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Gangs & working with gang members

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Aim:

Provide an overview of gang membership and factors to take into account when working with gang members

Looking at:

- The definition of gangs
- The Gangs Matrix
- Factors behind gang membership
- Factors to take into account when working with gang members
- Services available

Definition of “street gangs”



The Policing and Crime Act 2009 (updated by the Serious Crime Act 2015) definition;

Gang-related violence is: ‘Violence or a threat of violence which occurs in the course of, or is otherwise related to, the activities of a group that:

- a) consists of at least three people; and,
- b) has one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified by others as a group.’

Trident Gang Command definition, taken from the 2009 Centre for Social Justice Report;

A gang is: ‘A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who

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

They may also have any or all of the following features:

- 3) Identify with or lay claim over territory;
- 4) Have some form of identifying structure feature; and
- 5) Are in conflict with other, similar gangs.

The Gangs Matrix

- A database of suspected gang members in London and was launched by the Metropolitan Police in 2012
- It was created in response to the 2011 London riots
- Individuals are listed as 'gang nominals' and given an automated green, amber or red violence ranking
- Concerns have been raised in regards to how people are listed on the gangs matrix, due to the vagueness of the definition and the discretion given to officers
- It was found that the gangs Matrix was shared with other authorities such as housing and schools/ colleges, which have resulted in young people facing further issues
- Other controversies: social media monitoring, adding and removing, following, victims & racial biases

GANGS MATRIX AT A GLANCE



80%
12-24 year old



78%
Black people



75%
have been victims of
violence themselves



35%
never committed any
serious offences

Gangs Matrix continued

The over identification of BAME people as gang members

- A Mayoral review found a disproportionate number of those monitored were of black or minority ethnic (BAME) heritage.
- 87% were from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, and 78% were black.
- However, 27% of those responsible for youth violence are black

- 15% were minors; the youngest was 12 years old
- 99% were male
- The Met has now removed almost 500 people with little or no evidence of gang involvement, & says the majority have not committed a crime in the six months following their removal.

- Accurate statistics on gang membership are very hard to gather and can be portrayed inaccurately.
- There are currently 2,676 people on the gangs matrix

Gang related crime



Table 1: Proportion of serious violence identified as gang related³

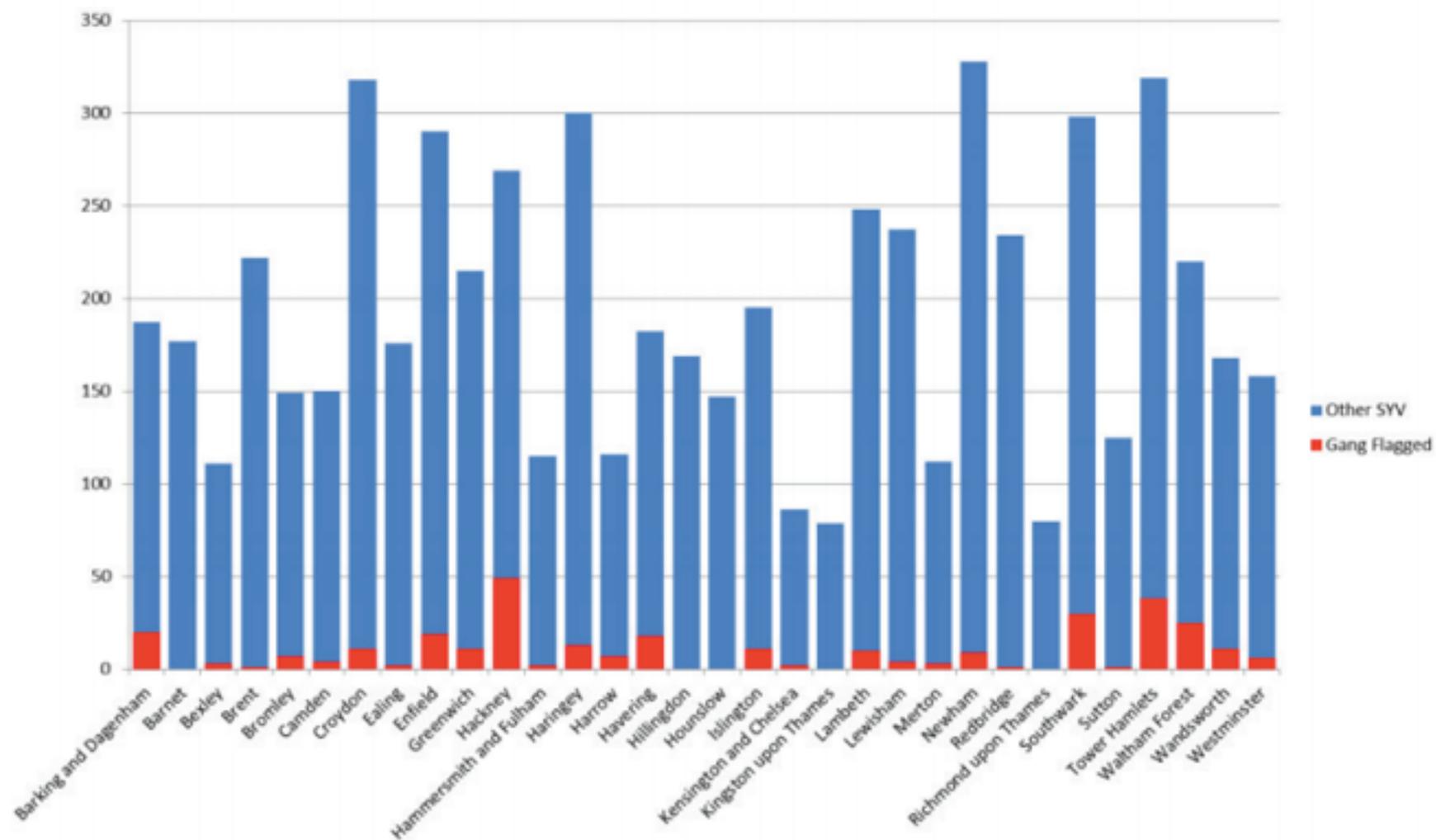
Crime Type		2016	2017	2018*	Total
Homicide	All Homicides	112	136	106	354
	<i>Gang related</i>	29%	27%	37%	31%
	Homicide excluding Domestic Abuse & Terrorism	95	115	83	293
	<i>Gang related</i>	35%	32%	47%	37%
Shootings	Lethal Barrelled Discharge	334	354	313	1001
	<i>Gang related</i>	50%	40%	52%	47%
	Lethal Barrelled Discharge - Victim Shot	136	144	112	392
	<i>Gang related</i>	62%	49%	63%	58%
Stabbings	Knife Injury; Victim under 25; excl. Domestic Abuse	1853	2138	1433	5424
	<i>Gang related</i>	26%	21%	18%	22%

² Internal MOPAC analysis based on 2017 data. Previous analysis from 2015 also found gang-related stabbings to result in more serious injury.

³ Homicide and knife injury statistics are victim counts. Both firearm categories are offence counts. Data shown as 2018 includes offences up to 30/09/2018.

Gang related crime

Gang crime is a small percentage of serious youth violence



Gang membership

Why do people join?

- Feeling of protection/safety (& family protection)
- Sense of belonging and family
- Issues at home (DV, substance misuse, absent parents, bereavement)
- For financial gain and other rewards
- Previous family gangs links
- Status amongst peers and others
- Self esteem and achievement. Through gaining ratings, young people who may be unable to succeed at school, sports or other activities can be seen as a part of “something”
- Peer pressure
- Lack of family or emotional support
- Fear of intimidation or threats from others

(This list is not exhaustive)

Factors to consider when working with gang members

- Geography

Can be difficult for mentees to distance themselves if they return to the same area

- Threats of violence

Better to gradually disconnect (fade away) then announce departure

- Expectations

Peers expecting them to return and still be involved in any gang related activities

- Mental health issues

A lot of gang members will have experienced violence, and may suffer from mental health issues such as PTSD, anxiety and depression. This could also be due to perpetrating violence, bereavement etc.

- Relationship breakdowns

Previous breakdowns and breakdowns due to disassociating

Pushes

- Grew out of the gang lifestyle
- Criminal justice system involvement
- Police harassment or pressure
- Personal or vicarious victimization

Decker and Lauritson, 2011

Pulls

- Familial responsibilities
- Job responsibilities
- Significant other
- Moved
- Family left the gang
- Gang fell apart

Other potential issues

- Low self-esteem/confidence
- Issues getting into ETE
- Social exclusion
- Social disadvantages
- Issues due to development
- Substance misuse
- Sexual exploitation & abuse

(This list is not exhaustive)

Services available



- **London Gang Exit**

Providing support to exit, develop new skills, and provides the opportunity for social reintegration into the community through support, guidance and practical help. The service offers holistic support over a six month intervention period

- **Bereavement Counselling**

Various organisations - Speak to PMs

- **Therapy**

Either in prison or following release

- **Substance misuse support**

Various organisations - Speak to PMs

- **Extra curricular activities**

Sports, music, creative activities, activities in general

- **Mentoring**

Support from Trailblazers

Reading list



<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/london-trident-gangs-matrix-metropolitan-police>

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/reports/Trapped%20in%20the%20Matrix%20Amnesty%20report.pdf>

<https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/gangs-violence-matrix/>

<https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/force-content/met/about-us/gangs-violence-matrix/mopac-gang-matrix-review.pdf>

<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-intervention-of-met-gangs-matrix>

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmhaff/199/19905.htm#:~:text=The%202009%20Act%20defines%20a,associated%20with%20a%20particular%20area.>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771130/The_mental_health_needs_of_gang-affiliated_young_people_v3_23_01_1.pdf

<https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Getting-Out-Staying-Out.pdf>