

Good practice guide to responding to gang related violence

This guide is intended to support multi-agency partners to ensure all appropriate actions are taken following incidents of **serious youth violence related to street gangs**. It provides guidance in relation to key considerations for professionals in terms of risk assessment and safety planning.

This document **does not** replace existing statutory processes.

Definition - Street Gangs

As the definition of street gangs vary and are often quite broad, we define street gangs as predominantly street-based groups of young people who see themselves (and are also recognised by those within the community) as a noticeable group for whom crime and postcode conflict is integral to the group's identity. Crimes may include; robbery, extortion, drug dealing, knife or gun related crimes.

We also take into consideration young people that may live within gang impacted environments where they might not directly be associated with a street gang, however, share the same risk factors due to living within a specific postcode, having a relative/partner in a gang or utilise the same amenities where street gangs may reside (i.e. youth centres, parks, subways, shopping centres, gyms etc.)

Definition – Serious Youth Violence

In Norfolk we are treating serious youth violence as any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime involving a young person under the age of 18 in an extra-familial setting. This may be in relation to county lines and/or criminal exploitation or in a separate contextual setting.

Notifications following an incident (Childrens services only)

Refer to existing processes around Senior Manager Alerts and Serious Incident Notifications.-

<https://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/departments/childrens-services/our-procedures/social-care/social-work-process/death-or-serious-injury-to-a-child-looked-after-or-in-need>

In the event that a serious incident notification is submitted to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Panel a rapid review will be triggered.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-child-safeguarding-incident>

Considering immediate safety

Children's Services will initiate a multi-agency section 47 strategy discussion on notification of serious youth violence. All partners involved should take account of the extra-familial nature of the risk and include consideration of the following:

- Establish when hospital discharge is likely
- Which agencies know the family and who will contribute to the social work assessment
- Consider parent/carers ability to protect. This should include consideration of parent/carers level of awareness and understanding given the extra-familial nature of the risk
- Consider level of known ongoing risk from perpetrator or associates/gang members/olders
- Identify any social media posts that may ignite or create further issues – this may help us to act quickly in trying to ascertain what is likely to happen next
- Consider whether it is safe for the young person to return home, return to the area where the incident happened, return to education/employment provision and consider any practical immediate safety measures (alternative accommodation, CAD markers, doorbell video, fire safety etc.)
- Consider whether there are siblings who as a result of the incident may now be at risk and need to be safeguarded
- Consider whether there are other young people connected to the index young person who, as a result of the incident may now be at risk and need to be safeguarded/steps that could be taken to disrupt reprisal attacks
- Support and protection in hospital (see below)
- Identify trusted professional for possible hospital visit
- Consideration for requirement for a 'threat to life' warning (Police)

When a young person is in hospital

Social media and phone access

Access to mobile phones and social media may increase risk of further violence in the community. Advice should be given by police and children's services to young people and parent/carers to avoid the use of mobile phones and social media. Police are able to use powers to seize devices as part of evidence collection and must consider doing so if this may help prove who has assaulted the young person. When seizing any mobile phone, the police officer should do their best to explain to the young person why it is being done (in order to find out what happened to them) and the legislation that entitles them to do so.

Visitors

Police officers will attend A&E if they are aware of a serious youth violence incident. Likelihood of 'visits' to victims by friend or foe gang members should be considered. Before the police officer attending leaves, a discussion should be held between Police, Health and Children's Services regarding ongoing risk in hospital and requirement for restricted visitors or ongoing police and/or hospital security presence.

Trusted professional support

Young people who have been victims of serious youth violence may need support from a trusted professional. Young people may be feeling alienated from peers, coming to terms with an injury and questioning the circumstances that led them to the situation – this can be a ‘reachable moment’ through which young people can be supported to consider making changes in their lives. **Youth workers from Children’s Services Targeted Youth Support Service** can be made available if requested by social work teams to support young people in hospital – professionals visiting young people in hospital must be clear with hospital staff and police colleagues about their role in visiting the young person. Discussion regarding consideration for deployment of youth workers to hospital should take place between the Senior Investigating Officer, relevant Head of Social Work and the Head of Targeted Youth Support Service.

Young person in custody

A young person being in custody is also identified as at a ‘reachable moment’. In custody, they are stripped of mobile phones, social media & peer pressure, and can consider the consequences of their actions and their current life direction. Early intervention custody workers are trained and specialist workers in the area of exploitation working from Wymondham PIC, who are experienced at working with adolescents, and are seen as separate to the Police. They will support increased identification of children at risk and experiencing exploitation. Early intervention custody workers will attempt to engage young people aged 10-17 who are:

- Arrested and taken to Wymondham PIC (this service is currently only available at Wymondham)
- Young people that are open to services in Norfolk or reside out of county, the early intervention worker will advocate and coordinate/liase with agencies that are involved
- In addition, voluntary community interventions will be offered to young people and their families who live in the Greater Norwich area and are not already open to statutory services or early help.

The custody workers will ensure information is shared in real time with CADS, case holding social workers, family support practitioners, YOT workers, mace police and TYSS youth workers. They will feed into strategy discussions/professionals’ meetings and support the child whilst in custody.

Pre-discharge planning meeting

Discharge planning should include consideration of both the young person’s health and safety. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that no young person is discharged from hospital into an unsafe environment, where their health or well-being may be compromised or where further significant harm could occur. Consideration should be given to the wider environment the young person will be returning to, including siblings and other members of the household.

The pre-discharge planning meeting should include:

- Social work team
- Young person’s registered GP
- Police

- Designated Safeguarding Team (01603 257164) or via email: safeguardingchildren.norfolk@nhs.net
- Acute hospital safeguarding team and hospital ward staff (ward staff will have offered 1-1 support and may have background information on presentation of young people and intelligence regarding contacts)
 - ▶ NNUH – safeguardingchildren@nnuh.nhs.uk
 - ▶ QEH – QEH-klw-tr-safeguardingteamqehkl@nhs.net
 - ▶ James Paget – JPUHSafeguarding@jpaget.nhs.uk
 - ▶ Community Health Provider – CCSTR.norfolksafeguardingteam@nhs.net
 - ▶ Norfolk Community Health and Care – Safeguarding.info@nhs.net
 - ▶ Norfolk & Suffolk Foundation Trust – nmh-tr.NSFTSafeguardingTeam@nhs.net

Thinking about the wider context of a serious youth violence incident

Gang related violence by its nature relates to networks of young people who may or may not also be involved in the conflict. It's important to understand the wider context of any single incident in order to appropriately assess risk for multiple young people.

Children Services should convene a **complex strategy discussion** under section 47 of the Children Act to consider all known gang related associates and those in opposing gangs (opps).

The purpose of this meeting is to gather information from all services and formulate a plan which reduces the risk of retaliation or further serious incidents.

Children's Services should add the records for this meeting to Liquidlogic for all relevant children. Actions will be sent to attendees and the associated data should only be used for the purposes agreed in the meeting.

Principle attendees should include

Head of Social Work/Family Support
Relevant Team Managers
Allocated Social Workers/Family Practitioners
Health Designated Safeguarding Team/MASH Health
MACE Police

Youth Justice Manager/YOT Operational Manager
Head of Targeted Youth Support Service/Team Manager
Team Manager CADS Exploitation Desk

College or other education, training or employment provider

Consider which other professionals may need to attend, this could include

Independent Statutory Services
CAMHS
Probation

Housing

Trusted allocated professionals from other external or commissioned youth services or TYSS
Social Worker (OLA young people)

Wymondham PIC custody workers

Relevant voluntary and community organisations

The meeting should take account of and address the following:

- Associations peer group dynamic and any risk posed by adult exploiters or gang members (incl. known weapon carrying reprisal threats, drug debts as a result of incident etc.)
- Are current safety plans fit for purpose?
- Are parents and carers aware of the extra-familial risk and are they able/willing to offer protection?
- Are parents and carers aware of any risks to themselves or other family members?
- Are there additional risks relating to residential/education/training placements due to location, other users?
- Requirement for exploitation screening and or risk levels – all relevant young people
- Police disruption and response plans (add response/trigger plans to young person's record)
- Risks relating to attacks on property and practical steps to reduce risk CAD markers, home adaptations (fire safety, video doorbells etc.) increased police presence
- Intelligence or information relating to the incident or future risk – (this should include reminders to all professionals regarding the process and requirement for timely intelligence and information sharing) continue to monitor social media for any indication of future risk
- Risks to staff – clear mitigation actions should be included in all instructions for contact
- Wider community impact and requirement for actions to support stabilisation or create safety in locations/contexts including youth work and community safety team
- Is there a requirement to liaise with other local authorities regarding OLA young people linked to the incident?

Media and press consideration

Following an incident of serious youth violence, Norfolk Constabulary will take the lead on media communications. This is a natural position as Police will need to

1. Identify possible witnesses
2. Reassure the public
3. Maintain public safety

These 3 principles should remain central to any media release. Police will appoint a Corporate Communications SPOC who must liaise with relevant Health and Children's Services media colleagues. The Police Senior Investigating Officer must have oversight of all media releases.

Court appearances

It is important that professionals have a clear joined up position in relation to support for bail or otherwise. Relevant Heads of Social Care and YOT should meet to discuss any imminent Court appearances for young people linked to the incident.

Agree which professionals will be deployed to support young people and families in custody and/or at Court.

Consider any likely risk outside Court buildings – agree mitigation actions, including liaison with Police.

In the event of **Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation** YOT should, as part of a placement assessment consider whether the young person has links/ops in potential secure establishments.

Staff safety and well-being

Issues regarding the safety of staff working with victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence and/or gang related activity must be considered at all times – ensure risk is assessed and mitigating actions have been applied prior to direction for contact.

Staff working with young people who are victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence may experience secondary trauma and require support to access well-being services for a debrief and/or reflective Joint Agency Group Supervision following an incident. Managers should support access to this opportunity – see [Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership Joint Agency Group Supervision](#).

Informing and updating other relevant partners

Contextual safeguarding briefings to relevant partners may be useful following an incident of serious youth violence – this might include education providers, safer schools' officers, youth work providers in the affected community. These briefings are for the purpose of informing and updating relevant partners in order that they can implement any required safety or support measures within their context and/or practice and so that partners can be reminded of the importance of ongoing information and intelligence sharing.

The meeting would be chaired by the relevant Head of Social Work or nominated Team Manager and should be supported by MACE Police. Contextual safeguarding briefings should not discuss individual young people.

Stabilisation and business as usual

A return to business as usual MACE process is required in the weeks following an incident of serious youth violence.

- [Multi-Agency MACE screening process](#)
- [Contextual Safeguarding toolkit \(includes disruption toolkit\)](#)

Locality mapping meetings convened by Children's Services will support the ongoing review of associations and risk relating to particular contexts.

Child planning meetings will review risk and support action to ensure safety planning is robust.

Professionals should also consider the following:

- Use of location safety mapping and planning with young people

- Context weighting to ensure plans are appropriately focused
- What support can be made available to the young person in relation to trauma?
- Actions to avoid permanent exclusion and achieve education continuity
- Disruption planning including the content of Criminal behaviour orders (CBO's) etc.
- Plans to support the young person to build critical thinking, resilience and effect positive change. Including access to trusted relationships – additional resource available might include TYSS, ROSE, St Giles
- Support for parents/carers to understand extra-familial risk for their child and increase safety, including information gathering, reporting missing episodes
- Family Group Conferencing
- Plans to create safety/stability in the community or context – consider context assessment and plan, deployment of detached youth workers, group work etc.