

## Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children (November 2024)

Report: [Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children](#)

This multi-led partnership<sup>1</sup> approach to reviewing how local partnerships and services respond to children and their families when children are affected by serious youth violence allows for the focus to shift from a policing response to youth violence to a multi-agency response, adopting a holistic methodology to determine the strength of local partnerships. The findings from this report highlight the importance of collaboration, early intervention, and a shared sense of responsibility across agencies in tackling serious youth violence.

### 1. Importance of Multi-Agency Collaboration

The report rightly emphasises the critical role of effective partnerships between police, local authorities, education providers, health services, and community organisations. While progress has been made, there are gaps that must be addressed:

- **Enhanced Information Sharing:** Work with partners to establish robust mechanisms for real-time information sharing, ensuring that all agencies have the intelligence needed to intervene early.
- **Joint Training Initiatives:** Promote cross-agency training programs to ensure a shared understanding of youth violence risk factors and interventions.
- **Community Engagement:** Strengthen partnerships with community organisations to build trust and co-produce solutions tailored to local needs.

### 2. Early Intervention and Prevention

Preventing youth violence requires a proactive approach, addressing root causes such as social deprivation, school exclusion, and exposure to trauma.

Key Actions:

- **Targeted Youth Programs:** Invest in early intervention initiatives, including mentoring, diversionary activities, and youth engagement schemes, to provide young people with positive alternatives.
- **School Partnerships:** Expand collaborations with schools to identify at-risk children and deliver interventions that keep them engaged in education.
- **Parent and Family Support:** Develop programs that empower families to support young people and address challenges before they escalate.

### 3. Tackling Exploitation and Gang-Related Violence

The inspection report highlights the role of organised crime in exploiting vulnerable young people. Addressing this requires a coordinated effort to disrupt criminal networks and protect those at risk.

Key Actions:

- **Disruption of Criminal Networks:** Strengthen policing efforts to dismantle gangs and disrupt the supply of drugs and weapons.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation)

- Support for Exploited Young People: Increase the availability of specialised services for young people coerced into criminal activity, including trauma-informed care and safe housing.
- Community Safety Partnerships: Work with local authorities to deliver place-based approaches that prioritise the safety and resilience of communities.

#### **4. Victim Support**

Children and young people affected by serious youth violence require tailored support to recover and rebuild their lives.

Key Actions:

- Trauma-Informed Services: Expand access to counselling and mental health services for victims and their families.
- Restorative Justice: Promote restorative justice opportunities that empower victims and hold offenders accountable.
- Rapid Response Teams: Establish multi-agency teams to provide immediate support following violent incidents, reducing the risk of retaliation or further harm.

#### **5. Accountability and Progress Monitoring**

To ensure that multi-agency responses are effective, we must establish clear accountability mechanisms and measure progress.

Key Actions:

- Performance Metrics: Develop local indicators to track outcomes, such as reductions in serious youth violence and improved engagement with at-risk youth.
- Regular Review Meetings: Convene multi-agency boards to review progress and address emerging challenges.
- Community Feedback: Involve young people and community members in evaluating programs and shaping future priorities.

This report is a timely reminder of the need for a united approach to combat serious youth violence. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, we are committed to building a system that prioritises prevention, protects vulnerable young people, and holds those responsible for violence to account.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I will continue to champion the partnerships and resources needed to deliver meaningful change and make our communities safer for all.

**Donna Jones**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

#### **Response from: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary**

As identified within this HMICFRS report, tackling youth violence is a multi-faceted issue requiring a range of policing responses from safeguarding both victims and offenders through to tackling County Lines and Organised Crime and Exploitation.

The reduction of all serious violence remains a priority for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary (HIOWC) and we understand the detrimental impact it has on our communities. HIOWC data indicates that most serious violence and violence against the person with injury

(including adults and children crimes per population) are both lower than the national rate and formal action taken for both areas are higher than the national rate (top half in the national and MSG rankings tables for formal action taken). We approach its criticality with regard to children and young people as an utmost priority and ongoing progress in this area is achieved through driving forward our Force Priorities including: Putting Victims First, the Relentless Pursuit of Criminals and Exceptional Local Policing.

As the HMICFRS report highlights, the government introduced its Serious Violence Duty in January 2023. The duty aims to make councils and local services work together to share information and target interventions to prevent and reduce all forms of serious violence.

HIOWC have had this approach in place for a significant period of time, with strong governance through the multi-agency Violence Reduction Partnership and the Tactical Violence Reduction Board alongside other partnership boards including the Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

The work of the Violent Crime Task Force is funded through the Home Office Grip Funding and dedicated analysts share information with partners with a strong focus on children and young adults. Through this work we scrutinise information relating to serious violence perpetrators and habitual knife carriers and our approach is delivered through the lens of our Child Centred Policing Strategy thus ensuring that a child centred and safeguarding approach is paramount in all our interactions with children at risk of harm. This partnership also tackles 'wicked problems' such as the challenges in placing our most at risk children in the care system in a way that safeguards from further criminal association or exploitation.

Our commitment to tackling knife crime remains a priority, and we continue to take a community-led approach, working alongside partners in the VRU to identify those involved, address the root causes, educate our communities, provide preventative advice and ensure those carrying and using weapons are brought to justice.

We consistently undertake a range of proactive activities funded by the OPCC including targeted operations, community engagement and education to reassure young people they are safer not carrying knives, and to walk or run away from harm. While knife crime remains relatively low in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in comparison to other parts of the country, we will not be complacent. We are continuously focusing our efforts and are committed to do everything within our legal power to tackle serious violence.

The work of the Violence Reduction Unit has a public health approach at its heart and recognises that youth violence cannot be solved by one agency. Through effective problem solving there have been focussed deterrence initiatives including; the Princes Trust scheme for a specific cohort of young people either in or on the edge of the criminal justice system and Operation Sceptre, which includes permanent knife surrender bins and 'weeks of action', supporting the work our officers and staff carry out all year round to ensure our residents are safe from knife crime.

The HIOWC Child Centred Policing Strategy is the pinnacle of our approach to all children including both those who are victims of crime or those who perpetrate crime or are exploited to do so. Youth crime continues to fall but too many young people are still becoming victims and suffering harm. We work with partners to intervene early and prevent harm to children and young people, and within this we recognise that children and young people are not "mini-adults" and the better our policing for them is now, the less they may need us in the future. This strategy helps the force focus on what is essential and what works.

Alongside our strategic approach we have a range of operational prevention approaches aimed at young people, including the [Safe4Me – Hampshire Police's free education resource programme for schools, colleges and partners in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight](#). This essential resource enables us to communicate with parents, communities and education providers and has a range of resources, news, events and resources including sign posting to support services.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary also operates as a trauma informed force. We have upskilled our officers and staff across a range of operational teams including custody and neighbourhood policing teams to ensure an appropriate and adapted approach to children as victims or perpetrators who may have SEND, neurodiversity or have experienced adverse childhood experiences.

As a force we have also delivered a range of training to prevent the 'adultification' and victim blaming of children across the board. This includes provision of online resources on our intranet and ongoing continuous improvements led by our Education Team to ensure officers and staff understand what victim blaming is and how impactful it is.

Alongside this we have successfully rolled out trauma informed training which was delivered in conjunction with Rockpool and has been recognised as good practice by HMICFRS. Officers and staff are trained on how to recognise the needs of the child and how safeguarding is a priority, they are required to conduct timely referrals to partner agencies where risk is identified and these notifications are subject to a robust programme of continuous scrutiny to assure ourselves that the most urgent and pertinent information is shared with our safeguarding partners.

Furthermore HIOWC have in place a specialist Missing Exploited and Trafficked Team (METT) who work closely with partners to information share and assess risk relating to CSE and CCE alongside the wider issues relating to serious violence, county lines and gang related offending. The introduction of our Missing Locate Teams (MLT) enables a fast and effective response to missing children who may be at risk of offending or at risk of harm.

During our Custody inspection in February 2024, HMICFRS reflected positively on the work HIOWC undertakes to divert children from custody and the force has worked closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to develop national best practice guidance in regard to the strip searching of children. In November 2024 the force updated its guidance with the biggest amendment being that Superintendent authority has to be sought in advance and ensuring that all strip searches are intelligence led and an appropriate adult is present. We also have Hampshire Liaison and Diversion service based within our custody suites supporting children whilst detained and proactively offering follow up to the family of every child.

In regard to disproportionality, our Use of Police Powers Board, overseen by an ACC, scrutinises disproportionality data for key areas such as stop search and use of force. Where issues are identified we work to continuously improve our approach and disseminate learning. HIOWC also has within its governance structure a Culture and Legitimacy Board and Race Action Plan with both having oversight from the Chief Constable and representation from the OPCC Youth IAG.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary welcomes the report from HMICFRS and will continue to prioritise the reduction of violent crime to ensure Hampshire and Isle of Wight is a safer place for everyone.

**Sam De Reya**  
**Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

**Recommendations:**

No recommendations were made for this inspection report.