

AGENDA ITEM 7

Essex Police and Crime Panel	EPCP/14/17
Date: 20 th July 2017	

Report title Tackling gangs in Essex

Report by: Paul Wells (Essex Police)
Greg Myddelton (OPCC)

Enquiries to: Greg Myddelton
Telephone: 01245 291644
Email: greg.myddelton@essex.pnn.police.uk

1. Purpose of report

This report provides the panel with an update on the work of Essex Police, the OPCC and partners in tackling gangs in Essex.

2. Recommendation

That panel members note the report.

3. Overview

Tackling gangs and organised crime, and reversing the trend in serious violence, which is often the result of gang activity, are two of the key priorities within the Police and Crime Plan for Essex.

Whilst the actual number of gang-related incidents can be difficult to measure, we know that over recent years there has been an increase in the level of serious violence which has been linked to the activity of gangs across parts of Essex.

Tackling this issue requires operational and strategic responses across a wide range of partners.

4. Operation RAPTOR:

Operation Raptor is the operational approach taken by Essex Police to dealing with the issues of Urban Street Gangs (USG) within Essex.

Tackling gang criminality & knife crime also form a key part of the draft Essex Police Crime Prevention Strategy.

The strategic aims of Operation Raptor are:

- Support victims of gang crime in particular repeat victims and those vulnerable to gang exploitation & violence
- Target the offenders, in particular repeat offenders and, in doing so, increase the number of positive outcomes (prosecution or other intervention)
- Work with local communities, the media, businesses and partners to increase the level of actionable intelligence
- Work with other forces and partners to understand and tackle to local drugs supply market – “County Lines”
- Identify & address patterns, trends & hot spots in knife crime
- Work with schools, colleges & the voluntary sector to effectively engage with young people about the dangers of gangs and the carrying of knives, supporting diversionary activity

Whilst very important, enforcement activity is only a part of the overall approach to tackle USG's. To be effective, it must form part of co-ordinated approach across Essex Police and its partners. To this end, Safer Essex has established a sub-group to co-ordinate learning and activity across the partnership in order to tackle the issue of gangs across the partnership.

5. Current USG picture:

The Essex Individual Harm Matrix has been developed to identify the most harmful gang / drug line member's active in Essex.

This comprises a combination of Trident recognised gang members operating in Essex, London based drug dealers / members who travel to Essex to commit offences and local nominals linked to specific gangs /drug lines that are active in Essex.

The individuals are scored based on violent offences and intelligence relating to violence AND drug offences and intelligence relating to drug dealing.

There are currently 150 active individuals representing 48 different Gangs on the Matrix. The age range of the gang members is 13 -56 with an average of 24.

The matrix also holds records for 91 individuals who were active but currently in custody and for 124 inactive individuals where no intelligence has been received for at least 3 months.

6. Raptor Enforcement Teams

All three Local Policing Areas (LPAs) continue to have dedicated Operation Raptor enforcement teams. The focus of these teams is to carry out enforcement activity focused towards disrupting gang activity. The teams can come together if required in response to a specific issue, or work as individual teams on their respective LPAs. They are supported as required by specialist teams.

Essex Police is currently reviewing further proactive support options to support Op RAPTOR and other key operational areas. Technological advances have also offered new proactive opportunities, which Essex police will utilise in its approach to USG.

Since January 2017, RAPTOR teams across the County have;

- Arrested 279 people
- Charged 130 people
- Submitted 484 Intelligence reports
- Seized approximately £100,000.00 in cash.
- Seized 31 Vehicles

7. Cross Border Working

One of the key issues in tackling 'County Lines' is that the networks involved are not based solely within the Essex Police Districts. Within Essex, it is often the "lower levels" of the network that are visible, making effective enforcement challenging, as these subjects are easily replaced by the wider network.

Over the last 12 months, Essex Police have been working with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to take a more holistic approach to the entire county line, through an approach called Project DENVER. Project DENVER has seen joint activity between Essex Police & MPS, on what was assessed as one of the most significant gangs within the MPS (with significant levels of violence associated with their activity). Over the last year, co-ordinated activity has and continues to be undertaken – which has had a significant reduction in the activity of this specific line.

The approach taken in Project DENVER is now being expanded to further “lines” operating within the MPS & Essex Police. This approach is recognised as good practice by national government and is being established in other areas.

8. Community Policing Hubs

Partnership working & the sharing of information & intelligence is key to effectively tackling gangs.

As local Community Safety Hubs continue to develop across the districts and unitaries, RAPTOR teams continue to form an integral part of those multi-organisational information sharing arrangements.

Local RAPTOR tasking has been established in a number of areas linked to the hubs. This involves a range of partner agencies coming together to share information & intelligence & co-ordinate a multi-agency approach. This approach will continue to be developed over the forthcoming year.

9. Media

Over the past 12-months Op Raptor has become firmly established in the consciousness of the public and local and national media. Communications activity over the last year has been extremely proactive with on average between two and four press releases issued every week showcasing everything from arrests, operations, warrants and sentencings to activity with stakeholders (for example community events, conferences with partners and closure orders). During the Raptor weeks of action activity is heightened further with one media release per day for the duration.

The Raptor teams are featured heavily in local media and have now attracted national media interest. Negotiations remain ongoing between the Essex Police

press office and the BBC who are hoping to feature the Op Raptor teams in two major programmes (Ill Gotten Gains and Panorama).

10. Institute of Community Safety (ICS) & Safer Essex

The Institute for Community Safety (ICS), working closely with the Home Office, were recently commissioned by the PCC to develop a countywide strategic framework for tackling gangs, violence & vulnerability.

The ICS report identified five key themes;

- 1) Data/intelligence** - understanding the nature of the threat posed by gangs around violence and vulnerability is the key to partnerships being in a position to effectively tackle the problem. Such understanding is crucial to drawing in partners who may not initially see the issue as something they should be involved with, but who are undoubtedly impacted by this agenda.
- 2) Governance** – this covers all aspects of the work, and is about leadership, vision, partnerships, performance management and target monitoring. Leadership matters as much at a tactical level as it does at a strategic level, but the key is how leaders persuade other partners why they should be involved, and how. The problem of gangs, violence and vulnerability is cross-cutting, which means leadership and governance in a county and regional context is a key factor for success in this arena.
- 3) Enforcement/cross-border working** - an inconsistent use of tools and powers by partnerships to tackle gangs has been a feature of most gang-affected areas over the past five years. With a national increase in county lines activity, regions and partnerships previously unaffected by gangs have found themselves having to review procedures and activities. The phenomenon of county lines has led to the need for tools and powers that reflect the rise in exploitation and close links to trafficking and modern slavery. In addition, there is a crucial need for regions to link both strategically and operationally with those large urban areas exporting the gang issue.
- 4) Prevention** - preventing young people from becoming involved with gangs, violence and vulnerability is crucial if the cycle of gang violence is to be broken. Given the wide and almost endless scope of prevention work, we decided, after initial discussions with senior managers to

concentrate on schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), alternative provision and vulnerable locations.

- 5) Safeguarding** – primarily, this issue is about safeguarding and protecting vulnerable people, who are being exploited by gangs. We know that harm is often hidden. With many vulnerable people it is not until the full circumstances surrounding that person are understood that the potential for harm is identified.

Safer Essex has been identified as the most appropriate partnership body through which this issue should be owned and developed. A sub-group of Safer Essex has been established to take forward this work, with a Tackling Gangs symposium taking place in mid- July to develop a joint action plan.

11. Diversionary Activity

In December 2016 the PCC commissioned a new service to pilot and deliver targeted interventions that seek to protect young people from the harm associated with gang affiliation. The project was a direct response to the commitment within the Police and Crime Plan to “prevent the exploitation of children and vulnerable people by gangs through early intervention initiatives and jointly commissioning diversionary activities”. The project was split into two requirements;

1. To provide direct, targeted support to individuals at highest risk of exploitation to divert them away from engaging in gang activity, and
2. Educating and informing professionals about identifying risk factors of gang-involvement, and how to signpost young people into appropriate support.

Following a competitive tender process the contract was awarded to an organisation called “Gangline” and delivery commenced in January 2017. The pilot is delivered in 6 areas with known ‘County Lines’ issues; Chelmsford, Colchester, Thurrock, Southend-on-Sea, Tendring and Basildon. The project will deliver one-to-one support with 100 vulnerable young people over 2 years, and provide awareness training to more than 700 professionals. It will be evaluated to inform future roll out.

The PCC also provides funding to a number of organisations including: The Essex Rape Crisis Partnership (ERCP), The Children’s Society, Catch22 and Victim Support which provide support to young people that may have been

victims of gang-related crime or may be at risk of exploitation. In addition, the PCC provides funding to a range of activities through the Community Safety Development Fund (CSDF) which offer diversionary activity for young people and raise awareness of the dangers of carrying weapons, especially knives. Specific knife-crime charities have been supported through the PCC's CSDF in recent years.

12. Op SCEPTRE (Knife Crime)

The use of knives as part of the USG culture continues to grow. Op SCEPTRE is the national operation, designed to combat the increase of knife crime in Essex. Essex Police continue to participate in the national "Op SCEPTRE" activity. In 2017, there has been one official "week of action" under Op SCEPTRE (May 1st to 8th). A second week of activity is planned in July 2017.

Essex Police will continue to develop its activity to deal with this issue, both as part of Op RAPTOR and as specific activity under Op SCEPTRE.

The results of the first week of action;

<u>Performance Summary</u>					
	Total		Total		Total
Knives Seized	15	Sec 1 PACE searches	12	Intel. submissions	18
Weapons Seized	10	Retail Premises Visited	0	No. of Engagement events	8
Total Arrests	8	No. of Retail Pass	0	No. of Education events	0
Knife/bladed arrest	4	No. of Retail Failures	0		
HKC* arrest		Street Cautions	0		

13. Summary of key strategic focus for 2017

During 2017, Operation RAPTOR will continue to develop its approach to tackle USG, specifically focusing on;

- Development of partnership approach to USG – cognisant that enforcement activity alone will not tackle the issue.
- Development of effective cross border working – sharing of information & intelligence to take a holistic approach to USG.
- Development of dealing with vulnerability issues, including the use of legislation not previously associated with USG (such as Human Trafficking / Civil Orders).
- Activity to tackle knife crime.