

Safeguarding Children Affected by Gang Activity and/or Serious Youth Violence Protocol



Croydon Safeguarding
Children Board (CSCB)

“Keeping Croydon Safe for Children”



CROYDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Protocol - Safeguarding Children Affected by Gang Activity and/or Serious Youth Violence

Introduction

In 2009 the London Safeguarding Children Board published the Pan London Safeguarding Procedure regarding Children Affected by Gang Activity and/or Serious Youth Violence.

The purpose of this local protocol is to outline a local multi agency operational response and should be read in conjunction with the Pan London procedure.

Additional legislation and policies that support this procedure are;

- Children Act 2004
- National Service Framework
- Every Child Matters
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, DCSF 2010
- UN Convention
- Pan London Child Protection Procedures 2007

The Pan London procedure provides guidance for frontline professionals, their managers and the voluntary sector on identifying and safeguarding children who are vulnerable to or at risk of serious youth violence.

Local response

The Pan London Procedure recommends that 'local authorities nominate a local professional who can develop specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence to act as an adviser to other professionals'. Croydon has a specialist gangs' team called Pathways which is a partnership response by YOS, Probation, the Police Gangs Team (Aries), and the Gangs Advisory Project (GAP). Both projects are co-ordinated from the Turnaround Centre.

The terms and definitions referred to in this protocol regarding gang involvement/behaviour are those which are laid out in the Pan London Procedure on page 5 and should be referred to when considering whether or not a young person is at risk. This definition has been adopted locally as part of Croydon's gang's strategy;

1. **Peer group:** a small, unorganised, transient group of children who 'hang out together' in public places such as shopping centres. Crime is not integral to their self definition;

2. **Wannabee group:** includes children who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive criminal activity, including collective violence against other groups of children. Wannabees will often claim 'gang' territory and adopt 'gang-style' identifying markers of some kind;
3. **Gang:** a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of children who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.
 - Children may be involved in more than one 'gang', with some cross-border movement, and may not stay in a 'gang' for significant periods of time;
 - Children rarely use the term 'gang', instead they used terms such as 'family', 'breddrin', 'crews', 'cuz' (cousins), 'my boys' or simply 'the people I grew up with'.
4. **Organised criminal group:** members are professionally involved in crime for personal gain, operating almost exclusively in the 'grey' or illegal marketplace.

Assessment

Professionals should assess the presenting behaviours / what a child is telling them in the context of whatever information they know or can gather from the child about the risk factors which contribute to the child's vulnerability to gang involvement and serious youth violence.

The tools for making an assessment are:

- The Common Assessment Framework (see Mobility and Young London; integrated working without boundaries; the London CAF Protocol, 2009); and
- A specialist / statutory assessment (including LA children's social care initial and core assessments, YOS ASSET, YISP ONSET or CAMHS/Adult Services/Probation assessments)

The four levels of need which an assessment could indicate for a child are:

- Level 1: Universal
- Level 2: Vulnerable – Common assessment
- Level 3: Complex – Common assessment or a specialist / statutory assessment (including LA children's social care initial and core assessments, ASSET/ONSET or CAMHS/Adult Service/Probation assessments)
- Level 4: Acute – A specialist / statutory assessment (including LA children's social care initial and core assessments or ASSET/ONSET etc)

Information sharing and checks

This protocol aims to ensure effective and timely information sharing and risk assessments on the basis of what level of risk is determined and a local response is agreed.

Locally we have identified that level 3 and 4 will require a dedicated response to effectively manage the risk as the cases fall into two intervention levels and these are:

1. The need to respond immediately (same day) where the risk is complex/acute due to the significant risk of harm (i.e. threats of death or serious injury) to a child and/or family members.
2. The need for a more planned and managed approach to the management of identified risk and needs (i.e. known gang involvement, or at risk of serious youth violence that is having a significant impact on well-being)

In such cases the Police, YOS/YISP and/or Social Care will be involved to determine if there is a significant risk to an individual and/ or their family and in such cases a representative from one of these agencies will act as the 'lead' professional to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

Wherever possible, professionals in all agencies should involve parents as early as possible in cases where there are concerns that a child may be affected by gang activity and serious youth violence; and the child and his/her parents should be invited to multi-agency meetings as appropriate to discuss the concerns.

It should also be noted that consideration should be given to the possibility that the Parent or Carer could be involved in gang activity and that this could heighten the risk.

Multi-agency decision making and signposting

If the case is complex and/or acute a meeting will be convened by the Police, Housing, YOS/YISP or Social Care within 24 hours (see appendix 1). Agreement about which agencies will be invited should be reached with the child and family ideally, but this would not always be the case, especially when sharing information relating to risk posed by family members. The local professional with specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence should also be consulted.

Please note that if the risk requires an immediate same day action, each agency must ensure that their Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures are followed in line with this protocol.

The meeting has a number of responsibilities and functions to fulfil:

- Share information about the child and their family. Under Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all agencies are empowered to share information without permission for the purpose of crime prevention (although obtaining consent is good practice);
- Identify key contacts and lead professional;
- Plan the most appropriate services to intervene and support the child and their family and to reduce risk.

The outcome of meeting may be that:

- There is no need to proceed further at this point;
- There is a need to invoke child protection procedures;
- There is a need for further assessment;
- There is a possibility of criminal action against an adult;
- There is a possibility for restorative justice (restorative conference), mediation meetings and/or family group conferences;
- There is a need for a gang exit strategy - leadership, anger management conflict resolution training and, where necessary, relocation;
- Intervention is required to divert the child from involvement;
- There is justification for criminal action against the child;
- There is insufficient information at this stage, but concerns remain and further work is required to clarify them or;
- A referral to a voluntary project / organisation should be made.

Multi-agency case plans should have clear outcomes, assigned responsibilities and be led by a lead professional chosen from those practitioners present at the meeting. The lead professional to co-ordinate provision and be a single point of contact for the child and their family for the range of services represented at the meeting.

REFERRAL INFORMATION

A referral can come from any professional/agency that has concerns about a child or young person. This can be done immediately by contacting:

Pathways Manager (Nichole McIntosh) on 020 8404 8330

Address: Turnaround Centre, 51-55 South End, Croydon CR0 1BF

Figure 1 – High Risk

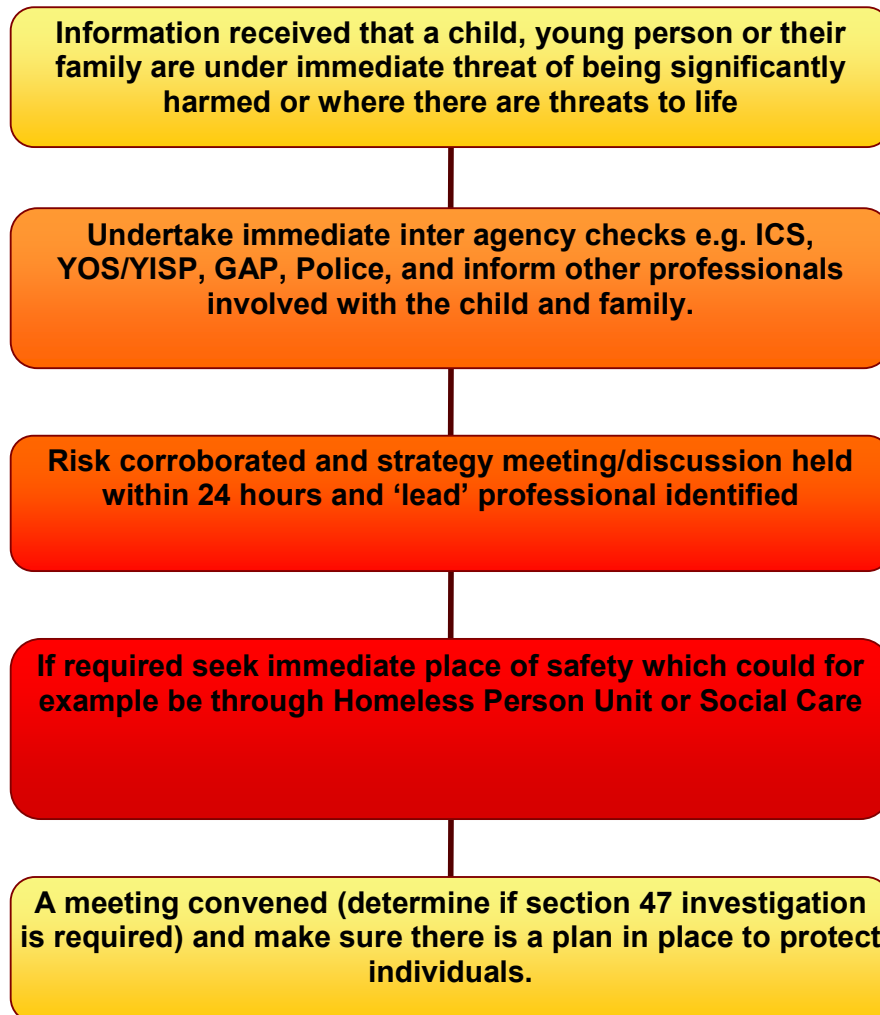


Figure 2 - Medium/Low/Uncorroborated

