

Preventing the Violent and Sexual Victimisation of Vulnerable Gang- involved and Gang-affected Children and Young People in Ipswich

August 2017

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Acknowledgements

To the young people of Suffolk who struggle for recognition and reward. We hope for a safer passage into a successful adult life.

The research team would like to thank Suffolk's Public Health and Community Safety Team for commissioning this work. Members of the team have been most helpful in facilitating a complex and sensitive piece of action research.

Strategic co-operation from service managers and leaders has ensured that findings have been noted and suggestions operationalised. Many thanks are due for the hard work and good humour of practitioners who have prioritised the safety and wellbeing of clients in difficult circumstances.

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The Response to Gangs and County Lines in Suffolk Before 2017

A Suffolk Constabulary threat assessment initiated in 2014 observed that the supply of Class A Drugs to Ipswich and other Suffolk towns was dominated by street gangs from London. It notes that children and young people from London and Suffolk were involved in 'running' the drugs to end users and that their risk of coming to harm was high. The Police estimated at this point that a small number of young people, frequently recorded as 'missing' from Care or home by the police and Safeguarding authorities, were either known, or suspected, to be working for London-based drug dealing networks. Children and young people reported 'missing' in London had also been found at Suffolk addresses known to be used for drug dealing.

The assessment recognised that in the preceding decade there had been an increase in the numbers of boys and young men travelling from London to Ipswich in order to supply Class A drugs and that members of London-based drug-dealing groups had been present in Ipswich throughout this period despite several successful police operations to disrupt the trafficking and distribution of Class A drugs. The assessment suggested that violence, threats and coercion were used routinely by these groups to exert control over vulnerable children and young people and local Class A drug users whose homes were being 'cuckooed'. This kind of violence was evident in other parts of Suffolk where the illicit drug market was saturated and competition between dealers was fierce. Intelligence also suggested that Organised Crime Groups (OCG's) involved in drug dealing were storing weapons at dealing locations and arming 'runners' with knives.

In recognition of these problems, in November 2014, representatives of the government's Ending Gangs and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme were invited to undertake a peer review of the effectiveness of local responses and provide a framework for future action.

The EGYV review noted that senior leaders in the County had recognised the serious threat posed by the gang problem and that a range of existing multi-agency initiatives had been put in place. It observed that the Ipswich Borough Police Commander had established a GOLD policing strategy and constructed a complementary multi-agency intervention (Operation Volcanic). However it appeared that lack of clarity vis-a-vis roles and responsibilities within the community safety and other partnerships meant there were no obvious mechanisms to effectively identify, address and communicate a way of dealing with gang offending by the partnership. It also noted that, to date, senior leaders did not have a formal or specific role and that responses were largely Police-led and enforcement-based.

Progress since the EGYV Report

The ECSSG (Exploited Children Strategic Sub-Group) endeavoured to establish an understanding within the partnership that the involvement of children and young people in gangs was a safeguarding issue, to clarify referral routes and develop targeted interventions. In addition, the formation of the Safer and Stronger Communities Group (SSCG) helped to develop and clarify the role of community safety in this developing agenda.

In an effort to widen understanding of the system, a paper on gangs and County Lines was presented to the multi-agency YOS Management Board in December 2014. The YOS also delivered a presentation and workshop on gangs in addition to the LSCB *Raising Awareness Day on Child Exploitation* in November 2015. The LSCB undertook similar work with *Schools Choice* and endorsed revised training packages. The LSCB provided five training sessions for Suffolk County Councillors (SCC) and two sessions for SCC Residential Care staff, on exploitation in general and exploitation linked with gangs and groups in particular. This training provided an overview of the risks, but has not specifically focused on gang activity in Suffolk. Specific information on the risks associated with gangs was provided by the YOS for inclusion in multi-agency safeguarding training.

In 2014/15 the Police were considered to have a good understanding of the threat posed to vulnerable children and young people through gang involvement. Police staff had been trained in this area. YOS staff have also had bespoke training specifically on working effectively with young people involved in gangs or at risk of gang involvement. However, this understanding was not shared by all the partner agencies. Indeed, there was still disagreement amongst partners about whether there was a 'gang problem' at all. Hence, the EGYV review had suggested greater use, and integration, of data held by partner agencies in order to establish the size and nature of the threat posed by local gangs.

In January 2017, the Community Safety Lead from the Localities & Partnerships Team of Suffolk County Council asked Dr. Paul Andell from the University of Suffolk to produce a proposal for a Rapid Assessment Exercise (RAE) of the gang problem in Ipswich. The aim of the RAE was to identify the nature of the problem; describe and assess existing interventions, highlight any significant gaps and outline an evidence-based strategy for a co-ordinated response to the crime and anti-social behaviour in Jubilee Park and, other gang-affected neighbourhoods in Ipswich.

Reducing Duplication

Following the EGYV peer review, action plans from Operation Volcanic and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Gangs Sub-Group were reviewed and merged to reduce duplication. Oversight of progress in delivering the action plan was provided by

The Suffolk Safeguarding Children's Board (SSCB) Exploited Children Strategic Sub – Group for safeguarding issues and Operation Volcanic for police related matters.

Intervention on the Ground

The County also established five Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) Locality Groups based on Children and Young People Service boundaries. Core membership includes managers from Children's Social Care; Early Help Team; the YOS and Children's Home Health Named Nurse for Safeguarding, the Police, a District/Borough Council (Housing) representative; a Representative of the independent/voluntary sector – as appropriate; a Children Missing from Education delegate. The purpose of CARE groups is to ensure the priorities identified in the SSCB CE Action Plan are delivered locally and support local implementation of multi-agency policies and procedures for identifying, assessing and responding to child exploitation, to share intelligence about individuals or groups who present a risk of child exploitation and support disruption and prosecution where appropriate.

In addition, Ipswich-based *Tactical and Tasking Co-ordination Meetings* are in place. These are Police led multi-agency operational meetings focusing primarily on frequently missing young people. These meetings are attended by the Police, the Make a Change Team, the Health Service, YOS, Children's Homes and Suffolk Family Focus, SCC Children's Services and the Anglia Care Trust. Young people discussed may be gang involved or at risk of gang involvement.

At an operational level, in 2015 Operation Volcanic, a police-led initiative involving Anglia Care Trust (ACT), the Youth Offending Service (YOS), Suffolk County Council (SCC) Early Help (EH) Make a Change (MAC) Turning Point, Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) and the Ipswich Safeguarding Manager targeted the Jubilee Park area. There was also a related police response to missing young people, some of whom were involved in gangs and county lines, called *Operation Strobe*.

Latterly, in 2015 a Jubilee Park Working Group a multi-agency operational group led by Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) was established. The group aimed to work with vulnerable young people at risk based in the area. The St Giles Trust was commissioned to train and recruit peer mentors to work with young people in the area adopting the SOS model the St Giles Trust use in London. Alongside this, The YOS was asked to deliver group work to young people by IBC. In 2017 Suffolk County Council also commissioned Community Action Suffolk (CAS) to deliver a Level 3 Diploma for front line workers in Ipswich. This pedagogic process has assisted to raise the profile of quality youth work across Ipswich, embed good youth work practice and has encouraged a more co-ordinated approach from youth work practitioners on the ground.

A *Gangs Toolkit* was agreed by the SSCB Exploited Children Strategic Sub-Group in 2016 and was posted on the SSCB website. The Toolkit includes information about available resources including those for schools and parents. It summarises the recommendations of the *Early Intervention Foundation* on how to work effectively with gang-involved young people or those at risk of gang involvement. For their part, YOS teams have had training in working with gangs and have access to specialist resources.

There have been a variety of interventions in schools and Police Community Support Officers have been delivering information to young people considered to be at risk of gang involvement. The *Fearless* project set up by Crimestoppers also provided training to professionals and discussion groups with Suffolk 11-17 year old school students about knives, violence and drugs gangs in Lowestoft and Sudbury during November 2015 with the help of a facilitator from the St Giles Trust. The *Fearless* workshops were funded by Suffolk Police and Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service.

The Present Challenge

Suffolk Police have made over 2,500 arrests in connection with drug related crime over the past two and half years and are now bringing the county's three area drug operations Volcanic (South), London (West) and Boulevard (East) together under the 'umbrella' of Velocity. However, it is broadly recognised that enforcement alone cannot solve the problem of County Lines. The objectives of Velocity will remain the same, to identify dealers of drugs in the towns and the surrounding areas of Suffolk and disrupt and dismantle their activity, to identify those who are being exploited by their vulnerability, continue to work in partnership with other agencies in a co-ordinated and focused partnership approach. The police recognise there is a need to better co-ordinate the response across the region and are currently working on a pilot between the Metropolitan Police and the Eastern Region Specialist Operations Unit (ERSOU) to produce a single intelligence product detailing the threat of county lines across the Eastern Region. This product will be used to inform local tasking processes across Suffolk for both Organised Crime Groups and Local Policing. It is hoped that this process will better address the risks from exploitation, firearms and levels of violence and provide a more joined up response to the main threats county lines pose across the region.

Suffolk agencies and communities have responded to the issue of 'county lines' and youth gangs in a wide variety of ways. Nevertheless, as a YOS assessment of progress in Suffolk since the EYGV report observed:

'... clear oversight and governance of this area of work remain a priority and the relationships between the different partnerships involved in different strands of this work require clarification to avoid duplication and silo working.'

It is to this issue that the present research is a response.

The Research Brief

This research, commissioned by Suffolk County Council's Public Health Department (Community Safety), is an initial response to the recent increase in gang and drug-related violence amongst vulnerable young people in Ipswich. This violence is associated with a form of drug distribution described by the National Crime Agency (NCA 2016) as County Lines. The aim of the research is to provide an evidence base, advice and recommendations for the development of a multi-agency gang strategy in Ipswich. This research is the first of three related investigations which focus upon drug distribution networks and associated harms in Suffolk.

Definitions

Although 'youth gangs' are not a new phenomenon in the UK, governmental concern about the presence and proliferation of violent, armed, youth and young adult gangs is a relatively recent phenomenon. These concerns have prompted a fresh debate about the nature, extent and impact of these gangs on the socially disadvantaged communities in which most of them are located and their connections into criminal business organisations. Clearly there are numerous adolescent groups in the UK engaged in relatively innocuous adolescent misbehaviour and the term 'gang' is sometimes used indiscriminately in popular discourse, the media and the criminal justice system to describe them. We therefore utilise the tighter definition devised for *Dying to Belong* (CSJ, 2009):

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.

(Dying to Belong, 2009)

In its *County Lines, Gangs and Safeguarding* report (2016) the National Crime Agency (NCA) describes the way street gangs, exploiting vulnerable younger adolescents in both the major cities and out of town locations, distribute narcotics across wide swathes of the country using vulnerable children and young people. In their evaluation of the government's Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, Disley and Liddle (2016) describe how:

Young people were said to be given targets for selling and punished if the targets were not met. Train tickets would be bought in advance by 'the elders', and the fact that young people had valid train tickets for these journeys, which they would not normally be able to afford, provided evidence that their trips were organised,"

The NCA describe these groups as ‘Urban Street Gangs’, ‘Organised Crime Groups’ or ‘Dangerous Dealer Networks’. In his study of drug markets in Plymouth and Southend, Coomber (2015) describes similar groups as ‘Second Generation Street Gangs’; i.e. street gangs that have evolved into *de facto* criminal business organisations. In their review of the EGYV initiative, Liddle and Densley (2016) chart the metamorphosis of some localised street gangs from South and East London into sophisticated drug dealing networks since the inception of the EGYV in 2012. Some of these networks “cuckoo” or embed local sales points in the homes of vulnerable residents.

Suffolk Police are aware of over thirty County Lines trafficking drugs into Suffolk from several different urban centres. However, the present research focuses only on the County Lines supplying street gangs in Ipswich and their impact upon vulnerable gang-involved and gang affected children and young people.

The Research Methodology

This research involved a Literature Review, a ‘Rapid Assessment Exercise’, Individual and Group Interviews with professionals and young people concerned with and/or impacted by the gangs and drug markets, Stakeholder Feedback Events and a ‘Key Local Expert’ research strategy. All interviews conducted by the research team complied with agreed ethics and safeguarding procedures.

- *The Literature Review* aims to bring together recent research and scholarship in the areas of street gangs, organised crime, drug markets and child and adolescent exploitation relevant to the issues under investigation
- *The Rapid Assessment Exercise* is a tool for identifying, and summarising available qualitative and quantitative data, e.g. data held by health, educational and criminal justice agencies, relevant to the social phenomenon or practice issue that is the focus of an investigation, as comprehensively as possible, within tight time and budgetary constraints. It is therefore more suited to the development of policy and practice in fast changing situations than conventional academic research. RAEs are particularly useful for alerting policy makers to the need to intervene, and identifying appropriate interventions (at individual, community and structural levels).
- *The Interviews* were conducted by Dr. Paul Andell, Professor John Pitts and Ms. Liz Jones. They conducted 50 individual interviews and two focus groups with professionals who work with young people, and three focus groups with children and young people, some of whom are believed to be gang-involved. The data generated by these interviews was transcribed and analysed using the Atlas data analysis programme (see Appendix IV).
- *The Stakeholder Feedback Events* have consisted of both formal and informal presentations with opportunities for questions and written feedback from attendees.

- A *Key Local Expert* research strategy gathers data from informants who are 'key' in the sense that they can facilitate access to the extensive social networks to which they are 'gatekeepers' and provide unique understandings of aspects of their social milieu, by virtue of the roles they play or have played within it, and illuminate the meanings of behaviour that the researcher may not understand. As such, Key Local Experts extend the investigator's reach in situations where he or she has not, or cannot, be a direct observer.

The Emergence of Gangs and Gang Violence in Ipswich

The present research was initiated because of the concerns of professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors and the police about crime, youth gangs, drug dealing and distribution and the possible exploitation of younger children and young people in the Jubilee Park area of Ipswich. Jubilee Park is a children's play area in Westgate Ward, to the west of Ipswich Town Centre. Westgate Ward is an area characterised by high levels of social deprivation, being in the bottom 10% of the most deprived enumeration districts in England. It is also said to be the 'stamping ground' of J-Block a recently established local street gang with connections into drug distribution networks run by older people.

Those people have been in Ipswich for some time, and they probably wouldn't consider themselves part of J-Block. But there's people that are going to be connected and affiliated to them, that have been in Ipswich for donkeys. (R1)

Following complaints from the local residents, a range of interventions have been developed in the vicinity of the park, including the imposition of Dispersal Orders which give the police powers to disperse groups of two or more in designated areas where their presence or behaviour is likely to result in members of the public being intimidated (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003). The local authority and third sector partners have also developed projects that have aimed to provide constructive leisure activities for the young people of the area.

Whether these young people are actual gang members remains a contentious issue amongst professionals in Ipswich, with some believing that they are and others that they are not:

I think there's been a bit of an issue with it. And, I think people are still saying, no it's a group, not a gang. I've certainly heard that. So, I think because lots of people say, and I've heard this as well "Oh go to London that's a gang" So, they're not looking at it from where I suppose, I am and my other colleagues are looking at it. So yeah. My definition from the Home Office is that, they were a group and have now moved into a gang culture. (R2)

More recently, concerns about these young people have heightened because of an apparent increase in youth violence in the area. It is estimated that around 15-20 boys and girls below the age of 18 are involved in the illegal activities in the area, most of whom are known to, or are involved with, welfare services. Local authority professionals believe that five or six of the girls in the area, aged between 12 and 18, may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

Respondents in the present research say that they first became aware of the presence of the two main Ipswich street gangs, who styled themselves IP1/J-Block, and IP3/Nacton/ Q-Block, around 2012/13 and that this coincided with the arrival of 'gang members', initially from London but subsequently, although less frequently, from Birmingham and Liverpool, who were endeavouring to establish local drug dealing networks. Respondents suggest that J-Block is composed largely of White, African Caribbean and mixed heritage young people while Nacton/Q-Block is composed primarily of Black and, possibly, South Asian, young people. Both groups appear to have familial or friendship links with gang members in London.

There are 2 main crews Nacton and J-Block. J-Block is more established; made up of mainly young white and black men, (they have) ready access to London support (gang members) who are living and staying up here dealing under the J-Block banner. Nacton is more young black and Asian men. Nacton used to be vehemently anti Class A but now they're openly dealing on estates. (R1)

One thing we do see now is some of these local gangs, they do have males, that are either affiliated or originally from London. Whether they be youngsters or in their 20s. These people are either bolstering the numbers (in the Ipswich gangs). or looking after their bosses supply of class A It's difficult to say. (R3)

Estimates of the numbers of core members of these gangs (Elders) range between 10 and 40. Estimates of the number of Youngers, the runners, are even more speculative. However, respondents said that the YOS, CID (Criminal Investigation Department) and the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) had dealings with most of the young people involved.

County Lines, variously described, as we have noted, as 'Urban Street Gangs', 'Organised Crime Groups', 'Dangerous Dealer Networks' or 'Second Generation Street Gangs', have become a major conduit for illicit drug distribution in England and Wales for four main reasons: because big city drug markets are becoming 'saturated' (Windle & Briggs, 2015); because the competition with other local gangs has become too brisk and too dangerous (Pitts, 2017); because the dealers have become too well known to the local police (NCA, 2016) and because the gangs anticipate that they will meet with less resistance from the police and local dealers in new 'Country' locations (Drugwise 2017). But even when this latter belief proves to be untrue some groups are still prepared to take the risk because of the large profits to be made.

In my understanding of county lines it's that drugs come out of London in particular, in a sort of hub and spoke model, so drug markets are expanded further

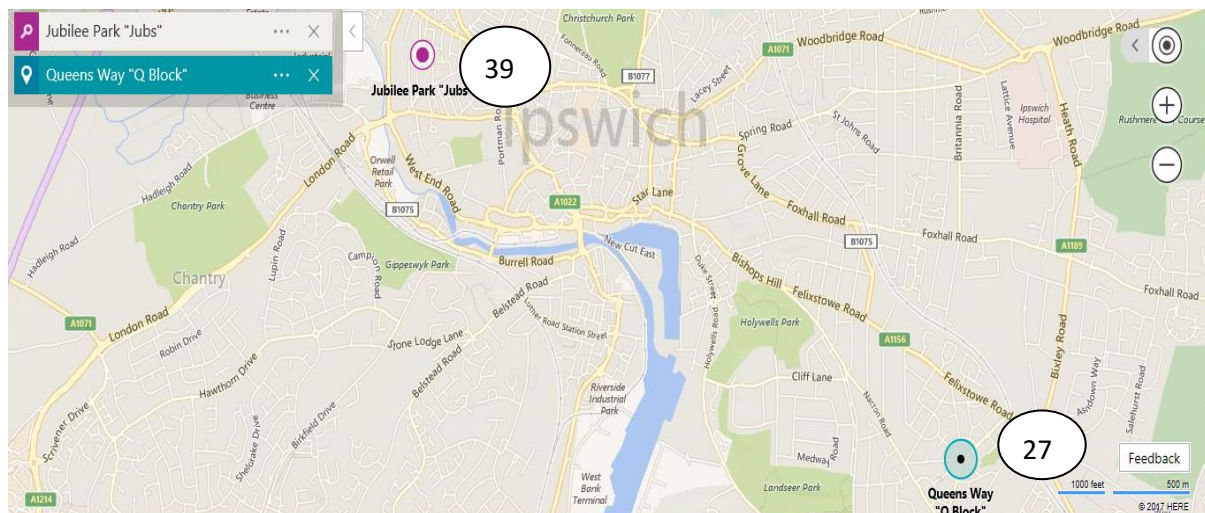
out into the surrounding Counties where there aren't established drug supply markets to start with. And with it comes, not just the drugs but the violence that comes with it, and particularly from my point of view, it's associated with the exploitation of children and vulnerable adults ... when I was actively involved in this area, the drugs were probably coming from the north London boroughs, Hackney, Haringey, Brent. But I know it's much wider than that, and I've certainly seen dealers coming up from Lambeth, Southwark; those areas. (R4)

County Lines did not just update the marketing and distribution of illicit drugs, they also acted as the conduit whereby the violent culture of some metropolitan gangs was insinuated into new locations.

What I'm seeing is some of them aren't just motivated by financial gain. It's what we're saying about the kudos, the respect, and it's also in the way that they change into a character, that they're perceived or expected to be. If you're working for a County Line, you must act like this, you must think like this, you must to a certain extent look like this". (R13)

When the government's *Ending Gang & Youth Violence (EGYV)* programme was launched in 2012 it targeted 30 gang-affected 'local areas', 19 of which were in London. By 2016 it was targeting 52 areas, one of which was Ipswich.

From 2012/13 J-Block and Nacton/Q-Block, emerged as recognisable street gangs. These gangs were effectively 'stage-managed' by established local 'crime families' and run, day-to-day, by seven or eight older adolescents, 'Elders', aged between 18 and 25. It is estimated by the agencies involved in face to face work with young people in these areas that the number of identifiable 'gang members' is 66 although the actual number may be considerably more.



The 'Youngers' aged from 12 or 13 upwards, who were attracted to J-Block and Nacton/Q-Block were quick to assume the attitudes and emulate the behaviour of the Elders who in turn were emulating the big city 'gangstas' running the County Lines.

As Coomber observes:

Elevated levels of violence in Southend-on-Sea (compared to Plymouth) were in part deemed to result from differences in the approach to transactional practice and also a level of cultural disjunct from, for example, the 'Somali' sellers; the broad expectation/acceptance of the practice of robbing vulnerable runners, and in the (very) occasional turf war resulting from 'gang' conflict.

A research respondent noted that:

I think that they're almost adopting the sort of perceived ideas of what gangs in London, and other built up areas in the country, might be. Which is these postcode wars ... there is probably going to be an element of it that involves having a greater share in the drug supply market ... There's been suggestions that they might have fallen out over females as well, where females have become involved with members of both sides, and that's only going to create friction as well. (R1)

Some of the 'Youngers' associated with the Ipswich gangs were the young people who 'hung out' in Jubilee Park. For these young people the attractions of gang involvement go beyond the relatively modest pecuniary rewards they receive because drug dealing offers an enhanced status and, for boys, a route to a plausible masculinity, which they feel is denied them in the conventional world.

My boy would not have been involved with J-Block if we had not moved over that area. Most of the lads who were involved he knew for years and used to play football with them ... When I asked him why he got involved he said he wanted to make me proud ... the thought of him involved with trap houses and gangs does not make me proud I just want him to be the best man he can be... (R5)

These young people are often drawn from poor ethnic minority families (Anderson 1999). They are the 'throwaway kids' stuck in the Care system (Fazal,2017). They are Loic Wacquant's 'Urban Outcasts' (2008) who find the home they are denied in the conventional world in a street gang. They are the odd ones out in high-achieving families. They are the ones who fall out of school into the Pupil Referral Units. They are the bewildered children of recently arrived asylum seekers. And because they feel they don't really belong anywhere they are eager to embrace the trappings of the 'Gangsta' lifestyle. As Jock Young (1999) has argued the young people involved in these gangs have often experienced both a denial of reward and a denial of recognition in the conventional world, but find both in the gang and the drugs business.

Asked about the upsurge in gang related violence in the recent period, YOT workers spoke of a 'perfect storm' comprising:

- Cutbacks in staff and resources leading to the closure or shrinkage of youth services

- The erosion of legitimate employment opportunities
- Benefit cuts
- The paucity of appropriate accommodation for young people in Care or released from custody
- The emergence of local street gangs
- County (drug) Lines
- Menacing music videos
- Gang rivalry
- No safe routes out of gangs once young people are involved largely because of drug debts

YOT workers pointed to a substantial increase in 'risk strategy meetings' called in response to reports that a young person appeared to be selling drugs, most of whom are associated with J-Block and Nacton or if a 'known' young person goes missing. In Suffolk, the police log between 10 and 15 people a day as Missing Persons (MISPERS). These meetings are called by the Area Safeguarding Manager although any other agency can ask for a meeting to be held.

Ends, Gang Conflict and Social Media

As with London gangs (Pitts, 2008, Harding, 2014, Andell 2016), in Ipswich violent inter-gang rivalry and periodic invasions of rival territory became a key feature of life in the gang. And because location is presumed to denote affiliation, 'Youngers' from the two-gang affected neighbourhoods, as well as young people who are not gang involved, were always in danger of violent confrontation with someone from a different 'End'. This has meant that the Ipswich YOT has had to limit young people attending appointments at their offices in order to avoid conflict between young people who are, or are assumed to be, gang rivals. Similarly, Westbridge PRU is careful to timetable young people from differing post codes at different times and ensure they are ferried through rival territories by taxi.

Recently this danger has been heightened because of the production by the rival gangs of videos on social networking sites 'dissing' their adversaries. This means that as the taunts and threats become ever more blood-curdling, the on-line audience grows and the possibility of backing-down evaporates. Simon Harding (2014) who undertook fieldwork in central Lambeth, writes:

The gang suffers further violation when images of the incursion are posted (marketed) widely on SNSs (Social Networking Sites). The violation is played out endlessly in cyber-space repeating the humiliation: each viewing endlessly diminishing the Street Credit of the gang. This is addressed quickly via an impact statement and a challenge – a Retort, quickly posted to counteract the damage done. A verbalised 'impact statement' denies any current or lasting damage by the

incursion, 'ain't no big deal', even suggesting it was permitted, 'we let you Bruv, so we could film you and know who you are'. A challenge is then made, inviting the visitants to repeat their win. Retaliation is promised in strong terms and the consequences for this violation made clear. By posting this Retort, the violated gang attempt to stem the damage done to their own Street Credit. As the drama now plays out in cyberspace, one negative advert is met with another. Those violated by the incursion now clamour to get 'face time' on screen in the posted Retort. Large numbers are corralled as evidence of support and the strength of the gang. Insults fly and individuals are singled out and targeted for 'dissing'.

As Harding contends, online taunts expressed through the lyrics of grime music can easily precipitate real violence. Recently, young people affiliated to an aspiring Nacton grime artist and made him say "Fuck Nacton" as part of a public humiliation. He was then beaten and slashed with a knife. This incident was filmed and uploaded to social media, precipitating a series of escalating tit for tat confrontations involving gang elders. These included the discharge of a firearm in a hostel, a firebombing and shots fired into the house of a rival. These increasingly violent actions involved adults who are currently subject to criminal charges.

Given their origins in the entertainment industry (Hagedorn, 2008) the styles and practices that gang members absorb from globalised 'gangsta' culture tend to be, preposterous caricatures of human behaviour. This means that affiliates are destined always to be 'wannabees', aspiring, and urged on by peers, to achieve ways of being which are unattainable. But 'wannabees' are the most dangerous kind of gang affiliates because they will do anything in their attempts to be accepted as the 'real thing'.

Girls, Young Women and Gangs in Ipswich

Research for the Children's Commissioner (Firmin 2015, Beckett et al 2013) suggests that for girls joining the gang tends to be a process of 'seduction' rather than 'coercion', sometimes following in the footsteps of an older sister, or more often, an older brother, who is already a gang member; or starting a relationship with a gang-involved boy or young man. Initially, at least, girls and young women tend to be attracted to gangs by the 'glamour' and the easy money but eventually find themselves locked into a set of exploitative relationships which are hard to walk away from (Firmin, 2009). For many of these young women the gang appears to offer an alternative to, and possibly protection from, a difficult or abusive family situation, 'real' friendship, and a sense of being appreciated and popular.

There have been changes in terms of the vulnerability of young women and more recently issues of child sexual exploitation. Females as young as 12 are vulnerable due to a lack of self-confidence and gang culture. They become trophies embraced by the gang and this makes them feel safer. (R7)

However in reality, gang involved girls and young women may be required to carry or conceal guns, drugs and money and also to sell drugs. If they are arrested, robbed by gang rivals, or otherwise fail, they can expect violent retribution. Whether gang affiliated or not, girls and young women living in gang-affected neighbourhoods are also at heightened risk of sexual violence and exploitation (Firmin, 2010, Andell & Pitts, 2012, Beckett (et al) 2013):

We certainly have seen lots of examples of young females being introduced into the gangs. They are being used for sexual gratification as part of that group set up. So they have sex with multiple partners and this is not necessarily consensual. And, we've also seen how these young girls are used to introduce other girls into these groups. So, they start out being a victim of exploitation, and then they move up to being the people, who introduce the next lot into the system. (R4)

You know another girl took two girls, to a males house, there was ten men in the house and, there was drugs, and alcohol. But luckily that little girl got out, ran and phoned her mum to come and get her. (R2)

After things had broken down with mum, it broke down with her dad, and then it broke down with her grandmother. I think she felt very alone, and very much as if she had to look after herself. I think you know the group she has become involved with in Ipswich while all of this has been going on. The group is now very much her family, it offers her the support she needs, plus she's getting the kudos, the self-esteem, because now she's quite high up in this group. We've been informed that she's actually recruiting other people. When you look at where she's come from and what she's been through, you can see that a lot of her needs have been met very well but she's still incredibly vulnerable in terms of drugs. (R8)

Some respondents believed that some gang-involved young women were being groomed to participate in group sex with gang members in East London.

They're all saying the same thing. I think the issue we had was from the county lines in Dagenham, well it certainly was Dagenham, some lads were coming down, so they would take some of these girls to Dagenham, they went to parties. You know they were exploited in the Dagenham area. (R2/1)

As research undertaken for the Children's Commissioner for England revealed young woman subject to sexual abusing gangs do not report their victimization to 'the authorities' because they know that these professionals are required by law to 'do something about it' (Beckett et al, 2013). And they fear that this could lead to further victimization of them or their families. This, as we argue below, highlights the importance of workers who are embedded in the gang-affected community who can develop relationships of trust with actually or potentially victimized young people embedded and help them to find solutions at their own pace.

The Evolution of Local Drug Markets

Until around a decade ago retail drug markets operated by street gangs in the major cities tended to be concentrated in, or adjacent to, gang affected neighbourhoods (Pitts, 2008). The street gang was the retailer, apparently supplied by different wholesalers with no affiliation to the gang. There were two main modes of distribution. Street-based *Open Markets* to which customers would travel, and *Closed Markets* in which retailers supplied a limited number of trusted customers from adjacent neighbourhoods who would place their orders by telephone or text. These orders would be delivered by gang 'Youngers' on bikes or mopeds. The 'Youngers' tended to be the ones who had face-to-face contact with customers while the 'Elders' assumed a lower profile, dealing with the drug wholesalers .

Today, drug dealing networks span the country and, as the NCA (National Crime Agency) definitions of County Lines suggest, the dividing line between street gangs and organised crime, the retailers and the wholesalers, have become blurred as older gang members have evolved into middle-market drug wholesalers. This proliferation of dealing networks has been facilitated in part by the concentration of gang-involved young people from different regions in the same prisons and Young Offender Institutions and by schemes designed to relocate gang members at risk of death or serious injury at the hands of their own or rival gangs, a long way away from the source of the threat.

Prior to the arrival in Ipswich of gangs from the metropolis, the local illicit drugs market was composed mainly of local user/dealers who, typically, travelled to a metropolis to buy drugs for themselves and their friends and associates. Ironically, it seems that the effective policing of this group may have 'paved the way' for the arrival of the metropolitan gangs.

About three years ago the town had a much smaller network of dealers, and dealer groups and, it was more controllable from an intelligence point of view. You had fewer people and fewer groups to focus your intelligence research on and this made it easier to target them. When they were effectively removed from the town and were no longer active in Ipswich, this opened up a void which had to be filled somehow, because the demand was still there. And then all different types of people, would try their hand at dealing drugs in Ipswich. And, some were good at it, and some weren't, and that was when we started seeing groups coming into Ipswich from London, using youngsters.
(R9)

North American research suggests that drug distribution networks emerge, grow and adapt to changing circumstances surprisingly quickly. Youthful friendship groups that dabble in the sale of drugs can rapidly evolve into more structured distribution networks (Ayling, 2011, Curtis and Wendel, 2014, Moeller, 2017).

The evolution of drug markets described by Curtis and Wendel (2014) has some similarities with what we know about developments in Ipswich in the recent period. Their research charts the evolution of 'messy friendship networks' into the 'shop floor' of sophisticated criminal enterprises. As the circle of users grows, the local market becomes a target for 'middle market' suppliers who then sideline local user-dealers or co-opt them, through reward or coercion, as street dealers, who, in turn, being unable to service the expanding market, draw other local young people into the business. This appears to have happened in Ipswich.

Meanwhile, because the price of illicit drugs is falling while its purity is improving, the local drugs trade, having initially been led by demand, now becomes supply-led with the franchised 'partners', and their newly recruited 'runners', coming under ever greater pressure from the metropolitan suppliers to expand the market 24 hours a day. But this expanded market quickly becomes attractive to other big city players who want 'a piece of the action'. So the market now also becomes a site of competition and, sometimes violent, conflict and this means the franchised 'partners' and, in particular, their runners come under further pressure because they must now also maintain market share.

There's a big drug market in Ipswich and moves towards improving the business with better quality gear available 24/7. Brand names go out by text such as "I'm with best of both" or "3 for 2" the business model of County Lines is very good.

(R10)

A brief scan of the local press indicates that the trafficking of illegal drugs into the Eastern region, and Suffolk towns in particular, by gangs from South and East London, along with the associated violence, has been evident since at least 2013. These periodic incursions have been met by police 'crackdowns' in which substantial numbers of London and local drug dealers have been arrested and jailed. Nonetheless, the trade persists because the potential rewards are such that the void left by the arrest and imprisonment of one group is rapidly filled by another.

Social changes saw young lads emerge who were aimless, not academic, but saw a niche in gang culture promoted through the media which gave them the means to earn a few quick quid. Knife carrying was unusual in the past but now 8 out of 10 people dealing have a weapon ...They have overt disrespect for the police and authority generally. It's been a quick transition to a dangerous situation over the last 5 years. (R9)

Gangs and Drug Markets in Ipswich Today

The available data on drug use in Suffolk between 2012 and 2016 (See Appendix I) tells us more about the activities of the agencies and organisations dealing with illicit drug use and drug users than the actual levels of consumption (Newcome 2007).

Arrests for *Possession* of Class A drugs appear to have been declining before recent targeted police activity which saw *Possession* arrests begin to rise, although charges for this offence declined. Both arrests and charges for *Possession with Intent to Supply* Class A drugs are declining and were at their lowest in 2016. This accords with our finding that the young people trafficking or delivering the drugs to an end user are usually carrying relatively small amounts. As we have argued, this was a deliberate strategy adopted by the groups orchestrating County Lines from London and those organising the distribution of the drugs in Ipswich. Action by the police has clearly disrupted the drugs market in the recent period but the problem remains that there is a larger pool of young people, or seasoned Class A drug users, groomed and ready to take over this role and replace those who have been arrested or deterred (Edmonds et al 1997).

Although as the graphs in Appendix I indicate, over the same period needle finds in Ipswich have doubled, the number of injecting drug users known to the relevant services in Suffolk has fallen by 150. This apparent discrepancy may be due to the reconfiguration of services.

The Class A drugs, heroin and crack cocaine, that reach Ipswich are delivered by young people, usually recruited in London, by train or driven in cars, usually hired under a false name, by metropolitan gang members. A respondent noted that the police seldom find large amounts of drugs and the 'drug hauls', when they occur, involve fairly small amounts. The couriers do this because if they are apprehended they will only lose an amount they can afford to lose. This is an economic calculation designed to minimise the loss of the commodity and maximise profit. It is also a way of avoiding a long prison sentence. It was the respondent's experience that couriers would bring enough to supply the market for one or two days and then other couriers would bring up fresh supplies. The dealers with the larger 'stashes' tended to be 'resident Suffolk suppliers' with no connection to County Lines, who tend to deal in cocaine and amphetamine, rather than crack and heroin.

The young people who deliver the drugs, like the gang-involved children and young people who deliver them in and around Ipswich are typically aged between 12 and 17. As we have noted, these 'Youngers' are often known to Children's Services but because their absences from home and school are usually fairly brief, they are seldom reported to Safeguarding professionals or the Police (Sturrock & Holmes, 2015).

Lads from London rarely use crack or heroin; its very much about the business for them. They come from various boroughs. South East is easiest for them, it used to be Woolwich CGM and Dockyard boys but they got busted. County lines are now

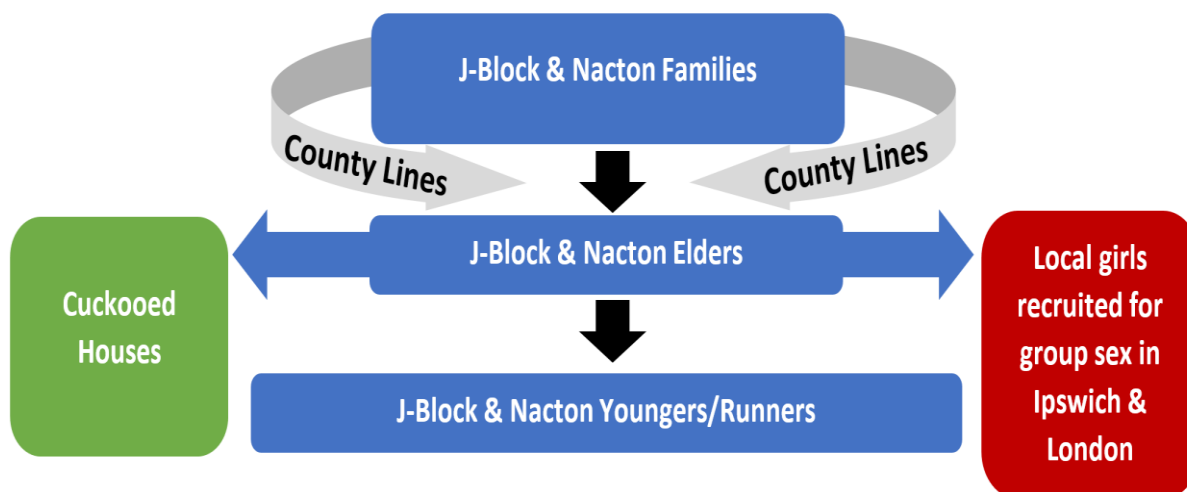
more organised at the London end, they are very good at it. They have the right people for the right task. 14-17 year olds sitting on a parcel in Ipswich, lots from care homes, they sit in an address and older lads in hire cars recharge supplies and take away the money. Young ones do it for a pair of trainers, its security for them, a feeling of worth and belonging - if they come from a broken home they will be looking for nurturing but they are being exploited by a smaller group who are making a fortune. (R9)

The gangs use children and younger adolescents because they are easier to control and, being young and having few, or no, previous convictions, are less likely to be known to the police. At the outset, they may be given relatively small amounts of money or presents; 'phones or expensive trainers, for doing this 'high risk' work. Initially they may be told that they have been specially chosen to play an important role in the gang (Sturrock & Holmes, 2015) but they are then informed that they are in debt and must repay the debt by working for the gang. In a further twist, gang members will sometimes arrange for these youngsters to be robbed of the drugs they are carrying so that they become indebted to them. If they protest, they are told that unless they keep working to pay off the debt both they and their families will be subject to violent retribution. While the police obviously have an important role to play in preventing this pernicious trade, the strategy also places the onus upon Children's Services and schools.

This said, interagency co-operation in relation to gang-involved children and young people in Ipswich appears to be bearing fruit:

There is now an agreement, between the police and Children's Services and it makes sense. If you're looking at drug dealing you are concerned with local children and young people so you stand a better chance, because everything is already here and contained within Ipswich. The parents are here, the kids are here, the drug dealing is here. They might be going to pick up their drugs in London but they've got to come back to Ipswich ... Housing professionals give us information too. Many times they've helped us to execute a warrant at an address that we didn't even know about, and it was only because the social housing group said, "Oh we've got this activity going on here. This person gave me this name or this phone number was given to me." All these little snippets of information help. There's more of a controllable environment in Ipswich. But when you're trying to deal with the county lines there isn't enough intelligence being fed between the two forces. (R11)

The drugs coming from the metropolis are usually hidden in luggage or taped to the bodies of the 'Youngers' who transport them from the metropolis on public transport, but they may also be secreted in the bodily orifices of the young people. This latter method, 'plugging', makes the trafficking more secure since the police have neither the equipment nor the powers to detect or detain these 'mules'. As we have noted, the pattern of supply appears to be 'little and often', or 'just in time' to borrow a term from commerce. This means that the class A drugs trafficked along County Lines are not usually 'warehoused'/stashed in Ipswich as they would be in a location like Plymouth which is much less accessible from the source of supply (Coomber, 2015).



Once in Ipswich the drugs are usually delivered to a residence taken over by J-Block or Nacton. Youngers from London or Ipswich are left in the “Trap House” to serve up drugs, keep the tenant under control and collect the money. This arrangement appears to be overseen by Elders from the metropolitan gangs. Evidence from the police and housing professionals suggests that the metropolitan Elders may be staying in a separate house or flat belonging to a vulnerable young woman with whom they have deliberately struck up a relationship, while trusted Youngers operate and manage the ‘cuckooed’ flats or trap houses belonging to a local Class A drug addict who is paid in drugs for the use of their homes or subjected to threats or violence to make it available.

These young men, along with the J-Block and Nacton Elders, are the middle managers of the Ipswich drugs business. They organise other Youngers who undertake the local distribution and collect payments. The drugs are packaged for sale and the Youngers and other drug users are sent off to deliver the drugs to end users and collect money from them.

From what I've seen we've got people as young as 12-13, being part of these groups. I don't know what age they become sort of criminally active, in terms of taking part in the supply. But certainly, those who are victims of exploitation are aged from 12 or 13, up to 18. But, actually we see that continuing up to 24 or 25.
(R4)

The Youngers who deliver the drugs to the end-users run four different kinds of risk. The first risk is that they might be apprehended by the police, the second that they might be attacked and robbed by members of a rival gang, the third, that they might be attacked and robbed by their ‘customer’ and the fourth, that they might be robbed on the orders of Elders from their own gang. In each case they would be held responsible for the loss and could then be subject to violent retribution from the Elders, or other Youngers directed by the Elders to mete out punishments. Although this relationship is obviously an abusive one, the young people are unlikely to see it that way, focusing

instead on the material rewards, the enhanced status, the sense of inclusion and, sometimes, the escape from a dysfunctional family, which gang involvement offers.

Violence is not an inevitable feature of drug markets (Coomber, 2015) and research identifies the factors which can foster or minimise its prevalence. Levels of violence are usually high if distribution is controlled by a gang (Taniguchi et al, 2011, Venkatesh, 2008). When buyers and sellers come from different areas and are not linked by any pre-existing 'community ties', violence is likely to be high (Johnson 2016). If, however the local community has a high level of 'collective efficacy' (the capacity to band together to mobilize the relevant agencies and individuals to combat the violence) drug-related violence will be low (Berg and Rengifo 2009). Interventions to mediate between the groups involved have also been shown to reduce violence (Jacques 2008, Werb, 2011).

It is evident from our interviews with a range of professionals that these Ipswich Youngers have also been spotted in Felixstowe, Lowestoft, Bury St. Edmunds and Leiston. This suggests, as was originally suspected by the professionals commissioning this research, that the County Lines which supply J-Block and Nacton, and the local crime families that effectively run these gangs, are at the centre of a drug dealing circuit which appears to supply many areas in Suffolk and may well be implicated in drug distribution beyond its borders.

Well they're drug running, and we know that because they've been arrested and they've had drugs on them. They are making their videos and they're very open about that. So, yeah, it's obviously not just in Ipswich, I mean it's all over Suffolk.
(R2/2)

Recent research pointed to the vulnerability of many young people in rural Suffolk who constitute a significant section of the market for these drugs

The research highlighted young people living complex lives. While attempting to negotiate progressions to employment and education, at the same time as overcoming rural accessibility issues, some also had to manage poverty, family caring responsibilities, homelessness and mental health issues. These complex and compounding challenges resulted in young people having restricted access to opportunities and a sense of being 'spatially locked-in' and disconnected.

(Sinha et al, 2017)

However as one respondent pointed out, the drug runners are often one step ahead of the police so when the police secure a warrant to raid particular premises the dealers quickly revert to dealing on the street and when the police respond to this they revert back to the previous premises-based model. This is much less likely to happen where houses have been cuckooed, with some houses being used for many years.

In a similar way to how vulnerable young people are groomed by gang Elders, vulnerable substance misusers and sex workers are also groomed by them. The Pro-

active Team observed that street dealers, often “cuckooed” vulnerable substance misusers who are directed to customers by phone, carrying up to 8 ‘wraps’.

Recently, there have been eight arrests of young London adults and children found in ‘cuckooed’ premises used to store and co-ordinate drug sales. Some of these Youngers are aged between 14 and 15. When arrested they were holding substantial amounts of cash and Class A drugs. In one operation, young people were found in possession of £1000 in cash and £5,000 worth of heroin and crack. These young people from London “work away” for several days at a time storing and replenishing supplies of drugs and collecting the money. These local dealing networks rely heavily on mobile phones to advertise drug sales, with group texts being sent directly to users for marketing purposes with messages such as;

“Serving up”, “Were on” and “T’s open”

SIM cards with the contact numbers of customers are of great value to both drug dealers and enforcement agencies. And the young people who look after the gang’s assets (drugs, money and SIM cards) are fearful of the retribution that would follow any losses so when they are apprehended they will attempt to secrete or ingest both drugs and SIM cards, which can prove to be very dangerous.

Accommodating Vulnerable Young People

Children and young people looked after by local authorities tend to be at greater risk of gang involvement. As we have suggested, this may be due to the social and emotional difficulties they have experienced and their need for a sense of inclusion. However, if they are located in a Children’s Home or lodgings with young people who are already affiliated to gangs, the likelihood of them becoming involved in, and/or exploited by, the gang is increased.

The problem (with a vulnerable young woman’s placement) is that four doors in one direction, and about eight doors the other way are three young people who are on our books. We are concerned because they are known to be part of J-Block. Although she’s on very limited money, £57 a week, she comes down here (to the YOT) in taxis! (R6)

This problem is sometimes exacerbated by the fact that some young people in Care are placed in Suffolk by other local authorities. These young people have not necessarily severed their ties with gang members in their home area and may be involved in expanding drug markets for their metropolitan associates. Young people leaving custody may also be placed in lodgings in Ipswich and if they have served a sentence for a gang-related offence they are likely to have done so in a Young Offender Institution with many other gang-involved young people from the London area.

The problems of a chronic shortage of appropriate accommodation in Ipswich and a

shortage of appropriately trained staff in the lodgings and B&B hotels where the young people are placed are compounded because, in many cases, YOT workers are not involved in placement decisions or the 'return interviews', when young people are discharged from custody. Yet it is often the YOS workers who have information about the group/gang affiliations of many of them and it is they who would be able to warn against placing particular people in particular locations. These placement discussions may be improved by routinely consulting YOS staff about licence conditions, group and gang affiliations. YOS involvement is also important because the YOT carries statutory responsibility for young people on Court Orders or post-custodial License. It is also the case that inappropriate placement in a location inhabited by gang-affiliated young people may put YOS workers at risk.

A View from the Street

Interviews were conducted with respondents who claimed to have personal knowledge of gang life. One was an older former user/dealer of class A drugs. One was the parent of a gang member. One was a gang-involved young woman. We conducted three focus groups; a boys group, a girls group and a mixed group involving a total of 22 young people aged between 12 and 21. Respondents came from a range of ethnic backgrounds including White British, White Eastern European, Black African Caribbean, and Black African. The largest ethnic group was of mixed heritage. Respondents spoke mainly about violence, grooming and sexual exploitation

A Changing Drugs Market

A former user dealer described changes from an older market model to a new one which he believed was precipitated by changes in youth culture and, in part, as an unintended consequence of police enforcement which had displaced the drugs market from Ipswich to rural Suffolk, thus paving the way for the establishment of County Lines.

The main change I saw was you had small cottage industries and a dealer's work was product-specific. With the advent of rave culture and the arrival of the poly-user we saw more people using a number of different drugs so it made common sense for dealers to change from selling a single product to selling multiple products marketed together. But you didn't want to know half a dozen different contacts.

As we have noted, the new marketing model was very different:

What I see now is much more commercial. People coming out constantly 'do you want this do you want that'. Yeah and that's again about that pyramid selling technique you know but the family allegiance is still there. The family

'restaurant' ... by getting access to that and actually being the one that comes to that door ... that rapport requires a level of trust. The dealer is trusting you not to give his name out and not to tell anybody where he lives. You trust him. A decent product a decent wage a decent price.

But they (city dealers) steal those gains. The family allegiances are clinging onto it but you've changed from a kingpin , the main dealer with a couple of people, to these unknown faces. It's a telephone number that you contact; you don't get that rapport with the dealer... It's much more dangerous. I mean the new round is about the open market drug delivery ... the phone comes out ... mountain bike delivery or a closed market working from a house which with the old school dealer that would be his home. But when you've got an open market of 10 hoodies on the corner, in a park, who would be replaced by 10 the next day, what is your quality control or your customer service should it all go tits up. So the big risk of going to somewhere like that is going to get robbed ... And going to be ripped off.

Research suggests that levels of violence in the drugs market depends on both the duration of the relationship between the user and the dealer and whether distribution is controlled by a gang or not (Taniguchi et al 2011, Venkatesh, 2008, Coomber, 2014). Referring to gang control of the market the respondent said,

Now it's not only for financial gain, it's about, you know, the kudos, the respect. They change into a character that they're perceived or expected to be. Yeah. If you're working for a county line you must act like this you must think another way and most certainly look like this (pulls a hard face). There's almost an occupational culture here. Definitely and with that comes the threat of violence.

This new model of distribution stands in marked contrast to the rural heroin markets described by Few (et al, 2004):

Generally, drug buying and selling had a marginal effect on the community. Where users were funding their drug use through crime, the offences tended to be committed in another town. Alcohol was considered in all sites to cause more problems.

A Parent's Story

The parent of a young man caught-up in the Ipswich drugs business believes that the recent changes described by the previous respondent have had a catastrophic impact on local young people.

In my eyes, there's only a few things that can happen, either you end up in prison, you end up seriously hurt or you end up dead. Right? And you end up, doing something that is not in your nature. You can become a killer when you aren't a killer. To me, none of these boys, the boys that I've met through my son trust me, they're not killers they're not even bad. The truth of it is they're not even bad lads, they're just lads who have had no-one, no family. The difference with my boy is he

has a family and I feel he was drawn into it more because of ... how to describe it, he shut me down.

This parent described the transition to gang involvement.

I think with them it starts off a bit like you're told, yeah a pair of trainers or something, you're told it's all cool. But you don't get that some of the lads who are older have lost all their feelings. Do you know what I mean, they've become so cold. They don't care what they're getting these youngsters into.

When asked the age of the Elders are who are involving these young people the parent replied cautiously:

Erm, I'm not saying as I know them I'm just saying what I would call older, I would say between twenty-five and thirty something ... I'm not talking about my age. I think by the time, if you get to my age and you're still in it then you're either fucked, as in you're out on the road and you're doing the crack and doing that shit and your still selling it to make a bit of money, or you're in at the top, no one knows you're in it, you're very high at a level that the police can't really, aren't able to get you anymore ... Like my boy was the lowest. You know you're handling it on the street, the easiest for the police to nick and if I'm totally honest that's what pissed me off a little bit. That's all the police are interested in they're not actually solving the problem. Cos you're just a kid like my boy you can find them ten a penny.

Like some other respondents, this parent asked whether valuable police resources were best spent on targeting low level participants in the dealing network.

There is a great deal of money to be made in the Ipswich drugs market. Our respondent estimated what young people like his son could be earning:

A week? I would say, roughly depending on how much they're grinding out, they're probably making five hundred quid a week, something like that (R: 'that's a lot of money') might be a bit more sometimes. Yeah course it's a hell of a lot of money for not actually physically doing anything ... in that world you'll feel like 'I'm not actually getting up', 'I'm not actually going to work'. But you're still being told what to do. You know they don't see it.

The respondent went on to comment on the exploitative nature of the work of a street dealer and the cultural values that are absorbed along the way:

My boy would never see it, but you're still being told what to do, when you have to be out on the street, and also you're obviously in serious danger, you know. But that's part of it a bit of an adrenaline rush, you know ... I'm gonna be totally honest, I think, to me, we're saying to a young generation that we've totally forgotten about, 'right we expect you to have these standards and these morals' but the actual morals and the standards that we as society are showing is basically saying 'fuck everybody, do what you want and get greedy as fuck'.

Reflecting upon the son's involvement in the gang the respondent mused;

You don't see it coming and of course you don't want them to do it. I ain't got a clue why it happened but something fucking got him, something like grabbed hold of him and made him think 'yeah this is it' ... If someone had said to me four years ago, five years ago, 'you're son will be out on the road, in trouble with the police, selling drugs, getting himself in trouble' I would have said 'not a chance, I take him to football, he's playing football, Saturdays, Sundays, he's doing alright at school, I used to do the parents evenings, I've been strict, I'm trying, as a parent.

The Story of Z

Z was accommodated in a residential children's home in Ipswich. Prior to this her lifestyle had been chaotic. Z is of mixed heritage. She had lived at home with her mother who was an alcoholic and her step father. She described school as difficult and says she was bullied. At age 11 she began to act out at school, slamming doors and throwing furniture. Later she began to truant, smoke cannabis and drink alcohol. She also stole from shops (mainly iphones to sell on for cash). As a result Z became known to the police who advised her to "fix up" (get her act together).

At age 15 she said she wanted to be more grown up to frighten those who were bullying her and so she started hanging out with older people in their 20s and she eventually began to drive for a local gang who were "bagging up" and delivering Class A drugs. She said she was bombarded with calls from male gang members who promised to look after her and give her gifts and money if she would work for them.

Z eventually moved on to selling drugs on the street in central London but received messages on Instagram which were flattering but also contained offers of more work selling drugs from flats or "trap houses". She would spend up to a month at a time working from "trap houses" occupied by young male gang members and drug users. She also mentioned that most of the time she did not get paid for this work. She said she also met lots of other young people who were also working in these flats and she formed friendships with some of them. She mentioned that she and others were ferried from place to place by older gang members to sell drugs and that sometimes some of the girls were expected to provide sex.

Z became increasingly involved selling drugs from flats in various towns and cities for a variety of gangs who she met over social media. Locations Z "worked" included Medway, Walthamstow, Wood Green, Hertfordshire, Camden, Southampton and Reading. For most of this "work" she received very little in terms of financial reward but was given food, some clothing, drugs and alcohol and the work gave her a sense of belonging. Z describes being taken to Walthamstow with 2 other girls in a car one aged 13 and the other 16 whom she described as "pick up girls".

In a "trap house" in Wood Green Z was separated from her friend who was taken to work from a different flat. Z was given a small pair of football shorts and a crop top to

wear but managed to call her YOT worker who made arrangements for her to get home. According to Z, being moved around to different trap houses happened many times to her and she claims this is also happening to many other young women.

She gave the example of having to escape from a flat in Reading where she and her friend were taken but separated. The people holding them had obviously expected her to have sex with them. Once back in London she met up with her friend who had been stabbed in the leg for refusing to have sex with an older gang member. The wounding was never reported and the older gang members threatened to come to London to exact revenge on Z and her friend for leaving the trap house in Reading. Z mentioned that her cousins managed to protect her from the elders who threatened them. She concluded that that “all gangs treat girls like shit”.

Space Safety and Sex

Many of the young women in our focus groups expressed fears regarding gangs and said that they did not feel safe in the Town Centre (around McDonalds and the Cinema) Cardinal Park, Jubilee Park and Stoke (the site of a recent gang fight). The back of McDonalds in the High Street was mentioned several times by some of the younger girls as a place where members of J-Block hung out to smoke weed. However, it should be noted that their fears were not limited to gang involved boys but also included older men outside of pubs and clubs in the town centre.

RG1: I don't like it... I mean I don't know, I mean I hate walking past a group of boys like in gangs. It makes me feel like really kind of small.

RG2: Yeah

RG3: like there's always a gang that like hangs out round the back of McDonalds and you walk past there and it just makes you feel really nervous to think that there are people there that could start a fight at any point.

Other older girls in the group did not display the same fears and said they might feel safer with gang members:

RFG: I don't like people who are like quiet boys ... I like hard boys. The bad boys like they're the hardest to like get with to get to like you. So I'm like, (postures) so some are like ... (postures again) so if I went out with someone in a gang yeah which I am yeah. And if he like cheated or did something that hurt me then I couldn't leave cos like you know I'm part of that gang now cos like I'm with him, so even if he hurt me or something then I'd still have to be in the gang and like hope that one of the other boys, yeah I'd have to try 'n' get with one of the other boys... I know I'm attracted to them kind of boys I can't help it I like the danger.

RG 6: I think that's what most girls like, most girls are into the bad boys and that's why most boys are in gangs...

RG 2: Yeah

RF G: to try and attract the girls because they'll know, erm girls like bad boys.

RF G: I think most girls join gangs because they're scared of what will happen if they don't join the gang,

RG 6: yeah like they think erm if they didn't join that gang then that gang would be after them. But if they join the gang then they can go after people with the gang so. And have backup if erm other people do want to fight them.

Some of the young women were keenly aware of the subordinate role played by women in gangs

RG 7: I always think the girls are just in gangs just for the boys to have a quick fuck. That's what I think like...

[Giggling]

RG 6: That's what the boys think like. That why I say like the girls are always there so like the boys can always have a quick fuck whenever they want. You know what I mean?

One young woman asked:

RG 5: So say you agree to do something with a boy yeah and during that time you ask them to stop and they don't...is that rape?

Researcher: Yes I think it is, I think it's very important, it's about feeling safe and as [...]mentioned before - that is if girls with gangs are sometimes just there so boys can have sex, then it's important that you understand that if you agree to go to a certain degree beforehand and then change your mind that that's ok. You can change your mind and that should be respected.

RG 6: That is nothing to do with this topic.

(The researcher arranged for Respondent 5 to explore the topic of consent with a worker in a private one-to-one session).

However, some of the girls in our focus group were also aware of the coercive or intimidating roles that girls involved with gangs can play:

RG 2: I think like sometimes the girls are like the worst ... when you think sometimes the boys are like 'oh I'll hurt you even if you're female'. That's just to scare you. But you know like if a girl was there and was like 'oh I'm gonna slap you' because they're a female, well not because they're a female, but because

you're female and they're female then there's like a lot more chance that they will actually hurt you I think girls are more intimidating because they, well, we, normally hold a grudge.

Feelings of being unsafe also concerned virtual spaces and most of the young people were aware of conflicts played out on You Tube and the danger that they could escalate into real life violent attacks.

RF 8: I told you about the two young lads in town and they were getting slapped about being told to say that Nacton is crap. Because that video got put onto social media and then so many people saw it.

RF9: Then groups of people went out to get the guy that posted this video and to get the guy that done it. But because it was talking about different generations of families it ended up being the fathers and uncles of these young boys who were only 13 and 14 who went after the guy who was, I think he was in his early twenties and I think potentially that was involved with the shooting that happened in town, you know where the front doors were shot up? And I think that was all part of that you know older family members were then going round and then following it up. Because the young gangs members had made the trouble.

Developing the Strategy:

Towards an Evidence Led Response

I know the Boards and the Chair of the Board, will say well this is our responsibility and that's not our responsibility. But, my view is this is a changing world and sometimes Boards have to rethink their areas of responsibility, to meet what's going on locally at the time and not necessarily the sort of the statutory agenda that's set for them. (R12/1)

In the mid-1990s leading figures in US gang research produced a summary of the evidence of the effectiveness of gang intervention (Spergel et al, 1994). The survey integrated the findings of research conducted in 45 cities in the initial assessment of the *National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program* mounted by the US Department of Justice.

The survey found that:

- The interaction of the strategies of community organization and opportunities provision was the single strongest predictor of programme effectiveness.
- The second most significant predictor was, inter-agency collaboration.
- In cities with an emerging, as distinct from an embedded gang problem, community organization and opportunities provision, plus a 'consensus on the definition of gang incidents' was the key factor in achieving effectiveness.

- The fourth most significant variable was agencies having an external advisory group.
- Together, these four variables accounted for 82 percent of the variance in the general effectiveness score in chronic gang problem cities.

Field visits suggested certain common elements associated with reducing the youth gang problem:

- Clear and forthright recognition of a youth gang problem.
- A consensus on a definition of the problem amongst these representatives (e.g. *gang, gang incident*)
- The mobilisation of political and community interests
- Proactive leadership by representatives of significant criminal justice and community-based agencies
- The specification of clear targets for agency and interagency intervention, and the development of reciprocal, interrelated, strategies.

In brief, successful strategies were characterised by a combination of suppression, social intervention, organizational development and the provision of social opportunities, supported by the politicians, professionals and residents of gang-affected communities.

The Comprehensive Gang Model

1. Community mobilization. Local citizens and organizations are involved in a common enterprise. The program consists of local police officers, probation officers, community youth workers, church groups, boys and girls clubs, community organizations, and local residents working as a team to understand the gang structures and provide social intervention and social opportunities whenever they can.

2. Social intervention. The program reaches out to youths unable to connect with legitimate social institutions. The youth, the gang structure, and the environmental resources must be taken into account before the youth is provided with crisis counselling, family counselling, or referral to services such as drug treatment, jobs, training, educational programs, or recreation.

3. Provision of social opportunities. Youths at different points in their lives need different things. Older gang members may be ready to enter the legitimate job field and need training and education to do so. Younger youths at risk of becoming gang members may need alternative schools or family counselling. The program should provide individualized services for each youth based on his or her needs.

4. Suppression. This not only consists of surveillance, arrest, supervision by probation and imprisonment to stop violent behaviour but also involves good communication between agency service providers and control providers. All providers jointly decide what happens to a particular youth when trouble arises or when it is about to.

5. Organizational change and development of local agencies and groups. All workers need to work closely with one another and collaborate. Former gang members working as community youth workers need to be given as much respect as the police officers in the program. Each group can provide important information for the program that the other may not be able to obtain

In 1994 the US Government launched a series of four and five-year demonstration projects testing the model developed in the earlier research in five different cities. One

of the larger programmes, the *Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Project* in Chicago (Spergel and Grossman 1998) compared outcomes for 195 program youths', who received some services, and 208 youths who received no services. In their evaluation of *Little Village*, the researchers concluded that:

- Targeted gang members experienced fewer arrests for serious gang crimes compared with the control group.
- The coordinated project approach, using a combination of social intervention and suppression was more effective for more violent youths.
- The sole use of youth workers was more effective for less violent youths.
- The programme was most effective in assisting older youths to reduce their criminal activities (particularly violence) more quickly than if no project services had been provided.
- Residents in target areas reported significantly greater improvement in community conditions, perceptions of gang crime, and police effectiveness.

In three demonstration sites there was no statistically significant change in arrest patterns, which Spergel & Grossman (1998) attribute to 'poor program implementation'. These communities had difficulty establishing successful interagency collaboration and tended to neglect one or more of the five required program elements.

Spergel and Grossman's findings are echoed in a meta analysis of nine studies of interventions in gang-related crime and anti-social behaviour in England, undertaken by the SSRU (2009). They found that integrated interventions had a positive effect in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour compared to the more usual, 'siloes', service provision if they included:

- Community involvement in the planning of interventions
- Community involvement in the delivery of interventions
- Expertise shared between agencies
- Case management/provision that was personalised to individual offenders
- Delivery of incentives to gang members to change offending behaviour, as part of a wider comprehensive intervention approach; for example educational opportunities, tattoo removal, financial assistance, recreational activities.

In a similar vein, research by Brand & Ollerenshaw (2009) suggests that integrated multi-agency gang strategies are successful to the extent that those commissioning or leading them are able to exert control or influence over:

- The credibility and capacity of the strategy
- The commissioning of the strategy

- The integration of community members, particularly young gang-involved/affected people into the strategy
- The coordination of the strategy
- The targeting of local interventions
- The review of the strategy

The involvement of gang-affected young people in the development of the strategy, would suggest a rights based approach because, in gang-affected neighbourhoods, pressures upon children and young people to become gang-involved are sometimes huge and, as recent research demonstrates, parents and children often feel isolated, threatened and powerless (Braga et al 2001, Pitts, 2008, Harding, 2014, Beckett et. al. 2013). A 'rights-based' approach would, ideally be facilitated by street-based youth and community workers and would aim to place greater control in the hands of the people experiencing the problem. As Crimmens (et. al. 2004) who undertook a national study of street-based youth work observe:

An awareness of the importance of the community sometimes leads on to work aimed at encouraging young people to take more active roles in their communities. ... Such work can only be undertaken effectively by workers with an understanding of political processes. For these workers, face-to-face practice embraces a remit to work with local representatives and institutions as a means of facilitating the participation of young people or, in some circumstances, representing their interests:

A rights based approach views children's participatory rights and their protective rights as two sides of the same coin because, as many young people have observed, rights only have value if they are known, relevant, enforceable and supported by strong adult advocacy (Dalrymple & Boylan, 2013). Thus, a rights-based approach is central to an embedded, neighbourhood-based, intervention designed to enable people to exert greater control over the practices of the professionals working in their communities by equipping them with the relevant knowledge and skills, while opening-up access to the places where key decisions are made. But, crucially, it also supports them in taking collective action to confront and exert control over the people who are threatening them and tearing their neighbourhoods apart.

Developing an Effective Practice

Research emphasises the need for continuing, and sometimes protracted, involvement with gangs, gang-involved and gang-affected young people, and adults, by professionals in order to divert would-be 'gangsters', promote the desistance of those who are deeply involved in gang culture, prevent sexual violence and exploitation and build the capacity of local residents to 'reclaim' their neighbourhoods from the gang and the predatory groups exploiting young people (Spergel, 1995, Spergel & Grossman 1998, Braga, 2004, Crimmens et al 2004, SSRU, 2009).

This process can be facilitated by youth and community workers who would initiate a programme of what, in the USA, is known as *Community Organisation*. Community Organisation involves building consortia and helping the community groups, agencies, organisations and schools within them to decide which aspects of the local gang problem they are best equipped to deal with. Community organisers are then able to identify gaps where local authority resources might be used to develop a comprehensive, scaled, service in which different kinds of services would be delivered to young people with different levels of involvement in, or who were differentially affected by, gangs. Beyond this, the consortia, supported by youth and community workers, could also serve as a base for a community development/capacity building strategy in the gang-affected neighbourhoods.

Recent research tells us that in gang-affected neighbourhoods in English towns and cities, although the violent and sexual victimisation of children and young people may be commonplace it is seldom reported (Beckett et. al., 2013). This is because of a widespread belief amongst young people in these neighbourhoods that ‘the authorities’ are powerless to stop it and that official intervention might well make matters worse by setting them up for further victimisation. Most young respondents were pessimistic about the possibility of change and feared that the situation was, if anything, getting worse; not least because of the closure of local youth projects, mentoring schemes and street-based youth work programmes. This withdrawal of public services tended to compound their sense of fatalism.

The problem is that like many of the projects set up under the auspices of the EGYV programme, the agencies and organisations established to protect and ‘safeguard’ these young people are essentially reactive; intervening after the event, in response to an incident or a referral and putting victims or perpetrators through time-limited agency-based programmes (Pitts, 2017). This is because, in the UK, many ‘safeguarding’ and criminal justice agencies are still working to a model in which expertise is located within a bureau staffed by specialists to which the hapless victims or the culpable perpetrators are taken to have their victimisation or their offending worked on by the experts.

But for these young people the risks are out there in the gang-affected neighbourhood, where the experts seldom venture; the perpetrators are their peers and the problem lies, first and foremost in the dynamics of the neighbourhood rather than the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of particular young people ensnared in the social field of the gang. The young people know this but they also know what kinds of support and intervention, in the neighbourhood, in the school and in the peer group, could ameliorate their situation. They are also aware that, all too often, the victims of gang crime, particularly young women, are regarded as in some way responsible for their own victimization (Firmin, 2015).

Abstracted, bureau-based, responses to the gang problem may improve the lot of some gang-involved individuals. However, they cannot anticipate gang violence and victimisation in order to make pre-emptive interventions. Nor can they respond to the, almost invariably unreported, victimisation of gang-involved and gang-affected girls and young women and their parents (Beckett et. al. 2013). In particular, they cannot mediate between potential adversaries in inter-gang violence which is the forum where most gang fatalities occur. In short, most safeguarding and criminal justice agencies are destined to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is at least unfortunate since the research tells us that a key feature of effective gang strategies and gang mediation appears to be that the workers are embedded in the neighbourhoods and the groups involved in, and most affected by, gang crime (Spergel & Grossman, 1998, Braga et al 2001, Pitts, 2008, Centre for Social Justice, 2009). These workers are best placed to undertake an assessment of the gang problem, to work with local agencies, organisations and community groups, to establish with which aspects of the local gang problem they are best equipped to deal. Moreover, it is only when gang-involved and gang affected young people are engaged in such a strategy that their fatalism and nihilism can be called into question by their experience of making better things happen, and their reflexivity mobilised in the struggle to effect bureaucratic, neighbourhood and individual change.

What Youth work? (ironic laughter). Not that we are aware of. That's part of the difficulty isn't it, like XXXX run enough physical activities for young people which is great, for those that want to engage. It's the detached Youth Workers that will go over and approach kids that don't want to talk to professionals, that's kind of what I feel is lacking really. (R12/2)

Yeah, the Make A Change Team have got some really good workers, who do have the capacity to get out into the community and they have got lots of local knowledge, like with some of the work that we have been doing with the Roma community. (R12/3)

We have been linking in with the police, and we have a roving youth worker who goes out with the YOS worker and a PCSO, and their awareness about what's going on in the Jubilee Park area of town has really been enhanced by just going out. Going out and seeing and talking to people, rather than just being sat in an office. (R12/4)

Educationalists, schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) etc., are often left out of gang strategies. This is not the case in Suffolk however where schools have been closely involved in the development of gang strategies. All school-age children are required to attend school. Unsurprisingly, the evidence suggests that schools and PRUs which serve gang-affected neighbourhoods are likely to be the places where vulnerable children and young people are 'groomed' and recruited by gang members (Pitts, 2013). The people doing this may be older boys or girls who are students at these schools and PRUs, or

older adolescents who hang around the entrance to the school during breaks or at the end of the school day. In some cases they will arrive by car to 'pick up' youngsters who want to be, or are coerced into being, gang-involved.

School-based information programmes like the MPS's *Growing Against Violence*, which aims to deter young people from gang involvement have been evaluated positively (Densley, 2013) but work is also needed to support school staff to help them recognize signs of 'grooming' and the behaviours they might expect from young people who have been 'groomed'. Unexplained absence is a key indicator of probable gang involvement and systems for identifying these absences quickly, and informing the police, the safeguarding authority and parents is essential to safeguarding these vulnerable young people and Suffolk appears to have developed a remarkably robust system for achieving this.

Counselling and psychological support are regarded as key components of most gang exit strategies. Yet, for young people, finding the service that fits their needs can be very difficult. As several of our respondents observed, young people who do find their way to a service that deals with drug abuse may also want help with family relationships, sexual relationships, their benefits, and mental health difficulties. However, nationally, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are under extreme pressure and young people may have to wait several months for an appointment when the severity of their problem requires a response 'right now'. Research also tells us that onward referral to another specialist agency is seldom successful with 'evaporation rates' topping 60%. One of the reasons for this is that they grow tired of telling their 'story' to helping professionals again and again. This would suggest that the various young people's counseling services in Ipswich might usefully merge into a 'one stop shop' in which one worker endeavours to deal with a range of problems and that they are supported by specialists as and when this is necessary. This would suggest that CAMHS offer training and clinical support to the counseling team only picking up individual cases when the young person's difficulties are too complex or too pressing to be dealt with by the counseling team. Such a service could work closely with an embedded gang intervention team in order to facilitate a 'seamless' referral.

Building a Partnership

The main gap is that we don't have what I would consider to be a robust strategy a robust multi-agency strategy. I think you can do all sorts of wonderful things. I think people are doing all sorts of well-meaning work but it is not properly knit together under the auspices of one overarching strategy. From that strategy we can determine properly what the gaps are. I think there is a need for enforcement but we need to know exactly what we're dealing with to know what we should be enforcing in the same way that we need to be looking at issues around prevention.
(R3)

XXXX goes to a lot of the meetings as well, I think you've been involved in some of those as well and community safety partnership meetings. And then there's a Westgate Ward meeting which is the Councillors from the Jubilee Park Area meeting every month, which I attend. There's loads, there's loads and loads of meetings everywhere, too many, and all kind of discussing the same thing, and not being very joined up. (R12/5)

Research undertaken by van Staden et. al. (2011) found that a large amount of time was spent identifying the roles potential partners could play and, crucially, what the benefits would be for them if they joined a partnership to combat organised crime. The researchers therefore recommended the development of a 'toolkit' detailing:

- The range of partners that could play a useful role in tackling organised crime at a local level
- Which aspects of the problem each agency is best equipped to address
- Their respective powers and responsibilities and hence the roles they are able to play in any partnership and:
- The benefits, both professional and fiscal, that they will gain by virtue of their involvement in the partnership

In initiatives like gang strategies which involve the onward referral of gang-involved young people, there is a tendency to include in the partnership only agencies and organisations associated with crime and justice, child protection or special or compensatory education. Yet, in many towns and cities, professional football clubs and private sector employers like Sainsburys and Timpsons have played a central role in the rehabilitation of gang-involved young people. What they offer is an experience of involvement in normal daily life with people who are not 'service users' which, more than most other interventions, avoid the associated stigma. It is also the case that many local employers and entrepreneurs can be found in the boxes at professional football matches on Saturday afternoons and these are the people who hold the key to the non-stigmatising, status-conferring, jobs which offer a plausible alternative to gang involvement.

We cannot assume at the outset that collaborating agencies have sufficient knowledge about each others' responsibilities, expertise, organisational structures and priorities. As Moore (1992) observes:

We take on the values and philosophies of (our) profession and the basic concepts and assumptions which form the frame of reference which we use as the set to solve the problems within our own purview. The tools and methods are self-evident to us but not to other disciplines.

A respondent in the current research said:

No I don't think we've got a long term plan yet. We are still reactive to problems as

they emerge. We're trying to deal with them as they gather pace. Until people are focused on the fact that we need a wider plan and a coherent long-term policy or plan we will continue to deal with things piecemeal. I think communication and information sharing between agencies is getting better. I think that's always been an issue. You can read our policy about working together but it's the interface of agencies where the friction often arises in terms of sharing information. But this is critical to forming a solution that works. I know what my immediate structure is in terms of the exploitation strategy but I am much less confident in knowing what other departments in the local authorities are doing to address these issues. And I am fearful about replication; people just doing the same work on the same issues but not sharing and communicating what they're doing and not knowing that anybody else is working on that. (R1)

We note below that getting to understand these dimensions of another agency's work is fundamental to effective collaborative working. This is particularly so with regard to an agency's 'targets'. Collaboration may be attractive to an agency because they believe it will help them achieve their 'targets'. This is not unreasonable, but if trust is to be established each of the partners will need to be frank about 'what's in it for them' and the limits of their contribution from the outset.

The research suggests that successful collaboration is based on a combination of:

- Good communication between partner organisations (McGarrell, et al 2006, Senior et al, 2011),
- An acceptance by partners that the benefits of partnership, both professional and fiscal, outweigh the disadvantages (Gray, 1985),
- Clear shared objectives (Dawson, 2007)
- Practical 'buy-in' by the agencies (Hope et al forthcoming)
- The availability of the necessary resources, particularly staff time (Pitts, 2012),
- A willingness and ability to share information (Pitts, 2012)
- Good 'strategic oversight' (McGarrell, et al 2006),
- Strong administrative arrangements

Realism is also important as a national study of street-based youth work (Crimmens, et al, 2004) suggests:

Positive partnership working ... is also predicated upon an open acknowledgement that agencies have different legal and administrative responsibilities, working styles, professional boundaries and are unable always to share information. Respondents who spoke positively about partnership working acknowledge the constraints under which other agencies labour, stressing the need for sensitivity and the investment of time and energy in joint training, clarification of managerial responsibilities, line-management arrangements and the harmonisation of agency protocols.

Davison (et al, 2010) emphasise the need for scheme champions in collaborative work, while Gray (1985, 1989) found that if the problem to be solved or the benefits to be gained from collaboration are not obvious to potential partners, a 'champion' with a new narrative', which identifies the scale and nature of the problem/task and its likely impact upon the agencies and their clientele, but also offers access to the places where decisions are made, is imperative. Indeed, Atkinson (et al 2007) maintain that:

a vital sine qua non for successful interagency collaboration' was the presence of a new type of 'hybrid' professional with experience in and knowledge of a range of agencies and, in particular, an understanding of their, cultures, structures, discourses and priorities.

Similarly, Hope (et al, forthcoming) posited the need for partnerships to be led or facilitated by 'meta-professionals' who bring experience in, and/or knowledge of, a range of agencies and, in particular, an understanding of their cultures, structures, discourses and priorities. In the Health Service this role is played by workers described as Care Navigators who endeavour to ensure that the services fit around the young person rather than the other way around.

Collaborative responses in the criminal justice sphere, in which information is shared and action is then taken by a plurality of agencies can be extremely effective (see for, example, Florence et.al. 2007 and Pitts, 2012). In his evaluation of collaborative working in Operation Challenger, a Greater Manchester Police initiative to combat organised crime, Pitts (2012) found that the most commonly identified difficulty concerned the complexities of data protection legislation and the struggle to harmonise the plethora of agency data-sharing protocols which multi-agency working requires.

Information and Data Sharing

Problems of information and data sharing were also raised by several of our respondents. One spoke about information sharing in relation to county lines:

So, for example if you were to check an individual that was stopped in a car in Ipswich or found at a known address or arrested in possession of a large amount of money, and when you check them on your police systems, alarm bells ring and it shows they're a gang member from London. This should really be shared with the Met. I could submit intelligence and ask for it to be shared with the Met but I've got no idea who's going to be looking at that. So quite often, I'll try and do my own bit to find out which gang the suspect is in and the borough it's in, or whether he is known to Operation Trident. I think now the police are trying to get back to sharing information; realising that what goes in has to come back. (R9)

Another was concerned about inter-agency information sharing:

I think just getting the right people in the room, to say 'look we have a duty to share this information, you know, you've got to be up for it!' You know, it may not

be anything more than a common e-mail address where people can send stuff. It doesn't need to be high tech to be effective, but it requires the will to be effective ... We are protecting our information. And I was at a meeting the other day, we were talking, talking about making something multi-agency, and then somebody said, this meeting has a part one and a part two. Well I said, that's just absolutely ridiculous. What trust does that engender, that we're happy to hear everything you say, but actually we'll need our own little meeting, to discuss the stuff that we don't want you to hear. You know, if we're going to solve this, you know, we need to take some risks around that sharing of that information. (R4)

We do generic Protecting Vulnerable People Assessments with a Red, Amber, Green at the MASH. But database systems do not talk to each other. Care First (social services data base) and Athena (Police data base) should connect. (R9)

Inevitably, different agencies will use several different databases and there is seldom a single 'gatekeeper' who can mandate the sharing of information between them. As a result, partners usually have to approach several different people/agencies if they wish to update themselves on a particular situation or young person.

The Health Service, in any work commissioned by them, appears to be particularly wary of sharing information because of 'patient/client confidentiality', while other agencies are concerned about their own agency's information sharing protocols and 'client confidentiality'. However, because many professionals are unclear about what these protocols require and how they should be interpreted they are reluctant to share information in situations where it might well be permitted. Thus, information sharing tends to be constrained not only by agency protocols but also by the willingness and knowledge of individuals holding that information.

We need to be more transparent with the public about drugs and the motivation it provides for crime -not many people wake up in the morning and feel the need to burgle someone's house, they do it for drugs. We need a way of making it better, we want to make a difference but need cooperation from other agencies. For example treatment agencies need to share the burden. (R1)

The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) defines the law on the processing of data on identifiable living people. Although the Act does not mention privacy, it was enacted to bring UK law into line with the EU Data Protection Directive (1995) which required Member States to protect people's fundamental rights and freedoms and in particular their right to privacy with respect to the processing of personal data. However, beyond the legislative constraints on information sharing that the Act imposes is the human factor:

You've got a policing purpose to go to that hire company and say 'can you tell me about who owns this car, because I've got a bit of information that it was in the wrong place at the wrong time.' One quick phone call to them does it but officially we have to keep submitting a data protection form every single time to a different person in that company to find out that information. It seems like it's a very long-

winded way of going about it. Whereas if you can overreach these things by having overarching data protection forms in place, that allows that for 12 months you have a single point of contact. So, you phone that person up and you go, 'Hi it's XXXX.' and they go 'Hi, how are you?' blah, blah, blah, and they give you the information. Done! (R9)

The Act is complex, open to interpretation, not widely understood, and carries significant penalties for breach, with fines of up to €100,000 and the possibility of imprisonment. As a result, agencies and organization that hold personal data have tended to interpret the Act conservatively. Beyond this, if partners feel that they, or their contribution to a joint project is not valued, this will serve as a further disincentive to data sharing. In complex multi-agency collaborations, early involvement of legal advisers to clarify where the red lines fall in terms of what can and cannot be shared within the different data-sharing frameworks of the agencies involved can speed-up the process significantly. Barriers to sharing data are often more perceived than real, borne of anxiety on the part of those receiving information requests.

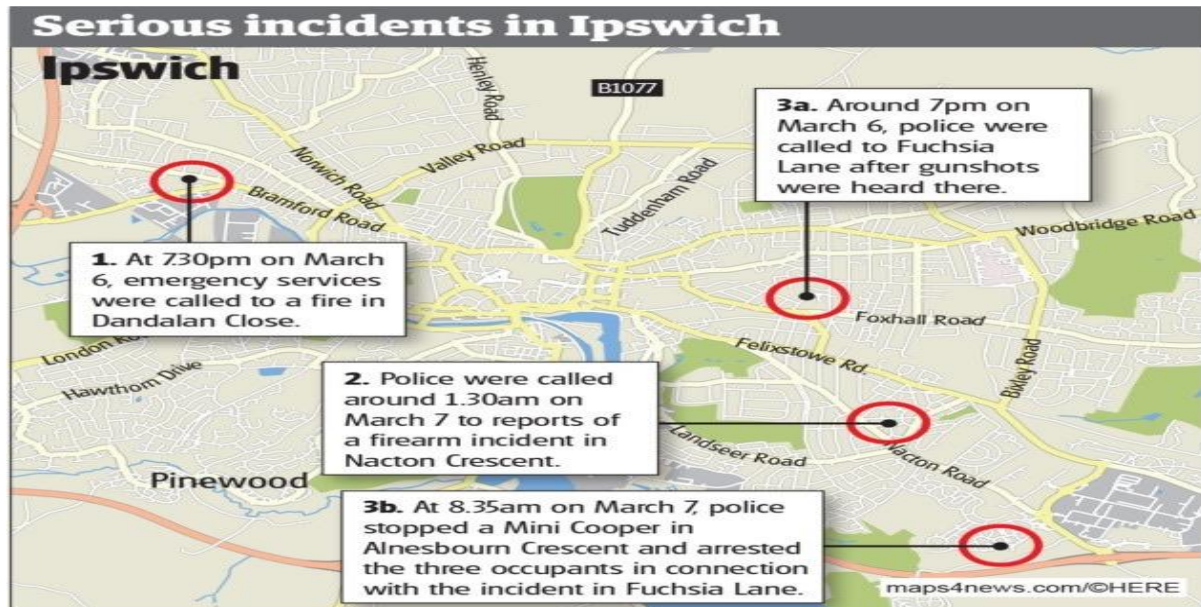
One of the most common barriers to information sharing is a misunderstanding between agencies and organisations about exactly why data is required and the purposes to which it will be put by the agency requesting it. This accounts for many of the difficulties welfare and criminal justice agencies experience when working with 'Health'.

To avoid a piecemeal consideration of the legality of sharing data, one option is to put in place a Service Level Agreement (SLA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the organisations and agencies concerned. This is an administrative, non-legally-binding, arrangement which enables all parties to set out in one document the types of information they want to share, the purposes for which they want to share it, the way in which the integrity of the data and its security will be ensured and the general parameters for how the data will be shared. In drawing up the SLA or MoU, consideration should be given to justifications for sharing this type of data for the purposes of a particular initiative, taking into account the different legal gateways on which the various agencies and organisations rely. This should avoid the need to undertake this detailed consideration again, every time a piece of information needs to be shared. As van Staden et. al (2011) say in their report to the Home Office on partnership working in criminal justice:

Work should be commissioned to develop a standardised information-sharing protocol template for the purposes of sharing information ... which can be adapted to suit local circumstances. This template should be agreed at a national level and should include information on the implications of existing legislation around personalised information sharing for partners sharing information locally.

Enforcement

The shooting and firebombing in the Nacton area in March 2017 appears to have been a 'game-changer' in that it presented the public and concerned professionals with the shocking reality of the risks to which some adults and vulnerable young people in Ipswich could be exposed.



Mrs Harsant, who is a member of the Community Safety Partnership, said: "We will be looking at all these incidents. I think it is really concerning. "I know the police are running a big operation on drugs. "People are worried in my ward. People are a little bit apprehensive about walking around the town. It's a little bit worrying because you could get involved unintentionally.

(East Anglian Daily Times, 17th March, 2017, p1)

Innes & Fielding (2002) would describe this as a signal crime or event because:

In effect, the crime or incident is 'read' as a warning signal by its audience(s) that something is wrong or lacking, as a result of which they might be induced to take some form of protective action. In addition, the presence of this signal will shape how the person or groups concerned construct beliefs concerning other potential dangers and beliefs.

Slovic (1992) suggests that if a signal event is not met by a robust official response, potential perpetrators may conclude that there is a diminished risk of apprehension and the signal event may become the cause of an escalation in the seriousness of these crimes. At this point, Slovic argues, a 'threshold' or 'tipping point' is reached. This argument is akin to Wilson & Kelling's *Broken Windows* thesis (1982).

Signal events suggest that 'the game has changed' and an effective intervention needs to send back a signal that the response is changing too. Just such a signalling strategy was at the heart of *Operation Ceasefire* the multi-agency Boston gang initiative developed in

the 1990s. In the late 1980s Boston Massachusetts experienced an epidemic of gang-related firearms homicides in some poor inner city neighbourhoods. Between 1987 and 1990 gang related murders rose from 22 per annum to 73. From then until 1995 they averaged 44 a year.

Launched in 1996, Operation Ceasefire drew upon Spergel and Grossman's Comprehensive Gang Model (see above), to bring together practitioners, researchers and local people, including gang members, in gang-affected neighbourhoods to undertake an assessment of the youth homicide problem. Recognising the suspicion and hostility that many local people felt towards the police, prior to launching the intervention officers spent months working with community groups to improve local services and enhance youth provision. Having done this, they proceeded to implement what David Kennedy (2007) describes as a

...focused deterrence strategy, harnessing a multitude of different agencies plus resources from within the community.

The objective of *Operation Ceasefire* was simple enough, it aimed to save lives and reduce serious injury. It did not aim to 'smash' gangs, although defection from gangs was a side effect of the initiative. In Boston's gang affected neighbourhoods, certain proscribed behaviours, like possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults, would trigger highly publicised multi-agency crackdowns by organisations with enforcement responsibilities.

This approach involved deterring chronic gang offenders' violence by reaching out directly to gangs, saying explicitly that violence would no longer be tolerated, and backing that message by pulling every lever legally available when violence occurred ... When gang violence occurred, a direct message (was sent) to gang members that they were under the microscope because of their violent behaviour.

(Braga et al, 2001)

The strategy had three elements:

- Enhancing community relations to get local support for targeted crackdowns, thus stimulating community 'collective efficacy' in the development of informal social control and the reduction of incivilities.
- Engagement with gang members to elicit information, transmit consistent messages about targeted crackdowns and provide diversionary services for gang involved young people:
- Co-ordinated leverage on gangs through highly publicised multi-agency crackdowns on certain specified behaviours i.e. possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults.

An analysis of the impact of *Operation Ceasefire's* by the *John F. Kennedy School of Government* at Harvard, which began in 1996, concluded that the programme had been responsible for a fall in youth homicides from an average of 44 per annum between 1991 and 1995 to 26 in 1996 and 15 in 1997; a downward trend which continued until 1999. However, with a change in project staff, and project philosophy, which resulted in the social intervention elements of the programme being abandoned, gang-related youth homicides began to climb again, reaching 37 in 2005 and peaking at 52 in 2010.

The Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS) modelled on *Operation Ceasefire*, was launched in 2002, in the wake of research undertaken by Karen Bullock & Nick Tilley (2001) which revealed that between April 2001 and March 2002, South Manchester gangs were responsible for 11 fatal shootings; 84 serious woundings and 639 other incidents of violence involving firearms. Although MMAGS was, in effect, a statutory partnership, it had an Independent Advisory Group including community representatives and it met regularly with *Mothers Against Violence*, *Victim Support* and several other local voluntary sector organisations.

MMAGS, based on Operation Ceasefire in Boston, USA, utilizing detached youth work, in-house educational/welfare programmes, peer mentoring and the development of customised educational, training and vocational opportunities had a remarkable impact upon the young people it targeted. From 2001 it played a major role in the steady reduction of gang-related firearms discharges, deaths and associated injuries.

The other key element in the success of the Manchester gang strategy was the creation of the Xcalibre gangs unit, launched by the Greater Manchester Police in August 2004; charged with creating 'gun free streets' in Greater Manchester. Xcalibre has three elements:

- A small squad that focuses on the criminal business organisations supplying firearms and Class A drugs to gangs.
- A critical incident team that investigates gang-related shootings
- The Xcalibre Taskforce; a team of one inspector, two sergeants and 15 constables.

The Xcalibre Taskforce team set out to identify the young people and adults who were actually involved in gangs and gang crime and to meet them on the streets. The teams went out on patrol every evening, sometimes with MMAGS outreach workers and peer mentors, covering the areas where gang-involved young people congregated. They adopted a policy of never driving past a suspect but always

stopping and talking to them. What they talked about were the risks to the gang members, their families and friends from continued gang involvement.

In the case of intervention with the criminals operating County Lines and the exploitation of vulnerable children and young people in the drugs business, Cullen (et al, 2016) commend an approach to controlling their behaviour which draws upon the lessons of Boston and Manchester. The approach involves:

- Forbidding certain behaviours (e.g. using children and vulnerable adults);
- Informing the groups involved that breaking this 'rule' will lead to intensive multi-agency enforcement and disruption activity against **ALL** members of the group for **ALL** offences committed no matter how minor;
- Engaging affected communities to explain the approach and win their support;
- Ensuring that the first group to break the 'rule' is subjected to a tough response as promised;
- Using this response to reinforce the deterrent message.

They also suggest a hypothetical 'script' directed at the purveyors of illicit drugs via County Lines:

*We know you are using children to run drug supply lines.
You will stop using children NOW!
Drug suppliers using children will be singled out for special attention.
They will go to the top of the list for enforcement.
Specialist techniques and extra police resources will be focussed on them until they are brought before the Courts
These dealers will not be A priority for the police; they will be THE priority.
Not using children does not mean you have permission to supply drugs.
Supplying drugs is illegal.
Drug suppliers not using children will still face investigation and prosecution, but those using children will face a special response as they are the most harmful and deserve more attention.
Communities support what is being done and why it is being done: to protect children from violence and exploitation.
If you want to change your life you can get help with education, training employment and housing by calling 0800 XXX XXXX
The new approach starts NOW! There will be no further warnings.*

A respondent described how the use of children and younger adolescents in County Lines had been disrupted in Ipswich in the recent past:

For example; say a 14-year-old boy is brought up from London to deal for a

A respondent described how the use of children and younger adolescents in

County Lines had been disrupted in Ipswich in the recent past:

For Example; say a 14 year-old boy is brought up from London to deal for a particular line in Ipswich. You grab hold of that kid, and you detain him, whether it be for a drug search or because he's been reported missing by his local force. You could drive that kid home, drop him off at his parents, and within an hour, If that parent has got no control of him, that kid is gone already and he's missing again. And there have been occasions where these children have ended up straight back at Ipswich, the following day, or within a couple of days. So, what a lot of the officers were doing at the time was going immediately to social services to put the child into child protection. But social services start becoming overwhelmed with the fact, that they're getting these children being put into child protection by the police on a daily basis because of the fact that they were found at a particular address in Ipswich. It is not suitable for that child to just be driven straight back home, because you suspect that the parents don't have much control over them, otherwise, how did they end up Ipswich. There is an element of coercion and consent from that child to go there in the first place. To send them straight back to their parents isn't always the right solution. Anyway, we were going down that road almost on a daily basis for several weeks, if not a few months at one point. They (the London gangs) realised that whilst that might not necessarily disrupt their ability to make money it did disrupt their ability to supply drugs frequently. Because their little runners were being scooped up by the police on the streets and detained for hours, if not longer. These kids were being used for the sole purpose of making the money. There's no doubt about that, and take that kid away from them and, ironically enough, they're too cowardly to do that dealing on their own. They want to use this kid as their safety net. 'You're the one who's going to go out to do the dealing for me.' 'You're the one who's going to go out into the street.' 'You're the one who's going to carry all that risk for me.' 'I'm going to be sat in this address controlling the stash.' So, once they (the children/runners) were getting taken away they were realising that this was not going the way they wanted it to, they're being pulled off the streets too often, and so we haven't seen that as much recently, which can only be a positive thing. But, the shift that we've seen is on to the drug users now, I've noticed. So that, whilst you may not have the vulnerable young children, you've still got people vulnerable by virtue of the fact that they are drug users, and have been taken advantage of because of their desperate nature. They wouldn't just be having someone knock on the door 'Do you feel like running some drugs for me for a hundred quid a day?' No normal person is going to do it. (R9)

This would suggest that reducing demand amongst people addicted to class A drugs might usefully form a second leg of a disruption strategy (see Appendix II below).

Policing County Lines

But that phone number is eventually going to tell you everything you need to know. It's going to tell you whether that person is going to London to collect their drugs or having drugs delivered to them. It's going to give me the person's identity and their area. It's also going to tell me who they're talking to every day and the drug users they're supplying. How often they're traveling out of the town, and how they're travelling. I don't think it's immensely difficult to find it out. It's just, you know, having the resources to be able to do that. (R4)

The process whereby the level of surveillance suggested by this respondent can be achieved is fairly time-consuming however and some officers complain that in many cases, if this information is needed it is needed 'right way'. However, officers must first submit an application for 'communications data' from what they describe as a 'Spook'; a civilian officer who receives the application and forwards it to a senior officer, at superintendent level or above, for approval before approaching the various telephone networks with a request. In the case of a telephone number believed to be associated with a county line the investigating officer will have to demonstrate that the number is needed for a specific policing purpose. If the results of the successful application suggest that more intrusive surveillance is likely to secure a conviction, the police would approach the Court to grant a RIPA, a directed surveillance authority, in respect of the registered user of the 'phone number. If the officer wants this person to be the subject of visual surveillance, a team of specially trained officers would then be mandated to carry it out but the police would have to bid for this resource.

ACPO has a target for supply of drugs across county, but the East has 5 counties Beds, Cambs, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and when we bid for resources who is to say that Luton needs it less than Suffolk. (R9)

Some respondents felt that separate Level One and Level Two, intelligence departments dealing with the same problem made little sense in the investigation of county lines. Instead, they favoured an intelligence department that dealt with the problem at each of these levels because county lines spanned both. If a local officer has been dealing with the case for weeks or months; knows the individuals involved; their cars and relevant addresses they do not see the value of drafting in a specialist officer, for whom the force must bid.

I've spent years dealing with some drugs investigations, and, you do build up local and general knowledge of the picture. To then have that passed on to somebody that doesn't have the same level of knowledge and contacts doesn't make sense. What I'm saying is, they should all stay connected in that chain. Because the investigation might go all the way up to someone who is at the top end, but there might well be some crucial piece of information that someone at the bottom end of the investigation could give them; like an informant who tells you that a particular car turns up at a particular address at 2 o'clock in the morning, stays for thirty minutes and then leaves. That piece of information on its own is absolutely useless but when it's, fed into a county lines investigation it could well be the missing piece which brings the whole set-up down. (R1)

The level at which the investigation is undertaken has, in the past, been determined by the volume of drugs being trafficked. However, as we have discovered, the county lines supplying Ipswich operate on a 'little and often' basis in order to avoid loss of the product and protracted imprisonment. As one respondent noted:

You don't have to look at a drug dealer, and think I need to get hold of a large

amount of drugs on him to get him locked up. You just need to be able to prove that he's conspiring with others and that he's involved in the supply of drugs over an extended period of time. (R4)

Ipswich police respondents felt that communication with London was often a problem. They said they found it difficult to locate the appropriate officers in the Metropolitan Police who would take responsibility for following up questions or sharing information concerning London gang nominals.

There has to be someone to take responsibility for that, and maybe that should be London's Metropolitan Police saying this is our problem. I guess their argument is that it's not so easy when the day to day problems exist in Ipswich. We need to trust each other more and understand each other more. They need to understand that Ipswich is different to London; there's going to be advantages to what you can do in Ipswich, that you wouldn't be able to do in London. I mean the use of certain investigative tools such as AMPR. I don't think they know in London that you get to Ipswich up one road' the A12. If, at four o'clock in the morning, when there's not many people using the A12, they've got call data that says that a known phone came up the A12 at that time; if they don't know who to call, they might not ever do it. They may well eventually find out, what car they were using, but one phone call, to one officer, to say 'Can you just have a look at this between these times on this date because you've got access to that data?' It needs a working strategy across an entire region that encompasses the MET, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs and Beds. Where you can make one phone call to the MET, and they can make one phone call to you, and there's a point of contact that will steer you in the right direction. And, won't say 'check the police national database' or 'submit this form, to get this information.' You need a person at the end of the phone, or in an office, that you can actually talk to. (R1)

Gang Injunctions

Gang injunctions, known colloquially as 'Gangbos', were introduced in Part IV, section 34, of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 (H.M. Government, 2016). They came into force in January 2011. The use of gang injunctions was extended to 14 to 17-year olds by the Crime and Security Act 2010 which came into force in 2012. The Gang Injunction is a civil tool designed to prevent gang-related violence. It allows the police or a local authority to apply for an injunction against an individual to prevent gang-related violence and, from 1 June 2015, gang-related drug dealing. Government guidance indicates that:

Over the medium and longer term, gang injunctions aim to break down violent gang culture, prevent the violent behaviour of gang members from escalating and engage gang members in positive activities to help them leave the gang.

The government guide identifies the key points of the gang injunction as follows:

- A gang injunction is a civil tool to prevent a person from engaging in, encouraging or assisting gang-related violence, and gang-related drug dealing,

and to protect them and their community from gang-related violence and gang-related drug dealing.

- Gang injunctions are applied for at the County Court or High Courts.
- From June 2015, provisions in the Crime and Courts Act 2013 will move jurisdiction for hearing gang injunctions for 14 to 17-year olds to the Youth Court.
- The burden of proof is civil, which means that the court must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities.
- A gang injunction can last for a maximum of two years.
- The gang injunction order can impose prohibitions (things not to do, for example associating with other gang members) or positive requirements (things to do, for example attending an apprenticeship programme).
- Failure to comply with a gang injunction is not a criminal offence.
- In the case of adults, it is dealt with by way of civil contempt of court by the applicant authority.
- The sentence for contempt of court is a fine, a suspended term of imprisonment, or up to two years imprisonment. Depending upon the nature of the breach
- A person aged 14 years to 18 years may be sentenced to any of the remedies available under Community Orders, a suspended term of imprisonment, or up to 2 years imprisonment

The guide makes clear that gang injunctions differ from anti-social behaviour powers. ASBOs (now replaced under ASB reforms) in that they are directed towards different social problems. About 100 gang injunctions have been granted since 2011 in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Essex and some London boroughs, Gang injunctions also allow gangs to be targeted as an entity. A practitioner observed that:

What I find more helpful about the gang injunction is that it addresses the gang as a holistic entity. It can provide for measures against everyone in a gang; even peripheral associates can be named in non-association orders and they will be picked up on the police radar.

Thus, gang injunctions allow a police force or local authority to target the activities of every gang member at the same time, maximising disruption and deterrence.

Gang injunctions have been challenged on the basis that they breach the human rights of the subjects of the injunctions. In a recent Manchester case, the police had obtained the injunctions against 12 men and one woman in a bid to stop 'a gang war'. At that

time Salford has seen an upsurge in gang-related violence between two groups (Pitts, 2016, Osuh, 2016).

The court heard that the people named in the injunction were linked to 32 allegations, which police believed had the hallmarks of gang warfare between families, or two groups of individuals.

However, their defence lawyers claimed that the injunctions interfered with their client's article 11 rights of freedom of association, because they restricted who they were able to meet up with. In response, the presiding judge, Judge Gore, observed that:

Those are qualified rights that have to be balanced, and if behaviours alleged against them are bound to be proven, I'm entitled to take into account the human rights of all citizens of Little Hulton and associated areas of Salford, who are adversely affected by the behaviours alleged in this litigation.

[A detailed explanation of the law and related procedures can be found in the Statutory Guidance on Injunctions to Prevent Gang-Related Violence and Gang-Related Drug Dealing, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/injunctions-to-prevent-gang-related-violence-and-drug-dealing>

Supervision and Breach

Having identified gang-involved clients who are subject to supervision or license it is important that the CRC (Community Rehabilitation Company) and the YOS share this information with the police officers and other members of a multi-agency *Gang Intervention Team* in order that regular checks can be made on their activities. Research suggests that close liaison between youth justice and CRC professionals and the police and the systematic oversight of gang-involved probationers and parolees are key features of successful gang interventions. Of late, probation/CRC services have been subject to criticism for failing to 'keep tabs' on their clients (Probation Inspectorate, 2017). There is also unease about the division of supervisees into low and high-risk groups supervised by different organizations because gang-related risk is seldom stable. Thornbury (et al 1995) describe the gang as an escalator, taking young people to a new and more serious level of criminal involvement. Thus, while the 'delinquent peer group' may act as a vehicle or context for the commission of offences, the severity of which is shaped by the proclivities of individual perpetrators, the gang facilitates the shift to different, and sometimes far more serious, levels of crime.

Evidence from Manchester suggests that if the breach of orders is always responded to with a robust sanction this has a strong deterrent effect. Indeed, the project reached an agreement with the probation service and the Court to establish accelerated breach proceedings for gang-involved supervisees wherein breaches of orders were dealt with within a day or two and not infrequently involved the imposition of a short prison sentence.

Evaluating the Gang Strategy

It is now fairly widely accepted within the field of Gang Studies that evaluations utilizing what Pawson & Tilley (1994) describe as *Realistic Evaluation* are the most effective. *Realistic Evaluation* has many advantages over more conventional forms: of evaluation

- It promotes systematic organisational feedback in real time, essential to effective project development.
- It promotes dialogue within and between organisations and with the intended beneficiaries of an initiative or operation.
- It acts as a spur to reflexivity within and between organizations.
- It helps to build capacity within and between organisations and their stakeholders
- It assists in developing the skills and knowledge of the workforce and other stakeholders.
- It enables a comparison of the effects of similar interventions in different contexts, establishing what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?

Realistic Evaluation is rooted the *Participatory Action Research*, pioneered by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s and 1950s; which he describes as ‘*a system of progressive problem-solving*’. In his seminal paper *Action Research and Minority Problems* (1946) Lewin described the process as:

... *research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action that uses a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the action.*

Utilising Lewin’s *circle of planning, action, and fact-finding* enables ‘activists’ to identify the key mechanisms that sustain the problems being addressed and, as Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest, by identifying and analysing these mechanisms, and the contextual variables which shape their impact, it is possible to devise alternative mechanisms designed to disable or circumvent the circumstances responsible for the original problem/s.

Action research, by enabling stakeholders to articulate their views, by identifying key points of commonality and conflict, by helping to crystallise those views and transform them into a coherent programme for change, and by exploring options for action, initially with separate groups, but eventually in a dialogue between groups, can begin to build a ‘social archive’ of shared knowledge. This resonates with the observation of Pawson & Tilley (1997) that:

it is people, the stakeholders, the decisions they make and the commitment they show which determines whether a programme works (or not) and people rather than programmes should be the primary focus of the evaluation.

The main objective of this process is to enable the researchers, in collaboration with the other stakeholders, to build, refine and operationalise a *Theory of Change* because as Kurt Lewin (1952) has observed: *'There is nothing as practical as a good theory'*. Realistic Evaluation is a process of theory testing and theory (re-) building. It proceeds from the assumption that every social initiative is a theory waiting to be tested. It endeavours to make the implicit theories informing programme development explicit, by developing clear hypotheses about how, and for whom, programs might 'work'. The implementation of the program, and the evaluation of it, then tests those hypotheses. In order to do this it interrogates the three key components of a social programme:

Context (C) Because the distinctive features the local context will affect the implementation of the intervention. These include local social, economic and political structures, organisational models in operation, the characteristics of programme participants and staff as well as geographical and historical factors. Therefore, one of the tasks of such research/evaluation is to learn more about 'what works for whom', 'in which contexts and why particular programmes do or don't work'.

Mechanism (M) Programmes 'work' by enabling participants to make different choices (although choice-making is always constrained by participants' previous experiences, beliefs and attitudes, opportunities and access to resources). Making and sustaining different choices requires a change in participant's reasoning (for example, values, beliefs, attitudes, or the logic they apply to a particular situation) and/or the resources (eg information, skills, material resources, support) they have available to them. This combination of 'reasoning and resources' is what enables the program to 'work' and is known as a programme 'mechanism'. It is the interaction between Context and Mechanism which yields an Outcome ($C \leftrightarrow M = O$).

Outcome (O) Outcomes are the results of a programme and can be intended or unintended. Because programmes work differently in different contexts which in turn trigger different change mechanisms, they cannot simply be replicated from one context to another and automatically achieve the same outcomes. Good understandings about 'what works for whom, in what contexts, and how', ie a theory based on rigorously tested hypotheses, yield a robust set of principles for practice

Conclusions and the Way Forward

Our findings suggest that an effective gang strategy requires:

- Clear Leadership
- Effective Strategic Governance
- A Multi-Agency Operational Response
- Community Engagement'
- Systematic 'Real Time' Evaluation

Clear Leadership

In responding to the threats and vulnerabilities highlighted by the research, it is critical that key agencies, Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk Constabulary and the Police and Crime Commissioner take joint responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of the research team. Political support and senior officer commitment will be key to success. They will oversee the development of the initiative, initially in Ipswich, but eventually as a countywide strategy. The broadening of the scope of the initiative will require both the development of an evidence-base, via action research and a consideration of the leadership of the countywide strategy.

Effective Strategic Governance

In a complex multi-agency landscape, it is sometimes unclear where responsibility is located. There is therefore a need for clarity about where accountability lies. There are a multitude of partnership forums many with similar but overlapping roles and there is a need to identify the place where strategic and operational co-ordination will take place. Consideration should be given to extending the remit and reviewing the membership of the existing Youth Gang Violence and County Lines Steering Group to create a Suffolk wide strategic forum composed of the relevant local authority Cabinet Member, senior professionals/ managers from Suffolk Safeguarding Board, Suffolk YOS, Suffolk Police and Suffolk Children's Services.

We recommend that this group have a County-wide remit to reflect the scope and scale of the gang/drugs problem as it affects vulnerable young people in Suffolk. The decision by Suffolk Constabulary to move their operation from three Suffolk Police drug operations London, Volcanic and Scorpion to become a single operation in the near future also supports this. We believe that such a structure fulfils the central goal of the YOS which is to respond effectively to the particular problems of youth crime and victimisation within its area.

The Steering Group should consider developing its strategy in pursuance of three clear and interrelated aims (as was the case in Boston and Manchester) because the proliferation of aims and objectives risks blurring the focus of the strategy which, in turn, could lead to 'mission drift'. Thus the Aims of the strategy would be:

- To stop the gang-related violence towards, and the sexual exploitation of, vulnerable children and young people from London, who are involved in the trafficking of Class A drugs; and those in Suffolk, who are distributing Class A drugs.

- To disrupt the illicit drug distribution networks which utilise vulnerable children and young people.
- To neutralize the impact of the County Lines drugs trafficking

Given that the initial focus of this research has been on a specific geographical area (Ipswich), in addition to a countywide strategic forum, consideration needs to be given to the best type of fora to oversee operational delivery in each locality. In the case of Ipswich, the Ipswich Community Safety Partnership has broad membership and could be the most appropriate forum. We suggest the inclusion of third sector bodies and community based organisations since the research suggests that they are key elements of effective gang strategies.

A Multi-Agency Operational Response

In order to realise the strategic aims of the initiative, the research suggests that it would be efficacious to establish a co-located multi agency team composed of professionals from the areas of policing, adolescent safeguarding, youth work, education, youth justice, /CRCs (Community Rehabilitation Companies), child and adolescent mental health, peer mentoring, employment & training and housing (See Appendix II below). The recruitment of team members with some knowledge and experience in participative action research would be particularly useful.

It would be important that these professionals have the ability and the authority to influence practice and policy within their agencies of origin. It would also be important that members of this team have the knowledge, skills and flexibility to work on an outreach basis with both young people and community members and community groups in gang-affected neighbourhoods.

The professional with lead responsibility for this team should bring experience in, and knowledge of, the range of agencies deemed to be relevant partners and, in particular, an understanding of their cultures, structures, discourses and priorities. S/he would have the ability to challenge single agency decisions if it was felt that they did not reflect the overall objectives of the Strategy.

Although challenging in an environment of austerity, the funding for this group will need to be a medium to long term commitment

The remit and focus of the team will be defined in the light of the evolving impact of the intervention and the findings from the ‘real time’ evaluation running in parallel with it. However, the work of the team may involve any or all of the following:

- Mapping the gangs, gang involved children, young people and adults to establish a ‘baseline’ measure of gang involvement and gang impact against which progress can be assessed.
- Assessing the risks posed to, and by, gang affiliates.
- Establishing a Service Level Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations and agencies involved in the strategy in order to avoid a time-consuming, piecemeal, consideration of the legality of sharing particular types of information and data.

- Signalling to the perpetrators of gang-related violence and the exploitation of vulnerable children and young people that these behaviours will no longer be tolerated and that the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators is now the top priority for the Police.
- Enforcement: focusing specifically on perpetrators of gang-related child and adolescent exploitation and victimisation linked to J-Block and Q-Block and their suppliers (Suffolk Organised Crime Threats Assessment).
- Gang Injunctions: Seeking legal advice on the potential efficacy of Gang Injunctions in disrupting gangs and deterring gang involvement in Ipswich.
- Establishing Closer Surveillance of gang-involved young people and adults on probation, license or parole and instituting mechanism for accelerated proceedings if they breach conditions of their orders by engaging in gang activity or associating with proscribed persons.
- Promoting Information Sharing and, where necessary joint operations with the appropriate Metropolitan Police borough gangs units and operation Trident, and endeavouring to devise more efficacious administrative processes.
- Liaising with the Prison Service to utilise the knowledge and influence of prisoners involved with the J-Block and Nacton gangs or the County Lines which supply their drugs.
- Reviewing the placement of vulnerable gang-involved and gang affected children and young people in Care and, in particular, the placement of gang-involved children and young people from outside the county. Also reviewing the training of staff, vis-à-vis gangs and exploitation, in the Homes and Lodgings used by the Council
- Prevention: Establishing a range of interventions in gang-affected neighbourhoods and gang-affected institutions.
- Diversion: via a gang-desistance programme offering, where necessary, relocation and insertion into Education, Training and/or Employment.
- Working with third sector agencies to develop counselling and mental health services together in a 'one-stop-shop' to improve accessibility, impact and retention rates in these services.
- Resettlement: Intensive support for the young person leaving custody from a Gang Intervention Team.
- Consideration: in liaison with the SCC developing a scheme of Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT) (See Appendix II below) for users who are resistant to other forms of treatment for opioid dependency, who constitute a significant segment of the local and regional drug market
- Evaluation of the impact of the gang strategy via 'real time' participative action research. In this context, evaluation would be a crucial 'steering mechanism' for

Community Engagement

Community Engagement will be central to the initiative and would include community development in the gang-affected neighbourhoods, working with gang affected families and developing and implementing pre-emptive intervention in Schools, PRUs, Children's Homes and with Young People and staff in B&B accommodation. This approach would enable the team to develop services within the community with the involvement of local residents and wider third sector agencies. This approach would require a separate resource for the two areas in Ipswich and would be a central part of the overall strategy.

Maintain a 'Real Time Systematic Evaluation

This research has adopted a cyclical methodology of *Plan, Do, Review* which has enabled the knowledge and experience of a range of stakeholders to be brought to bear on the problem. It is proposed that this approach continues in Ipswich to ensure that the interventions deployed are effective.

Ipswich was selected as a priority because of the level of gang/drug dealing activity in the Nacton and Jubilee Park areas. However, this activity is not restricted to Ipswich and we therefore recommend that the action research be broadened to investigate the other localities targeted by the emerging strategy.

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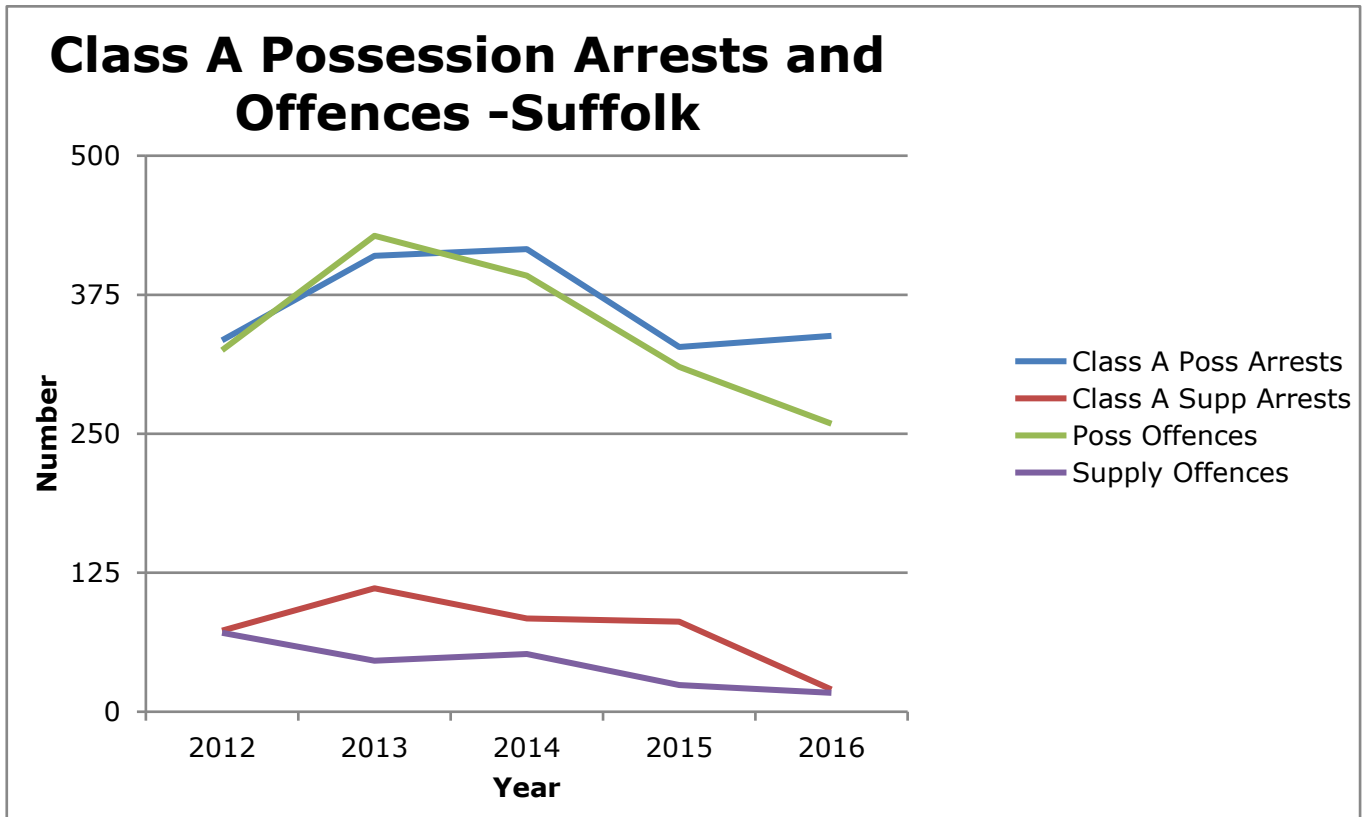
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Appendix I: Drug Treatment & Arrest Data

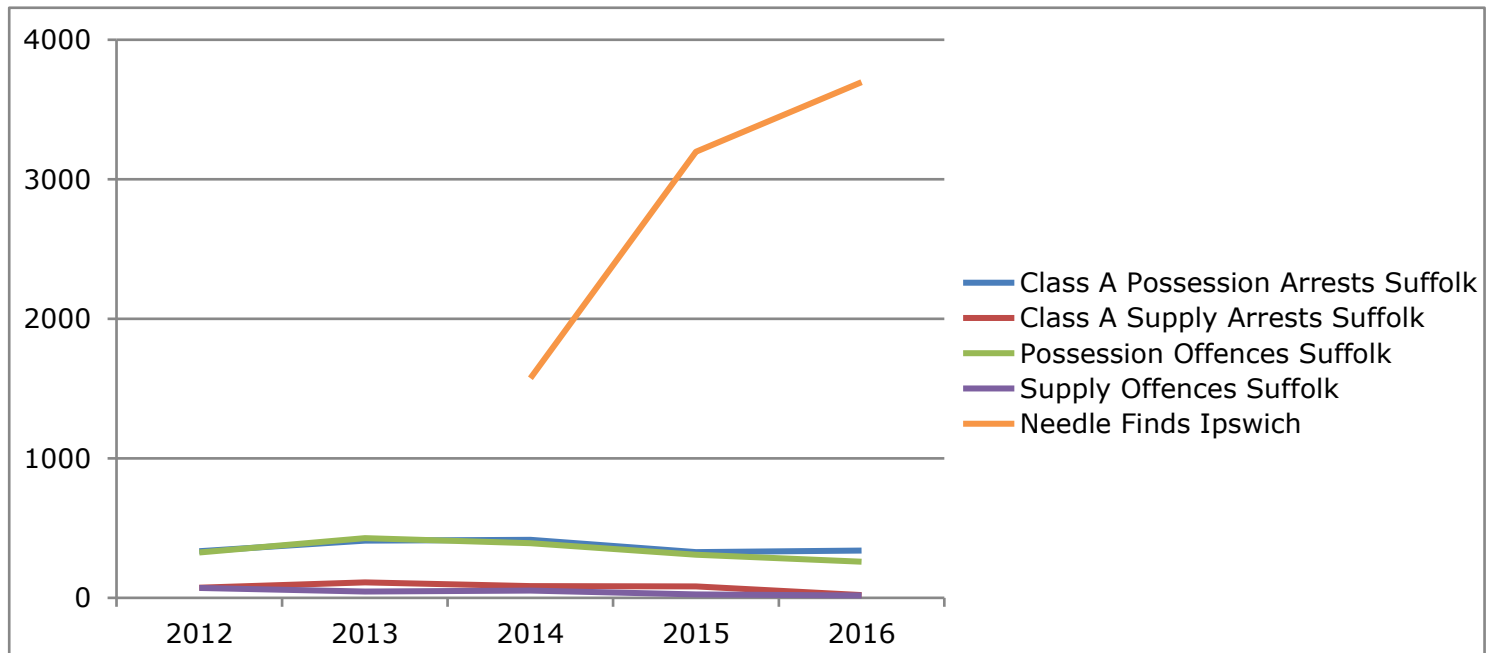


	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Class A Possession Arrests	334	410	416	328	338
Class A Supply Arrests	73	111	84	81	20
Possession Offences	325	428	392	310	259
Supply Offences	71	46	52	24	17

2012-2013 arrests for supply rose by 38 – Supply offences fell by 25

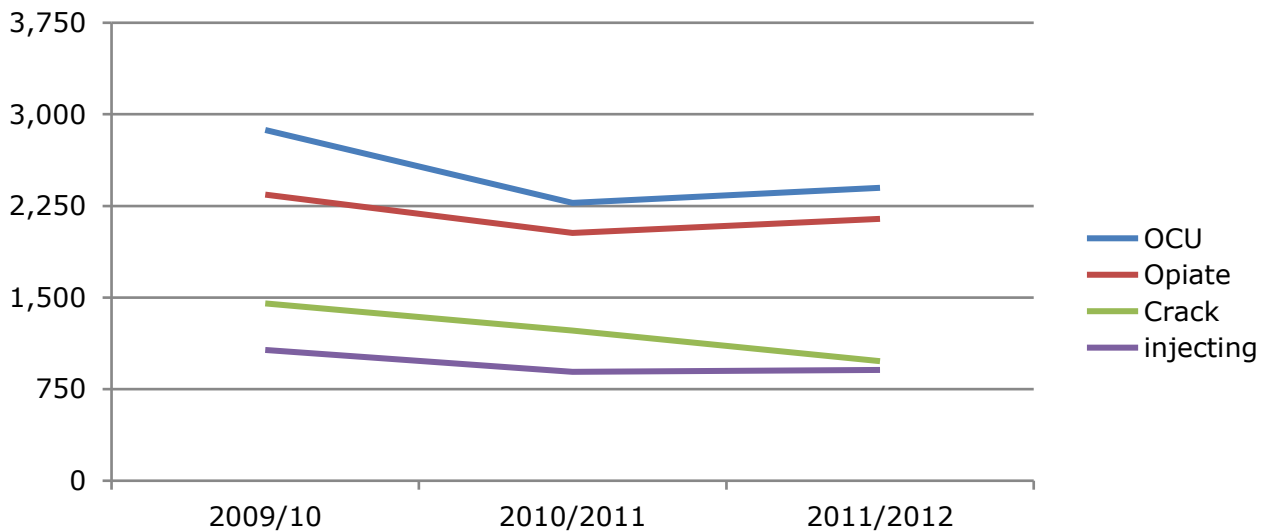
2012-2013 Arrests for possession rose by 76 - Possession offences rose by 97 (difference of +21) – lesser charges brought for conviction

Comparisons of needle finds Ipswich as compared with arrests and offences in Suffolk



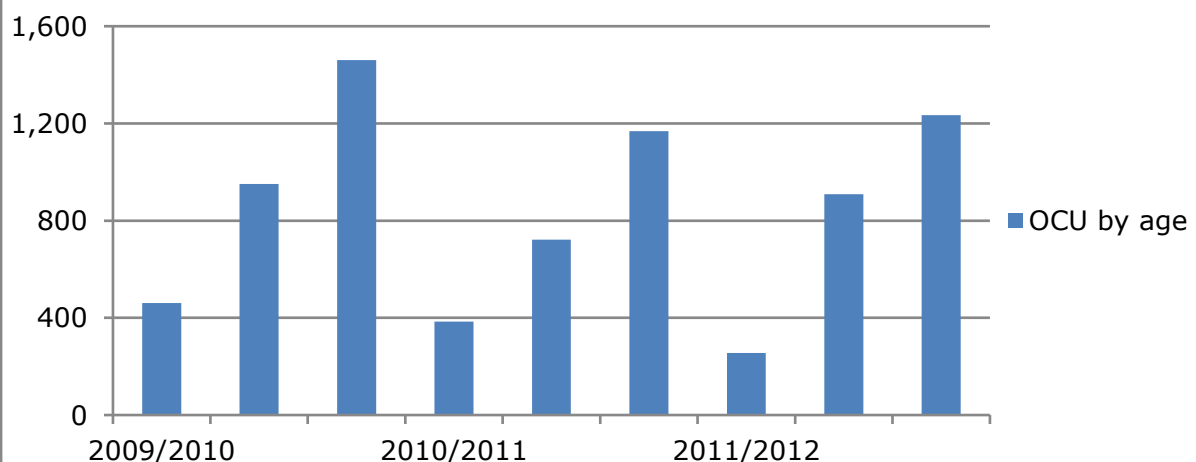
	Class A Possession Arrests Suffolk	Class A Supply Arrests Suffolk	Possession Offences Suffolk	Supply Offences Suffolk	Needle Finds Ipswich
2012	334	73	325	71	
2013	410	111	428	46	
2014	416	84	392	52	1574
2015	328	81	310	24	3197
2016	338	20	259	17	3696

Estimated number of Opiate or Cocaine user (OCU) clients - Suffolk



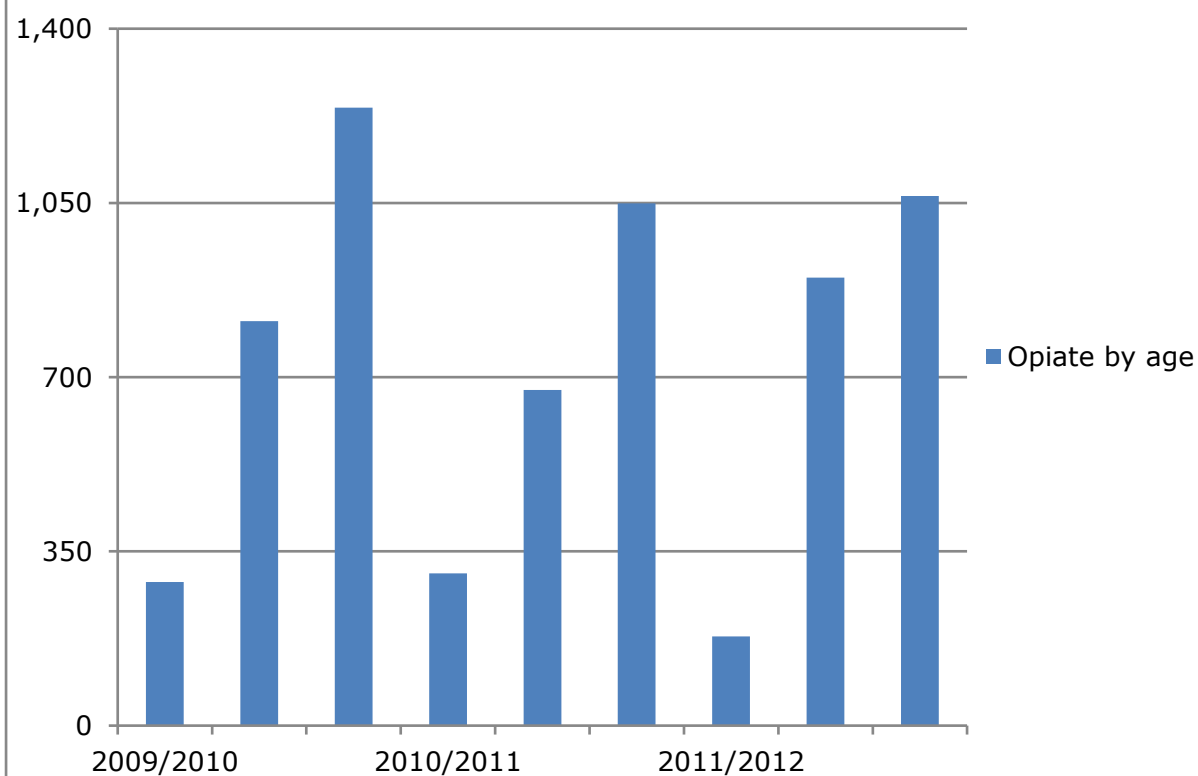
	2009/10	2010/2011	2011/2012
OCU	2,872	2,275	2,398
Opiate	2,343	2,029	2,143
Crack	1,452	1,229	979
injecting	1,071	892	907

Estimated number of Opiate and Cocaine (OCU) clients by age band



	2009/2010			2010/2011			2011/2012		
	15-24	25-34	35-64	15-24	25-34	35-64	15-24	25-34	35-64
OCU by age	461	950	1,460	385	722	1,168	255	909	1,234

Estimated number of opiate user clients by age band - Suffolk



	2009/2010			2010/2011			2011/2012		
	15-24	25-34	35-64	15-24	25-34	35-64	15-24	25-34	35-64
Opiate by age	289	813	1,242	306	674	1,049	179	900	1,064

Appendix II: Demand Reduction for Heroin

Research undertaken by UK Focal Point on Drugs (2014) suggests that there could be around 750 'problem' (opiate) drug users in Ipswich (ONS 2010) who constitute a significant section of the demand side of the local drugs market. In Suffolk, the main heroin markets are in Ipswich, and to a lesser extent, Bury St. Edmunds. However, in the recent period, the influx of dealers from larger cities has helped to establish a market in Lowestoft.

As we have noted, older, problematic drug users are likely to form a significant part of the demand side of the market and in some cases this group provide dealing both premises and user/dealer drug distributors. Given the importance of the demand side of the market for sustaining the drugs business, the development of treatment and support regimes for problematic users could be important, particularly if the demand for heroin is price elastic (Weatherburn et al 1997).

Heroin assisted treatment (HAT) is helpful for users who are resistant to other forms of treatment for opioid dependency. Prescribing diamorphine (the medical name for heroin) to problematic users has been legal in the UK since 1926, Currently, diamorphine can be prescribed by doctors who are licensed to do so by the Home Office. The successful results of a UK Randomised Injectable Opioid Treatment Trial (RIOTT) (Strang et al, 2010) prompted the Department of Health to award three-year contracts to South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) in 2010 and two other mental health trusts in 2012 to provide supervised heroin treatment in London, Darlington and Brighton. This followed a number of similar trials conducted globally since the 1990s, which led to the legalisation of HAT in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Denmark. A third of the patients were given methadone orally and another third injected methadone. The remainder were treated with injectable diamorphine. Researchers monitored the outcomes for six months to compare the physical and financial effectiveness of the three treatments. Results showed that supervised heroin treatment produced larger reductions in street heroin use. HAT patients achieving 66% negative samples for using street heroin when tested, against 30% for the injectable methadone group and 30% for the oral methadone group. The trial also showed that HAT substantially reduced criminal activity. HAT patients reported carrying out 1,731 crimes in the 30 days prior to the start of the programme. After six months, this figure fell to 527. Analysis also indicated that savings from legal, prison and health service costs would more than cover the costs of treatment. Supervised heroin treatment also has a remarkable effect on overdosing. In the Netherlands, for example, the rate of opioid overdose deaths per one million adults is 9.1. In the USA the rate is 83. (Roes, 2016) Durham Chief Constable Mike Barton argues that HAT is vital in "beating the drugs problem that costs this country billions of pounds every year."

Appendix: III

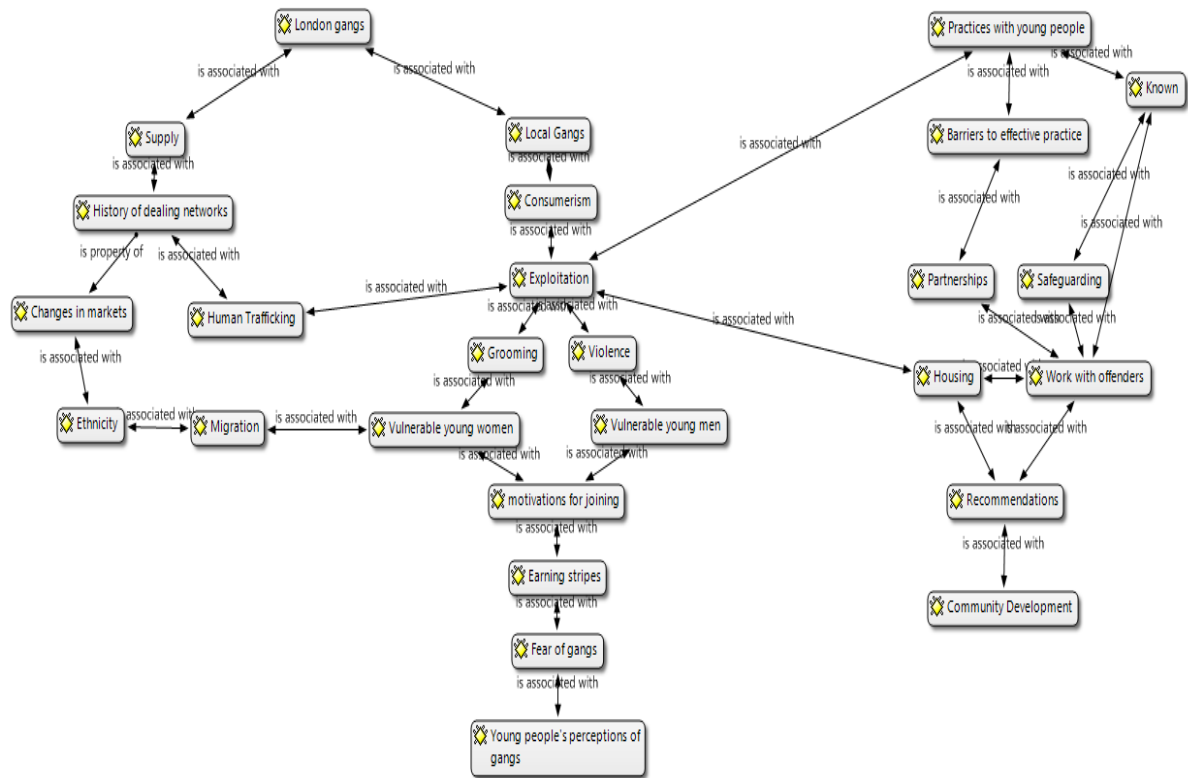
Key Features of Gang Desistance Programmes

In several gang-affected neighbourhoods in the major UK cities local authorities in collaboration with the third sector have developed gang desistance programmes. These programmes vary in terms of their emphasis and their component parts depending on the nature of the gang problem in their area. Although 'one size' does not fit all a consideration of the component parts of these programmes may be suggestive in terms of the development of a multi-agency gangs programme in Ipswich. In his evaluation of three successful gang desistance initiatives in London, Pitts (2011) sketched out their key features:

1. It would target gang-involved children and young people utilising a '**Traffic Light**', **Risk Assessment Instrument** to establish the depth, nature and risks posed by young people's gang involvement. This would enable the programme providers to develop a range of interventions of the right type, intensity and duration. To succeed however, all the relevant agencies, schools, and local residents would need to be involved in the assessment, because some 'serious players' may be unknown to statutory agencies.
2. It would have an **Outreach Function** usually pursued by street-based youth workers skilled in making and sustaining contact with 'hard-to-reach' groups to draw them into the programme (Crimmens et al, 2004).
3. It would have an intensive **Groupwork Programme** which focused upon the development of alternative routes out of gang involvement and 'leadership' training. The effects of these programmes would be maximized if they had one or more residential episodes which took participants to an unfamiliar setting where they were required to engage in unfamiliar group activities
4. It would have a **Casework Function** in which criminal justice, youth work and or social welfare professionals worked with the young person and their family to support involvement in the groupwork programme, address family problems and (re-)establish links with school and/or relevant social welfare agencies.
5. It would establish a **Presence and a Base in a Gang-affected Neighbourhood** and allow continuing contact with gang-involved young people beyond the life of any particular the intervention.
6. It would provide continuing practical and emotional support in the form of **Mentors**, **'Buddies'** and/or a **Drop-in** function

7. It would have access to the services of ***Education, Training and Employment Specialists*** who would work with gang-involved young people, to maximize their skills and knowledge and effect realistic choices about their futures; and with local employers, colleges and universities to open up alternative legitimate pathways for these young people.
8. It would have access to the services of a specialist ***Housing Professional*** who could, if necessary, enable young people under threat to move to suitable, and suitably supported accommodation in another area.
9. It would have a ***Mediation Team*** that would keep contact with all local gangs, and crews, enabling it to intervene to defuse inter-gang conflict and thereby reduce tit-for-tat violence.
10. It would have a ***Through-care Function*** involving regular visits to gang-involved young people in YOIs or prison by project staff in order to draw them back into the project/ programme on their return, which is often a point at which violence erupts.
11. It would also have a dedicated ***Girls and Young Women's Intervention Team***

Appendix IV: Network Analysis



The Research Team

Dr Paul Andell DCR (R) BA CQSW MA (Dist) Prof Doc. is a lecturer at University Campus Suffolk. He has worked as a probation officer, youth justice worker and community safety manager for the Greater London Authority. Paul was Head of Criminal Justice Initiatives for the Criminal Defence Service and a Strategic Advisor to several Local Criminal Justice Boards on behalf of the Ministry of Justice. Paul has also led national research projects on policing and was a managing consultant for Matrix Knowledge on a number of Home Office sponsored projects. Recently Paul was National Director of Brathay Communities Projects which included the Lambeth X-It project. Paul co-authored the West Yorkshire Gang Vulnerability Report undertaken on behalf of West Yorkshire Police and has acted as a consultant for the Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Offending Service SOS- gang desistance project and the Lambeth Gangs Strategy. Paul is currently the Deputy Chair of the London Gang Forum.

Prof. John Pitts MA (Dist.), PhD, D.Litt, Dip.Ed. Dip.YW, FRSA is Vauxhall Professor of Socio-legal Studies at the University of Bedfordshire and a Visiting Professor of Criminology at the University of Suffolk and the North China University of Politics & Law in Shanghai. He has worked as a school teacher; a street and club-based youth worker; a YOS manager, a group worker in a Young Offender Institution and as a consultant on youth crime and youth justice to the police and youth justice and legal professionals in the UK, mainland Europe, the Russian Federation and China. He has written extensively about youth justice in England and Wales, most notably in *The New Politics of Youth Crime* (Macmillan, 2001) and in the past decade he has undertaken studies of violent youth gangs and drug markets in London, Manchester and West Yorkshire, the findings of which are recounted in *Reluctant Gangsters* (Willan/Routledge, 2008) and *Critical Realism & Gang Violence* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016 [ed. R. Matthews]). He has acted as an adviser on violent youth gangs to local authorities and police forces. He was a consultant to the Centre for Social Justice inquiry into violent youth gangs in the UK, published as *Dying to Belong* (2009) and a participant in the *Prime Minister's Gang Summit* in October 2011. He was deputy chair of the *London Gangs Forum* and a member of the *Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child and Adolescent Sexual Exploitation*. Since 2013 he has been undertaking research on pathways into, and multi-agency responses to, organised crime in Greater Manchester. In July 2011, he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters for '... his published work and research, the conspicuous originality of which ... has contributed significantly to the development of youth justice in England and Wales.'

