

## LOCAL CRIME SOLUTIONS

### BOROUGH / PROJECT :

# Southwark Council Anti-Violence Unit



### PROBLEM :

Over the past decade, the profile of urban street gangs has markedly changed. Intense rivalries between groups fuelled by illegal drug markets has resulted in disputes and feuds that were settled by knife violence that affected families and local communities.



### SOLUTION :

The Southwark Anti-Violence Unit (SAVU) brings together the four pronged approach of: community involvement; prevention and early identification; support and enforcement, with particular focus on meaningful outcomes for those that are involved in, associated with, or at risk of, gang activity within the borough.

The aim of the multi-disciplinary SAVU team consisting of statutory services, voluntary sector organisations and community based organisations, is to use existing resources in a more targeted and focused way. By doing this, the borough aimed to build on previous partnership successes and enable the clients identified to move away from their current gang activity and associations and make positive lifestyle choices for the future. This includes reducing the risk of harm to not only to themselves but for the local communities affected by gang activity.

## BACKGROUND :

Many of the urban street groups had connections to elders; members of local gangs who were in their early 20s and had “groomed” youngsters, or had siblings who grew up and took over the notoriety of their older family members.

Southwark has charted the emerging structures of gangs in Southwark and how urban gangs have come to the fore in 2005-2008 then split and divided. An urban street gang attracted a street-based following and a core membership of around 40-50 young people were involved in illegal drug activity, violence and intimidation. The gang had a direct feud with other rival groups in the area as well as in neighbouring boroughs.

During this period, the partners within the Safer Southwark Partnership made a significant shift in approach, investing in programmes that specifically targeted those people directly involved in gang violence and, in particular, those who had an influence over younger people who were emerging.

## ACTIONS :

The Safer Southwark Partnership has been instrumental in developing a range of interventions to reduce the harmful impact of gang and serious youth violence, working alongside enforcement activity of the police and other criminal justice agencies where necessary.

The programmes that have been found to be most effective include:

- providing one to one support and intensive mentoring
- re-housing and relocation
- facilitating access to employment and meaningful training

Building on these programmes, and embracing the seven principles of ending gangs and youth violence as set out by the Home Office, Southwark established the Anti Violence Unit (SAVU). This is a multi agency team that brings together statutory services, voluntary sector organisations and community based organisations.

SAVU provides support for individuals (aged 16-25yrs) involved in and at risk from gang related crime and serious violence through a range of interventions, specifically tailored to each individual client. Specific support offered to the client is assessed using the NOMS ‘Seven Pathways to Reduce Re-offending’ which includes:

- accommodation and support
- ETE
- health
- drugs and alcohol
- finance, benefits and debt
- children and families
- attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

Each intervention plan is unique to the specific need of that individual so that there is the greatest chance for them to be able to exit their current association with gang activity.

Activity in the first instance was focused on getting SAVU set up and begin operating on the identified client list. This has involved pulling together a team from across divisions within the local authority as well as those from third sector organisations. SAVU currently consists of:

- Head of Community Safety and Enforcement (Chair and strategic manager of SAVU)
- Community Safety Officer (Co-ordinator and lead on SAVU processes)
- 2 x Resettlement Workers (St Giles Trust) who provide advocacy, mentoring, rehousing and ETE support.
- Seconded Detached Youth Worker (LBS Youth Services) who works daily with young people on SAVU and other at risk young people and provides a referral route into SAVU
- 2 x part time Probation Officers providing intelligence and updates on their clients and also providing a referral route for individuals released from prison who are suitable to SAVU
- ETE Support Officer (Southwark Works) assisting clients with apprenticeships, employment, training and education.
- 1 YOS Officer (Youth Offending Service)
- MPS Gangs Analyst who provides intelligence and recent updates for clients.
- SASBU (Southwark Anti Social Behaviour Unit) Officer.
- SASBU Risk Management Officer who assesses the risk for all clients and manages the SERVE process for re-housing our most at risk clients who need to be moved.

The partnership also includes:

- Family Support Team Manager
- Children's Missing Education Manager (Children's Services)
- Youth worker (based at A&E)

## OUTCOMES :

SAVU – Results so far (May 2012 to 1st October 2012)

A total of 97 clients have been taken on to the SAVU programme.

Out of the 97 cases:-

- 70 clients are engaging well with their advocate/case workers, of particular note;
  - 4 have been supported into full time employment
  - 19 have undertaken or are completing supported work placements
  - 2 are undertaking an apprenticeship
  - 11 in education
  - 11 are being supported with emergency re-housing out of the borough due to risk through our SERVE programme
- Of the 27 remaining clients:
  - 13 currently serving custodial sentences
  - 1 has just been released from custody and an offer of support is to be made
  - 1 just released from prison and in deportation centre
  - 11 are not engaging well or have declined offer of SAVU support
  - 1 recently recalled by Probation

All of the SAVU clients had been previously arrested or convicted for offences in the 12 months prior to the start of SAVU (May 2011 - May 2012). Since the commencement of SAVU (May 2012-October 2012) 57 per cent (55 clients) had not been arrested or convicted for ANY offences.

### **Enforcement statistics**

To use available powers to target and disrupt clients who do not engage or continue to have a negative impact on the community. Outputs from this work stream are delivered by the Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU) and will include Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and notices to seek possession.

From May 2012 to October 2012 SASBU has issued and undertaken:

- 4 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts have been signed with young people involved in gang related ASB in the Borough
- 12 enforcement visits have been made and warnings issued to families of young people involved in gang activity.
- 1 Notice Of Seeking Possession has been served on a household where two violent gang members reside.
- 1 Notice of Termination is being prepared against a tenancy where police found large quantities of Class A drugs and a weapon
- 1 Notice of Seeking Possession is being prepared against a tenant whose home was raided and guns and drugs found.

There are four ASBOs in the Court system for young people involved in gang behaviour in Bermondsey and in Walworth.

Two other ASBOs against gang members were not given by the Courts due to the individuals being given lengthy custodial sentences

### **A&E data**

There has been a 23 per cent reduction in knife admissions to Kings from 1 May - 31 August 2012, compared to the same period the year before.

## **FUNDING :**

Funding to support SAVU and its interventions have been provided by the Home Office Ending Gangs and Youth Violence Grant - £275,736 as well as £75,000 provided by the MOPAC Communities Against Guns Gangs and Knives grant.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT :**

Tracy Umney  
**Safer Southwark Partnerships Team Manager**  
**E Mail:** [tracy.umney@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.umney@southwark.gov.uk)