

Chapter 1

Tackling serious youth violence – Can a Public Health perspective offer the way forward?

In January 2016, I took over the corporate responsibility for community safety. This marked my first operational service responsibility after transitioning from the NHS to the council in 2013 under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and includes two services that can only be described as ‘full on and under pressure’, the Anti-Social Behaviour and Youth Offending Services. My taking up of these responsibilities coincided with a significant increase in serious youth violence involving assaults with knives and noxious substances. What then transpired over the last 12 months presented one of the most particular public health challenges I have faced in my 17 years as Barking and Dagenham’s Director of Public Health.

Two separate murders redefined our understanding of the swathe of issues that lead a minority of young people into gang culture and serious youth violence.

- On 13 September 2016, police were called to an incident in Gibbfield Close, Chadwell Heath, where two men had been seriously injured with stab and slash wounds. The victims were Paul Hayden and his son Ricky, who subsequently died because of his injuries.
- On the 12 November 2016 police were called to Church Elm Lane, Dagenham. On arrival, they found a 16-year-old male with injuries consistent with knife wounds. The injuries were not considered to be life threatening or life changing and

he was taken to hospital. Around the same time police were called to a second male with suspected knife injuries who was in Wyhill Walk, Dagenham. Wyhill Walk is a short distance from Church Elm Lane. The male in Wyhill Walk was Duran Junior Kajjama, aged 17, who later died of his injuries.

The murders in Marks Gate and Village wards had a profound impact on residents, expressed through social media and a series of community meetings. Community engagement is one of public health’s most powerful and valuable social epidemiological skills, unfortunately often overlooked in today’s reliance on a data driven view of population health as it involves listening and learning about the reality of our

Family of Chadwell Heath’s Ricky Hayden march against knife crime at north London rally

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Ricky Hayden’s mum, Suzanne Hedges, second from left, with members of Dean Pascal-Modeste’s family at a knife crime rally in north London.

“Drop the knife save a life” chanted the relatives of a popular nightclub bouncer at an anti-knife rally in north London.

residents' lives. Two powerful community messages emerged:

- The resolve of the community to tackle serious youth violence was without question.
- There is no easy answer and we can no longer place the blame on one community or agency. This is about us as a borough coming together and being focused in our solution, part of which is to fully acknowledge violence as a public health issue and treat it as such because the current punishment-focused intervention is not working.

In a nutshell, despite an overall fall in crime in the borough over recent years, serious youth violence continues to represent a significant problem. A problem we don't fully understand, which, as with disease, changes with our evolving communities and their environment. The nature and increase in our serious youth violence is presenting a similar challenge to that nationally following the August disturbances in 2011. The then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, The Rt. Hon Iain Duncan-Smith MP identified the need to change our approach from enforcement to one that addresses the social and environmental causation of violence, saying: "violence is a public health issue, we must start seeing and treating it as such"².

The idea of presenting serious youth violence as a public health issue is an interesting one. Traditionally considered an issue for law enforcement agencies alone, youth violence is now rightly being

considered from a public health perspective. While a public health approach does not offer all the answers to this complex and multi-faceted problem, it does provide an opportunity for understanding youth violence, including providing guidance that builds on local best practice, encouraging analysis and scrutiny of how priorities are identified and translated into intervention programmes.

Understanding youth and gang violence

Understanding the problem from a community perspective is critical in establishing an effective solution. Our community engagement meetings in both Marks Gate and Village wards identified that public services don't always understand community issues or work together on solving the problems. Quite often, we just provide services and react to issues rather than investing in proactive solutions to reduce violent crime and with behaviour focused interventions addressing prevention and causes, rather than the symptoms.

During 2016 the media reporting³⁴⁵⁶⁷ of our high impact crimes such as the murders and other youth violence painted a worrying picture of young people in Barking and Dagenham but of course such reporting frequently overlooks the fact that the clear majority are not involved in any criminal behaviour whatsoever. Less than 1% of the total population of under 18s are accused of any physical violence each year⁸. Also, whilst difficult to calculate the

number of people affected adversely by gangs, a conservative estimate, based on a Waltham Forest study, would suggest that gangs affect 4% of the total population (for Barking and Dagenham, this would represent approximately 8,000 people in the extended network of people affected (associates, peripheral members, younger siblings who are vulnerable etc.), with 1,096 directly affected)⁹.

Whitney Iles¹⁰ writing in the Guardian in August 2016, makes an important point "that many stories on social media and regional news would have us believe that knife crime is solely a London issue and is predominately a problem for black communities, but this is wrong. Knife crime affects us all and according to Home Office statistics, the UK's hot spots for knife crime include Cleveland (first place) and Durham (third place). In 2014/15 Cleveland - which includes towns such as Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Redcar - was the knife crime hotspot of England and Wales with 55 knife crimes per 100,000 population". Whitney concludes "But regardless of where or who the victims and perpetrators are, knife crime is becoming an epidemic"¹¹.

The London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (2016) make an important distinction based on 2014-15 data, that a higher proportion of gang-related knife crime resulted in serious injury, but in terms of overall volume there were more serious knife crime injuries that were non-gang related¹². The GLA Peer Outreach Team suggests that much of the violent activity in London involves peer groups, rather than gangs

2 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97861/gang-violence-summary.pdf

3 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1853124/cops-hunt-dagenham-knifeman-after-man-was-stabbed-to-death-in-residential-street/>

4 <http://news.met.police.uk/news/deceased-named-in-dagenham-murder-investigation-208284>

5 <http://www.itv.com/news/london/2016-11-17/two-teenagers-arrested-over-murder-of-a-17-year-old-boy-in-dagenham/>

6 <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/ricky-hayden-death-fourth-teenager-19-arrested-on-suspicion-of-chadwell-heath-murder-a3368891.html>

7 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3476377/Shocking-moment-mob-youths-armed-baseball-bats-knives-ACID-mass-brawl-police-outside-London-McDonald-s.html>

8 Metropolitan Police, Serious Youth Violence across the MPS between 01/04/2011 to 31/03/2016

9 Pitts, J. (2007) Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest, University of Bedfordshire, Figure 9.2 p.74.

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/22/youth-violence-epidemic-punishment-knife-crime-public-health-scotland>

11 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2015>

12 https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/serious_youth_violence_report_-_london_assembly.pdf

as they are traditionally known. However, young people feel that the Met and other services unhelpfully label these young people as 'gang members' when it is not the case¹³. The other way of seeing this is that our understanding of a 'gang' is out of date. The data could suggest that the Trident Gangs Matrix¹⁴ is an ineffective tool to identify young people at risk.

The Policing and Crime Act 2009, set out that for violence to be 'gang-related' it must involve at least three people, associated with a specific geographical area, who have 'a name, emblem or colour' which allows others to identify them as a group. In 2015, this was revised in new statutory guidance from the Home Office¹⁵. There is no longer any mention of geographical territory or gang emblems: a 'gang' is any group that commits crime and has 'one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified as a group'. The guidance doesn't describe what those characteristics might be and in Barking and Dagenham we try to get our peer groups to fit the gang definition, therefore the problem is being labelled and addressed wrongly. However, an interesting question to pose is: "If they are gangs rather than peer groups does that get better recognition for support for perpetrators or action by enforcement agencies?"

Definitions apart the Matrix itself has been seen by some as a tool of controversy¹⁶. Figures for 2016 show that of the 3626 people listed on that database across London 78% were black and a further 9%

were from other ethnic minority backgrounds. Ethnic minorities make up 40% of London's population. A snapshot of the gangs' matrix for Barking and Dagenham at January 2017 shows 79% were black and a further 14% were from ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities make up 49% of the population of Barking and Dagenham. A review led by the Labour MP David Lammy ordered by David Cameron when he was prime minister has found that the Metropolitan Police may be overly targeting black and ethnic minority youths as gang members, resulting in them being treated more harshly by the courts, prisons and justice system¹⁷. A more effective approach would be to create and maintain a matrix that identifies the most at risk young people through, schools, police, youth service and youth offending service who may need specific targeted one to one work.

What do we know about youth violence locally?

Violence and youth violence is an area of interest for the Director of Public Health as the Public Health Outcomes Framework¹⁸, the national performance monitoring and comparison framework for Public Health issues, contains several indicators relevant to youth violence:

- First time entrants into the youth justice system
- Violent crime (including sexual offences) – hospital admissions for violence
- Violent crime (including sexual

offences) – violence offences

- Re-offending levels – percentage of offenders that re-offend
- Re-offending levels – average number of re-offences per offender

The indicators are a key tool in measuring the progress made in improving the lives of young people affected by violent crime, and in the success of the Government's wider gang and youth violence agenda. They also provide a useful tool to understand the scale of the challenge facing Barking and Dagenham benchmarked against the other 32 areas of the country identified as having the most serious youth violence and gang problems and defined as Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas by the cross-government initiative led by the Home Office in 2012¹⁹.

In 2011-12 when the 33 priority areas were designated, 18 of the 33 target areas had higher numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system than the national average, with only three areas recording a lower rate. In 2011-12 Barking and Dagenham had similar levels of first time entrants to the youth justice system as that observed nationally²⁰, however more recent data in Table 1 shows that first time entrants now exceed national levels. Levels of reoffending – the average number of re-offences per offender, in Barking and Dagenham has also marginally increased in line with national levels, where previous levels were below. Hackney and Tower Hamlets, are two potential comparator boroughs that fall within the same Index of Multiple

13 MOPAC Challenge presentation, February 2016

14 https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/Strategic%20Ambitions%20for%20London_%20Gangs%20and%20SYV%202014.pdf

15 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/changes-in-legislation-reflected-in-new-gang-definition>

16 <https://netpol.org/2015/07/23/racism-gangs-matrix/>

17 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/19/metropolitan-police-may-be-overly-targeting-bame-youths-as-gang-members>

18 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-outcomes-framework-2016-to-2019>

19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/newsupport-to-tackle-gang-and-youth-violence>

20 <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Catch22-Dawes-Unit-Violence-prevention-health-promotion-October-2013.pdf>

Deprivation Decile as Barking and Dagenham, the most deprived decile. All three boroughs show a similar trend between 2011-12 and the recent data outlined above, first time entrants into the youth justice system have either remained or risen above the national average with levels of violent crime. Hospital admissions and violence offences remaining consistently above national levels for all three boroughs.

In October 2016, the Youth Justice Board completed a six month follow up audit of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Offending Service. During this latest audit, it was highlighted that the cases they looked at displayed a complexity of needs and were concerned that several of the cases audited involved high risk activity and the use of violence and weapons. They noted that this appeared to be more prevalent than when they had last visited and wanted to ensure that all partners were responding to this need and are working together to address the issues identified, particularly about the issues of gangs and youth violence.

When looking at population level data it is important to note that this table provides only a snapshot of the outcome for these areas and, of course, there will be a number of influential factors in each locality that contribute to performance and which should be considered.

To understand the issues locally we have carried out a Serious Violence Problem Profile which was completed in December 2016 (restricted and unpublished²¹) and gives a much more detailed picture of the nature and extent of serious violence in the borough.

The profile was based on quantitative and qualitative information collated between October 2015 and November 2016 as extracted from Metropolitan Police crime, intelligence and incident records. The data was used to conduct 'hot spot mapping', crime pattern analysis, offender demographics and needs, and qualitative information around vulnerable people, locations and activities in regard to serious violence.

The Serious Violence Problem Profile considered violence that affects young people and violence between strangers (public settings, violence in or near licensed venues and linked to alcohol consumption, robberies), which was not flagged as domestic abuse. A bespoke dataset was created for the analysis on Victims, Offenders, Location and Temporal features. The bespoke data set used Violence against the Person, Robbery and Sexual Offences crime records between the 1st October 2015 and 20th November 2016, triangulated with Gangs Offending, Serious Youth Violence, Knife Crime with Injury and Gun Crime Discharges datasets.

When the 'Violence with injury' crimes of serious wounding and assault with injury data sets was analysed the largest proportion of violence was between people known to one another in some way (56%). Stranger violence accounted for 44%. There were 14 categories of violence manually assigned to the crime data, of which five combined accounted for 74% of all records – miscellaneous stranger violence (27%), alcohol related (14%), familial but not domestic (12%), youth on youth (11%) and acquaintance/friend disputes (10%).

When looking at the most serious violence, which is more costly and harmful to society, the largest categories were gang and weapon injuries (30%), alcohol related (22%) and miscellaneous stranger violence (21%) – these three categories combined accounted for 73% of most serious violence in Barking and Dagenham. Using the number of recorded violent crime offences as a basis, it is estimated that the incidence of violent crime in the borough in the rolling 12 months to September 2016 is equivalent to one violent offence for every five people²². Serious youth violence, as demonstrated in the murders of Ricky Hayden and Duran Junior Kajama, in September and November 2016 respectively has now returned to peak levels last experienced in 2011. Table 2 highlights the key findings from the Serious Violence Problem Profile in relation to youth on youth violence and serious youth violence in Barking and Dagenham.

21 The Serious Violence Problem Profile document is confidential to the council and its partners because of small numbers and the potential for identification of individuals.

22 Revised multipliers of crime published by the home office (to account for under reporting) were used to multiply the actual number of violent offences in Barking & Dagenham in the rolling 12 months to September 2016 to get an overall estimated number of offences (40,259) and when used with the ONS Mid year population estimate for Barking and Dagenham (202,000)

Table 1: Indicators relevant to youth violence from the Public Health Outcomes Framework mapped against the Government's 33 target areas for tackling serious crimes. Figures in red are higher than the national average, while those in green are lower.

	1.04 - First time entrants to the youth justice system (2015)	1.12i - Violent crime (including sexual violence) - hospital admissions for violence (12/13 - 14/15)	Violent crime (including sexual violence) - violence offences: rate per 1,000 population (15/16)	Health and Justice: Re-offending levels - percentage of offenders who re-offend (2013)
Barking and Dagenham	540.52	48.14	26.30	27.29
Birmingham	498.59	58.18	17.40	26.10
Bradford	433.56	74.57	22.14	26.77
Brent	445.50	48.19	22.64	28.81
Camden	488.63	45.50	25.56	29.77
Croydon	560.65	48.94	22.73	26.64
Derby	529.03	55.16	18.78	30.01
Ealing	328.82	58.80	22.32	25.75
Enfield	424.60	32.72	18.20	26.66
Greenwich	458.81	37.86	24.91	27.54
Hackney	491.61	56.71	25.93	27.80
Hammersmith and Fulham	573.33	69.29	25.39	31.36
Haringey	454.62	54.95	24.68	26.93
Islington	531.91	67.56	27.30	30.34
Knowsley	388.52	118.92	14.70	27.35
Lambeth	631.16	67.75	26.78	28.65
Leeds	460.03	65.85	23.98	28.21
Lewisham	712.68	60.22	24.36	27.98
Liverpool	368.00	143.54	22.26	30.65
Manchester	537.34	83.16	25.63	28.57
Merton	299.42	45.19	16.71	22.95
Newham	443.95	67.82	25.70	27.67
Nottingham	821.95	62.74	23.24	28.17
Oldham	367.77	94.05	22.46	26.78
Salford	398.87	82.63	15.14	25.45
Sandwell	425.34	76.45	14.35	24.53
Sheffield	525.87	61.93	13.46	26.37
Southwark	578.37	66.07	24.76	27.56
Tower Hamlets	548.04	54.84	26.27	26.19
Waltham Forest	419.35	69.02	22.44	25.01
Wandsworth	369.94	42.13	18.49	25.18
Westminster	306.73	41.83	35.20	27.31
Wolverhampton	605.98	75.18	18.15	24.89
England	368.65	47.49	17.18	26.36
less 10%	331.78	42.74	15.46	23.72
plus 10%	405.51	52.24	18.90	29.00

Table 2: Key findings from the Barking and Dagenham Serious Violence Problem Profile

<p>Victims:</p> <p>Analysis of recorded crime data taken from the Metropolitan Police Crime Recording Information System (CRIS) between October 2015 and November 2016 shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victimisation rates for Serious Violence in Barking and Dagenham are highest for those aged between 12 and 35, peaking between the ages of 12 and 20 (more than 2 times above average), with those aged 14-18 (more than 4 times above average) being the most overrepresented victims. When the violence offence categories were broken down by victim age groups and expressed as a proportion of the population (using Office for National Statistics 2014 mid-year estimates) individuals aged 10 - 24 accounted for up to half of all gang flagged incidents, weapon injuries and gang indicator crimes, despite making up less than one fifth of the population denoting levels of vulnerability. 	<p>Offenders:</p> <p>Analysis of recorded crime data taken from the Metropolitan Police Crime Recording Information System (CRIS) between October 2015 and November 2016 shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offending rates for Serious Violence in Barking and Dagenham are highest for those aged 13 and 25, peaking between the ages of 15 and 20 (more than 4.5 times above average), with ages 15 and 16 being the riskiest years). When the violence offence categories were broken down by victim age groups and expressed as a proportion of the population (using Office for National Statistics 2014 mid-year estimates) those aged 10-24 were significantly overrepresented as perpetrators of most categories of violence, including weapon enabled robbery, gang flagged and indicator crimes, and weapon injury offences. This age group perpetrated more than two-thirds of all offences despite making up less than a fifth of the population. More than half of all serious wounding (including GBH with intent, attempted murder, stabbing and shooting) was perpetrated by those aged 10-24.
<p>Location:</p> <p>Using variations of the Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science, Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI) vulnerability mapping was completed to identify areas of Barking and Dagenham which are most susceptible to gangs and serious violent crime, and areas where the risk of youth involvement in crime may be greatest. Above average risk of youth offending for Serious Violence was identified in all but two wards of Barking and Dagenham.</p> <p>London Borough of Barking and Dagenham 2016 Unpublished</p>	

What is the socio-economic impact on the borough?

The impact of serious youth violence in terms of individual, social and economic costs to Barking and Dagenham is significant. The wider socio-economic effects, while less visible, are far-reaching, and have the potential to cause sustained, long-term damage to the borough. For all recorded violent crime, the estimated cost was £67.6m during the previous 12 months, whilst for estimated levels of crime (accounting for underreporting) the socio-economic cost is £356.9m (sexual offences account for a significant proportion of the latter figure due to more chronic levels of underreporting)²³. Using the

Cambridge Crime Harm Index²⁴, we can surmise that the most serious violence in Barking and Dagenham (serious wounding, weapon enabled crime, serious sexual offences) accounts for just 18% of all violent crime, but contributes 80% of the harm experienced and 42% of the socio-economic costs. Interestingly within these figures, it has been suggested, the total estimated socio-economic cost of known violence linked to gangs in Barking and Dagenham for the previous 12 months was £7.98million (12%).

From an NHS perspective alongside the economic impact, youth violence also has a personal cost for the individual. In 2015-16, 337 Barking

and Dagenham residents were admitted to accident and emergency because of a violence related incident. In the same period, 114 Barking and Dagenham residents aged 13-24, were admitted to hospital in an emergency for assault involving a knife or sharp object²⁵.

The population level costs as outlined are clearly a driver for action in times of austerity, however, understanding the problem is more than a quantitative data exercise and no single piece of evidence decides an intervention programme. We need to link what the data is telling us with the individual and environmental causes of serious youth violence.

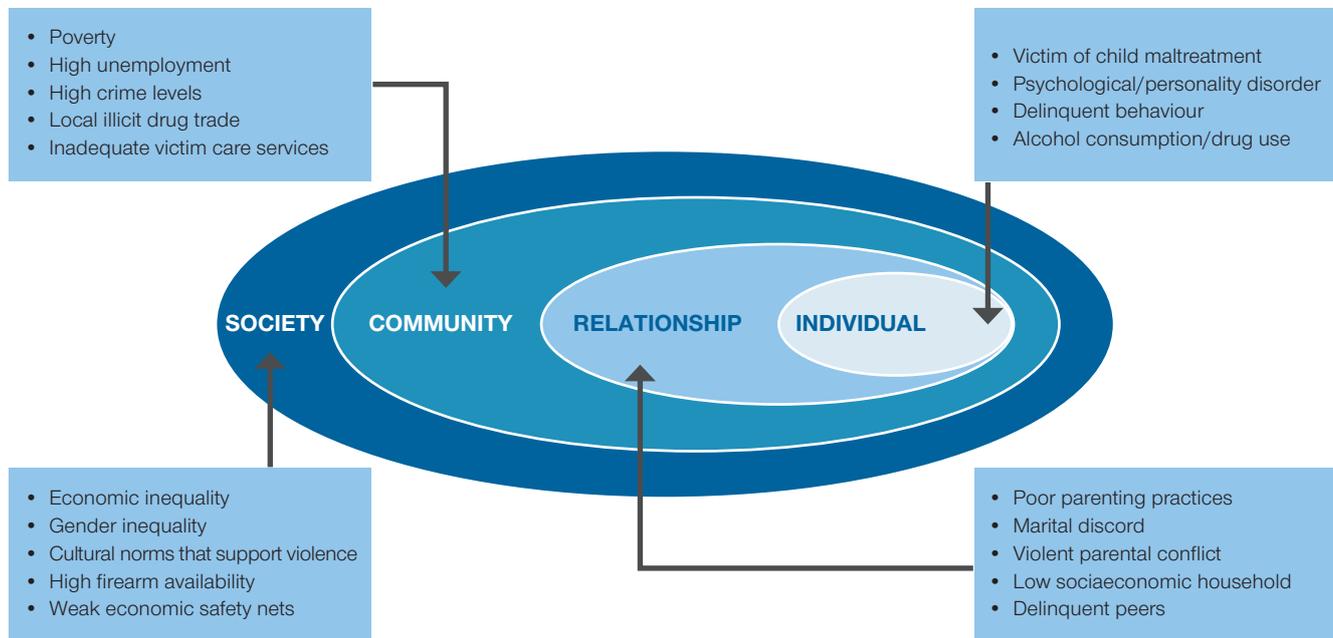
23 Brand, S. and Price, R. (2000) Home Office Research Study 217: The economic and social costs of crime - assigns socio-economic costs to individual categories of crime based on costs borne in anticipation of crime (i.e. security), as a consequence of crime (i.e. victim and health services), and in response to crime (i.e. policing and criminal justice system). These costs were revised in 2011 and used to work out socio-economic costs of violent crime in Barking & Dagenham. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/unit-costs-of-crime-and-multipliers-revised> Accessed 01.12.2016

24 Sherman, L. et al (2015) The Cambridge Crime Harm Index – based on Criminal Justice System sentencing guidelines, the principle is that not all crimes are equal in terms of harm (e.g. 1 homicide has greater impact than 1 shoplifting offence). To calculate harm score, the number of offences is multiplied by the harm score for that crime type. Therefore, the weighting for arson without endangering life = 33 and for rape = 1825 – if an area records 10x arsons and 10x rapes, the harm score for arson is 330 (33x10) and for rape 18,250 (1825x10). This has been done for all Violent Crime offences in Barking & Dagenham in order to calculate the proportion of harm. See also Keay, S. (2015) Lancashire Police strategic assessment technical report.

25 Secondary User Services Data, Barking and Dagenham Admissions to Accident and Emergency 2015-16. Accessed 25/01/17

Adapted from WHO 2004²⁹

Diagram 1: Some cross-cutting risk factors for violence



Why does youth violence happen?

The reasons that young people become victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence are many and varied^{26 27}. Factors such as the influence of peer groups; the level of exposure to violence within the family; or the impact of the community have all been cited as reasons why a young person might engage in serious violence. From a population health perspective violence within the community is strongly related to inequalities, with the poorest fifth of society suffering rates of hospital admissions for violence five times higher than those of the most affluent fifth²⁸.

Diagram 1 shows the interaction between risk factors at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels. Different types of violence also have specific risk factors.

The Fear and Fashion report, written in 2004, identifies the breakdown in social structures (families, extended families, supportive communities), the established alienation of large sections of the youth population and the fashionable nature of violence as being key elements that fuel violence³⁰. Likewise, the Youth Justice Board has identified several risk factors for criminal activity among young people, including poor housing, poor educational achievement, and living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood³¹.

In July 2016, the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee examined the detail behind the rising number of victims of serious youth violence in London, and the reasons why some young people find themselves victims or perpetrators of serious violence³². In Barking and Dagenham, as in London, the number of victims has been rising slowly over the past four years, following a sharp drop in 2011-12³³. The Met attributes that drop to a reduction in personal robbery at that time. It also suggests that the recent rise can in part be explained by a change in recording practices of Grievous Bodily Harm, which ranges from incidents such as 'a fight in the playground to a really serious assault outside a nightclub'³⁴.

26 http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap2.pdf

27 <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2016-0045/CDP-2016-0045.pdf>

28 Protecting People Promoting Health: A Public Health Approach To Violence Prevention For England, Department of Health 2012

29 <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43014/1/9241592079.pdf>

30 Youth Crime , Community safety.org

31 A summary of risk and protective factors associated with youth crime, and effective interventions to prevent it, Youth Justice Board, Institute of Criminology

32 https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/serious_youth_violence_report_-_london_assembly.pdf

33 Metropolitan Police, Serious Youth Violence across the MPS between 01/04/2011 to 31/03/2016

34 Chief Superintendent Dave Stringer, meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, 14 July 2016

Other commentators, however, suggest that several other factors are driving the recent increase. These include the changing 'criminal economy', with young people more involved in serious crimes such as drugs; increased population mobility creating tensions among different communities; and an increased willingness of young people to carry weapons³⁵. Although not talked about as widely in the literature one cannot ignore the influence of materialism on young people and crime. The cost of an iPhone 7 for example, is significant and yet having luxury goods is constantly normalised by social media to the point where some young people see these items as a basic human right. If you also have a drugs market which provides people with access to more wealth than they could achieve through legitimate employment, you have a gateway into criminal activity which is difficult to dissuade young people out of.

In dealing with the murder of Duran Junior Kajjama, who was a popular and up and coming rap/grime artist, I reviewed the interface between criminality and current youth culture. 'UK Grime' is a hip-hop sub-genre that has now formed its own industry and focuses primarily on the negative aspects of inner city life. The lyrics often glorify criminal activity and postcode rivalries and incite violence. This genre of music and youth culture has been a source of tremendous controversy and is often cited as the cause of the increase in violence within communities, leading to arrests where artists have incriminated themselves by producing music about incidents that have occurred.

This is particularly true amongst certain pockets of inner city youth who attempt to merge the persona

of the artist with everyday life and want to live and be perceived in a certain way. A topic that has become more high profile recently is the continued sexualisation of women, not only in the lyrics of this genre, but more importantly in the visual representation of young females in music videos. The link with the glorification and distribution of drugs cannot be understated.

Despite all this, hip hop has generated a significant fan base around the world with a wide demographic of listeners, mostly among youths. This raises the question of whether the negativity commonly linked with rap music is not just one side of the coin. The reality is that rap music is greatly misunderstood as it has been vital in promoting social and political awareness among the youth of today. Rap music educates people on a range of perspectives and raises many social issues. Rap is a channel for people to speak freely about their view on political or social issues and by doing so it engages teenagers to become concerned and aware of these issues. We need to harness rap music as a community engagement intervention with the intention of sending a positive message to young people. For my generation, such harnessing of music for community action was the whole point of the Sir Bob Geldof inspired 'Live Aid' fundraising initiative.

Understanding the negative perception of safety

Research suggests that exposure to violence, particularly during childhood, is consistently found in the individuals most likely to be involved in violence (as victims and/

or perpetrators) in adolescence and later life. When one examines the background of our young people who are in contact with the Youth Offending Service this is a striking risk factor. The London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (2016) report stated that a dominant driver, particularly of knife crime among young people, appears to be a belief that they need to be prepared to defend themselves³⁶. This could, in part, be fuelled by a perception of the number and severity of weapons on the streets. It may also be a fear fuelled by incidents that occur in their communities, which cause a negative perception of safety. If a serious incident occurs, there needs to be a concerted effort by the police and other agencies to ensure that young people are safe and reassure them of this.

Whitney (2016) suggests that the long-term impacts of violence should not be underestimated. He argues that in understanding the impact of trauma we need to recognise that a traumatised young person, perhaps one suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for example, will try to work through their trauma by re-enactment to master their emotions. The re-enactment could play out in the young person now carrying a knife for two reasons: firstly, because they believe they will be a victim again and on some level, is still the victim trying to get to grips with their reality; and secondly because they want to be the victimiser and move away from the position of victim³⁷.

Intervention programmes need to consider a range of actions that focus specifically on identifying young people who have witnessed and been victims of serious offences at the earliest opportunity who may

35 Graham Robb, meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, 14 July 2016

36 https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/serious_youth_violence_report_-_london_assembly.pdf

37 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/22/youth-violence-epidemic-punishment-knife-crime-public-health-scotland>

be more vulnerable and susceptible to crime in the future. We should not be waiting until the teenage years before acting to prevent youth violence. The emergence of the risks that put some young people on a path towards violence can often be in evidence during early childhood. Commissioners and service providers should examine the potential value of utilising a trauma recovery model³⁸ with those young people affected both within and outside the youth offending service.

There is more to be done not only to understand the drivers of serious youth violence in Barking and Dagenham, but also why some young people that are exposed to risk factors manage to avoid becoming victims or perpetrators. Matt Watson suggested that currently “the problem with prevention [of youth offending] is you throw the net very, very wide. That is obviously very expensive, and you are not sure what the key factors are with all these people with very, very similar issues and difficulties”³⁹.

Understanding why people do and do not involve themselves in serious youth violence should help with “learning your way out of the problems” and shaping more targeted preventative measures⁴⁰.

Community engagement

Communities affected by violence can be difficult to engage. Factors such as acceptance that violence is the norm or cannot be prevented, fear of reprisals, a ‘no grass’ culture and lack of trust that reporting violence will lead to action are barriers that need to be addressed. It is difficult to create a strong and cohesive community where it doesn’t exist, but



statutory agencies such as councils and the police, and community safety partnerships can act as catalysts for change.

There are no easy solutions and each community is different, as we saw when we engaged with the residents in Marks Gate and Village wards. Three key themes were consistently voiced in both ward engagement events:

- The sustainable answer can only be achieved through effective community engagement that is wider than the civic minded few and is serious about dialogue with young people
- The impact of housing and environment
- The fear of crime

How do we engage with hard to reach communities?

In exploring this issue, it is important for the reader to note that I am not contradicting the fact that knife crime impacts everyone. There is no universal definition of ‘community engagement’, but it is generally agreed that community engagement strategies include partnership building and networking, community mobilisation and community coalition building. However, there are numerous problems associated with successfully engaging disengaged communities. In a Scrutiny Review of Engaging with ‘Hard to Reach Communities’, the London Borough of Haringey found that barriers to engagement included: lack of contact points; staff not necessarily being aware of dual needs and cultural aspects; practicalities e.g. timing of events; and information provision e.g. language used⁴¹. Whilst Ted

38 <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20220%20July%202015.pdf>

39 Matt Watson, meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, 14 July 2016

40 Graham Robb, meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, 14 July 2016

41 Scrutiny Review of Engaging With Hard To Reach Communities, London Borough of Haringey, March 2010

Cantle also noted that communities can be disempowered by the authorities focusing on self-appointed community leaders, who may not be the most appropriate leaders, who then act as gatekeepers to their communities⁴².

The Home Office report, *Ending Gang and Youth Violence Community Engagement* (2014) noted that community engagement in this context requires an acceptance that universal approaches to community engagement need to be balanced with targeted interventions which address the needs of specific groups within the community⁴³. The specific groups that need to be engaged include active and former gang members, young people involved in violence, their close associates, and those who are in prison or a youth offender institution. But equally as important, community engagement strategies should also include members of the wider community, including those who are most at risk of, or most affected by, violence. This can create an environment in which violence can be stopped and maintained in the long term. Such an approach requires collaboration between a range of partners, including statutory and non-statutory partners, residents, community, faith and youth groups, and businesses⁴⁴.

An evaluation of effective engagement of communities in regeneration for the Scottish Government reported that community planning partnerships are reported to have employed a wide range of methods for engaging communities. This has included residents' panels made up of a representative cross section of the community who were asked for views on service provision and other issues; 'Planning for Real' – an opportunity for residents to design

improvements in their community; civic forums and assemblies – either made up of community representatives or regular events that are open to the public. They provide an opportunity for the community to discuss service delivery issues with the service providers; community involvement in (or leadership of) the development of local community plans; residents' juries made up of about 15 local people who consider a single issue in considerable depth; surveys and questionnaires; and approaches based on information technology – touch screens in public areas and 'online polling' using the internet⁴⁵.

The Village community engagement event was attended by a parent of each of the victims and the subsequent community march against knife crime was organised on behalf of Duran Junior Kajjama's mother Beatrice. Both events highlighted the role of individuals who have experienced serious youth violence first hand and that has been key in engaging the community in Village as they can challenge young people in a way that we, as professionals and service providers cannot, using emotion and their respect for the individual's loss which is necessary to motivate people to take action. The reaction of a parent towards young people for carrying knives can be a powerful voice, whereas our responses as professionals have to be un-emotional and focused on enforcement or support.

How do we engage effectively with young people?

The single most important issue arising from youth violence in general,

and the murder of Ricky Hayden and Duran Junior Kajjama in particular is the need to engage young people. Young people who are involved in gangs and crime are amongst the hardest groups within the community to engage. However, there is strong evidence to show that community groups and leaders can successfully work with hard to reach groups of young people.

Evidence from the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF)⁴⁶ between 2000 and 2006, shows that a gradualist community approach can slowly engage even the hardest to reach groups. NSF projects engaged young people through informal networks, and informal activities such as sport, computers and DJ-ing. This was combined with advice, information and guidance, help with school work, accredited activities and training. When young people were 'signed off' NSF projects, 71% were noted as moving onto a 'positive outcome'. Few remained NEET (Not in education, employment or training), and young people gained new experiences and qualifications that will help them in the long term. As part of a 'community approach', most NSF projects encouraged young people to be involved beyond their role as participants⁴⁷.

An evaluation of effective engagement of communities in regeneration for the Scottish Government reported that methods of youth engagement in Scotland include youth forums, youth groups or committees. Other approaches included A Young People's Manifesto developed as a result of a youth conference and young people being directly involved in decision-making on how Community Regeneration Funds are spent. More innovative ways of engaging with the young

42 Ted Cantle, *Beyond Gatekeeper Community Leaders 'Making Diversity Less Divisive'*, Municipal Journal 1st August 2013'

43 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-community-engagement>

44 *Ending Gang and Youth Violence Community Engagement*, Home Office, 2014.

45 *Evaluation of the Effective Engagement of Communities in Regeneration: Final Baseline Report*, Communities Scotland, 2006

46 Gavin Bailey, *Reengaging Young People*, An evaluation of the Neighbourhood Support Fund, Community Development Foundation, 2006

47 Gavin Bailey, *Reengaging Young People*, An evaluation of the Neighbourhood Support Fund, Community Development Foundation, 2006

communities were also found including use of video, DVD and the internet to engage young people, the use of drama, a youth festival, participation in debates in the council chambers, links to the Scottish Youth Parliament, and training and support of young people to conduct a survey on young people⁴⁸.

This shows that the key to engaging hard to reach communities often lies in the way that the engagement is carried out. In 'Not another Consultation', Local Government Improvement and Development⁴⁹ noted that many of the old rigid consultation techniques are simply not up to the challenge of improving local democratic legitimacy. Instead, the report emphasises the value of informal consultation events that are fun and which provide opportunities to influence decisions through participative and direct democracy. This form of consultation is just one of a series of activities that give people confidence in their capacity to control their own circumstances.

Protecting People Promoting Health: A Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention for England, Department of Health 2012, suggests that violence can be prevented by a range of different interventions throughout the life course to reduce individuals' propensity for violence, lower the chances of those involved in violence being involved again, and ensure that those affected by violence get the support they require. Programmes that support parents and families, develop life skills in children, work with high-risk youth, and which reduce the availability and misuse of alcohol, have all proven to be effective at reducing levels of violence⁵⁰.

In terms of the links between health



and crime the use of messaging and social media is crucial in engaging young people. Evidence suggests teenagers can't control impulses and make rapid, smart decisions like adults can. This is simply due to brain development, with the frontal lobe of the teenage brain, which controls decision-making, being not fully developed, so signals move more slowly⁵¹. This may assist in explaining why teenagers can be especially susceptible to addictions such as drugs, alcohol, violence, smoking and digital devices. This also suggests that the normal education 'health warning' type messages through non-digital media are likely to be less effective.

The role housing and environment can play

One issue on which community and youth engagement can potentially reap positive benefits for violence

reduction are environmental improvements to public space and housing. Environmental improvements can also benefit mental and physical health by promoting social interaction, increasing perceptions of safety and promoting physical exercise. Potential strategies can include improving neighbourhood infrastructures (e.g. better transport and street lighting and increasing access to green space). For example, a study in the USA found that urban public housing residents who lived in buildings with more nearby green space reported lower levels of aggression, violence and mental fatigue than their counterparts with less green space. A different study found that the presence of greenery in common spaces in a large public housing development was associated with greater use of, and social activity in, the outdoor space⁵²

48 Evaluation of the Effective Engagement of Communities in Regeneration: Final Baseline Report, Communities Scotland, 2006

49 <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Not-Another-Consultation.pdf>

50 Protecting People Promoting Health: A Public Health Approach To Violence Prevention For England, Department of Health 2012.

51 https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=interview+Frances+Jensen+On+The+Teenage+Brain++Shots++Health+News++NPR&sourceid=ie7&rls=c om.microsoft:en-US:IE-Address&ie=&oe=&gfe_rd=cr&ei=SveLWLnM6KN8QfWpY3wCQ

52 Protecting People Promoting Health: A Public Health Approach To Violence Prevention For England, Department of Health 2012

This is important for spatial planners as Barking and Dagenham is London's growth opportunity. Barking Riverside is one of several growth areas in the borough, expecting a population of 75,000 people by 2030⁵³. Key to our vision is growth which is inclusive, with 'no one left behind'. The recent independent Growth Commission report and its recommendations begin our conversation to connect the whole community of Barking Riverside and the surrounding areas, both new and existing, physically, socially and economically, thus making a positive contribution to physical and mental health⁵⁴.

Reducing fear of crime

Community engagement following the murder of Ricky Hayden revealed deep seated concerns around anti-social behaviour and drug dealing in the area. Most categories of violent crime in Barking and Dagenham are currently experiencing increases in recorded levels, which in turn has led to a growing demand for services to protect and safeguard victims and vulnerable people, and to effectively manage perpetrators. In Village ward a number young people voiced a lack of confidence in current witness protection programmes.

In the US, Department of Justice guidance, *Reducing Fear of Crime: Strategies for Police*, highlights the devastating impact that fear of crime can have on communities, and argues that fear reduction should be included among the explicit components of the modern police mission⁵⁵. This has led to several innovative solutions at local level within US cities. Case Study 1 offers an innovative solution:

Case Study 1: Targeting Fear Baltimore County COPE (Citizen Oriented Police Enforcement) .

COPE officers survey the community, and work with neighbourhood organizations, local businesses, and local government agencies, to understand and solve each community's problem, on the community's own terms. COPE officers recognise that every neighbourhood has different problems that stem from different causes—and they tailor their responses accordingly. The results have been exceptional. COPE teams have substantially reduced fear of crime among residents of the communities they served. Residents are more satisfied with their communities, with the police, and with their local government in general. And, perhaps best of all, the three COPE units' activities have driven serious crime and calls for police service down by 10 percent or more in the neighbourhoods they have served.

To address these concerns, the Borough Commander has instituted a targeted programme of reassurance policing with focused patrols in areas of high demand accompanied by the legitimate use of Stop and Search. In addition, the search for those offenders who are wanted by police continues. Evidence shows that reassurance policing can achieve a whole range of objectives, including: reducing fear of crime; increasing public confidence in the police; reducing crime; and reducing anti-social behaviour⁵⁶.

A positive outcome observed in both wards following community engagement has been the increasing confidence in the capacity of local agencies to manage crime, which reduces anxiety, if local people believe that the police and the council can manage and deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour effectively. Furthermore, anxiety reduces if residents feel involved in and informed about the process. The theory is that increased confidence reduces personal anxiety and latest research suggests that, by improving confidence in the agencies charged with crime and disorder reduction, there will be consequent impacts on a resident's perception of crime. Despite the events of the last 12 months the latest results taken from the Public Attitude Survey for 2016-

17 shows that public confidence in policing is at 77% which is the highest it has been in recent years⁵⁷.

The way forward

The Community Safety Partnership hosted a Youth Violence Conference in September 2016 to examine the Partnership's proposed action plan for dealing with the increase in serious youth violence. Will Linden, Analyst Co-ordinator from the Violence Reduction Unit in Scotland, was invited as the key note speaker. Case Study 2 offers a powerful example on what can be achieved by public health violence reduction models.

Whilst data may not always be readily available in respect of prevention, there is a wealth of literature and research examining the underlying risk factors of violence which can be drawn upon to shape our interventions. The Partnership has used this evidence base to develop a violence reduction and prevention plan to combat youth violence in the borough, which contains a suite of interventions to both engage young people and to reassure the wider community. One of the principal focuses for the action plan is prevention and the identification of and work with perpetrators, with agreed actions at family and

53 <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/planning-guidance-and-policies/local-plan-review/one-borough-one-community-one-plan/>

54 <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/business/growing-the-borough/our-strategy-for-growth/overview-2/>

55 Gary Corder, *Reducing Fear of Crime Strategies for Police*, Department of Justice, 2010.

56 Andrew Millie & Victoria Herrington, *Reassurance Policing In Practice*, Views From The Shop Floor, British society of Criminology

57 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-research/confidence/confidence-dashboard>

Case Study 2: Violence Reduction Unit Scotland

A decade ago Glasgow was branded the murder capital of Europe. Determined to tackle the city's addiction to violence Strathclyde Police decided they needed a new approach. In January 2005, the force established the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). The unit's remit was to target all forms of violent behaviour, knife crime and weapon carrying among young men in and around Glasgow.

Influenced by the World Health Organisation's World Report on Violence and Health (2002), the newly formed VRU became the only police force in the world to adopt a public health approach to violence. Treating it like a disease the VRU sought to diagnose the problem, analyse the causes, examine what works and for whom and develop solutions, which once evaluated, could be scaled up to help others.

To achieve this the unit teamed up with agencies in the fields of health, education and social work. The VRU aims to reduce violent crime and behaviour by working with partner agencies to achieve long-term societal and attitudinal change. It also focuses on enforcement, to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who are involved in violent behaviour. The unit aims to explore best practices and develop sustainable, innovative solutions to the deep-rooted problem of violence.

More than a decade on from the formation of the VRU Glasgow is no longer the murder capital of Europe and recorded crime in Scotland is at a forty-year low. However, violence is still a chronic problem in Scotland with domestic abuse and sex crimes a growing concern. The VRU remain committed to its public health approach to violence and are the only police members of the World Health Organisation's Violence Prevention Alliance.

community level to identify young people at risk and provide support both within the family setting and the community, particularly through positive diversionary activities and mentoring services for young people. The plan also provides for a range of policing and intelligence activities, to provide community reassurance against the risk of crime.

The following programmes have been suggested as potential areas that will have most impact on serious youth violence.

- Youth Risk Matrix - The early identification and targeting of young people that may be more likely to become involved in criminal activity and potential violence will assist the partner agencies to work more proactively at an earlier stage to intervene and prevent the escalation of offending for young people. The proposal would be for the borough to create and maintain a matrix that identifies the most at risk young people through, schools, police, youth service and youth offending service that will need specific targeted one to one work. This will need the support and time of an analyst that can work across the information

from all partner agencies to create real time information regarding those young people most at risk, areas of hotspots, peer associations, and trends in offending to inform the ongoing support provided.

- Provision of targeted support within school aimed at Year 6 and Year 7 pupils to provide one to one support for those young people identified through the matrix. This support will focus primarily on supporting and diverting young people away from current behaviours. This will require two dedicated workers who work across a group of primary and secondary schools to offer this support. These workers will work very closely with the schools, schools police officers and the Out of Court Disposal work within the Youth Offending Service to regularly monitor and review the matrix and can respond to changing needs.
- High level mentoring support given to those young people identified as at high risk of violence and gang involvement, and those resettling back into the community after a custodial sentence. The

provision of this service needs to be delivered by mentors with an experience and understanding of the current issues facing these young people. This will be a more intense level of mentoring with a focus on education training and employment and moving young people into an alternative lifestyle.

The plan supports the London Mayor Sadiq Khan's commitment to tackling the "growing problems" of knife crime and youth violence. Among his proposals to tackle serious youth violence is a knife crime strategy that will focus on tackling gangs and shops illegally selling knives; an anti-gang strategy developed alongside local authorities, schools and youth services; and greater control of the youth justice system to deliver a joined-up approach to cutting youth crime.

In the longer term, the Mayor's commitments and the tactical responses to serious youth violence will need to adapt as the threat, risk and harm evolves. This dovetails with the council's 20-year manifesto on "enabling every resident of the borough to fulfil their potential through the reform and the delivery of services aimed at reducing

58 <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/tackling-knife-crime>

59 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/mopac-consultations/your-views-policing-and-crime>

dependency and increasing employment, skills and growth in every part of the community"⁶⁰.

I remain very optimistic that we can effectively make a difference if the links are made between crime and disorder and vulnerability, social integration and inequalities. This mirrors the premise of the council's new Community Solutions service: that it is more effective and sustainable if the root causes are tackled rather than dealing with the symptoms. The suggestion that The

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) will want to work closely with local authorities on anti-gang strategies is also positive as it is an area where we have started some good partnership work and may provide the opportunity to widen this further. Many of our issues are similar to those throughout London so the opportunity to work across boroughs could be very valuable, particularly around the issue of the placement of high risk young people which is an important local issue.



Peace march in January 2017, for Duran Junior Kajjama and Ricky Hayden.

60 <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/council/get-involved/consultations/borough-manifesto/>