



**Dan Price**  
Cheshire  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner

## **Research and analysis: Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence working together to support and protect children – Response from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire**

**Published on:** 20 November 2024

**Publication types:** Serious Youth Violence

**Police Forces:** All forces in England and Wales

**Data Sources:** Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation

### **Report Summary**

The report examined how local partnerships and services in England addressed serious youth violence affecting children and their families, evaluated the multi-agency arrangements between children's social care, health services, youth justice services, schools and the police.

The inspection focused on three themes:

- strategic responses to serious youth violence
- work with children, both individuals and groups, affected by serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation.
- intervention in specific places to improve safety for children and communities.

The main findings identified some effective collaboration across agencies to meet the needs of children impacted by serious youth violence. This effectiveness was down to partnerships sharing an understanding of children's backgrounds, including experiences of trauma and abuse, leading to initiatives that addressed these issues and provided educational and developmental support.

The effectiveness of local safeguarding partnerships to recognize serious youth violence as a safeguarding issue is inconsistent. Some well-established LSPs were pro-active in their approach whilst others failed to recognise or address the broader needs of affected children, such as exploitation, mental health concerns and trauma. A lack of frontline oversight, multi-agency audits, uncertainty about referral thresholds and escalation procedures further hindered effective intervention.

If harm is to be reduced to children their needs to be recognition that children with SEND including those who are neurodivergent such as those diagnosed with ADHD and autism are at significant risk of service youth violence. Delays across England in assessing children's

needs in relation to SEND are putting these children at greater risk of harm. Some areas had introduced measures to reduce delays in assessment and support.

**Some good practices included:**

Placing navigate staff in Emergency Departments and hospitals to give advice and support to children and families affected by serious youth violence. To build trust and confidence for children to speak the navigate staff were representative of the local community. There were well established links between navigate staff and multi-agency professionals who could respond earlier to support and protect children and their families.

All children brought to custody for an incident relating to serious youth violence are seen by a health professional and liaison and diversion professionals. Timely referrals to social care professionals make alternative accommodation arrangements when required. They quickly arranged community-based help for these children. This ensures that, in line with their needs children do not remain in custody longer than necessary.

A detailed analysis of information about groups of children was used to inform the approach to prevention with the support of the violence reduction unit. Leaders and managers in the youth justice service analysed their data and identified that a disproportionate number of boys, children from diverse backgrounds and children who experienced abuse and neglect were victims of service youth violence and or criminal exploitation. They established a disproportionality task force to identify and address these issues locally where can across boundaries, leaders secured funding from the London VRU to set up a specific project to address these children's needs. This project provides specialist mentoring and outreach, advice and support, educational workshops and group work for parents and children.

There were no recommendations specific for police, but the necessity for consistent recognition of serious youth violence as a safeguarding concern calls for improved multi agency collaboration to address the complex needs of affected children. It highlights the importance of comprehensive training for frontline professionals and the importance of local safeguarding partnerships in coordinating effective responses and the necessity for engaging communities, families and young people. This ensures interventions are informed by those affected to enhance effectiveness and mitigate serious youth violence.

The report has been analysed by professionals in the OPCC who are developing strategies to tackle serious youth violence and have developed the following recommendations as a result.

**Recommendation 1**

Ensure that serious youth violence is seen as a safeguarding issue in the local partnership area.

**Recommendation 2**

Partnerships need a systematic and coordinated approach to seeking the views of those affected by serious youth violence.

**Recommendation 3**

Gather and analyse all relevant data and information and use this to inform and develop approaches to serious youth violence.

**Recommendation 4**

Recognise and understand patterns of disproportionality in the population of children affected by serious youth violence, to prevent it.