

Amendments to the Part 1, Chapter 2 – Serious Violence Partnerships'

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill provides a unique opportunity to **prevent, identify and support children who are involved in serious youth violence and are victims of child criminal exploitation (CCE)**.
- In 2019, the Children's Commissioner for England estimated that there were **27,000** children at high risk of gang exploitation;¹ and in 2020, the number of 'children in need' assessments that **identified gangs as a factor increased by 34%**.²
- These figures vastly **underestimate the scale of the issue** as many children do not know they are in or admit to being in a gang.
- CCE occurs when a **child is manipulated or coerced into undertaking criminal activity**. It is a form of child abuse that often inflicts serious harm on children, destroys families, ruins childhoods and can set up a vulnerable child for a life in and out of the criminal justice system.
- However, only a fraction of children involved in gang violence are known to children's services.³
- It is essential that children are protected from CCE and serious youth violence, through prevention and early intervention. However, children often face multiple and complex issues that **no one agency can tackle alone**.
- We welcome Part 2, Chapter 1 which will **introduce a new legal duty requiring local public services to work together in 'Serious Violence Partnerships'** to tackle serious violence. This will bring together chief officers of police, specified health authorities, local authorities, probation service providers, youth offending teams and fire and rescue services to plan, prevent and reduce serious violence.
- However, as the duty currently stands, **it will not go far enough to protect and safeguard children** from serious youth violence and criminal exploitation.
- We believe this **duty can be strengthened** to prevent CCE and serious youth violence and better safeguard children by providing clear support pathways for when they present to agencies as victims of these significant harms.

Proposed amendments to Part 2, Chapter 1 – 'Serious Violence Partnerships':

1. A duty to ensure that each local strategy to 'plan, prevent and reduce serious violence' includes a **detailed plan on the prevention, identification and safeguarding of children** involved in serious violence and criminal activity due to coercion, exploitation and/or trafficking.
2. A requirement on all relevant professionals within the specified authorities to **undergo training on the prevention, identification and safeguarding of children involved in criminal activity and serious violence** due to coercion, exploitation and/or trafficking.
3. A duty on the specified authorities to **consult the voluntary sector and local businesses** on the local strategy to 'plan, prevent and reduce serious violence' to

¹ Office of the Children's Commissioner, Keeping kids safe - Improving safeguarding responses to gang violence and criminal exploitation FEBRUARY 2019

² [Characteristics of children in need, Reporting Year 2020 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

³ [CCO-Gangs.pdf \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/cco-gangs.pdf)

help tackle serious violence in their communities. This will encourage interdependent partnership working between local agencies, charities and the private sector who know their local communities and work with them to design solutions. This is particularly important when working to prevent risk for children through *contextual safeguarding* which brings together all child protection systems and wider safeguarding partnerships with individuals and sectors who have influence outside of the family and home, and recognise that spaces, such as parks, local taxi services and shopping centres, are a critical part of safeguarding practice.

4. The establishment of a **National Serious Violence Oversight Board**, chaired by the Secretary of State, to review all local strategies and data to provide a national picture and issue recommendations nationally and locally. This board must produce a report to Parliament every two years on the progress of the duty.
5. Assurances that all new duties will be **supported by long-term investment**. Currently the Bill states that a relevant authority does not have to comply with the duty if it results in the '*authority incurring unreasonable costs.*' It is imperative that all authorities are supported with sufficient funding by Central Government to tackle serious violence in their local areas.

About Barnardo's

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. In 2019/2020, we supported 358,800 children, young people families and carers through more than 800 services and partnerships.

During the pandemic Barnardo's led *See, Hear, Respond*, a unique programme of 80+ charities and community-based organisations across England. The programme provided targeted support to vulnerable groups of children through a blended offer including an online support hub, online counselling and therapy, access to specialist group work, face-to-face 1:1 support, detached youth work, and support with reintegration into education. The programme supported over 27,000 children at risk of being criminally exploited through detached youth work and received 1,943 individual referrals for support regarding child sexual abuse outside of the family home and wider criminal exploitation.

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