



RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection - Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children

Date Inspection Published - 20 November 2024

Type of Inspection: Cleveland Specific National
 Follow Up Thematic
 Partner Inspection

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report sets out findings from 6 joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) carried out between September 2023 and May 2024. JTAs are carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation).

The JTAs looked at how local partnerships and services respond to children and their families when children are affected by serious youth violence. The inspections considered the work of individual agencies as well as multi-agency working arrangements between children's social care, health services, youth justice services (YJS), schools and the police. In this report, the term 'multi-agency' is used to describe arrangements between these agencies.

The inspections focused on 3 themes:

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

In summary, the report states:

- The extent and impact of serious youth violence are more far-reaching than many adults realise. Too many children, including some as young as 11, are carrying knives because they feel unsafe and see this as a form of protection. Serious youth violence has a wide impact across communities. In some localities in the areas inspected, carrying a knife is the norm for some children.
- A failure to consistently identify serious youth violence as a safeguarding issue is leaving too many children at serious risk of harm. Lack of comprehensive guidance from the government on how partners should address harm outside the family, including serious youth violence, is exacerbating this, as is a lack of focus by Local Safeguarding Partnerships (LSPs).
- The government and local agencies must prioritise the needs of children who are disproportionately at risk of harm from serious youth violence. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), in particular those who are neurodivergent. The government should equip local agencies to ensure these children have access to timely assessment and appropriate support. Some children from specific ethnic groups are disproportionately represented among those harmed by serious youth violence. Partnerships need to target interventions to support those most in need, and to better understand and address the underlying causes of serious youth violence.

- There are examples of local partnerships doing effective work to reduce harm to children from serious youth violence, but this is not happening in all areas. Despite the expectation set out by the Home Office in the Serious Violence Duty, not all local partnerships are sufficiently focused on serious youth violence. This leaves some children at risk of harm.
- Multi-agency work was most effective when serious youth violence was a strategic priority. Effective partnerships had a shared understanding of local need. They collated and analysed all relevant information, and consulted with children, families and communities about their experiences and needs. This resulted in effective work to reduce harm and meet children's needs.
- In some areas, partners worked together well to meet the wider needs of children affected by serious youth violence. They had a shared understanding of the children's backgrounds and experiences, including trauma and abuse. Effective initiatives focused on addressing the impact of abuse, supporting children to access education, giving children opportunities to develop interests and skills and helping them to stay safe.
- Local partnerships need to do more to evaluate approaches to addressing serious youth violence, to use available research about what works and to share learning across areas to drive improvement in practice.
- Children's access to support to address serious youth violence varies too much between local areas. Some areas have violence reduction units (VRUs), and some VRUs were making a positive difference for children. But not all areas have this additional resource.
- Projects aimed at preventing serious youth violence often receive short-term funding. This limits partners' ability to evaluate their effectiveness and compromises long-term planning.
- Engagement with the community, children and parents is essential. There was some strong practice where partnerships worked to reduce harm and build stronger community support for children. It was found that the risk of serious youth violence is reduced when statutory partners and the education and voluntary sectors work together.

PCC RESPONSE TO INSPECTION

Comment by the PCC:

The PCC recognises the importance of organisations and agencies working in partnership to:

- target interventions and support those children most in need;
- understand and address the underlying causes of youth violence; and
- meet the wider needs of children affected by serious violence.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC) Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) is the area's first dedicated partnership, which is tasked with reducing levels of serious violence. Working closely with other statutory partners, CURV explores innovative solutions to prevent and divert people at risk of becoming involved in violent crime. CURV supports partners to identify long-term, sustainable interventions and projects to deliver long-term, positive outcomes.

CURV funds many interventions, one of which is the Corner House Youth Project. The project provides a twin track approach to tackling serious violence in public spaces. Firstly, youth workers seek to engage with young people in hotspot areas to better understand their needs and concerns. Secondly, harm reduction activities for young people (identified as being at greater risk of becoming involved in serious violence) are delivered.

As detailed in the Police and Crime Plan 2024-2029, one of the PCC's priorities is to reduce crime, antisocial behaviour and harm. The PCC aims to ensure that Cleveland will be a safer place to live, work and visit, with less crime, violence and antisocial behaviour.

For major public health issues such as violent crime, the PCC plans to bring together partners to explore society-wide strategies that will make a difference for communities in the short-term and in the decades to come. The PCC recognises the opportunities multi-agency working provides to save lives for communities and prevent the devastating harm caused by violence.

The PCC acknowledges that there are many agencies providing vital services that help divert young people from becoming involved in crime and educating them about the consequences. The new Police and Crime Plan prioritises reducing rates of offending across Cleveland by tackling the root causes of crime, which the PCC recognises will be achieved by greater partnership working.

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