Safeguarding children affected by gang activity and / or serious youth violence

Serious youth violence is
3 times more likely to be committed
by gang members than
by non-gang anti-social children

London Safeguarding Children Board
London Councils
59½ Southwark Street
London SE1 0AL

www.londonscb.gov.uk

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Contents

1. Introduction 5
1.1 This procedure 5
1.2 Definition of a gang 5
1.3 Definition of serious youth violence 6
1.4 Terms 6
2. Legislation and policy 7
3. Principles supporting this procedure 7
4. Context 8
4.1 The origins of violence in children 8
4.2 Serious youth violence 9
4.3 Gang involvement 10
4.4 Formation of gangs 11
5. Serious youth violence 13
5.1 Weapons 13
5.2 Alcohol and drugs 14
5.3 Sexual violence 14
6. Professionals' response 15
6.1 Identifying a child at risk from gang activity and/or serious youth violence 15
6.2 Signs and symptoms 15
7. Information sharing 17
8. Local expertise in relation to gangs and serious youth violence 17
9. Assessing levels of need 18
10 Vulnerable children (and some children with complex needs) 19
10.1 Common Assessment Framework (CAF) 19
10.2 Multi-agency decision making and signposting 21
11. Children at risk of / experiencing significant harm 22
11.1 Definition of significant harm 22
11.2 Referral to LA children's social care 22
11.3 LA children's social care response 23
12. Parental engagement 23
13. Looked after children 25
14. Different professionals' roles and responsibilities 25
14.1 All agencies 25
14.2 LA children's social care 26

14.3 Youth offending service (YOS) 26
14.4 Police 27
14.5 Schools and FE colleges 29
14.6 Health 31
14.7 Housing and Social Landlords 31
14.8 London Probation Service 32
14.9 Community groups / voluntary agencies and faith groups 32
14.10 Youth service / targeted youth support 32
15. Role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board 32
Appendix 1 – London Serious Youth Violence Board Terms of Reference..... 35
Appendix 2 - Metropolitan Police Service Definition of Serious Youth Violence and Youth Violence 40
Appendix 3 - Risk assessment framework for children affected by gangs and/or serious youth violence..... 42
Appendix 4 - Quick referral flowchart..... 43
Appendix 5 - Preventing the impact of gangs and group offending on schools44
Appendix 6 - Further information..... 47

1. Introduction

In 2007, twenty seven children died in London as a result of shootings or knifings by other children, in incidents of serious youth violence perpetrated individually or in gangs.

In a recent survey, the Metropolitan Police identified 169 youth gangs in London, many using firearms in furtherance of their crimes and estimated to have been responsible for around 40 murders and 20% of the youth crime in the capital[1].

Indeed, concerns generated by such statistics led to the creation of the London Serious Youth Violence Board (LSYVB), established in 2009 to actively examine proposals for a pan-London approach to serious youth violence. This Board, which is due to report in late 2010, will be working with the London Safeguarding Children Board (London Board) and other partners to make available guidance on best practice within the field, as well as tackling complex areas including safeguarding and disproportionality. For more information about the LSYVB, see http://younglondonmatters.org/hottopics/the_london_serious_youth_violence_board_lsyvb_/ and the terms of reference in Appendix 1

1.1 This procedure

1.1.1 This procedure provides guidance for frontline professionals and their managers in all agencies, and individuals in London's local communities and community groups on identifying and safeguarding children who are vulnerable to or at risk from involvement in or targeting from:

- Emergent criminality, serious youth violence perpetrated by their peers in gangs, or increasing anti-social behaviour; and
- Serious youth violence perpetrated by children acting on their own.

1.1.2 This procedure should be read in conjunction with the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007); in particular:

- Sections 2.10.36. Screening and searching pupils for weapons in schools, 5.6. Bullying, 5.18. Harming others, 5.23. ICT-based forms of abuse, 6. Referral and assessment and 13. Risk management of known offenders; and
- Section 5.40. Sexually exploited children, and the supplementary procedure for Safeguarding children abused through sexual exploitation (London Board, 2006).

See the London Safeguarding Children Board website: www.londonscb.gov.uk.

1.2 Definition of a gang[2]

1.2.1 Groups of children often gather together in public places to socialise, and peer association is an essential feature of most children's transition to adulthood. Groups of children can be disorderly and/or anti-social without engaging in criminal activity.

1.2.2 Hallsworth and Young[3] and Robert Gordon[4] set out the following definitions:

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[1] *Metropolitan Police Pan-London Gang Profile, 2006*

[2] Defining what is a 'gang' is extremely difficult and although this is the accepted definition, it is important for us to be open to new understandings that rigorously attempt to understand the phenomena in the UK and do not duplicate knowledge and practice from the U.S.

- Peer group: a small, unorganised, transient group of children who 'hang out together' in public places such as shopping centres. Crime is not integral to their self definition;
- Wannabee group: includes children who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive criminal activity, including collective violence against other groups of children. Wannabees will often claim 'gang' territory and adopt 'gang-style' identifying markers of some kind;
- Gang: a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of children who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.
  - Children may be involved in more than one 'gang', with some cross-border movement, and may not stay in a 'gang' for significant periods of time;
  - Children rarely use the term 'gang', instead they used terms such as 'family', 'breddrin', 'crews', 'cuz' (cousins), 'my boys' or simply 'the people I grew up with'[5]; and
- Organised criminal group: members are professionally involved in crime for personal gain, operating almost exclusively in the 'grey' or illegal marketplace.

1.2.3 Gordon also suggests that definitions may need to be highly specific to particular areas or neighbourhoods if they are to be useful. Furthermore, professionals should not seek to apply this or any other definition of a gang too rigorously; if a child or others think s/he is involved with or affected by 'a gang', then a professional should act accordingly in assessing the risk to the child as both a potential perpetrator and a victim. See section 6. Professional response onwards.

1.3 Definition of serious youth violence

1.3.1 Youth violence, serious or otherwise, may be a function of gang activity. However, it could equally represent the behaviour of a child acting individually in response to his or her particular history and circumstances.

1.3.2 The definition of 'serious youth violence' currently in use by the Metropolitan Police Service is 'any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 1-19' i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm. 'Youth violence' is defined in the same way, but also includes assault with injury offences.

Appendix 2. sets out the full Metropolitan Police Service definition of serious youth violence.

1.4 Terms

1.4.1 The terms in this procedure conform to those set out in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007), section 1.6. Glossary; in particular, a 'child' is defined as children 0 to 17 years and adolescents up to their 18th birthday; and a

[3] Adapted from *Three Point Typology of Urban Collectivities (Hallsworth and Young (2004). Hallsworth and Young refer to 'young people', this has been adapted to 'childre' to ensure consistency throughout the document.*

[4] Robert Gordon's Five Point Typology of Youth Groupings

[5] Lambeth gangs study early 2008

'professional' as any individual working in a voluntary, employed, professional or unqualified capacity, including foster carers and approved adopters.

1.4.2 Where a child is 'affected' by gang activity or serious youth violence, the risk or potential risk of harm to the child may be as a victim, a perpetrator or both.

2. Legislation and policy

2.1 The UK Government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme, which includes the Children's NSF[6] and is supported by the Children Act 2004[7], requires all agencies to take responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child to enable them to:

- Be healthy;
- Stay safe;
- Enjoy and achieve;
- Make a positive contribution;
- Achieve economic well-being.

2.2 Supported by the Children Act 2004, the government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF, 2006)[8], states that 'multi and inter-agency work to safeguard and promote children's welfare starts as soon as there are concerns about a child's welfare, not just when there are questions about possible harm.' Working within this policy framework, professionals from all agencies have a statutory responsibility to safeguard children affected by gang activity and/or serious youth violence.

3. Principles supporting this procedure

3.1 The following principles should be adopted by all agencies in relation to identifying and responding to children (and unborn children) at risk of or being affected by gang activity and/or serious youth violence:

- Children who are harmed and children who harm should both be treated as victims, and professionals should bear in mind that a child may be a perpetrator and also a victim of violence;
- The safety and welfare of the child is paramount;
- All agencies act in the interests of the rights of the child as stated in the UN Convention (1989)[9];
- All decisions or plans for the child/ren should be based on good quality assessments and be sensitive to the issues of gender, nationality, culture and sexuality; and

[6] National Service Framework for Children, Children and Maternity Services: http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/ChildrenServices/ChildrenServicesInformation/fs/en
[7] http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040031.htm
[8] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/workingtogether/
[9] http://www.unicef.org/crc/

- All agencies should work in partnership with members of local communities, to empower individuals and groups to develop support networks.

4. Context

4.1 The origins of violence in children

4.1.1 Empathy is the single greatest inhibitor in children of the development of propensity to violence[10].

4.1.2 The experience of love, affection and nurturance are core requirements for a child to develop the ability to have:

- Empathy / to care about other children / people / creatures; and
- Positive self-identity / esteem.

4.1.3 These experiences are not sufficient in themselves. A pattern of parent-child relations and positive child-rearing practices are required, which include:

- Positive guidance;
- Discipline; and
- Learning by participation.

4.1.4 Thus the factors which influence a child's propensity to **initiate** violence include:

- Parenting which is cold / uncaring, non-nurturing and neglectful[11];
- Parenting which includes harsh disciplining[12];
- Maltreatment, such as physical or sexual abuse in childhood (abuse by adults and peers within and outside of the family)[13]; and/or
- Trauma such as domestic violence or involvement in or witnessing conflict violence (see also the London procedure for safeguarding children abused through domestic violence, London Board, 2008).

4.1.5 One factor which influences a child's propensity to **imitate** violence is:

- Parenting which is permissive and neglectful, resulting in a lack of guidance and creating ineffectiveness and poor self-control for a child. The child is then not equipped to resist an environment or group which instigates violence.

4.1.6 Crucially, the impact of the factors listed in point 4.1.3 (above) may be partly or wholly mitigated for an individual child through contact with caring adults[14], peers or later in life[15].

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[10] *The Wave Report 2005: Violence and what to do about it*
[11] *The Psychology of Adversity* (Robert S. Feldman, 1996)
[12] (Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1990) and (Youngblade & Belsky, 1990) in *The Psychology of Adversity* (Robert S. Feldman, 1996)
[13] (Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1990) and (Youngblade & Belsky, 1990) in *The Psychology of Adversity* (Robert S. Feldman, 1996). See also *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence* (A. Miller, 1990)
[14] Garmezy & Rutter, 1983 in *The Psychology of Adversity* (Robert S. Feldman, 1996)
[15] For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence (A. Miller, 1990)

4.1.7 In addition, some children may respond to the factors listed in point 4.1.3 (above) by becoming fearful and avoidant, rather than aggressive[16].

4.2 Serious youth violence

4.2.1 By far the majority of children do not become violent overnight. Their behaviour represents many years of [increasingly] anti-social and aggressive acts[17], with aggressive habits learned early in life often the foundation for later behaviour[18]. Where a child succeeds at low-level anti-social acts, such as verbal abuse and bullying, violating rules and being disruptive, s/he may feel emboldened to perpetrate increased violence.

4.2.2 However, any public discussion around serious youth violence should contain messages that reassure the public and build confidence, i.e. that the vast majority of young people contribute positively towards society. It is a fact that serious youth violence is committed by a small minority (less than 2%) of young people. Indeed, these messages form part of the central platform of the communication strategy for the London Serious Youth Violence Board.

Children who kill

4.2.3 Research suggests that children who kill can be divided into three groups:

- Psychotic children, although it is rare that this psychosis will limit their understanding of reality and lead them to kill without an appreciation of what they are doing;
- Over-stressed children who become explosively violent under extreme stress, usually in a one-off incident; and
- Aggressive children, constituting the largest group, who are often anti-social youths whose aggression escalates over time and results in killing. These are the children referred to in point 4.2.1 (above).

4.2.4 A recent USA study[19] suggested that there is no single personality style or dynamic found in children who commit homicide. The study concurred, however, with a UK study[20] of a sample of children convicted under Section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (i.e. for murder, manslaughter, rape, arson and robbery)[21] which postulated with some confidence that ninety percent of the children had been subjected to abuse in their early and/or recent past. In addition, the children had experienced the loss of a significant family member or friend with surprising frequency.

Environmental factors

4.2.5 Several factors are important contributors in potentially increasing an individual child's propensity to act violently:

- Exposure to media images of violence;
- Access to weapons;

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[16] *The Psychology of Adversity* (Robert S. Feldman, 1996)
[17] *Youth Aggression and Violence a Psychological Approach* (Thomas G. Moeller, 2001)
[18] *Social and Cultural Experiences that Affect Youth Violence,* Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, Vol. I
[19] Kaser-Boyd (2002)
[20] 'Waiting for change: The experiences and needs of Section 53 offenders' (Boswell 1991)
[21] s53 is now referred to as s90 (for murder) and s91 for other crimes punishable by 14 years or more if they had been committed by an adult. This is from Powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000, which is a consolidating Act.

- Involvement with alcohol and other drugs; and
- Involvement in a gang.

4.2.6 Exposure to media images of violence increases a child's fear of becoming a victim, with a resultant increase in mistrust of others. It desensitises the child to violence, resulting increased callousness toward violence directed at others and a decreased likelihood to take action on behalf of the victim when violence occurs. It also increases a child's willingness to become involved with violence[22].

In families where children's viewing is not regulated, they can readily access graphic violence, often with sexual content, through cable TV, the internet and on dvd.

4.2.7 For comment on weapons and involvement with alcohol and other drugs, see section 5. Serious Youth Violence, below.

4.3 Gang involvement

Recognition and respect[23]

4.3.1 A recent study of street crime confirms that much of it is primarily concerned with respect and recognition rather than monetary gain[24]. Gang members will sometimes video their offences and post them on websites. While this renders them more vulnerable to prosecution (these sites can be a good source of intelligence)[25], it serves to consolidate their reputation for toughness and hence the 'respect' to which they aspire.

4.3.2 Respect matters to children in relation to gangs because to be 'disrespected' makes a child a target for anyone who wants to make a name for themselves. An act of 'disrespect' that goes unpunished can be perceived as inviting a challenge from rivals within their own gang as well as members of other groups. In certain neighbourhoods, being 'mugged' is often a prelude to a career of street crime prompted by fear as children endeavour to rebuild respect in their social group in the wake of an attack[26].

4.3.3 Violence is also a way for gang members to gain recognition and respect by asserting their power and authority in the street, with a large proportion of street crime perpetrated against members of other gangs or the relatives of gang members[27].

4.3.4 Gang members also tend to be socially and emotionally isolated individuals with a very low level of mutual trust. Their relationships are put under even greater strain when gang members assault or rob friends, relations or one another – a not infrequent occurrence[28]. However, it is worth noting that some high profile gang members have excellent social and communications skills, and can be intelligent and articulate.

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[22] USA: Surgeon General's Commission Report (1972), National Institute of Mental Health Ten Year Follow-up (1982) & Report of the American Psychological Association's Committee on Media in Society (1992)
[23] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)
[24] Richard Wright et al, 2006
[25] Efforts have been made to close these down through internet service providers (ISPs) but this has proved difficult as the site may be moved very quickly to different ISP.
[26] Bill Sanders (2006)
[27] Pitts, 2007, Young, 1999, Sanders 2004, Wright et al, 2006
[28] Palmer & Pitts, 2006

4.3.5 There can be a discrepancy between the apparent normality of some gang–involved children and the violent acts they commit or commission:

"I grew up with them. Some of them were really nice blokes, but that's just the drugs business, everyone does it. It's kind of expected. It's terrible but these blokes aren't nutters"[29].

Group behaviour[30]

4.3.6 A loss of individual self plays an important role for those who participate in group violence. Giving oneself over to the group may be experienced as a falling away of the limitations inherent in the self and of the boundaries restricting connections to other people. The resulting feelings of abandon, together with feelings of group connection and oneness, can be intensely satisfying. At the same time, the anonymity of becoming one with a group may promote violence by leading to a diffusion of responsibility for others' welfare and less fear of blame and punitive consequences.

4.3.7 In some circumstances, those who participate in group instigated violence are not known to be aggressive or anti-social. Rather, they can be children whose permissive parenting did not equip them to resist the group (see point 4.1.3, above).

4.3.8 In the course of group violence, the members enter into a process of change along a 'continuum of destruction'. Escalating violence can evolve quickly, through a process of 'contagion'. This contagion may result from a sensitivity to other people, perhaps because of identification with others who are seen as members of one's group or shared dissatisfactions, concerns and values, or shared antagonism toward a potential victim group.

4.3.9 'Bystanders' within the group have the ability to influence a gang by their action or passivity. Group violence sometimes seems leaderless, but individuals often emerge as leaders who initiate and guide the violence.

4.3.10 In the same fashion, bystanders who attempt to interrupt the continuum of violence can take on a de-facto leadership role. The earlier bystanders act as the mob is forming, the greater their potential influence.

4.3.11 Whilst only a small percentage of children join gangs, and the absolute amount of violent behaviour by gang members is small, some studies suggest that homicide and aggravated assault are three times more likely to be committed by gang members than by non-gang anti-social children[31].

4.4 Formation of gangs

Community and family circumstances

4.4.1 Circumstances which can foster the emergence of gangs include:

- Areas with a high level of social and economic exclusion and mobility (which weakens the ties of kinship and friendship and the established mechanisms of informal control and social support)[32];

[29] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)
[30] *Youth Aggression and Violence a Psychological Approach* (Thomas G. Moeller, 2001)
[31] *Social and Cultural Experiences that Affect Youth Violence,* Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, Vol. I
[32] The MPS SRAU have undertaken a borough by borough analysis of geographical locations which plot where youth violence; serious youth violence and youth stabbing incidences have occurred in 2005 to 2007/08. This highlights that the vast majority of incidences in each category have occurred in the same

- Areas made up of predominantly social housing, and especially where it is high rise / high density social housing. There is a perfect correlation in London with 'gang neighbourhoods' and being amongst the 20% most deprived government lower level super output areas (based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007).
- Areas with poor performing schools – in terms of leadership, positive ethos, managing behaviour and partnership working;
- Lack of access to pro-social activities (e.g. youth service) and to vocational training and opportunities;
- Communities who have experienced war situations prior to arrival in the UK[33];
- Areas with a high level of gang activity / peer pressure and intimidation, particularly if the family is denying this or is in fear of the gangs; and
- Family members involved in gang activity and criminality.

4.4.2 Many parents are aware of the widespread perception that the gang problem is ultimately a product of poor parenting and that the solution lies in assuming responsibility for their children. However, they feel unable either to control or to protect their children[34].

4.4.3 Gang-involved families are vulnerable to attack, reprisal and burglary. A London youth offending team worker reported that: *"…parents are also told to hide guns and drugs[35]"*, and parents forced to decide whether their child's best interest is served by resisting the gang or joining it sometimes collude with gang membership as the safest option for their child. Intimidation from gang members silences would-be complainants and witnesses.

4.4.4 Families who are exposed to violent crime can suffer long term negative impact on their health and well-being. Homicide can cause shock, denial, anger and fear, which may be heightened if the victim or family know the offender and/or live in the same neighbourhood. Victims, families and communities can also be stigmatised by homicides through being (or feeling) blamed for the situation[36].

Reluctant or naive gang members

4.4.5 Children may become reluctant gang members as a means of self-protection. Non-affiliation may mean that it is dangerous to use certain services or facilities like an FE college or the local park, either located in gang territory or where access is only possible if one traverses gang territory. Feedback from residents has been that *'to stay out of trouble children would have to stay at home'*[37].

4.4.6 Children can become involved in anti-social behaviour and gangs (and high-risk behaviors of all types) through impulsivity, lack of experience and failing to foresee consequences (see also point 4.1.4, above).

4.4.7 However, gang members who want to leave a gang not only lose its protection, becoming vulnerable to other gangs with whom they have previously come into

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few boroughs and that these geographical locations are predominately those parts of London which also have pockets of serious deprivation

[33] *Metropolitan Police Pan-London Gang Profile, 2006* report
[34] *Reluctant Gangsters (*Pitts, 2007)
[35] *Reluctant Gangsters (*Pitts, 2007)
[36] *The experience of gun crime in London* (Victim Support London, 2006)
[37] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)

conflict, but may also be at risk from their former associates because of the disrespect or disloyalty implied by their departure.

4.4.8 One gang member said: *"If I want to be out of the gang, I must leave this area. No way I could stay round here man. There is always someone to come after you with a blade or something"* [38].

5. Serious youth violence

5.1 Weapons

5.1.1 Fear and a need for self-protection is a key motivation for children to carry weapons – carrying a weapon affords a child a feeling of power. Neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation and social exclusion generally have the highest rates of gun and knife crime[39].

5.1.2 Knives and other weapons are far more prevalent than firearms, especially in the case of children. The Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (Home Office, 2005) highlights that:

- Four percent of children had carried a knife in the last 12 months;
- Less than one percent reported having carried a gun in the same period; and
- Eighty-five percent of those that had carried a knife said the main reason was for protection, and a further nine percent said it was in case they got into a fight. Unfortunately, carrying weapons increases the risk of serious injury or death while defending oneself or fighting, and the risk multiplies in group situations.

5.1.3 The Home Office reports that in 2005-06 the most common method for all killings was with a sharp instrument[40]; twenty-eight percent of all victims were killed by a sharp instrument; and seven percent of victims had been shot (50 victims) in 2005/06.

5.1.4 In the three months to September 2005, children between the ages of 10 and 17 years accounted for over a quarter (28%) of those legally proceeded against for a gun or knife enabled crime[41].

5.1.5 Many children do not seek active involvement in gun crime and if they do use a gun are horrified by what they have done e.g: *"…he was crouched up in the corner crying because he'd brought the gun out to protect himself and had been challenged so he pulled the trigger. He hadn't wanted to pull the trigger."*[42]

5.1.6 Professionals working with children who may have reason to be fearful in their neighbourhood or school / FE college should be alert to the possibility that a child may carry a weapon. See sections 10.7 Keeping professionals safe and 10.8 Management responsibility, and 2.10.36 Screening and searching pupils for weapons in schools in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

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[38] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)
[39] Metropolitan Police Service recorded crime
[40] *Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2005/06* (Kathryn Coleman et al, 2007)
[41] Metropolitan Police Service recorded crime
[42] *Othering the Brothers, Youth and Policy* (Palmer S. & Pitts J, 2006)

5.2 Alcohol and drugs

5.2.1 The use of alcohol can play a major role in interpersonal violence involving young people. According to a recent Youth Justice Board survey of children known to London Youth Offending Teams[43], many of the children who were involved with gang activity used illegal drugs and alcohol. Binge drinking as a group was common and was strongly associated with violence.

5.2.2 The children's use of drugs brought them into contact with adults who are involved in organised crime, supplying drugs. The drugs business tends to attract career criminals who regulate the market through often extreme violence or the threat of violence[44].

5.2.3 Children often carry drugs (or weapons and stolen property) for the older gang members, so that they can be stopped and searched with impunity. Children will also serve jail terms for older gang members.

5.3 Sexual violence

Rape

5.3.1 One London project working with girls who are involved with gangs reports that nearly all of the girls they have contact with have been raped by male group members[45]. Some senior gang members pass their girlfriends around to lower ranking members and sometimes to the whole group at the same time.

5.3.2 A London YOT has reported concerns about the number of young women who regard abusive behaviour from young men as a 'normal' part of adult relationships[46].

5.3.3 An American study of gang behaviour on college campuses concluded that group sexual assault (and other types of assault) mainly occurs in an environment where group behaviour and acceptance is important to the young men involved. The theory of diffusion of responsibility suggests that individuals who might otherwise not have perpetrated a sexual assault may do so in situations where the presence of others acting in a similar fashion diminishes the individual's feeling of responsibility for the harmful consequences of his own behaviour[47] (see also points 4.3.6 – 4.3.9, above).

5.3.4 Very few rapes by gang members are reported, with girls extremely reluctant to identify their attackers and often intimidated and threatened not to talk. One head teacher reported:

"One of my year 10 students was recently gang-raped by some gang members. I talked to her and her mother. They are obviously very frightened and the mother insists that it was consensual. The girl won't come to counselling because she is afraid of being seen to talk to anyone in authority about it".[48]

Grooming

5.3.5 Gang members often groom girls at school and encourage / coerce them to recruit other girls through school / social networks. There is also anecdotal evidence that younger girls (some as young as 10 or 12) are increasingly being targeted, and

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[43] *Groups, Gangs and Weapons* (YJB, 2007) , available at http://www.yjb.gov.uk/publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idProduct=342&eP=
[44] Arlacchi, 1998 in *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007).
[45] NSPCC
[46] Southwark Youth offending team
[47] Bechhofer & Parrot ed. 144 -148
[48] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)

these girls are often much less able to resist the gang culture or manipulation by males in the group. The girls often do not identify their attackers as gang members and tend to think of them as boyfriends. They may also be connected through family or other networks.

5.3.6 Girls are often groomed using drugs and alcohol, which act as disinhibitors and also create dependency. Girls may also be used as mules to transport drugs, which frequently involves trafficking within the UK.

5.3.7 See also the London procedure for safeguarding sexually exploited children (London Board, 2006); and the London procedure for safeguarding trafficked and sexually exploited children (London Board, 2006).

6. Professionals' response

6.1 Identifying a child at risk from gang activity and/or serious youth violence

6.1.1 A child could be:

- Non-involved, but at risk from becoming involved and harmed from gang activity or serious youth violence; or
- Involved with gang related activities and/or serious youth violence and at risk both of harming others and being harmed him/herself.

6.1.2 Potentially a child involved with a gang or with serious violence could be both a victim and a perpetrator.

This requires professionals to assess and support his/her welfare and well-being needs at the same time as assessing and responding in a criminal justice capacity.

6.1.3 See the quick referral flowchart in Appendix 4.

6.2 Signs and symptoms

Gang involvement

6.2.1 Children as young as 7 years old can be gang-involved. Professionals who have contact with children should be competent to identify the signs and symptoms which, particularly when clustered together, can raise concerns that a child may be either reluctantly or willingly involved with a gang. These include a child having family experiences and circumstances as outlined in sections 4. Context and 5. Serious youth violence, and presenting indicators such as:

- Child withdrawn from family;
- Sudden loss of interest in school. Decline in attendance or academic achievement (although it should be noted that some gang members will maintain a good attendance record to avoid coming to notice);
- Being emotionally "switched off", but also containing frustration / rage;
- Started to use new or unknown slang words;
- Holds unexplained money or possessions;
- Stays out unusually late without reason, or breaking parental rules consistently;
- Sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or 'uniform'

similar to that of other young people they hang around with, including a particular colour;

- Dropped out of positive activities;
- New nickname;
- Unexplained physical injuries, and/or refusal to seek / receive medical treatment for injuries;
- Graffiti style 'tags' on possessions, school books, walls;
- Constantly talking about another young person who seems to have a lot of influence over them;
- Broken off with old friends and hangs around with one group of people;
- Associating with known or suspected gang members, closeness to siblings or adults in the family who are gang members;
- Started adopting certain codes of group behaviour e.g. Ways of talking and hand signs;
- Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other groups of young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past;
- Scared when entering certain areas; and
- Concerned by the presence of unknown youths in their neighbourhoods.

6.2.2 Looked after children are particularly vulnerable due to their low self-esteem, low resilience, attachment issues and the fact that they are often isolated from family and friends (see also section 13. Looked After Children). There are risks specific to different types of placements such as secure units, children's homes, foster homes, or living in semi-independent accommodation.

6.2.3 It seems that the more heavily gang-involved a child is, the less likely s/he is to talk about it. However, if a child does talk about gang involvement, professionals should always take what the child tells them seriously.

A child at risk of becoming a serious violent offender

6.2.4 Professionals who have contact with children should be competent to identify the combinations of signs and symptoms which can place children at risk of becoming serious and violent offenders. These include a child having experiences and circumstances as outlined in sections 4. Context and 5. Serious youth violence, and presenting indicators such as:

- Hyperactivity – the relationship between hyperactivity and later violence has been found consistently across studies, regardless of the measurement methods used;
- Concentration problems – which can predict later violent behaviour as well as academic difficulties, which themselves are risk factors for violence;
- Aggression - the earlier anti-social and violent behaviour presents, the more likely a child is to display chronic and serious violence in later childhood and adolescence;
- Acceptance of violence, carrying weapons and substance misuse and sexual exploitation – which weakens a child's internal controls against these behaviours;

- Dishonesty, anti-social beliefs and attitudes, and hostility toward police – all of which have all been found to predict violence, particularly among boys[49].

Sexual exploitation

6.2.5 Children at risk of sexual exploitation linked to gang activity and/or serious youth violence may also present with:

- Running away;
- Overt sexualised dress / attire;
- Internal injuries, multiple sexually transmitted infections (STI's), miscarriages and/or termination;
- Chronic drug dependency (particularly crack / heroin); and/or
- Expressions of despair such as self-harm – cutting, overdosing, eating disorders, sexualised risk-taking.

6.2.6 See the London procedure for safeguarding children abused through sexual exploitation (London Board, 2006), available at www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/supplementary_procedures/

7. Information sharing

7.1 Professionals in all agencies need to be confident and competent in sharing information appropriately to safeguard children at risk of harm through gang activity and/or serious youth violence.

7.2 Professionals in all agencies should share information in line with section 3. Information sharing, in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

7.3 All agencies are empowered to share information without permission for the purpose of crime prevention under section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, although obtaining consent is good practice

7.4 See also: Sharing personal and sensitive personal information on children and young people at risk of offending – a practical guide (Youth Justice Board & ACPO, 2005) at www.yjb.gov.uk.

8. Local expertise in relation to gangs and serious youth violence

8.1 Local authorities are recommended to nominate a local professional who can develop specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence to act as an adviser to other professionals and the lead professiona in cases where there are concerns that a child is/could be affected by gangs and/or serious youth violence. This postholder could support staff in more than one local authority area, and should also consider making use of Met Police data and analysis (subject to usual agreements).

8.2 Some local authorities have appointed / nominated a multi-agency gangs and serious youth violence team to take the lead on these issues; such a multi-agency

[49] J. Fraser in *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions* (R. Loeber & D.P. Farrington eds. 1998)

gangs and serious youth violence team could support staff in more than one local authority area.

9. Assessing levels of need

9.1 Professionals should assess the presenting behaviours / what a child is telling them in the context of whatever information they know or can gather from the child about the risk factors which contribute to the child's vulnerability to gang involvement and serious youth violence. See section 4. Context and section 6.2 Signs and symptoms.

9.2 See also the risk assessment framework for children affected by gangs and serious youth violence, in Appendix 3.

9.3 The tools for making an assessment are:

- The Common Assessment Framework (see Mobility and Young London: integrated working without boundaries (the London CAF Protocol, 2009); and
- A specialist / statutory assessment (including LA children's social care initial and core assessments, ASSET[50], or CAMHS).

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

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

9.5 When a professional is concerned that a child may be at risk of being significantly affected by, or involved in, gang activity and/or serious youth violence, the child is likely to be vulnerable (level 2) or at risk of harm (levels 3 or 4).

Weapons

9.6 Professionals working with children who may have reason to be fearful in their neighbourhood or school / FE college should be alert to the possibility that a child may carry a weapon. See sections 10.7. Keeping professionals safe and 10.8. Management responsibility, and section 2.10.36 Screening and searching pupils for weapons in schools in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

[50] A youth justice assessment tool comprising a main assessment, a serious harm risk assessment and a young person's self assessment. It is used to assist in planning interventions and review progress and outcomes. See http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/Assessment/Asset.htm for more information.

10 Vulnerable children (and some children with complex needs)

10.1 Common Assessment Framework (CAF)[51]

10.1.1 See also the risk assessment framework for children affected by gangs and/or serious youth violence in Appendix 3, Level 2: Vulnerable – common assessment and Level 3: Complex – common assessment or LA children's social care assessments, and section 9. Assessing levels of need.

Deciding to undertake a CAF

10.1.2 A common assessment should be undertaken by the service or agency which first has concerns that a child is vulnerable to, or at risk of harm from, gang involvement or activity. There may be a need to assess (and convene meetings) about more than one child.

10.1.3 A professional who has concerns about a child should discuss these with his/her immediate/line manager, nominated safeguarding children adviser[52] and local professional with specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence (see section 7. Local expertise in relation to gangs, above). The decision to undertake a common assessment is a matter for professional judgement, taking into account whether:

- The child appears to have needs which are not being met but it is not clear what these are;
- A child is not progressing as expected and the reasons for this are not clear;
- It appears likely that the child will need help from more than one agency;
- Additional information is required to meet needs which have already been identified; and/or
- A parent, carer or child requests an assessment.

10.1.4 Where available, a pre-assessment checklist can be used to assist the professional in deciding whether or not a common assessment would be appropriate. The professional should check whether a CAF has already been done by contacting the local officer responsible for co-ordinating the CAF (or using Contactpoint when available), or asking the child and parents.

10.1.5 If a CAF already exists, the professional will need the consent of the child / family to access information from the lead professional (see section 9.4, below) about the child's needs and about services already in place or adding information.

10.1.6 The exception to this is where professionals have concerns that to involve parents would risk further harm to a child, see section 11. Parental engagement, below.

Undertaking a CAF

10.1.7 The professional undertaking a CAF should:

a) Discuss the benefits of the CAF with the child/family and offer the assessment;

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[51] See Mobility and Young London: integrated working without boundaries (the London CAF Protocol, 2009)

[52] Section 2.3.4 Nominated safeguarding children adviser in Chapter 2 Roles & Responsibilities, *London Child Protection Procedures (2007, LSCB)*

b) If the child / family consent the assessment can go ahead;

c) See the CAF flowchart for action to take if the decision is not to go ahead with CAF or if an assessment is refused;

d) Use the local CAF form as a prompt:

- aim to gather information about all aspects of the child's life, not just those that fall within this service remit
- concentrate on information which is most relevant to this episode (additional information for other sections of the CAF form can be included later by other professionals)
- focus on strengths and positives in the child's life as well as concerns
- base the assessment on evidence (what has been observed or what the child or parent has said) rather than opinion

e) Record the results of the assessment and decide, in discussion with his/her immediate/line manager and nominated safeguarding children adviser, on the level of response needed;

- is this a level 2a case: single agency or maximum 2 agencies; is it a level 2b case: multi-agency or is it level 3 complex or level 4 (see section 10. Children at risk of / or experiencing significant harm, below)

f) Agree and record the actions, timescale and anticipated outcomes on the CAF form (e.g. if the child needs multi-agency support, who will convene the multi-agency meeting – see also section 9.2. Multi-agency professionals meeting below)

g) Record consent to share the assessment information with other agencies and any limitations on that consent;

h) Check that consent has been obtained to send a copy to the local officer responsible for co-ordinating the CAF;

i) Give a copy of the assessment to the child and family;

j) Agree a meeting date to review progress against the CAF action plan;

k) Review progress against the CAF action plan;

Reviewing the CAF Action plan

10.1.8 The outcomes could be one of the following:

a) Child and family are now receiving the services identified and there are no more additional or unmet needs No further action required at present. Consult with manager and agree decision. Close CAF;

b) Not all the actions agreed have been carried out and some needs remain:

- record non-completed actions
- identify people and resources needed to complete them
- set a date for completion and arrange a further review meeting

c) Needs have changed or further needs have been identified and other support or services required:

- continue with CAF process
- complete revised action plan

- arrange a further review meeting

d) Circumstances have changed and/or needs have become more severe. Consult with manager and make referral to the appropriate agency. Record their response and set date to review.

10.2 Multi-agency decision making and signposting

10.2.1 If a common assessment indicates that more than two agencies should be involved in meeting the child's needs, it may be appropriate to hold a multi-agency professionals meeting. Agreement about which agencies will be invited should be reached with the child and family, and the local professional with specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence should be consulted (see section 8. Local expertise in relation to gangs and serious youth violence, above).

10.2.2 The multi-agency meeting has a number of responsibilities and functions to fulfil:

- Share information about the child and their family. Under Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all agencies are empowered to share information without permission for the purpose of crime prevention (although obtaining consent is good practice);
- Identify key contacts and lead professional;
- Plan the most appropriate services to intervene and support the child and their family;
- Modify plans in the light of information shared;
- Ensure accountability;
- Increase mutual understanding and the use risk assessment techniques;
- Identify other children who might be at risk;
- Increase understanding of different agencies' ability to and constraints of taking action; and
- Increase understanding of the success of different interventions.

10.2.3 The outcome of meeting may be that:

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

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

10.2.5 Professionals should act in line with Mobility and Young London: integrated working without boundaries (the London CAF Protocol, 2009) and local procedures.

11. Children at risk of / experiencing significant harm

11.1 Definition of significant harm

11.1.1 Significant harm is defined as a situation where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a degree of physical, sexual and / or emotional harm (through abuse or neglect), which is so harmful that there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies into the life of the child and their family.

See the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007), section 4.3. Recognition of abuse and neglect.

11.1.2 In relation to gangs and serious youth violence children could be or could put themselves at risk of harm from:

- Their peers; or
- Gang-involved or affected adults in their household (including because their parent cannot protect them).

11.1.3 Professionals should always take what the child tells them seriously.

11.2 Referral to LA children's social care

11.2.1 See also the risk assessment framework for children affected by gangs and serious youth violence in Appendix 3, Level 3: Complex – LA children's social care assessments and Level 4: Acute – LA children's social care assessments, and section 9. Assessing levels of need.

11.2.2 If a professional is concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm – as a victim or a perpetrator of serious youth violence, gang-related or not – the professional should:

- Wherever possible, consult with their agency's nominated safeguarding children adviser, their manager and, if available, the local multi-agency gang intelligence forum and/or professional with specialist knowledge in relation to gangs (see section 8. Local expertise in relation to gangs and serious youth violence, above);
- Consider section 5. Harming others, in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007); and
- If the threshold is met at level 4 for significant harm, then a referral must be made to LA children's social care, in line with section 6. Referral and assessment and section 7. Child protection enquiries, in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

11.3 LA children's social care response

11.3.1 LA children's social care will respond in one of three ways and will advise the referrer of which plan is in place:

- An initial assessment will be undertaken to identify the child's level of need and service provision;
- The initial assessment may identify the child or young person as at risk of significant harm and in need of protection. This will necessitate a child protection enquiry and a core assessment of need under section 47 of the Children Act 1989;
- Where no concerns are identified, there will be no further action. In these cases, LA children's social care will advise the referrer verbally and in writing as to why they are not taking action.

11.3.2 When an agency receives notification that LA children's social care will not be taking action, the professional who made the referral to LA children's social care should undertake a common assessment for the child (see section 10.1. Common Assessment Framework).

11.3.3 Where inter-agency disagreements arise on the preferred course of action, see Diagram 1. Flowchart on resolution of professional differences in *Mobility and Young London: integrated working without boundaries (the London CAF Protocol, 2009)* and/or section 18.6. Professional conflict resolution in the *London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007)*

11.3.4 In cases where LA children's social care identify a risk of significant harm, they will hold a strategy discussion with the police in line with section 6. Referral and assessment in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

11.3.5 Once concerns are raised about harm from gang activity and serious youth violence, there should also be consideration of possible risk to members of the child's family and other children in the community. Professionals should be alert to the fact that other children could be identified as being at risk of harm from gang involvement / activity and will then need to be responded to as a child in need or a child in need of protection.

11.3.6 The LA children's social care response will be in line with the usual processes, outlined in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

12. Parental engagement

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

12.2 The exception to this is where professionals have concerns that to involve parents would risk further harm to a child. If the parents are not invited, the reason should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting together with a written undertaking that a named person informs them of the outcome of the meeting.

12.3 Parental consent is required in order to undertake a CAF.

12.4 Where a referral is made to LA children's social care for an initial assessment, parental permission is required by LA children's social care in order to seek information for assessment purposes. See sections 6.5.10 & 6.6.5 in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

12.5 In instances when LA children's social care initiate s47 (child protection) investigations, the social worker should inform parents at the earliest opportunity of concerns, unless to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm or undermine a criminal investigation. See section 7.7. Involving parents, family members and children, in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

12.6 Staff should work to maintain parental involvement throughout.

Difficulties in engaging parents

12.7 Staff have a duty to look at every possible way that parental co-operation can be achieved, including the use of community organisations and/or community leaders to facilitate the work with parents/family (whilst keeping the child's interests paramount).

12.8 Where a child is not involved with the Youth Offending Service Team (YOT) and the parents are unwilling to engage, professionals should consult section 10. Working with un-co-operative families, in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

Accredited Parenting Programmes

12.9 Accredited parenting programmes provide parents with an opportunity to improve their skills in dealing with the behaviour that puts their child at risk of offending. They provide parents/carers with one-to-one advice, as well as practical support in handling the behaviour of their child, setting appropriate boundaries and improving communication. By improving the parenting skills of parents/carers, these programmes address one of the biggest risks associated with young people offending. Parents should be offered the opportunity to voluntarily attend a parenting programme if their child becomes involved with the youth justice system or attends a project such as a Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP)[53] or Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP)[54]

Parenting Contracts and Orders

12.10 In many cases, parents engage willingly with the support on offer. But parenting contracts can offer more structure to the relationship between service and the family, which may suit some families better, and parenting orders can be used if parents do not engage voluntarily. Parenting contracts and orders are preventative interventions that can be used to provide support and challenge to parents of children and young people showing problematic behaviour such as:

- Serious misbehaviour at school which could lead to exclusion;
- Exclusion;
- Truancy;
- Criminal conduct;
- Anti-social behaviour (for further information see Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003).

12.11 See also section 15. The role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

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[53] Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) aim to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending by children 8 - 13 years considered to be at high risk of offending. See http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjs/Prevention/YISP/

[54] Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs), are tailor-made programmes for 8 to 17-year-olds to reduce offending, truancy, and exclusion for 8 to 17-year-olds in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: see http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/Prevention/YIP/

13. Looked after children

13.1 Looked after children say that bullies, gangs and the risk of serious youth violence are the worst thing about where they live[55].

- A fifth of children had concerns about gangs and bullies; and
- Over half of the children had been bullied – with 20% of them as frequent victims.

13.2 Whilst LA children's social care professionals have a key 'corporate parenting' role for looked after children and care leavers, professionals in universal services have regular contact with looked after children, and the police, YOS and the voluntary sector can, in some cases, also have relatively high levels of contact with looked after children. All staff should be aware of the increased vulnerability of looked after children to gang involvement and the risk of serious youth violence.

13.3 In some parts of London, looked after children are recruitment targets for gangs. Professionals in all agencies who have contact with looked after children should be alert to their increased vulnerability to being gang-involved, targeted by gangs or adversely affected by gang activity. These children could potentially be at risk of harm from serious youth violence.

13.4 Youth offending services should ensure the National Protocol for Case Responsibility, section 5.7 (currently draft) is followed in regards to any transfer of young offenders between boroughs where gang affiliation is known. This information should include welfare and risk information.

LA children's social care

13.5 When children are known to be involved with or affected by gangs, professionals need to take into account gang territory and gang membership when planning placements for looked after children, to avoid placing a child in a situation which exposes him/her to serious youth violence.

13.6 At reviews, the Independent Reviewing Officer should recommend that a team manager convenes a multi-agency professionals or network meeting if there are concerns that a child may be vulnerable to gang involvement and/or serious youth violence. The overall intention is that there needs to be clear lines of accountability for any looked after child who is vulnerable to or affected by gang activities and/or serious youth violence.

13.7 All children's homes should have access to a local professional with specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence or a gangs and serious youth violence team (see section 8. Local expertise in relation to gangs and serious youth violence) who they can consult if they have concerns.

14. Different professionals' roles and responsibilities

14.1 All agencies

14.1.1 Safeguarding children (in this instance from harm through gang activity and serious youth violence) is everyone's responsibility[56].

[55] Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director, 2007 *Looked After in Care* (consultation with 300+ children in care)

14.1.2 Accordingly, professionals in all agencies must follow the procedures in sections 6 to 12 above if they identify vulnerability or risk of harm to a child through gang activity and/or serious youth violence.

14.1.3 Professionals in all agencies should also be aware of the significance of issues such as those listed in section 4.1 The origins of violence in children, which may provide an opportunity for early intervention and prevention.

14.1.4 Professionals in all agencies should be confident, competent and easily able to access support from:

- Their agency's nominated safeguarding children adviser (see section 2.3.5 of the London Child Protection Procedures, London Board, 2007);
- Their agency's nominated Common Assessment Framework adviser (if different to the nominated safeguarding children adviser); and
- The local professional with specialist knowledge in relation to gangs and serious youth violence or gangs and serious youth violence team, if there is one (see section 8. Local expertise in relation to gangs and serious youth violence, above).

14.1.5 Each agency should assure themselves that their staff are receiving the information / training to enable them to identify risks of harm to children from gangs and serious youth violence, and have access the specialist support needed from the professional/s in point 13.2 above, to respond appropriately.

14.2 LA children's social care

14.2.1 LA children's social care professionals need to be alert to the possibility that a child referred to them or a child they are already working with may, in addition to any of the child's other presenting issues, be or become vulnerable to / involved with, a gang or serious youth violence.

14.2.2 LA children's social care professionals should initiate engagement with parents early and maintain it throughout, particularly for looked after children. See also sections 4. Context, 12. Parental engagement and 13. Looked after children, above.

14.3 Youth offending service (YOS)

14.3.1 A recent audit of a London youth offending team revealed that a high proportion of gang-involved children are known to the criminal justice system – 42% of the team's caseload were gang-involved in some way:

- 50%+ of these children were regular, active, and probably willing, gang members;
- 25% were involved occasionally and not necessarily willingly; and
- 16% were involved reluctantly[57].

14.3.2 YOS professionals should share information with all relevant agencies about any serious incidents relating to gangs and/or serious youth violence for each child they are working with and the child's siblings, at the earliest opportunity.

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[56] *Making Arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children* (*DfES 2005)*, www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/

[57] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)

14.3.3 YOS professionals must liaise with establishments in the secure estate to ensure that the secure estate staff have knowledge of an young person's gang affiliations.

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs)

14.3.4 YISPs operate in a number of London boroughs, and aim to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending by 8 to 13-year-olds who are considered to be at high risk of offending. Panels are made up of a number of representatives of different agencies (e.g. police, schools, health and LA children's social care). The main emphasis of a panel's work is to ensure that children and their families, at the earliest possible opportunity, can access mainstream public services.

14.3.5 In boroughs which have a YISP, consideration should be given to referring unconvicted children aged 8 to 13 to it where concerns exist of involvement in gangs and/or serious youth violence.

14.4 Police

14.4.1 The police, especially safer neighbourhood policing teams, should be aware of siblings or other children living in households which are affected by gang activity and/or serious youth violence, including parents as adult gang members, and should share this information internally with child abuse investigation teams and externally by referral for a common assessment and/or to LA children's social care at the earliest opportunity.

14.4.2 The police should inform LA children's social care and other relevant multi-agency groups wherever possible of victims of gang-related crime and serious youth violence, given the correlation between victims and future gang members.

14.4.3 The *Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Youth Strategy* sets out its 3-year plan to deliver long-term sustainable reductions in youth crime, harm to children, young people and anti social behaviour. The police recognise that responding appropriately to children who are involved with or affected by gangs requires a long-term, joined-up strategy involving high-level, multi-agency strategic leadership. Police, working in partnership, will also make use of effective problem solving interventions and diversion activities, alongside rigorous enforcement options where appropriate.

14.4.4 Officers and police staff who interact daily with young people are best placed to recognise the signs displayed by young people that may either already be gang members or at most risk of being recruited into a gang. A responsibility rests with all to ensure that intelligence around those affected by gangs is accurately recorded and then shared with partner agencies, in order that appropriate strategies can be implemented.

14.4.5 Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Schools Officers, and Police Community Support Officers are building up trust with communities in order that local concerns around gangs and violent individuals is shared with police. The presence of police officers within schools is now broadly welcomed and local partnership programmes within schools outline the risks of gang membership and knife crime to young people.

14.4.6 The local MPS contribution can include:

- Police membership of local Safeguarding Board and support/membership of Preventions Sub Group to ensure the issue of gangs is addressed from a strategic preventions perspective in addition to enforcement activity;
- Effective use of existing Merlin system to bring children at risk of gang activity and/or serious youth violence to notice;

- Deployment of dedicated Schools Officers taking responsibility for policing schools environs and exchanging information and intelligence on gang activity and/or serious youth violence, operating within local Safer Schools Partnerships;
- Use of schools officers to build strong relationships with educators (and pupils) to address offending and behavioral issues within the school environment, operating within local Safer Schools Partnerships;
- Develop effective links between boroughs and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (CAIT) to ensure that children being exploited within a gang context are supported;
- Use Schools Officers to deliver messages to children warning them of the physical and emotional dangers of allowing themselves to be exploited by gangs;
- Work cross border in order to tackle gang activity and/or serious youth violence both operationally and to ensure joined up working with partners in long term problem solving;
- Establish a gang database managed by the Borough Intelligence Unit and share this information through regular meetings with partners to monitor levels of intervention, diversion and enforcement targeted at individual gang members;
- Support the development and implementation of a borough Anti Bullying Strategy and work to ensure ratification by LSCB and build this into local *Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)*;
- Train front line staff in *Every Child Matters* and ensure that they ask, "Is this gang related" when dealing with incidents and to record this information;
- Police Officers working in YOTs to target gang members or those at risk of gang membership for intervention work and restorative justice programmes;
- Deploy resources to police transport links/hubs where groups of young people congregate in order to engage and prevent offending;
- Encourage schools and colleges to run 'Safety Week' termly and deploy screening arches linked to this;
- Provide police support for Education Welfare Officers to ensure school attendance through Truancy Patrols and home visits;
- Training police officers working with young people in effective Restorative Justice and measuring the use of Restorative Justice within the EPIC system;
- Develop training for school staff in policy, procedure and powers under Education Act to increase confidence to seize stolen or prohibited articles;
- Support, manage, develop and publicise the success of diversionary schemes such as the *KICKZ Project* and Police Cadets (MPVCC) to provide young people with positive alternatives to gang activity and/or serious youth violence;
- Seeking to sponsor and support mediation between gangs and individuals particularly at the conclusion of criminal justice proceedings;

- Identification of a Youth Priority by each Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team within the MPS;
- Putting in place information sharing protocols with schools and colleges to ensure awareness of young people at risk of or involved in gang activity and/or serious youth violence to allow safeguarding of students; and/or
- Developing an integrated Borough Gangs Strategy to draw together the education, engagement and enforcement strands

Osman warnings

14.4.7 A warning regarding threat to life, or an Osman Warning, is so named after the Osman v United Kingdom case (1998) which placed a positive obligation on the authorities to take preventive measures to protect an individual whose life is at risk from the criminal acts of another individual. In the context of gangs, this may occur as a result of gang rivalry or because of an incident occurring within a young person's own gang (for example threatening to leave or refusing to commit an act of violence).

14.4.8 If the police give an Osman Warning to a young person they should inform LA children's social care and consider whether:

- There is a need for immediate action (see section 11. Children at risk of / experiencing significant harm, above); or
- There is risk of significant harm (see section 11.2 Referral to LA children's social care, above); or
- The child should be referred for a common assessment (see section 10.1 Common Assessment Framework, above).

14.5 Schools and FE colleges

14.5.1 Schools can be well placed to pick up signs of anti-social behaviours, aggression / bullying and gang activity amongst children and identify those at risk of harm as victims and/or perpetrators (including siblings, girls at risk of sexual exploitation etc).

14.5.2 Poor academic achievement is one of the most consistently-reported risk factors found to increase the likelihood of violent behaviour and crime. Recent USA research found that primary school boys with low achievement ended up being convicted of a violent crime as an adult twice as often as for other boys[58].

14.5.3 Where professionals in schools or other educational establishments have concerns about the risk of harm to a child from anti-social behaviour, bullying and potential or actual gang activity and/or serious youth violence, they should inform their nominated safeguarding children adviser and follow the procedures in sections 9. to 13, above.

All education establishments can be affected

14.5.4 Some primary schools in London report conflict between self-styled gang members. From time to time, gang-affiliated youngsters from secondary schools are

[58] *Early predictors of adolescent aggression and adult violence, in* V*iolence and Victims, 4*, 79-100. (D.P. Farrington, 1989).

summoned to a primary school by their younger brothers and sisters as reinforcements in the aftermath of an 'inter-gang' playground dispute.

14.5.5 In some areas of London, FE colleges are vulnerable as sites where gang activity and/or serious youth violence can gain momentum because, unlike schools, gangs are more likely to view further education colleges 'as belonging' to particular gangs. This ownership can give rise to incidents of serious youth violence on the premises and create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Achievement and exclusion

14.5.6 In recent UK studies[59], almost two thirds of 23 active gang members interviewed had been permanently excluded from school, with the exclusions often resulting from gang involved and gang-affected children attempting to bring weapons onto school premises. The studies confirmed that children involved in anti-social behaviour and gangs tend to see academic striving as 'uncool' and, as a result, educational failure can come to be accepted as the norm amongst them.

14.5.7 Children who continued to attend school were caught in a double-bind because they would be 'shamed' by the other children if they gave wrong answers in class, or achieved low marks, but if they consistently gave right answers or achieved high marks, they were ridiculed.

Schools as safe places

14.5.8 A Childwatch survey in one London borough found that many students felt adults were unable to protect them. High levels of transience in schools serving areas of acute social deprivation and mobility mean that the 'pecking order' is never settled and conflict is continual.

14.5.9 Schools affected by gang issues and potential or actual serious youth violence will need to work in partnership with the police (the Safer Neighbourhoods Policing Team), YOTs and LA children's social care. Safer School Partnerships can be an effective forum for this multi-agency working. The Partnership lists 'to steer young people away from involvement in criminal gangs' as one of its key quality standards. An early evaluation of this programme found that pupils in participating schools felt significantly safer than their counterparts in comparison schools, and there was also evidence that victimisation outcomes were improving in these schools[60]. See 14.4.6 for more information on potential contributions from the MPS, and http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/sspg/ for further details on the Safer Schools Programme.

14.5.10 A Headteacher recently interviewed[61] said:

"I think the children are relieved to leave gang culture outside. We have a zero tolerance policy on knives. We use security wands and conduct random searches, we agreed this with the parents. We have rules: No hoods, No hats, No caps and No bandanas. We say to them that the street stays on the street."

She argued that in this way the children are given the option of embracing school values rather than street values because they feel safe inside the school. This allows them to drop the posture and so they are freed from their dilemma about gang loyalty.

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[59] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007) & Pitts, 2006
[60] Youth Justice Board, 2005 *Safer School Partnerships*
[61] *Reluctant Gangsters* (Pitts, 2007)

14.5.11 Staff in schools must be appropriately trained to exercise their legal responsibilities and duty of care around physical intervention through an approved / accredited method (such as the “Team Teach” programme).

14.5.12 See Appendix 5. for an extract from Gangs and Group Offending Guidance for Schools (DCSF, 2008); the full document is available at: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12639.

14.6 Health

14.6.1 Health professionals, in particular GPs and A&E staff, may become concerned about a child’s involvement in serious youth violence due to injuries or wounds, particularly those caused by sharp instruments or knives.

14.6.2 Through their home visiting, health visitors may become aware of gang involvement by the parents, older siblings or other adults linked to a household, or that the children in a household are being affected by gang activity and/or serious youth violence in the neighbourhood.

14.6.3 Health professionals may also come into contact with girls who they suspect may have been sexually exploited or abused, perhaps through Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics, sexual health services and GPs. The professionals should be alert to a child’s likely reluctance and fear of discussing this.

14.7 Housing and Social Landlords

14.7.1 Housing in the public sector is provided and managed by social landlords, itself a generic term that masks huge diversity across the social housing sector and includes local authorities, Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations.

14.7.2 Social landlords have a proven record of effective partnership working through, for example, CDRPs and Safer Neighbourhood Groups. Through their housing management function they are well placed to identify risk and to make a strong contribution to delivering positive outcomes across the range of preventative, enforcement and/or resettlement strategies.

14.7.3 The incidence of gang activity and/or serious youth violence are high-level concerns for social landlords and their residents in neighbourhoods in which they manage properties. Where a social landlord has such a legitimate interest, they should be directly included in the formulation, implementation and review of relevant strategies.

14.7.4 Although ‘general needs’ social landlords are well placed to pick up on the impact of gang activity among the children of tenants, there is also a key role for the hostel / supported housing sector (funded through the Supporting People programme), who may be accommodating the young people themselves. This includes 16 / 17 year old 'children in need' who are accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act, and whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable to exploitation by gangs. These types of services are uniquely placed to pick up on risk factors and also to work with young people attempting to break away from gang activity.

14.7.5 Where housing authorities (including Supporting People providers) and social landlords have any suspicions that a child may be at risk of harm, they should inform their local safeguarding children adviser and/or Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Coordinator and follow the procedures in sections 7 to 11 above.

14.7.6 The timely sharing of information, whether intelligence or evidence, is essential and housing authorities and social landlords should be included in all relevant information sharing arrangements, involved in individual case management meetings and provided with detailed guidance, supported by training where appropriate, on how, where and to whom to raise concerns and/or to identify and notify risk.

14.7.7 Housing authorities and social landlords should be signed up to the local authority's information sharing protocol and ensure that they have clear communication channels in place with statutory agencies such as LA children's social care, YOTs and the LSCB.

14.8 London Probation Service

14.8.1 Professionals in the probation service are in a position to identify children at risk of harm from gang activity and/or serious youth violence through their work with adults who are violent and/or gang members. These adults may be parents, older siblings, people engaged in recruiting children into gang activity and/or serious youth violence, or living in households with children.

14.8.2 Probation service professionals should share information about children at risk of harm from gang activity and/or serious youth violence via the CAF process to the relevant services at the earliest opportunity.

14.9 Community groups / voluntary agencies and faith groups

14.9.1 Community groups / voluntary agencies can be well placed to know the profile and location of local gang activity and potential or actual serious youth violence through their community links and the work they do to support children and their families. In addition, community workers and professionals from voluntary agencies can be best placed to reach children who are at risk of harm from their peers.

14.9.2 All community group and voluntary agency staff and volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and that they should respond to child protection concerns in line with this Procedure and the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007).

14.9.3 Gang-related 'territorialism' and serious youth violence can make community, voluntary or youth work difficult in any local area. In these circumstances, safe outreach work rather than building-based activities can be an effective way forward.

14.10 Youth service / targeted youth support

14.10.1 Each local authority should have a targeted youth support plan in place, providing a range of interventions for specific groups including gangs / serious youth violence, and professionals should refer to these local procedures.

15. Role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Responding to serious youth violence and gang activity

15.1 Asked to reflect on what might have prevented their own involvement in offending / group offending, children cite:

- Having a significant, respected adult they could turn to;
- Having a chance to develop their skills and potential; and

- Access to fulfilling diversionary activity[62].

15.2 In areas where children are particularly at risk from gang activity and/or serious youth violence, the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) should consider auditing local activity to tackle anti-social behaviour, youth violence and gangs in relation to these main areas:

- Tackling the supply of knives, guns and ammunition for criminal use;
- Reducing the level of glamour associated with serious youth violence and gang membership and the use of weapons;
- Partnership with children and parents to build community capacity for making serious youth violence and gang membership less attractive;
- Promoting YOT-led multi-agency support for parental self-help groups in the community to support parents prior to their children become involved with the youth justice system;
- Transforming deprived neighbourhoods, futures and opportunities to provide alternative activities to make serious youth violence and gang membership less attractive;
- Increasing the confidence of communities affected by serious youth violence and gang-related crime that the problem is being properly addressed;
- Increasing the willingness of potential witnesses to come forward to give evidence / information to the authorities;
- Ensuring effective engagement and cross-agency risk management of serious youth violence and gang members and those at risk;
- Increasing the sustainability of funding of initiatives and projects which tackle serious youth violence and gang related activity;
- Encouraging effective partnership-working and information-sharing in relation to serious youth violence and gang related activity; and
- Improving the evidence base relating to causal factors and what works in tackling serious youth violence and gang related activity.

15.3 See Tackling Gangs: a practical guide for local authorities, CDRPs and other local partners (Home Office, 2008), which sets out the lessons learnt from the Tackling Gangs Action Programme launched in 2007 and is available to download from http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentstreet/violentstreet011.htm

15.4 See also the Youth Crime Action Plan (Home Office, 2008), which sets out the government's programme for tackling youth crime and can be downloaded from http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan/.

Preventing anti-social behaviour, youth violence and gangs

15.5 All LSCBs should:

- Promote awareness of the relationship between 'good enough' parenting and aggression in children, and

[62] *Groups, gangs & weapons* (Youth Justice Board, 2007)

- Promote early years service-led parenting support;
- Promote capacity-building in the community for parental self-help groups to educate and support 'good enough' parenting;

15.6 In areas where children are particularly at risk from gang activity and/or serious youth violence, the LSCB should:

- Ensure that preventative work in relation to gangs and serious youth violence is a key part of the LSCB's strategy. The LSCB should link up with other preventative work in the area, establishing strong partnerships with social exclusion teams, crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs), the police and other agencies.
- Have an overview of the work of agencies such as the voluntary and community sector in the area to minimise the risk of other children becoming involved in gang activity and serious youth violence (see also section 15.2, third bullet point, above).
- Ensure that there are effective local strategies in place to safeguard children affected by gang activity and/or serious violence and intervene when issues arise.
- Collect data on children who have been identified as needing additional services due to gang-related and/or serious youth violence concerns, and feedback from children and their parents at high risk from gang-related activity and/or serious youth violence, in order to inform provision of services in the future.

Training

15.7 All LSCBs should ensure that single agency and multi-agency training is provided for all professionals who work with children on:

- Child development – the relationship between 'good enough' parenting and the pro- and anti-social coping mechanisms children develop as a consequence.

15.8 In areas where children are particularly at risk from gang activity and/or serious youth violence, the LSCB should ensure that single agency and multi-agency training is provided on:

- Safeguarding children and promoting their welfare in relation to gang activity and serious youth violence is provided; and that professionals are confident working with local prevention and intervention programmes relating to gangs.

Appendix 1 – London Serious Youth Violence Board Terms of Reference

LSYVB
London Serious Youth Violence Board

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1 Aim

1.1 Working with key partners and stakeholders we will reduce serious youth violence and the fear of violence in London.

1.2 This will be achieved through an action orientated approach and by focussing our efforts on improving the way we work and how we do business with each other.

2 Definition

2.1 Serious youth violence is defined as "murder, attempted murder, grievous bodily harm and weapon-enabled violent crime committed by and against young people under 20 years of age".[63] (Although feedback from the London Summit on Serious Youth Violence suggested that the age range be extended to include youths up to the age of 25 years, there are concerns that this may dilute the focus that the new Board requires to be effective. It is accepted that the board and practitioners/partners should be aware of the potential relationships between young adults and youths involved in serious youth violence, e.g. older siblings, and therefore the potential risks to young people).

3 Role of the Board

3.1 The Serious Youth Violence Board will:

- Strengthen the capacity of local authorities and partners to tackle serious youth violence by:
  - clarifying and strengthening the strategic and operational framework;
  - promoting partnership joint plans and outcomes;
  - improving the sharing of information and intelligence both within and across agencies;
  - developing procedures and practices that improve and clarify the interface between serious youth violence and Safeguarding framework.

[63] MPS Youth Strategy

- Encourage better joint working between the key statutory partners and other agencies, including the Third Sector.
- Act as a "gateway" for new directives/initiatives and identifying good practice (e.g. liaising with Government departments on identifying potential links between initiatives and advising on direction that reflects London's needs).
- Support the development of a central repository of good practice, effective approaches, programmes and providers ensuring it meshes with the Mayor's Project Oracle and sponsoring improved practitioner activity.
- Measure progress by using the London Youth Crime Prevention Board (LYCPB) dashboard.
- Monitor progress of Workstreams established under the LYCPB.

3.2 In delivering the above the Board will address the need for:

- Coherence and stability in policy and practice for serious youth violence across London;
- Greater knowledge and use of interventions that are proven to work, and high quality data to inform strategic decisions;
- More consistent sharing of expertise and experience among practitioners; and
- Greater clarity about how the safeguarding framework, and other information sharing processes, can be productively applied to SYV.

4 Desired outcomes

4.1 The following is not intended as a comprehensive list but rather an indication of desired outcomes that the Board would wish to see or measure its impact and effectiveness against:

- Reduction in serious youth violence and the fear of violence (reduction targets to be set by the new Board for the period 2009 - 2012).
- Redressing disproportionality, particularly in respect of African-Caribbean youths involved in violent crime, both as victims and perpetrators.
- Increased confidence of the public, especially young people, in the criminal justice system, police and agencies[64].
- LYCPB initiatives taken forward[65].
- Influencing existing inspection bodies to build into their processes measurements of progress in this area.
- Influencing strategy and policy direction based upon research outcomes and inclusion of evaluation mechanisms.
- Strengthening capacity in local authorities and partners across London to tackle serious youth violence.

[64] As measured by the British Crime Survey & reflected within APACS

[65] Work is already underway to mainstream the LYCPB initiatives within existing and new delivery vehicles

5 Governance and structure

5.1 The Serious Youth Violence Board would be accountable to the LCSP for the delivery of the key initiatives.

5.2 The frequency of Board will operate as a delivery Board, meeting quarterly or more frequently as may be necessary. The location of the Board meetings will be set between partners and key stakeholders.

5.3 The Board will be underpinned by a Practitioners' Forum which will focus on:

- Providing a reality check for the Board.
- Determining how to make it work.
- Sharing good practice.
- Guiding, supporting and providing membership of the various workstreams.

5.4 Membership to include representatives from youth offending service (YOS) managers, schools head teachers, police safer neighbourhood leads and crime managers, local authority community safety managers, social services, A&E consultants etc. and draw upon the experience and membership of the Guns Gangs and Weapons Practitioners Group (GGWPG).

6 Membership

Will	Tuckley	Chief Executive, **Chair**	LB Bexley
Martin	Hewitt	Commander (SCD)	Metropolitan Police Service
Ron	Belgrave	Community Safety Manager	Greater London Authority
Sue	Berelowitz	Deputy Children's Commissioner	11 Million
Romi	Bowen	Director of Children's Services (Southwark)	Association of London Directors of Children's Services
Cindy	Butts	Independent Member	Metropolitan Police Authority
Paul	Clark	Director of Children's Services (Harrow)	Association of London Directors of Children's Services
Cheryl	Coppell	C/Executive Havering Chair of London Safeguarding Children Board	Chief Executives' London Committee
Cynthia	Davies	Head of Youth Crime Team	DCSF
Phyllis	Dunipace	Director of Children's Services (Lambeth)	Association of London Directors of Children's Services
Rose	Fitzpatrick	Assistant Commissioner (Acting)	Metropolitan Police Service
Maria	Galovics	Assistant Chief Officer	London Probation
Jo	Gordon	Head of Crime & Drugs Division	Government Office for London
Susanna	Hancock	Head of Youth Justice Strategy	London Criminal Justice Board

Mark	Newton	Chief Superintendent	British Transport Police
John	O'Brien	Chief Executive	London Councils
Michael	O'Connor	Director of Children's Services (Westminster)	Association of London Directors of Children's Services
Paul	Plant	Deputy Regional Director	NHS London
Graham	Robb	YJB Board member	Youth Justice Board
Safron	Rose	Director, South & East	NSPCC
Justin	Russell	Head of Violent Crime Unit	Home Office
Mike	Taylor	Head of Specialist Crime Prevention and Partnership	Metropolitan Police Service
Jacky	Tiotto	Head of Children & Learners Division	Government Office for London
Javed	Khan	Executive Director	LSYVB

7 Role and requirements of Chair

7.1 The role and requirements of the Chair is to:

- Be the public face of the Board; be a strong issues-broker; and provide strategic leadership.
- Liaise directly with Ministers and key members with community safety and children's responsibilities, seeking their views and influencing policy and decision making.
- Chairing up to five Board meetings per annum.
- Based on the LYCPB, approximately a further 1-2 days per month (liaising with secretariat, reading, stakeholder / key player liaison).

8 Duration of the Board and proposed timescale

8.1 The Board will be of limited duration. Key milestones will include:

- Formal Board Launch — February 2009
- A problem definition phase — March 2009
- Board's work programme agreed — March 2009
- Mid term Summit — December 2009
- Delivery and monitoring of outcomes — A further 9-12 months

9 Resources

9.1 The Board will adopt a similar approach and model as that of the London Youth Crime Prevention Board, particularly with regard to resourcing of:

- A full time Grade 7 Civil Servant or equivalent (with background knowledge to the subject matter) as policy lead
- A full time Higher / Executive Officer as administrator

9.2 Additional staff may be seconded from different representative agencies.

9.3 The LCSP Secretariat will also be on hand to engage in related business.

9.4 The Board's anticipated costs include:

- Chair's expenses.
- Executive Director's costs.
- Secretariat secondment costs.
- Programme budget including communication/marketing costs.

10. Executive Director

10.1 The Executive Director (or senior advisor) to act as the executive Lead, taking responsibility for delivery of the workstreams and SYV secretariat. The role will include:

- Supporting the Chair of the Board.
- Advising on how proposals coming out of the Steering Group/Summit are made more attractive to local authorities and Directors of Children's Services (DCSs).
- Advising on structure and content of the work programme.
- Helping decommission the LYCPB, acting as adviser on its final report and helping ensure LYCPB initiatives are sustained.
- Stakeholder management.
- Helping identify what works.
- Promoting information sharing.
- Guiding the work of the secretariat.

10.2 Additional information concerning the work of Serious Youth Violence Board can be obtained from the LSYVB secretariat:

- Javed.khan@gol.gsi.gov.uk 020 7217 3185
- Kate.eves@gol.gsi.gov.uk 020 7217 3091
- Mat.shaer@gol.gsi.gov.uk 020 2717 3200
- Michael.mensah@gol.gsi.gov.uk 020 2717 3584

Appendix 2 - Metropolitan Police Service Definition of Serious Youth Violence and Youth Violence[66]

1. Definitions

1.1 Serious Youth Violence is defined as any offence of Most Serious Violence or Weapon Enabled Crime, where the victim is aged 1-19.

1.2 Youth Violence is defined in the same way, but also includes Assault with Injury offences.

Counting rules

1.3 The Serious Youth Violence and Youth Violence measures count the number of victims (aged 1-19) of offences, rather than the number of offences. This means that if a record has either an original main classification or a subsidiary classification that meets the relevant definition, all victims aged 1-19 will be counted.

1.4 If a record falls into more than one category (i.e. if a homicide is committed using a gun), then each victim will still only be counted once.

Youth Strategy

1.5 Youth Strategy success measures are presented as the number of victims per 1,000 youth population. To produce meaningful ratios, groupings of victims aged 10-19 for Serious Youth Violence and 10-17 for Total Youth Crime (for both victims and the comparator populations) have been used. These age ranges will provide more insightful ratios than the 1-19 and 1-17 groupings. The majority of youth victims fall within these aged 10+ groupings, so comparing to a broader population with more "younger" victims will produce misleading figures.

2. Most Serious Violence

2.1 Most Serious Violence Offences consist of the following classifications:

- Homicide and Child Destruction (excl corporate manslaughter)
- Attempted Murder
- Wounding or other act endangering life and GBH with intent
- Causing Death by Dangerous/Careless/ Inconsiderate Driving
- Causing Death by Aggravated Vehicle Taking

Assault with Injury

2.2 Assault with Injury is predominantly the offence type Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) and any religiously or racially aggravated actual bodily harm. This wider offence consists of bodily harm by furious driving (code 008/04), actual bodily harm (008/06), assault with intention to resist arrest (008/20), dangerous dogs offence (008/21), dangerous dog offence where victim has been bitten (008/22), racially aggravated ABH (008/34). The simplest explanation is that Assault with Injury is an assault where the victims sustains any visible injury.

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[66] Source: **Performance Directorate © MPA**

Weapon Enabled Crime

2.3 Weapon Enabled Crime consists of both Gun Crime and Knife Crime, which are defined as follows:

2.4 Gun Crime – any offence that meets both the criteria below:

- Major category of Violence Against the Person (excluding the minor category of Offensive Weapon), Sexual Offences, Robbery or Burglary
- Includes a gun feature code

2.5 Knife Crime – any offence that meets both the criteria below:

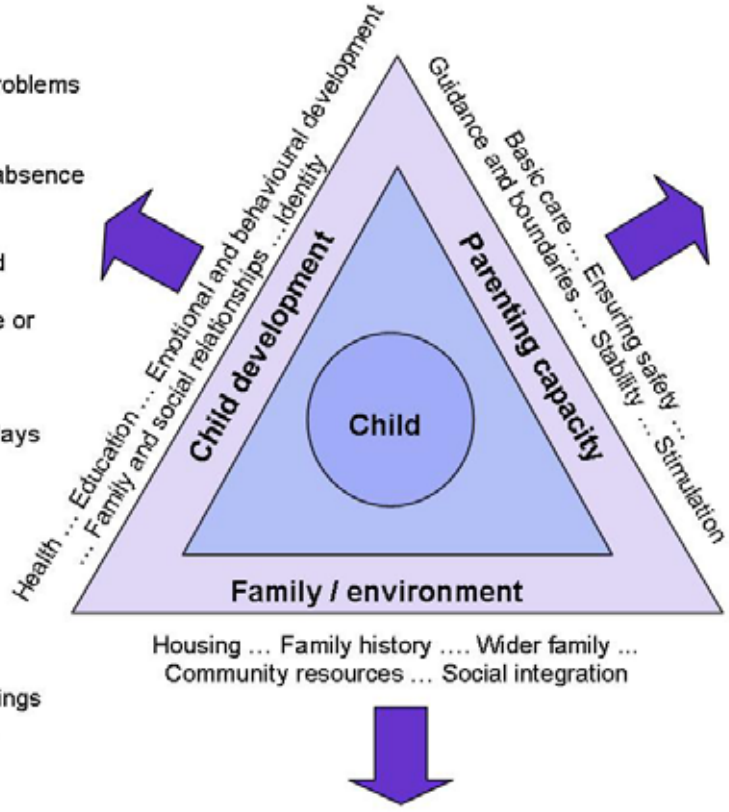
- Murder Attempted Murder
- Threats to Kill
- Manslaughter
- Infanticide
- Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life
- Wounding or GBH with Intent
- Sexual Assault
- Rape
- Robbery; and
- with a knife/sharp instrument feature

Appendix 3 - Risk assessment framework for children affected by gangs and/or serious youth violence

High level risk factors
- Early problems with antisocial and criminal behaviour
- Persistent offending
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Unable to regulate own emotions and behaviour
- Physical violence and aggression
- Permanent exclusion from school
- Peer drug use
- Friends condoning or involved in antisocial and aggressive behaviour
- The need to identify olders, and youngers, as gang initiation, particularly in Year 7 of secondary schools

Medium risk factors
- Mental heath problems
- Aggression, behavioural problems
- Depression
- Low self esteem
- Truancy and unexplained absence from school
- Bullied or bullying others
- Medical history of repeated injuries of accidents
- Child in local authority care or leaving care

Low level risk factors
- Specific developmental delays
- Lack of ethnic identity
- Peer rejection
- Not involved in positive activities
- Friends condoning or involved in antisocial and aggressive behaviour
- Few social ties
- Aggressive bullying by siblings
- Exposure to violent media



High level risk factors
- Child neglect
- Conflict and violence in home
- Lax parental supervision
- Child is not protected from significant harm or danger, including contact with unsafe adults
- Lack of parental attachment to child
- Historically involved with or known to social services
- Parental abuse
- Parents aggressive towards or unwilling to engage with statutory agencies

Medium risk factors
- Allowing child to associate with known troublemakers
- Inconsistent or minimal boundaries
- Lack of emotional care
- Lack of parental discipline
- Violent discipline

Low level risk factors
- Parents unable to communicate effectively with children
- Child left with multiple or unsuitable carers
- Lack of social opportunities
- Unstable family environment
- Parents don't model positive and responsible behaviour
- Absent parent
- Parent-child separation

High level risk factors
- Family members involved with or associate with gangs
- Wider family involved with gangs
- Community norms that tolerate crime
- Known gang recruitment at school
- High levels of local crime including drugs market
- Presence of gangs in community
- Local tensions between ethnic / cultural / religious groups

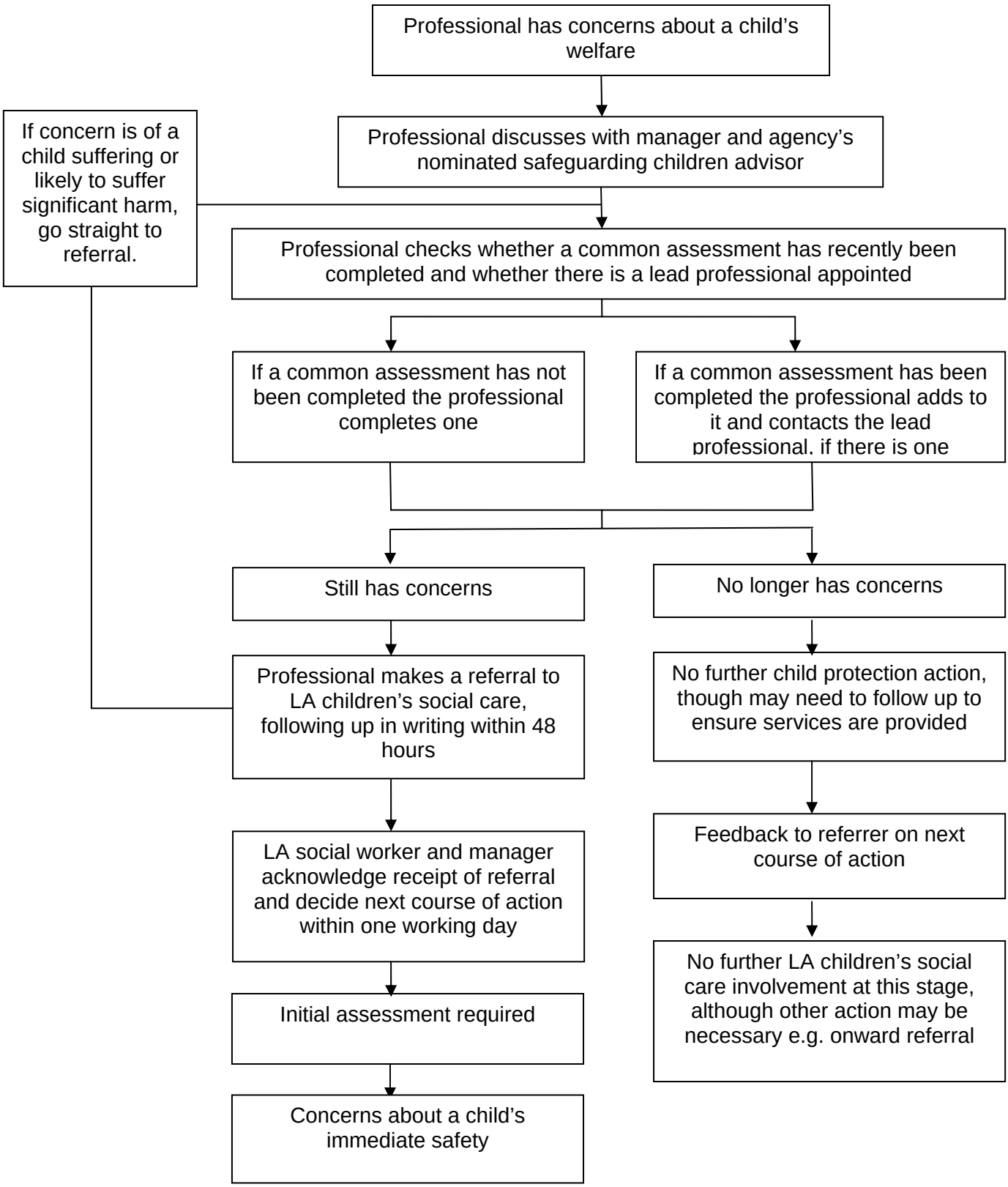
Medium risk factors
- Availability and use of drugs
- Witness or victim of domestic violence
- Criminal conviction of parents or siblings

Low level risk factors
- Lack of reliable support from wider family
- Lack of positive role models in the community
- Little interaction with neighbours and community
- High unemployment
- Sustained poverty
- Limited access to conventional careers
- Lack of age appropriate, safe play facilities in area
- Transient families
- Financial difficulties affecting child

Appendix 4 - Quick referral flowchart

(extracted from London Child Protection Procedures)

If at any point in this process, professionals suspect or find that a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm – STOP the CAF process and make a referral to LA children's social care in line with the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2007): www.londonscb.gov.uk



Appendix 5 - Preventing the impact of gangs and group offending on schools

Prevention of risk: a whole school strategy

1. Pupils

1.1 Schools could assess the readiness of their systems for dealing with gang and group offending issues.

School Systems	Purpose
Common Assessment Framework	To assess children's needs for services earlier and more effectively - ensuring a holistic, joined up approach.
Pupil support systems	To ensure that systems for behaviour and attendance improvement - including use of Pastoral Support Plans, fixed term and permanent exclusions and managed moves - are assessed against risk of gang impact.
Personal protection	If a pupil is targeted, are there agreed strategies with pupils and parents between school and agencies to protect the child in school and while travelling to and from school?
Safeguarding	Siblings or gang members and especially those at risk of sexualised behaviours may be referred into the safeguarding processes.
Screening systems for referral to other agencies	Place 'markers' of gang activity and/or serious youth violence on behaviour systems and set up transfer thresholds to police or YOT systems.
Information sharing with the police and YOT	Under the principle of 'what protects the child', agree how information (soft and hard) will be collected, used and shared.
Self-referral systems	Confidential systems for pupils, parents to seek assistance. Some police, LA and extended schools have set up such phone, e-mail or web based systems. Junior Crimestoppers may also play a role locally
Home- school liaison	What family support systems are there for victims? Be aware if families are the recruitment route to gang membership.
Peer support / mentoring	Personal support strategies to keep children clear of harm.
Restorative approaches	Have restorative approaches available (e.g. through YOT, police or LA) for informal and formal conflict resolution.

2. Curriculum

The whole curriculum

2.1 This includes the learning which pupils undertake through the ethos of the school as well as the taught curriculum. Approaching gang issues through the curriculum requires careful handling to ensure that gangs are not inadvertently glamourised, or gang membership reinforced.

The targeted curriculum

2.2 Schools may also choose to undertake one-off themed curriculum activities on gang issues sometimes using the national curriculum framework or resources developed or supported by LA or voluntary groups:

The specialist curriculum: individual or group work

2.3 Many schools use small group learning sessions with young people at risk:

- As potential or actual victims of crime – to learn protective behaviours perhaps taught by police or other groups;
- As potential gang members – to understand both the emotional draw to the gang and the potential consequences;
- To promote positive options using mentors as role models to divert pupils from the gang brand.

3. Families

Targeted support

3.1 Schools can benefit from targeted parenting and family support interventions for pupils at risk of negative outcomes, including pupils at risk of being involved with or targeted by gangs:

- An early intervention project for 8-13 year olds to ensure parents receive a coordinated package of support to help with their child's behaviour – being expanded by 2011 to most local authorities;
- Family intervention project – for identified young people and their families at highest risk;
- Targeted youth support coordinated by a lead professional including family support when appropriate;
- A yot parenting programme;
- Support from parenting advisers – every la will have at least two, working through extended schools and across the la, and individual schools may have a parent support adviser;
- Parenting contracts – a voluntary instrument drawn up between the parent and either the school or la. Parenting contracts help parents or carers improve their parenting skills (e.g. by enabling them to attend parenting classes, counselling or one to one sessions) so as to improve their child's behaviour and attendance.

4. Other partners including the police

Police

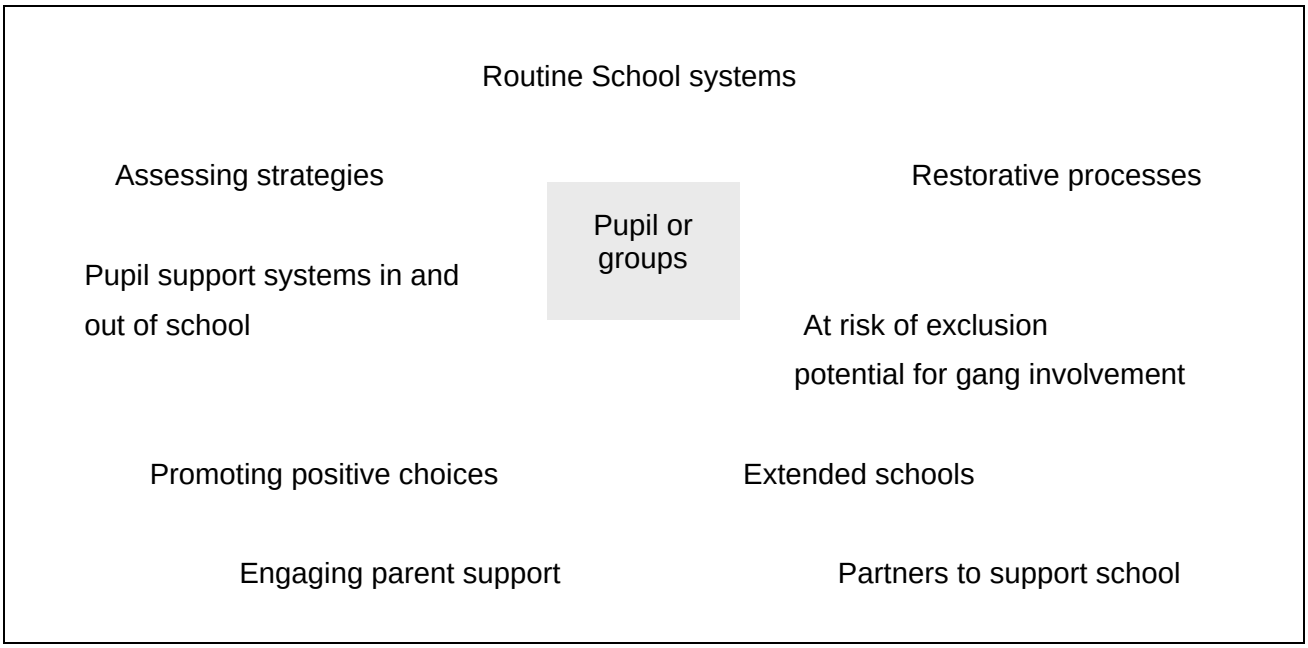
4.1 It is vital that all schools work closely with local police services. There are varied models of school-police working. These include Safer School Partnerships (SSPs) - a form of provision that is structured and well-evaluated. Schools should discuss developing the school–police joint working strategy with LA Children's services. For further information see http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00050/

Other partners

4.2 There are a number of other partners that can support schools in tackling gang and group offending issues.

Dealing with individual pupils or groups at risk of being involved in gangs

4.3 Schools may wish to review their work in the following areas in order to manage down the risk or impact of gang engagement.



Legal powers available to schools

4.4 Schools have a duty through Governors and Headteacher to establish a behaviour policy which can be reviewed to ensure that it covers actions relevant to preventing and tackling gang impact.

Emergency planning

4.5 Schools should review their existing emergency plans in the light of possible scenarios relevant to their community, for example if:

- There is immediate threat of gang conflict on site or immediately off site; or
- There is credible information about a pupil/adult carrying a weapon with serious intent to do immediate harm.

4.6 General guidance on emergency planning for schools is available at: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies.

Appendix 6 - Further information

1. Police: http://www.met.police.uk/

2. Youth Justice Board: www.yjb.gov.uk/

3. Home Office:

3.1 Tackling Gangs: a practical guide for local authorities, CDRPs and other local partners (May 2008): www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentstreet/violentstreet012.htm

3.2 Tackling Gangs Monitoring report (May 2008): http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentstreet/violentstreet011.htm

3.3 Youth Crime Action Plan (July 2008): http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan/

3.4 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP): http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/regions/regions00.htm

3.5 Guidance on multi-agency working on gangs: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/dpr45.pdf

3.6 Guidance for parents and carers on gangs: http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/gangs-you-and-your-child

3.7 Guidance for young people: www.teenissues.co.uk/saygoodbyetoschoolgangs.html

4. DCSF:

4.1 School behaviour policies guidance: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/schooldisciplinepupilbehaviourpolicies/

4.2 'Dealing with Troublemakers' guidance: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=9232

4.3 Anti-bullying guidance: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/

and: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/

4.4 Cyber bullying guidance: http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00685-2007

4.5 Weapons searching guidance: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11454

4.6 Drugs guidance: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/drugs/

4.7 Violence reduction guidance: www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/12187/ACFD89B.pdf

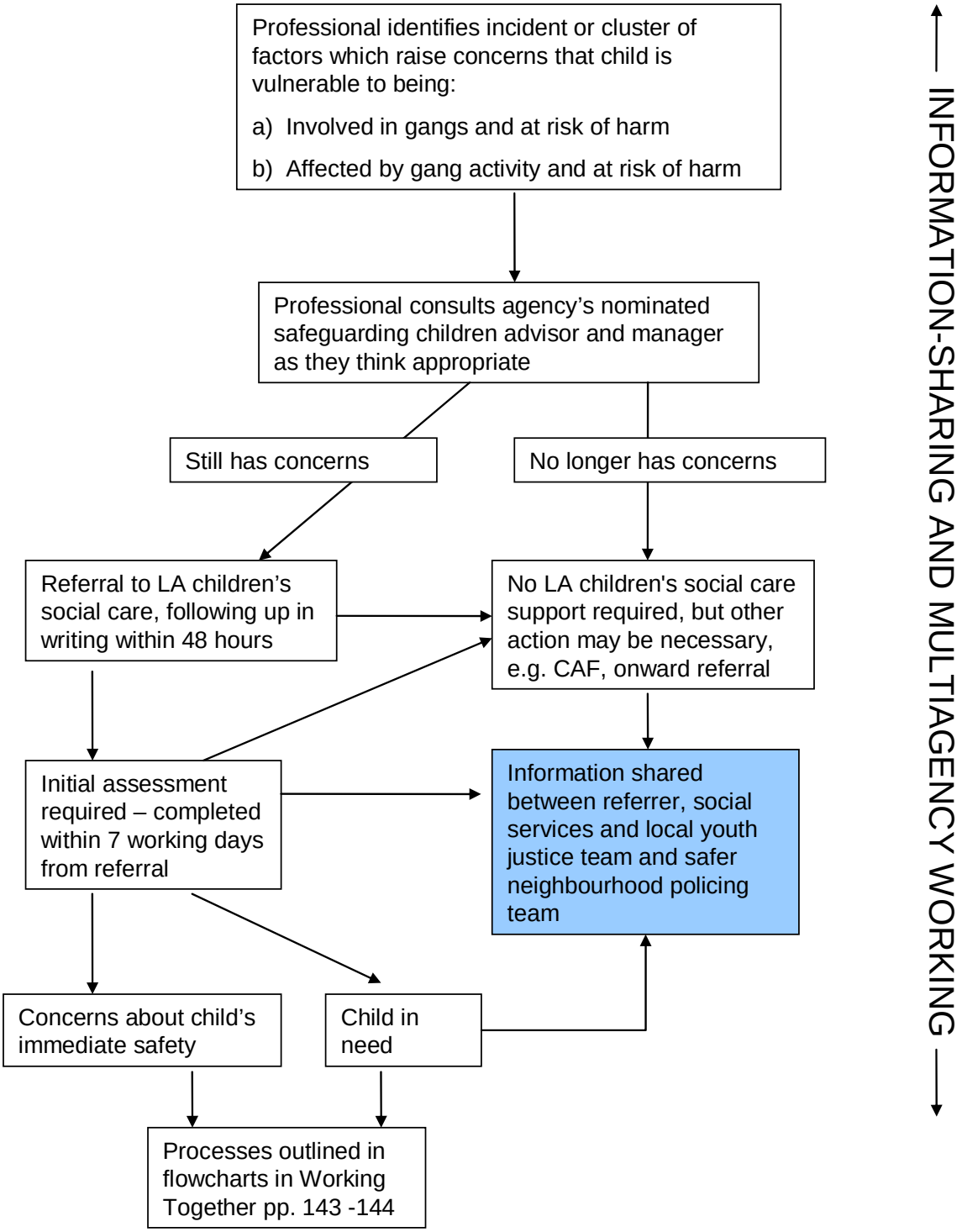
4.8 Guidance on the use of force to control or restrain pupils: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12187

4.9 Safer School Partnerships guidance: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00050/

4.10 Extended Schools guidance: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools/

4.11 Guidance on Targeted Youth Support Services: www.ecm.gov.uk/deliveringservices/tysemergingpractice

4.12 Guidance on school travel and transport: Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance

4.13 Guidance on community cohesion: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion/

Appendix 6 Identification and Referral Flowchart