Intervention in High Crime / Violent Neighbourhoods: Evidence of Impact

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Intervention in High Crime/Violent Neighbourhoods: Evidence of Impact

Since the early to mid 1990s there has been a concerted effort from policy makers, practitioners and academics to establish effective ways to tackle gang violence. This briefing aims to summarise the findings from research and evaluations of key violence prevention initiatives from the US and UK.

If we are to safeguard young people in gang affected neighbourhoods we must recognize that for them the risks are out there in the neighbourhood, where the experts seldom venture. The perpetrators are their peers and the problems lie, first and foremost in the dynamics of the neighbourhood rather than simply the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of the young people. Traditional office-based, responses to the gang problem may improve the lot of some gang-involved individuals. However, they cannot anticipate gang violence and victimisation in order to make pre-emptive interventions. Nor can they respond to the, almost invariably unreported, victimisation of gang-involved and gang-affected girls and young women and their parents (Beckett et. al. 2013). And they cannot mediate between potential adversaries in inter-gang violence which is the forum where most gang fatalities occur. In short, many safeguarding and criminal justice agencies are destined to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

This document does not aim to provide a model tackling gang violence, however it may aid in the understanding of what have been key elements of past interventions and help in the development of future interventions.

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The National Youth Gang Suppression & Intervention Program: US Department of Justice

Spergel I, Chance R, Ehrensaft K, Regulus T, Kane C, Laseter R, Alexander A, Oh S (1994) Gang Suppression and Intervention: Community Models Research Summary Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Spergel I. & Grossman S. (1998) The Little Village Project: A Community Approach to the Gang Problem, Social Work 42:456–70

In the mid-1990s leading figures in US gang research produced a summary of the evidence of the effectiveness of gang intervention (Spergel et al, 1994). The survey integrated the findings of research conducted in 45 cities in the initial assessment of the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program mounted by the US Department of Justice. The survey found that:

- The interaction of the strategies of community organization and opportunities provision was the single strongest predictor of programme effectiveness.
- The second most significant predictor was, inter-agency collaboration.
- In cities with an emerging, as distinct from an embedded gang problem, community organization and opportunities provision, plus a 'consensus on the definition of gang incidents' was the key factor in achieving effectiveness.
- The fourth most significant variable was agencies having an external advisory group.
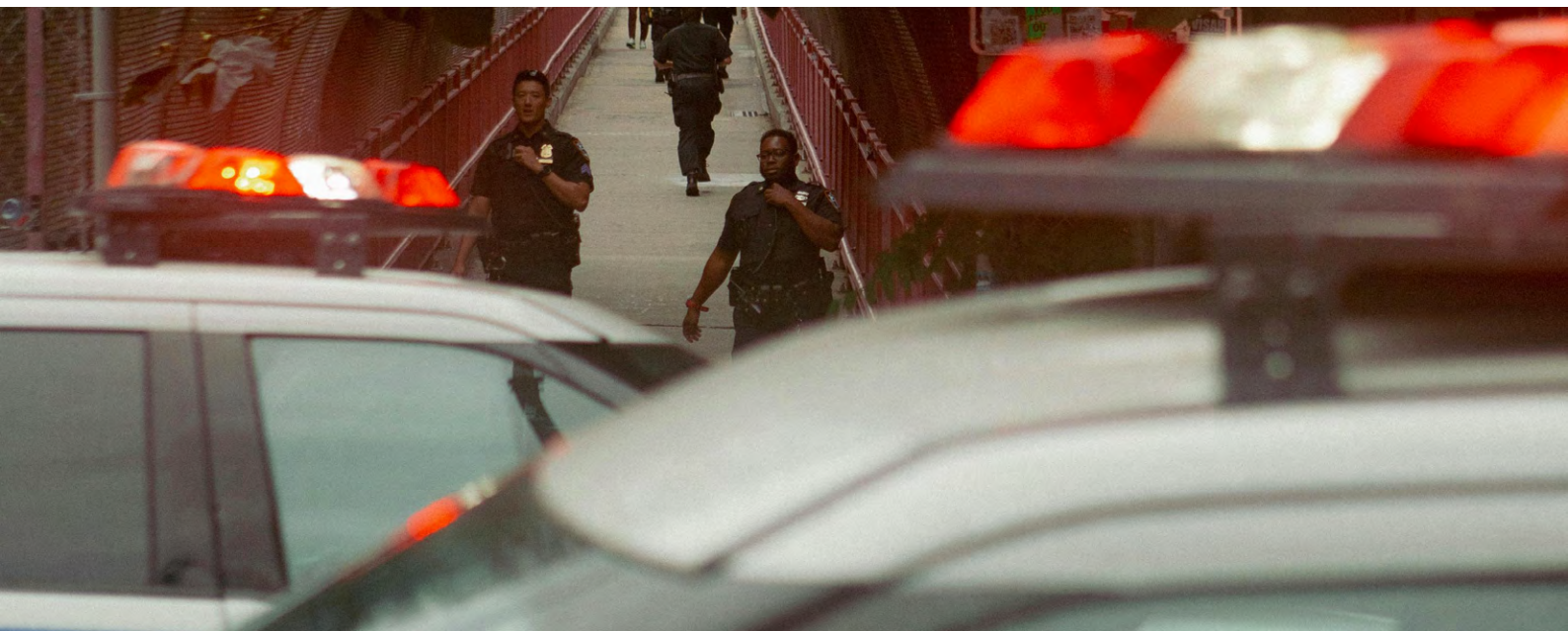
Together, these four variables accounted for 82 percent of the variance in the general effectiveness score in chronic gang problem cities.

Field visits suggested certain common elements associated with reducing the youth gang problem:

- Clear and forthright recognition of a youth gang problem.
- A consensus on a definition of the problem amongst these representatives (e.g. gang, gang incident)
- The mobilisation of political and community interests.
- Proactive leadership by representatives of significant criminal justice and community-based agencies.
- The specification of clear targets for agency and interagency intervention and the development of reciprocal, interrelated, strategies.

In 1994 the US Government launched a series of four and five-year demonstration projects, testing the model developed in the earlier research in five different cities. One of the larger programmes, the Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Project in Chicago (Spergel & Grossman, 1998) compared outcomes for 195 'program youths' who received some services, and 208 youths who received no services. In their evaluation of Little Village, the researchers concluded that:

- Targeted gang members experienced fewer arrests for serious gang crimes compared with the control group.
- The coordinated project approach, using a combination of social intervention and suppression was more effective for more violent youths.
- The sole use of youth workers was more effective for less violent youths.
- The programme was most effective in assisting older youths to reduce their criminal activities (particularly violence) more quickly than if no project services had been provided.
- Residents in target areas reported significantly greater improvement in community conditions, perceptions of gang crime, and police effectiveness.

On the basis of this research Spergel & Grossman devised their five point COMPREHENSIVE GANG MODEL comprising:

1/ Community Mobilization

Local citizens and organizations are involved in a common enterprise. The program consists of local police officers, probation officers, community youth workers, church groups, boys and girls clubs, community organizations, and local residents working as a team to understand the gang structures and provide social intervention and social opportunities whenever they can.

2/ Social Intervention

The program reaches out to youths unable to connect with legitimate social institutions. The youth, the gang structure, and the environmental resources must be taken into account before the youth is provided with crisis counselling, family counselling, or referral to services such as drug treatment, jobs, training, educational programs, or recreation.

3/ Provision of Social Opportunities

Youths at different points in their lives need different things. Older gang members may be ready to enter the legitimate job field and need training and education to do so. Younger youths at risk of becoming gang members may need alternative schools or family counselling. The program should provide individualized services for each youth based on his or her needs.

4/ Suppression

This not only consists of surveillance, arrest, supervision by probation and imprisonment to stop violent behaviour but also involves good communication between agency service providers and control providers. All providers jointly decide what happens to a particular youth when trouble arises or when it is about to.

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5/ Organizational Change and development of local agencies and groups

All workers need to work closely with one another and collaborate. Former gang members working as community youth workers need to be given as much respect as the police officers in the program. Each group can provide important information for the program that the other may not be able to obtain.

Spergel and Grossman's findings are echoed in a meta analysis of nine studies of interventions in gang-related crime and anti-social behaviour in England, undertaken by the SSRU (2009).

Operation Ceasefire, Boston USA

Braga A, Kennedy D, Waring E and Morrison A (2001), Problem-oriented Policing, Deterrence and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire, The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 38(3) pp.195-225

Operation Ceasefire was a multi-agency Boston gang initiative developed in the 1990s. In the late 1980s Boston Massachusetts experienced an epidemic of gang-related firearms homicides in some poor inner city neighbourhoods. Between 1987 and 1990 gang related murders rose from 22 per annum to 73. From then until 1995 they averaged 44 a year. Launched in 1996, Operation Ceasefire drew upon Spergel and Grossman's Comprehensive Gang Model (see above), to bring together practitioners, researchers and local people, including gang members, in gang-affected neighbourhoods to undertake an assessment of the youth homicide problem. Recognising the suspicion and hostility that many local people felt towards the police, prior to launching the intervention officers spent months working with community groups to improve local services and enhance youth provision. Having done this, they proceeded to implement what David Kennedy (2007) describes as a

… focused deterrence strategy, harnessing a multitude of different agencies plus resources from within the community.

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The objective of Operation Ceasefire was simple enough, it aimed to save lives and reduce serious injury. It did not aim to 'smash' gangs, although defection from gangs was a side effect of the initiative. In Boston's gang affected neighbourhoods, certain proscribed behaviours, like possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults, would trigger highly publicised multi-agency crackdowns by organisations with enforcement responsibilities. The strategy had three key elements:

- Enhancing community relations to get local support for targeted crackdowns, thus stimulating community 'collective efficacy' in the development of informal social control and the reduction of incivilities.
- Engagement with gang members to elicit information, transmit consistent messages about targeted crackdowns and provide diversionary services for gang involved young people:
- Co-ordinated leverage on gangs through highly publicised multi-agency crackdowns on certain specified behaviours i.e. possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults.

Operation Ceasefire was based firmly on deterrence theory; the idea that the certainty of detection and arrest and, to a lesser extent, incarceration would deter individuals from further offending and serve as a salutary warning to those contemplating criminal involvement. The approach placed the police at the front and centre of the initiative. Describing the programme, the researcher Anthony Braga (et. al., 2001), noted that:

This approach involved deterring chronic gang offenders violence by reaching out directly to gangs, saying explicitly that violence would no longer be tolerated, and backing that message by pulling every lever legally available when violence occurred.(p7)

Operation Ceasefire brought local people, including gang members, together with police, welfare, education and employment professionals and researchers, to undertake an assessment of the youth homicide problem and plan a response. The strategy involved CO-ORDINATED LEVERAGE ON GANGS through highly publicised multi-agency crackdowns, in partnership with the housing, probation, parole and the vehicle licensing authorities, that

could impose sanctions; making it clear that such enforcement would be triggered by certain specified behaviours like possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults.

> *... it was crucial to deliver a credible deterrence message to Boston gangs. Therefore, Operation Ceasefire only targeted those gangs engaged in violent behavior, rather than wasting resources on those that were not.*
>
> *(Reed & Decker, 2002, p.37)*

However, Operation Ceasefire also endeavoured to 'enhance community relations' to secure the support of local residents for the crackdowns; to engage gang members, in order to elicit information and transmit consistent messages. And it also entered partnerships with social welfare, youth work, education and careers services that could provide alternative futures for gang-involved young people who desisted from violent crime.

The Ceasefire deterrence strategy was personalised; communicated to a relatively small audience of Boston's gang-involved youths rather than all the young people in the neighbourhood. The Ceasefire Working Group believed that face-to-face communication with gang members would undercut any feelings of anonymity and invulnerability they might have, and that a clear demonstration of interagency solidarity would enhance offenders' sense that something new and powerful was about to happen.

Initial data gathered in Boston showed sudden, large, decreases in youth homicides, but this was not sufficient, of itself, to establish whether, or to what extent, Operation Ceasefire was responsible. The problem for the evaluators was that to produce reliable date on the impact of the programme they had to contend with what the English criminologist Roger Matthews (2016) describes as 'the most significant development in relation to crime in living memory', namely, the 'crime drop'. As Al Blumstein & Wallman (2000), citing FBI data, observed, the

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dramatic rise in homicides in general and youth homicide in particular in the USA in the latter half of the 1980s, was followed by a similarly dramatic decline in the mid-1990s. They write:

> *The increase primarily involved young males, especially black males, and occurred first in the big cities, and was related to the sudden appearance of crack cocaine in the drug markets of the big cities around 1985. This development led to an increased need for and use of guns and was accompanied by a general diffusion of guns into the larger community. The decline in homicide since the early 1990s has been caused by changes in the drug markets, police response to gun carrying by young males, especially those under 18 years old, the economic expansion, and efforts to decrease general access to guns, as well as an increase in the prison population and a continued decline in homicide among those over age 24.*

Researchers therefore constructed a time series analysis that controlled for national and regional trends in youth homicide and serious violence, monitored homicide victims aged 24 and under in 29 other New England cities and collated monthly figures for youth violence, seasonal variations in youth unemployment rates, changes in the victimisation of older people and changes in street-level drug dealing, as measured by arrest data.

Taken together, these data indicated that in the three neighbourhoods where Operation Ceasefire operated, the programme was associated with a 63% decrease in youth homicides, a 32% decrease in calls to the police about shots being fired and a 25% decrease in gun assaults (Braga et al, 2001). A longer term analysis of the data indicated that the programme had been responsible for a fall in youth homicides from an average of 44 per annum between 1991 and 1995 to 15 in 1997; a downward trend which continued until 1999 (Braga et al, 2001).

An analysis of the impact of Operation Ceasefire's by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, which began in 1996, concluded that the programme had been responsible for a fall in youth homicides from an average of 44 per annum between 1991 and 1995 to 26 in 1996 and 15 in 1997; a downward trend which continued until 1999. However, with a change in project staff, and project philosophy, which resulted in the social intervention elements of the programme being abandoned, gang related youth homicides began to climb again, reaching 37 in 2005 and peaking at 52 in 2010.

The Epidemiology of Violence

Slutkin G. (2017) Reducing violence as the next great public health achievement, Nat. Hum. Behav, 1, 0025 https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-016-0025

Slutkin G. Ransford C. & Zvetina D. (2018) How the health sector can reduce violence by treating it as a contagion. AMA J Ethics. 2018;20(1):47-55.

One of the best known advocates of the public health model of violence reduction is the American epidemiologist Gary Slutkin. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Slutkin was working for the WHO in Somalian refugee camps, endeavouring to contain the spread of tuberculosis (TB), cholera and AIDS. He was mapping the places where the diseases were most likely to be transmitted from person to person in order to focus the effort to contain them. He found that transmission spiked at particular times and in particular places. He realised that the key to containment was to get people to change their behaviour and he believed that a rapid effect could be achieved even when larger structural factors could not be tackled. For Slutkin, the key lay in changing behavioural norms, not simply providing information, and this was dependent upon the necessary information being passed on by 'credible messengers'. As a result, whenever there was an outbreak he would use outreach workers from the same group as the target population. Thus Slutkin used Somalian refugees to reach refugees with TB or cholera, sex workers to reach sex workers with AIDS, young mothers to reach mothers with problems of breastfeeding and diarrhoeal management (Slutkin G, 2017).

In the mid 1990s Slutkin returned to the USA. When he looked closely at the youth homicide data in Chicago he saw clear parallels with the maps of disease outbreaks with which he was familiar. He noted that:

> *"The epidemic curves are the same, the clustering. In fact, one event leads to another, which is diagnostic of a contagious process. Flu causes more flu, colds cause more colds, and violence causes more violence."*

Slutkin therefore argued that violence, like most other human behaviour, was a product of modelling and copying and was transmitted like a pandemic. He went on to found his violence

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reduction programme, Cure Violence, which would, he maintained, use the same strategy the W.H.O. had used to control outbreaks of cholera, TB and HIV in Somalia.

Slutkin's remedy for violence reduction was behavioural change which would transmute into cultural change through encounters between violent young people and credible messengers from the locality known as 'Violence Interrupters'.

Slutkin moved on from Boston to launch his own, unrelated, Operation Ceasefire in Chicago. However as John Buntin (2008) argues, Slutkin's Ceasefire programme took one part of Boston's original Operation Ceasefire, the street workers (Slutkin's Violence Interupters), and made that into the entire programme. Bunton also argues that we do not know exactly how successful Slutkin's Ceasefire programme, latterly re-badged as Cure Violence, really was. On its website Cure Violence, by now a world-wide organisation, cites an impressive record of violence reduction based on 'independent' evaluations of its programmes.

> *An evaluation of the Cure Violence approach implemented in Chicago found that the Chicago program was associated with an up to almost 70 percent reduction in shootings and killings in some areas and an up to 100 percent reduction in retaliatory homicides across seven sites over a 33-79 month period. In Baltimore, one historically violent neighbourhood had a 56 percent decrease in killings and 34 percent decrease in shootings over a two-year period. In New York City, two evaluations found significant reductions in shootings and killings, including a recent evaluation that found a 63 percent reduction in shootings in the Bronx over a four-year period; and one site surpassed 1,000 days without a gun killing in the community. Similar results are being reported in several other cities in the US and abroad.*

But, as we have noted, the independent evaluators of the various Cure Violence programmes have also had to grapple with the problem of the 'crime drop'. As a result, the findings of even the more sophisticated evaluations are 'generally mixed' (Butts et al, 2015). Each evaluation revealed some evidence to support the approach but the U.S. Department of Justice's Crime Solutions Database, the website that chronicles and synthesizes evidence on criminal justice prevention and intervention programs, concludes that the public health approach of Cure Violence currently merits the label "promising" rather than "effective."

Operation Ceasefire in Manchester

Bullock, K. & Tilley, N. (2002) Shooting, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a Crime Reduction Strategy, London: Home Office

Bullock K. & Tilley N. (2017) Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a Crime Reduction Strategy, Research Gate

The Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS) was launched in 2002, on the basis of research undertaken by Karen Bullock & Nick Tilley (2002). Bullock & Tilley had spent time in Boston observing the implementation of Operation Ceasefire and ascertaining whether a similar approach might be relevant in the UK. Their research in Manchester was based on intelligence compiled by Greater Manchester Police and interviews with former and current 'gang members'. This confirmed that much of the armed violence in the city was, associated with the defence of drug dealing territories. The study revealed that between April 2001 and March 2002, South Manchester gangs were responsible for 11 fatal shootings; 84 serious woundings and 639 other incidents of violence involving firearms. It also showed that most of the perpetrators and victims were teenagers. These shootings were highly localised. Of those recorded in 1999, for example, 68% were in the two main gang-affected neighbourhoods in South Manchester. Of the 46 gun crime victims identified in the study, 30 lived in these two areas, where, in the second half of 1999, there were six gang related murders in five months. It also emerged that many of the perpetrators of gun crime had also been victims of gun crime.

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MMAGS was a partnership between the Police, the Probation Service, the Youth Offending Service, the Education Authority, Housing, Social Services and the Youth Service. MMAGS employed full-time staff seconded from the police, youth service, education and probation, who offered diversionary, educational, recreational and vocational activities to young people in, or on the fringes of, youth gangs. They worked with up to 75 individuals at any one time, mostly aged between 10 and 25. Participation in the programme was mainly voluntary, however, some youngsters were required to cooperate with MMAGS as a condition of a court order or licence. The project also ran sessions in schools and youth centres on issues such as gang culture, firearms legislation and peer pressure.

MMAGS contacted young people through:
- Referrals from partner agencies
- Referrals from other agencies
- Outreach by detached youth workers in gang-affected neighbourhoods
- Youth liaison officers who coordinated school/club programmes
- Self-referral/direct contact with young people.

When a young person entered the programme the team undertook an assessment with them to ascertain the type of diversionary programme that would meet their needs and gain their interest. The ensuing Intervention Action Plan (IAP) could involve several agencies (e.g. schools, social services, housing and the probation service) working together to deliver the programme components.

Although MMAGS was a statutory agency its steering group was composed of community members and met regularly with Mothers Against Violence, CARISMA, Victim Support and several other local voluntary sector organizations.

In its first 12 months of operation MMAGS made contact with over 200 young people and during this time, only 10 per cent of its "target list", composed of gang-involved young people, re-offended, suggesting that those who engaged with MMAGS were likely to renounce gang criminality. However, as is often the case, although the MMAGS diversionary programmes appeared to be very effective with programme participants, gang-related gun crime in South Manchester continued unabated.

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The Manchester Integrated Gangs Management

Until 2007, when a firearms incident occurred, the practice was for the police to flood the streets with officers, stopping and searching anybody who fitted the profile of a likely perpetrator. This meant that many uninvolved Black young people in the area would be stopped and searched and this had the perverse effect of maximising resentment while minimising the flow of intelligence. However, research suggested that the proliferation of street gangs was achieved via the recruitment of younger siblings and their associates at the bottom end and ready access to guns and Class A drugs at the other. As a result, MMAGs and the Greater Manchester Police decided upon an augmented strategy.

The Xcalibre gangs unit, launched by the Greater Manchester Police in August 2004; charged with creating 'gun free streets' in Greater Manchester. Xcalibre had three elements:

- A small squad that focused on the criminal business organisations supplying firearms and Class A drugs to gangs.
- A critical incident team that investigated gang-related shootings.
- The Xcalibre Taskforce; a team of one inspector, two sergeants and 15 constables.

The Xcalibre Taskforce team set out to identify the young people and adults who were actually involved in gangs and gang crime and to meet them on the streets. The teams went out on patrol every evening, sometimes with MMAGS outreach workers and peer mentors, covering the areas where gang-involved young people congregated. They adopted a policy of never driving past a suspected gang member but always stopping and talking to them. What they talked about were the risks to the gang members, their families and friends from continued gang involvement.

Xcalibre in partnership with MMAGS became the Manchester Integrated Gangs Management System (MIGMS). Members of MIGMS continued with their earlier strategy with the additional element that if they found the younger siblings of gang members or their associates on the 'corners', they assumed that they were vulnerable to gang involvement, and hence 'at risk', and would therefore take them home and issue their parents with a Statement of Concern. This would also trigger a multi-agency case conference, including representatives from education, health, Probation, the Youth Offending Team and the local Safeguarding Board, to consider the vulnerability of gang-involved young people their siblings and associates and to put in place a relevant social intervention.

An early sign of success for this new strategy came in the summer of 2008 whenXcalibre recorded the longest gap between firearms discharges, from mid-February to July, since 1990. This coincided with the sentencing of members of the Gooch Close gang which demonstrated that gang-related offending would attract far more severe sentences. Together, these factors appeared to be having a marked impact on behaviour on the streets. Xcalibre also utilised Facebook and other social networking sites to discover who was gang-involved and so, as intelligence built, it was no longer possible for gang-involved young people to deny their involvement.

As a result of these changes, there was a recognition in gang affected communities that things had improved and this resulted in increased information flow. In Hulme and Moss Side, community advisory groups were established and when the police mounted a raid they would tell members of these groups who would explain to other local residents what was happening and why.

In 2000 there were three gang-related murders and 47 firearms discharges in gang-affected neighbourhoods in South Manchester. In 2016 there were no gang-related murders and no firearms discharges in these neighbourhoods.

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Some Lessons from Manchester:

- *Bust high profile figures* (burst the untouchability myth)

- *Stem the flow of drugs and guns*/sever links with criminal business organisations (dedicated Xcalibre squad)

- *Keep continual (daily) contact* on the street and at home with gang members (dedicated Xcalibre Task Force)

- *Utilise social networking sites* to see who is being identified as a gang member by others and who is said to be doing what

- *Use imprisoned gang members* as influencers

- *Use carefully chosen ex-gang affiliates* as peer mentors and young youth workers and offer the necessary training and mentoring

- *Identify and map younger friends and associates* of gang members, tell their parents and refer them to a multi-agency Safeguarding conference that will address their vulnerabilities and devise an intervention

- *Develop alternative leisure provision* for younger children and adolescents

- *Offer alternative futures to older adolescents* Youth workers working with police offer alternative, legitimate, routes to status and success

- *Co-locate* key agency representatives

- *Develop close links with local citizens* and be seen act effectively and fairly in response to their concerns. Use them to explain 'crackdowns' to other local people as they happen

- *Ring-fence* the funding of the strategy

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The Glasgow Public Health Model

McVie S. Bates E. & Pillinger R. (2018) https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/patterns-of-violence-glasgow-london/dec

Densley J. Deucher R. & Harding S. (2020) An Introduction to Gangs and Serious Youth Violence in the United Kingdom, Youth Justice, Volume 20, Issue 1-2, https://doi.org/10.1177/1473225420902848

Once described by UNESCO as the murder capital of Europe, the homicide rate in Glasgow was higher than in any other major European city, and more than double the European average. In 2005 the WHO reported that Scots were three times more likely to be murdered than people living in England and Wales.

Present day Glasgow gangs have their origins in the conflicts which arose in the city in the 1880s. The original Glasgow gangs were divided between those which were solely territorial and those that combined territorial and sectarian allegiances. While originally a largely protestant city, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries large numbers of poor, Irish, Roman Catholics migrated to Glasgow, drawn by the job opportunities in the heavy industries around the Clyde and the better quality of life they offered. However, one of the results was that sectarian youth gangs formed in the low-income neighbourhoods in which the migrants settled. With the advent of mass unemployment in the early 1930s these conflicts intensified and it became fairly common for men in their twenties and thirties to remain active members of street gangs

The Glasgow Violence Reduction Unit was established by Strathclyde Police in January 2005. In their research, undertaken in 2007, the police identified 170 street gangs in the city, with an estimated 3,500 members aged between 11 and 23. The unit adopted the approach of the Cincinnati Community Initiative to Reduce Violence a 'focused deterrence strategy' modelled

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on Boston's Operation Ceasefire. However, whereas Cincinatti targeted African American young adults involved in gun crime, Glasgow targeted White young people aged between 12 and 24 who were actually involved or at risk of involvement in knife crime. In 2008 the VRU set up the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) in the East End of Glasgow in partnership with the Health, Housing, Social Services and Education authorities.

This initiative had three basic components:

- A Zero-Tolerance police warning that if the violence didn't stop, 'relentless targeted enforcement' would follow;
- Call-ins at which identified gang members attended Court where family members of injured or deceased gang members, police and doctors detailed the human cost of gang activity and gang culture
- An invitation to participants to sign a pledge to renounce violence and work with the CIRV programme. This was matched by a commitment from educational, youth serving, social care and employment agencies that if young people desisted from violence they would be helped with any education, training and employment or family difficulties.

Because the CIRV version of the 'public health' model was based on the assumption that gang violence was an inter-generationally transmitted cultural adaptation, a key part of the VRU's work was developing early childhood interventions to support parents and those involved in teaching young children. These initiatives, were informed by research in 'developmental' or 'life course' criminology and, in particular, the work of Richard Tremblay (2000), a child psychiatrist from Montreal who argues that:

What we do in those early years, those first four years of life, are the most important and what we learn is to negotiate, to communicate, to compromise, to empathise, to problem solve, to resolve conflict, so that the violence option gets pushed down the menu, so it becomes the last resort. For lots of young men, they never learn these skills so the only option they have is aggression and violence. It's not a deliberate thing, the sin is ignorance, they don't know any better.

(Tremblay 2000, p.4)

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This approach to violence is inevitably long-term which is probably why, having visited the VRU, London's Mayor Sadique Khan said that it would take ten years to deal with the youth violence problem in London. However, both the then Police Commissioner Cressida Dick and John Carnochan, then VRU's director, warned against trying to transfer a model, developed in response to deep-rooted, often sectarian, animosities in Glasgow, lock, stock and barrel, to other locations.

Beyond this, the sheer scale of the problem in the larger English cities would make such 'policy transfer' very difficult. Densley (et al 2020) explain:

> *Glasgow is approximately the size of two London boroughs. It is only 600,000 people. It is a single unitary authority and a single political colouring. In London we have 32 boroughs plus the City of London, each of different political colouring. There are huge challenges there. The Glasgow City Council is very close in its proximity to Government; it is a very flat structure. In England and in London, that is extremely difficult; it is a very extenuated structure.*

There were 10 gang call-ins from 2008, and of the 473 gang members who attended, 400 (around 10% of Glasgow's estimated gang members) signed a pledge of non-violence. CIRV claim that by 2011 there had been a 46% reduction in violence amongst this group. Moreover, those who have taken part in the most intensive programmes were said to have cut their offending by 73%, while knife-carrying among participants apparently dropped by almost 60%, although this tends to be an offence with low levels of detection.

However, following the inception of the VRU, the homicide rate in the city of Glasgow declined by 65%, and there were similar reductions for other non-fatal types of violence. Moreover, during this period, there was a 25% drop in recorded violent offending by gang members in areas where the VRU did not operate.

Alongside this, Glasgow police were stopping buses and searching young people coming into the city from the outlying housing estates at weekends, when most of the stabbings occurred. And in 2009, metal detectors were introduced to detect weapons being carried into Glasgow by young people. A contemporaneous study of stop and search in Scotland found the rate to be much higher than in England and Wales and double that of London. By far the greatest use of these powers was in the Strathclyde region and specifically in Glasgow. Moreover, during

this period new sentencing powers were also introduced and longer sentences were being imposed for knife carrying (Crichton, 2017). This suggests that the VRU programme outcomes could have been benefitting from a more general decline in youth violence in the region and an intensification of the policing and prosecution of young people involved in knife crime.

However, this is speculative because a study by Susan McVie (et al 2018) found that during the life of the VRU there was no systematic recording and analysis of long term trends in knife crime in Glasgow or Strathclyde. As a result, it is hard to pin down precisely what independent effect the VRU had on violent crime (Grimshaw & Ford, 2018).

Divergent Theories?

Clearly, enforcement loomed large in both the Manchester and Glasgow interventions, the latter's claim to be pioneering a 'Public Health' model notwithstanding. It is not so surprising that an epidemiologist Like Gary Slutkin, spotting similarities in graphs of disease transmission and violent crime might come to view the transmission of violence as a kind of epidemic. Nor is it so surprising that a Boston police officer looking at the same graphs as Gary Slutkin might think they were seeing a failure of the state and its agents to reinforce boundaries, and confront those who deviate from them with the consequences of their actions. Moreover, while this police officer would probably recognise that the rationality of the people they target is bounded by the subcultures in which they were enmeshed, he or she would probably also guess that most of them were sufficiently 'street smart' to recognise where their best interest lay.

The Manchester and Glasgow programmes were both police-led, and both employed targeted deterrence; Manchester via Xcalibre, and Cougar and Glasgow through Zero-Tolerance police warnings of 'relentless targeted enforcement', call-ins and the heightened police stop and search activity which accompanied the programme. Both used local 'credible messengers' to convey the message of the costs and risks of continued weapons use, and both offered alternative futures via their partners in education, training, employment and family

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counselling. Thus, the different vocabularies and theoretical standpoints of the two models notwithstanding, they each employed similar strategies and collaborated with similar partners.

A comparative study of the efficacy of 'focussed deterrence' and 'public health' models of violence reduction concluded that strategies that involved collaboration across multiple sectors could achieve more, with fewer resources, and over a shorter period of time, than either targeted policing or Cure Violence-style Interrupters alone (Cerdá et al, 2018). The researchers concluded that police officers and Cure Violence interrupters could block different violent events from occurring in the same communities, with Cure Violence outreach workers targeting the most violent gang members. They write:

> *Since limited resources are available to prevent violence in urban areas, targeting resources on combination interventions that span multiple city agencies and harnessing community stakeholders may achieve the elusive combination of efficacy and health equity that is a goal of public health initiatives.*

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Building & Maintaining Partnerships that Work

Van Staden (et. al. 2011) in their Home Office study of multi-agency partnerships dealing with organised crime found that partnerships were effective if they identified:

The partners that could play a purposeful role at a local level. It was therefore necessary to identify:

- Which aspects of the problem each agency was best equipped to address
- Their respective powers and responsibilities
- The benefits, both professional and fiscal, that they would gain by virtue of their involvement in the partnership

Atkinson also found that:

'a vital sine qua non for successful interagency collaboration' was the presence of a new type of 'hybrid' professional with experience in and knowledge of a range of agencies and, in particular, an understanding of their cultures, structures, discourses and priorities.'

Research by Brand & Ollerenshaw (2009) in the UK suggests that gang strategies are successful to the extent that those commissioning them are able to exert control or influence over:

- The integration and empowerment of community members into the strategy
- The credibility and capacity of the strategy
- The coordination of the strategy
- The commissioning of the strategy
- The review of the strategy
- The targeting of local interventions

Although we usually refer to the people and agencies involved in a joint social enterprise as working in 'partnership', the term has many different meanings. In order to achieve greater clarity about what 'partnership' might mean. Himmelman (1996) developed what he calls a Four Stage Model of 'Collaboration'.

	Networking	Coordination	Cooperation	Collaboration
				Enhancing each other's capacity for mutual benefit
			Sharing resources	Sharing resources
		Altering activities / ways of working to achieve a common purpose	Altering activities / ways of working to achieve a common purpose	Altering activities / ways of working to achieve a common purpose
	Exchanging information for mutual benefit	Exchanging information for mutual benefit	Exchanging information for mutual benefit	Exchanging information for mutual benefit

Networking involves exchanging information for mutual benefit and requires a relatively low level of trust and co-ordination between partners. Contacts are usually informal, person-to-person, rather than organisation-to-organisation. However, this level of partnership is central to success at the other levels because it involves a 'continuing dialogue of mutual benefit' between people who are actually 'doing the job'.

Coordination involves both the exchange of information and agreement between the partners to alter their activities or ways of working to achieve a common purpose. Coordination aims to solve problems of fragmentation, overlap and duplication in services.

Cooperation also involves, exchanging information and coordinating activities but requires that organisations also share resources; including money, staffing and buildings.

Collaboration involves all of the above but also focuses on collaborators working together to ensure that the agencies and professionals with responsibility for different parts of a problem or task produce a coherent and cohesive 'system' in which the service user, or client, receives a service tailored to their needs risks and aspirations.

Gray, (1985, 1989) and Harrison et al (2003) emphasise that effective partnerships also require facilitation.

Commissioning Public Services

The IoE SSRU found that integrated interventions had a positive effect in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour compared with the more usual, 'siloed', service provision if they included:

- Community involvement in the planning of interventions
- Community involvement in the delivery of interventions
- Expertise shared between agencies
- Case management/provision that was personalised to individual offenders
- Delivery of incentives to gang members to change offending behaviour, as part of a wider comprehensive intervention approach; eg educational opportunities, tattoo removal, financial assistance, recreational activities.

The Premier League and Gang Desistance

Christine Barter, Paul Hargreaves, Kelly Bracewell & John Pitts, (2023) The Premier League: Breaking the Cycle of Gang Violence, Andell P. & Pitts J. (eds.) The Palgrave Handbook of Youth Gangs in the UK

"The Premier League Club Community Organisations: Prevention and Gang Desistance"

Each of the eight Premier League Club Community Organisations (CCOs) involved in the research were, in their different ways, concerned with the prevention of gang violence and for some clubs this was a major part of their work. Criminologists distinguish between three types of preventive intervention, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Primary Prevention involves universal strategies that address the social, economic and familial factors that research suggests are associated with gang involvement. These kinds of intervention are usually undertaken, or funded by, public authorities and are beyond the scope of the clubs. Secondary

Prevention targets young people who appear to be at risk of becoming gang-involved. At this level, programmes characteristically target individuals who have family and friends in gangs as well as those who have difficult home lives and live in gang-affected neighbourhoods. Interventions may involve street-based outreach programmes, school-based 'gang resistance education', life skills work, and contact with police officers and/or peer mentors who explain the negative consequences of gang membership. All the clubs were involved in this level of gang prevention. Tertiary Prevention targets gang members who are seriously involved in gang violence and County Lines drug dealing. Some clubs worked with this group.

CCO Involvement at a Strategic Level

Most CCOs were represented on multi-agency strategic groups, characteristically convened by the police. These groups monitored gangs and gang crime in their borough/s and held information about and maintained contact with the agencies and organisations involved in 'gang work'. This appeared to have several advantages for the clubs. It enabled them to identify gaps in provision and to thereby focus their gang work in areas, and with groups, where they had the capacity and expertise to make a positive impact. It also enabled CCOs to avoid the duplication of work already being undertaken by other agencies and organisations. By virtue of their, sometimes extensive, local knowledge and local connections, it enabled CCOs to provide local intelligence which could sometimes forestall violent conflict between rival gangs.

Reward and Recognition

Most gang-involved young people come from poor families in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. And many are destined to be denied both reward and recognition in the conventional world (Young, 1999). While, to the outside observer, the gang appears to offer very modest rewards, it offers a great deal of recognition, an elevated status in their locality as well as protection from their adversaries. However, involvement with a football club, which has no obvious ties with the criminal justice or child protection services, and a prestigious 'brand' can offer a significant level of recognition and status without the risks involved in gang membership and County Lines drug dealing. As such, the CCO would appear to be an ideal vehicle for a gang prevention, diversion and desistance interventions. But such an intervention would need to be significant, in terms of its targeting, the time and attention

it devotes to the young people targeted and its duration. Much of the research on gang desistance programmes suggests that they are successful while the young person in involved but that their impact tails off when the programme ends. Some of these young people will come from families in which their siblings, parents, and possibly grandparents, are involved in gang-related activity so the role of the club as a countervailing, pro-social force will be crucial. The main difference with a programme offered by a Premier League CCO is that it can offer sustained involvement, initially by an intensive, tailored, programme and latterly via the universal preventative offer of PL Kicks. Moreover, the CCOs do not carry the stigma of the welfare and criminal justice agencies with which many gang involved young people are all too familiar. And in some cases, the clubs have also been able to provide young people with paid jobs as uniformed stewards on match days and serving in the club shop.

Staffing Strategies

Several of the Premier League CCOs involved in gang work had recruited staff from their catchment area, some of whom had grown up in gang affected neighbourhoods. This strategy had several advantages. Staff retained contact with friends and family in the neighbourhood and were aware of local gang activity. This enabled them to use this knowledge to target interventions and meant that they were 'street wise'. This gave them insight into the lives of some of the young people with whom they worked and helped establish their credibility in the eyes of the young people. Harris & Seal call this Reciprocal Identification.

Community Based Delivery

In endeavouring to reduce the territorial animosities between different gangs, Arsenal is working in and between gang-affected estates. Crystal Palace is taking its services to gang hotspots in the community. Burnley by keeping contact with local mosques and schools, monitors the local gang problem. Southampton takes the PL Kicks programme to gang affected neighbourhoods, Crystal Palace, Everton and Stoke work in gang affected schools and Tottenham Hotspur works with the victims of violence who come into local hospital A&E departments. This is something which statutory agencies are seldom able to do. In many ways their goals are akin to those of the highly successful Cure Violence programme developed by epidemiologist Gary Slutkin (et al, 2018) in Chicago. Slutkin argued that if violence is to be countered and contained interventionists must interrupt transmission, prevent future spread and change group norms."

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He has worked in publishing and as a school teacher; a street and club-based youth worker; a youth justice worker, a group worker in a Young Offender Institution and as a consultant on youth crime and youth justice to youth justice and legal professionals in the UK, mainland Europe, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

In the past fifteen years he has undertaken studies of children and young people involved in, and exploited by, violent youth gangs, organised crime groups and drug markets in East and South London, Manchester, West Yorkshire and East Anglia. The findings of these studies are recounted in Reluctant Gangsters (Routledge, 2008), Mercenary Territory (in Goldson ed. Routledge, 2011) Drifting Into Trouble: Sexual Exploitation and Gang Affiliation (in Melrose & Pearce, eds. Macmillan, 2013) Critical Realism and Gang Violence (in Matthews ed. Macmillan 2016), The End of the Line: The Impact of County Lines on Youth Offending in a County Town, (in Youth & Policy, 2018), The Evolution of the English Street Gang, (in Safer Communities, 2019) and The Palgrave/Macmillan Handbook of UK Youth Gangs (ed. with Paul Andell, 2023).

In July 2011 he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (D.Litt) for:

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He has acted as an adviser on youth offending and violent youth gangs to central and local government, 'think tanks' and police forces. He also acts as an expert witness in Crown Court cases involving gang crime. He was a consultant to the Centre for Social Justice inquiry into violent youth gangs in the UK, published as Dying to Belong (2009) and a participant in the Prime Minister's Gang Summit in October 2011. He was deputy chair of the London Gangs Forum and a member of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child and Adolescent Sexual Exploitation (2013). More recently he was a member of the team evaluating the English Premier League Breaking the Cycle of Violence programme funded by BBC Children in Need. Most recently he has been involved in studies of young people in Care who are consigned to custody (Nuffield Foundation, 2020), ethnic disproportionality in diversion from Court (Nuffield Foundation, forthcoming) and the responses of police and local authorities to Child Criminal Exploitation (British Council, forthcoming).

James Alexander

Dr James Alexander is an Associate Enterprise Fellow at London Metropolitan University specialising in issues of youth justice and youth safety. He also leads their Dprof in Crime, Policy and Security. Alongside teaching, over the past six years, James has evaluated five local authority led youth safety projects, including two funded by the VRU, and published a number of articles focused on youth violence issues. In 2021, James was part of a Home Office funded research team that looked into what support was available to young people who were involved in child criminal exploitation.

James works with young people on a weekly basis with the St Matthew Project, which provides predominately football activities for children and young adults. He is also a trustee of the project and is responsible for the implementation of its trauma informed approach to service delivery and establishing its parental support programme.

Recently, after being an advisor for nine years, James has become a director of Skye Alexandra House, an organisation specialising in providing holistic support to young women and girls who have experienced or are at risk of violence and sexual exploitation.

Prior to working in academia, James spent over 15 years working in the youth sector, designing and managing programmes for young people at risk of exclusion or criminal activity. This included running an alternative education centre, and a construction training programme for young people from Lambeth and Croydon.

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