

BOROUGH / PROJECT :

Enfield Council Gangs and Serious Youth Violence



PROBLEM :

Enfield has experienced persistent levels of youth delinquency since the mid-1990s. Initially this consisted of anti-social behaviour and low level incidents amounting to nuisance. From the early 2000s, however, there were signs of an emergence of more serious incidents of violence. This was further manifested by the identification of several offending gangs, located in specific parts of the borough.



SOLUTION :

Enfield has taken a Problem Orientated Partnership (POP) approach to tackling gangs. This is underpinned by a SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) approach.

The SARA approach:

Scanning

- Series of youth murders in Enfield (2008), three of which were gang-related.
- Average of 11 SYV offences per week (2006-2009).
- 13 per cent increase in Serious Youth Violence (SYV) (2010), 32 per cent increase in knife-enabled robberies.
- Widespread negative media attention contributed to increasing fear of crime in local community.
- Residents chose weapon and gang crime as top priority; only 33% felt safe in their local area after dark.

Analysis

- Two-thirds of victims were youths, 48 per cent white, 24 per cent black; and 87 per cent of incidents involved lone victim.
- Black males significantly over-represented as offenders. More than half of incidents involved multiple suspects.
- Offences concentrated in the east of the borough, particularly estates, transport hubs and shopping centres.
- Offending temporal pattern matched closely with school timings (time of offending/seasonality).

- Five main gangs identified from Partnership intelligence, two of which contributed to over 70 per cent of gang offences.
- Gang members significantly over-represented as victims and perpetrators.

Response

- Gangs Symposium and multiple training sessions held to improve practitioners' understanding of gangs.
- Gangs Action Group (GAG) established to minimise violence through co-ordinated pathways for identified offenders and to improve information sharing.
- Detailed gang and offender profiles developed.
- Intelligence used to obtain ASBOs and a Gang Injunction.
- Gangs Call-In developed to present opportunity for gang members to engage with support services.
- Location based responses included improvements to gang-linked estates, better linking up of borough CCTV, use of deployable CCTV cameras to priority locations, improved weapon sweeps through use of metal detecting wands, knife arches being deployed in schools and dispersal zones being utilised.

In particular three aspects of Enfield's POP approach stand out:

Offender Profiles:

Offender Profiles are created for each referral and include all available information on each individual. This includes housing/property details, benefits information, ASB issues relating to the individual or their home address, education info, health and A&E details, immigration information, Probation history, police intelligence including CRIS and CRIMINT information, social services information, Youth Offending Service history and gang information (associates, hangout areas etc). Information on immediate family members is also included.

The information collated allows the GAG to appropriately decide on enforcement, support and diversion actions. Each of these is tailored specifically to the needs of the individual and is also based on the outcome of previous and ongoing actions.

Location Based Responses:

As highlighted in the analysis, a number of gang / SYV problems have persisted in particular locations for extended periods of time. To tackle these, a number of environmental improvements were identified by the GAG.

Three estates which had suffered from youth violence for several years were identified. These estates have historically been notable gang territories. Following site surveys by a specialist Crime Prevention Officer, a number of recommendations were implemented to these locations, including:

- Cutting back and removal of shrubbery to prevent weapons being secreted in these areas and to improve natural surveillance.
- Clearing of rubbish and debris, particular bricks etc. which may be used as weapons.
- Key-operated gates and railings being installed to improve access control measures and to limit escape routes.
- Locking rubbish chutes to prevent unauthorised access to housing blocks.
- Anti-climb paint being applied to prevent offenders from entering the estates.
- Automatic security lights being installed to act as a deterrent and to also reduce the fear of crime felt by residents.

Gangs Call-In:

Analysis and previous police operations showed that a solely enforcement based approach was not a viable long-term solution to gangs and SYV issues. It was identified that exit strategies and support to enable offenders to exit gangs was necessary. To facilitate this, a Gangs Call-In project was designed. This was based on a Glasgow Police initiative and takes place in a courtroom in a local Crown Court. Up to 40

identified gang members and youth violence perpetrators are invited to attend each session which features a series of hard-hitting presentations including:

- A senior police officer explaining that the event is an opportunity to stop offending and to move onto a supported pathway. It is also made clear that all enforcement options will be utilised, should individuals actively chose not to engage.
- A surgeon detailing the medical effects of violence including graphic images of victims' injuries.
- A mother of a murdered youth explaining the effect on her and her family of losing her son.
- Ex-gang members who have rejected the gang lifestyle recounting their experiences and how they left their gang.

Following this, numerous service providers then outline what they are able to offer as assistance. Should they choose to engage with these services, a priority service is provided to ensure the support is put into place as quickly as possible. This covers the following strands:

- education assistance
- training
- employment
- mentoring
- counselling / emotional support
- financial advice / assistance
- health & drugs/alcohol support
- parental support
- housing advice
- young people support services
- domestic violence support.

The session ends with a request for the young people to sign an agreement to cease offending. They are also provided with a direct telephone number to access any of the above support. In the days immediately following each Gangs Call-In session, contact is made with each individual by a suitable lead person e.g. YOS worker, teacher, social worker etc, to encourage them to engage and take up the support offer. Regular contact is then maintained to ensure the needs of the young person are being met to enable them to exit the gang lifestyle.

BACKGROUND :

The London borough of Enfield has experienced persistent levels of youth delinquency since the mid 1990's. Initially this consisted of anti-social behaviour and low level incidents amounting to nuisance rather than criminal offences. Towards the early 2000's, however, an emergence of more serious incidents of violence began to be prevalent. This was further manifested by the identification of several offending cohorts and gangs, particularly around the Edmonton area of Enfield.

By 2006/07 four named gangs were present in Edmonton and gang-linked violence continued to escalate. In 2008, cross-borough youth violence resulted in a series of youth murders, three of which were considered as being gang-related. These incidents lead to further rivalries developing internally, within the borough and externally across North-London, with existing gangs expanding in membership and further groups emerging in the aftermath.

ACTIONS :

Enfield developed a Gangs Action Group (GAG) which involved three key stages:

- Analysis to enable local gang issues to be understood and to identify young people involved.
- Robust information sharing with local and cross-border partners to enable the creation of gang and offender intelligence profiles.
- A working group to manage priority gang nominals.

The aims of the GAG are to:

- Prevent and minimise violence between groups of young people.
- Coordinate plans for individual gang members through enforcement, intervention and support to divert them onto positive pathways away from criminal activity.
- Improve information sharing and local knowledge of gangs.

The GAG working group meets every five weeks to monitor individual gang members and is attended by multiple agencies including the Police, Youth Offending Service, Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Council Community Safety Unit, Youth Support Team, local housing providers, schools representatives, Probation, Social Care, UK Borders Agency and third-sector organisations.

Referrals to the group can be made by any agency that has concerns regarding young people they are in contact with being at risk of gang-related offending. All partners subsequently provide intelligence on each referral and, based on this information, a decision is made by the working group to decide if the referral is suitable to be looked at by the GAG this decision is based on the risk of the individual being a victim and/or perpetrator of gang related violence.

Initially, the working group focussed on 15 priority individuals; as the problem solving group has developed, this has risen to over 40.

OUTCOMES :

- SYV decreased 11 per cent (2009-2011); long term, figures show 28 per cent reduction since peak levels in 2007.
- SYV reduced 28 per cent in main gang hotspots; GBH and ABH decreased by 52 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.
- Gang-related estates experienced 16 per cent decrease in anti-social behaviour, with one estate achieving 50 per cent reduction.
- Over 200 hidden knives and weapons have been discovered around the borough, including one firearm, all of which have been removed from circulation.
- 58 gang members have attended Call-In sessions to date, with 52 signing agreements to stop offending.
- Feelings of safety have improved drastically, with 61 per cent of residents stating they feel safe in their local area after dark (2011).
- Challenges include working with gang-linked females, and dealing with potential financial pressures.

FUNDING :

In relation to this work around the call-in project and GAG processes, the major resource used for this has been officer time and increased joint working between partners. There has also been some specific grant funding used to aid this work.

The sustainability of this is dependent upon the ongoing mainstream resources, supplemented by grant funding to help support this work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT :

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