

Children and Young People's Partnership Board

DATE:
18th September 2008

TITLE:
Youth Offending Service –

WARDS
All

SUMMARY: There is continuing concern about youth violence in the capital. An analysis of the last two years violent offences shows a significant fall in Hammersmith and Fulham, though characteristics of those involved is changing, becoming younger.

Initiatives to respond to Youth Violence have developed over the last year, based on information exchange and including all agencies in planning for children at risk.

A “Street Outreach Service” is being developed as a new model of work, independently funded, and delivered under the auspices of Hammersmith and Fulham Partners Against Crime.

CONTRIBUTORS

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RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That the work to address youth violence in the borough is noted.
2. That the work of the Street Outreach Service be reviewed by the Children and Young people's Partnership Board in 12 months with an initial evaluation of its work.

1. Youth Violence in Hammersmith and Fulham

At time of writing, 22 young people have been murdered in Greater London during 2008 causing continuing concern at all levels of government and within the community about violence committed by young people.

The following report reviews the situation relating to crimes of violence in the last two years in Hammersmith and Fulham. The report also outlines actions being taken by the partnership to address the risks of violent crime by young people.

1.1 Background

The group of offences that makes up “violent offences” include offences of violence against people and Police officers, as well as possession of weapons, offences relating to dogs and behaviour that is directly threatening.

The offences monitored are common assault, assault, assault on a police officer, assault occasioning actual bodily harm assault occasioning grievous bodily harm, “other wounding with intent to cause injury”, manslaughter, murder. Additional offences where physical injury has not occurred but where the threat of violence is addressed include false imprisonment, possession of a blade in public, possession of an offensive weapon, possession of a firearm, threatening words and behaviour and ownership of a dog that is dangerously out of control.

The data used for this report relates to offences of violence where the Police have made a decision to deal with an incident through a reprimand or final warning, where the offender admits the offence, and incidents where the Police have decided to charge the alleged offender, either because they have denied the offence, have previously been finally warned, or where the offence was so serious that the offence must be dealt with by a court.

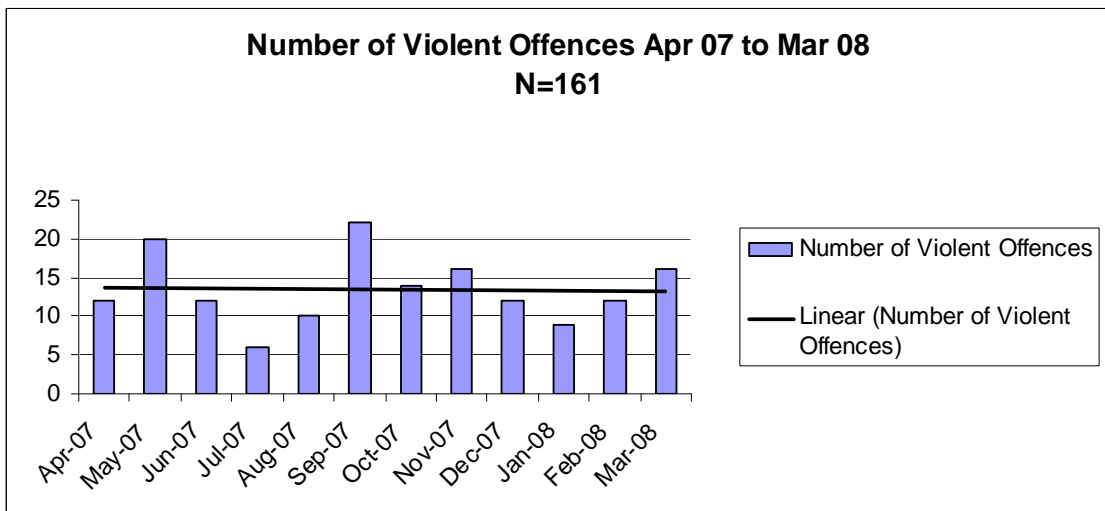
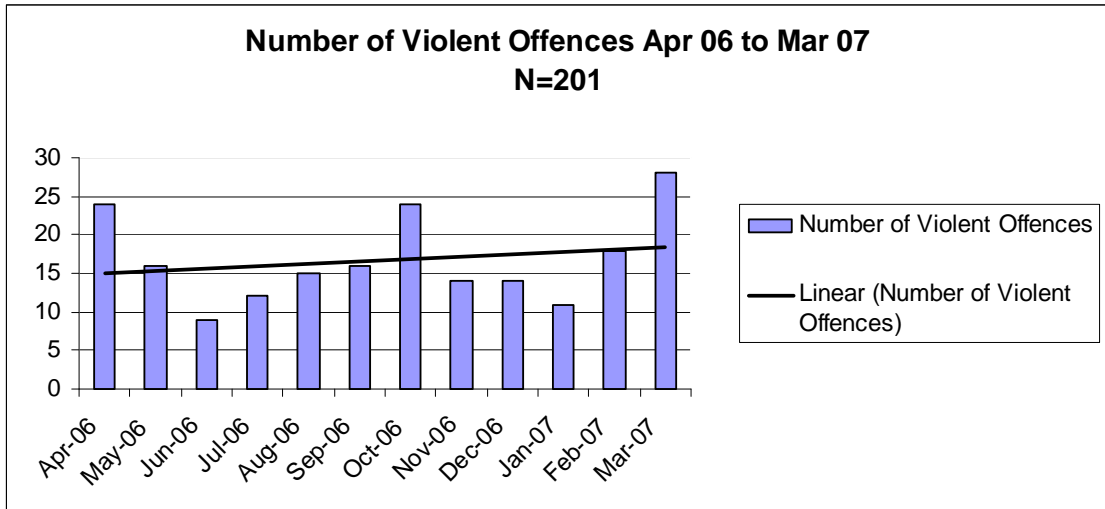
The incidents dealt with through charges may not result in a conviction. For the purpose of this report however this data presents the known full number of violent incidents.

1.2 Violent Offences and charges over the last two years.

- 1.2.1 Offences have decreased in the last two years. 201 in 2006/7 to 161 2007/8. During 2006 to 7 the trend of offences was increasing, culminating in March 2007 with 28 offences committed or charges made. This was the month of Kodjo Yenga’s murder. The monthly average for violent offences was 16.75. In 2007 to 8 the trend line is level, with an average of 13.4 offences a month.

1.2.2 The numbers of different young people involved in violent offences has also declined from 134 in 2006/7 to 111 2007/8.

The proportion of girls involved in violent crimes has increased marginally from 18% to 19%, but the proportion of violent offences committed by girls has increased from 18% to 22%. In 2006 to 7 there were 26 girls and 108 boys involved in 36 out 201 violent offences. A year later the figures were 21 girls and 90 boys, with the girls involved in 35 out of 161 offences.



1.2.3. Considering the times of year when offences are committed the monthly range was from 9 to 28 in 2006/7 and from 6 to 22 in 2007/8. There are spring and late summer peaks, possibly indicating that return to school after holiday periods is a key risk time.

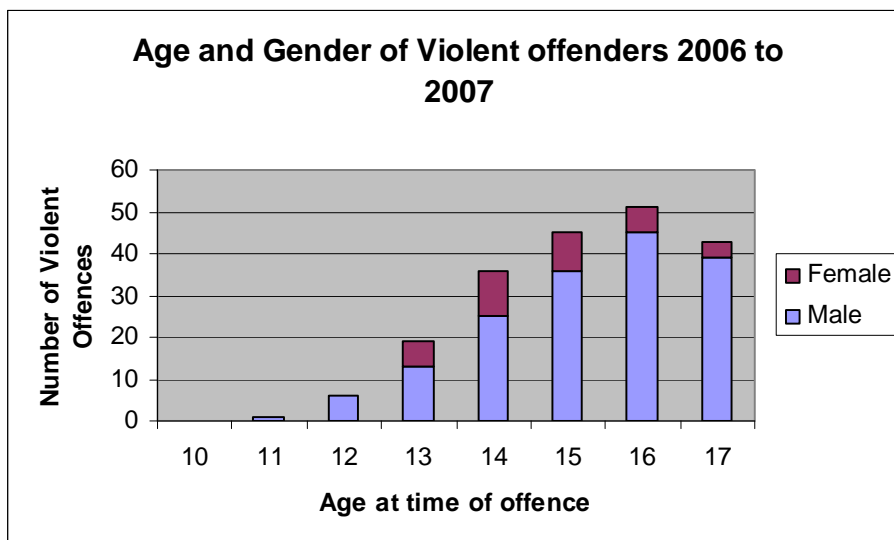
2. Offences by age

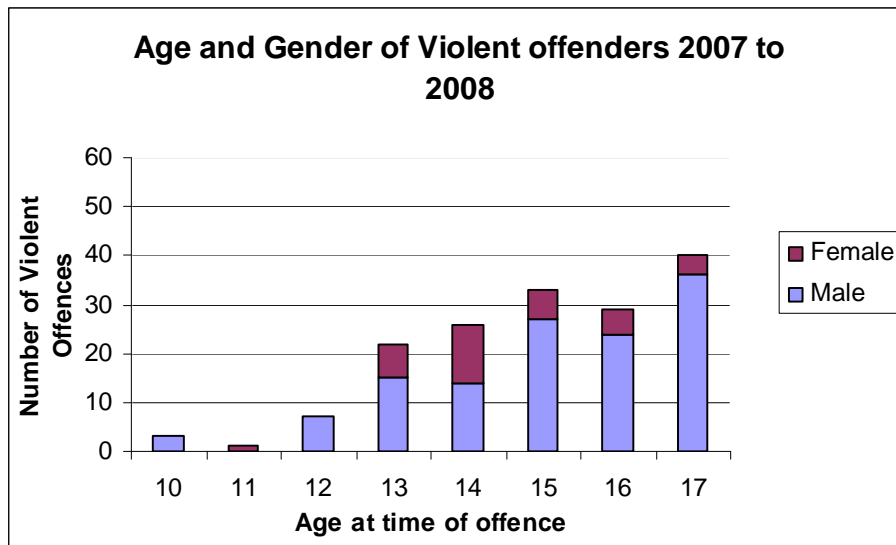
A comparison of the two year's data indicates that the number of younger children aged 10 to 13 in violent offences is increasing, while the numbers of 14 to 17 year olds is reducing.

Reviewing the data shows that these younger children are involved with the full spectrum of the offences, from threatening language to assault on police officers and assault causing actual bodily harm and wounding. One of those involved in Kodjo Yenga's murder was 12 at the time of the offence.

The partnership has in place a system for identifying children at risk of involvement in crime from aged 8 upwards through its "Early Intervention Panel".

This panel has been amalgamated with the Common Assessment Framework Panel, now the "Family Support Panel." These inter-agency consultation and case planning processes will be used to ensure services are directed at children with a potential risk of being involved in violence.





2. Initiatives.

The partnership in Hammersmith and Fulham has a range of structures for intelligence sharing and collectively planning responses to individual or group risks in the community.

Initiatives that provide the background structure to partnership work include 6 weekly combined Prolific and other Priority Offender Panels, linked with Anti-Social Behaviour panel and Early Intervention Panel. The inclusion of Police and Probation Service in the Children's Service Family Support Panel considering common assessment framework issues and individual cases which ensures social care agencies' early intervention contributes to crime prevention work.

Three specific initiatives to target violent offences are outlined below,

2.1 "RAMP" Process – Risk Assessment Management Process

This Police process for gathering information to identify individuals to target has been developed to a model where Police, Youth Offending Service or the Youth Service can convene a meeting to review information on individuals or groups of concern.

The aim is to identify early signs of youth violence or gang behaviour and to plan joint or collective responses.

The process has been used three times in the last year. Immediately following the murder of Kodjo Yenga in March 2007 the three agencies met to identify the wider group of young people associated with the gang, "MDP". Information was used to identify young people who represented a high, medium or low risk of violent acts in the aftermath of the murder.

The group identified as high risk received a collaborative intervention from Police, YOT and Youth Service – a joint home visit by a safer neighbourhood team police officer and a member of the youth service or YOT. This visit was carefully scripted and staff involved were briefed in advance.

13 home visits were carried out and feedback was generally positive. It was noted from feedback from young people not targeted for home visits that the word spread among young people that action was being taken.

The RAMP process has been used twice since the first MDP initiative. The second time assessed no risk from the group identified warranting additional action.

The latest process has resulted in 7 young people being targeted for additional work. This arose out of two groups identified by youth workers in two clubs about violent language and behaviour arising unexpectedly and youth workers having to take steps to protect some young people from others. The interventions at this point is relationship building with these young people between Youth Workers and Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) staff based with the YOT.

2.2 SOS - Street Outreach Service.

£150,000 has been secured over three years from the John Lyons Charity for a youth worker to start a pilot project on a completely new way of engaging with young people involved in gangs. The project is to be delivered through HAFPAC, Hammersmith and Fulham Partners Against Crime, partnership charity involving the local authority and private sector companies based in the borough.

It is based on local experience in Hammersmith and Fulham, following the death of Kodjo Yenga, which has been developed with reference to the work of David Kennedy in Boston United States in the late 1990's.

The street outreach service will identify young people involved in gangs and develop effective working relationships with them and their own community support systems.

This will be done by outreach work, finding places to meet and build relationships on the young person's territory. A youth worker will work alongside Police Staff and a volunteer community mentor. Area based grant and additional grant funding is being sought to fund Police and additional staff. The staff group will identify who the young people regard as their supporters in the community – who is there who will stand by them through thick and thin?

The principles behind the project are:

1. A message that violence must stop supported by use of all possible enforcement methods to hold those responsible for violence to account for their actions in court.
2. The involvement of young gang members with their own networks to devise the ways out of gang violence. This is through group events with the support network delivering the message that they want to keep their young person safe from harm and help them towards a more positive future.
3. Commitment from agencies to stand behind young people who are seeking a way out of violence with access to the opportunities they need.

The SOS workers will contribute to the second and third sections of the strategy, finding and enabling the community networks round the young person and increasing access to an alternative lifestyle.

The project will design a new set of skills and ways of working to confront and reduce the harm done to the community, by gang related criminal and anti-social behaviour.

2.3 Turnaround Group - targeting robbers

The YOS developed a groupwork programme in 2006 with support from GOL. The "Turnaround" group is a 10 week programme for young people on statutory supervision orders and is a component of their supervision plan.

The groupwork curriculum is based in cognitive behaviour therapy methodology, i.e. that individuals can understand the causes of their behaviour and learn techniques to manage behaviour that will be effective for them.

The group has been run once a year since 2005 and has succeeded in engaging the highest profile violent offenders in the borough.

The young people involved as part of their supervision have a 33% re-offending rate which compares well with other interventions.

3. Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Offending Service key performance indicators for the 12 months 2007 to 2008.

3.1 Background

From April 2008 the number of indicators on which the YOS reports to the Youth Justice Board is reduced to four. Education, training and employment, satisfactory accommodation, use of custody and First Time Entrants.

3.2 Last quarter performance

The performance for the first quarter indicates Education, Training and Employment, and Accommodation are performing in the top performance area and ahead of London and national performance, the First Time Entrants target is in the top band and ahead of London but not the whole of the country.

The use of custodial sentencing at 17.9% of all sentences was in the lowest performance band. There were 19 custodial sentences in the quarter, which included 8 for the two incidents involving MDP in 2007, including Kodjo Yenga's murder.

The continuing use of secure remands to local authority accommodation is a concern as the projected use exceeds the budget allocated. When a child under 15 is denied bail and has to be held in secure accommodation the local authority is responsible for a third of the costs and all transport costs. To date 9 children under 15 have been in secure remand placements, including four involved in murder charges.

4. Comments from Head of Finance:

4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the purposes of this report.

5. Comments from Head of Legal Services:

5.1 Children's Services have identified budget pressures in the area of secure remand placements in 2008/09. £78k has been identified as overspend with an additional £100k identified as risk given the level of placements made to date, this has been reported in the Corporate Revenue Monitor (CRM). Pressures on this budget area will continue to be closely monitored during 2008/09 and any further risk will be reported as part of the monthly CRM process.