



SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE STRATEGY 2020

Definitions:

There are several definitions that describe ‘Serious Youth Violence’ but the one element that they all have in common is that they all focus on the **age** of the person involved in the incident and the **gravity** of the offence:

Serious Youth Violence is defined as ‘*any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 1-19*’ i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm. ‘Youth violence’ is defined in the same way, but also includes assault with injury offences; as defined by Hounslow Safeguarding Partnership: <https://www.hscb.org.uk/professionals/vulnerable-adolescents/serious-youth-violence/>

The Home Office develops the notion of ‘Serious Youth Violence’ being associated with children who are involved or at the periphery of ‘county lines’ and negative peer groups and concerning children involved in ‘county lines’ and other related activities. The Home Office definition sets this out as: “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”:
<https://yjresourcehub.uk/serious-youth-violence.html>

The consensus is that there has been an increased volume of media interest about the ‘significant’ rise in serious youth violence, particularly in relation to knife crime, and that national awareness amongst the public and within communities is heightened as a result. Professional responses have increased and there are differing views into the causes and effect. There is a great deal of coverage into the influence of social media on children and young people and if this acts as a catalyst or a trigger in the way that some children and young people subsequently respond: <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/social-media-as-a-catalyst-and-trigger-for-youth-violence/>

National Responses:

The **Home Office** produced their **Serious Violence Strategy** in 2018 (updated in June 2020) to set out the government response serious violence and the recent increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf

The **Youth Justice Board (YJB)** in Feb 2020 set out their approach to Serious Youth Violence by addressing it through the SYV Pathfinder model which focuses additional attention and

resources on specific areas within the country where serious youth crime is most prevalent:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reducing-serious-youth-violence-our-approach>

The **Children's Commissioner** in Feb 2019 published a report '**Keeping Kids Safe**' which provided an in depth study looking at children nationally, in England, who are member of gangs: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/keeping-kids-safe/>

The report identified a number of findings and recommendations in dealing with Serious Youth Violence and identifying children who are at risk of gang affiliation and involvement in serious crime, including knife crime.

Every Youth Justice Service (YOS) in England was asked to produce data to inform the findings in the Children's Commissioner's report.

The **main findings** were that children with gang associations were:

- 95% more likely to have social, emotional and mental health issues and more than twice as likely to be self-harming
- 41% more likely to have a parent or carer misusing substances and eight times more likely to be misusing substances themselves
- 37% more likely to have witnessed domestic violence
- 37% more likely to be missing/absent from school

The **early warning signs** for gang-based violence were detailed as:

- Referrals to children's services where gangs were identified as an issue rose by 26% between 2015/16 and 2016/17
- Permanent exclusions rose by 67% between 2012/13 and 2016/17
- Hospital admissions for children who have been assaulted with a sharp object rose 20% between 2015/16 and 2016/17
- The number of children cautioned/convicted for possession of weapons offences rose 12% between 2016 and 2017

The following **national recommendations** were made:

- The government needs to make child criminal exploitation a national priority and lay out clear expectations about the role of all organisations working with children – including the police, schools, children's services and NHS bodies.
- Joint inspections between Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and the police and probation inspectorates should be rolled out across England, starting with the areas with high gang violence who were unable to respond to the information request for this report.
- More emphasis on the early years within the Serious Violence Strategy, with the Department for Education setting a clear target and plan for reducing the number of children beginning school with very low levels of development, along with a national plan for improving special educational needs identification in the early years.

- More support from the NHS, including better mental health support for children at risk of gang membership and exclusion.
- An urgent commitment to what will replace the soon-to-expire Troubled Families programme, alongside a long-term family-based approach to supporting children at risk of gang involvement.
- Ensuring councils have enough resources to provide the youth and early help services required to meet the needs of children at risk.

Greater Manchester Response:

Home Office funding was made available in 2019 to certain policing areas with a specific remit to address serious violent crime. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) is one of these areas and the funding was devolved through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Each of the 10 GM Community Safety Partnerships received funding to develop their own local ‘Serious Violence Reduction Plan’. There was a clear direction from the GM Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner that this needed to focus on children, young people and young adults in transition with a specific remit on the public health approach and strong links to schools. The focus for GM is clear:

“If we can turn young people away from violence at the earliest possible opportunity, we can make a real difference to them and our communities”

The GM Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) brings together Greater Manchester Police (GMP), National Probation Service (NPS), GMCA, health and education professionals, youth justice and local authorities to address the underlying causes of violent crime and work together with communities to prevent it. <https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/greater-manchester-launches-new-unit-to-tackle-serious-violent-crime/> The following sets out its aims:



Stockport's Response:

Stockport's exposure to gang activity, associated child criminal exploitation and serious youth violence has been relatively low when compared to some of our larger GM neighbours; however, that does not mean that as an authority we have been immune from the impact, as we have seen an increase in weapon-related activity and we definitely cannot afford to be complacent.

Over recent years Stockport has dealt with increasing levels of serious youth violence, child criminal exploitation and working with children who identify themselves as having a gang affiliation. There are a myriad of reasons why this is happening, too many to list within this paper; however the increased use of social media, less observation of turf boundaries and cross-border activity has undoubtedly contributed to the rise.

In the summer of 2017 Stockport witnessed unprecedented levels of serious youth violence, mainly in the Town Centre which affected several victims and attracted media attention. Children were carrying weapons, crossing boundaries and settling scores in public places, this led to people being injured and putting several members of the public at risk. This required an immediate response, led through the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP), to create a community safety solution. Multi-agency initiatives were led through the Police, the Youth Justice Service and included partners from across the local authority and third sector agencies.

The range of interventions and co-ordinated response was successful in quelling the initial problem and have set out the agreed coordination needed to identify and respond to issues swiftly as and when they arise, some of which are detailed below:

SSP Community Safety Violence Reduction programme: Grant funding made available to certain policing authorities in 2009 through the Home Office was devolved through GMCA to the 10 GM Community Safety Partnerships. As a result Stockport has developed its 'Serious Violence Reduction Plan', which sets how funding will be spent in line with the terms and conditions of grant. A quarterly audit is sent to GMCA on behalf of the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP). The following programmes and interventions give a sense of what those priorities are and Stockport's response:

Knife and Weapon-Related Crime: Nationally the increase in the use of knives and weapons has also been seen in Stockport. To coincide with GMP's 'Operation Sceptre' a joint local programme was developed in Feb 2019 through the police and the YOS called '**On the Edge**'. This is an early intervention programme that ranges from dedicated work in schools, group work and 1-1 sessions, as well as awareness raising and working with parents and supports the local police delivery model 'Project Sycamore'.

** Full details of the 'On The Edge' knife crime programme are contained in Appendix 1.*

Headteachers have been briefed through both the Secondary Heads and Primary Heads Consortiums and all secondary schools, and some primary schools (Years 5 & 6) have now received the Knife Crime Awareness sessions, which are delivered across individual year groups. The roll-out of the programme across schools has been very successful and by March 2020 over 5,000 children had received the briefing across Stockport, in class size groups. In addition, key stakeholders asked for bespoke training as part of their safeguarding development, including the GP's Forum and acute emergency workers within the NHS Foundation Trust.

Serious Youth Violence (GMCA-funded early intervention programmes): In addition to the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funding additional ring-fenced grants have been made available through GMCA, which include the GMCA Community Safety funding and the GMCA Youth Justice Transformation funding.

By analysing the intelligence, reviewing the evidence and utilising the (time limited) resources has meant that a number of 'Targeted Youth' interventions managed by Youth Justice & Targeted Youth Support, through the support of the Community Safety Partnership have been put in place across the borough. These include early intervention programmes which target children who are identified to be vulnerable and 'at risk' due to a range of identified reasons such as; exclusion from school, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse etc; these programmes include Community Football Foundations programmes, Boxing programmes, Summer Arts programmes, Girls Groups, Fishing, Outdoor Pursuits, Crime Awareness days and Yoga sessions to name but a few. Dedicated programmes for Speech and Language, Trauma-Informed approaches and Participation (Voice of the Child) have also been developed and delivered and this provides additional interventions for both the 'Targeted Youth' cohort and the statutory 'criminal justice' cases that are at a higher risk of involvement in Serious Youth Violence.

In addition, Youth Justice & Targeted Youth Support working with Life Leisure and Stockport Homes have been awarded funding through the national 'Reaching Communities' grant and the subsequent 'RTime' programme means that some Detached Youth Outreach programmes have been successfully deployed in hotspot and priority areas.

***A separate additional report on 'Targeted Youth Provision' is also available which details the response to Covid-19 and which programmes, community interventions and detached outreach have continued to be delivered throughout lockdown.*

SSP Public Safety & Protection (Performance Development Group): The PDG meets bi-monthly and is attended by strategic leads from Place, Youth Justice, Stockport Homes, GMFRS and the Police. A full summary of recent crime data is produced and analysed by the group to ensure that key crimes, hotspots and trends can be identified as they occur, priorities can be responded to and resources deployed. This group is also responsible for part of the GMCA SSP Community Safety funding and has the flexibility to pool resources and direct funding into areas of concern.

Cross-Border & GM work: The devolved authority arrangements has brought even closer working between GMCA and the GM authorities. There is a wealth of programmes that have been rolled out across the 10 GM authorities and this has enabled further co-commissioning and joint delivery. It has enhanced our understanding of other authorities and enables better co-operation with cross-border activities. All 10 authorities have signed up to GM data-mapping and GMCA have been able to produce comprehensive analytics that assists us in identifying where to dedicate resources. Crest Advisory have been commissioned through GMCA to work with all GM agencies to pool data and provide a comprehensive data-resource.

Operation Barometer: A joint operation that was led locally through the police and the Youth Justice Service, to ensure that all key partners are able undertake joint operations and deploy staff swiftly and safely to key hotspot areas. Initially a 'Ladder of Intervention' was developed to identify children involved in ASB and Youth Disorder and this has now evolved into a multi-agency neighbourhood response.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE): Learning from our Manchester neighbours and working across the GM conurbation, Stockport has been involved in a CCE-Mapping exercise, which has heightened our understanding of peers, associations and triggers that identifies children living in Stockport at risk. The Aspire Complex Safeguarding Service are well established, and a Youth Justice Officer is seconded into the team to ensure cases are co-worked.

Missing Children: The multi-agency 'Staying Safe' Panel and the Missing Hub meets weekly to ensure intelligence in relation to missing children and other priority and vulnerable groups are identified and responses put in place.

Organised Crime Groups (OCG): Arrangements were revised for the Bronze/Silver/Gold Groups that review Organised Crime Groups and activities. This has led to more streamlined groups which are able to develop a Boroughwide response based on key intelligence.

Appendix 1:

'On The Edge' ...

'On The Edge'... is Stockport's partnership approach to dealing with knife and weapon-related crime within the borough and also forms part of the wider GMP 'Operation Sceptre' programme.



What Are We Doing?

Led through Stockport Youth Justice and Targeted Youth Support Service (YOS) together with Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and partners within Education & Safeguarding the programme has been developed that sets out how the partnership intend to tackle knife and weapons-related crime within the borough.

Adopting a Public Health approach to this is recognition that a criminal justice-based approach is not the only solution to challenging this type behaviour, which is work is done collaboratively with professionals from within communities and specifically within schools and educational settings. By working with the police, schools and local community projects, we are better equipped to tackle this head on and create greater resilience within our communities.

What Is The Aim?

The aim is to provide universal knowledge to all children and young people across the borough, targeted intervention to those identified as being at risk of becoming involved and a robust programme to all those convicted of a weapon or knife related offence/behaviour.

In addition to the traditional methods used to tackle crime this approach will use other means and methods that focus on key areas and potential hotspots in order to keep our children, young people and our communities safe.

To build on best practice nationally with a focus on ensuring that:

“the most vulnerable children and young people are protected, the most challenging are tackled and the most dangerous are stopped”



How Are We Doing This?

‘On The Edge’... is a tiered approach:

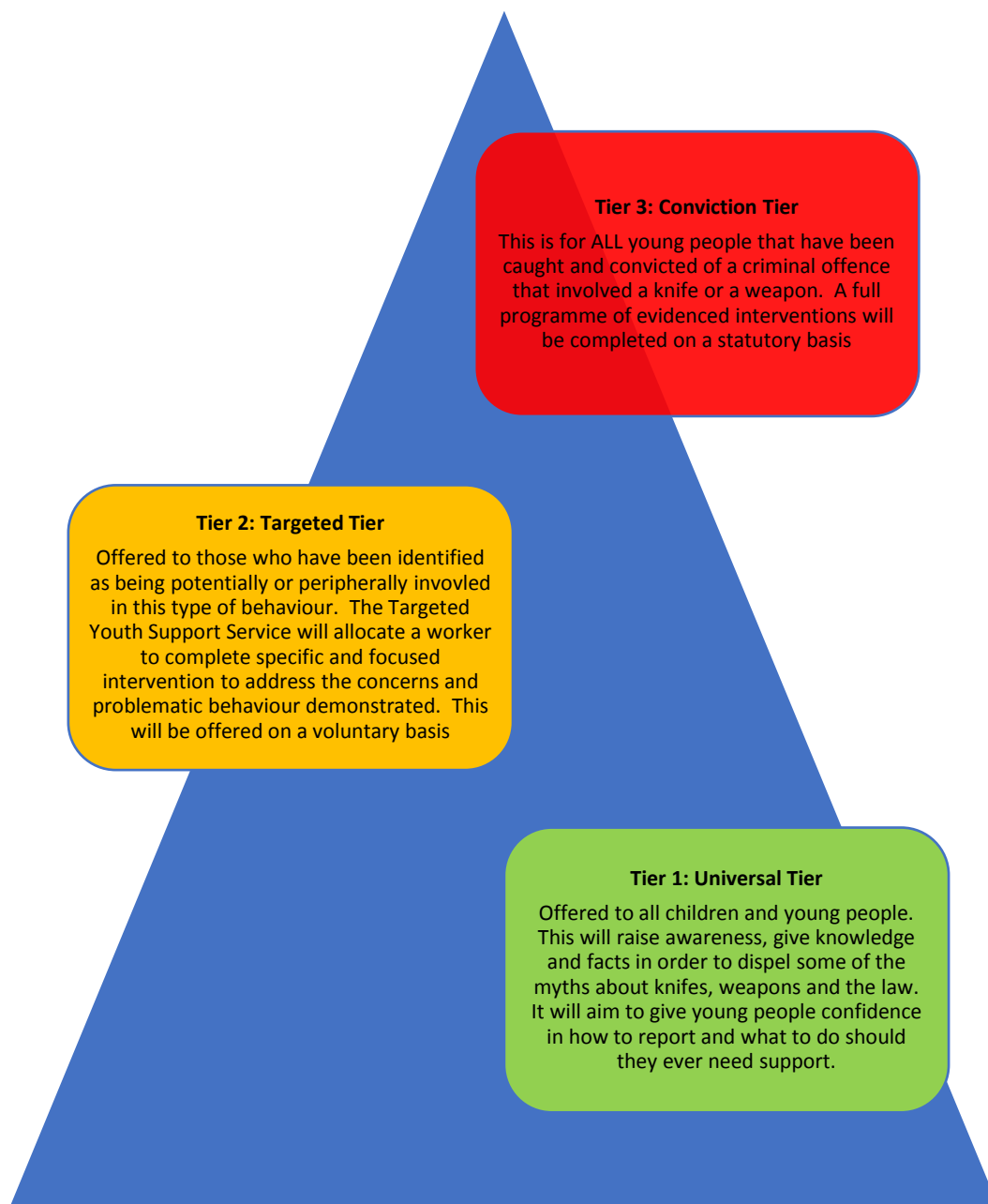
Tier 1: This is the universal tier offered to all children and young people irrespective of their understanding and level of involvement with knife and weapon-related behaviour.

Tier 2: This is offered to those that have been identified as being potentially involved in this behaviour. They will be allocated a Youth Justice case manager and the work will be carried out in a 1-1 setting.

Tier 3: This is ALL young people that have been convicted or received a substantive outcome either from the police or through the courts. This will be evidence-based programmes delivered through a specialist Youth Justice Officer and work will also include direct intervention from the dedicated Youth Justice Police Officer.

Prior to the Covid crisis this early intervention approach was supported by police and detached youth outreach workers providing a strong community presence; which included targeting identified hotspot areas and being highly visible in and around the community to offer support, advice and deal with any emerging issues. Some of the methods used by the police included Weapons Sweeps in local parks and areas of concern, Knife Arches to provoke discussion and interaction with communities and time-limited knife amnesties. All of these were intelligence-led and supported by partner agencies. Clearly the impact of Covid has meant that some of these interventions have had to be modified.

By targeting whole year groups within schools it ensures that children and young people are given the direction and information to make the right decision should they ever be **On The Edge**... Research shows that this approach is the most effective way of delivering the message around the dangers and implications of carrying a knife and/or becoming involved in knife or weapons-related behaviour.



Who Have We Reached So Far?

Overall the number of children and young people who have been engaged through the 'On The Edge'... programme from Feb 2019 to Nov 2020 is just short of 6,000 (**5,826**) pupils. This equates to hundreds of hours of dedicated interventions reaching over 43 establishments, many of which have been visited on multiple occasions for different year groups.

The impact of Covid-19 has significantly curtailed the interventions that were able to be offered within schools over the Spring/Summer period. Since 1st April 2020 nearly 700 children and young people having benefited from these 'free' programme provided to

schools. Since the Autumn term all the sessions within schools, colleges, pupil referral units and sixth forms have been done through Covid-safe delivery and contactless methods.

Tier 3 Statutory Cases

The Youth Justice & Targeted Youth Support Service continue to offer programme support to children and young people convicted of a weapons-related offence, many of whom have been convicted in the courts. This delivery has continued throughout the global pandemic and each child has received a bespoke intervention.

Next Steps

Forward planning is a large part of the 'On The Edge'... programme, which is constantly evolving to ensure that the intervention and delivery is keeping up to date with current information, local knowledge and has that ability to engage even the most entrenched and complex children. The delivery team now consists of Neighbourhood Policing Teams, a local Stockport resident who is also an NHS Consultant Trauma Surgeon, an ex-offender acting as a mentor, a victim of knife crime and trained Youth Justice Officers dedicated to the delivery of this programme across Stockport.

Covid has severely limited some of the plans for progression, which included engaging at least half of the 80 primary schools in Stockport by April 2021. Contact remains in place with the Primary Heads Consortium and has the backing of the interim Director of Education to roll this programme out. The aim is for Secondary Schools to be equipped to self-deliver the programme at Tier 1, which will be developed in the form of an 'off the shelf' intervention package designed for use in PHSE lessons.

Working closely with the GM Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) a GM Policy has been produced that advises schools on what to do if a child brings a knife or weapon into school, this has led to the current consultation and development of the following GM protocols, which are being localised to make them relevant for Stockport. These include:

- The Greater Manchester Knife Crime and Youth Violence Protocol for Education-schools
- The Greater Manchester Knife Crime and Youth Violence Protocol for Education - colleges
- The Greater Manchester Knife/Weapon Risk Assessment form
- Stockport Knife/Weapons Pathway

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