



FACT SHEET: Gang Activity

Whilst the deaths of young people are the worst possible outcomes of gang related violence, other violence and abuse can, and does, have a significant impact on those involved. In order to reduce the harm caused by gangs and safeguard children and young people in Sheffield, it is the **responsibility of all practitioners to ensure they know what to do if they suspect a child or young person is involved, or at risk of involvement, in gang activity, particularly if weapons are implicated.**

The aim of the protocol

- To provide guidance to practitioners if they have concerns that a child or young person is involved, or at risk of becoming involved in gang activity, or is in possession of a weapon
- To define what is meant by a gang and gang membership, to outline the risk factors and reasons for joining gangs
- To ensure a coordinated response from all agencies in relation to young people and gang activity.

Definitions

The agreed definition for a gang adopted by Sheffield SCB is that used by the Home Office:

- A group of 3 or more people, who have a distinct identity (e.g. a name, badge or emblem), which commits general criminal or anti-social behaviour as part of that identity, and uses (or is reasonably suspected of using) firearms or knives in the commission of offences.
- The lowest level of risk is for those involved in **peer groups**
- The middle level of risk is for those involved in **street gangs**
- The highest level of risk is for those involved in **criminal networks.**

See 'A Preventative Approach to Young People and Gangs in Sheffield (2008)' for information.

For further details see **chapter 3.12** in the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures.

Acting on concerns

Referrals should be made to Children's Social Care when there are concerns about risks of significant harm to a child or young person. Consider the risks to any siblings as well to prevent revenge actions, which may target family and friends.

Practitioners can contact the Targeted Youth Support Team (TYST) who will arrange to visit the young person jointly to carry out an assessment. The assessment should involve all relevant agencies and a multi agency meeting may take place as an outcome of the assessment.

The Sheffield Gang Prevention Model

TYST works with young people, who do not have statutory involvement via the courts. TYST interventions take place with the consent of the young person and their parents/carers and may include the following:

- Increase involvement in alternative positive activities with a plan to reduce the risks
- Work with the young person, the parents or carers and school to reintegrate into mainstream education provision
- Provide appropriate positive mentors
- Inform the young person of the legal consequences of their activities in the short and long term and provide alternatives
- Engage the family and wider community to provide positive activities in the local area
- Provide a confidential mechanism to report concerns, particularly about weapons crime, and empower local communities to play a part in reducing gang activity in their area.