

London Gang Member Referral Guide

Context and background notes



Introduction

The existing Metropolitan Police Gangs Matrix identifies those gang members in each London borough who pose the greatest risk of committing and or being a victim of gang-related violence. The scoring process ensures that there is a consistent scoring matrix used across London; and, if a gang member moves from one borough to another, that scoring will be understood and capable of risk management at the new borough in which the gang member resides.

The Metropolitan Police has an agreed protocol for transfer of a gang member from one borough's police matrix to another, but this relates solely to the police. There is no guidance as to how an holistic handover between all engaged services in one borough can be involved in a co-ordinated handover to their counterparts in another borough that a gang member is moving to.

The London Gang Member Referral Guide has been developed based on working practice in LB Hackney to ensure an effective handover of gang members to other boroughs or local authority areas, to which they have moved; so that there is continuity of support, diversion opportunities and, where appropriate, enforcement.

The guide is intended as just that, it is a framework that allows for all agencies to ensure an effective handover of their clients, but provides the flexibility for boroughs to tailor it to local service practices and need.

LB Hackney Gangs Intervention work

Hackney's Community Safety Partnership identified tackling gang violence as a strategic priority in 2009 and undertook detailed analysis of gang violence in the borough to develop a comprehensive understanding of the alliances, disputes and tensions between different gangs.

As a result the first co-located Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU) in the UK was formed in Hackney in the summer of 2010. The IGU has all staff in a single dedicated suite that enables real-time communication and information sharing, speed of action and intervention, enabling a multi-agency approach that looks at all preventative, diversion and enforcement opportunities.

The IGU consists of dedicated teams from the Police, National Probation Service, the council Community Safety Team, Youth Justice, Safer London Foundation, Department for Work and Pensions and Victim Support.

The work of the IGU has resulted in reductions of gang related violence, so that levels are now around a third of that experienced in 2010.

Hackney's approach to a comprehensive gang member handover

The London Gang Member Referral Guide sets out a tried and tested approach to a handover through completion of a notification form that ensures there is provision of comprehensive information in relation to any gang member moving to another borough.

The guide sets out the headline actions required of each agency that are relevant to a particular client, including police, NPS, Community Rehabilitation Company, Youth Offending Team and DWP. It also includes specific actions in relation to an urgent move to another borough as a result of evidenced gang violence or threats.

The process ensures there is a consistent approach to the handover of a client to another borough and can also be used as a check-list for gang members moving to the borough from elsewhere.

While the framework suits Hackney's purposes, it can be adapted to the particular operating processes of any borough, taking account of the resources dedicated to tackling gang violence or simplifying with a single point of contact if a dedicated multi-agency approach is not required.

Case Study



J was a 23 year-old long-term gang nominal with a large number of associates and an extensive offending history including drug dealing, violence and theft offences.

He had a long history of non-convictions linked to his gang lifestyle, many for violence. His home address had been subject of an attack where a firearm was discharged. His mother had moved away from the area and his father is deceased. His brother lives in Hackney but they no longer have any interaction with each other.

Essentially he had no ties to Hackney other than gang-related associations and offending.

J expressed to his probation officer that he wanted to leave his gang lifestyle and make a fresh start. In order to support this it was considered necessary to relocate him away from previous associates, to outside the borough. Accommodation was identified in another borough via the leaving care team and direct support provided by St Giles Trust and the IGU DWP worker. To assist further and provide clear parameters, a Gang Injunction was obtained which set out a number of conditions (to be in force for two years):

1. Not to enter the London Borough of Hackney without the written permission of the Head of the Hackney Gangs Unit.
2. Not to use the internet to encourage or facilitate violence.
3. Not to be in a public place with two or more persons behaving in a manner likely to cause a person to fear for their safety.
4. Not to associate with a list of 20 named individuals.

In addition positive activities were included:

1. Attend meetings with a worker from the Integrated Gangs Unit as advised by the Gangs worker.
2. Maintain an application for job seekers allowance if not in paid employment.

Clearly the injunction conditions and potential risk issues applied to the new borough the subject had moved to. A comprehensive handover was undertaken using the referral guidance, so that all agencies in the new borough were aware of his previous gang involvement, the gang injunction; and its conditions and that his aim to make a fresh start. From this there was an effective handover within DWP, so that job-seekers allowance continued to be paid and basic training for plumbing was identified, to support subsequent applications for apprenticeships which were made in consultation with J. National Probation conducted a case handover that included a comprehensive briefing on the gang injunction and positive conditions, with St Giles maintaining the same caseworker after the move to deliver an element of continuity.

Through both a comprehensive handover and continued liaison between agencies in Hackney and the new borough, J has had bespoke support in respect of training and is now on an apprenticeship and no longer associating with gang related individuals.

Conclusion

The Gang Member Referral Guidance provides a useful set of factors and agencies to be considered in the effective handover of a gang member who moved from one local authority area to another. For those gang members looking to start a new life, it enables agencies in the new local authority area to understand not just past history but also future aspirations and from that provide the best opportunities for a successful transition.

For those who continue to be active gang members an effective sharing of information and handover by all agencies and not just the police, provides the best opportunity for informed risk assessment and action to prevent offending and violence. It enables the borough that hands over a gang nominal to be confident that they have satisfied their safeguarding obligations and provides the new area with accurate information to access future risk, as well as provide useful points of contact for future reference.

A lack of effective handover risks an assumption that risk factors are known or do not exist, or that other agencies have taken responsibility for information sharing. The guidance document removes such assumptions and documents a handover that is clear to all. As a guide it is very much open to local authorities who use it, to tailor it to their own needs.

Contact

Steve Bending, Head of Safer Communities Hackney



steve.bending@hackney.gov.uk



London Councils
59½ Southwark Street
London SE1 0AL
www.londoncouncils.gov.uk
020 7934 9816

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