

## Tackling Violence against Young People: First Steps outline

### Vision

Our vision is simple but ambitious:

***Young people in Lambeth should be free from violence***

Violence against young people deeply affects our borough, with a significant impact on young people from all backgrounds and ages but particularly those in the black community. It leaves many of our young people living in fear of their lives and with life changing injuries or worse on a regular basis, and has a wider impact that damages families, communities and neighbourhoods. It stops our young people from achieving their goals and aspirations, and creates a cycle of violence that begets new harm in future years. We all have a responsibility to do more to stop this, and change how we work to safeguard our young people from violence.

We will achieve this by developing the borough's first "Tackling violence against young people" strategy. This will adopt a new approach to the issue by addressing the fundamental risk factors which cause violence to occur in the first place, based on the public health approach, rather than purely enforcement, diversion and intervention as we have previously. It builds upon the substantial work in recent years to understand and address youth violence, and the ongoing efforts through the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Young People at Risk, Youth Offending Service, Young Lambeth Co-Operation, Safer Neighbourhood Board and Black Thrive in this area. We have come a long way, and improved in many areas, but we can and must do more to address this issue. With multiple agencies involved working to different priorities, we are often crisis driven, creating fragmented and partial responses rather than joined up, evidence based effective practice. This strategy will address that.

It will be the first time Lambeth as a borough brings together all its work into a single place with a single vision and purpose for us to remove the risk of youth violence from our young people – both now, and for future generations.

The strategy will involve new and old partners – both from the statutory sector and across the community. To be successful, it must be developed and owned by the community and young people as well as the statutory bodies, and it must work with and enhance the good work that already takes place across Lambeth's communities every day.

The strategy will change how Lambeth Council and partners approach violence against young people. It will become part of all of our work, not just specialist teams. Preventing youth violence will be a key goal for all staff, and all areas of work have a role to play in achieving our vision.

Finally, the strategy must be for the long term – whilst there are immediate improvements we can and will deliver on in 2018, to fundamentally change the nature of violence and how we prevent it requires a generational shift that will take a decade or longer. We will commit to the principles developed during the strategy, and the knowledge that work done now may only see success in many years to come. The strategy will outline actions for the short, medium and long term but the strategy itself will cover a 10 year period.

We also acknowledge that young people and children's lives are interconnected, and that often focussing on a single concern may not fully address the issue. There are many similarities between risk behaviour around youth violence and other areas such as going missing, radicalisation and child

sexual exploitation. Whilst this strategy focusses on preventing violence against young people, it will link through and compliment the over-arching LSCB Young People at Risk work addressing all these areas.

This “first steps” document outlines the initial vision of the Safer Lambeth Partnership, but this is not the end of a process. It is the beginning of the work – our goals and how we reach them must be developed with and by our communities, our young people and Lambeth’s third sector organisations, from large charities to concerned mothers organising events for young people in their homes. What we say here will change following our residents and young people’s engagement and leadership.

### **Our understanding of the problem**

Lambeth conducted an exhaustive Violence Needs Assessment in 2015 which looked at identifying the underlying risk factors and reasons why violence in Lambeth was higher than other boroughs. We know from this and other work that:

- Lambeth has the highest volume of serious violence against young people crimes out of all London boroughs, with over 7000 crimes in a 10 year period
- Lambeth also has the highest number of ambulance call-outs for young people who are victims of an assault, significantly higher than any other borough
- There is a proven link between the deprivation of the ward a young person lives in, and the risk of them being a victim of violence. The poorer the ward, the higher the chance of being a victim.

Since then much work has already taken place to improve how we tackle violence against younger people in Lambeth over the last few years, with the creation of the Gang Violence Reduction Unit, the LSCB Young People at Risk strategy, the formation of the Young Lambeth Co-Operative and more. Equally, Lambeth’s community groups and residents have delivered many successful programs and supported hundreds of young people away from violence.

However, despite all that work, violence against young people is rising in Lambeth. Knife crime, which overwhelmingly impacts on younger people, has risen to a five year high. Serious Youth violence shows a similar trend. We know that most of this violence occurs either on our transport routes or in our estates, and much is unreported to the Police. The link between organised crime, gangs and violence against young people has changed, with exploitation of young people to sell drugs across county lines emerging as a significant new risk factor for young people. At the same time, the carrying of knives by young people has become commonplace and a cultural norm in some of our communities – out of fear and a belief a knife offers protection. The Lambeth Equalities Commission identified that the disproportionality of both victims and offenders of violence against young people in Lambeth remains a key issue for us – young black men are significantly more likely to be a victim or offender of violence against young people.

We know from recent case studies that despite a multitude of interventions, we are still not always successfully turning young lives around. One young person who came to the notice of authorities aged 9 had over 25 different statutory interventions alone, plus many community supported interventions:

# Case 1 – Interventions



Unfortunately, despite all of this effort and resource, that young person continued to both commit violence and be a victim of violence. The result is that they are now facing significant time in prison for violent offences and they have permanent life changing injuries from being the victim of violence towards young people. This case highlights the incredible complexity of the issue, and also the need for better co-ordination between statutory agencies. This is not a case of a lack of resources for interventions – but that our interventions sometimes fail those who need them the most, and that we can and must do better to support young people in this cycle of violence.

It is clear that we need to fundamentally rethink our approach to preventing youth violence. We propose to do that through our new strategy, and the fundamental principles we all agree must form the bedrock of that work.

## Equalities

Youth violence in Lambeth has an extremely significant disproportionality – young black men are far more likely to be the victims of violence, and also the perpetrator. As highlighted in the 2017 Equalities Commission, BAME people face inequality at all stages of the criminal justice system, and youth violence is one area where that inequality is even more pronounced. Almost half of all victims of serious youth violence (47%) are black young people, despite being only 34% of the population. Our strategy will address this issue directly and we will ensure that young black men and their families are part of the strategy development and the work we deliver.

## Key Principles

- Any successful strategy for tackling violence against young people must be **led and delivered by our communities**, in partnership with third sector groups and statutory bodies – no single agency can accomplish the long term change needed to make Lambeth safer for our young people. We must engage with communities at a local level, and they must be part of the development of the strategy from the start – including those most affected by this issue, young people.
- We will adopt a **Public Health based approach** to this work, based on the 2015 Violence Needs Assessment. This will prevent violence occurring in the next generation. This is a long

term commitment from all partners to improving the health and wellbeing of young people in Lambeth.

- Our work will deliver on **sustained change across all statutory agencies, and must be a priority for those agencies**. This is an issue that needs system change for all the public sector, not just children’s services, police and community safety. Only by addressing the fundamental issues, including health, transport and housing, can we tackle the root causes of violence against young people, and effectively doing that requires significant and sustained commitment by the public sector to address this issue.
- We will reshape our existing provision and resources to provide better support for young people already involved in violence, or at risk of being involved in violence. Through a “twin track” approach we will improve our services to the current generation, and work to prevent future young people being involved in youth violence at all. Each is as important as the other.

## Tackling violence against young people

### Young people currently at risk

- Helping those at risk of violence now
- Ensuring their siblings are safe

### Future generations

- Supporting our communities to stop the next generation of young people from experiencing violence

- The strategy will complement and cover the over-arching work led through the Lambeth Children Safeguarding Board to safeguard young people at risk, the work of the Safer Neighbourhood Board to support young people not currently deemed high risk, the YOS improvement plan the Young Lambeth Co-Op’s ambitions to tackle serious youth violence and the work of Black Thrive to improve the health and wellbeing of black people in Lambeth.
- The strategy will not just look to improve existing interventions but will work to:
  - Prevent young people from being involved in youth violence in the first place
  - Identify those at risk as early as possible
  - Help and protect those at risk
  - Disrupt those inflicting violence on our young people
- This strategy will build on our practitioner’s experience, both in the council and third sector. It must be a working document that changes how we work on the ground. It will be informed by and developed with frontline workers, including social workers, housing officers

and teachers, to make sure it is fit for purpose and achieves what we are setting out to achieve.

### **The Public Health approach**

The public health approach is the key to successfully dealing with the long term issue of violence against young people in Lambeth. Based on the work delivered first in the USA and then Glasgow Violence Reduction Unit, the aim of the public health approach is to tackle the root causes of violence. Rather than focus on interventions for those people already involved or at risk as our previous work has done, it addresses the underlying factors which cause violence to occur in the first place.

As outlined in the 2015 Violence Needs Assessment, the key risk factors identified in Lambeth for violence against young people are:

- Issues around early childhood and families, particularly early adverse life experiences and quality of and support for parenting.
- Issues around the influence of delinquent peer groups and social and cultural norms on the socialisation of boys and young men.
- Issues around 'socio-health' factors including the prevalence of poverty, deprivation, learning and other disabilities and poor mental health.
- Issues around the sale and consumption of alcohol (and to a lesser extent, drugs) and a lack of 'resilience' in public places such as night time economies and transport hubs.

Our strategy will adopt these four risk factor themes and work to address them throughout the lifespan of the strategy. The fundamental aim of the public health approach is to improve and strengthen our community resilience so that the community themselves address youth violence. In health terms, we seek to "inoculate" communities by improving their resistance and resilience to violence.

Ultimately, change in our communities must be led and owned by our communities – it cannot be imposed by statutory agencies from the outside.

### **Process**

An initial Task and Finish group has been convened that will act as the project board for this work, reporting into the borough's Community Safety Partnership, Safer Lambeth. It will also update and link to the Children's Safeguarding Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Initially it has representation from:

- Cabinet Member for Community Safety
- Lambeth Council: Chief Executive
- Lambeth Council: Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods & Growth
- Lambeth Council: Strategic Director, Children's Social Services
- Lambeth Council: Director of Housing
- Lambeth Council: Director of Environment
- Lambeth Director of Public Health
- Lambeth Police
- Black Thrive
- Lambeth Safer Neighbourhood Board

- Young Lambeth Co-Operative
- Lambeth Youth Offending Service

This will be expanded to include the local Clinical Commissioning Group, and other key stakeholders as the work progresses including representation from young people. This group will identify the initial key priority themes for the short, medium and long term strategy and work with the community and residents to develop the strategy. It will commission research and activity as needed to support the strategy, building on the violence needs assessment and the young people at risk strategy. It will lead on the development of a wide ranging and meaningful engagement program with young people, residents and community groups to ensure that our strategy is truly a partnership strategy for all of Lambeth. It will also oversee the year 1 commitments outlined below.

### **Year 1 commitments**

The Task and Finish group will identify and oversee the development of the strategy across 2018. However, there are a number of key actions already identified which can be delivered on in the short term which will improve our immediate responses to violence against young people, and work towards our longer term goals of implementing the public health model in Lambeth. These are only the initial proposals, and will be developed and expanded on with the community and third sector in Lambeth.

### **Community engagement and partnership**

Lambeth has many active community groups who aim to prevent violence to young people as part of their daily work. Both the Young Lambeth Co-Operative and the Lambeth Safer Neighbourhood Board co-ordinate and work with groups across the borough, and the Young Lambeth Co-operative in particular represents over one hundred and sixty third sector groups. We need to improve how we share information and intelligence between the third sector and statutory agencies, and how we can work together better at preventing violence. The three areas we will address in 2018 are:

- Formalising intelligence sharing between all agencies, so that the community is aware of what statutory agencies are doing and community groups can pass intelligence and information to prevent violence to the council and police. This will build on the existing YLC information sharing forum.
- Develop a process for identifying those young people who are not yet involved in violence, but risk of doing so, and how the statutory agencies and council work together to route them into provision and diversion. This links to the Early Intervention work in children's social Services and the Safer Neighbourhood Board intervention pilot.
- Working with the Young Lambeth Co-operative, we will build on the YLCs "hub and spoke" model so that a localised community presence is deployable either proactively, when we know tensions in a community are high, or reactively post an incident when communities are scared and angry to prevent further violence. In essence, this "hyper-localised" community outreach will improve the resilience and confidence of our communities during times of crisis. Unlike previous programs, it will use groups directly embedded in their communities at a very local level.

### **Schools based programs**

Multiple intervention programs are commissioned for Lambeth schools, both locally (Children's Services, Community Safety, Public Health) and regionally (Mayor's Office, Home Office funding). We

will combine our commissioning work into one commissioned program to remove duplication and ensure that we are delivering on the key essentials for Lambeth to tackle youth violence.

### **Housing estate-based local plans**

A significant proportion of violence against young people takes place in our estates, and the borough's gangs are predominantly estate based. Working with residents, housing, RSLs, regeneration and transport colleagues we will develop a bespoke action plan for each estate where gang violence and young people has been identified as a priority concern. This will be developed with residents, professionals and third sector groups and specific to each housing estate. This "hyper-local" based approach will use the strengths of each different group working and living in an estate to make them safer for young people, bringing them together to develop and deliver a tailored plan for each estate where violence against young people is a concern.

This will include considering whether there are physical space issues identified in the violence needs assessment that can be addressed. One of the factors influencing violence in Lambeth is the physical design of the environment in which our residents live. This could include looking at lighting, CCTV, access ways, line of sight and other physical space issues as well as a targeted, estate specific plan for the groups and risk factors for that estate. The strategy will ensure that existing relevant evidence and advice from, for instance, the 2017 Lambeth Housing Standard Health Impact Assessment report is addressed.

### **Practice Based Interventions**

Front line practitioners in both statutory and voluntary sector organisations work with many children and young people affected by serious youth violence. Staff working in, for example, children's social care, the youth offending service, housing, schools and youth and play organisations need support in developing more specifically tailored responses that better help and protect children and young people. Workers understandably can feel anxious, fearful and unconfident in their practice because of the depth and complexity of these issues.

We will build on the existing work of the LSCB Young People at Risk strategy, and develop suitable tools and responses so that staff across different organisations are more confident in working together, using trauma informed interventions to help and support children and young people, building their resilience and keeping them safe.

It is also important that, in developing this strategy, we draw on the expertise of front line practitioners. They have much to contribute from their daily experience of working with children and young people affected by serious youth violence. Changes can be made now to improve our work on the ground, led and informed by frontline workers and practice managers.