



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CABINET 16 DECEMBER 2020

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – GANGS AND KNIFE CRIME
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Scrutiny Review – Gangs and Knife Crime.
- 1.2 All Overview and Scrutiny review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:

Collaborative working

- 2.1.3 That the current work and programmes undertaken by the Community Safety Team regarding knife crime is continuous and becomes more strategic.
- 2.1.4 That the Community Safety Manager is charge with working with all relevant organisations and Agencies so that they collaborate and enhance joint bids for funding in respect of dealing with gangs and knife crime.
- 2.1.5 That Northampton Borough Council, works with other Agencies and Groups in the town to coordinate the youth provision/offer in the Borough.
- 2.1.6 That Northampton Borough Council leads on Multi Agency Training, regarding issues relating to gangs and knife crime, to bring all multi Agency work together.
- 2.1.7 That a meeting with Community Safety Team, NBC, and Community Courtyard is convened regarding involving its work.

Facilities for Young People

- 2.1.8 That all potential funding streams are investigated so that youth clubs, and other facilities for young people are brought back into the town.
- 2.1.9 Funding is the core as all activities cost money and it is ensured that the costs should not be passed onto the young people.
- 2.1.10 That in recognising that the most difficult area appears to be liaising with families, when safe to do so, the Community Safety Team has a stand a family fun day; or a similar event is organised remotely.

Best Practice

- 2.1.11 That the Community Safety Team liaises with Officers at Merseyside regarding their best practice initiatives in dealing gangs and knife crime and aim to mirror such initiatives in Northampton.
- 2.1.12 That all Councillors are provided with the link to the short film produced by young people, via Free2 Talk - Knives end Lives: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCnUZyfeL4> and encouraged to watch it.

3. Background and Issues

- 3.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Working Group was:
- 3.2 To investigate how Northampton Borough Council (NBC) can play an active role in tackling knife crime and gangs in Northampton

Key lines of Inquiry:

- To gain an understanding of the work currently being undertaken by partnerships, statutory and voluntary organisations, and the Police to address these issues
 - Whether there are links between knife crime, gangs other issues
 - How Agencies can work with Community to reduce and respond to
 - How young people can be engaged with in preventing knife crime and gangs
 - To raise awareness of knife crime and gangs in Northampton
 - Whether there are any common factors that lead to involvement in Gangs
 - To explore best practice elsewhere in identifying and providing support to victims of knife crime and gangs
 - To understand what NBC is doing outside the Scrutiny process in relation to knife crime and gangs
- 3.2 Following approval of its work programme for 2019/2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in April 2019 commissioned the Scrutiny Working Group to undertake the review – Gangs and Knife Crime. An in-depth review commenced in June

2019 and concluded in September 2020. Due to unprecedented situation of the Covid19 pandemic, meetings were cancelled during March 2020 and July 2020.

- 3.3 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Graham Walker (Chair); Councillor Jane Birch (Deputy Chair); Councillors Jamie Lane and Cathrine Russell.
- 3.4 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - improving the health and wellbeing of local people.
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Evidence Collection

- 3.6 Background data, including:
- Presentation to set the scene: To identify the prevalence of the problem locally
 - Relevant national and local background research papers
 - Definitions – Knife crime and Gangs
 - Case Studies
- Best practice external to Northampton
 - Internal expert advisors:
 - Leader of the Council, Northampton Borough Council (NBC)
 - Cabinet Member for Community Safety, NBC
 - Head of Customers and Communities, NBC and the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, NBC
 - Head of Housing and Wellbeing, NBC
 - Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety
 - Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
 - Service Manager, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
 - External expert advisors:
 - Head of Protecting Vulnerable Persons, Northamptonshire Police
 - Chief Superintendent, Northamptonshire Police
 - PCSO – St David's, Northamptonshire Police
 - Service Manager, RISE Team
 - Senior Manager, Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Board
 - Director, Education Services, NCC
 - Representative, Children's Rights' Group, Corporate Parenting Board
 - Chief Officer, Northamptonshire Victim Support
 - Cabinet Member for Adult Services, NCC
 - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, NCC

- Chair, Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board
- Chief Officer, Service Six
- Chief Officer, Lowdowne Centre
- Manager, Free to Talk Group
- Chief Executive, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)
- Chief Officer, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Chief Executive, Victim Support, Northampton
- Security Manager and Police Team, University of Northampton

Site visits to Free2 Talk, Blackthorn, and Far Cotton Boxing Club

4 Key Findings and Conclusions

- 4.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:
- 4.1.1 Evidence gathered highlighted that Northamptonshire is not unique, however, it is the most effected county in the region regarding county lines; due to the transport links making it easy for them to get around and the many academies in the town. Exclusions from school are high and the number of home-schooled children has tripled. The Working Group realised that looked after children and children excluded from school are often involved in gangs.
- 4.1.2 The Working Group acknowledges there is a need for a complex solution to the problem. The Working Group further acknowledged that there is a need for community empowerment and the Police can assist regarding bidding for funding.
- 4.1.3 There is the perception that some young people carry knives as they feel safer doing so. but the majority do not carry knives and are perfectly safe. People are more likely to be injured if they carried knives. Harm caused by drugs is a cross-cutting theme, for example drug and drink driving.
- 4.1.4 Some middle-class cocaine users use cocaine over the weekend but hold down a full-time job. There is a need to ascertain the demand for the supply of drugs in Northampton. There is a need to reduce the demand. Drugs appear to be a main concerning issue.
- 4.1.5 The site visit highlighted that the Boxing Club keeps young people fit, instils discipline and gives them somewhere to go. The value of Boxing Clubs and the benefit that it provides to young people was emphasised by the Working Group. Boxing Clubs are a tried and tested method for anger management. Boxing gives self-discipline. Boxing is credible for both genders. The John Daly Boxing Club has been a fantastic facility for young people and assisted a number of youngsters. Mr Daly is prepared to take his Boxing Club around the county. Far Cotton Boxing Club instils discipline into the young people. It is understood that others would like different activities and opportunities
- 4.1.6 If parents cannot pay bills such as gas and electricity; this can then be an incentive for young people to join a gang and obtain money that way.

- 4.1..7 The Community Safety Initiatives were welcomed.
- 4.1.8 The Working Group emphasised that there is not a lot for young people to take part in that doesn't cost money; there is a need to build up youth clubs and boxing clubs. A bid is being submitted regarding facilities for 8-13-year olds. The Working Group hopes that there could be funding stream achieved to bring youth clubs back into the town which requires a push with government to outline objectives.
- 4.1.9 Evidence gathered showed that Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) employs two Officers who check on those who fall in the amber category of home schooling; however, they have no right of access and have to have proof that they aren't receiving education. Parents/ guardians are responsible for paying for exams.
- 4.1.10 During the evidence gathering process, the Working Group head that often, the parents have no idea what is going on e.g. one child had a cannabis addiction, the parent made sure he had no money however, he was then arrested with a balaclava and a knife.
- 4.1.11 The work undertaken by the Community Safety Team and the Police over the summer holiday period was welcomed as was the work that is carried out with both Primary and Secondary schools.
- 4.1.12 There is a need to coordinate the youth provision/offer in the Borough.
- 4.1.13 The Working Group welcomed the training regarding the risk of exclusion that is being rolled out to schools as well, there is a need for Multi Agency Training to bring all multi Agency work together. It was reiterated that Multi Agency training is required.
- 4.1.14 Over lockdown in 2020, safeguarding oversight continued. Schools remained open during the holidays too and vulnerable children could attend. Safeguarding leads in schools will be given further training. In addition, some parents will be anxious about sending their children back to school in September. Free school meals have continued over the summer holiday period.
- 4.1.15 There is a need to co-ordinate all activities going on in the town and this would avoid duplication. It needs to be ensured collaboration takes place. There is also a need to build community support. The Working Group highlights that there are pockets of voluntary organisations all delivering a service, but they are not joined up. Should partnership working develop, there would be the ability to signpost.
- 4.1.16 The Working Group hoped that there could be funding stream achieved to bring youth clubs back into the town which requires a push with government to outline objectives.
- 4.1.17 The most difficult area appears to be liaising with families the Working Group agreed that a way to rectify this could be to have a stand at a family fun day which may be useful.
- 4.1.18 The Working Group notes that there are a number of reasons why young people join gangs, there is a need for long term solutions. People often accept certain

behaviours, for example there is no positive role models at home. There is a need to do a lot more at an early age.

- 4.1.19 Previous Troubled Families work did a lot of in-depth prevention work which included life skills development classes. Such classes are valuable and there is a need to provide somewhere for classes such as homework or sports and recreation.
- 4.1.20 The Working Group felt that attitude to violence and gangs is often “skewed”. NPH is working in Blackthorn, one question that is asked is whether people feel safe. Some comments received were that “stabbing is normal around here”. People don’t seem to report as they have a fear to report. A blind eye is turned.
- 4.1.21 There needs more Police and Youth work on the streets. It is acknowledged that a number of PCSO’s have built good standing, trusted relationships with young people.
- 4.1.22 There is a real problem with organised crime targeting young people. Often groomed into the gangs.
- 4.1.23 The Working Group felt that there needs to be a meeting with NBC and Community Courtyard regarding involving its work.
- 4.1.24 Evidence gathered highlighted that Merseyside has undertaken some best practice in combatting gangs and knife crime.
- 4.1.25 The Working Group commended the film produced by young people, via Free2 Talk - Knives end Lives: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCnUZyfeL4>

5. Options

- 5.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Policy

- 6.1.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council’s policy framework through its work programme.
- 6.1.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to the Council’s response to gangs and knife crime. Cabinet’s response will need to consider these issues in detail.

6.2 Resources and Risk

- 6.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

6.2.2 **Legal**

6.2.2.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.3 **Equality**

6.3.1.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.5 **Consultees (Internal and External)**

6.5.1 The Committee received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of this report.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Gangs and Knife Crime (November 2020)

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9 November 2020

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