Commission on Gangs and Violence: Uniting to improve safety

November 2017

Rev Dr. Carver Anderson

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Abbreviations

BYM   Black Young Men

BAME   Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

BME   Black and Minority Ethnic

BRGV   Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence

CIP   Community-Involved Partnership

CLP   Community-Led Partnership

CRC   Community Rehabilitation Company

CSP   Community Safety Partnership

FG   Faith Group

PCC   Police and Crime Commissioner

SP   Specialist Providers

USG   Urban Street Gangs

UK   United Kingdom

USA   United States of America

WMP   West Midlands Police

YOS   Youth Offending Service

Chair of Research Team: Rev Dr. Carver Anderson, Associate Researcher
Birmingham City University
Curzon Building
Birmingham
B4 7BD

The Chair of Commission: Bishop Derek Webley
The Police and Crime Commissioner: Mr David Jamieson
Lloyd House
Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6NQ

Dear Commission Chair and Police and Crime Commissioner,

On 16th March 2016, the Commission on Gangs and Violence was launched. I was asked to lead the research aspect, to critically explore the challenges, concerns, interests and issues associated with the rise in serious violence and gang related activities in Birmingham, which has resulted in life changing injuries and the loss of lives.

The Commission acknowledged that the 2016/17 increase in violence, the use of firearms and knives is at a level that requires effective partnerships to tackle the associated challenges. It was therefore agreed from the outset that the research would consider what an active 'community-involved' and community-led partnership should consider in exploring solutions.

From the outset, Professor Steve Garner, Head of Criminology and Sociology at Birmingham City University, supported the process with academic and ethical research input and advice. The research has also been supported by Dr. Geraldine Brown, Bishop Dr. Delroy Hall and Mr Paul Grant, who undertook consultations with decision makers across the statutory, private and voluntary sectors and interviewed specialist providers (see profiles in appendices) actively working in communities across the city.

It is from the research process that we offer recommendations to the commission and other stakeholders.

Rev Dr. Carver Anderson

Acknowledgements:

City and business

This report acknowledges past and present initiatives aimed at tackling serious violence and negative gang-affiliated activities. It highlights the need for partnership working between statutory, community, faith, voluntary and business sectors in the development of effective and sustainable strategies and interventions.

Probation Officer – National Probation Service Multi–Agency Gang Unit), Chris Jordon and Soulla Yiasouma (Youth Service), Beresford Dawkins (Community Development Manager, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust), Elliot Mason (Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce), Richard Nicol (Executive Director, The Re Group, Social Business Initiatives), Wade Lin (Managing Director and Founder of Cleone Foods, Birmingham) and Karl George (Founder and Chief Executive of the Association of Corporate Governance Practitioners).

Foreword from Chair of Commission

This report acknowledges some of the challenges, concerns, positive work and complexities associated with responding to issues of gangs and violence in Birmingham. After a period of relative calm in the city, there was a spike in gun-related incidents and violence in 2016 into 2017 that resulted in fatalities. This reality sparked reminders of the past that motivated the Police and Crime Commissioner to launch a review and research process to consider causes of these and to explore recommendations to effectively intervene, so as not to return to the days of regular news headlines associated with gangs and violence on our streets. The courage shown by many – be they individuals, groups institutions or otherwise – could not allow the previous good work that had contributed to a more peaceful city, to be in vain.

The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner was clear from the outset of the commission that a community-involved approach was necessary, if sustained partnerships in addressing the concerns were to be developed. The Commissioner and the partners around the table agreed that there was no one solution to deal with the above complexities. The Commissioner was also clear that West Midlands Police could not 'arrest its way out' of the situation because other partners are equally important in tackling the related issues.

We anticipate that this report and its recommendations will support and foster a more public health and community-involved approach to serious crime and violence in Birmingham and the West Midlands.

I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation to all the members of the commission and all the bodies represented around the table.

It is important that the commission has utilised the experiences, approaches, projects involved with the issues and sought information and assistance from institutions and individuals from all walks of life to make the report relevant and current as we seek to move the agenda forward.

The members of the commission can all be proud that their collective contributions to address this challenging situation will, I believe, not be in vain.

Bishop Derek Webley

Chair of the Commission on Gangs and Violence

Foreword from the Police and Crime Commissioner

We are determined that we do not go back to where we were a decade ago. Violence is unacceptable and we all need to work together to ensure that we don't go backwards on this crucial issue.

Excellent work has been done by the police, but in particular by the community. That work has decreased the level of gun crime and made our streets safer. This commission will review that work and make recommendations on what needs to occur in the future to ensure that this spike in gun crime does not reoccur.
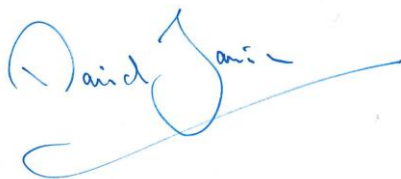
We have listened to the community and their concerns on gangs and violence; that is why we are launching this root and branch review. Gangs and violence are complex issues and the response should be, too.

A tough approach from the police is just one aspect of how we tackle gangs and violence. We need a consistent approach by the whole public sector, across different agencies to empower communities to help them tackle these issues collectively.

Whilst gun crime has fallen over the last decade, if it takes place on your street it is, of course, the biggest concern in your life. We recognise that concern and, for that reason, we are coming together to launch this commission into the root causes of gangs and violent crime in the city.

A robust police response is necessary, but we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. Arrests and prosecutions will only be temporary solutions that deal with the symptoms, not the core issues. We all need to work together to bring about a solution that includes skills, jobs and prosperity for the affected areas.

The Commission on Gangs and Violence will be community led, with the support of statutory agencies, not the other way around.

David Jamieson

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

Report Summary

This report is evidently long. Some may choose to only read the summary and sections 4 and 5 in the first instance. These set out the findings, recommendations and framework for active community-led, community-involved and multiagency partnerships that can develop perspectives and solutions to address issues associated with gangs and serious violence.

This research report into gangs and violence in Birmingham commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner began in March 2016 with the launch of the Commission on Gang and Violence. The commission's job was to respond to the serious increase in the numbers of people hurt and killed by firearms and knives and other forms of violence. It also had to respond to the families, friends and communities mourning the loss of loved ones and wider concerns about organised crime and serious violence in city neighbourhoods.

As acknowledged earlier, this report offers a ***community-led, 'city-community' partnership*** response to gang and non-gang related violence in Birmingham. In essence, it explores the challenges associated with engaging and working with individuals and families associated with criminality regarding desistance, which is the termination of criminal activities and negative behaviours (McNell and Weaver, 2010; Glynn, 2014). It uses both statistics, official documents, interviews, meetings and observations to explore the challenges, interests and issues around organised and spontaneous violence in the city, which generally occurs in public spaces and environments. For those individuals and communities impacted, it highlights the depths of hurts, pains, regrets and fears of both the victims and perpetrators of serious violence. It expresses the hopes, dreams and plans of young people, a cross-section of community members, business people, faith leaders and city leaders.

Report recommendations seek to offer solutions that effectively respond to the concerns, challenges, hurts, hopes and aspirations highlighted in the research. There are numerous examples in the data of participants from several communities talking about the lack of trust between statutory bodies and local communities. They say that one way to reduce gang violence is to build a community-led partnership with city, business, community and other groups. Such a partnership can make the best use of the city's resources to limit the violence and improve the lives of all its peoples. Simply 'cracking down' on 'hot spots' of violence and gang activity or known individuals is not a long-term solution.

This report acknowledges that there is not a pre-existing consensual definition of community-led approaches. For this reason the research team has come up with a

definition based on consultation with community organisations and other stakeholders. Community-led approaches constitute:

> agreed responses (programmes and activities) undertaken in defined areas and neighborhoods by individuals, groups or organisations in that location, to achieve positive changes relating to identified concerns and challenges (environmental, social or economic) with objectives defined by participants in consultation with key stakeholders.

Importantly, the above definition does not negate activities that may be facilitated by statutory sector providers, however it cautions against a top-down approach to involving groups in the community (Crisp et al., 2016).

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Commission on Gangs and Violence see this report as a first step towards a sustainable programme of changes to address the issues around gangs and violence and wider youth criminality that can potentially progress into involvement with serious crime groups and activities.

We acknowledge from the outset that the term 'gangs' is at times contested and does not have an agreed definition that is used by all. However, for this report we have attempted to interpret what it means within a Birmingham context, as highlighted in section 4.3.

Political context

This report acknowledges the political context in which the issues explored are situated. Since the decision to critically explore issues associated with gangs and violence was made, there have been three defining political elections we believe have bearing on the recommendations in the report. These began with the re-election of David Jamieson as the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner on the   5th May 2016. Secondly, on the 4th May 2017 Andy Street was elected Mayor of the West Midlands. Finally, following the general election of 8th June 2017, Amber Rudd remained Home Secretary. Their respective interests, concerns and plans to tackle gangs and serious violence have been highlighted at different times.

The synergy towards addressing what Amber Rudd categorises a 'crime epidemic' around gang activities and the use of knives is evident. During her visit to the West Midlands in May 2017, she expressed that there was an urgent need to create job opportunities to eradicate youth unemployment and address peer-associated criminality and violence. This projection is also highlighted by Andy Street who expresses commitment to reduce the likelihood of young people being drawn into gangs or drug-related crime through employment and other opportunities (Dolley, 2017). However, Amber Rudd emphasised the need for greater insights and clarity around the key

causes or drivers for gang-associated activities and extreme youth violence (Golledge, 2017). The Police and Crime Commissioner's initiative in setting up the Commission on Gangs and Violence clearly offers an opportunity for critical review and analysis on the nature and scale of the problem.

Birmingham Context

Gangs, violence, guns and knives continue to plague towns and cities across the UK, with devastating consequences for families and neighbourhoods. According to some media reports and government statistics, the West Midlands has been 'the gun crime capital' of the UK over a two year period (McCarthy, 2016). This means that some families, communities and neighbourhoods are damaged by acts of spontaneous and deliberate violence that kill or seriously injure. They are also damaged by the long prison sentences given to some perpetrators. Gangs and violence produce money and power for some and fear and misery for many more.

Across the research data, community participants, victims and perpetrators highlighted the following key needs and challenges:

> ➢ Individuals and organisations that can be trusted to support them when they are in crisis.
> ➢ Employment opportunities, especially if one has a criminal record.
> ➢ Statutory agencies, especially the police, to acknowledge the pain and mistrust by certain groups/communities that have been in advertently or intentionally misrepresented or mistreated, and to commence conversation regarding a process of 'healing'.
> ➢ Safe spaces and venues in communities that offer advice and guidance regarding personal development.
> ➢ Support for parents with youngsters at risk of gang association and criminality.
> ➢ For black young men to be given opportunities to progress beyond the labels of gang affiliation as portrayed by the media.
> ➢ To get ex-offenders more involved in mentoring and supporting youngsters at risk of involvement in criminality.
> ➢ For more early support for schools and parents with children identified as having behavioural challenges.
> ➢ Receiving genuine love, care and concern for the families of victims and perpetrators and where possible support them in restorative justice processes.

The research further confirms that some victims fear speaking out for a number of reasons. Some expressed the belief that this would make them 'weak' or 'snitches' in areas where strength and silence are necessary to avoid further violence (Antrobus, 2009**)**. Some are traumatised and carry emotional and psychological pains that require

understanding and support (Anderson, 2015; Brown, 2014). Other victims strike back and cause more pain and trauma in families and communities. Other victims simply die.

The present gangs and violence associated challenges should not be seen in isolation of Birmingham's history - The deaths of Charlene Ellis and Latisha Shakespeare, at a New Year's party in Birchfield in 2003 (Beckford, 2004; Dawkins, 2003; Heale, 2008), shocked Birmingham awake to gang and gun violence in the city. 8,700 people gathered at the 'Communities Unite' event in January 2003 at Villa Park around the banner, 'Enough is enough: Youth Cry Life, not Death'. This community-led initiative brought together many ordinary people, community and faith groups, people from voluntary, business, statutory and private sectors and government officials, in the fight against drugs, crime and gun violence (Dawkins, 2003).

There were fatal shootings and stabbings and serious non-lethal gang violence before the deaths of the two young women, but these did not pull people together in the same way. The city's responses to their deaths sparked Birmingham's original partnership to tackle gang violence, the Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence group (BRGV). This became a core priority group in Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (Home Office, 2008) and a turning point in the quest to develop community-involved/community-led responses to organised crime and serious violence.

The problems

This report shows crucial links between the drugs industry, the illegal use of firearms and knives and serious violence. It looks at key points and responses to these issues between 2003 and 2017. It shows the importance of community groups and organisations, families and faith groups in limiting violence and promoting peace in Birmingham. It shows how local, regional, national policies, perspectives and procedures shape what happens on the ground and in people's lives.

The research suggests that there is no single explanation for reductions in gun and knife crime. Many things can contribute to more peaceful streets and lives. The key is to create an environment where people can work together effectively. Recommendations for making things better in Birmingham are laid out. However, they should be considered with the learning and reflections falling under three headings: Ensuring enduring leadership direction and commitment; from enforcement to public health and Images and stereotypes: representation in public debate. This report suggests that, some media responses associated with gangs and violence has been known make things worse, by the sensationalisation of issues, which have been known to result in 'moral panic'. Furthermore, some reports lack any detailed or critical analysis or enquiry into the very complex world associated with gangs and violence.

Ensuring enduring leadership, direction and commitment

The first point relates to the disbanding of Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence partnership which led to the breakup of a coherent approach to gangs and violence across the city. Whilst the Multi Agency Gang Unit (MAGU), Youth Offending Services (YOS) and community sector organisations offer examples of good practice around gangs and youth violence, however:

- There are no examples of genuine 'power-sharing' between local communities and the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. There are no community-led and no effective community-involved partnerships.

- The victims, perpetrators and others directly affected by gangs and youth violence are rarely included in strategic discussions around the planning of services or interventions.

- There are very limited ways to review and research good or best practice and such initiatives (from all sectors) are seldom celebrated and replicated.

From enforcement to public health

The second point is that established ways of seeing and dealing with gangs and violence lacks credibility, as a number of respondents have highlighted in the research. The dominant and embedded 'criminal justice/law enforcement' model of 'cracking down' on 'hot spots' and individuals means more confrontations between communities and police. Community organisations that were interviewed reiterated feelings that statutory bodies often fail to see, let alone address, the lack of trust and confidence created in local communities impacted by serious violence and the police's efforts to limit it.

The research says that there are more possibilities for real change where the criminal justice, law enforcement approaches are considered within a public health framework. From the growing body of evidence relating to public health, it is becoming increasingly clear that its cross-disciplinary nature can bring partners together from different sectors and agencies. These should include credible community groups and organisations, which can help communities to develop, fund, implement and evaluate a comprehensive strategy that supports individuals and families towards desistance.

There are numerous examples in the data highlighting how serious violence and gang-associated activities are related to other social issues. These include: living in poor and under resourced homes and neighbourhoods; school exclusions; educational 'underachievement'; exposure to violence; family and personal debt; the glorification of

'materialistic lifestyles' on social media; negative experiences with statutory personnel/service providers; boredom and a lack of recreational spaces and activities; minimal parental supervision and 'father deficit'; 'disruptive' family relationships; mental health difficulties; unemployment; trauma; being 'looked after' by a local authority; and racism and bullying (victim or perpetrator). Whilst each aspect in isolation should not be seen as a tipping point towards gang affiliation or violence, when they become interconnected, negative outcomes are likely. This increases the risk of people getting involved in criminal activities (Anderson, 2015; Brown, 2014; Regan and Hoeksma, 2010; Gunter, 2010; Pitts, 2008).

Images and stereotypes: Representation in public debates

Thirdly, there are few balanced and informed challenges to the mainstream media's 'stories' about gangs, guns and violence in certain neighborhoods. In effect, media representation of the city's responses to gangs and violence continues to highlight some historical notions of gangs based on old prejudices, rather than any balanced community-city partnership representations. This report therefore strongly supports the need to promote and empower genuine, credible authoritative voices at neighbourhood and community levels, to influence the public discourse that can potentially impact on misguided media representations of the issues.

The recommendations to limit the multiplication and interconnection of these issues are grouped under the following key themes that are represented in the findings of the full report:

1. Criminal justice and public health considerations

2. Gang labels - contested and reinforced

3. Community–involved and community-led partnerships

4. Individuals and families ('street' and natural) – support structures and interventions

5. Education, training and preventative considerations

6. The voices of young people ('uninvolved', 'gang-associated', 'victims' and 'perpetrators')

7. Specialist providers and culturally competent grassroots organisations

8. Faith groups - an untapped component

9. Prison influences

10. Statutory and Business sector responses

The report acknowledges that most children, young people and adults in Birmingham are law abiding and not associated with gangs or violence. However, it highlights the absolute devastation that is possible by a small minority of individuals, drawn from different parts of the city and by no means exclusively linked to one geography, community or ethnicity. These individuals or groups are known to be advocates of violence, are involved in illegal drug sales and trafficking, and also possess and use firearms and knives in 'protecting their trade'.

There is a desperate need for responses that work to tackle Birmingham's reputation as the UK's gun crime capital. Even though no one intervention, approach or partnership can reduce serious violence and gun or knife-related deaths, the willingness of people from the statutory, community, faith and business sectors to work together to make things better establishes relationships, trust, transparency and accountability (Home Office, 2012). The evidence says that these things cannot be assumed. They are created by the people involved in them.

The evidence also says that these initiatives work best when the people most affected by them are involved at all levels and given aspects of leadership to influence outcomes. The single most important resource in any partnership is the communities that both produce and challenge gang life and its associated violence. A theme amongst a number of respondents is the aspect of working together. Community respondents and community-led organisations were clear that, without communities working with others from different sectors to build opportunities and challenge injustices, there can be no limiting of the impact of the drugs and other criminal industries in the city.

This report fully supports the notion and plan for community-involved and community-led partnerships that share and review information and plan and are involved in commission services.

Recommendations and rationales:

Governance, implementation and review

Recommendation 1: The Gangs and Violence Commission is to provide ongoing leadership, direction and co-ordination to work that will reduce the impact of gangs and violence, working to fill the current leadership vacuum.

The Gangs and Violence Commission should continue meeting quarterly to monitor, review and scrutinise the implementation process and progress related to the recommendations in this report. Importantly, the commission should agree priorities and timeframes for implementation of the recommendations. Furthermore, the commission

should establish a community/city-led implementation group who will ensure delivery on the recommendations approved in the report.

Recommendation 2: The Gangs and Violence Commission will work with a range of partners to collate and analyse data about gangs and violence.

The commission should develop ways to regularly gather and compare local data on gangs and violence with national trends. For example, national data shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) youngsters are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and have fewer life chances than other ethnic groups. This should be compared with the trends in Birmingham. This will enable more rigorous analysis and future planning relating to offending, gangs and violence association and evaluation of outcomes and interventions.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement/Approaches

Recommendation 3: The Gangs and Violence Commission will agree a broad, preventative public health based action plan for addressing gangs and violence, recognising that enforcement does not offer enduring solutions.

The commission partnership should agree on a public health approach to gangs and violence and use this to commission services. The public health approach does not negate the inclusion of criminal justice or law enforcement actions, but considers it within a framework for considering how gangs and violence problems are defined, also the challenges, aspirations, causal factors and support needs for those associated. This should enable more inclusive and effective partnership working and better outcomes.

Recommendation 4: The action plan will include targeted, place-based activity.

The commission partners, with the West Midlands Police, should decide which neighbourhoods need more strategic interventions and partnerships to address their specific concerns. The partners should also offer 'doable' strategic action plans with 'measureable' outcomes. These plans should also include the joint training needs that would allow for more effective work with families and communities associated with gangs and violence.

Recommendation 5: The commission should consult with local community-led organisations to support their full involvement in the development of 'local community well-being partnerships' (community, voluntary, faith, statutory and business) in neighbourhoods identified as areas needing interventions relating to gangs and violence.

Recommendation 6: The commission partners should enable community organisations and groups involved in gangs and violence associated interventions to

strategise, share and train together. The best practices produced locally can be shared with statutory providers to influence city policy and practice.

Recommendation 7: Our understanding of gangs and violence locally must be underpinned by a sustained academic research programme.

The commission partners should ask academic partners, in particular Birmingham City University, to host an annual Birmingham partnership symposium regarding best practice around gangs and violence reduction. The aim is to make a learning, training and empowerment space for 'stakeholders' (victims and perpetrators included) to offer insights and experiences regarding sustainable and effective approaches and interventions.

Community Mapping/Networking

Recommendation 8: The development of a community-led partnership, to use social media and information technology mechanisms to strategically reach key communities and stakeholder audiences regarding gangs and violence awareness /initiatives.

Recommendation 9: The commission partners should ensure a remapping of all community groups/organisations, faith groups and key individuals providing or supporting gangs and violence services and interventions. These groups and individuals should be invited onto an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to work with the commission to deliver workshops around: gangs and violence reduction, ways to increase community participation and explore more effective ways to support communities directly affected by gangs and violence.

Offending: Young People/Adults

Recommendation 10: The commission partnership should learn from Birmingham Youth Offending Service and consider a roll out of its family-empowerment approach as a template for working with families, with needs to be linked to the criminal justice system, youth violence and criminality.

Recommendation 11: A flexible and culturally responsive community based preventative and reactive mediation and conflict intervention capability is required.

The commission should promote a shift away from the 'law enforcement' response and towards community-led mediation and conflict interventions and approaches. Community organisations (faith and non-faith) should be supported to appoint and train community mediators and facilitators to mediate in situations associated with gangs, conflicts and violence reduction in neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 12: The commission partners should work to include an 'authentic youth and family voice' in their discussions and planning. This voice can represent the views of victims and perpetrators in service provision and provide relevant information about 'life on the ground'.

Recommendation 13: The commission partners should prioritise supporting community-led organisations that support children, young people and young adults identified as 'at risk' of gang or violence related behaviours and activities. Such early interventions have a greater chance of success and should be available to anyone in need.

Education/Support for Young People

Recommendation 14: The commission will review approaches to school exclusions, aiming to develop services and support for excluded pupils and their families.

The commission partners should examine patterns of school exclusions and how schools manage them in the priority areas. Processes that lead to exclusion overlap with processes that encourage people to become involved with organised crime and violence. The aim is to understand what leads to exclusion, how exclusions are managed and what support is offered to the child and family once they have been excluded. This includes issues around race, gender, faith, culture and the need for schools or colleges to signpost families affected to local groups (faith, business, parents and community) for support.

Recommendation 15: The new Police Cadet scheme must engage young people in areas most affected by gangs and violence.

The commission should promote the implementation of the Cadets Scheme in specific areas of Birmingham. This will involve a more targeted approach to the recruitment of volunteers from diverse backgrounds to be cadets and a community-city partnership to engage groups and institutions to champion and support the scheme.

Recommendation 16: The commission will develop, support and review schemes that support young adults at risk and ex-offenders to find work and start businesses.

The commission should set up a strategic working partnership to support young adults and ex-offenders facing challenges around getting a job and starting a business. This group could work with the Birmingham and Solihull Youth Promise Plus project to help 'hard to access' young people to engage directly with key city business leaders and employers.

Recommendation 17: Mentoring schemes should be targeted at young people at most risk.

The commission partners should support the appointment of the Partnership Engagement Manager to develop school-based mentoring schemes to support young people 'at risk' of exclusion/offending and in need of greater support. The engagement and consultation with local community groups is necessary for this role.

Family and Community Support

Recommendation 18: The commission will support development of specialist family and trauma therapy services for those affected by gang associated violence.

The commission partnership should ensure that specialist counselling services, including family therapy and trauma therapy services are available to both victims and perpetrators of gang associated violence. This will involve commission partners compiling a comprehensive list of organisations and agencies that offer these specialist services.

Recommendation 19: Birmingham City Council should engage partners in a review of services for young people.

The commission should encourage the City Council to review its position on youth facilities in priority areas and wards to consider the establishment of partnerships or to re-establish spaces and facilities where meaningful activities (learning, fun, sports, discussions, counselling, coaching, mentoring) can take place.

Recommendation 20: Prisoners associated with gangs and violence should have a comprehensive 'intervention and support package' in place for when they leave prison.

The commission should promote community–involved and community-led approaches to offenders and ex-offenders by setting up a working group. This group can encourage agencies that work with these individuals (the West Midlands National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company, Youth Offending Services, and HMP Prisons link to City of Birmingham) to fulfil their statutory responsibilities to support prisoners towards and on release. Prisoners with gang and serious violence issues need an 'intervention support package' to ease their re-entry to productive community life. This package should follow the government's seven pathways to encourage rehabilitation and reduce reoffending. These include: accommodation; education, employment and training; health (physical and mental); drugs and alcohol; finance, debt and benefit; children and families; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

Faith

Recommendation 21: The commission's action plan should include exploration and review of faith-based approaches to gangs and violence.

The commission should develop a co-ordinated approach to engage all inter-faith and multi-faith forums/groups in Birmingham. The aims are to discuss the role of faith, values and morals in issues around organised crime, gangs and violence and to promote working together, especially in 'priority neighbourhoods', to increase the peace.

Funding

Recommendation 22: There should be investment in capability to seek greater external funding from charitable and non-statutory funders.

The commission should support the appointment of a Fundraising/Community Development Manager to encourage capacity building in community groups and to build a network of voluntary and community groups. Such a network can investigate joint funding and investment strategies to secure substantial funding, e.g. Big Lottery Reaching Communities joint bid, from non-statutory funders supporting gangs and violence reduction initiatives.

Business, Employment, Jobs and Training

Recommendation 23: The commission should establish a community-led 'interdisciplinary business hub' for supporting individuals and families associated with gangs and violence. This hub will show people routes into employment, training, self-employment and business start-up possibilities.

Recommendation 24: The commission should work with businesses to provide spaces for activity, training, mentoring and advice for individuals and families associated with or affected by gangs and violence.

The commission should involve the business sector in its work through the promotion of corporate social responsibility. Such social responsibility can lead to partnerships between all sectors to acquire appropriate buildings and premises for establishing 'safe spaces' for learning, personal development, advice, guidance, business start-up and other relevant support for individuals and families associated or impacted by gangs and violence.

The report highlights the willingness of the different sectors in the commission partnership to work together in addressing the challenges linked to gangs and serious violence. It also   acknowledges that, arrests and law enforcement approaches are not enough to effectively confront and reduce serous violence in local neighbourhoods or communities (Home Office, 2011; Jamieson, 2016). It is from these acknowledgements that this report confirms that only an active and sustained multi- agency, city-community response to the recommendations will make any significant inroads into what, for some, has been categorised a 'crime epidemic' relating to gangs and serious violence.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to Commission

The Police and Crime Commissioner made it clear at the start of the Commission on Gangs and Violence that a more critical exploration, rooted in community-led and community-involved approaches was needed. Partners agreed that without the authentic voices from communities affected by peer-associated criminality and violence, this research report might misrepresent or miss key points issues associated with how communities perceive and respond to serious violence and their thoughts or aspirations concerning partnerships and effective city-wide responses.

The commission, made up of representatives from the community and statutory sectors, acknowledged that:

- New guns have become available and old weapons drawn back into use;
- A new generation of young people are 'at risk' or have already been drawn into gang-related activities;
- Gangs and criminal friendship groups are a persistent threat in some communities;
- Listening to the 'voices' of young people and families associated with gang-related activities and the serious violence is necessary for the development of effective interventions;
- Not all firearms offences and violent acts are gang related;
- Community members are concerned about the lack of a sustainable partnership strategy to address the key issues associated with gang-related activities and violence;
- The withdrawal of funding from BRGV undermined efforts to limit gang-related harm offered by community groups and projects and other cuts in funding reduced local voluntary and community activities;
- The demographics of serious violence and gang-related criminality have changed significantly;
- Communities recognise that, 'Something is different, things have changed';
- Communities lack confidence in the police and need to own and drive a genuine and sustainable strategy and action plan, where the PCC and other partners are held accountable for what is commissioned (from the Commission on Gangs and Violence Action Plan, 2016 - See appendix 1).

Given these trends and considerations, it was necessary to engage credible community organisations (specialist providers) to support the research process in privileging the voices of people impacted by serious violence, gang-related criminality and the city's responses to them. This was to be complemented by a review of a sample of the relevant literature around gangs and serious violence and input from the statutory, business and faith sectors. From these sources, a report would be produced that would make a series of recommendations for all stakeholders.

1.2 Why another report?

There are fractured relationships between the police and some communities. One way to rebuild some trust is to take those communities seriously and to discuss historical and ongoing hurts and misunderstandings honestly. These reflections could be the basis for learning how to do things better. Some respondents argued that some statutory personnel are not equipped to genuinely understand and address the needs of individuals and communities involved or at risk of involvement with gangs and violence.

Some individuals approached to participate in the study raised the following questions:

- 'Why do we need another report relating to "gangs", violence and youth crime?'
- 'What difference will another report make to grassroots agencies and organisations who are engaged with serious violence and criminality?'
- 'Is the system ready and willing to think differently about how they deal with our communities relating to "gangs" and violence?'
- 'Will this report do anything to stop the killings of our sons and loved ones?'
- 'What will be different about a community-led research report?'
- 'Will this report deal with the racism and brutality experienced by black men?'
- 'Is this the report we are waiting for to support and improve multi-agency working, as well as community and city partnerships?'

These were critical questions for the research team. They question the possibilities that community-city partnerships can effectively address extreme violence and peer-associated criminality, as the city faces economic, political and social challenges.

However, the report argues that it is useful for the following reasons:
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and other stakeholders have raised concerns about the serious rise in gun and knife related violence over

the past eighteen months and are fully supportive of a fresh look at causes and potential responses, with a view of commissioning effective and more sustained interventions.

- The commission wants ways to develop fresh working relationships with communities as partners.
- There is political will on the part of the Home Secretary, the Mayor of the West Midlands and the Police and Crime Commissioner to address the problems associated with serious violence.
- There is a willingness within communities to engage with key decision makers and to work in partnerships to bring about concrete sustained changes.
- Unlike other reports, this research explores the contributions of faith groups and prisons in solutions/interventions and future partnerships.
- A new 'bottom-up' look at old solutions can offer recommendations for more effective long-term objectives and solutions based on partnerships.
- The continued willingness of the police and other statutory body personnel to consider violence and gang-associated activities within a public health framework allows for links to be made with community-led approaches.
- The commitment to place local communities at the heart of making local changes through processes of community involvement allows for new forms of monitoring and evaluation of recommendations and initiatives.

The next section considers the themes explored in this report.

1.3 Key factors explored

This report is rooted in community-led and community-involved approaches and is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of SPs who represent diverse communities across Birmingham. Their knowledge and experience is presented here under ten themes and expresses the complexities relating to violence and gang-related activities. These should not be seen in isolation from the material, emotional, environmental and moral realities that shape the lives and livelihoods of people living in the city. For example, the volatility of some young people is compounded by their communities' experiences of discrimination and deprivation. Some communities and groups are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and these negative experiences promote mistrust and conflict between them and statutory providers.

Evidence shows that youth crime and violence are not limited to any one community or cultural group and that, since 2003, there has been some evidence of a reduction in gun and knife related crimes, as highlighted in section 3. However, the 2016/2017 recorded spike in gun and knife related crimes further highlights the serious concerns

about, what some respondents in this research, categorised as the 'new generation of gangsters' who are known for their spontaneous acts of violence. Some youth respondents said that some of their peers look-up to men serving substantial prison sentences, or are still 'on road' making money, as role models. Some community respondents described this generation as, dangerous, fearless, hot-headed, impulsive, and de-sensitised to violence, angry and disrespectful to authority. Speaking for themselves, members of this 'new generation' said that they are now the 'generals of the street' and their areas and no longer respect the authority of the 'older heads'.

The above context increases the probability of spontaneous acts of violence and the need for specific multi-agency and community partnerships to target young people 'at risk' before their behaviour escalates into acts of criminality and serious violence.

Importantly, the contributions of specialist providers and community organisations allow this report to offer a community-led approach based on dialogue, consultation and observation. This approach has the potential to bring people's 'realities' into a 'partnership space', where meaningful changes can be discussed and actioned.

1.4 Intended outcomes

This research intends to influence the strategies and practices of those working with individuals, families and communities associated with gangs, violence and criminality. It offers recommendations to support effective partnership interventions to divert young people from lives of crime, to help gang members leave 'the game' and promote prison-community rehabilitation processes. Of course, some people will persist with negative activities, beyond any interventions. This means that partnerships need to consider all options and powers to minimise the criminal and violent outcomes of these choices.

Other outcomes include:

- A better understanding of the key factors associated with the spike in gang associated activities and violence
- A report detailing recommendations and an action plan
- A report and action plan launch event in December 2017
- Community-led activities to ensure delivery of the action plan and the development of a cross-partner/community approach.

1.5 Report structure

The report sketches the social, political and economic context of Birmingham's community-led approach. It suggests that such an approach be based on a public health methodology that would steer discussions away from a purely criminal justice and law enforcement perspective. This is important because how things are discussed shapes how they are understood and responded to. The report discusses the benefits of a community-involved approach to gangs, violence, the use of weapons and organised crime in Birmingham.

The report is structured in the following way:

- Section1 introduces the context of the Commission on Gangs and Violence
- Section 2 sets out some methodological considerations around community-led and community-involved research
- Section 3 outlines the Birmingham context and its issues and challenges
- Section 4 presents the results, rationale and recommendations
- Section 5 offers a framework for building effective community-involved partnerships and
- The conclusion offers some final reflections.

The next section explores the methodological processes for achieving the above aims and intended outcomes.

2- Methodological Considerations

2.1 Introduction

Given the agreed community-led approach to this research, it was acknowledged that culturally competent methods were needed to privilege the voices of individuals, families and communities affected by gangs, violence and organised crime. Usually, such people are labelled 'hard to reach', gang-associated, excluded, 'problematic' and are excluded from critical strategic discussions about their own welfare and wellbeing. By putting them at the heart of the exploration, new tools, interventions and methods of delivery can be generated from the analysis grounded in their experiences.

The following section considers the methods applied in the research.

2.2 Mixed methods approach

The choice to see issues around gangs and violence in Birmingham through 'community-led lenses' suggested the use of a 'mixed methods' qualitative approach. This means using a mix of research methods to access, capture and represent the voices, contexts and realities of respondents. These included: reviews of relevant literature and reports; semi-structured interviews with decision makers, service providers and/or key stakeholders working in statutory bodies; focus group discussions with community groups, young people, mothers and with prisoners in HMP Birmingham; consultation seminars and workshops; 'reasoning sessions' with fathers; questionnaires; attendance at commission and SP meetings; outreach interaction in Handsworth, Sparkbrook, Small Heath, Alum Rock, Newtown and Alum Rock; attendance at and review of video footage from 'Faith Matters' seminar and facilitating two three-day residentials for young people and participant observations.

2.3 Ethical and sensitivity issues

The issues associated with serious youth violence, gang-affiliation and the illegal use of weapons are sensitive and emotive areas for research, even for experienced researchers. Dickson-Swift et al. (2008:1-2) say that "qualitative research is an emotional activity and researchers need to be aware of the emotional nature of the research and anticipate the effects that it may have on them and their participants." This can influence the people involved directly or indirectly and lead to harmful outcomes. This is important for non-community-based stakeholders to remember, and care was taken and guidelines discussed to minimise the risk of harm and other negative outcomes. This includes changing details to protect identities.

2.4 Field work
The specialist providers work across a range of community settings. Their reputations in those communities and regular contacts allowed them two-fold participation in the research. They organised and facilitated data collection in their communities and were interviewed themselves. These 'authentic voices' of people immediately affected by gangs, organised crime and violence, together with interviews with figures from the statutory, community, faith and, voluntary sectors allow for a 360 degree view on the issues and their possible solutions.

These interviews were carried out by others in the research team and questioned representatives from:
- Local authority providers
- Police and Crime Commissioner's office
- National Probation Service
- Community Rehabilitation Company

- West Midlands Police Community Safety Partnership
- Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust
- Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
- The Re Group - social business initiatives
- Cleone Foods, Birmingham (community business initiative) and
- Association of Corporate Governance Practitioners.

The table below represents the 498 individuals consulted across communities:
Figure 1

Community Involved Research		
Focus of work	**Consultation event(s)**	**Number of participants**
Young people/men & fathers categorised 'hard to reach'	4 Events Street Outreach One-to–one Interviews Specialist Provider Forums	70
Women and Families	2 Events - the creation of a safe space for women to talk about their experiences and find solutions 1 Event - focus group, looking at families of perpetrators 1 Workshop	60
Prevention and reducing reoffending through the Sports Engagement Hub South Asian and Somali communities	2 Residential workshops relating to access to sports and addressing negative behaviours associated with youth violence 4 Workshops Drop-in sessions	30 198
Prisoners/offenders focus group/consultation in prison	13-week course; one-to-one sessions/consultation event relating to community and prison realities associated with violence	20 prisoners
Faith Matters Event	Exploring the relevance of faith groups regarding gangs and violence in communities	45
Schools/college context in dealing with criminal justice and community safety for young people	Questionnaires, focus groups regarding keeping communities safe	75

The approaches captured a range of viewpoints that fuelled critical reflection on the effectiveness of present practices and enhanced the awareness of the commission's work.

The specialist providers were grounded in their local communities, consequently they had good relationships and an awareness of residents. The rest of the research team had experiences of working with various communities across the city and region. The research team was 'independent' and professional, but had deep connections and understandings of the issues and situations being researched. The advantages of being a 'known individual' in communities already suspicious of 'outsiders' were clear. The literature on research supports this observation. For example, Goodson and Phillimore (2012) outline the advantages of prior understanding and insights into the community or group being explored. More specifically, Glynn's (2004) points about research with black youths are worth noting:

> Young black people have felt comforted by talking to someone who identifies with who they are, as opposed to their supposed social label. Likewise, disaffected white males and females who are embracing urban culture through music such as hip-hop, garage, drum 'n' bass, dancehall music, etc. have felt more at ease knowing that the researcher had a familiarity with the world they occupy. At all times, positive reinforcement without judgment enabled those young people to feel at ease in expressing their views on their terms. (Glynn, 2004: 17)

Glynn's observations and concerns are especially important given how black young men are negatively categorised and disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (Anderson, 2015; Brown, 2014; Gunter, 2010).

2.5 Time scales and analysis

The commission was launched in March 2016. The fieldwork began in July 2016 in line with the framework below (taken from the ethical framework developed by the research team in partnership with Birmingham City University):

Figure 2

1. Selection criteria – Participants/respondents to be fully briefed regarding the aims /expectations of the study and the role of the commission.

2. Pre-piloting questions (to be tested with sample group) – To ensure that interview/focus group questions would allow participants to openly express their stories.

3. Engagement – Respondents, once contacted, to be seen in safe environments, with minimum outside distractions, and that ample time is given to putting participants at ease (relationship-building phase).

4. Briefing – Respondents to be made aware that they had the option to withdraw.

5. Debriefing – Participants to have the opportunity to reflect on the process of being interviewed or being a part of a focus group and be given the option to contact the lead researcher if any concerns/ issues arose.

6. Capturing information – SPs to produce a written report detailing consultation, number of participants and key themes arising. They should also ensure that the narratives of participants are represented accurately, noting that the language from a 'street perspective' may require further translation within the coding and analysis phase of the study.

9. Analysing data – All data to be reviewed and analysed by the research team using an adapted form of grounded theory (locating key issues and themes from data) represented by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006). From this process, the analysis, findings and subsequent recommendations will emerge.

In conversations and meetings with the commission partnership and separately with SPs, it became clear that an unrealistic time scale had been set. It was therefore agreed for a report launch in December 2017, allowing time for critical analysis and writing of the final report.

3-The Birmingham context: understanding the issues and challenges

3.1 Introduction

Birmingham is said to be one of the most culturally and racially diverse cities in the UK, if not Europe. It also has a population of children and young people of about 750,000. With over 1.1million residents, statutory, business, faith, voluntary and community sectors have competing economic, environmental, and educational, social and public health interests, concerns and challenges. Whilst some reports and studies present Birmingham as a city to be envied and admired, others point to serious challenges associated with child poverty, the illegal use of firearms, gang-related crimes and serious violence.

The Birmingham Child Poverty Commission was set up in spring 2015 and raised concerns about the city's response to 37% of its children and young people living in poverty (Reed, 2015). The report added that poverty increases the risk of associated social and health related challenges. There are also interconnections between poverty and deprivation and gang-associated activities and violence.

During the period of this research, Birmingham received much media coverage concerning stabbings, shootings, violent attacks and the 'new generation of gangsters' allegedly carrying them out. Some argue that this is a 'moral panic', with the media using some families' violent tragedies as evidence of some form of 'gang insurgency'. Others are fearful as parents, because of what they see as the desensitising impact of violence on children and young people and the belief that it is inevitable in certain areas. One of our respondents said:

> This goes beyond discussions about gangs and post codes and is more to do with the breakdown of moral and ethical values relating to love, forgiveness, care, hope and trust, because without these, there will always be troubles out here.

Links need to be made between such moral arguments and wider debates about how strategic partnerships, institutions and policies can encourage desistance, limit harm and promote justice and equality across the city. To that end, the next section considers previous research findings and reports and highlights both 'good' and 'bad' practices in search of fresh insights.

3.2 Interpretations and perspectives regarding gangs and violence in Birmingham - views from social research studies and reports

Over the years, especially from 2003, there have been reports, studies and discussions exploring issues associated with violence, gangs, knife and gun related crimes in Birmingham. Different governments have grappled with 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' across UK cities. In 2011, the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, and Iain Duncan Smith, the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, co-produced the Ministerial Foreword for the 'Ending Gangs and Youth Violence: a cross government report including further evidence and good practice case studies'. This report was said to be the first truly cross government approach and championed the need for joined up working to tackle a 'gang and youth violence epidemic'.

Previous relevant government reports include: 'Preventing youth violence and gang involvement: practical advice for schools', 'Tackling gangs: a practical guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners', 'House of Commons Home Affairs Committee: gangs and youth crime' and 'Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System'. These reports and guidance documents examined why young people become involved in gangs, organised crime, violence and behaviours some define as nihilistic and self-destructive (Anderson, 2015). They also offer solutions to those providing services in areas impacted by gang and youth violence. However, community-based and non-community-based organisations and individuals are still concerned about gangs and youth violence and their new forms, which highlight the need for new approaches or interventions in the statutory, voluntary, faith, business and community sectors.

Given all of this, the government's 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' report became a benchmark. It offered a framework for developing effective approaches gang and youth violence, as shown here:

> Our proposals are wide-ranging. They are focused on five areas: prevention, pathways out punishment, partnership working and providing support. We need to combine action to tackle the causes of gang and youth violence with tough enforcement to crack down on those who commit crimes. Stopping such violence is not a task for the police alone. Teachers, doctors and youth workers all have a vital role to play. Success will only come when local areas and local agencies like these work together and share information (Home Office, 2011:3).

The report was launched with its wide-ranging proposals in 2011. A programme of work with local authorities followed in April 2012. A review report was published in 2015, from which the following three key recommendations are drawn.

- Programmes with records of turning around the lives of young people in

gangs and with entrenched behavioural difficulties need to be commissioned more consistently. The Government should expand support for mentoring programmes that focus on gang-affected young people. While it is vital that work is delivered in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, a key factor in the success of many programmes is their separation from local criminal justice agencies, as perceived by the young people.

- We should accept that children as young as seven are at risk of gang involvement. The Committee believes that primary school anti-gang education programmes should be expanded. In every school where there is local knowledge of gangs, a senior teacher should be nominated to coordinate the school's anti-gang measures and ensure that relevant figures come in to the school to talk about gangs. It is widely accepted that success in learning is one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime

- The Committee recommends that the existing work of local organisations that are well supported and have grown from the resident communities, such as Gangsline and the SOS project, should be expanded. The Home Office should ensure that detailed evaluation is undertaken of projects deemed to be examples of best practice, to create models that can work for communities across the country. The Home Office should develop interactive online tools and the use of social media to gain the input of local communities on what can be done to combat gangs (Home Office, 2015:10-12).

The 'Ending Gang Violence' report asked why key recommendations for reducing gang involvement and youth violence had not been implemented, even after extensive consultations. The view that authorities know what to do or are required to take actions, but do not act was also a theme in the current research. For example, statutory respondents said that recommendations, past, present and proposed, should all work in line with relevant legislation and procedures. These include the Children Act 2004, with a focus on the sections regarding interagency partnership approaches and supporting families from a safeguarding perspective and key legislation regarding education, mental health and working with vulnerable adults. An important document in this context is Birmingham's 'A brighter future for children and young People: the Birmingham strategy', grounded as it is in the Every Child Matters outcomes. These outcomes are to help children, young people and their families to live lives of opportunity and are to:
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve

- Make a positive contribution and
- Achieve economic well-being

These are promoted for all children and young people to develop their full potential. However, many respondents said that their realities were very different. Some of these issues are explored in section 4.

Our research highlights that there has been numerous perspectives and responses associated with the concerns in Birmingham relating to gangs and youth violence. Some of these are represented below:

Books, research and reviews:

Anderson (2015); Beckford (2004); Brown (2014, 2016); Glynn (2012, 2014); Hale (2008); Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney (2017); McLagan (2005); Gooderson (2010); Home Office (2012); Birmingham City Council (2010)

Summits and conferences:

- ➤ Birmingham Gangs and Violence Commission Best Practice Summit (February 2017)

- ➤ West Midlands Police Conference – Street Influences: Addressing the Negative Impact of Gang Culture (2008)

- ➤ The Report from the Connected –together we can tackle gun crime, Home Office Conference at Birmingham Botanical Gardens (19-20 January, 2004).

Independent and partnership reviews/reports

- ➤ Lozells Disturbances Summary Report **-** Black Radley Ltd (2006)

- ➤ Enough is Enough: A Community United For Change (Dawkins, 2003)

- ➤ Urban Living Employment and Training Community Research Project' (January-March, 2009)

- ➤ STUCK: Current approaches to the design and delivery of interventions to address gang-related violence in Birmingham' (BRAP, August 2012)

- ➤ Young Disciples Research Evaluation Report (2003)

➤ Bringing Hope: Churches response to Drugs, Guns & Gangs-Conference Report (2004)

➤ Report of the Come to Success Conference, organised by the Muslim Community
➤ (September, 2005)

➤ Bringing Support, Providing Inspiration: Conference Report -The Sikh Community's Response to Drugs, Guns, Knives and Gangs (2006)

The above documents offer numerous recommendations, reflections and insights that were intended to contribute towards improving the situations relating to gangs and violence. However, there is little evidence of any sustained accountability mechanisms to ensure that recommendations were implemented and evaluated.

Throughout the interviews with specialist providers, statutory sector personnel, community respondents, faith and business sectors, it was widely acknowledged that issues associated with gangs and violence was largely law enforcement-led. For all specialist providers and most of the statutory sector providers, previous reports, studies and recommendations often lacked consistent coordinated partnerships that genuinely included perspectives and involvement of local community groups or individuals. Specialist providers and a number of active community respondents held the view that Birmingham is struggling to address the concerns and challenges associated with gangs and serious violence effectively for the following reasons:

- There are few genuine power-sharing community-led and community involved partnerships.
- There is little involvement of victim and perpetrators (who have desisted) involved in strategic discussions.
- Good and best practice initiatives (from all sectors) are seldom celebrated and replicated.
- A criminal justice/law enforcement culture means little or no community involvement.
- Governance and leadership associated with the gangs and violence agenda is fragmented.
- There is a lack of specific community-involved partnerships in areas with significant or potential gang-associated challenges.
- The dominant media representations of gangs and violence in certain neighborhoods are distorted and misrepresent the real 'on the ground' issues.
- Perceived failure to address the lack of trust and confidence between local communities and statutory bodies.

This report acknowledges that there are no 'quick fixes' to the issues, concerns and challenges emerging or highlighted in this research. Researchers like Anderson (1999), Glynn (2014), Brown (2014) and Fraser (2017) argue that some of the issues are entrenched and systemic, which are linked to interconnected social, economic, educational and moral trends. Effective responses therefore need to be grounded in sustainable city-community strategies, focused on supporting individuals, families and neighbourhoods and promoting justice and equality for all. Beckford (2004), a leading theologian and cultural critic from Birmingham, suggests that the underlying causes of gun crime and gang violence are the systemic failure or multiple breakdowns of social, cultural, political, communal and moral forces in the urban context.

The next section reviews some trends, statistics and insights concerning the incidence and impact of serious violence (both gang and non-gang-related) over a thirteen-year period.

3.3 The current issues and challenges

Birmingham has spent many millions of pounds over the years on criminal justice or law enforcement approaches in response to the challenges associated with 'guns, gangs knives and violence'. Its officers and services have worked to 'catch and convict' perpetrators, support victims and champion 'community safety' in response to serious violent crime. Acts of violence, spontaneous, chaotic, premeditated and intended, are concerns for everyone in the city. Respondents interviewed from all sectors agreed that 'people are afraid'. For some perpetrators that were interviewed, there was a key theme relating to 'blocking out' the pain and devastation their actions cause individuals and communities.

Whist it remains needful to acknowledge the fears regarding gangs and serious violence, it is important to establish the facts about what is known about gun and knife-related crimes in the West Midlands and in Birmingham in particular.

Key statistics from WMP recorded crime data are set out below:

Trends in gun crime

Figure three shows the trend in gun crime in the West Midlands since 2003. The figure shows us three distinct periods. First from 2003 to 2007 gun crime was high at over 1,000 crimes per year. Secondly from 2007 to 2012 there was a period where gun crime fell substantially – reaching less than half of the 2003 level by 2012. Unfortunately the data

now show a reversal of this fall in gun crime. While the level in 2016, and to date in 2017, was still far below the 2003 level there has been a clear increase from 459 in 2012 to 584 in 2016. Between beginning of January 2017 and end November 2017 626 gun crimes were recorded, in effect concurring that the spike or increase has not yet halted.

Figure 3: Police recorded gun crime, West Midlands force area

Number of offences
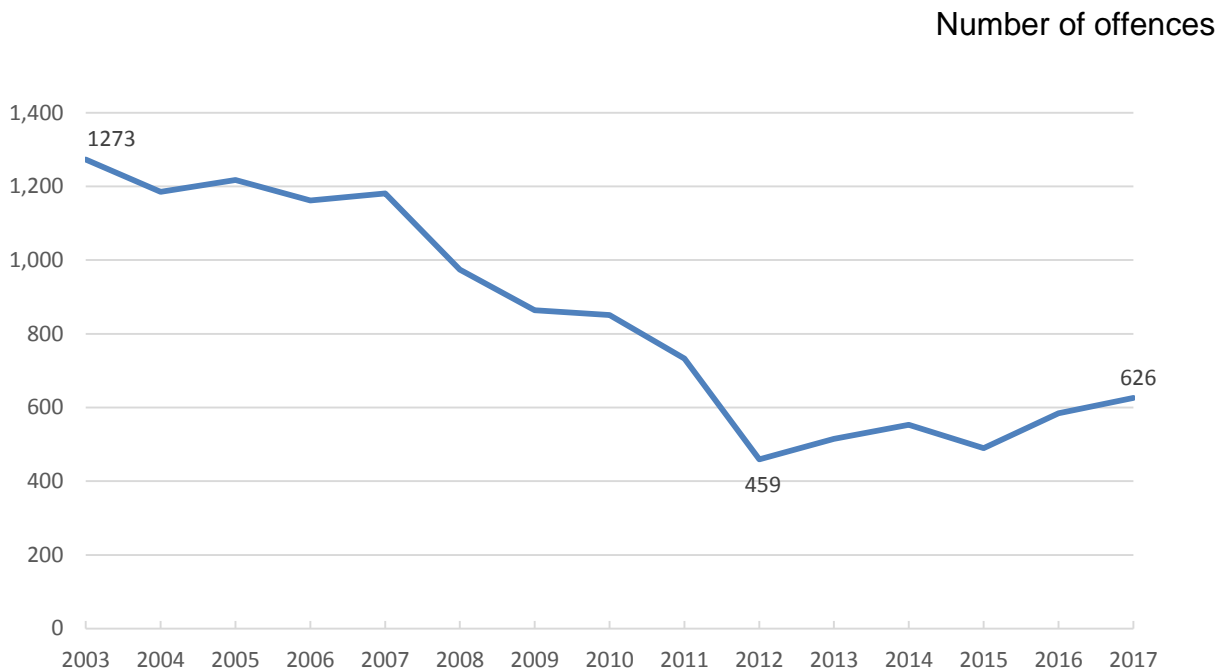
While some of the increase might be due to improvements in crime recording in recent years some will be a genuine rise. Admissions data for NHS hospitals in England also show increases in all three categories of assault by firearm discharge (by handgun, by rifle, shotgun and larger firearm, by other and unspecified firearm) from 109 admissions in the 2015/2016 to 135 in 2016/17 adding to the evidence that there is an increase in gun crime.

This report echoes the concerns of commission partners regarding the relative high prevalence of gun crime in the West Midlands compared to the England and Wales average, at 19 per 100,000 and 9 per 100,000 population respectively[1]. Though the West

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[1] Data are for 2015/16 and may not be fully comparable to other crime data in this report as there may be differences in the offences and types of firearms are included.

Midlands is comparable to similar urban areas such as Greater Manchester (16 per 100,000 population) and Metropolitan Police (18 per 100,000).

It is important to note that gun crime data include offences where a gun has been used as a threat or as a blunt instrument. The number of gun crimes where a firearm is discharged is far smaller, though still worryingly high at 107 to date in 2017.

Types of crimes involving guns

A variety of recorded crime types are captured within the gun crime statistics. As shown in figure 4 below, the most common crime within the gun crime statistics is robbery of personal property, followed by possession of firearms to cause fear, robbery of business property, actual bodily harm and wounding with intent GBH. Together these accounted for 66 per cent of all gun crime in 2016.

Figure 4: Police recorded gun crimes, 10 most common gun crime types, West Midlands Force area, 2016

Percentages

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeand
sexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016
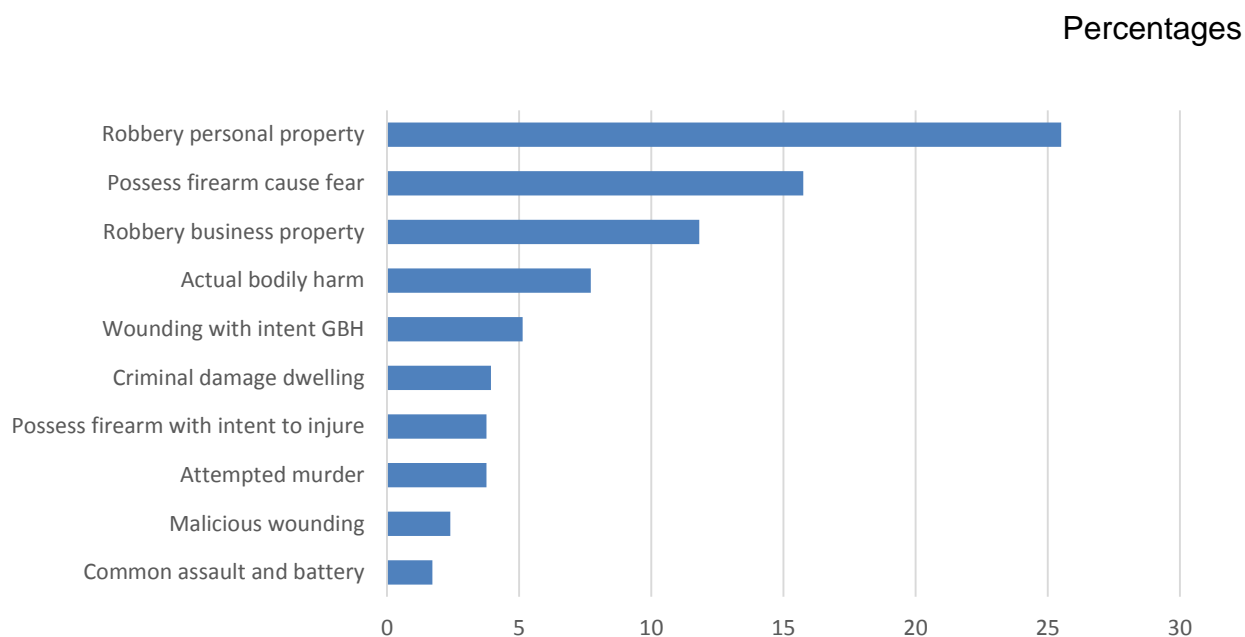
Murder and attempted murder

While only a fraction of all gun crimes are murders or attempted murders respectively, these crimes are clearly the most serious and have a devastating impact on victims, families and friends and whole communities.

Murders and attempted murders involving guns seem to be following a similar pattern as gun crime overall, increasing in recent years from lows around 2013 as seen in figures five and six below.

Figure 5: Police recorded gun crime, murders, West Midlands force area
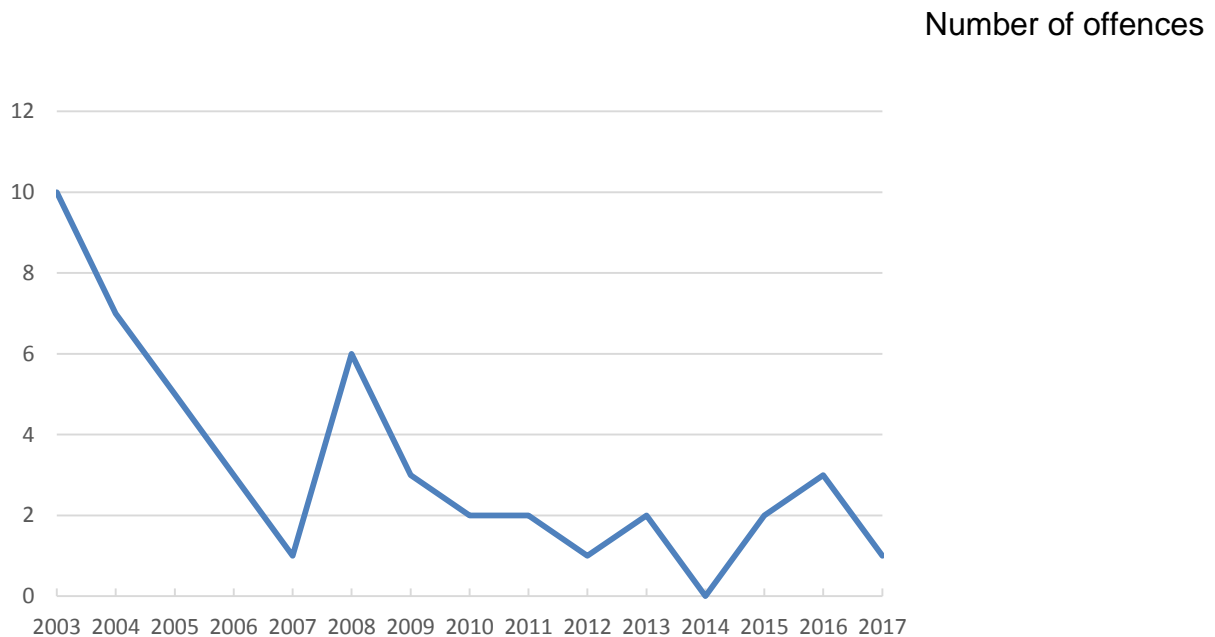
Number of offences

Figure 6: Police recorded gun crime, attempted murders, West Midlands force area

Number of offences
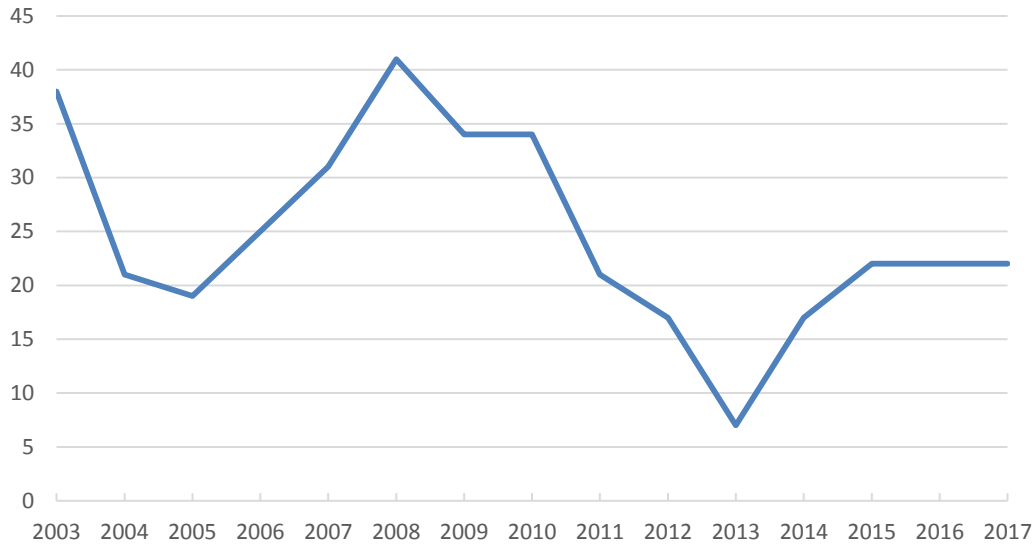
This report again highlights the crucial need for interagency and community-involved partnerships to strategise, towards influencing the reduction in gun related crimes and violence. During our research, we read and heard numerous news reports relating to fatalities associated with serious violence, for example, there were headlines reporting three deaths in Birmingham within forty eight hours (Paxton, 2017). This unprecedented situation highlights the seriousness of the challenges and raises questions as to whether these fatalities were predictable or preventable. It also questions what new efforts or strategies are needed to influence the attitudes, thinking and behaviours of those responsible for such atrocities.

Gun crime in Birmingham

The data presented so far show the picture for the West Midlands force area as a whole. The focus of this report is however Birmingham, and for good reason as 57% of all the gun crimes recorded in the West Midlands in 2016 were recorded in Birmingham. Even taking into account that the majority of the West Midlands population lives in Birmingham it is still disproportionately represented in the gun crime data. As shown in figure seven there were 25 gun crimes per 100,000 population in Birmingham East in 2016 and 32 per 100,000 in Birmingham West in 2016.

Figure 7: Police recorded gun crime rates, West Midlands force area, 2016

Crimes per 100,000 population
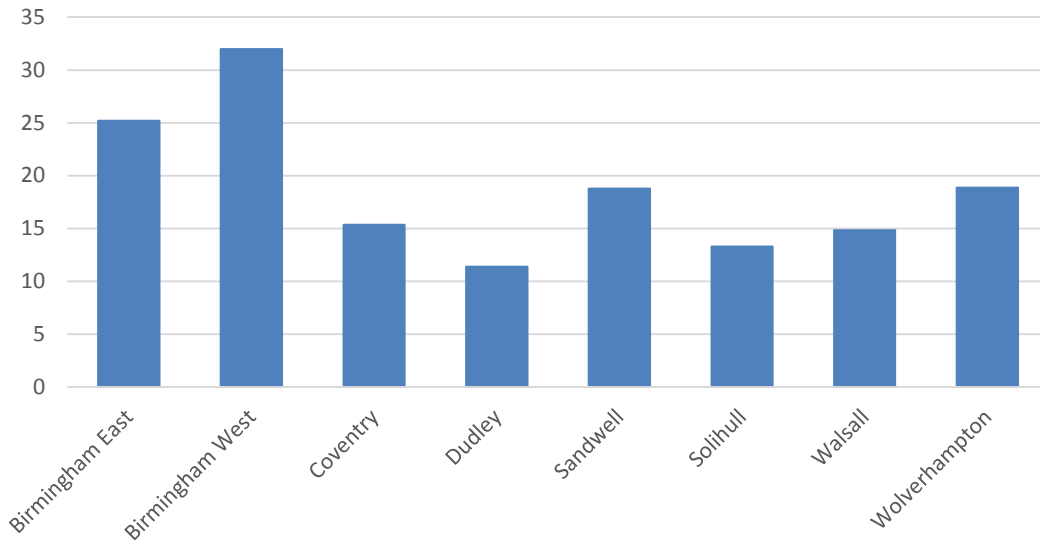
Within Birmingham the types of crime that make up most of the overall gun crime figure are the same as for the West Midlands as whole.

Localities of Gun-Related Crimes

The map below shows the incidence of gun-related crimes across the city and identifies the four main areas.

43
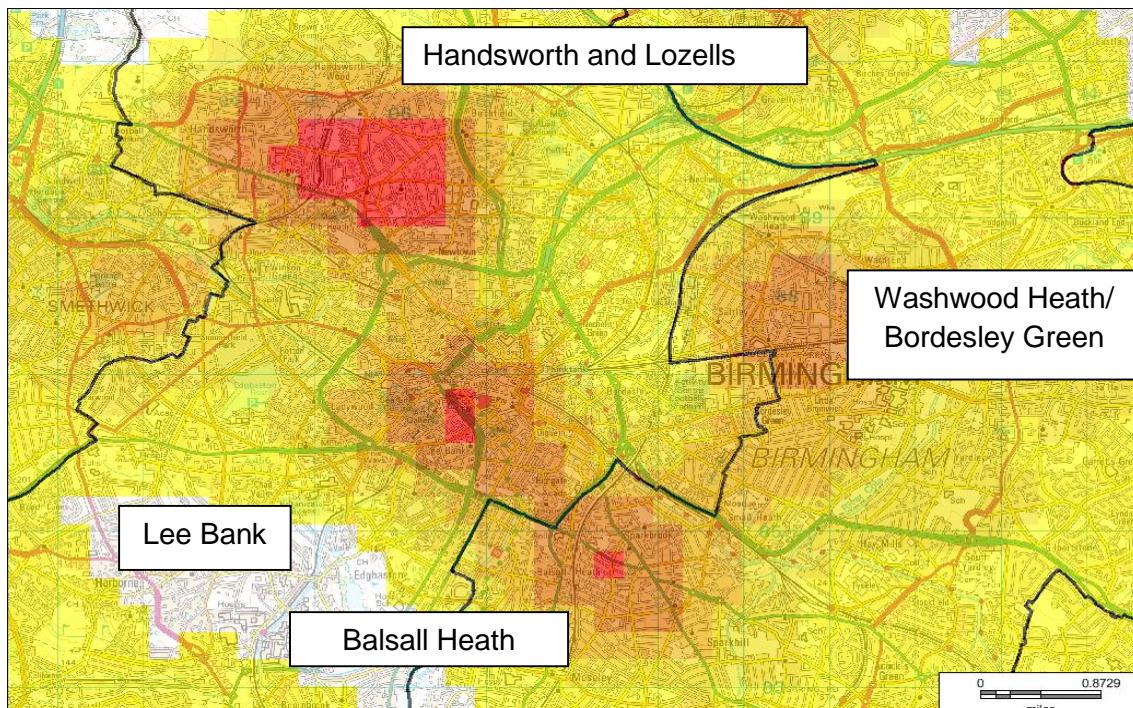
Knife crime

As highlighted previously, knife crime is also relevant to the work of the Gangs and Violence Commission. Figure eight shows that this is following a very similar pattern to gun crime, increasing in recent years from a low in the early 2010s.

Figure 8: Police recorded knife crime, West Midlands force area

Number of offences
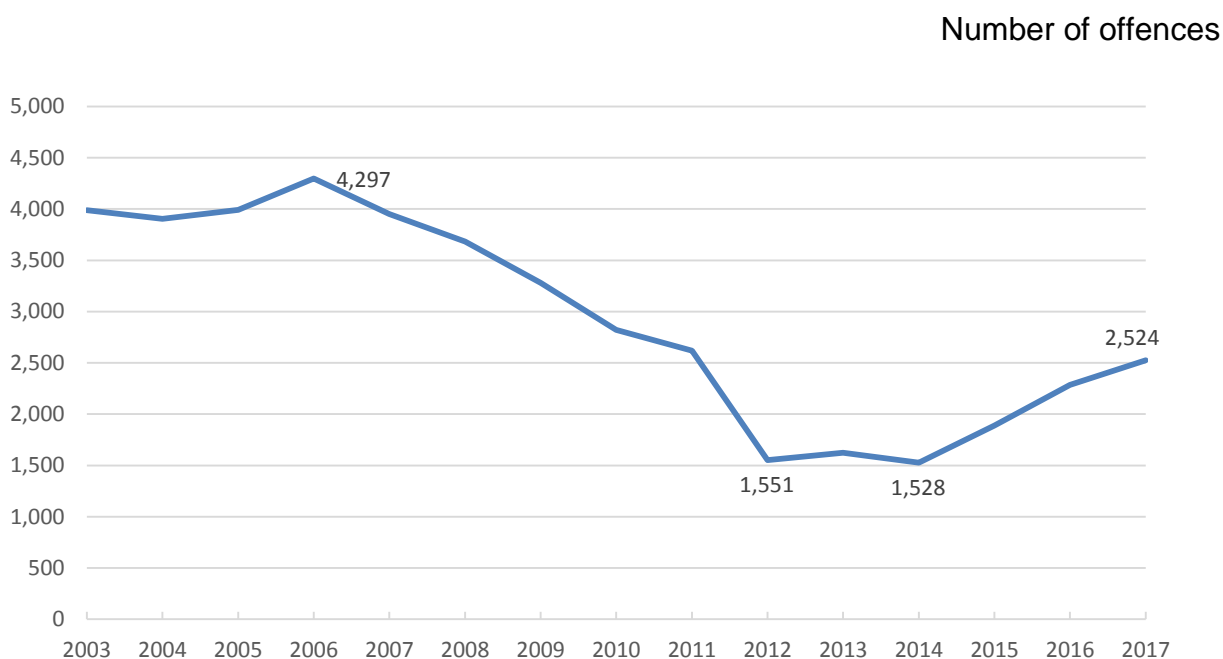
Knife crime, like gun crime, incorporates different crime but consists in large of robbery of personal property, actual bodily harm, wounding with intent GBH, robbery of business property and malicious wounding. It also, like gun crime, is focussed around the Birmingham area with more than half of the knife crimes taking place in 2016 being recorded in Birmingham. Our evidence confirms that murders and attempted murders involving knives, like those involving guns, have also increased in the last few years.

In 2016 West Midlands Police recorded 104 offences of having a blade/point at school and 472 of having a blade/point in a public place.

Limitations of crime statistics

Police recorded crime statistics provide essential information to help us understand the scale and severity of gun and knife crime in the area. However, they do not show the whole picture. They cannot show the true scale of problems associated with possession of illegal weapons as the police can only capture what is reported, or they become aware of through their own operations. Recorded crime is also subject to changes in recording practices so it can be difficult to interpret trends in the data. Finally, numbers cannot fully reflect the impact these crimes have on individuals and communities, whether directly through injury, intimidation or loss of a loved one, or through the fear of crime that affects a community as a result of gun and knife crime.

Whilst statistics are important for helping us to paint the picture regarding gangs and violence, this report strongly supports the need to hear the voices of people from the communities impacted by the issues.

Understanding patterns of gun and knife crime

This research has found little evidence to highlight what interventions, approaches or partnerships, if any, contributed to the reductions in gun-related deaths (gang and non-gang related) in recent years. It is also difficult to explain the increase in gun and knife-related crimes between 2016 and 2017. This therefore creates a challenge to offer evidence-based proposals for improving the situations. We believe that effective multi-agency and community-involved partnership that shared and reviewed information in line with joint gang and violence reduction strategies could provide such data. Such proposals are offered as recommendations in section 4.

Our focus groups with young people highlighted that a significant number said they felt unsafe when not armed. This raises concerns because although they arm themselves as a means of 'protection', there is evidence to suggest that they are more likely to have their weapons used against them (Evans, 2011; Adebanwo, 2010). One participant said:

> I carry a knife to school because I would rather get caught with it than get caught slipping by man on road...

We believe that Caroline Flint's observation in 2004 when she was Home Office minister is still pertinent. Her Forward in the Birmingham , Connected :together we can tackle gun crime report, stated:

Gun crime and gun culture has become a serious issue in many of our towns and cities. For some, carrying a gun has become a fashion and part of everyday life. The result has been the almost casual use of guns, and a loss of life that is wholly unacceptable (Home Office, 2004).

Where armed young people become more confrontational, spontaneous and desensitised to the impact of their actions, there are serious challenges for local communities, services and authorities. From the start of this research, at least seven people have been killed by guns or knives.

The next section considers some of the issues associated with ethnicity, gang-related activities and violence.

Ethnic Profile - Defendants and Victims

Some research and much media coverage suggest a link between gun-related crimes in certain cities with particular communities, racial and ethnic groups. This link raised questions for a number of respondents, especially from the black Caribbean communities, where young men are disproportionately represented in criminal justice statistics and media coverage relating to gangs, violence and gun and knife related crimes (Anderson, 2015; Brown, 2014; Glynn, 2014; Gunter, 2010; Home Office, 2007). The perception that black young men are the main perpetrators of gun-related crimes is seriously challenged by the WMP data below. It shows that the highest proportion of defendants and victims of gun crime are recorded as White British (53% and 59% respectively).

WMP statistics associated with Gun Crime Defendants 2003-2016

WHITE - BRITISH	53%
BLACK - CARIBBEAN	18%
ASIAN - PAKISTANI	9%
MIXED - WHITE+BLACK CARIBBEAN	5%
ASIAN - INDIAN	4%
BLACK - OTHER	3%
BLACK - AFRICAN	3%
ASIAN - OTHER	2%
WHITE - OTHER	2%
MIXED - OTHER	1%
MIXED - WHITE+ASIAN	1%
OTHER - ANY OTHER	0%
WHITE - IRISH	0%
ASIAN - BANGLADESHI	0%
MIXED - WHITE+BLACK AFRICAN	0%
OTHER -CHINESE	0%
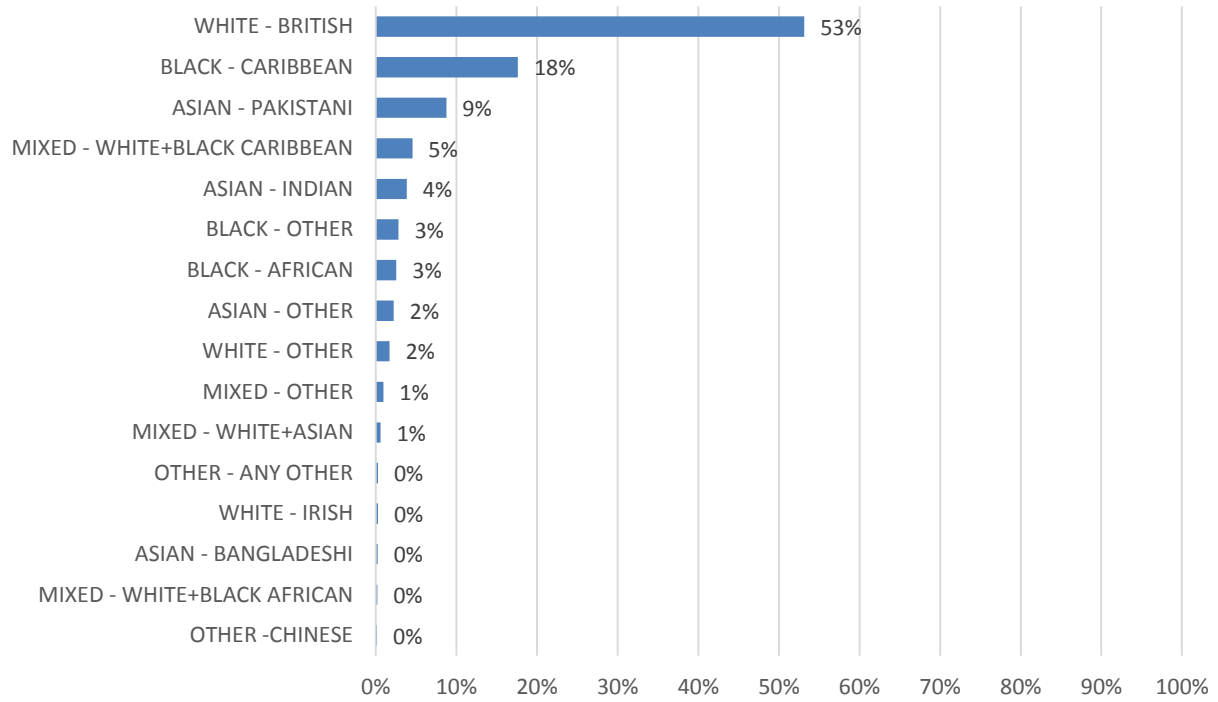
WMP statistics associated with Gun Crime Victims 2003-2016

Ethnicity	Percentage
WHITE - BRITISH	59%
ASIAN - PAKISTANI	11%
ASIAN - INDIAN	8%
BLACK - CARIBBEAN	8%
ASIAN - OTHER	3%
MIXED - WHITE+BLACK CARIBBEAN	2%
WHITE - OTHER	2%
BLACK - AFRICAN	1%
ASIAN - BANGLADESHI	1%
OTHER - ANY OTHER	1%
BLACK - OTHER	1%
MIXED - OTHER	1%
MIXED - WHITE+ASIAN	0%
OTHER -CHINESE	0%
WHITE - IRISH	0%
MIXED - WHITE+BLACK AFRICAN	0%
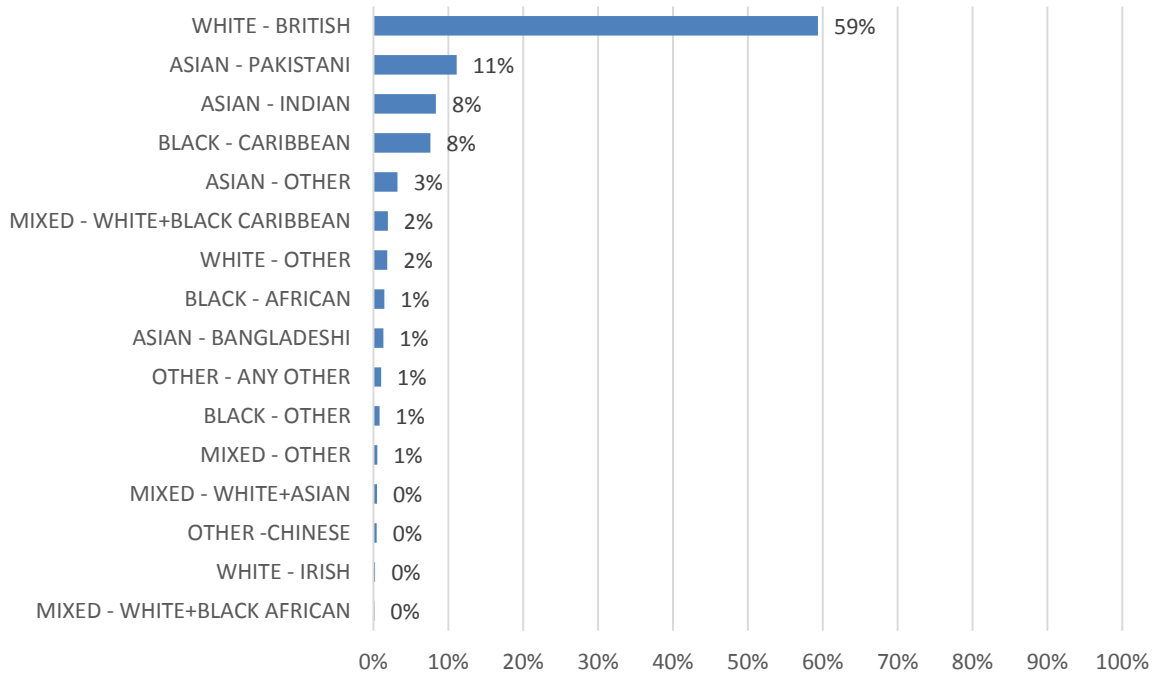
The next section considers some of the responses and interventions relating to gangs and violence in Birmingham.

3.4 Interventions and responses to gang associated criminality and violence

Evidence of effective Interventions or responses from either statutory, community, voluntary and faith sectors that support individuals and families to desist from criminality and gang-associated violence remain limited. The data shows community groups struggling to maintain 'grassroots services' because of funding problems. One specialist provider organisation continued working with individuals and families at risk of involvement in serious violence without any funding to pay staff for 3 months. This SP said:

> We can't sit by and let young people kill each other or get involved with serious violence, because we have no money to pay staff. Our staff are dedicated and said they would hold out for a period. We are a part of the community, so we believe we have a responsibility to show love and save lives - we believe the money will come in due course.

The lack of consistent funding was a challenge for all SPs interviewed and these underlined wider funding concerns for groups and partnerships involved in desistance interventions. In recent years, Birmingham City Council, like councils

across the country, has implemented cost-cutting regimes. These have led to the loss of key services for vulnerable people, including youth and children's services (Gentleman, 2016). These cuts have seriously hurt the strategies and service provision of statutory, voluntary, faith and community sector groups.

The following groups represent an array of organisations and strategic partnerships that have contributed to making Birmingham safer over the past fifteen years. Many of them no longer exist:

Birmingham Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (BASBU) Building Lives Intensive Intervention Project (Bliip), Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence (BRGV), Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV), Multi Agency Gang Unit (MAGU), Multi Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP), Safer Birmingham Partnership (SBP), Safer Schools Partnership (SSP), The Centre For Conflict Transformation – formerly the West Midlands Mediation and Transformation Services – (TCFCT), West Midlands Police (WMP) and Birmingham Youth Offending Team (YOT).Young Disciples Youth Development (YD), Bringing Hope Charity, Community Vision West Midlands CIC, KIKIT Drugs Project, Partnership Against Crime (PAC), Handsworth Recreation Group (HRG), First Class Youth Network, Halford Drive Sports Hub, TSA Projects, First Class Legacy, Community Facilitators' Group, Scarman Trust, Bangladeshi Youth Forum and Worth Unlimited, Real Action UK and Families For Peace.

From conversations, interviews and reviewing reports associated with a number of the above organisations and groups, interventions were highlighted, ranging from intensive law enforcement to music and sports programmes, as well as other therapeutic approaches.

Some respondents reflected on the rise and demise of community-based organisations. The following observations are drawn from that research data. They raise serious questions that summarise community concerns. Their directness might be uncomfortable, but they set the foundation for more sustainable and transparent city-community partnerships.

- Interventions and solutions are heavily driven by finance and funding, not necessarily the needs of individuals or communities;
- There is a lack of any tangible evidence-based data relating to impact of interventions over any sustained period;
- Strategic partnerships to consider long-term and sustained approaches and interventions regarding desistance are themselves lacking sustainable structures, such as in the case of Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence;

- The episodic galvanisation of community, faith, statutory, voluntary and business sectors appears to be driven by crisis and key incidents; and
- Statutory sector management responsible for service provision associated with gangs, youth violence and community safety issues have limited connection or conversations with communities or young people and these tend to be crisis-driven rather than proactive.

One of the effects of the funding crisis is that organisations are forced to justify the money that they spend in terms of outcomes achieved. They are now in competition for funds with a range of sometimes partner organisations to promote desistance and community safety. This has led to some organisations claiming that their unilateral efforts and approaches were responsible for the reduction in gang conflicts, knife and gun crime or serious violence. Although understandable, this can be divisive and contradicts the spirit of collaborative working and multiagency partnership.

One solution is that strategic partnerships can seek joint commissioning funds, where each organisation is able to bring their respective expertise at given phases.

Given the reoccurring theme in the data about long-term sustainable interagency partnership working, all sectors were questioned about their commitment to sustainable partnerships. There was an acknowledgement by stakeholders that without long-term co-ordinated strategies and partnerships, Birmingham will fail to critically influence any reduction in gangs and violence.

4. Community-led research: Results, Recommendations and Rationales

4.1 Introduction

Section 3 represented the Birmingham context relating to the illegal use of firearms, knife crimes and serious violence. It also highlighted a number of organisations and partnerships (past and present) that have used different interventions and perspectives in response to gangs and violence concerns. In considering previous reports, both local and national, it became more apparent that the challenges faced by statutory agencies in seeking to address serious violence in communities have seemingly lacked sustainable partnerships with key community groups with on-the-ground experience of working with both perpetrators and victims of violence (Brown, 2014).

In this section, we present key findings based on our acquired data, using processes highlighted in section 2. This enabled us to give privilege to the voices of participants

and stakeholders, which allows for greater understanding and draws attention to their views, interests, concerns and aspirations. Furthermore, we hope that the gaps and wider factors associated with effective interventions and impact will be represented in rationales and recommendations under the following themes:

- ➢ Criminal Justice and Public Health Considerations
- ➢ Gang labels – Contested and Reinforced
- ➢ Community –Involved and Community-led Partnerships
- ➢ Individuals and Families (street and natural) – Support Structures and interventions
- ➢ Education Training and Preventative Considerations
- ➢ The Voices of Young People (uninvolved, gang associated, victims and perpetrators)
- ➢ Specialist Providers and Culturally Competent Grassroots Organisations
- ➢ Faith Groups – An untapped component
- ➢ Prison Influences
- ➢ Statutory and Business Sector Responses

It is evident from section 3 that there are competing, economic, social, political, strategic and austerity issues and challenges that have inhibited, diverted and impacted the work of tackling youth violence and gang-associated criminality. We raise further concerns here as to why we were not able to find more substantial research reports relating to any projects considering desistance principles and practices. However, we found the Birmingham Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2016-2017, a well thought-out, family-oriented approach, rooted in the understanding that:

> The youth justice system works on the basis that addressing risk factors such as family breakdown, educational underachievement, substance misuse, mental illness and building resilience is the best way to reduce a young person's risk of offending and reoffending

From our many discussions and research interviews, it became increasingly evident that a criminal justice, tough law enforcement approach to gang and youth-associated violence does not address the root causes of why some young people and families became involved in gang-associated activities and acts of serious violence. Associated research into gangs and youth violence increasingly points towards the idea of public health approaches, which focus on elements such as mental health, trauma, faith, poverty, environmental concerns and the concept of creating safe spaces. From a public health perspective these factors can potentially help in understanding a family's needs and challenges. Whilst both criminal justice and public health approaches may seek to

influence desistance, the fundamental argument that arises from the literature, and findings points to a lack of critical review with communities about the impact of tough law enforcement public heath approaches.

In line with the above and drawing from the data presented, informed by the voluntary, statutory, faith, community, private and business sectors, the next section considers factors that should be considered in exploring fresh ways of engaging with the gangs and violence agenda.

4.2 Criminal Justice and Public Health Considerations

It is increasingly clear from numerous government reports and research findings that without co-ordinated interdisciplinary and inter-agency working with tangible involvement from communities, the battles to engage, prevent, challenge, divert and positively empower or apprehend individuals associated with gangs will be ineffective at best and, at worst, lost.

Whilst a public health approach to addressing the challenges related to gang violence is becoming more common in statutory sector circles, tensions are apparent between notions of enforcing the law against blatant acts of criminality and seeking more to consider causal factors. Our data highlight a gap in that the critical debates surrounding either public health or criminal justice approaches lack a critical community-led or community involved component. Whilst there appears to be some evidence of fresh thinking, it remains clear that the power, resources and approaches are driven by the statutory sector, which again raises concerns about applying a top-down model. This report therefore acknowledges the need for co-ordinated community partnerships as the change towards a more public health model intensifies.

From the growing body of evidence relating to public health, it is becoming increasingly clear that its cross-disciplinary nature can bring partners together from different sectors and agencies. These should include credible community groups and organisations, which can help communities to develop, fund, implement and evaluate a comprehensive strategy that supports individuals and families towards desistance. Furthermore, a public health approach can facilitate contributions about the development of systems that would help with systematic data acquisition, which would help to increase understanding about the extent of the challenges or problems regarding gang-related violence in key neighbourhoods.

Importantly, the public health approach to violence prevention asks some fundamental questions that are crucial for the commission. The following questions are relevant:

- What problem do we agree is of concern/interest?
- When and where did the problem begin?
- Who is involved?
- Where is the problem?
- Which individuals or communities are impacted?
- How can we engage with the individuals causing or impacted by the problem?
- What are the causal factors relating to the problem?
- Who should be involved in addressing the problem?

While further questions could be added, the above offers partners the opportunity to critically explore the same questions and frame strategies. In adapting the public heath framework highlighted by Mercy et al (1993), represented below, it allows commission partners to frame action in relation to each phase of the cycle. Importantly, this model also allows partnership organisations to agree on who would be most effective and impactful at each 'action stage'. In effect, the model enables each partner to apply their respective skills, expertise and at the same time accountability to the partnership on progress made. We acknowledge that it is crucial for communities to be involved in this approach and we are mindful that there will be differing views, perspectives, experiences, cultural competences and intersectional understandings, as well as competing interests. However, this is where the opportunity presents itself for learning, developing trust and planning together towards not just 'reaching' individuals, families and communities, but positively working towards desistance. We believe it is therefore crucial that careful consideration is given as to where the leadership for implementing a public health approach to gangs and youth violence fits across wider strategic platforms or tables.
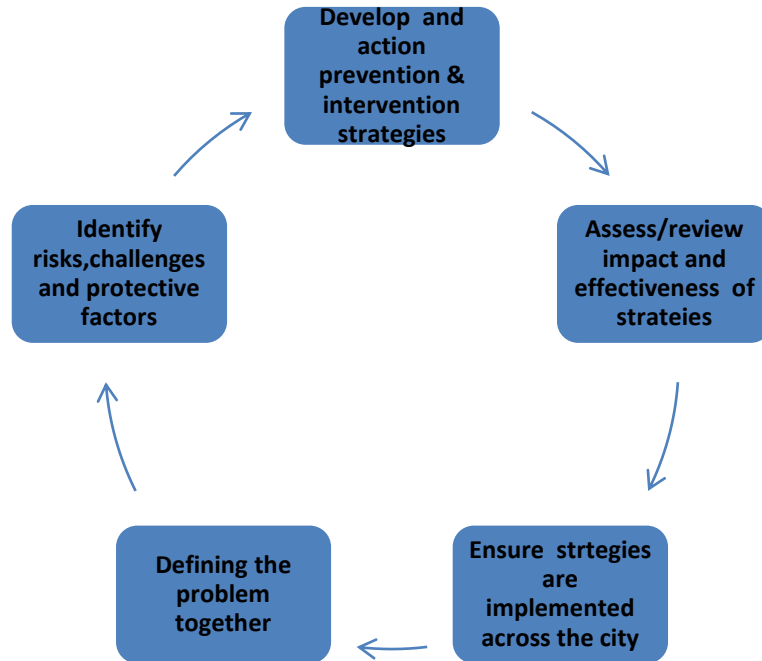
Adapted framework from Marcy et al (1993)

Using a public health model to address the shift in gang associated violence is still to be tested. One statutory sector participant offered the following:

> Although there are increased discussions about developing a public health approach, I believe we are not yet at the stage where we have the same focus because of our different roles and responsibilities, but with more critical debates, I believe we can come to some consensus about whether a medical, community, enforcement approach is needed in given situations. What we can learn from using a public heath approach is the notion that we may all have a part to play in tackling serious violence in communities.

Although discussions are continuing regarding a public health approach to violence prevention, it appears that most of the momentum is from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, represented in the setting up of the West Midlands violence prevention alliance in 2015, with the support of West Midlands Police and Public Health England. Whilst this is an important initiative, our research confirms that few statutory, community, faith or business sector respondents are aware of it. This raises concerns for us, given that such an initiative aims to support communities and service providers in addressing challenges of serious violence. Furthermore, it again demonstrates a fresh

approach within a framework that has the risk of being driven by police and criminal justice priorities. Consequently, this report calls for a critical review regarding how communities and community organisations will be involved, given the following statements made at the launch of the alliance:

> ..Violence blights the lives of too many people, by working together across the public and voluntary sector and targeting the root cause, we can make the West Midlands a safer place to live and work in (West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner).

> Violence prevention is a top priority of the West Midlands Directors of Public Health. Tens of thousands of people are affected by violence each year in our area and of course the effects can be life changing. By working together across police, schools, health and other sectors we will be able to reduce the pain and long-term harm that comes from being a victim of violence (Birmingham Director of Public Health).

> We are committed to tackling violence in our communities, not just when it becomes a critical issue, but where the potential for harm is identified. We cannot do this alone. The West Midlands violence prevention alliance underlines our commitment to working in partnership with other agencies to keep our communities safe and prevent them from harm (West Midland Police Chief Constable).

The above statements all refer to the people in communities across Birmingham. We believe there is a need for a more strategic inclusion of credible community-led organisations.

Both empirical and anecdotal evidence show that most acts of spontaneous and intended violence occur in public. This means there are emotional, psychological and social implications for those involved also onlookers (Pitts, 2007). With this – and the above – in mind, we make the following recommendation:

Recommendation
The Gangs and Violence Commission will agree a broad, preventative public health based action plan for addressing gangs and violence, recognising that enforcement does not offer enduring solutions.

4.3 Gang Labels – Contested and Reinforced

This report has used the word 'gang' in line with the commission's brief to consider 'gangs and violence'. The debates and discussions regarding gangs, friendship-groups, organised crime groups and radicalised individuals have entered a new discourse. The research indicates that the historically racialised construction of urban street gangs (USGs) as a problem of black young men and organised crime groups as a problem of South Asian young men is contested. Some cite evidence and argument to say that these labels are used to vilify and criminalise certain groups in certain neighbourhoods.

As we understand it, the term 'gang' used by statutory sector providers refers to the following definition in the Dying to Belong report (2009 :48) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO):

Gangs are expressed as: A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:

- See themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group
- Engage in a range of criminal activity and violence.

They also have at least one of the following features:

- Identify with or lay claim over territory
- Have some form of identifying structural feature
- Are in conflict with other, similar, gangs (Home Office,2012:3).

From the outset, this report suggests caution in how acts of group- and peer-associated violence are categorised across the city, in particular relating to communities that are already (intentional or inadvertently) stereotyped or labelled 'gang-zones', 'no-go areas', 'crime hot-spots', 'ghettos' and 'problem areas'. Some respondents felt that such categorisations reinforce the mistrust between the statutory sector and communities that continue to feel stigmatised, labelled and stereotyped.

One specialist provider highlighted the following, in response to the mind-set of gang-associated individuals:

> Some young men are desensitised to violence. They have seen horrible things, like friends being shot, involved in serious violence themselves, having other friends receiving long prison sentences, but they are still not motivated to leave that lifestyle. Some of these young men only see

darkness and death as their outcome. Their trauma is a fact, but their parents have taught them to be strong and to hold it down. However, many such young men end up institutionalised and can no longer make positive choices.

While discussions have been dominated by talk about male gang members, the issues associated with young women emerged as a key feature during focus group discussions. Some mothers expressed greater concerns about young women and girls whom they believed were being groomed by young men to become gang associates, which meant being used as sex trophies for a number of young men. These young men would later brag about their encounters with the girls and young women.

Young women were also being used to hold and conceal weapons, drugs and other items for gang members being pursued or under surveillance by the police. According to these mothers, young girls go out with 'high-ranking' male gang members to gain greater insights into the murky 'gang world' and would later brag about it to other girls. This very concerning issue is an under-researched area and will require further exploration because it also raises safeguarding concerns, given that some young women are known to be still at school and are vulnerable to being further entrenched into a gang lifestyle.

According to Densley (2013) gang membership is often seen as a transitional phase for some youngsters. However, this report acknowledges that some gang-associated individuals face challenges when they seek to exit from this negatively entrenched lifestyle. The following statements come from four active male gang associates who were interviewed:

> 'We will ride and die together, that's how we flex out here. Manz loyal to the end.'

> '.....What you saying, we need to stop what manz on, for what blood? You got a job for me? No answer, see, because you dun know that man ain't going to be employed.'

> 'Keeping it real, manz done some things that should have put me six foot under but you know what? My time ain't come yet.'

> 'You know how this thing goes, blood; when you are on the system of the feds and probation, man still do their thing but keep under the radar.'

These statements highlight some key factors that should not be overlooked. First, these men were prepared to talk to someone they believed would listen and understand them. Second, the evidence of 'street loyalty' points to a willingness to support each other. This aspect is what Anderson (1999) describes as a 'code of the street', which we suggest, when applied during spontaneous confrontations between rival groups can soon escalate,

with very serious outcomes. This has been seen a number of times in Birmingham neighbourhoods and city centre locations. There was also an acknowledgement of conflict with statutory sector personnel.

A specialist provider said:

> The labelling of black young men as gang members, who may only be friendship groups, has caused concerns over the years. We already know perceptions about black men are more negative than positive. I think that more effort is required by the city to work with community organisations to bring a balance, where black men are not always seen as the main problem regarding gang violence.

The concerns raised by one specialist provider were echoed by others who felt that gang labels were being used in racialised ways. The National Crime Agency's report, County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply (2016) offers useful insights, exposing a number of themes associated with gang violence across city and county lines:

> Gang members are generally in their late teens to mid-twenties; however some areas reported members in their early thirties. Gangs from London were predominantly Black British Afro Caribbean. However, all of the intelligence we received stated that gangs from Liverpool and Manchester were made up of White British European males. Gangs travelling from Birmingham tended to be ethnically Asian and often family members or close associates and have close links to the areas they are operating in. (2016:5)

Glynn (2014) and Anderson (2015) challenge the labelling of black young men, calling for the 'social scientific world' to develop clear and competent ways to explore, analyse and represent black men in ways not constructed largely by white male hegemonic privilege and institutions. For Glynn, the US mass incarceration of black men further reinforces the notions of black men being inherently 'criminal', based on the disproportionate numbers 'locked away'.

A statutory service provider recipient offered the following observation:

> Black young men may not be committing more crime than others, but they make up a high percentage of those linked to gangs, some of whom are doing some long prison sentences. I agree, we need to look very seriously at why this is.

In line with seeking to consider causal factors for the above and exploring more strategically, we believe that Glynn's criminal justice pipeline below offers a framework for asking critical questions at each stage.
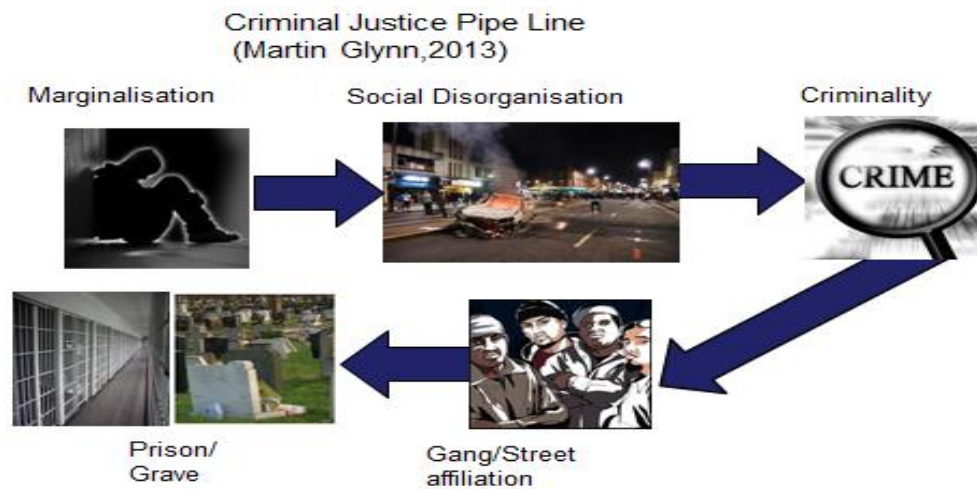
Whilst seeking to explore the issues associated with gangs within a UK context, this report acknowledges that the gang phenomenon is indeed a global one, with much research data available. Gang categorisations and labels continue to emerge from various scholars. As acknowledged earlier, for some researchers, gang definitions and labels have become a melting pot of ideas, seeking to represent young people who are in some way involved in illegal activities as one of their definitional components.

Along with the above, Hallsworth and Young (2004) support the notion that gangs are organised crime groups with three levels:

- Tier 1 represents youngsters in friendship groups who are involved in petty crime activities, which may include drinking, drug use, anti-social behaviour and generally disruptive in public spaces.

- Tier 2 is linked to young people who are peer driven towards drug dealing, being involved in area or territorial disputes. This group is loosely organised, but may be affiliated to older criminals who fall into tier 3.

- Tier 3 sees their involvement in criminality, drug trade, illegal use of firearms as a 'business'. These organised crime groups (OCGs) are linked to certain family relationships and ethnic groupings that will negotiate with other criminals relating to drug distribution and other illegal enterprises. This correlates with the National Crime Agency's research report.

From assessing the narratives and reviewing the literature in this section, we would propose the following as to what constitutes a gang that may be of concern:

> Negative gangs are a socially and intentionally constructed group of individuals with attitudes, thinking and behaviours geared towards criminality. These individuals are usually young people who identify themselves with a name, alias or label and are linked to a certain geographical areas or postcode. They will use violence and intimidation, social media and weapons as 'tools of power' to violate, challenge and disrespect other gangs or groups. Their ready access to illegal substances through inter-criminal – also inter-county – connections are pursued, maintained and safeguarded. They are familiar with the codes and language of the streets and have role models who reinforce their criminal lifestyles.

Elijah Anderson (1999), a leading US ethnographer involved in research associated with gangs, decency, violence and the moral life of the inner city, for over 30 years, raises some concerns about agencies that continue to view individuals and families through a set of constructed labels. His research explores some of the negative labels within an urban context. He suggests that some individuals and families are feared and seen as strange icons in certain neighbourhoods. However, little thought is given to their social position and the legacy of violence, discrimination, racism and poverty into which these individuals or family exists. For Anderson, each spontaneous act of violence – a shooting or stabbing, an assault – relates to people with real blood running through their veins and narratives that may help us to understand why they are involved in any of the gang tiers noted on the previous page.

Gang-associated activities and serious violence have had a negative impact on a number of communities across Birmingham, which in recent years were not linked or profiled with such issues. In the past 18 months, there has been a growing number of serious gang-related violent incidents in such areas such as Kings Norton, Chelmsley Wood, Acocks Green, Kingstanding and Northfield.

Whilst the debates continue, we take very seriously the need to critically explore how interventions could address some of the root causes of youth violence and gang associated activities. Over the years we have seen much research into some of the factors that may influence a young person to become involved in aging associated activities and violence. These may include:

- Poverty and high levels of deprivation
- Neighbourhood destabilisation (families moving due to refurbishment or a rapid change in the population profile), which weakens the ties of

kinship and friendship that may have represented informal social support

- Grooming and recruiting by peers, relatives and friends on behalf of older men and other gang leaders
- Poor performing schools – in terms of leadership, positive ethos and pro-activity and ability to work in partnership
- High levels of exclusions and truancy, with children having negative attitudes towards school and also having particular educational difficulties
- Lack of affordable youth facilities
- Easy access to drugs and alcohol
- Negative role models
- Lack of parental supervision and moral guidance
- Evidence of disrespect and antisocial behaviour in neighbourhoods
- Domestic abuse, with children observing this over a period of time
- Bullying and discriminatory practices
- Emergence of a culture/value-system that idolises or legitimises violence as a means to resolve conflicts and gain 'ends' (specific community areas)
- Evidence of mental health challenges and trauma (Anderson, 2015; Brown,2014; Gunter, 2010; Home Office; Regan, 2010; Fraser, 2017)

In line with above concerns, we highlight the following from one of the mothers interviewed, whose son, she suggests, is 'heading for destruction':

> As a single mom with a 14–year-old son who was excluded from school, I struggle to control him, especially when he is angry. He hates his dad, and has threatened to find him to deal with him. I have to work, so I don't know where he is when I am out. He is still awaiting a school place and feels the teachers have always picked on him because of his size. I am so tired now because all I see is him getting deeper and deeper into the life of the streets. We used to have a youth club, which he used to go to, but that's closed. Our community is just getting worse.

This mother highlights the challenges of other mothers who raised similar concerns during specialist provider (SP) focus group discussions. For them, the failure of public authorities in education, health, youth services continues to alienate certain groups in society.

Recommendations

> The Gangs and Violence Commission will work with a range of partners to collate and analyse data about gangs and violence.
>
> The Gangs and Violence Commission is to provide ongoing leadership, direction and co-ordination to work that will reduce the impact of gangs and violence, working to fill the current leadership vacuum.
>
> Our understanding of gangs and violence locally must be underpinned by a sustained academic research programme.

4.4   Community-Involved and Community-Led Partnerships

The section above has highlighted the very real challenges associated with gang categorisations and labels. It also raises some considerations for those willing to accept that behind every gang-associated and violent individual there are causal foundational and fundamental issues, which, if ignored, may result in the continuation of attitudes, thinking and behaviours that are expressed in gang association and spontaneous violence. The evidence is clear: there is a lack of effective inter-agency partnerships that have community-led organisations, which share power towards improving the lives and communities most impacted by gangs, guns, knives and serious violence.

We believe a community-involved and community-led approach recognises the importance of factors such as 'race' racialisation, power, accountability, joint focus, inter-agency interests and priorities and institutional racism and other forms of oppressions. Whilst some of these factors may present a challenge in any critical conversation, they should not be ignored or side-lined in the hope that they will self-regulate, self-manage or disappear.

This report suggests that there should be steps to address issues as they occur with care, sensitivity and humility, which are words seldom heard from the statutory sector towards individuals, families and communities categorised as 'hard to reach' and 'problematic'. Having acknowledged some potential challenges, we believe there will be new possibilities and fresh insights that emerge as any community-city partnership seeks to unravel and construct new paradigms.

Having suggested the development of sustainable community-led approaches, we are faced with a number of challenges, as one of the fathers from a focus group highlighted:

> Too long have our communities been treated like we are caged animals awaiting food from the keepers of the cage. Let them live here for a while; they will soon see and feel the pressures. We are real people, with real issues and challenges that need support. We need to be heard and that

what we say is taken seriously by the powers that be. We know what we feel, trust me!'

We believe this father's thoughts and narrative represent others in different neighbourhoods across Birmingham. They are facing multiple challenges that may be linked to the issues highlighted above by The London Safeguarding Board.

Our research has highlighted the fact that a number of credible community-based groups and leaders are willing to contribute to strategic discussions about improving the lives of young people and reducing gang violence. Among these are the specialist provider organisations, which are involved in a range of effective interventions. Specialist providers made the following statements:

- Some community groups can be seen as unprofessional, improperly managed and lacking in 'city connections', but do good work and are committed to seeing their communities improved.
- Many community-based groups are overstretched, lack financial sustainability and are required to compete with each other. The survival of services rests on external funding, competition for contracts.
- Community-led groups and initiatives are forced to hide thinking and strategies until funding application or commissioning forms or bids are submitted, in case other groups steal their ideas. These are real tensions and challenges that they face.

The challenges for survival among BAME community organisations are significant and made more difficult because of national and local government cuts. Some research participants view the local authority as being more concerned with being seen to be in partnership with BAME community groups rather than delivering quality services for them, except where there is going to be a significant political return.

As acknowledged previously, for a community-led organisation to be a partner with the statutory sector, there are implications relating to resource and power-sharing, financing projects, criminal justice and legal responsibilities, trust and accountability. However, research highlights that when communities partner with the statutory and other sectors regarding issues of concern, there is a greater possibility of finding effective solutions. This is because those who are affected by social or community challenges are more likely to bring their collective experience to bear in defining the issues they face; identifying what needs to change; identifying solutions and acting for and influencing change (Crisp et al., 2016; **Dailly and Barr, 2008**).

There is evidence throughout this report that indicates the willingness of the partners around this commission to critically pursue a community-led approach.

Both statutory and community sector participants agree with the notion of having credible community groups or organisations involved around strategic decision-making tables.

The diagram below offers a framework of what a community-led approach would consist of. This framework incorporates a public health approach, which we believe supports the direction the commission seeks to adopt:

Community-led solution focus cycle (Anderson, 2017)
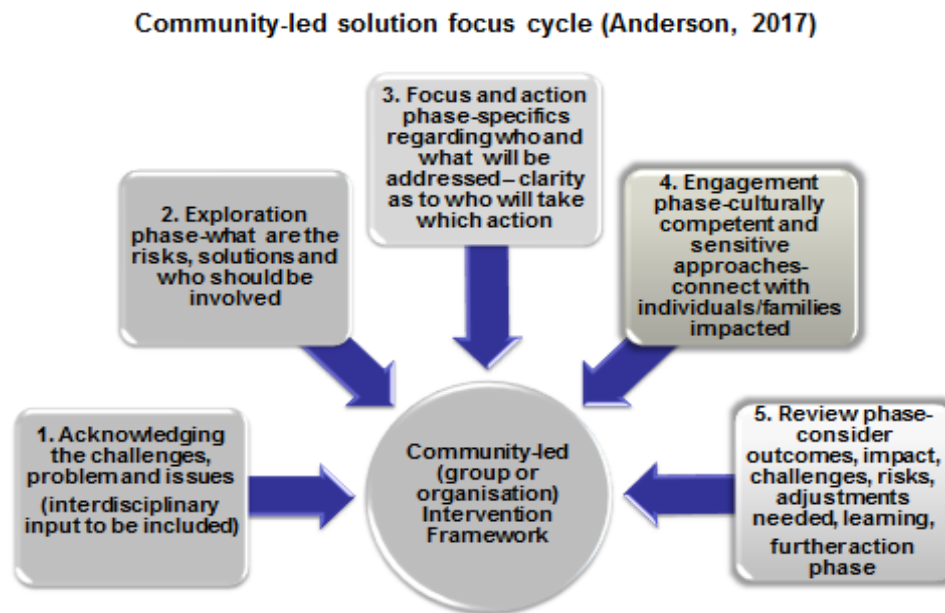
Police intelligence and approaches may be relevant in some cases. However, it is increasingly clear that sustained involvement and partnerships with key community organisations and individuals, leading and participating in initiatives to address gangs and violence challenges, is necessary. Research has shown that where credible, trusted and established community groups and individuals are involved with victims and perpetrators of crime and serious violence, they are more likely to successfully mediate and minimise the risk and potential for further violence and fatalities. A number of community respondents suggested that developing loving, genuine, compassionate, caring and honest relationships with victims and perpetrators of serious or extreme violence will lead to greater insights that can help communities seeking to respond more effectively to these challenges.

There are a number of reoccurring themes relating to communities that have been raised by participants. These include: trust and confidence between statutory providers and local neighbourhoods; and the need for genuine power-sharing in tackling gangs and

violence issues in local communities. We found little evidence of community-city partnership frameworks with power-sharing protocols. Having said that, we are mindful that this will require strategies and procedures to ensure any community-led and city partnerships are sustainable.

The following recommendations seek to address concerns relating to sustained community-city partnerships.

Recommendations

The Gangs and Violence Commission is to provide ongoing leadership, direction and co-ordination to work that will reduce the impact of gangs and violence, working to fill the current leadership vacuum.

The commission partners should enable community organisations and groups involved in gangs and violence associated interventions to strategise, share and train together.

The commission partners should ensure a remapping of all community groups/organisations, faith groups and key individuals providing or supporting gangs and violence services and interventions. These groups and individuals should be invited onto an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to work with the commission to deliver workshops around: gangs and violence reduction; ways to increase community participation; and to explore more effective ways to support communities directly affected by gangs and violence.

4.5 Individuals and Families (street and natural) – Support Structures and Interventions

An important factor repeated by both statutory and community participants is the need to focus on family interventions that will consider individuals within a family-support framework. This approach evidently has a focus within the Birmingham Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2016-2017. A number of community and youth participants in this report described having lost a family member or friend to crimes linked to guns, serious violence and knife related incidents. They spoke of their devastation. One mother told us:

My son Joshua was murdered on the 21st September 2013. He was 18 years of age and my only son.

As a mother, people tell me daily that the pain will ease, but it doesn't. Losing someone you love is always difficult, but losing a child is indescribable. Losing them to murder adds pain that I don't feel can ever be processed; this makes it impossible to truly 'move on'.

I can only describe my loss by saying that I am alive, and my heart is beating, but inside I feel dead and my heart is broken. Knowing the one person I lived for has gone fills my heart with pain and fear. I worry that my life will always be an unhappy one, because nothing I do will bring my little boy back to me.

My entire family loved Joshua very much. He made them happy and proud. Our job as a family was to make Joshua happy, respectful and to feel unconditionally loved. We succeeded.

When Joshua died, the bright shining light of happiness went out in so many of my family, especially my parents, who adored him. My mum died three weeks ago and up until the end said she "just wanted to be with Josh". I really hope she is with him. My dad is a shell of his former self and you can see that he is just waiting to leave this Earth and be reunited with my mum and Josh. The rest of my family find it really hard to talk about Josh because the pain is raw and unbearable. They all know he was my world, so for them, not only have they lost Josh, they have lost me, too.

Everything has changed. I went to bed happy, a mother of two, a wife and a professional. Then someone decided to carry a knife and stab my son in his heart. Overnight, I became the mother of a high-profile murder victim, but that victim was my little boy, my son. My marriage broke down and I lost my job. At the age of 39, my life was to start again and it is a constant battle to get through each day. The loneliness is overwhelming and yet I feel determined to share my story and make as many young people aware and educated that there are no winners when the wrong choices are made.

I am always being told that there are many initiatives for young people, but if these were working, knife crime, gun crime and gang crime wouldn't be on the increase.

My son's murder case cost over £1,000,000, which is the average cost to our police forces, courts and NHS for a murder. How much has been spent on every murder, wounding, investigation and medical treatment in the West Midlands over the last five years? If a tiny percentage of this money was invested in the lives of young people who need additional support before they commit serious crime, lives will be saved and our communities would be safer places. Our government, councils, police and NHS would also save money.

Alison Cope, 13th March 2017

The pain expressed by this bereaved mother was echoed by other parents during focus group and one-to-one interviews.

'The Journey Through Life Cycle' (Anderson, 2017), highlighted below, offers key stages for possible support and interventions to divert, prevent and intervene with families and individuals involved or at risk of involvement in criminality, violence and gang associated

activities. The key stages are assessable and could indicate concerns that may be critical as to which services are needed at any given stage. Hence, it purports that an agency, group, organisation or individual could be involved at any point/stage of the cycle where a need is identified.

The Journey Through Life Cycle- (Carver Anderson 2017)
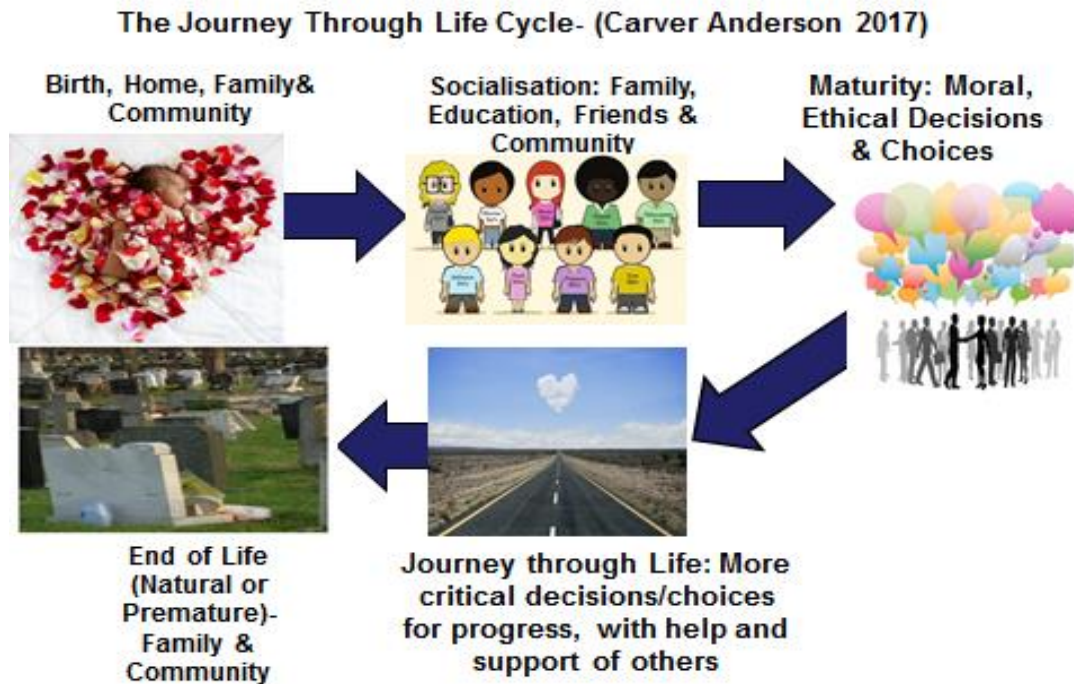
A recurring factor for a number of female respondents is the absence of fathers. Some mothers and male respondents say this has resulted in young men gravitating to the streets for 'male affirmation'. We suggest that this issue should not be overlooked in any assessment when considering family dynamics. The work of Glynn (2014) and Anderson (2015) suggest that father absence needs to be taken more seriously by statutory services because gaining a greater understanding into this could result in some answers as to why some young men become violent or join gangs.

Whilst we believe that the views of fathers and mothers are crucial to the debate surrounding gangs and violence, we are mindful of the evidence that a high percentage of young men caught up in gang associated activities and violence are from households that may have an absent father, or a father who himself is involved in criminality or other negative associated activities. It is with this in mind that a service provider said:

> The exclusion of women from informing interventions, despite them being a key stakeholder (due to their role within the family), has resulted in them feeling that they do not have a voice and are unable to inform in any

meaningful way the very services that are designed to support them, their children and families.

A mother, in a one-to-one interview, also offered the following:

> Many of our sons come from single-parent homes, like me. We do our best to raise them, but you know, we are women, so we teach our boys to be men. I think the absence of positive father figures plays a big part in young men growing up lacking direction and young women making wrong choices and ending up in relationships on the street that can cause them to lose their lives.

During this research a number of mothers voiced their concerns regarding the lack of support from statutory service providers, which they described as detached at times and ineffective in connecting with sons who have been labelled as problems. This is highlighted by a participant:

> What is needed is empathy, care, love and support from statutory and community groups who should seek to get a clear understanding of the issues, and the risk indicators, also point us in directions where to get help and how to get consistent support...

Many of the families involved in this research said their main support structures are linked to extended families or community organisations or faith-based groups. From interviews with specialist providers, it is evident that there are other community groups which offer support ranging from informal counselling, emotional and spiritual comfort, and political advocacy to material help. Such support makes significant differences to families that would otherwise suffer alone.

Community organisations, specialist providers and family members underline the importance of families sharing their experiences and knowledge. They say that where parents, carers and loved ones understand their options, they are better able to support themselves and those involved with 'gang association' or the criminal justice system through their difficulties.

There is enough evidence suggesting, the contested term 'gang', although an imprecise construct, is permeated and influenced by social and cultural meanings and understandings that can both expresses fears and moral panics about violence. It is therefore important for those engaging with this agenda not to be driven by some of the race-based stereotypes distortions surrounding gangs and violence.

Recommendations

The commission should consult with local community-led organisations to support their full involvement in the development of 'local community well-being partnerships' (community, voluntary, faith, statutory and business) in neighbourhoods identified as areas needing interventions relating to gangs and violence

The commission partnership should learn from Birmingham Youth Offending Service and consider a roll out of its family-empowerment approach as a template for working with families, with needs linked to the criminal justice system, youth violence and criminality.

A flexible and culturally responsive community based preventative and reactive mediation and conflict intervention capability is required.

4.6   Education, Training and Preventative Considerations

This report acknowledges that the majority of children and school-aged young people remain in school until they legitimately leave. Whilst an important factor, we are more concerned with those children categorised as 'problematic', 'hard to reach', troublesome, disruptive, difficult, rude, defiant, a bully, class-clown and angry. It is from these labels, which may be included in school reports and expressed during parents' evenings, we start to see signals that a child may require support to address her or his behavioural issues and concerns. However, we should be very cautious about collusion regarding labels assigned to children by a school. Numerous research reports have highlighted that schools are places where competing values, morals, interests and approaches to teaching and learning are tested by teachers, pupils and parents (Byfield, 2008).

We believe that it is during early years – from nursery to junior school – that concerted effort should be made to develop strong relationships between child, school and parents. A school's responsibility is to teach and empower a child educationally, intellectually and morally. At the same time, 'parental responsibility' underpins the role of parents to love, care, nurture and morally support their children to develop ethical values, towards learning right from wrong and generally guide them through life. Whilst there are several social scientific or psychological approaches in considering notions of development, many schools increasingly struggle to cope with the diversity in behaviours, cultural expectations, parenting styles and religious or spiritual observances. Consequently, policies and procedures to deal with these diversities are sometimes challenged by students and parents who may have differing perspectives about how their child or children are treated by schools.

It is within the above context that an exclusion or further labelling may take place within a school. This report questions the assessment need of a child who may be exhibiting behaviours that are of concern. It is at this stage that relationships with parents become more important. We would hope at this stage that all possible support structures and tools, including community-led organisations, faith groups, are in place to support children and families who are on the agendas of school board or governors' meetings.

The ultimate action of excluding a child according to our research inevitably begins a process that can ultimately create a pathway for children to enter a criminal justice trajectory, as represented in Glynn's (2013) Criminal Justice pipeline.

The Charlie Taylor report (2016:3), Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales, states:

> It is my view that education needs to be central to our response to youth offending. All children in England are required to be in education or training until their 18th birthday, but too often children in the youth justice system have been out of school for long periods of time through truancy or following exclusion. As a result, half of 15-17 year olds in YOIs have the literacy or numeracy levels expected of a 7-11 year old. Schools and colleges are crucial in preventing offending. If children are busy during the day, undertaking activity that is meaningful and that will help them to succeed in life, whether it is studying for exams, learning a trade or playing sport.

The above statement and additional research suggests that men, in particular, who are excluded from school for prolonged periods become detached from the ethos of education and can so easily gravitate to towards the 'education of the street'. This very serious possibility concerned mothers who attended focus groups. They expressed the following:

- Schools need to be involved earlier to address problematic behaviours instead of waiting to collect a catalogue of incidents to build a case for exclusion.
- Once excluded, alternative provision was totally inadequate. The boys were regularly allowed to attend for only two hours in the day and whilst there were not engaged in anything meaningful, but mixed with other young people who were already involved in more sophisticated criminal activity.
- Youth Offending Service was not able to provide a culturally sensitive service to the family. It was important that the allocated youth worker understood African Caribbean culture, the style of parenting and the issues faced in terms of

institutional racism. This was not the case, which resulted in a lack of trust and the mother's inability to build a good relationship with the worker.

The challenges relating to the disproportionate number of black young men excluded from schools in Birmingham should not be ignored, given the research about the impact of exclusions on family life. Both Byfield (2008) and Cork (2005) challenges the persistence of the achievement gap and high exclusion rates for black children. Lord Scarman, in his report after the 'Brixton Disorders' stated:

> …It was suggested that teachers tend to stereotype black pupils as ill-disciplined or unintelligent and accordingly set too low a performance standard for these pupils; lack of sufficient contact between parents and school; lack of understanding by teachers of the cultural background of black pupils. (1981:164)

We find it a continued concern to again hear black parents highlighting their concerns about schools, similar to those represented in Lord Scarman's Report 36 years ago. Some parents in the focus group had mothers expressing feelings about the lack of quality relationships with their children's schools, especially for those children already labelled by 'the system'. The need for quality alternative provisions was highlighted as an urgent priority. Mothers were concerned that their children were being excluded from schools with either no or very poor alternative provision being made. These young people are, in effect, left to be 'educated by the streets' and its negative influences.

According to families involved in two focus groups:

- Schools and colleges should be more involved with community groups to identify and work with 'at risk' youngsters.
- There is a need for a clear understanding of the issues, including the early risk indicators, where to get help and how to intervene.
- Families want to work with – and not against – the authorities/organisations, wherever possible. They also want everyone to set good examples so their children can see what they can be or do.
- They speak of the need to talk to their children, to find out what their children are thinking. This allows them to anticipate their actions based on verbal and non-verbal signals, understanding what is normal for their children and what is out of character.
- They talk of feeling isolated if their child is associated with the gangs and violence agenda or labelled as a problem and 'hard to reach'.

This section offered some insights from parents, which we anticipate will be considered by those involved in developing further strategies regarding the support of children deemed 'difficult.'

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Recommendations

Mentoring schemes should be targeted at young people at most risk.

The Commission will review approaches to school exclusions, aiming to develop services and support for excluded pupils and their families.
The commission partners should examine patterns of school exclusions and how schools manage them in the priority areas.

The commission should promote the implementation of the Cadets Scheme in specific areas of Birmingham. This will involve a more targeted approach to the recruitment of volunteers from diverse backgrounds to be cadets and a community-city partnership to engage groups and institutions to champion and support the scheme.

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The next section offers some insights form young people that we hope will be considered in the planning to work with them.

4.7 The Voices of Young People (uninvolved, gang associated, victims and perpetrators)

The very real challenges, risks and dangers facing young people who are involved or associated with gangs and serious violence continue to be represented in media headlines, documentaries, research and academic articles.

We were able to interrogate the data from SP's one-to-one interviews, workshops, focus groups, two residentials and outreach discussions that are represented later in the section. Up to 300 children and young people between the ages of 11 and 32 participated in this project.

SPs held a series of workshops, one-to-one interviews with young people and young adults from diverse backgrounds and ethnic identities as exemplified below in graphs of the two larger focus groups and workshop gatherings (Pinkney and Sam, 2016; Ashfaq, 2016). This further highlights the diverse nature of this study. Some workshops were attended by parents, family members and young people who offered insights regarding violence, gang association, gun and knife related crimes and the moral implications:

ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Ethnic Background	Count
MIXED OTHER	4
POLISH	3
ITALIAN	1
BANGLADESHI	2
PORTUGUESE	1
ASIAN	1
SRI LANKAN	1
KURDISH	2
SOMALI	4
PAKISTANI	8
MIXED WHITE AND...	4
AFRICAN CARIBBEAN	11
WHITE BRITISH	20
BENGALI	4
AFRICAN	4
INDIAN	5

ETHNIC BACKGROUND

AREA OF RESIDENCE

Area	Number
NORTHFIELD	3
SELLYOAK	1
KINGSNORTON	2
RUBERY	1
LOZELLS	10
WINSON GREEN	1
CASTLEVALE	3
GREAT BARR	2
SPARKHILL	1
PERRY BARR	3
NECHELLS	2
KINGSHEATH	1
HANDSWORTH…	1
EDGBASTON	1
OLDBURY	1
HANDSWORTH	8
SMETHWICK	10
WEST BROMWICH	5
KINGSTANDING	3
LADYWOOD	4
HOCKLEY	3
STETCHFORD	3
ASTON	1
SHELDON	1
ERDINGTON	2
SUTTON COLDFIELD	1
WESTWOOD HEATH	2

The tables below are linked to workshops within Sparkbrook, Aston, Alum Rock and Small Heath wards:

Ethnicity/Religion	Numbers
Pakistani	119
Sikhs	31
Hindus	13
Yemeni	7
Somalians	21
Other	7
Total	**198**

Age Range	Numbers
14 – 16 yrs.	39
17 – 21 yrs.	63
22 – 32 yrs.	45
33 – 41 yrs.	32
42 – 60 yrs.	19
Total	**198**

One of the most concerning issues facing some families in our research is dealing with the negative and unpredictable behaviours of some young people. Parents regularly highlight and express their concerns about these challenges. The following statement is from a father who was interviewed:

> Having turned my life around, I do my best to explain to my son that the street life and glamour he seeks will cause him to be sorry one day. I have seen it all and have paid the cost by spending a number of years behind bars. I know the dangers out there; that's why I now worry when he goes out.

The same worry was expressed by a number of mothers, some of whom had lost sons and others whose sons are involved with gang-associated activities. A high percentage of the young people involved in this study were very expressive about their lack of trust in authority figures, including probation, police and statutory services.

Some respondents did not feel that authority figures and public bodies liked them, nor had their best interests at heart. At the same time, they also they expressed some reluctance to be involved in this project because they feared the information would be used to target them. However, once they were reassured they agreed to participate. Emerging themes for some of these youngsters were police treatment, racism, and lack of understanding regarding their situations and feeling powerless. South Asian and Somali young people said they felt targeted by public authorities and the wider public because of their race, faith and culture. A number of African and African Caribbean young people told us:

'We don't trust the feds and people in the system because they don't show respect to us or the communities we are from… we trust people who, over time, show that they care and want to help us, even when we make nuff mistakes…'

'Which person in the system really cares about us out here? All they see is my black face and they paint a picture of who they think I am.'

'Manz are getting killed left right and centre.'

Our research shows that a high percentage of young people do not believe that the employment opportunities available in the city are for them, especially good jobs/careers, because of their race, culture, faith or postcode. They say that their positive dreams and aspirations are not encouraged by authority figures, but they will listen to and work with ex-offenders – people who have been through the system that they now face. They ask if there is any hope beyond the life of gangs and postcodes. Two participants said:

'What do you want me do out here? Starve? Or do what I have to do to eat food?'

Another said: 'If the bigger men are struggling with life, we are f*****g doomed.'

A critical question to ask at this juncture is: What can be done by the statutory sector to build trust and confidence? A question posed to an ex-offender (still on licence) yielded this detailed written response:

"More must be done to tackle the disconnect between persons of authority and young males, of teenage years and above. This can sometimes be seen in the schools and inevitably spills over into their private lives.

"Spend more time listening to the people who actually know what is going on. Too much seems to be given to statistical and other types of argument but not enough time is actually spent trying to engage with the people that can make a difference on the streets. The streets listen to people they know, know of, or can relate to. Investing in their peers that they look up to or they consider to be role models can have a profound effect on stopping youths making the wrong choices. Often rightly or wrongly, the youth only select the glamorous side of the lifestyle to add to their aspirations psychologically. Hearing the cold, hard facts or even the inspirational side of the journey from someone who has walked the same road is something that would work wonders. Having the right people to engage is imperative. More must be done to employ these people in areas where they can have the most impact.

"Provide more places for youngsters to go. More community-based initiatives need to be made available. In the past, there were many community centres etc. for the youth to go to in the evenings, weekends etc., where often the youth learned some very important life lessons. Many of the youth in inner city areas are from one parent families and as such, the issue of fatherless families and the link between that and anti-social behaviour etc. must be looked at. For many, the contact with an older youth worker, mentor, and support worker can be the only contact they may have with a role model type person, usually of the same sex, who they may need to ask for positive advice etc.

"More work on reintegration and rehabilitation needs to be introduced if the government is serious about trying to stop the cycle of recidivism. It seems that the emphasis is on the offender ticking boxes whilst incarcerated, but upon release that person is then left to their own devices with an overworked probation service is only really interested in no reoffending."

We are grateful for the above response, which evidently involved thought and courage to produce. This further highlights the importance of hearing the voices of individuals that have experience of the issues we seek to address in the report.

Young people and families in this study share how their lives are impacted by political, media and societal perceptions of 'endemic' serious youth violence, leading to widespread anxiety about 'dangerous' black youths (Joseph et al., 2011:3) and a range of negative consequences and poor community relations. One young male respondent described an incident that has left him with negative experience towards the police:

> I got stopped once, coming from the shop with my brother. The policeman said that there was some robbery in the area and we fit the description of the people that did it. My brother walked towards them to talk as his English was not as good as mine; before he could speak the policeman grabbed him and threw him against the car. I froze! Then the white woman from the shop ran out and shouted to them we are good kids and they are not allowed to do that. As soon as they seen her they changed their tone towards us. Since then, I hate police!!!

These negative feelings were not just targeted at the police, but also other public bodies such as: the Probation Service, the local authority and educational sector. This sense of frustration reflected their roles as practitioners or service providers:

> 'I see the council as more of the problem.'

> 'As a probation officer, you were mindful that a lot of the time, when you are looking at the cases coming through associated with adult males, you could pinpoint that there were times when they were younger when key intervention could have been put in place…The family were never utilised as key stakeholders and parents were not considered. The only time they were considered was when it was time to tell them things were going wrong.'

> '…I think they don't care and when they do give funding, they set it up so it doesn't hit the point where it should hit … if you put in a bid they tell you can't even pass the first stage because we are not earning and don't have the capacity. So they come up with all this bullshit and it ends up with people who get the money can't deliver on the agenda and then they want to use us for

'peanuts'. Historically, man used to jump on this but now we have become intransigent so we're not doing it.'

Another important factor emerging from focus groups and questionnaires was the issue of feeling safe in communities or neighbourhoods and if the issue of gangs and serious youth violence was a perceived threat or a real one. From the questionnaires, all participants indicated that they all felt unsafe in all areas represented in the graph above. The following response emerged from discussions:

'I'm not snitching on my endz, but all I am saying is where I'm from is 'peak''.
'You man talk about madness in your ends, but we too got bare madness goin' on in our bits! It's not just Handsworth, and Newtown …'

'My mom don't let me go anywhere, since that boy got shot in the head in Ladywood.'

'I carry a knife to school, because I would rather get caught with it than get caught slipping by man on road.'

'Bare man are in gangs in my ends (Laughs).'

The findings so far highlights that a significant number of young people did not feel safe in their communities, and some of them admitted carrying a knife at some point to school, college or to the shop just so they can feel safe. The younger participants, aged 11-13, did not see carrying weapons as a necessity, but those aged 14-19 felt that it was for their protection. This shows that the perceived threat of violence was with the younger participants, but the older members felt that it was an actual threat.

When discussing the notion of perceived and actual threat, respondents were asked where they felt the violence was coming from. The 11-13 respondents also highlight the role of social media in escalating problems around 'disrespect'. (This is represented in the Catch 22 Report, 'Social Media as a Catalyst and Trigger for Youth Violence', January 2017.)

Many of the youngsters linked the violence within their areas to drug dealing, disrespect, and falling out with specific people, rather than issues of gang-related violence. This further suggests that the younger cohort thought that gangs play a significant role in violence within their communities, which was based on what they hear in the street, see in the news or on music videos on YouTube, and the discussions they have with their peers. This was reflected in the view of one participant:

'Handsworth, Hockley, Winson Green, Newtown, Lozells, are the worst areas because that's where all the gangs are from and where all the madness you hear on the news comes from.'

This highlights how young people could be influenced into making decisions based on their perceptions about certain neighbourhoods fuelled by misrepresented views. On the other hand, this young person had some awareness that there had been a series of shootings, stabbings and fatalities in recent years within those areas. Young people in this study felt that social media and its constant use is part of a teenager's life. All in the focus group felt that they would not be able to function were they to lose their phones. One participant said:

"I can't live a day without my phone. I would go mad, if I couldn't holla at my mandem or look on Instagram at a couple girls (Laughs)."

All participants had the same view, specifically those aged 14-19. They all said their daily lives revolved around the use of their mobile phones, which had access to all media platforms. When participants were asked about age restrictions on certain websites they laughed, as they felt it was not difficult to get a personal account. All admitted falsifying information and when asked how easy it was, they stated it was simply by a click of a button. One participant said:

'It's not hard though, like I'm 13 and I'm on all of them, all you do when asked if your 18 is click yes.' (Group laughs)

Whilst participants may see this as trivial, this report raises concerns about safety and safeguarding issues, given the easy access to negative materials these young people have. Some participants, however, showed heightened awareness about the dangers such as cyber bullying, sexual exploitation, grooming, and extremist ideologies. Others expressed complacency and were adamant that they would not fall victim to these issues.

Despite the age range, racial or socio-economic background, all participants said they have seen or witnessed violence with the use of social media. The violence may involve dog fighting, street fights, mugging, armed robberies, stabbings, shootings and sexual abuse towards women. One participant said:

'That's normal though. I always see girls get violated, but it is their fault for putting themselves in them situations. You don't hear or see any of my girls doing any of that shit.' (Group agrees via nodding of heads)

Another participant said:

'Everyone here loves to watch them things, though. Bet if everyone was to go in their phones now, everyone would have some sort of madness to show man.'
(Group erupts in laughter)

The normalisation of violence and sexual exploitation has not only become the norm among young people, it has also desensitised them to the point that they have no empathy or sympathy for victims. They perceive the victim as being wrong and not the perpetrator. Such views have an adverse impact on perceptions of danger and vulnerability. All participants spoke from an idealistic premise – that it could never happen to them because they would never put themselves in situations where they could fall victim to violence. However, criminological theory stipulates that most victims did not know they would become victims until a particular situation occurred. Moreover, what is more significant about these perspectives is that young people admit that it is entertaining to see violent and indecent images/videos on social media.

The narratives of the focus groups, one-to-one interviews and questionnaire responses have revealed some key issues and factors that are pertinent for all sectors attempting to engage and support young people involved or at risk of involvement in gang-associated violence.

Recommendations
The commission partners should work to include an 'authentic youth and family voice' in their discussions and planning. This voice can represent the views of victims and perpetrators in service provision and provide relevant information about 'life on the ground'.

The commission partnership should ensure that specialist counselling services, including family therapy and trauma therapy services are available to both victims and perpetrators of gang associated violence. This will involve commission partners compiling a comprehensive list of organisations and agencies that offer these specialist services.

4.8   Specialist Providers and Culturally Competent Grassroots

This report again acknowledges that specialist providers have highlighted that they and other community groups or organisations support people around issues of serious violence, gang affiliation and organised crime. They were appointed for their skills, understanding and experience in engaging and working in communities, with individuals or families categorised/labelled, 'hard to reach', problematic, socially excluded,

disenfranchised, violent and gang associated. Their many years of experience enabled them to offer the commission fresh ways of exploring the real concerns associated with gangs and serious youth violence. They are leaders/directors in their respective organisations; actively involved in community-led approaches to work with individuals and families involved in or at risk of involvement with gangs, violence or other forms of criminality.

Specialist providers welcomed the opportunity to work alongside statutory sector partners towards establishing a community-led approach to critically explore issues associated with causes, impact and challenges of serious violence and the possible interventions that represents effectiveness. Their connection with respective communities allowed them to hear and bring people's 'realities' into a strategic 'partnership space', where insights and new approaches to dealing with gangs and violence could be discussed and put into action. Our conversations/interviews with specialist providers regarding their services to individuals and families in communities highlighted what they provided:

- ➢ Engaging at-risk individuals and their families with a solution-focused approach through varied sporting activities and relationship-building approaches.
- ➢ Offering teaching and training associated with gangs, conflict and youth violence.
- ➢ Offering mediatory support during conflict or critical incidents in local neighbourhoods.
- ➢ Group and one-to-one support for families associated with gangs and youth violence.
- ➢ Community outreach surrounding community safety and conflict.
- ➢ Working in prisons with men 'categorised hard to reach', delivering 13-week prison and community self-development and values-based course.
- ➢ Engaging with individuals and families on trauma and victim support issues.
- ➢ Pastoral care and conducting funerals for families who have lost loved ones to gun, knife and violent crimes or other tragic incidents.
- ➢ Engaging individuals and families with alcohol and substance misuse challenges.
- ➢ Schools engagement programmes focusing on conflict management and community safety.
- ➢ Supporting the reintegration of individuals back into community/training/employment.

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list of services, and although we have seen evidence of positive work, we were concerned that specialist provider organisations were not actively partnering or working jointly on any key projects. This has been acknowledged and a verbal agreement has been made to start more critical conversations about partnerships on certain key issues and projects associated with gangs and youth violence. The

reflection by service providers and subsequent discussions highlighted the following statement by a specialist provider:

> I think we may struggle to partner because we are all trying to survive. Most of our funding rests on applying for funds from external sources, which may mean going to the same funders. I think this situation calls for looking at ways to jointly seek funding.

This report acknowledges the present fragmentation in Birmingham's response to gangs and violence. Consequently, any attempt to address the issues requires strong local partnerships with leadership and understood governance structures. As acknowledged previously, there are no quick fixes to what this report confirms to be endemic and entrenched gangs and conflict factors. Again, we strongly support the recommendation for sustained collaboration and working relationships between statutory, faith groups, communities, business and voluntary sector partners. All specialist providers spoke about wider structural problems, including institutional racism, austerity, exclusion from strategic tables and inconsistencies in 'city-community' partnerships.

Specialist providers were able to sample feelings, thoughts, concerns and aspirations of communities and networks across the city. This substantial database is the foundation for the recommendations and rationales below. These offer a framework for understanding and responding to the wider social, economic and racial/cultural issues that shape the trends and types of 'gang'-based, peer-involved violence in the city. This framework is also shaped by insights drawn from Brown's (2014) research that examined community-city partnerships around such violence.

This research has already highlighted that the work of the specialist providers demonstrates the need to have credible people as part of the team to connect with the real issues in community. Furthermore, it is evident that there are other credible community-based groups and leaders who want to contribute to strategic discussions about improving the lives of young people and families to ultimately reduce gang-associated violence. Given the opportunity, there are individuals and leaders in communities who are able to represent the voices of marginalised people in their communities and to commission partners within wider socio-political gatherings.

Key concerns raised by some community leaders during the consultation were trust, accountability and respect, because these impact on community-city relationships. Some believe that until the city leaders take their role seriously – caring and loving the communities they serve – there will be no real and meaningful changes. We believe that the community-led organisations' difficulties in managing the challenges mirror those

faced by the statutory bodies. City leaders are clear that austerity drastically affects their capacity to deliver even basic services, let alone long-term community-support partnerships. Given this stark reality, city leaders and statutory sector providers are seen as 'incompetent' and 'inefficient', because they work to do so much more with so much less but are blamed for what they cannot deliver, change or fix.

SPs spoke to residents in communities that are categorised as 'hotspot areas' for crime and violence or seen as troubled and 'ghetto zones' by some outsiders and insiders alike. Some residents told the SPs that the labelling of their communities came from the system first and then they started to believe in the negative labels. Some participants were very challenging of the statutory institutions that fail to support community clean-ups or empower residents with better facilities for health and well-being issues.

Having acknowledged the concerns raised, there is enough evidence from the data to support the notion that there is a great deal of social capital across communities and neighbourhoods in the city. Interviewees and focus groups show how some community-led organisations use collective values, networks and culturally relevant approaches to develop economic, social and human capital. Some use this to support individuals and families involved in youth violence, gangs and organised crime to move them from powerlessness to empowerment as highlighted in the work of SPs.

The SPs underline the challenges of developing trust where people had been let down, if not betrayed, by 'authority figures'. Some people's experiences are such that their distrust goes across the statutory, community and faith sectors. The providers say that rebuilding trust takes long-term, consistent and incremental relationship development. This is arguably a time consuming and energy-draining process – but necessary. A recurring theme in the data is that of trust and confidence between communities and statutory providers involved in work associated with community safety issues. The   following responses emerged from individuals attached to community organisations:

> 'There is a general feeling there is a lack of understanding or deliberate lack of recognition by statutory bodies about how communities work, community groups need support and recognition for those of us providing effective support struggling families in our neighborhoods.'

> 'I want to be treated with respect and recognised as having skills that can be harnessed and seen as a valuable asset to my community.'

> 'I also got disillusioned with the lack of local authority support when I raised concerns about the lack of youth provisions in our area. I tried to explain that some of our youth were not able to attend provisions in other areas because it would mean making themselves vulnerable to attacks. I'm not sure if they understand how difficult things are for our youths.'

The diagram below shows the range of these community-based support/initiatives that should be considered in any city-community partnerships. It captures some of the richness and diversity of work being carried out in the community. These initiatives work within and between BAME communities, engage with public and private bodies and challenge and implement national and local policies.

Brown (2014) Mapping of community activity associated with urban gun crime
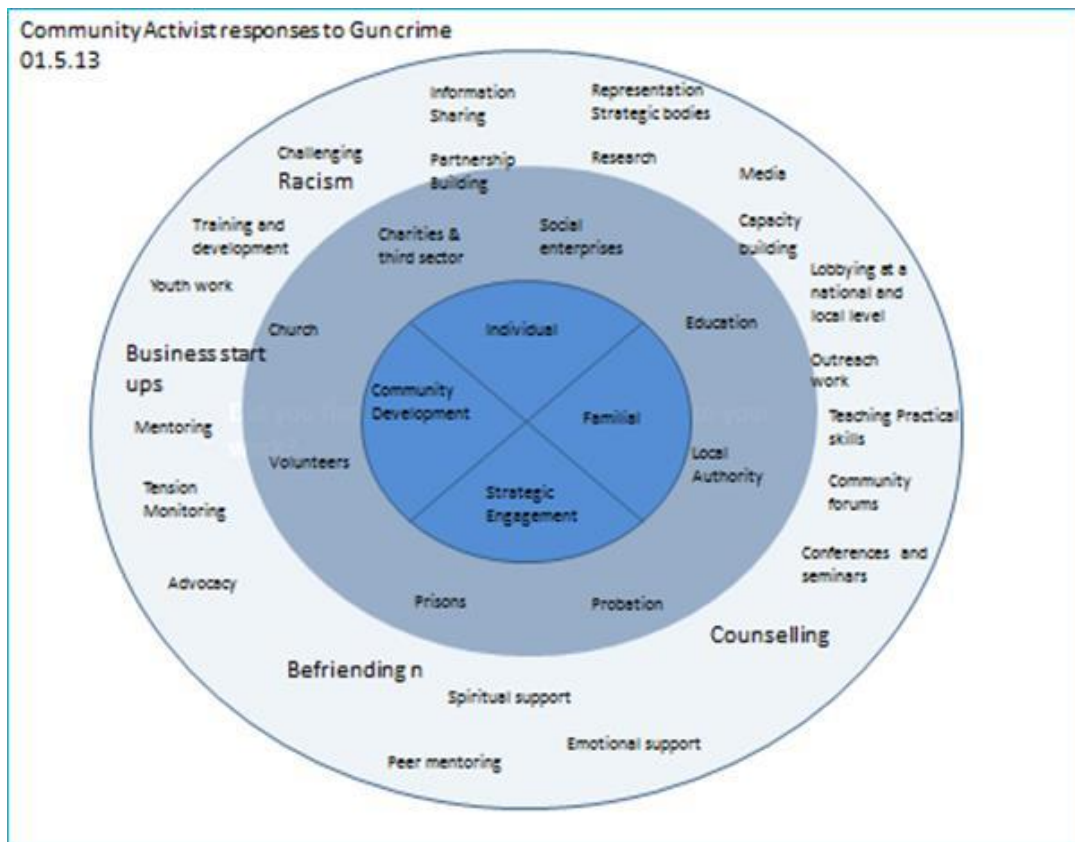
On reflection, our interviews with SPs highlighted that they were all committed to the development of their communities. However, they acknowledged that the challenges to sustain their services remain a priority. Their focus on engagement of individuals and families from communities impacted by serious youth violence and gang associated activities continues with limited recognition from city officials. They highlighted the following:

- The need for sustained multi-agency working and partnerships between community-led organisations and the city.
- The need for an agreed understanding about the problems and what interventions are specifically required.

- The need for partnerships that are transparent, accountable with constant links and engagement to communities served.
- The need for greater exploration and understanding about power-sharing, governance and management between community-led organisations and statutory sector providers.
- Priority should be given to the allocation of resources and transfer of assets.
- Difficulties within the community will not change with current fragmented strategies.
- There is no evidence of community-city, multiagency regular meetings associated with gangs and violence reduction outside of crisis periods.
- Political support is required to drive forward the gangs and violence agenda.
- Faith and business communities are assets that should not be side-lined.

Recommendations

The commission partners should prioritise supporting community-led organisations that support children, young people and young adults identified as 'at risk' of gang or violence related behaviours and activities. Such early interventions have a greater chance of success and should be available to anyone in need.

The commission should promote a shift away from the 'law enforcement' response and towards community-led mediation and conflict interventions and approaches. Community organisations (faith and non-faith) should be supported to appoint and train community mediators and facilitators to mediate in situations associated with gangs, conflicts and violence reduction in neighbourhoods.

4.9   Faith Groups- An Untapped Component

This report takes very seriously the rich and diverse sectors in Birmingham that represent faith traditions (see appendix 2). They have offered support and comfort to many individuals and families during times of crisis in their respective neighbourhoods. Some of these groups are in the heart of neighbourhoods where concerns relating to gangs, violence, gun and knife crimes are profiled. There are some faith leaders who have worked with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, along with Word 4 Weapons to install 'Knife Bins' or 'Weapons Surrender Bins', close to their places of worship or other locations. These bins are located in Sandwell, Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Since the bins have been introduced, hundreds of knives have been deposited, as well as two or more loaded guns. The debates as to whether this initiative impacts those who are instigators of violence and criminality in local communities continue. Whilst not necessarily linked to faith-based intervention, it is indeed community-involved.

There is sparse research evidence in the UK that offers any tangible perspectives or approaches as to the part faith groups play in any solution or interventions relating to gangs and serious youth violence. This means this report has very little to draw on outside of US examples. However, as noted earlier, there is much good pastoral and material support work offered by faith-groups across the city, from food banks and lunch clubs to informal education and counselling, to leadership training and community advocacy. There is little evidence of their systematic involvement in working with gang- associated individuals or families. Brown's (2016) evaluation of Bringing Hope's work says that faith-based interventions can improve offenders' lives.

Brown's assertion has to be considered within the wider framework of gang- and violence-related interventions. The possibilities relating to interventions that suggest faith-based or values-based approaches require further investigation within a Birmingham context. There are numerous examples in the US representing faith-based approaches to youth violence and gang-associated activities. We are aware that a number of delegates (statutory, faith and community sectors) from Birmingham visited one such initiative in Boston to explore approaches they had adopted during a period of numerous gang-associated deaths and violence in local neighbourhoods.

The Boston example gives us some insight into how faith-based involvement to gangs and violence has potential to impact upon certain neighbourhoods. The example given here is rooted in a Christian tradition and dates back to 1992, when the community had a wake-up call during the funeral of a young man who had been murdered. During the service, gang members chased a rival gang member into the church where he was beaten and stabbed. People were stunned and shocked; many were traumatised.

The subsequent days, weeks and months saw members of the clergy having strategic meetings with the police, probation and other key institutions. A number of church leaders and members took to the streets, chatted to youngsters and those involved in drug deals. They also had mini tent gatherings for children and young people to develop relationships and explore moral issues. Further strategic meetings agreed that the church, along with the police and parole officers, would visit families of gang-associated youths, or those involved in serious crimes who were categorised 'troubled youths'. There is repeated evidence and research representations confirming that through these joint initiatives, the youth murder rate dropped. It was later described as the "Boston Miracle". Between 1995-1998, no one under 17 was killed. The overall murder rate for the city dropped from 157 in 1995 to 37 in 1998.

Rev Rivers, the initiator of the partnership, said it was a great accomplishment that a mostly white city criminal justice system, distrustful black residents and church found some very constructive ways to work together (Smith, 2004).

The role of this report is to explore new interventions that could effectively support the desistance of gang associated individuals and those involved in criminality and violence. The component that faith groups may bring to the table is yet to be actively explored, so this report has started the process. We are aware that faith groups play a role in social and community cohesion and see first-hand the costs and devastations that occur when a gun or knife death takes place in their communities. Some of these leaders are involved in burying these individuals and comforting the grieving. They are often involved in building community capital and resilience, rather than challenging organised crime directly. One faith group leader had the following to say:

> Most of the young men and women who die as a result of gun, knife and other forms of violence are buried or cremated within a faith and religious 'rites of passage' process. I believe we also have a responsibility to save lives and not wait just to bury people. However, we need help to know how to be involved with those youngsters most likely to die because of their involvement with negative activities.

Although the devastations are seen and felt, there are growing concerns among some faith group leaders that young people are becoming more desensitised about burying their friends or family because of a gang-, gun- or knife-related death. A service provider wrote a poem after attending numerous funerals of young people tragically killed:

RIP a new rite of passage?

There's a new rite of passage that really bothers me, young people cut short from what they ought to be. Princes taken down by their own folk, reps to 'fallen soldiers' like some sick joke. School prom suits standing at grave sides, bottles of champagne to mourn young lives. Surely this is not how it should be, a new rite of passage called RIP?

Families thrown into chaos and grief, lives destroyed, absent is peace. Mothers weeping whilst holding their wombs, fathers wanting to enter the tomb. Do we just continue to bury our heads, business as usual, another youth dead. Face after face, their young smiles disappear, month after month, year after year? That's someone's daughter, it's someone's son, a statistic in a system that has gone so wrong. Surely this is not how it should be, a new rite of passage called RIP?

How did we get here, where did it start, what caused this demise the numbing of hearts? When did we lose it, how was it done, why have we let go of where we began. Who stole the pride and the self-love, why are we searching for a God above? Who will remind us and help us to see that love first and foremost starts within me, that life is sacred and truly a gift and conflict is no resolution to rift?

We need to reopen the moral debate about why right and wrong? About love and hate. Examine with a critical eye the issues at hand to understand why. Some can so easily take a life, wiped out so swiftly with the swipe of a knife, stare coldly down the barrel of a gun into the pleading eyes of some body's son. ENOUGH!!! Dear God enough already, this new rites of passage called RIP

We are not helpless, we are not lost, and we MUST take action or pay the cost. So who will stand up and play their part to bring back love into the hearts, of a generation that's simply fighting to be, whilst there's new rites of passage called RIP.

(Joan Campbell, 2016)

This poem expresses some of the raw emotions linked to the processes of burying a young person associated with youth violence. The descriptions of the multi-dimensional impact of gang- and gun-related violence has to be taken seriously by all sectors, even those who may have no links, understanding, connections to such atrocities. We suggest that the words of the poem encourages us to look beyond the statistics presented in policy and media reports to consider the impact of such crimes on the individuals involved, whether perpetrator or victim, their family members and the wider communities. The questions posed above are indeed critical: who is willing to stand up and play their part, examining urban youth violence and, more importantly, who is willing to take action?

The concept and discourse relating to faith, spirituality, ethics, values and religion associated with young people and their support is not an area that statutory sector personnel or city leaders actively explore. However, we are mindful that the city supported three faith sector conferences between 2004 and 2005, which focused on Christian Sikh and Muslim responses to gangs, guns and knives in their communities. Whilst these

conferences explored some key issues with tangible responses, little is known about the outcomes, other than conference reports and the establishment of the Bringing Hope Christian Charity, which is involved in work within prisons and communities.

The issues associated with how faith groups may or may not respond to challenges and concerns regarding gangs and violence were explored in a consultation seminar during the research process. Along with the responses from the seminar, there were separate focus group discussions with young people. They were asked what the concept of faith and spirituality meant to them. All the participants immediately made the link towards religion and the religious groups they subscribed to, such as:

- Christian

- Muslim

- Rastafarian

- Jewish

Further insights from the discussions with young people regarding faith and values highlighted the following:

- Young people are willing to explore issues associated with morals, faith and values, as they related to them.
- There is awareness that good and bad actions or activities have consequences.
- Some understood faith to mean a way of life and religious customs as fasting and prayers or going to church/mosque and engaging in charitable causes.
- All participants either came from religious families or families who subscribe to particular beliefs or spiritual practices.
- Conflict is evident in a number of families between parents and their children. Some parents do not seem to understand why their child is not complying with specific cultural or religious customs.

The following two statements highlight some of the conflicts for young people relating to faith:

> 'I will be straight with you fam, man is Muslim yeah, and I love the fact that I am Muslim, but practising Islam is hard! Like my parents want me to do bare things like go mosque, learn Quran, go this class etc., but fam, I need to make money and I don't wanna be like them when I'm older.'

Another participant said:

'I don't attend church no more, because they talk about everything 'but' what we as young people go through. You know how many gyal in my church that got pregnant last year and how many man are now shottin on road? Shockin!!'

Statements such as these highlight some of the challenges related to the disconnected cultural, religious and faith practices found within communities that are struggling to deal with the issues of gang violence amongst young people, who may be struggling with identities and grappling with the 'code of the street' (Anderson,1999). They therefore struggle to be linked to a faith or spirituality that hinders their progress on the streets.

Conversations with faith group leaders and statutory sector personnel highlighted the perception that faith groups represent a large and relatively well-resourced part of the voluntary and community sector in Birmingham, having at their disposal networks of mutual aid, service provision relating to human development, community development activities and community organising capacity.

Some see the Black Caribbean churches as the key, if not the only, faith group involved in issues around gangs, violence and community reconstruction. This perception has been challenged by faith organisations involved with disenfranchised families. This research has gathered data from young people and adults from diverse communities who have offered key insights regarding the pastoral and material support work offered by faith groups across the city, from food banks, lunch clubs, informal education, counselling, leadership training and community advocacy. However, there was recognition by some leaders; the services provided had little or no direct involvement with gang-associated individuals or families.

The other aspect for exploring what faith-based interventions may mean for the commission was the consultation seminar for faith group leaders as mentioned earlier. This was planned and initiated by service providers, ensuring that Birmingham's multi-faith leaders were invited. Whilst this initiative was well attended, we raise concerns about the lack of multi-faith representatives of Birmingham. Attendees on the evening were from a predominantly African Caribbean community sector, representing a mainly Christian faith tradition. Other attendees included statutory and voluntary sector personnel.

This report again acknowledges the evidence, supporting the fact that gang-associated violence organised crimes are not associated with any one race, ethnicity or faith tradition. However having reviewed presentations and video recording of the evening the following insights are represented:

- Faith groups are in communities that are impacted by gangs and serious violence.
- There are perceptions from some statutory sector personnel that faith groups are unable to present balanced and objective views.
- All faith traditions have some mandate to care for other human beings (see appendix 2).
- Faith leaders are involved in conducting funerals of gang-related murders and are welcomed by families during times of grief.
- Faith groups are resourced with buildings and other facilities that could be used for supporting grieving families.
- Some faith group leaders felt inadequate about being involved in communities plagued by serious violence.
- There is increased interest and willingness of statutory sector providers to engage with faith group leaders or faith-based organisations regarding gangs and serious violence interventions.
- The need for developing partnerships between local faith leaders, community-led organisations, and statutory sector providers is necessary.
- No one community group, faith, tradition or agency is able to tackle Birmingham's problem relating to gangs and serious violence.

It is evident from the above insights that that there are already links between faith organisations and local communities that potentially form a foundation for greater dialogue about being involved with interventions in local neighbourhoods. It is also clear from our evidence that faith groups play a role in social and community cohesion and see first-hand the impact and devastation caused by gangs and serious violence.

Recommendations
Commission's action plan should include exploration and review of faith-based approaches to gangs and violence.
The commission should develop a co-ordinated approach to engage all inter-faith and multi-faith forums/groups in Birmingham to discuss the role of faith, values and morals in issues around organised crime, gangs and violence.

4.10 Prison Influences

Whilst acknowledging that not all individuals or families associated with perpetrating violence or negative gang associated activities will enter the prison system, it is essential that we do not negate the prison component in any strategy focused on desistance.

As an aspect of our exploration, we were able to visit a local prison and were encouraged by how the men willingly highlighted their thoughts and concerns regarding the prison-community link and issues associated with interventions that would reduce their reoffending. A key theme emerging from discussions was that of employment, as well as support from statutory and community sectors. Much of the discussion focused on barriers encountered on release from prison when trying to access employment and how divulging a criminal record was a key barrier to rehabilitation, resettlement and desistance – employers rarely wanted to employ someone with a conviction. The men told us:

> 'Some people see prisoners as bad people, never to be trusted.'

> 'We are all from families that live in local communities, so we will need help to return to situations and relationships that became difficult because we are in prison.'

> 'Some of us are role models for younger heads on the streets and we want them to know that prison is not a nice place to come.'

> 'Prison is a place where it is difficult to always remain positive because we have all criminals in the same space.'

> 'We need more people to listen to us because of our experience in prison and community.'

One prisoner told us that he understands why they are in prison; however, for him and others who were serious about positively turning their lives around, there was little support. Some key themes for the prisoners were employment opportunities, finance and meaningful activities. For the prisoners, they were very resolute about the need to be able

to access meaningful employment. One prisoner suggested that prisoners could work in prison and have any remuneration put into a bank account, to be accessed on release. Linking employment and prison more effectively was very important. Another said: 'One of the biggest obstacles is that I have re-educated myself, got qualifications but no experience. How are you going to get experience if you can't get a job?' He said employers also needed to commit to taking on former prisoners by taking into account their potential at a job interview – not to rule them out because of a criminal record.

We acknowledge that there are a number of employers willing to consider recruiting ex-offenders, but these are not enough. One suggestion was to challenge prisons to allow appropriate organisations through the doors to help and prepare prisoners for release. This was fully embraced by the CRC lead that was present, who believed that some community groups were best placed to support ex-offenders from local communities.

Further reflections and discussions with probation and the CRC highlighted challenges between their relationship and that of ex-offenders. It has become evident that officers are struggling to build meaningful relationships with ex-offenders due to constraints and workload.

It is from the above context that two prisoners were asked to write a letter or some thoughts to the commission. The following represents their thoughts:

Prisoner X and Y- From Behind Bars

We are currently two serving prisoners at HMP Birmingham who have been sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment for crimes that are associated with the work of this commission.

I am 29 years old and this is my first time in prison and I will do everything in my power to make sure it is my last. I am 55 years old and this is my third time in custody. I, also, will ensure that this is my last time. We would like to take this opportunity to give our views and contributions to the current issue of gangs and violence in our community and how it affects everyone, directly and indirectly. We believe that our views and thoughts should be shared with the commission and, hopefully, taken into account when the report is finally published.

The reason for this is that we are deemed and seen to be part of the current problem, but we would like to be part of the solution for our community. We are in unique positions compared to most that are on the commission. We are both

in prison and will both be released back into our communities. We will both be affected by the recommendations and decisions made following this report.

The report will affect a lot of people, many families and the wider community. This report for the commission has to be taken seriously by the community, the city, faith groups and others groups involved. Young people's lives are being lost, and families, neighbourhoods and communities are being destroyed. Young people and those coming out of prison will need support on the road to change. With the right support, they will contribute to changing and supporting others in their neighbourhoods and communities.

We believe that this report has to be accurate. There are real issues and situations that are actively occurring in our communities that are not being addressed. We need to create solutions to address significant problems we face in prison and in the community. This is a huge situation needing effective support and help. Therefore, no stone can be left unturned, and partnerships must be formed. Assistance is needed from the community, such as families who have been directly and indirectly affected by gang life and violence. Faith-based groups and other organisations need to start working together to help people in need, like us.

There needs to be a holistic system in place to support young people who struggle with these issues. A back-to-basics approach is more than needed to address every aspect relative to this subject. The main focus should be to research of our young people as, if given the opportunity, the majority would want to change. Both of us will make ourselves available to assist in contributing to the support of others and of the youth who are involved and want help so that they can live positive lives.

We believe that this testament highlights the thoughts and aspirations of two men who not only acknowledge their respective 'wrongs' but are able to self-assess or self-reflect and express what they believe would support them on their desistance trajectories. We were encouraged by their reflections and suggest that the approach of supporting prisoners to contribute to critical reviews and strategic discussions should be encouraged. At the same time, however, we are mindful that desistance, rehabilitation and resettlement are interconnected factors that require a number of partners to support offenders associated with the concerns of this report.

The Ministry of Justice Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending (2013) reiterates the need for more evidence-based reviews on effective reduction of reoffending. In the context of this report and in line with a family-orientated, public health, community-involved and interdisciplinary approach, we support the notion

that any prisoner returning to community would benefit from a 'wraparound service' development plan one year before release and during their resettlement back into community. This process should inevitably involve community organisations. From our assessment, we believe that there is more scope for probation services, CRSs and Youth Offending Services to work in partnership with community and faith groups around issues of resettlement and rehabilitation.

Recommendations

Prisoners associated with gangs and violence should have a comprehensive 'intervention and support package' in place for when they leave prison.

The commission should promote community–involved and community-led approaches to offenders and ex-offenders by setting up a working group. This group can encourage agencies that work with these individuals (the West Midlands National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company, Youth Offending Services, and HMP Prisons link to City of Birmingham) to fulfil their statutory responsibilities to support prisoners towards and on release.

4.11 Statutory and Business Sector Responses

The section above considered the correlation between prisoners, ex-offenders and their re-entry to communities impacted by gangs and violence, some of whom may have been instigators before entering the prison system. It is within this context we acknowledge that issues associated with gangs and serious violence has been a concern for the city for more than 15 years. Responses and involvement from local councillors, city leaders have been varied, as leaders come and go with political changes. Equally, the business sectors have raised their concerns regarding the loss of business because of gang- and gun- related issues in the areas in which they are located.

Birmingham is made up of competing interests, challenges, motivations and concerns. Key structures and players shape its business, socio-political, economic and community development issues and organisations. The community sector is diverse and active; addressing a range of local issues, some working in partnership with public and private bodies, but is lacking meaningful and sustainable partnership structures.

The impact of austerity has had an effect, leading to inevitable restructuring of relationships that make this maze of connections complex. However, this is set against efforts of transparent ambition laid out in the Greater Birmingham and

Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (2016-2030). Steve Hollis, the chair of the partnership, states:

> What's more, the LEP Board recognises that a bold approach is exactly what is required in the light of Brexit. Whilst there is uncertainty now and there will undoubtedly be challenges to come, we are also moving into a period of huge opportunity. Greater Birmingham has the assets, the talent and the resolve to prosper, whatever the negotiations may bring. That's why, in this Strategic Economic Plan 2016-30, we are raising our game. Our vision is for Greater Birmingham to take its place amongst the global elite: a truly global city region by 2030, one that establishes our leadership in innovation in our key sectors, and leverages our international connections to the full.

All statutory providers agreed that there was a need for more sustained partnerships with credible organisations and groups in communities impacted by gang-associated activities and serious violence. However, we highlight a number of gaps associated with how strategic partnerships are forged between organisations (statutory, faith, voluntary, private and, business sectors). This lack of 'stakeholder' partnerships suggests no long-term relationships are in place. It is clear from our discussions with the business and statutory sectors that there are possible links between employment and financial stability and involvement with criminality or gang associated activities.

Importantly, previous reports have highlighted gaps and recommended the development of frameworks for sustained partnerships between sectors, with specific focus on addressing peer-associated violence, criminality and serious violence (BRAP, 2012; Birmingham City Council, 2010; Home Office, 2012).

Our research highlights that although statutory personnel had key responsibilities with young people in gangs, some staff struggled to understand why a significant number of young people were so anti authority and refused to co-operate with them. This report again raises the need for sustained partnerships with community-led initiatives that can relate to the types of young people involved in this report.

There are evidently concerns raised by both business and statutory sectors regarding interventions that are needed to help them employ young people who have been associated with gangs or violence. One businessman who was interviewed told us:

> Devolution and local decision making could be a very positive thing and are the key pillars in society and community. You would need to have law and order, the economy, the arts, health and the church, maybe six or seven spheres of influence. If there was a more holistic approach to vision for the

region and addressing the disparity between the haves and the have nots, the challenge would be how do you facilitate the transfer of wealth, and how do you characterise that by calling it investment, and how do you value the return? My version of the social economy is saying, cost benefit analysis over here, what is the proportion of the community, what is the cost to society by virtue of the fact they have not looked at the plumb line for a long time. How do you develop untapped potential of refugees, asylum seekers and other people groups? There is a school of thought of an asset-based community. You go with what's strong, not with what's wrong. You are working on the entrepreneurial flair of people.

Another business sector lead said:

For those businesses that are concerned about employing ex-offenders, we need to review the business community and explore their concerns and issues associated with crime and violence, also what training and support they may need to employ an ex-offender. In this way, we will have an idea of the different business that may or may not employ offenders in areas across Birmingham.

Whilst we acknowledge the two different sectors, it is clear in this research that both can support individuals on their desistance trajectories.

The recently appointed Mayor for the West Midlands is clearly advocating a link between the business and statutory sectors. He sees the support for the statutory sector as an important way to address gangs and violence issues, and at the same time he highlights the need for employment opportunities for ex-offenders or those at risk of offending. Having spoken to other city leads and cabinet members the following issues and concerns were highlighted:

- The need for continued conversations between communities and the city leaders is crucial.
- The gap between rich and poor needs to be addressed by considering inclusive economic growth.
- There is a need for sustainable structures and partnerships that drive forward the gangs and youth violence agenda.
- The police and statutory providers can only effectively address the issues associated with gangs and serious violence by working with key community groups.
- Trust between the police and some communities' remains a major challenge.
- Ward councillors should be consulted about issues of gangs and violence in their respective areas.

- Mental health and trauma support relating to young people caught up in violence should be central to their assessment needs.
- City to contact West Midlands resettlement prisons regarding mental health support for Birmingham prisoners whilst they are in and on release.
- Adopt a more strategic link with faith groups, PCC, MAGU, YOS and associated services responsible for working within the gangs and violence agenda.
- Consider a single point of contact for work tackling gangs and violence to be aligned to one strategic board/table, e.g. YOS, MAGU and CSP.

Whilst acknowledging the above issues as important to move the agenda forward, we must refer to a crucial question that was posed in 2010. This question was posed in the Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny report, 'Partnership working to tackle gang violence in Birmingham': 'How effective is the multi-agency partnership approach to reducing gang violence in Birmingham?'

It is as an important question then as it is now. Unfortunately, there is little evidence found in our research that demonstrates any real multi-agency working regarding these issues. Furthermore, at the time of asking the question, the BRGV structure was in place. This was also acknowledged in the Home Office Peer Review linked to Birmingham's 'Ending Gangs and Youth Violence' strategies and activities (Home Office, 2012).

Having assessed the different documents, interviewed respective sectors, considered the views of victims, perpetrators and communities, explored the responses of specialist providers regarding gangs and violence strategies and interventions for Birmingham, we conclude that:

- Birmingham has a gap in representing any true and consistently tangible multi-agency working regarding gangs and youth violence.
- Key community groups and faith groups are tangential to already fragmented and segmented response frameworks, even though they have valid understandings of the communities of concern.
- The office of the PCC has responded to the more recent concerns associated with gangs and violence. However, this report raises questions as to why previous strategies and reports regarding these issues have not been jointly reviewed, with a number of recommendations lost within the overstretched and financially challenged bureaucratic machinery.
- We found it a challenge to establish who or which section of the city was responsible and ultimately accountable for driving the agenda.

- The precarious relationship between some police officers and sections of certain communities does not help to rebuild trust and confidence in an already stretched force.
- The refusal of some schools to acknowledge gang-associated problems is a concern because it leaves pupils vulnerable.
- Our research highlights a willingness of commission partners to consider new approaches as Birmingham seeks a more co-ordinated interdisciplinary community-involved paradigm that can establish fresh aims, objectives, targets and review phases.
- There is a need to support the creation of opportunities for young people 'at risk' by working with schools, colleges, universities, businesses and community organisations to help inspire alternative possibilities to life of the streets.
- There are potential challenges regarding the 'vested interests' of stakeholders that should be addressed against an agreed solution-focused and needs-led response to gangs and violence.
- This report welcomes the willingness to see the guns- and violence-related issue through a public health lens.
- The issue regarding how faith groups and prisoners and the prison system may influence the gangs and violence agenda introduces fresh dimensions that are minimal or absent from previous Birmingham reports.
- There are some examples of good practices seen in MAGU, YOS and community sector organisations.

Again, we acknowledge that there are many issues associated with how strategic partnerships are forged between organisations (statutory, faith, voluntary, private and, business sectors). However, we reiterate the need for 'stakeholder' partnerships that are long-term, with annual targets and review structures. Previous reports have highlighted such gaps and recommended the development of frameworks for sustained partnerships between sectors (BRAP, 2012; Birmingham City Council, 2010; Home Office, 2012). This report therefore welcomes the initiative of the Police and Crime Commissioner in the setting up of the Gangs and Violence Commission.

This report represents our assessment of the data gathered and again we reiterate that there are no quick fixes for what is a complex web of challenges associated with gangs and violence. However, we believe that there are enough examples and recommendations that, if taken seriously, can start a fresh process that is truly community-involved, and on occasions community led, to be rooted in a public-health and multi-agency partnership structure.

> **Recommendations**
>
> The commission should involve the business sector in its work through the promotion of corporate social responsibility.
>
> The commission should establish a community-led 'interdisciplinary business hub' for supporting individuals and families associated with gangs and violence. This hub will show people routes into employment, training, self-employment and business start-up possibilities.
>
> The Commission should work with businesses to provide spaces for activity, training, mentoring and advice for individuals and families associated with or impacted by gangs and violence.

5. Framework for building effective community-involved partnerships

5.1 Introduction

This report recognises the complexities and challenges of influencing the attitudes, thinking and behaviours of individuals, groups and families involved in gang-associated violence in Birmingham neighbourhoods. No one approach, group, institution, system or individual can bring about the changes needed.

National and local evidence shows the limitations of the 'law enforcement approach' and punishing 'criminals' as a response to gangs and serious violence. Following the 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' report, numerous reviews and studies have underlined the need to address the root causes of gang association and youth violence to develop and sustain desistance approaches and interventions.

Joint approaches that incorporate all stakeholders in the design, implementation and review of strategies are needed to manage and coordinate citywide and local interventions. There are challenges to the development of such community-led, public health and interagency partnerships. The next section explores three such challenges.

5.2 Trust, moral dilemmas and confidence factors

Issues around trust and confidence between the statutory and community sectors are not new; however, we are faced with a number of key challenges that require these concerns to be addressed. The community sector highlighted historical and present concerns around, perceptions, treatment, respect, marginalisation, racism, honesty and alienation and the statutory sector highlighted the need to build community confidence. Young people, in particular, spoke of their distrust of the system and especially the police. However, the views of this 19-year-old represent the thinking of three generations in some communities:

See, that's the problem. You all want us to say that we are the problem, an you know what, yes, in some situations we probably are. But, that don't compare to all the bullshit that police have been doing round here. The police brutality! I mean, it's the same shit man are talking about now is the same shit my dad speaks about and what my granddad flippin speaks about! They are all flipping racist man, and it makes me sick when they try out the blame on us, when it's them doing the most f***ry around the world.

For this young person, their daily experiences of the police were like those of their father and grandfather. Some argue that such heartfelt expressions should be taken seriously as indicators of how unaddressed trust and confidence factors in communities can be repeated within each generation. These could be stories relating to hurts, oppression, discrimination, perceptions, both negative and positive, getting passed down from one generation to the next, which shape the way people view, as well as respond to life's issues and challenges.

Schönpflug (2008) offers a 'Cultural Transmission' perspective that covers psychological, developmental, social, and methodological research on how cultural information is socially transmitted from one generation to the next within families. He suggests that this perspective encompasses those processes and factors that transmit and modify beliefs, thinking, attitudes, values and behaviours in families and the wider population.

Given the above acknowledgements, this report supports the need for a 'truth and reconciliation' process that builds and sustains relationships in communities where trust with the authorities is not a regular or understood currency. The history and pain in some communities runs deep and requires a process of deliberate and focused relationship building to begin to heal. This can start with key conversations, events and statements. The failure to talk allows the continuity of distrust and misguided perceptions.

Policing approaches have changed over the years, as have the demography and nature of crimes. In his 2016-2020 Crime Plan, the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (Jamieson, 2016) says:

Crime is changing, not falling, and the way we respond to the threats we face needs to continue to change too. New priorities have emerged in recent times including cybercrime and previously "hidden crimes" including domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery. I will make

sure West Midlands Police is set up to respond to those threats and interventions take place to reduce the harm people face.

There are, however, difficulties in making such aspirations a reality, given £130 million in cuts since 2010. There are challenges around deciding priorities regarding actions and issues defined as essential, imperative, possible and doable. The data suggest that if such decisions are made and policies developed without effective community partnerships (individuals, families, leaders, community organisations, faith groups, business, and local politicians) they tend to implode. 'Top-down' and 'top-heavy' approaches to gangs and violence can be both ineffective and expensive.

This report argues that such partnerships could be developed based on an understanding of the core values, needs, aspirations, belief systems and behaviours of those in neighbourhoods impacted by gangs and extreme violence. As this report shows, there is no one voice that captures the life of these neighbourhoods, as no one voice represents the experiences of business, statutory, political and public protection stakeholders. However, there is a need for basic 'cultural competence' from non-community-based partners. It is from this understanding and 'appreciation' from statutory sector providers and policy makers that confidence from the community can emerge.

The National Centre for Cultural Competence (NCCC) embraces a conceptual framework and model for considering a competence process in seeking to work in diverse communities. According to Cross et al. (1989) and Goode (2004), cultural competence considers the following:

- Valuing diversity in local neighbourhoods.
- Conducing self-assessment regarding competence of staff and organisation.
- Practicing principles of community engagement that result in the reciprocal transfer of knowledge and skills between all collaborators, partners, and key stakeholders.
- Acquiring and institutionalising cultural knowledge and awareness for effective community engagement.
- Developing structures and strategies to ensure consumer and community participation in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the organisation's core functions.

Whilst our interviews with statutory leaders highlighted a willingness to support a notion of cultural competence, they were unable to categorically state whether their respective staff teams were fully conversant with the above.

Some community respondents were clear that encounters with statutory services about issues linked to gangs, serious violence and criminality often followed a 'law enforcement' perspective. The services were there to interrogate, judge and punish and were unaccountable to those who used them, rather than follow the culturally competent public health framework and values above. This raises issues around the ownership, implementation, monitoring and accountability of the non-community-based sectors. We suggest that their activities, policies and practices need to be overseen and monitored to ensure that they address the needs, interests and challenges of individuals and families impacted by serious violence.

The next section considers some issues linked to how strategic coordination, ownership and leadership of the gangs and serious violence strategies are implemented.

5.3   Leadership, ownership and sustainability

A key theme in the data concerns the leadership and ownership of the gangs and serious youth violence agenda. Statutory, faith and specialist provider organisations agreed that partnerships are necessary, but were unclear as to which strategic board or platform should lead and coordinate them. One suggestion was that this report should be embedded in all boards and structures involved with individuals, families and communities impacted by gangs, guns, knives and violence. This should include a community-involved/led structure to support the delivery of effective services linked to identified needs and a clear action plan for each recommendation with named responsible parties.

With the termination of the BRGV partnership, some statutory provider respondents did not know what new frameworks might be implemented, or who might be responsible for driving them. The BRGV's purpose and objectives are noted below for reference and review purposes, given that this model was used as a flag ship regarding reducing gang violence in Birmingham:

BRGV Purpose
Vision

We see a future Birmingham in which the energy, affiliations and competitive drive of young people is wholly directed into positive, productive social and economic leadership, rather than negative gang-related activity.

BRGV Aim
BRGV's aim is to reduce the level of gang violence and its effect upon communities.

In support of this main aim, BRGV2's aim is to stop young people falling into negative gang-related activity, and helping those that have started to stop.

BRGV Objectives
In support of its aim, BRGV has four objectives:

- To reduce gang-related shooting;
- To reduce the potential for gang-related violence;
- To improve community and neighbourhood reassurance;
- To enhance the image of the City as a safe city.

Outcomes
These objectives will result in the following four outcomes:

1. Gang-related violence reduced;
2. Gang-related crime offenders brought to justice;
3. Gang-related offenders exiting from crime;
4. Greater community and individual resistance towards negative gang-related activity (BRGV Strategic Framework, 2007)

There is much here that should be considered in both present structures and new frameworks. Picking up on some of the BRGV themes, some statutory sector respondents suggested that credible community organisations and representatives should be in a power-sharing leadership to drive the recommendations forward. This is an important idea, however, there is a need for caution in moving to the new initiatives without understanding why the old ones might have failed.

Section 3 shows that strategic bodies and organisations like BRGV and the Centre for Conflict Resolution no longer exist, even though they were meant to consider long-term solutions to issues around gang-related criminality and violence. They failed for various reasons, including funding challenges and the lack of robust evidence around the impact and effectiveness of any desistance interventions. We

remain very concerned about the lack of sustainability of community organisations or partnerships that are focused on engagement of individuals and families involved in criminality.

For some in the community, this raises questions about statutory partners' commitment and priorities, especially when there is evidence of the emergence of a 'new and fresh set of young gangsters', who are not easily engaged or are closed to interventions from statutory services outside of an enforcement situation.

The statutory, community and faith sector respondents agreed on the need for long-term, multiagency, community-involved and community-led partnerships. However, the continued impact of austerity and budgetary restraints may mean further cuts to resources available to children, young people and their families, such as Birmingham's Youth Service.

Given their criminal justice perspectives and financial limitations, statutory bodies often intervene only when individuals are seriously 'at risk 'or are heavily involved with gang-associated criminality. Where the statutory services intervene, there is the belief that it is too little, too late to help people address the complex nature of their needs. Community-based projects work to stop young people from ever going 'on road' and support them to leave it. These projects recognise the difficulty of people's lives and their feelings of isolation and exclusion from statutory providers' support. Community-based respondents reiterated the need to treat people with dignity, fairness and firmness, as highlighted in the cultural competence framework.

The next section discusses what an effective framework should consider in seeking to engage with issues associated with gangs and violence.

5.4   Conceptual framework: towards effective partnerships

Over the past 15 years, Birmingham's statutory service providers, faith and community groups have gone through various changes and challenges, impacted by socio-political, socio-cultural and economic influences. This means that some groups involved in effective engagement with 'at risk' or gang-associated youngsters no longer exist, mainly because of lack of funding. Groups' dependant on grants from the city and independent funders inevitably struggle to survive under austerity.

Discussions with SPs showed their concerns around sustaining their impact and good work, because of how the non-community-based stakeholders prioritise their work.

The realities associated with strategic shifts from a police, law-enforcement approach towards a public and social health framework is still to be tested.

This report has already highlighted some key issues and concerns and offered recommendations for partnering with community organisations within resourced and sustainable structure. During the data collection for this report – and being a part of the commission and SP meetings – it became increasingly clear that the commission is prepared to explore different or fresh frameworks to consider how a community-involved partnership with the city could be resourced and sustained.

To aid the commission's exploration of ways to implement the recommendations, the diagram below is included. It was presented at the commission meeting on 21st February 2017 and should be considered alongside the public health approach presented in section 4.2.

Towards An Effective Partnership Model

Systematic and incremental implementation of Recommendations with ACCOUNTABLE Leads (Org/ Agencies/Teams)

Active and Dynamic Conversations and Collaboration (Board, Forum or Consortium)

Revised Practices & Actions based on Research - with built-in Reviews/ Evaluations

Collective Agreement and Understanding re: Presenting Issues& Challenges

Sustainable and Effective Solution Focused and Needs-led Interventions

Long Term Culturally Competent approaches re: Prevention, Intervention, Rehabilitation and Enforcement

The willingness of SPs to participate as commission partners arguably represents a community-involved process that should be continued, as recommended in this report.

The community-involved participation by SPs should not be taken lightly. Four SPs made the point that some community members saw their involvement with the commission as collusion with the 'system'. As stated previously, some young people believed that the information gathered by the SPs may be used by the police to further intimidate them. Such views were challenged, however, it again

raises the concerns about how trust is developed and sustained between the community and statutory officials.

6. Concluding reflections

This report has acknowledged that serious violence and gang-associated criminality are issues of great concern in a number of neighbourhoods in the city. Furthermore, we have highlighted that the crimes associated with gangs and violence are perpetrated by a small percentage of people. However, from our exploration, it is clear that this small group of individuals can cause major devastations in neighbourhoods and wider city, which inevitably impacts on friends, families of victims and perpetrators as well as service providers.

There is evidence in this report substantiating that many acts of violence and peer-associated criminality occur in public and social spaces and that these impact on the emotional, psychological and social well-being of those directly or indirectly involved. The evidence emerging from the research shows that young men and women associated with gangs and violence are not detached from their communities, but are known and loved by some, feared and revered by others in their neighbourhoods. They are part of family structures and friendship networks (Anderson, 1999; Brown, 2014; Gunter, 2010). There are no 'unknown' or 'unidentifiable' gang members. Consequently, we believe there is a need for establishing community-involved and community-led partnerships that are able to engage and work with these 'known individuals'. However, this report strongly challenges any notion that community groups should be considered as 'intelligence gathering channels' for the police or the wider criminal justice system.

It is clear from the research that where credible, trusted and established community groups and individuals are involved with victims and perpetrators of crime and serious violence, they can better mediate and minimise the risk of further violence and fatalities. Many community respondents suggested that loving, genuine, and honest relationships with people affected by gangs and crime allow them to develop new ways to meet their challenges.

We believe the report for Birmingham Commission on Gangs and Violence is poised at the 'tipping point' for partnership working. There appears to be openness between city and community officials to develop sustained partnerships and strategies for effective interventions to counter serious violence. Key stakeholders working in statutory bodies acknowledge that a criminal justice approach, with rigorous law enforcement responses to 'gangs'

and violence, appears to have created a greater gap and distrust between some communities and the police.

This report has highlighted feelings, thoughts and aspirations of victims, perpetrators, city and community organisations, and concerned individuals. It does not negate the very real challenges related to historical hurts, misrepresentations, and relationship gaps between some in the statutory sector and communities or groups often identified as 'hard to reach'. The issues and challenges associated with gangs and violence remain complex and require the 'right framework' influenced by the 'right people' (credible, effective and culturally competent organisations/individuals from city and community) working together. As such partnerships develops, the diagram below, as presented to the commission meeting on 21st February 2017, should continue to influence and shape the thinking of partners.

Some Principles for Consideration
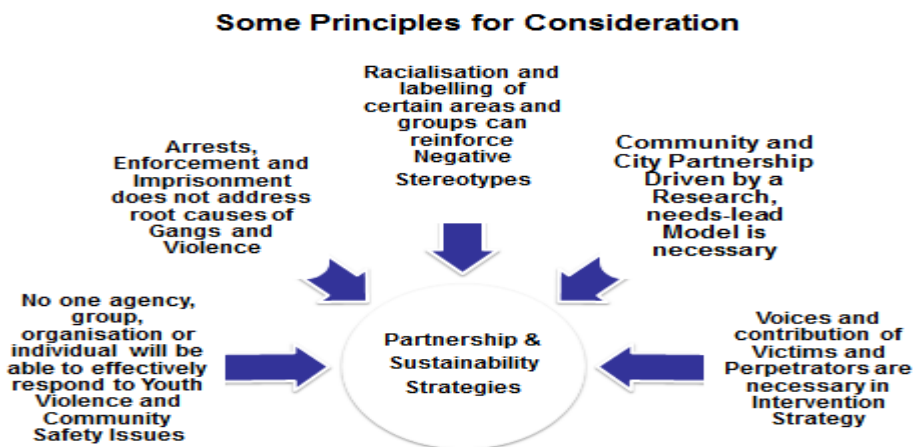
Despite some suspicions that this report may be ignored like others, there is evidence suggesting communities still see the value of working in partnership with key decision makers and statutory bodies towards transforming the landscape for young people and their families in the city. There is undoubtedly a need for further strategic thinking and actions regarding community-led and community-involved partnerships that adopt a 'bottom up' approach to gangs and violence prevention.

Moving Forward

From the outset of this research project, it was clear a community-led and multiagency approach should be considered. The Police and Crime Commissioner was clear at the launch of the commission in March 2016, that this approach seeks to put local people at the heart of making changes to the areas in which they live. We therefore further reiterated the need for this report to be embedded within all boards and links to the gangs and violence reduction agenda.

As acknowledged earlier, the impact of gang associated criminality and extreme violence have been a challenge and concern for a number of UK cities. Violence that is both spontaneous and intended impacts numerous families and communities across the UK. It is on this premise we end with a statement from a mom whose family, from Liverpool and Birmingham, welcomes and supports the need for this report. As like other high profile murders, they were cascaded into the local, national and international media spotlights following an unprovoked racially motivated attack on her son:

In writing this statement, it is in the hope that others won't have to write such words. But, given the magnitude and scale of problems with violence on our streets today, it is unfortunate that other mothers may have to write about pain, loss, sacrifice and justice; and, in some cases, injustice.

No one will ever know or understand the magnitude of losing a child ... until it happens. No one can fully grasp the pain, trauma and lasting effect of loss on a family and the community. Losing a loved one under any circumstances is a travesty. The long-term effects are infinite – they never go away and the impact and domino effect continues within generations, while having to explain to children why the person in certain photos are no longer present. The birthdays, Christmases and opportunities for celebration are all missed and longed for. The continuous questioning from curious nieces, nephews and grandchildren causes the reliving of an evil action on a daily basis.

Be it not for the grace of God and in the power of forgiveness, we would be consumed and destroyed by the overwhelming pain of loss for our beloved Anthony. Anthony was 18 years old when he was murdered in an unprovoked racially motivated attack. He was an aspiring basketball player, who wanted to be a lawyer. He had a profound sense of justice and love of young people and his community. This was the driving force for his organisation, The Anthony Walker Foundation that works to stop race hate crime in our communities.

Our hope is that this report creates a pathway for continuous positive work in the community, leading to a better tomorrow of equity, freedom and justice for all. It is in this report that I envision a clear strategy to tackle the problems of violence and grief in our streets, which can be utilised nationwide. Our expectation is that this report will be a catalyst for greater partnerships and cohesive communities all underpinned by a lasting peace. Our hope is for all of working together. Unity is strength and by taking this collective stance, we can become stronger.

Gee Walker and family (16.03.17)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

COMMISSION ON GANGS AND VIOLENCE

Working together for Safer and Stronger Communities

MANAGEMENT PLAN

**THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
AQUA HOUSE
LIONEL STREET
BIRMINGHAM
B1 3AQ**

JUNE 2016

INTRODUCTION

This management plan seeks to coordinate a series of interventions by the community and public sector agencies and offer detailed responses to the actual spike in gun related violence and the community perceptions that run alongside. There are a number of competing situations of which we are aware:

- There are new guns available, have become available, or have been drawn back into use

- A new generation of young people are being tempted by or drawn into gang related activities/ participation

- Gangs are a persistent threat

- The voices of young people are necessary in developing effective interventions

- Not all recent fire arms offences and violent acts are gang related

- Community members are concerned about the lack of a sustainable partnership strategy to address the key issues associated with gang related activities and violence.

- Perceptions are that withdrawal of funding from BRGV has undermined former activity to impact on gang related harm, which has supported community groups and projects. In addition, cuts in funding have also led to a reduction in local voluntary and community activity

- There is a significant change in demographics in the area

- Members of the community have told us that 'Something is different, things have changed'

- Members of the community have expressed concerns about perceptions of confidence in the police

- Members of the community express a need to have a genuine and sustainable strategy and action plans that's community owned and driven 'from the bottom up', where the PCC and other partners are held accountable for what is commissioned.

THE ISSUE

To be able to tackle the complex challenges resulting in the present 'problem', we need to be able to define the associated issues, and so this work will gather evidence to allow us to understand and subsequently address the issues raised, in partnership with other agencies. The key to this piece of work is that it will be community-led from the outset, both through the process and also development and implementation of the recommendations. This approach will put local people at the heart of making changes to the area in which they live; community involvement will be an on-going process throughout the lifetime of the project.

CURRENT POSITION

1. Urban street gangs and organised crime features heavily in the Commissioners' Police and Crime Plan, as does offender management, and putting in place better support services for victims.
2. Jobs and economic development impact on and reduces criminality.
3. Work with offenders is a priority; both in prison and 'through the gate' back into community.
4. Violence is a Public Health and partnership issue.
5. The enforcement strand will continue however, 'We can't arrest our way out of this'. West Midlands Police are partners, and will ensure that current responses are the right responses.
6. The OPCC supports work in schools such as the 'Precious Lives' project around knife and gun crime, educating young people on the impact of violence.
7. There is a need to consider prison resettlement work with partners that effectively reduces re-offending rates with high risk offenders and their families, removing stigma and discrimination and creating a genuine basis for a 'second chance' from all partners.
8. Educational standards have improved over the last 10 years; however we need to consider issues such as the number of school exclusions.
9. The Commissioner launched the current weapons surrender that was launched on the 16th February 2016 across Birmingham for 6 months and we will ensure that this initiative continues
10. Our approach has to be respectful, sincere and culturally competent, the audience will include individuals and groups with huge experience, engaging with individuals and families who may be gang associated. This includes working with families, bereaved because of violent crimes.

ORGANISATIONS TO BE ENGAGED

West Midlands Police, the Local Authority particularly Education (particularly schools in the area) and Environmental Services, Public Health, Violence Prevention Alliance, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Chamber of Commerce, Birmingham Youth Employment Initiative, the Business Sector, Local Enterprise Partnerships, the Business Sector, Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, Probation, Youth Offending Team, Mental Health services, HMP Prison Services, the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The Commission will be the governance structure for the project, accountable to the Commissioner.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Community members/organisations of the Commission will be representatives who have credibility and a track record of working effectively with the issues of concern to the Commission and community.

2.   As a 'partnership' the Commission will listen to and respond to the views of the community.

3.   The Commission will review the current responses to gangs and violence by commissioning a literature review of past reports and recommendations and assess their effectiveness and relevance to present challenges.

4.   The Commission will review and support the work that is currently taking place in the area - enforcement, youth activity, local authority interventions, voluntary, faith and community activity.

5.   The Commission will assess the programme of community engagement events, consultations, focus groups,   meetings etc. to develop recommendations for future activities.

6.   Members will bring innovation and best practice.

7.   The Commission will look for opportunities to increase effective preventative work and identify new trends

8.   The Commission will undertake a comparison of activity taking place in Manchester and London

9.   The Commission will develop report/recommendations for community-led implementation and the approach to gangs and violence in the future, based on the evidence gathered.

10.   The Commission will oversee implementation of community led activity, resulting in empowerment, engagement and resilience.

11.   The Commission will be in place initially for a 12 month period, to be reviewed.

OUTCOMES

-    A better understanding of the problems to be addressed

-    A report detailing recommendations and action plan

-    A Launch Event of the Report and Action Plan in September 2016

-    Community-led activity to ensure delivery of the Action Plan and the development of a cross partner/community approach.

Areas to be covered: Ladywood and Perry Barr Wards

TIMESCALES

Short term: 6 month consultation programme
Medium term: 12 month: monitoring of the process
Long term: To be determined

MILESTONE LIST

Milestone	Description	Date
Launch of the Commission	Invited guest list to the public launch	16 Mar 2016
1st meeting of the Commission		June 2016
Desk based literature Review	Academic to be commissioned to gather evidence to establish the current position of reports and recommendations to date to establish understanding of past work and recommendations made to date including Police Authority report, Black Radley Report, BRGV report, BRAP, John Coughlan, Faith in the City etc. Establish demographic and violence profile of Birmingham	June-August 2016
Programme of Events to pull together evidence	• Meetings • Focus Groups • Roundtables • Consultation Events with faith organisations, IAGs, community and residents groups, community activists, consultation events, mothers and families Birmingham Citizens	June-Sept 2016
Youth strand of consultation to be commissioned	Targeted youth intervention work: specific strand of meetings, engagement, video/film activity with an Action Plan	June 2016 To be completed Sept 2016
16 Workshops to be delivered in the current locations of knife bins	Words 4 Weapons will deliver 2 workshops to young people in locations to be confirmed.	March 2017
Delivery of the Precious Lives programme across Birmingham	Educate young people of the impact of youth crime on those and the families of those involved with the intention of diverting young people away from crime, in particular violent crime, e.g. knife carrying, gun crime, gang activity and CSE. This will be both to large mainstream school audiences as part of "citizenship" within PSHE curriculum and to more at risk groups with organisations for those excluded from mainstream education.	March 2017
Three month stock-take and review	Review activity of the Commission to date and ensure that the plan is on track	Aug 2016
Regular updates to Cllrs and MPs	Monthly updates to be given to Cllrs, MPs, and Cabinet member with Community Safety Portfolio	Quarterly

Event in partnership with Manchester, Liverpool and London	Event in Central Birmingham to consider the activities taking place across the four force area looking at similarities, responses, best practice	Sept 2016
Summit to launch the recommendations and Action Plan	Community-led event to launch the report and action plan	Oct 2016
Commission to monitor progress	Commission will continue to meet monthly/bi-monthly to monitor progress and implementation	Monthly/bi monthly

MEMBERSHIP

Bishop Derek Webley: Chair

Yusef Ahmed: Youth Commissioner (BWC)

Yusef is 18 years old and lives in Aston, Birmingham. He attends South and City College and is studying public services at the moment. He started getting involved in youth groups three years ago when he became a member of The Lighthouse. Also, in the past he has done voluntary work within schools, working with year 2 children. He has a wide range of hobbies and interests and enjoys getting to know different people, talking, helping people and listening to people. He is optimistic and likes to seize every opportunity he gets that is likely to have a positive impact on people. He enjoys giving young people a voice and the chance to get their point across.

Yusef wants to make a change, a difference, and help to reduce youth crime throughout Birmingham, which could help save lives and prevent them from being hurt or damaged.

Rev Dr. Carver Anderson: Academic/Researcher

Rev Dr. Anderson is a Practical Theologian and Social Scientist. He is a qualified social worker with many years experience at practitioner and senior management levels, working with individuals, families and communities plagued by multiple and complex challenges.

Dr. Anderson has a Masters in Social Science in Socio Legal Studies and a PhD in Theology (Towards a practical theology for effective responses to Black Young Men associated with crime for Black Majority Churches) from The University of Birmingham. He is an Executive Director and one of the founders of the Bringing Hope Charity in Birmingham, working to support individuals and families impacted by crime and violence, both perpetrators and victims. Over the years Dr. Anderson has chaired and been part of numerous committees regarding family and community safety also developmental issues. This included being a member of four Home Secretary's Round Table, considering community safety interventions.

Dr. Anderson has been a local pastor in Birmingham, with over 30 years experience in pastoral care and support, and has collaborated and worked in partnership with statutory, voluntary, faith and community sectors. In his various roles, he has taught, lectured and presented at seminars and conferences in Africa, Jamaica, Europe, the USA and across the UK, relating to his research interests (practical theology, youth crime, black young men and criminal association/activities, social ethics and faith interventions). Dr. Anderson particularly advocates for churches to be active in community life, bring hope support and insights to those represented in the Luke 4:18 narrative (the poor, prisoners, 'blind', oppressed and marginalised people).

Joan Campbell: Specialist Family Intervention Practitioner
Joan Campbell is a Director of Community Vision West Midlands CIC. She is a qualified Probation Officer with in excess of 25 years expertise working within the field of Offender Management, Substance Misuse, Education and family centred behaviour change programs.

Joan is responsible for the design of The Specialist Intensive Young Peoples and Families Intervention commissioned by Safer Birmingham Partnership under the Ending Gangs and Serious Youth Violence national Home Office initiative. She also designed Sandwell Oasis which was a similar family centred project commissioned by Sandwell Council to tackle the impact of urban street gangs. Such programmes recognised and utilised the involvement of parents as being critical factors in sustaining positive changes in the behaviour of young people. In addition to her work around urban street gangs Joan currently runs a victim support service, assisting those affected by serious crime to recover from the trauma caused not just to the individual but to the family as a whole. Joan will be using the learning from years of working closely alongside mothers affected by gangs (both as mothers of gang members and mothers of victims of gang violence) to inform the work being done by the Gang Commission.

Lincoln Moses: Chairperson Holford Drive Community Sports Hub
Has a high-level contextual understanding of the roles that are played by different gangs and violence organisations is linked to the Criminal Justice System and other youth prevention strategies. He has sat on the Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence Steering Group, 1,2,and 3, and is a Trustee on the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership. He is a member of West Midlands' Police Independent Advisory Group and has given keynote speeches and presentations to cross panels of MPs at the House of Commons. He has also led on publicity relating to this agenda, as well as appearing on Sky news with the new Chief Constable.

Rev Robin Thompson: Executive Director, Bringing Hope
Reverend Thompson was a member of the Home Secretary's Round Table for Gun, Gangs and Youth Violence from 2003 - 2008 and was recruited for the Home Office Peer Review between 2012 -2016. He is an Executive Director at "Bringing Hope", a charity organisation working to transform and reform lives and communities influenced and impacted by anti-social behaviour such as guns, gangs and knife crime. For over 25 years, he has specialised in working with socially excluded young people and families from different ethno-cultural backgrounds across the UK.

Robin was previously employed from 2002 – 2010 by the Birmingham Drug Action Team (DAT) as Lead Commissioner for Children, Young People and Families (CYPF), serving as a formal member of the Birmingham Safeguarding Board and also as a member of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership as DAT CYPF strategic lead for commissioning integrated substance misuse services and interventions. This role included areas such as substance misuse interventions, mental health, guns and gangs. His knowledge of both public sector commissioning and community development and business/social enterprise puts him in a unique position to enable real change and impact.

Bobby Dennis

Barry Dennis, known as Bobby, is well known in the community for his work and involvement with issues of concern and interest to local and national government, also to statutory, faith, voluntary and community sectors.

He has occupied several roles in the community over the years, from being a volunteer with community organisations, to being a Community Facilitator with Birmingham Settlement, who were involved in neighbourhood development, and community safety. His advice, skills and involvement with young people and families in deprived areas of Birmingham has been valued over the years. Importantly, Bobby offers much needed 'grassroots' perspectives regarding issues of concern in the community.

Bobby is an advocate of working in partnership and has done so through his 'Turn Around' project; working alongside organisations like Bringing Hope Charity, COPE Black Mental Health Trust, YMCA, Centre for Conflict Transformation and Young Disciples Ltd. His skills and support to mediate, manage conflict and offer advice relating to community conflict and safety, has been evident over the years. As a result he has received commendations from statutory, voluntary and community sector management. His joint support and involvement with pertinent community concerns/issues has been evident during some of Birmingham's most challenging periods, where youth violence, conflict and serious community disturbances were a problem. As a result, in June 2009, Bobby was presented with a Community Champion Award by Khalid Mahmood MP, for his 'outstanding contribution to the local community'.

Lloyd Robinson: Criminal Justice Specialist
Has well over 20 years' experience working with high risk individuals and is presently carrying out early interventions, mentoring young men at risk. He was previously a Gangs specialist NOMS 2 (West Midlands) & presently NOMS CFO3 (East Midlands). He has worked as an independent consultant to the Home office part of the Ending Youth & Gang Violence team and carried out peer reviews in 15 locations across the UK for the last 3 years. He has designed and is running Joint Enterprise awareness workshops in schools and Youth Offending Teams across Birmingham and Sandwell. Lloyd is also presently supporting Northamptonshire Police as a consultant around Youth and Gang Violence and is a member of Birmingham's Community Critical Reference Group and BRYV group.

David Jamieson: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

Assistant Chief Constable Carl Foulkes: West Midlands Police

Cllr John Clancy: Leader of Birmingham City Council

Adrian Phillips: Director of Public Health Birmingham

Chief Inspector David Twyford: Violence Prevention Alliance

Mashuq Ally: Director of Equalities, Community and Cohesion

Membership of the Commission may change over time, as issues are brought to the attention of the Commission and people are invited to attend to respond or deliver responses etc. People can be invited to attend to assist the Commission in its work. Members from statutory agencies are required to have a Deputy who can substitute at meetings.

OPCC Support

The strategic lead for the project is Alethea Fuller, who has the overall responsibility for managing this project, reporting to the Chief Executive. The project team will consist of Public Engagement Officers from the Partnerships and Engagement team and other members of the team, as necessary. The Communications Manager, Richard Costello will take the lead role in ensuring that communications and publicity is both appropriate and effective.

Appendix2   Faith Groups- Common Grounds

African Traditionalist

"One must have the courage to face life as it is, to go through sorrows and always sacrifice oneself for the sake of others."

Kipsigis Saying (Kenya)

Baha'i

"Blessed is he who prefereth his brother before himself."

Baha'u'llah, Tablet 71

Buddhist

"Do not hurt others with that which hurts yourself."

The Buddha

Christian

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Matthew 7 verse 12

Confucianist

"The man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others."

Analects 6.28.2

Hindu

"This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."

Mahabharata, XIII: 114

Jain

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self."

Mahavira

Jew

"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole Torah. All the rest of it is commentary."

Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Muslim

"No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

Prophet Muhammad

Sikh

"Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within all."

Guru Granth Sahib, p 258

Unificationist

"We are to live for others. You live for others and others live for you. God lives for man and man lives for God. The husband lives for his wife and the wife lives for her husband. This is goodness. And here unity, harmony and prosperity abound."

Rev Sun Myung Moon, 20.10.73

Zoroastrian

"That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatsoever is not good for its own self."

Dadistan - i - Dinik, 94.5
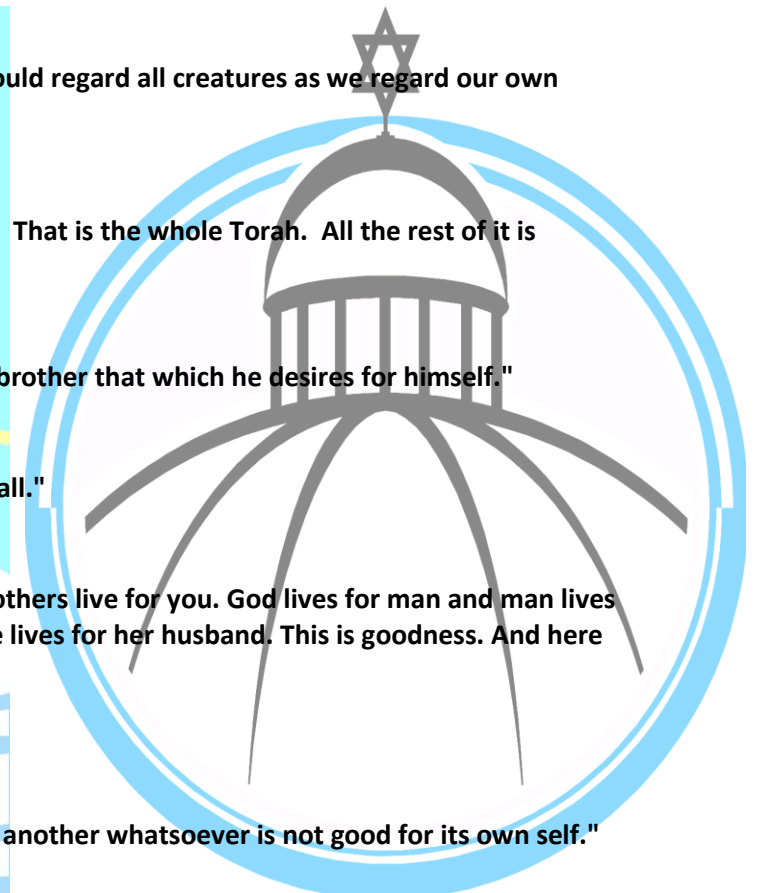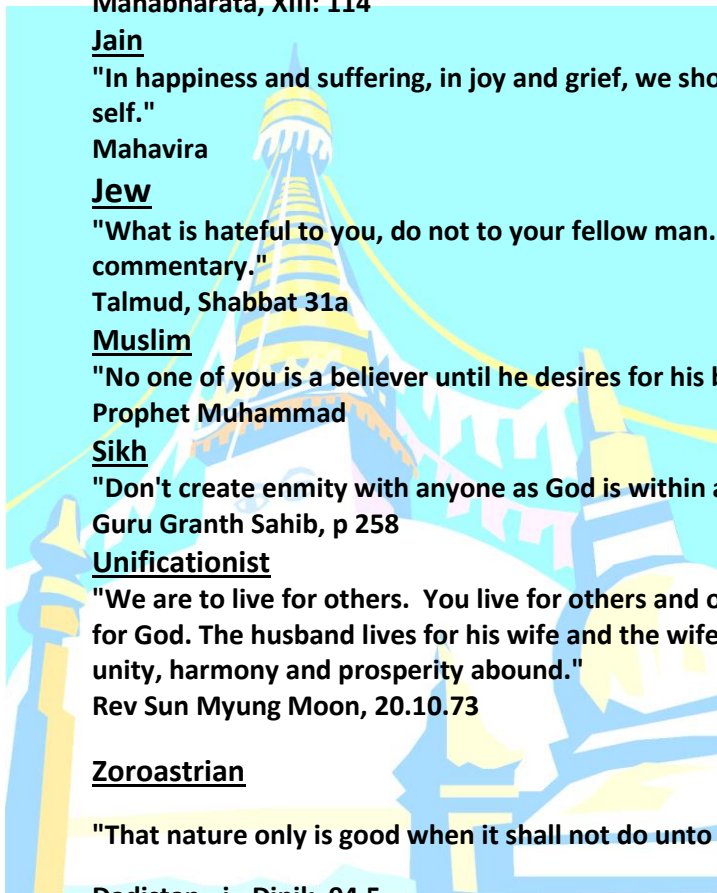
Appendix3

Research proposal for non-funded projects

You should use this form for research projects that do not require funding, but which may need ethical approval.

1. Research Lead	
Name Rev Dr. Carver L Anderson	
School/Department/Section:	Sociology/Criminology
Course: Research	
Other contributors	

Name(s):
   1. **Dr. Martin Glynn (BCU Lecturer)**
   2. **Mohammed Rahman (BCU-PhD Student)**
   3. **Paul Grant (CV attached)**
   4. **Dr. Geraldine Brown (CV attached)**
   5. **Dr. Delroy Hall (CV attached)**	

School/Department/Section:	Criminology/Sociology
Supervisor: **Professor Steve Garner**	

2. Proposed Project details
Title: A literature review exploring the motivations and experiences of victims and perpetrators of crimes associated with gangs and violence in Birmingham: Towards an understanding, for developing effective interdisciplinary interventions that supports a desistance trajectory.
Keywords: **Desistance and interdisciplinary conversations/interventions.**
Research Outline: aims, methodology, expected outcomes
This form relates to the literature review of a wider project. This project has several key phases that seek to explore / understand: causes, impact and interventions associated with serious violence, negative peer-led criminality or gang associated activities in Birmingham. This research/exploration is rooted in a qualitative methodological paradigm. **The office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has responded to the recent spike in gun crime and violence by instituting a 'Commission on Gangs and Violence', to consider an approach, rooted in a partnership that is 'community-led'. Such a partnership is intended to offer new/fresh possibilities; where specialist providers from the community and statutory sector agencies/leads are able to collaborate regarding strategies, recommendations and interventions towards addressing the**

issues of criminality and serious violence in Birmingham. The following two questions are therefore important in our exploration:

1. What are your thoughts, beliefs, values, perceptions and experiences relating to involvement in serious violence, also attitude and behaviours, linked to issues of gangs, guns and involvement in the criminal justice system?

2. What thoughts, ideas/ expectations are prevalent regarding what support, interventions and advice are needed to positively shape, influence or inhibit the desistance/rehabilitation journeys of individuals/families?

It is with the above in mind that a meeting/ conversation with Professor Steve Garner regarding a possible partnership with BCU subsequently agreed that an academic/rigorous research model could enhance this project.

As a result of continued conversations with BCU, The Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and Community Specialist Providers, the following phases are proposed:

- ✓ **Literature review – To be peer reviewed by BCU colleagues Sep – Nov 2016**
- ✓ **Interviews with SP Stakeholders and Statutory groups (Community–led research team – See CVs) Sep - Nov 2016**
- ✓ **Field work by Specialist Providers (interviews/focus groups- Governed by a Community-led ethical framework provided by Dr. Carver L Anderson) September - October 2016**
- ✓ **Youth Focus Groups/interviews (Community- led)------------- - Sep - October 2016**
- ✓ **Fieldwork data to be analysed -- November 2016**
- ✓ **Literature review along with fieldwork data to be triangulated---------December 2016**
- ✓ **Interim/Final Report/ Recommendations-----------------------------------December 2016**
- ✓ **Seminars/presentations within BCU and with stakeholders------February - July 2017**

Will the project require ethical approval/indemnity?
If yes, explain how and when these are to be obtained.
You should submit a completed ethical approval/indemnity form prior to starting your research.
Delays in getting approval may mean your project cannot complete on time.

Whilst this project seeks to address some very complex issues, as seen above, it has been agreed that it does not need to be ethically approved by BCU. As an academic, scholarly desk-based review of existing literature that does not engage participants in the collection and analysis of the information in this non-funded activity, ethical approval is deemed not to be required.

Key Milestones/Project Plan including start and end dates
(a Gantt chart or other visual representation may be attached here; include start and end dates.)

See above schedule and timeframe for details of where this literature review is expected to relate to the wider ongoing project.

Dissemination Plan
Say how the research results will be disseminated, e.g., academic conferences, workshops, published papers, journal articles, conference or seminar presentations, media coverage.

The wider project has three key partners, namely BCU, the community and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Consequently, there will be events, seminars and conferences organised to include all partners in the dissemination of the wider project's findings.

Further non-funded research or external bid which this research will lead to.
e.g. follow-on research or a specific funding opportunity with a submission deadline.

This project seeks to develop a community-led research paradigm that can be replicated in addressing issues of serious concern, as with issues highlighted above.

This project also seeks to provide new empirically based knowledge about negative peer-led criminality associated with violence, also how perpetrators/victims see their involvement in developing supportive structures/approaches to address concerns/challenges. Furthermore, it seeks to offer insights into practical theology, sociology and criminology regarding gangs and violence within an urban context.

Anticipated impacts
Consider the different impacts, i.e. benefits to society, culture, policy, health, the environment and quality of life — both within the UK and overseas.

The impacts will be generated by the wider project, not by this literature review alone.
See above section.

Approval by Head of School/Department/Section

I support this research:

I do not support this research:

Approved by	
Signed by	
Name	
Date	

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