



Learning on a Page: JTAI Serious Youth Violence Audit

Background

This multi-agency audit took place in April 2024 when York's response to children and young people who have been involved in serious youth violence was considered.

In February 2024, key partners from across York and North Yorkshire came together to assess the current state of serious violence across the region, and assigned key priorities to help combat it. Subsequently a regional Serious Violence Strategy was published which included resources and projects to support young people involved in, or to prevent youth violence.

The aim of this multi-agency audit was to understand the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to children who are at risk of, or who commit Serious Youth Violence.

Who did we Audit?

Six children's case records reviewed:

- Two were subject of a Child Protection Plan
- One was subject of a Child in Need Plan
- Three were Young People in the care of the Local Authority.
- Five of the young people were open to Youth Justice Service, with one child recently closing.
- All children were under the age of 18 years old and were from different families.
- Five children were White British, and one child was Black African. For one child who identified as White British, they also had White Asian heritage recorded, although this young person did not identify as White Asian.
- All children and their families were known to multi-agency partners

What areas of good practice was highlighted?

- Partners in York were able to identify many examples of 'the child's voice' within single agency records for every young person. This was evident in assessments, case summaries, home visits, reports, and multi-agency meetings. Assessments were written

directly to the child in plain English, without jargon or acronym within Children Social Care records.

- Partners noted improvement in the quality of Public Protection Notices completed by North Yorkshire Police in terms of how they capture the voice and analyse the lived experience of the child.
- Case summaries within Children's Social Care children's records were written to the child, included danger statements and safety goals, and provided clear information about risk and safety, which is available for example, to Emergency Duty Team (EDT) to use outside of working hours.
- Of the 6 children's case records considered in the audit 77.5 % had been previously known to agencies including police and CSC – whilst this is hugely positive, it may be of note that despite the significant involvement partners were not successful in steering the child away from the serious violence. This is also relevant for education colleagues where we discussed the significant work, which was evidenced, supporting children back into education, but had not resulted in supporting the child to return.
- As a result of this audit, partners are assured that children in York who commit serious crime receive a robust multi-agency response and support to prevent further offences and work with young people to support a positive future.

Key Learning Points

Learning Point 1

Four of the six children considered were neurodiverse and all of the six children had significant levels of childhood trauma, complex-family relationships, parental separation, changes of care giver, perceived rejection, domestic abuse, parental and young people's substance use. Partners considered the potential to add a note onto the child's record of what 'triggers' there are for the young person and how they might be best engaged. This is because times were identified when young people have struggled to accept support and have displayed a 'fight or flight' response or an aggressive response to some partners including police.

Learning Point 2

The young people's case records considered in this audit described young people's aspirations and hopes for the future, which is extremely positive and speaks about the quality of the relationships being built between practitioners and young people. Consistent consideration of the wider needs of the family network and risks to the wider group of children associated with an individual child were clearly evidenced. All assessments consider the needs of the

child within the context of their family network and analyse the impact of childhood trauma on the child and on their coping mechanisms.

Learning Point 3

All of the children whose case records were considered, had experienced some level of mental health difficulty, or were diagnosed with ADHD/Autism, with one child described as displaying traits of Bi-Polar illness and two children displaying self-harming behaviours. Whilst their health needs in most areas were met, it is possible that in some cases the behaviours exhibited by young people were related to their condition and difficulty in managing emotions leading to frustration and anger. Partners were curious to understand the cycle, described by some of the young people as *'feeling low and using drugs to feel better'*. For two young people who were diagnosed with ADHD, medication was not prescribed by CAMHS because of their substance misuse use and the potential for prescription medication to have a negative impact on the child when taken with drugs. This then creates a cycle of low feelings and drug use which is difficult to disrupt.

Learning Point 4

In the cases where drugs and alcohol were a feature, appropriate referrals to drug and alcohol support services were made and the Drug and Alcohol Support Worker within the Youth Justice Service also provided support to those young people.

Learning Point 5

One of the children whose records were considered in this audit was of dual heritage and one of Ghanaian heritage. It is positive that an understanding of this has informed our practice and supported the work with those young people, in particular within the Youth Justice Service, where a clear understanding of the cultural references for one young person, in terms of someone insulting his mother, was used to underpin their work with this young person.

Learning Point 6

It is clearly evidenced that there is a high level of work being undertaken between families and professionals but consideration should be taken to how indicators of escalating violence in young people over time and the cumulative effect of this are analysed. There was a clear awareness from colleagues about the range of services available to young people and evidence that they were being supported to access these resources to support their emotional well-being and mental health. It was recognised that the availability and access of therapeutic services particularly in respect of childhood trauma and impacts of Domestic Abuse should be understood and commissioned where gaps exist.

Useful resources and further reading

The role of systems of support in serious youth violence: evidence and gaps – June 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/649ac6ecf90109000c818883/The_role_of_systems_of_support_in_serious_youth_violence_-_evidence_and_gaps_June_2023.pdf

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