

THIS IS IT.
THIS IS MY LIFE...

**Female Voice in
violence** FINAL REPORT

On the impact of serious youth violence
and criminal gangs on women and girls
across the country

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ROTA
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the nia project



About us

ROTA

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) is a social policy research organisation that focuses on issues impacting on Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

As a BAME-led organisation, all ROTA's work is based on the principle that those with direct experience of inequality should be central to solutions to address it. Our work is actively informed by the lived experiences of BAME communities and their organisations.

The Author Carlene Firmin, MBE

Carlene Firmin started co-ordinating ROTA's research into serious youth violence in 2006, first delivering their youth-led research into weapon carrying in London, Building Bridges, for which she received a London Peace Award in 2008, and then developing the Female Voice in Violence (FVV) Project.

She also founded the Girls Against Gangs (GAG) project in 2010, supporting women affected by gang violence to become empowered to act as local advisors on gender and youth violence. Carlene presented on the issue of gender and gangs at the United Nations 54th Convention on the Status of Women in New York in March 2010.

She was recently appointed Assistant Director of Policy and Research at Barnardo's.

At 27, she became the youngest black woman to receive an MBE in 2011.

She has an MSc in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics and a degree in Philosophy from Cambridge University.



Foreword



Sue Berelowitz, Deputy Children's Commissioner for England

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states under Article 34 that governments have a duty to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. This extraordinary report sets out starkly, in the words of the young people interviewed, that too many women and girls in our midst are failing to be protected from often horrific, and almost casually perpetrated, sexual exploitation, violence and abuse.

ROTA, through the dedication, persistence and courage of Carlene Firmin and other colleagues, has been a major driving force in getting the plight of these women and girls on the map. This is ROTA's second report exposing the hidden pain and violence of women and girls who are associated with gangs and the chains that hold them fast. They are to be commended for facing up to and revealing a reality that most wish not to see because it is too grim and troubling.

Two words in this report stand out for me in sharp relief – *love* and *fear*. Women and girls speak about the love for their families that prevents them from telling anyone what's happening to them, and of the toxic cocktail of love, longing, low self-esteem and fear that keeps them in thrall to the male who is hurting them, whether he be boyfriend, brother or son. They speak too of the fear of betraying their family if they tell ("snitch") and the fear of loss, exposure, violent retribution and possibly prison if they seek to escape.

It is indeed the voices of the girls and women interviewed that make this report so powerful and compelling. We can no longer say "we didn't know". And it is the voices of the boys and their negative perceptions of women and casual acceptance of violence that make this report so disturbing.

National and local government, the police, health services and community leaders need to demonstrate that the compelling and distressing testimonies documented in this report have not



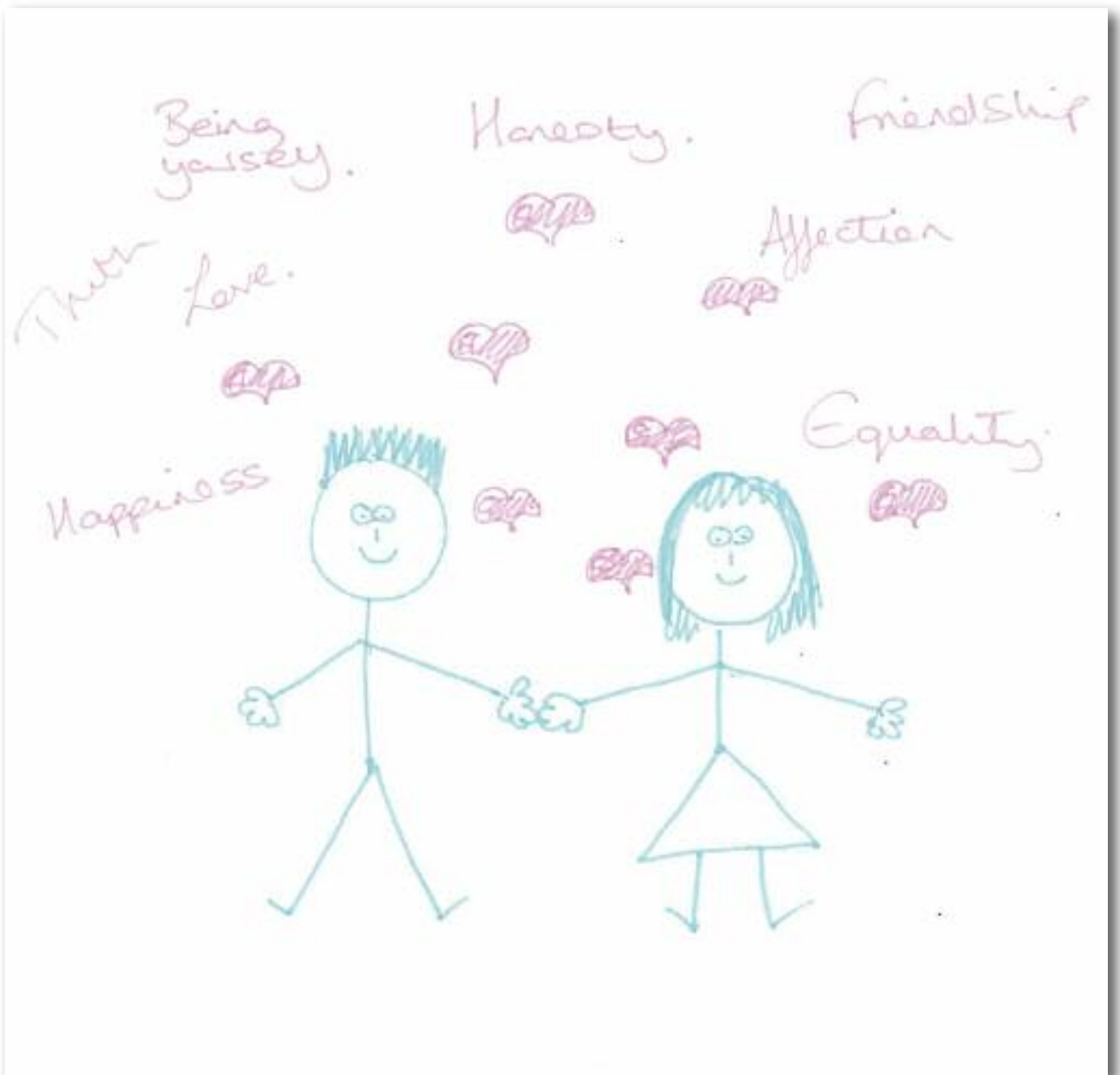


Image produced by female participant

been given in vain. Gang-associated sexual exploitation and serious violence must be recognised as abuse and agencies must respond accordingly, providing the protection and support to which these young people are entitled.

Great courage has been shown by ROTA and all those who contributed to this report. We should not underestimate

the bravery entailed in both gathering these testimonies and coming forward to give evidence. Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children have a right to be listened to and to be taken seriously. It is time to demonstrate that these voices have been heard by taking action to protect those caught up in these spirals of violence and to stop others from being similarly trapped.



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Executive Summary

Then to make up for the day before when he's battered me he'll come back with 5-600 pounds worth of clothes, a whole new wardrobe, new shoes and you're thinking I can't ever escape this, this is gonna be my life forever, and it's scary, it's a scary thing. I thought the only way I would ever get out of it would be to kill meself. I wanted it. Like up until 2 months ago the only thing I'd say about I regretted about that overdose was that it didn't work.

ROTA's 2010 Female Voice in Violence report was a watershed moment in the study of serious youth and gang violence. For a fleeting moment, girlfriends, mothers and sisters broke free from the debilitating experience of silent suffering to disclose the real, yet shadowy, manifestations of serious youth violence, sexual abuse and intimidation.

Indeed, while a fair amount of time and resources had been poured into the study of the role of men and boys as perpetrators of gangs and serious youth violence, relatively little had been dedicated to understanding its impact on women and girls.

Perhaps the challenge was too daunting. As Carlene Firmin says, "when an issue is challenging, it is easy to ignore".

Yet, as it turns out, listening was the first important step.

What started as murmurs of victimisation, exploded into pained accounts of physical, sexual and emotional violence in the pages of ROTA's 2010 Female Voice in Violence report.

Tellingly, the women and girls spoke with equal parts acceptance and frustration, as if they had no other option than to suffer as both victims and perpetrators of violence. In many ways, their fears were confirmed. Without protections and safeguarding measures, the repercussions of the words they uttered could be met with everything from rape and physical assault to the lingering emotional effects of gossip, left branded with scarlet letters of shame and fear.

In 21st Century Britain, when freedom and personal liberty are taken as given, women and girls continue to be held captive by the actions of others, who may

be the ones they love the most.

Sadly, despite the evidence, national policy on gang-associated violence against women and girls, has failed to recognise and respond with the requisite urgency required of the situation.

Granted, some inroads have since been made. For example, the Mayor's London strategy to end violence against women and girls made 11 additions to represent the needs of females affected by gang-related and serious youth violence. The Home Office submitted gang injunctions guidance to ROTA for gender-proofing prior to publication. However, given the potential magnitude of the issues, the response up to now has not afforded affected women and girls sufficient protection and safety.

So far the approach has been like looking at an impending storm through a telescope. Until we recognise that it is here, we will not be able to know just how many victims have been left in its wake. The impact that gang-related violence has on women and girls is one which will remain hidden as long as we fail to create conditions which enable disclosure consistently across the country.

ROTA and report author Carlene Firmin, denied this urge to turn away, instead expanding the research to Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham to ascertain the extent of the issue. *This is it. This is my life...* is the result.

The report identifies five key findings:

1 Gang-related and serious youth violence affects women and girls across the country, as relatives, partners and friends and those directly involved in offending.

2 Serious youth and gang-related violence against women and girls is a child protection and safeguarding issue. To respond effectively, we need risk management structures and processes.

- a. Girls need confidence to disclose
- b. Services need the ability and confidence to support girls to exit

3 Girls experience gender-based violence and this is not adequately addressed in policy or practice. The three key policy areas are:

- a. Violence against Women and Girls policy
- b. Youth violence policy
- c. Safeguarding and child protection policy

4 National and local responses are required to fully address the impact that gang-related and serious youth violence has on women and girls.

Centrally, clear guidance, with minimum standards, is needed to galvanise and enable local communities and local structures to respond effectively to violence against women and girls.

5 Men and boys require support to understand the consequences of their attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women and girls.

Interviews demonstrated:

- a.** The violent attitudes and behaviour that men and boys display towards women and girls within and outside of a gang context
- b.** The lack of understanding and responsibility men and boys had for both their attitude to and their role in the violence experienced by women and girls

Recommendations

In order to begin tackling the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls, ROTA recommends that:

1 The impact of serious youth and gang-related violence is a child protection issue and should be seen as one in both policy and practice.

2 Local authorities require a strategic and operational plan for responding to the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls.

3 The Department for Education and The Ministry of Justice commission an independent inquiry into the experiences of vulnerable girls in male-dominated settings.

4 The Home Office acknowledge and respond to violence directly experienced by girls including domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual exploitation, by:

- a.** Supplementing its strategic narrative and action plan on VAWG with specific commitments to girls and young women under-18
- b.** Appointing a Girls-Champion to ensure that all policy targeted at young people is gender-proofed

5 Voluntary sector organisations are funded to foster positive communications and partnerships in order to provide specialist provision, which:

- a.** Meets the needs of vulnerable women and girls affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence (including prevention, identification, intervention/diversion and exit)
- b.** Addresses the attitudes and behaviours of men and boys, who are involved in criminal gangs and serious youth violence to women and girls
- c.** Identifies and intervenes with boys who are being coerced by older males into exploiting girls



Introduction

Elizabeth Henry ROTA CEO

When it was published in 2010, ROTA's Female Voice in Violence report drew attention to the impact that criminal gangs and serious youth violence was having on women and girls across London. Attending the launch, the then Minister for Crime and Policing stated:

"If I was asked today how many girls are involved in gang violence in London, Birmingham or my home city of Liverpool, I wouldn't know. That's a gap I need to fill."

And yet criminal gangs and serious youth violence continue to affect women and girls across the country. On a weekly basis ROTA is contacted by a range of organisations and services that have identified women or girls who are gang-associated. Although they have been able to take this important step, they are struggling to protect gang-associated women or girls from harm or make appropriate referrals. These services include:

- Police forces
- Social services
- Youth offending teams
- Women's refuges
- Young Offender Institution and Prison Service
- Legal Aid
- Community Safety Teams
- Schools
- Safeguarding

Their contact demonstrates that services and local areas need support and guidance in order to protect women and girls sufficiently. Under our commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children under the age of 18 in the UK have a right to:

- Protection from violence (Article 19)
- Health and health services (Article 24)
- Protection from sexual abuse & exploitation (Article 34)
- Protection from abduction (Article 35)
- Protection from all other forms of exploitation (Article 36)

Under our commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination



of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, all women and girls have a right to:

- Be free of gender-based violence
- Have attention given to the specific needs of (adolescent) girls

At present, the current approach:

- Fails to prevent female association to criminal gangs
- Rarely identifies those at risk
- Places vulnerable girls in high-risk situations, such as male-dominated spaces or programmes

Hence, in line with the UNCRC and the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), we must afford sufficient safety upon disclosure to women and girls who are affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence.

FVV one year on

Since the launch of FVV 2010, we have seen progress at policy and practical levels in responding to the needs of gang-affected women and girls:

- 1.** The Mayor's London strategy to end violence against women and girls made 11 additions to represent the needs of females affected by gang-related and serious youth violence.
- 2.** The Home Office submitted gang-injunctions guidance to ROTA for

gender-proofing prior to publication.

3. The Youth Justice Board conducted a scoping exercise to assess the level of gender-specific work being delivered to girls in youth offending services, and began producing a practitioner's guidebook to working with girls in youth offending services.

4. Girls and serious youth violence was added to the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) Safeguarding Guidance on Gang Activity for Schools.

5. The London Serious Youth Violence Board appointed a Gender Champion.

6. ROTA was invited to join the Home Secretary's Guns, Gangs and Knives roundtable.

At ROTA we have formed the FVV Coalition, a network of organisations with an interest in the issue of gender and serious youth violence. The coalition is supported by a working group of organisations from across the voluntary and statutory sector. In its first year, the coalition has produced:

- Partnership Guidance for voluntary sector organisations to develop specialist intervention for women and girls affected by serious youth violence
- Regular e-newsletters for network members
- A survey of services who currently work with women and girls affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence

As we move beyond the report,

progress of FVV will be coordinated by the coalition and led by its working group.

Policy context

Since the publication of ROTA's Female Voice in Violence (FVV) Report in February 2010, there have been a number of policy changes and introductions relevant to the FVV agenda. While the findings of the FVV research programme are relevant to policy agendas across health, education, children and young people, criminal justice, housing and equalities, attempting to address all of these policy areas at once limits the impact that we can have on critical areas of policy. As such this report focuses on:

1. Violence against women and girls policy
2. Policy to target serious youth violence and criminal gangs
3. Safeguarding and child protection policy

Violence against women and girls

Since coming into power, the Coalition government has replaced the Cross-Government Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy with a new strategic narrative. ROTA's FVV coalition had hoped that the new strategic narrative would rectify the previous strategy's omission of serious youth violence as a form of VAWG.

Unfortunately, the current strategic narrative also fails to highlight the impact of serious youth or gang-related violence on women and girls.

The narrative does make explicit commitments to protecting girls, in addition to adult women, from violence. However, it also features assumptions that current safeguarding guidance is adequate to protect those who are currently experiencing violence:

We want schools to ensure staff are aware of how violence may affect a child's behaviour and what action they should take if they suspect that it is. There is guidance for schools to help them protect and support pupils who are at risk of violence or who are actually experiencing violence. (Home Office 2010: 10)

Schools safeguarding guidance on gangs features a reference to the FVV report and girls. However, this is insufficient for equipping agencies to feel confident or compelled to ensure all girls are protected from serious youth violence. Likewise, guidance on sexual exploitation makes reference to criminal gangs, but fails to offer the level of advice, particularly in relation to management of gang-associated risks and exit strategies, to enable agencies to feel confident in addressing this form of sexual exploitation. Aside from the specific references made

to girls in the prevention section of the strategic narrative, the remainder of the document is dedicated to the experiences of adult women. This is especially stark in the section entitled 'protection', which only refers to adult protective services such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), women's refuge provision, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA). These gaps result in the narrative failing to either illustrate how the UK protects girls from gender-based violence, or communicate its intention to do so.

The London strategy to end violence against women and girls, published by the Greater London Authority (GLA) in 2010 demonstrates that it is possible to make explicit commitments to women and girls affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence. For example, the GLA made 11 new additions to its strategic document to account for the specific risk posed by serious youth and gang-related violence. Over a three-year action plan, the document made commitments to build appropriate exit strategies, collect data, and ensure their own policies on serious youth violence were gender-proofed.

In order for this approach to be realised across the country, the government's central illustration of gender-based violence must reflect the experiences of women and girls affected by serious

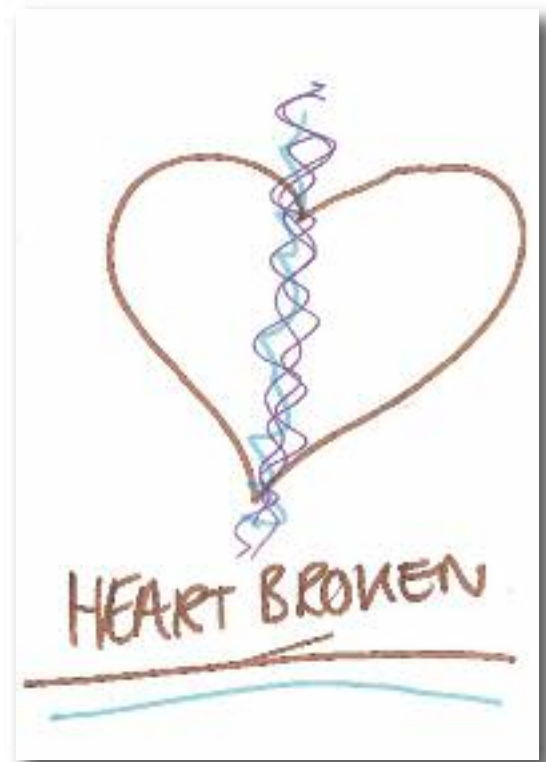


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youth and gang-related violence.

Criminal gangs and serious youth violence

Since the publication of the FVV report in 2010, central government approaches to address gang-related violence have focused on the introduction of gang injunctions. This power, introduced in legislation by the previous government, has been progressed by the Coalition government. It includes guidance published in January 2011 for the use of injunctions on adults. Injunctions will also be piloted on under-18 year olds from Spring 2011.

In relation to women and girls, ROTA welcomed the opportunity to gender-proof the guidance, and worked with the Home Office to ensure that the guidance provided clear indications of

the needs, risks and experiences of women and girls. However, ROTA remains concerned about the implementation of the injunctions. Currently, those placed on an injunction will be required to take part in positive activities to reduce their involvement in gang-related violence. Adequate gender-specific programmes available to women and girls placed on an injunction are necessary to ensure that any positive activity they are required to partake in is relevant to their experiences and needs. Breach of an injunction can result in up to 2-years in custody, and inappropriate support has the potential to increase the likelihood of breach. We will continue to monitor the impact of gang injunctions on women and girls, both when they are placed on injunction and when they are in relationships, or related to males on an injunction.

In addition to the introduction of injunctions, there has been increased publicity on the use of 'Joint Enterprise' in murder cases. Campaigns such as 'Who Killed Deon' explicitly included young women who were charged with murder for playing a role in a case of serious youth violence, such as sending incriminating photos to rivals or 'setting up' boys. While this approach may increase the numbers of girls potentially charged with serious offences, such strategic approaches have not been supported by the provision of appropriate services or communications

to girls to educate them on how to make better or safer choices should they feel pressured to 'set a boy up' or carry a weapon on behalf of a boyfriend.

Safeguarding and child protection

The last government published safeguarding guidance for protecting children from gang-related violence and from sexual exploitation. Both documents made reference to the impact of criminal gangs on girls and young women. However, neither document offers enough detail to guide local areas into confidently responding to gang-related sexual violence, exploitation or other forms of violence.

Local areas have contacted ROTA over the past year requesting training support, checklists, consultancy advice regarding police investigations and identification of vulnerable girls. All of these areas feel that the current guidance is insufficient to ensure safety when intervening. Local areas require support to:

- 1.** Ask the appropriate questions in gang-related incidents of violence against girls
- 2.** Call upon appropriate partners
- 3.** Develop safe exit routes
- 4.** Make decisions about charge and prosecution

They have not asked ROTA for answers but they have requested assistance in

reaching those answers, demonstrating that the current guidance does not provide sufficient assistance in these incidences of violence against girls.

Project overview

The Female Voice in Violence Programme seeks to: assess the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls; inform and improve policy and strategy to tackle criminal gangs, serious youth violence (SYV) and violence against women and girls (VAWG); and support the voluntary sector to respond to the needs of women and girls affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence.

ROTA achieves this through two strands:

1. The FVV Research Programme
2. FVV Coalition Working Group and Network

Objectives and deliverables

ROTA will:

- Build an evidence base and understanding of the needs and experiences of gang-affected women and girls across England
- Assess and engage in policy and service development through the FVV Coalition
- Engage the voluntary sector in the findings of the research to help improve

their capacity to respond to need

- Produce reports which document the experiences of women and girls across the country, and the response of services to their needs

The FVV Coalition will:

- Annually review progress by statutory and voluntary sector agencies against the recommendations made by the FVV programme
- Bring together the BAME, women's, youth and serious youth violence sectors to form partnerships and share expertise
- Support network members to engage in policy development, keeping them informed through e-updates and briefings, and using the evidence they generate across the country to inform consultation responses
- Raise the profile of the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls amongst those agencies and departments that have historically focused on men and boys
- Build sustainable relationships within the voluntary sector, to develop cross-equalities expertise

Funders and partners

The FVV Research Programme is funded by the BASIS Big Lottery Fund, Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) through its 'Tackling Race Inequality Fund' and London

Councils.

The Barrow Cadbury Trust, an independent, charitable foundation, committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised people in society, funded a portion of the Birmingham research. The Trust provides grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups working in deprived communities in the UK, with a focus on the West Midlands. It also works with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, seeking to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society.

The research programme was delivered in partnership with Catch22, Women Acting In Today's Society (W.A.I.T.S), The Transformation Centre (Birmingham), Platform 51 (Kirkby, Merseyside) and Trafford Youth Offending Service (Greater Manchester). The latter three organisations coordinated volunteer research teams in each research area. The chapter outlining the findings on boys was produced by Kim Maynard at Catch22, who led that area of fieldwork.

The FVV Coalition is supported specifically by the BASIS Big Lottery Fund. Imkaan and the nia project are delivery partners on the coalition. Imkaan produces the FVV e-newsletter and the nia project has produced FVV Partnership Guidance for the voluntary sector to work across equalities areas

on the issue of girls and serious youth violence.

Following engagement across the three cities, strategic meetings were coordinated by the Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence Partnership, the Liverpool Disarm Group and the Manchester Youth Offending Service and Local Safeguarding Children Board. The central government roundtable was coordinated by the Home Office.

Research team

This is it. This is my life... was delivered as part of the Female Voice in Violence Research Programme, led by the author Carlene Firmin, Senior Policy Officer, ROTA. Interviews with males, and the chapter outlining the findings of these interviews, were led by Kim Maynard, Catch22 (with secure estate interviews delivered by Carlene Firmin). Low risk interviews across the cities were co-delivered by a core team of female volunteers, coordinated by Liz Muir (Birmingham), Marcia Banasko (Liverpool) and Steven Giles (Greater Manchester).

Ryan Mahan, ROTA, served as Editor for the report.



Research Strategy, Research Ethics and Challenges

ROTA's London Female Voice in Violence (FVV) Project identified that:

- 1.** Women and Girls across London were affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence
- 2.** Current policy and service provision failed to manage the risks faced by these women and girls or prevent their involvement

While the report provoked a positive response from London's local authorities and pan-London agencies, further evidence of impact across the country was necessary to develop a national response that was relevant to regional areas. While ROTA had begun to work with central government departments on this issue, we also acknowledged that the potential for regional differences could not be overlooked, and would need to be understood to appropriately represent the needs of women and girls from a range of areas.

As such the national research programme was developed in order to:

- 1.** Identify whether criminal gangs and serious youth violence had an impact on women and girls from other parts of the country
- 2.** Assess where there were similarities and differences in the experiences of women and girls from different parts of the country in relation to criminal gangs and serious youth violence
- 3.** Understand the strategic and service capacity in other parts of the country for responding to the identified needs of women and girls, in both the statutory and voluntary and community sectors

The evidence is intended to enable us to make central government recommendations, with specific sensitivity to city and regional differences and similarities.

This is it. This is my life...:

- 1.** Illustrates the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls across Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester
- 2.** Accounts for the perspective of men and boys on the impact of criminal

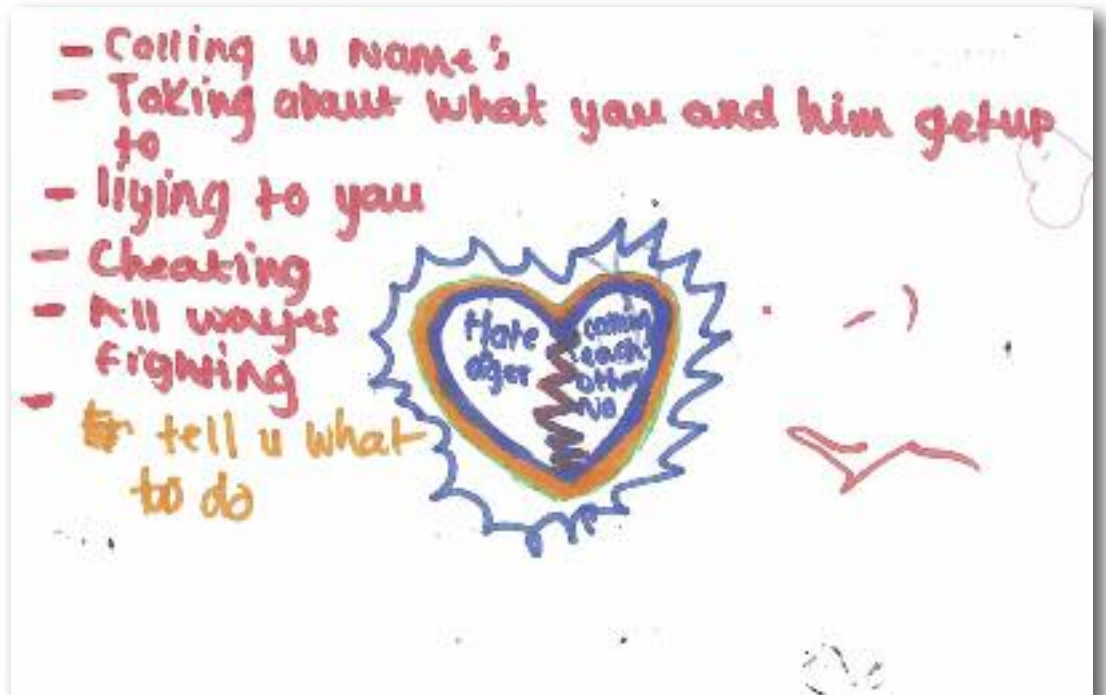


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gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls across Birmingham, Liverpool, London and Manchester

3. Examines similarities and differences between the four cities

4. Provides recommendations on what needs to be prioritised by central government, and local areas to ensure women and girls are:

- Prevented from being affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence
- Protected from violence
- Supported to exit

Definitions of 'gang violence'

Before we can begin to explore the impact that gang and serious youth violence has on women and girls we have to be clear what we are actually talking about. The 2009 Centre for Social Justice report into gang violence,

'Dying to Belong', defines a gang as:

'A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.' (Centre for Social Justice, 2009:3)

While many have argued, often validly, over the semantics involved with the term 'gang violence', (Alexander 2008), the above definition serves a contextual purpose. The women and girls that we interviewed made reference to 'gangs' on repeated occasions; it is not their responsibility to discern whether the group they are fearful of is an organised criminal group, criminal gang or peer group. Instead, it is the responsibility of

the professionals that they disclose to so that they can ascertain the level of risk presented. The belief that her risk is gang-associated is driving the fear of any woman or girl that discloses and as such should be taken seriously and investigated. The type of violence focused on in the FVV Project takes place in the context of criminal gangs. It is worth noting that some of these gangs will have links to organised criminal groups, networks and cartels, which have more direct involvement in human trafficking, drug importation and firearms trading, amongst other offences. The work of Simon Hallsworth and Tara Young, in distinguishing between violent and criminal groups, sheds some clarity on this issue:

Peer Group: A small, unorganised, transient grouping occupying the same space with a common history. Crime is not integral to their self definition

Gang: A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity

Organised Criminal Group: Members are professionally involved in crime for personal gain operating almost exclusively in the 'grey' or illegal marketplace.

(Hallsworth and Young: 2004)

Whilst academic definitions of gangs are important, our research indicates that organisations should not be

constrained by these definitions when working with gang-affected girls and women.

Phase 1: Regional scoping

In 2009 ROTA circulated a request for evidence from the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) leads in Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham. Responses were used to inform an introductory report outlining what each city hoped to get from the research, and what systems/services they currently had in place. All cities acknowledged that while they were attempting to offer services to women and girls affected by serious youth violence and criminal gangs, their good practice was pocketed and they required more knowledge of female experiences to respond appropriately.

Following these responses, ROTA met with representatives from all three cities and built relationships with potential referral agencies in the community. In Birmingham a meeting was held with the Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence partnership. In Liverpool we met with the Disarm Group. In Manchester we met with the Youth Offending Service in Manchester and Trafford and had contact with the Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS) through the Youth Justice Board regional gangs' forum. Contact was made with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

to gain access to secure estates.

Over a 6-month period we developed our referral pathways for interviews and built relationships of trust with gatekeepers to women and girls.

Phase 2: Fieldwork methodology

In addition to the scoping exercise outlined above, women and girls were interviewed across Liverpool, Manchester and Trafford, and Birmingham. Men and boys were interviewed across those three areas in addition to London.

In order to conduct research across the four cities, the FVV Coordinator was supported by volunteer research teams and volunteer coordinators in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. Catch22 supported the referrals and delivery of male focus groups across all cities. [see Annex 3]

Members of the team had the following roles:

ROTA FVV Project Coordinator

- Develop research model
- Schedule all interviews and focus groups
- Schedule all meetings with decision-makers
- Lead all medium-high-risk focus groups and all one-to-one interviews

- Train volunteer research teams in focus group facilitation and data collection
- Write final report

Volunteer Research Teams and Coordinators

- Lead some low-risk focus groups with females in cities
- Transcribe some low-risk focus groups with females in the cities
- Identify key themes for their city and report back to ROTA
- Attend meetings with decision-makers where possible

Catch22

- Lead majority of focus groups with males in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and London
- Transcribe all focus groups Catch22 conducts with males and report back to ROTA
- Identify key themes for males interviewed
- Write the chapter 'Key findings for boys' in the final report

All members of the research team:

- Attended training during August 2010
- Reported back regularly to their supervising officer
- Fed back findings and transcripts to ROTA

Ethics and safety

As the FVV project required the team to interview young people and vulnerable adults it was important to make sure that

both those being interviewed, and the research team, were kept safe at all times. A proportion of training to research team members was focused on ethics. Hard copies of guidance were handed out.

The guidance and codes to which FVV adheres are:

- British Society of Criminology Research Ethics Code
- Market Research Society Guidance on Interviewing Children and Young People
- Economic and Social Research Council Guidance on Ethical Research
- Social Research Association Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers

Ethics guidance included securing informed consent from participants (and parents for under 18 year olds), disclosure management, handling risky situations and researcher supervision. These documents provided guidance to the measures that ROTA put in place to protect participants and researchers on the FVV project. It should also be noted that all organisations making referrals to FVV were asked if they had any specific concerns regarding safeguarding or disclosure.

Research methods

The FVV research took the form of interviews and focus groups. Focus groups were used to capture attitudes of

groups in relation to experiences of serious youth violence and criminal gangs. One-to-one interviews were used to collect case study evidence with a focus on contact with services.

In order to identify any examples of promising practice in the voluntary or statutory sector, ROTA visited organisations and met with practitioners during the fieldwork period.

Focus groups

The main aims of the focus groups were to:

- Collect opinions and attitudes
- Capture debate and positions on gender and serious youth violence

The focus groups consisted of low, medium and high-risk participants. Low-risk focus groups were led by volunteer coordinator groups. Medium-high-risk groups were led by ROTA. Focus groups were not used to seek disclosure or actual examples of participant experience, although there were occasions where disclosures were made. Whenever possible, focus groups were voice-recorded and transcribed.

Methods included:

- Real life case studies
- Hypothetical scenarios
- Creative forms of expression
- Anonymous forms

One-to-one interviews

The main aims of the one-to-one interviews were to:

- Build case study evidence
- Track individual experiences and contact with services
- Identify past experiences of offending, risk and victimisation

ROTA led all one-to-one interviews with females, and supported Catch22 to interview males. Interviews presented a stronger possibility of disclosure. The interviews were voice-recorded and transcribed. Questions for interview were based on the themes of the discussion tool, but deviated from the specific questions where necessary to gain relevant information or when seeking clarification.

Promising practice

As ROTA has not designed an evaluation tool for gender-specific services we cannot officially identify 'best' or 'effective' practice as part of this study. However, when communicating with interview participants and regional stakeholders, we sought examples of any attempts made to take a gendered approach to youth violence, when working with boys or girls. In addition we were looking for any attempts by the women's sector to work on serious youth violence issues. These examples will be illustrated later in the report as examples of promising practice.

Referrals and schedule

ROTA has built a referral database from May - September 2010. Referrals were generated in a number of ways:

1. Through circulation of the referral form and introductory letter
2. Through meetings with gatekeepers to young people
3. Through peer-to-peer contact/outreach from the volunteer research teams and coordinator

Following email/telephone contact, follow-up meetings were held, whenever possible, with most potential referral agencies. The meetings enabled agencies to get a better sense of the research, and make informed decisions about whether to assign participants to individual interviews or focus groups. It also allowed ROTA to assess the risks related to the interview participants and make a decision as to whether the volunteer research team or ROTA should lead the focus group.

Referrals were generated from:

Schools: (Mixed comprehensives, all girls, academies, pupil referral units); Youth Offending Services; Secure Estate (YOI and HMP); Violence against women's services, Women's Violence against women services/refuge provision; Mental Health and addiction services; Youth Service; Faith groups; BAME and youth voluntary sector; Outreach.

Referrals and schedule - Tables

Total referral numbers:				
	Female Focus Groups	Female 1:1	Male Focus Groups	Male 1:1
Birmingham	63	11	37	2
Liverpool	64	10	26	1
Manchester	60	9	35	1
London	0	0	29	1
TOTAL	187	30	127	5

Age breakdown Females			
	Birmingham	Liverpool	Manchester
13-15	27	30	26
16-18	22	17	17
19-25	15	14	22
25-40	8	7	3
40-60	3	4	1
Prefer not to say		2	
Not completed			

Ethnicity breakdown Females			
	Birmingham	Liverpool	Manchester
African	9	4	3
Asian UK	2		4
Bangladeshi	2		
Black UK	3	2	15
Black Other	4		5
Caribbean	18	6	14
Irish	2	2	1
Mixed Race Other	3	4	
Pakistani	2		2
White UK and Asian	1		
White UK and Black Caribbean	7	3	2
White UK	17	51	22
Not Completed	3		
Prefer not to say	1	2	1

Age breakdown Males (differentiation by region not captured)	
Age	Total
13-15	34
16-18	48
19-25	26
25-40	8
40-60	1
Prefer not to say	7
Not completed	8

Ethnicity breakdown Males (differentiation by region not captured)	
Ethnicity	Total
African	3
Asian UK	8
Asian Other	4
Bangladeshi	6
Black UK	21
Black Other	2
Caribbean	14
Irish	4
Mixed Race Other	3
Pakistani	9
White European	2
White UK and Black Caribbean	8
White UK	38
Other (Afghanistan)	1
Not Completed	8
Prefer not to say	1

Faith breakdown Female							
	Catholic	Christian	Muslim	Rastafarian	Yes (not specific)	No	Prefer not to say
Birmingham	8	11	15	2	4	23	1
Liverpool	13	11	6	0	13	28	3
Manchester	14	16	4	1	13	21	0

Faith breakdown Male (differentiation by region not captured)								
	Catholic	Christian	Muslim	Rastafarian	Yes (not specific)	No	Prefer not to say	Not completed
Total	9	22	16	3	21	40	8	8

Disability and Learning Difficulty breakdown Male (differentiation by region not captured)						
	Yes (not specific)	Dyslexia	ADHD	No	Prefer not to say	Not Completed
Total	3	3	6	101	11	8

Disability and Learning Difficulty breakdown Female

	Birmingham	Liverpool	Manchester
Yes (not specific)	4	2	1
Dyslexia	1	5	2
ADHD	0	1	1
No	65	65	59
Prefer not to say	4	1	5

Disclosed Gang-Association: Females

Type of Association	Birmingham	Liverpool	Manchester
Sister of gang member	5	8	9
Daughter of gang member	0	1	4
Mother of gang member	3	7	4
Friend of gang member	18	15	13
Victim of gang violence	6	3	7
In a relationship with someone involved in, or associated with, gang violence	13	18	9
Link	4	1	7
Gang Member	3	1	4
Other	9	5	4
Disclosure form not completed	13	15	8

**Disclosed Gang-Association: Males
(differentiation by region not captured)**

Type of Association	Total
Brother of gang member	8
Father of gang member	1
Son of gang member	5
Friend of Gang Member	18
Victim of gang violence	2
In a relationship with someone involved in, or associated with, gang violence	0
Gang Member	37
Other	4
Disclosure form not completed	52



Key Findings for Females

Findings analysis

Between the cities there were greater similarities than differences in responses from females and males. As such this section will outline:

1. The key findings for females
2. The key findings for males
3. The differences between the cities

The responses indicate that women and girls continued to be implicated in gang-associated activities because they are not able to access appropriate protection or to share information safely. This was most apparent when respondents discussed their motivations for offending, experiences of sexual violence and relationships with partners and family members. Male participants interpreted this differently. For them, female involvement in serious youth violence and gang association was a matter of choice and therefore, so were any consequences they faced.

Focus groups and case study interviews revealed far more than we could

include in a single report. As such, this section focuses on those findings which were most significant. These are linked to recommendations for moving forward and underpin other subtle concerns such as sexual health or access to education. It is not that the discrete concerns we have chosen not to discuss are unimportant; it is more that we believe these will not be addressed until we enable women and girls to access support, seek advice and identify/manage risk.

These findings illustrate the perceived and real inability of services to protect women and girls. Until this is addressed it remains difficult to respond to the picture painted by participants of their lived experiences of criminal gangs and serious youth violence.

Key findings for females

Then to make up for the day before when he's battered me he'll come back with 5-600 pounds worth of clothes, a whole new wardrobe, new shoes and you're thinking I can't ever escape this, this is gonna be my life forever, and it's

I thought my nurse was my friend and then the next thing I know I had social services at my school.

*Woman,
20 years old,
Manchester*

scary, it's a scary thing. I thought the only way I would ever get out of it would be to kill meself. I wanted it. Like up until 2 months ago the only thing I'd say I regretted about that overdose was that it didn't work.

Information sharing and disclosure management

The biggest barrier to young women seeking support to exit criminal gangs, disclose involvement in serious youth violence or victimisation by serious youth violence was 'information sharing processes'. Across all three cities, those who were under 18 felt that they had no control over the sharing of information. It was repeatedly described as 'staff room' gossip. As a result, young women believed that talking about risk actually increased exposure to harm, with little chance that any agency would be able to afford the level of protection required to keep a gang-associated young woman safe.

The primary concern was that no matter what agency you disclosed to, if the incident was serious, they would have to tell somebody else and that ultimately this would involve the police. As such they preferred not to talk to anybody. We did not find a young woman in any city who would be willing to speak to the police in relation to her victimisation or her exposure to offending. Therefore the belief that disclosure to anybody would result in

police contact led to participants feeling that they could not safely confide in anyone in relation to serious violence or risk.

It is important to note that it did not follow that young women did not want to have information shared; it was more that they wanted to know how it was being shared, who would want to speak with them and how they would be protected. Because they did not understand the process, they were alienated from services.

*Sometimes if it's serious they are gonna tell somebody and that comforts you sometimes if you know that something is going to be done. **Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham***

*I wanted to talk to someone but I was too scared. It's alright talking about it for that hour or two hours that you're there but the minute you walk out nothing's changed. **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester***

*If I'm telling you something and it's that serious like of course I am wanting you to do something about it, but if I don't know what that is gonna be then I ain't gonna say; cos next thing you know you've got two police cars up the side of your house and people talk. **Young woman, 18 years old, Liverpool***

There also remained confusion in relation to confidentiality of health

services and voluntary sector agencies, with young women recounting varying experiences.

Girl A: But they said to me if you don't come back with your mum we'll have to get social services, she was 13.

Girl B: They can't.

*Girl A: They did. **Girls, 14 years old, Liverpool Focus Group***

*I'll tell the nurses and like my counsellor about the domestic violence and that, but I won't tell them about the rest of it, cos they can tell other people and they won't understand, they'll think oh she deserved it, she's a criminal. **Woman, 21 years old, Manchester***

Interviewer: Could you tell a youth worker?

Girl A: Depends.

Interviewer: On?

*Girl A: Who she goes to tell. **Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham***

When offering a list of agencies/individuals that a woman or girl could speak to in a crisis, participants were unwilling to engage with anyone beyond the family. Much of this was rooted in their lack of confidence in the information sharing process. The police, teachers and school nurses fared worse, but for different reasons. For example, participants could not identify the school nurse and only saw him/her as someone who dealt with medication.

*She comes in every Wednesday and does our injections. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

*She comes in once a week, no, she wouldn't know anything about my life. **Girl, 16 years old, Liverpool***

The police were not seen as an approachable option, particularly if the participant believed herself to be criminally associated.

*No, especially if people saw you. **Girl, 17 years old, Liverpool***

*No, you'll lose your kids, they aren't there to help you. **Woman, 27 years old, Manchester***

*When you're arrested it's about what you've done it's not about what you're going through. **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester***

*Ah no, if she wants to die go ahead. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

In relation to teachers, participants were concerned that information would be shared with colleagues. More importantly, they believed that teachers were there to teach and that it did not always seem appropriate for them to know personal information about pupils' lives. Learning mentors and external voluntary sector agencies were looked upon more favourably but were once again constrained by

information sharing.

Girl A: I don't have many teachers that I can talk to.

*Girl B: Na all of mine are grasses. **Girls, 14 – 16 years old, Manchester***

*It depends what kind of persons you've got... teachers can't say what they think and learning mentors can. **Girl, 15 years old, Manchester***

*And all teachers chat in the staff room; they say they won't say anything and then the next thing you know the other teachers are looking at you and the whole school knows. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

Girls' and women's previous experiences and/or perceptions of information sharing prevented young women from disclosing.

*I told someone something once and it just made everything worse. If I thought for one minute that it would help me then I'd talk but I know that it won't so what's the point? **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

*They gave me domestic violence leaflets but no-one actually came in to work with me there and then. They offered me counselling but he wouldn't let me take it. **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester***

I thought the school nurse was my

*friend: the next thing I know social services have turned up at my school; that night my boyfriend broke my nose, I was 15. **Young woman, 19 years old, Manchester***

Familial impact

Across all three cities the impact that serious youth and gang-related violence had on female relatives was noticeable and distinct from experiences in London. Sisters, cousins, aunts, mothers and grandmothers: were all at risk of victimisation, felt under greater pressure to collude and support male family members and did not feel that their association was in their control or based on choice.

As criminal gangs across the cities were often located within smaller community areas, had historical roots and were inter-generational, family members were easier to identify. Given the disorganised nature of gangs in London, and their limited links to any historical roots, family members were much harder to identify. However, this meant that in the northern cities, many felt more trapped to gang-loyalties, leaving little choice with regard to their association.

Female relatives were at risk of physical and sexual violence, and repeatedly cited threats to their homes.

Shoot the houses up and everything,

**Wherever I go
I feel guilty,
cos of what
me son did,
everywhere I
go my guilt
will be
with me.**

*Woman,
54 years old,
Liverpool*

horrible, horrible things they do to mothers; burn their houses down.

Woman, 27 years old, Liverpool

As soon as they know your house that's it, set fire to it, shoot it up, whatever, that becomes your life. Girl, 17 years old, Manchester

You're never safe, never. Woman, 32 years old, Birmingham

In relation to sexual violence, sisters discussed the threat of rape when rivals were looking for their brothers, when they were duped into relationships with rivals or when their relationships were restricted to their familial gang loyalty or area.

Their problems are your problems and that's it; if they're looking to kill him they're looking to kill you, can't find him then watch what happens. Girls get raped just cos of who their brother is and no-one will talk about it after. Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham

Yea sisters find themselves in problems, but some then go looking for it, like X she went out with Y knowing who he was just to piss her brother off. But then A really didn't know who her boyfriend was and when her brother found out believe she got banged up for real. Girl, 16 years old, Manchester

I'm scared, I'm always scared, and you people think what of. But it's like I'm

scared of me fella, what he could do to me, what could happen to him, what could happen to me brother, what he could do to me, and then there is everyone who could be gunning for me if they went inside, and you think, this is it, this is my life, how the fuck did I get here. Woman, 19 years old, Liverpool

Women and girls did not feel able to challenge male family members or that they would have much influence over decision-making. Mothers, in particular, cited religion/praying as the only thing that they could do if their son was engaging in serious youth violence or criminal gangs.

If she is coming from a spiritual background, instilling spiritual values within him from a young age. Pray for them, love them, speak to them.

Woman, 39 years old, Birmingham

I couldn't have said anything to my brother, and cos I had an older boyfriend who was also involved in it all I didn't see what leg I had to stand on, that was our lifestyle, it was what we did; it's only now he's gone that I wish I could have talked to someone and they could have showed me what was really happening. Woman, 34 years old, Manchester

I was there when he made the phone call and I heard him say 'get me a piece' and I said, 'what did you say, did you say get a me a piece' I said 'don't be

It's easier to go along and do the things they want to do than wait for something to be smashed over your head.

Woman, 20 years old, Manchester

bringing no pieces in here, don't you dare' and he'd said 'no mother, it's a deterrent, The only way I'm gonna stop these kids you know is if when they pull something out on me I'll put something back out on them' and that was that.

Woman, 54 years old, Liverpool

Sisters in particular felt unable to disclose to professionals or seek support. Compared to loyalty afforded by girlfriends, sisters' choices had even greater restriction and it was never seen as acceptable to 'snitch' on family.

Girl A: That's family.

Girl B: Oh yea you're not supposed to snitch on family.

*Girl C: But then like he's endangering the whole of your family, the family would have to give him advice, and keep it in there. **Girls, 15 years old, Birmingham Focus Group***

*No one in my family would ever do that. If I done that to A (my sister) then I would be called a snitch for the rest of my life. If you go round now and ask every kid would they grass they would say no coz you would get called a snitch for the rest of your life. Even if your mum did it, you would still get called a snitch. **Girl, 15 years old, Liverpool***

Engagement in offending

Women and girls engaged in offending behaviours alongside male peers or partners for two distinct reasons: *love*

and *fear*. While there was overlap for some, for most they either colluded with partners because they were in love with them and wanted to protect them, or due to fear for their personal safety or the safety of their families.

Fear was a key driver for offending. Participants claimed to be fearful of kidnap, torture, sexual violence, threats to life, threats to the home, isolation, and punitive responses by authorities to their offending.

*People that don't understand you get bullied into it... You can't phone the police on your own boyfriend. I could try and talk to him and say get it out of the house but then it's like you just get your jaw broken again. **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester***

Girl A: Set-ups – like a girl from one gang they send her to go find someone from another gang and then they come and deal with him.

Girl B: Sometimes it's not fair cos they put you up to do it.

*Girl A: Like you literally don't have a choice about it, they will get you, they will kill you instead basically so you have to. **Girls, 14 years old, Birmingham Focus Group***

This fear was underpinned by scepticism of the ability of services to offer any protection or, on occasion, to act upon their victimisation rather than on their offending.

What you gonna say, oh I've had drugs in my house but it's because I'm scared. They don't give a fuck, you still did it; how can you prove you didn't want to?
Girl, 17 years old, Liverpool

But that's what I wanted, and then you can't see any way out, how do you do it, how do you get away from him? Someone that takes your money so you can't even get a train, you can't support yourself even for a few days, you can't talk to him and say it's not working out cos every time you try to leave you know my stuff got burnt, I've gone weeks with no clothes because he's burnt them.
Woman, 20 years old, Manchester

She can (get help) but she shouldn't, she would put herself in even more danger, she's risking her life basically, because if anyone found out that she had been to the police about a gang then they'd be after her.
Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham

If women and girls were gang-associated, this fear extended beyond their relationship to the wider gang membership. Participants discussed their experiences of violence perpetrated by the whole group.

And if she had said no they probably still would have done it and raped her that way anyway.
Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham

I bump into his friends a lot of the time...they're only three of them that I'm scared of them, they've been involved when I've been assaulted by R, I've had all of them stamping on me and they're the only three I fear of.
Woman, 20 years old, Manchester

And you've got all of them going, you fucking will do that, and then what are you meant to do? Get battered until you give in? You just do it.
Girl, 16 years old, Liverpool

While a number of participants readily discussed their fears, a number also placed weight on their love and commitment to their male associate/s. Offences such as providing alibis, concealing evidence and storing weapons were all justified as being demonstrations of love and loyalty to their partners.

Yea – depends what it was for but I would yea. It depends what he's done, if it was to protect him or my family then yea I would.
Woman, 21 years old, Liverpool

You're not involved; he's got to sleep with it not you so I'd just do it, unless you want him to go inside. But don't wash the clothes, just burn them.
Girl, 16 years old, Manchester

If you love him you stand by him, how could you watch him go down? You'd

*feel responsible, then it would be your fault. **Girl, 18 years old, Birmingham***

This loyalty also extended to sisters who colluded with brothers out of unquestioning loyalty to family members, rather than fear of them.

*Your brother is a whole other thing. He wouldn't really let anything happen to you and at the end of the day he'll always be your brother so you have to just stand by him. **Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham***

*You can never snitch on family; that is not even an option to be honest. **Girl, 16 years old, Liverpool***

*If it's your brother ...why would you tell other people, then you're gonna have no one left, you just don't do that to family. **Girl, 17 years old, Manchester***

The distinction between fear and love as motivating factors for offending is important when policy and practitioners consider prevention and diversion. The messaging of criminal consequences or even the provision of support services will only be relevant to those who are offending out of fear. To intervene with a woman or girl who is offending 'out of love' one would need to consider that their fears are based on the loss of a relationship rather than the loss of personal safety, and this would need to be built into the communication strategy for such a

service. Furthermore, for those women and girls who were fearful of someone they loved or had a sense of loyalty towards, both aspects of their association would need to be addressed in order for them to feel able to seek support.

'Bad boys' and risk

While participants agreed that women and girls found 'bad boys' attractive, they failed to agree about what they meant by the phrase. Not all participants viewed 'bad boys' as those who engaged in crime, while others viewed them as those who engaged in serious violence.

Participants agreed that there was one characteristic that a 'bad boy' possessed, and that was the ability to offer protection.

*Other lads won't say anything to ya cos you're his bird. **Girl, 16 years old, Liverpool***

*Yea – like they get really protective over ya and it's like ah they care about me. **Girl, 15 years old, Manchester***

*Yea – because like I think a bad boy isn't timid they will actually go and do something, they will protect their family. **Girl, 16 years old, Manchester***

However, beyond this agreement there was a large disparity between those

It's like you like the bad boys but you don't want them bad boys.

Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham

who wanted protection and those who wanted gifts, but did not want to associate with violence.

*Someone's who cheeky, gets into trouble but not on purpose. **Girl, 14 years old, Manchester***

*They'll be nice at first, and they'll be like I'll buy you what you want, I'll buy you a new phone next week babe and all proper nice, anything you want new shoes, new dress and now nothing. **Girl, 15 years old, Liverpool***

*Cos there are ones with good looks and a good personality out there but it's cos the good looking ones are also the bad ones. **Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham***

This was compared to those who actively sought boyfriends who were both involved in serious offending and willing to engage in serious violence.

*Like if he could kill someone, or people thought he could, then yea I'm not gonna lie, he's gonna be attractive to me. **Girl, 17 years old, Manchester***

*Yea it is cos he's taking chances with the law, like you like it, like saying oh yea I've gotta go and visit my boyfriend he's inside, not on some stupid youth offending easy thing. **Girl, 16 years old, Manchester***

Not all men mean what they say, so when you know they mean it yea there

*is something better about that. Like so many boys on Facebook will say this and that, but the ones that mean it, they're the ones I want. **Girl, 15 years old, Liverpool***

In addition there were participants who suggested that the only men they knew or had access to were 'bad boys' due to the area that they lived in and who they associated with. They described boys in relation to their cultural frames of reference, the places they socialised in, the music they listened to and the activities they liked to take part in.

*Like if you live in one area you can't go into another part, and you can't date someone from that other part. **Girl, 14 years old, Manchester***

*They've gotta understand you like, they've gotta understand where you've come from and not judge you. That means you're gonna go for what you know, like all the fellas 'round here are drug dealers so that's it then. **Woman, 22 years old, Liverpool***

*He goes around killing people then that's not attractive at all; but if he does the same things that you do, especially if you live in the ghetto, then it's like I find it attractive anyway, like you can smoke a spliff with them or whatever. **Girl, 16 years old, Manchester***

Given the mixed response from participants, there was also a level of

confusion in relation to their own awareness of risk. Participants disclosed entering into relationships with men who they knew were 'bad boys' but did not appreciate how 'bad' or 'dangerous' those men actually were.

*Until the shit hits the fan you don't really know, and then it's like a smack in the face, this is my life. **Woman, 19 years old, Liverpool***

*But at the same time there were things I loved about it, I was taking coke on a daily basis, there was an endless supply of weed, money but you look back at it now and you can see it were all false, it were all what he'd took from people, I was risking my life cos I was go into his stash until it come to it and he weighed it, but he was understanding that I had a problem, I wasn't doing it to take the piss out of him, he got me addicted to it but then he had another hold over me. I had a drug problem and he was a drug dealer, so it was just a way he could control me. **Woman, 20 years, Manchester***

*When you hear about the violence it's not the same as when you see it, and then you feel sick. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

Others who knew about the level of violence that their partners were involved in were not always aware that their own safety had been compromised until they were in

crisis situations.

*And you're sitting there and you realise and you think how the fuck did this happen and now I'm looking over my shoulder all the time, I'll never be safe, do you understand how that feels? I'm safer in here than I am when I get out of here. **Woman, 24 years old, Liverpool***

*The thing is, when it comes to you, you're not ready cos you've always thought you could ride on his rep; then he's inside and all of sudden people are coming to you to pay off his debts, like for drugs he's taking on the inside, and you're thinking if I don't do this they'll kill me. **Woman, 22 years old, Birmingham***

*I feel sick talking about it, but I've been walking down and a cars pulled up with the window down so obviously you look and there's a gun there, and they're saying 'get in the car'. **Woman, 21 years, Liverpool***

However, many participants were able to articulate risk, drawing from their own experiences and those of their peers and family members. Women and girls were able to discuss, in detail, extreme forms of violence such as rape, kidnap, torture and arson, and their fear for their personal safety and the safety of those around them.

Given the confused response by participants, it would seem that the

assumption that ‘some girls like bad boys’ should not be used to explain away their association with criminal gangs and serious youth violence. Attempts to support girls to make safer choices about relationships would need to consider:

1. Some girls are attracted to men involved in extreme violence and some girls are not, even though they may all buy into the ‘bad boy’ concept
2. Some girls are acutely aware of the dangers they face, others do not believe risk applies to them

This is important, as simply raising women and girls’ awareness of risk will not support them to make better choices. This is especially important if the girls have always been aware of this risk but have not had firsthand experience of violence. Further work is needed to explore and understand the attraction to ‘bad boys’. Challenging their attraction to violent men will not apply if this was not the aspect of their character that they were attracted to in the first place. While these points may seem obvious to some, it was clear from interviews that women and girls had not been supported to look at their decisions through such a lens. Without this support, women and girls sometimes bought into assumptions about ‘bad boys’, which they later used to justify choices that they had not always been aware of making.

Relationships

Domestic violence, stalking, rape, sexual violence, confusion regarding consent, and an inability to influence a relationship were issues raised by participants across the country. However, those who were gang-associated also disclosed experiencing all forms of violence from their partner and his peers/other gang members. For participants as young as thirteen, domestic violence was a lived experience within their own relationships. All women and girls found it easier to describe bad relationships compared to ‘healthy’ ones.

Young women discussed a range of experiences of domestic violence, some who had been in relationships with gang members and some who had not. Gang association made a difference to participants for two main reasons:

1. The threat of violence extended beyond the relationship to the rest of the group, including choosing to exit, with some participants claiming to fear other females associated to the gang being sent into refuge provision to find them
2. There was awareness that the partner was violent, on some occasions using weapons, and this exposed participants to violence outside of the relationship

He’ll put someone in here to find me.

Girl A: I was on lockers and I had to delete all the lads off my Facebook, no lads numbers and he didn’t trust me when I went out with me mates.

Girl B: Was he older than you?

Girl A: No he was in school with me, we were the same age.

Girls, 14 years old, Liverpool Focus Group

He's got so many fucking girls that are scared of him that he could put them in all the refuges in X until he finds me. (Area anonymised for safety)

*One time him and 10 of his mates turned up, kicked my door in and all battered me for something I'd said to him, and did I get help, did I fuck; what would be the point of that? **Young woman, 19 years old, Manchester***

*And when they're violent with everyone you start to know what they're capable of, I've been gun-butted by him as he was on his way out, and felt lucky that he didn't turn it round. **Woman, 21 years old, Birmingham***

Outside of a gang context however, participants still disclosed extreme violence and were confused about consent. In relation to the latter, participants implied that having sex with more than one person from the same group, or being alone with groups of males, meant that consent had been given to having sex with an entire group.

*You can catch diseases, get called a slag, and then other people will be like ah go and have a go on her like she's been round the lot of us. **Girl, 14 years old, Liverpool***

They're just looking to get raped...So if they get raped it's their own fault, because they're the ones flaunting it out

*there, there no point going grinding up on someone, it's your fault basically. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

Girl A: How many people are going in and out of you and you are just acting like it's a normal thing, you just become someone that's easy to get.

*Girl B: You just are one of those girls that the boys pass around one another, or yeah you have her next kind of thing. **Girls, 15 - 17 years old, Manchester***

Focus Group

Girls readily discussed being motivated to have sex to save relationships or because it was assumed that was what boys needed. Participants rarely offered pleasure/enjoyment/love as a reason for entering into a sexual relationship.

*If they don't do what the guy wants then he's gonna leave her and she'll be devastated. **Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham***

*Pleasure, but like in the way that you feel loved, you want them to love you. **Girl, 15 years old, Liverpool***

*After that I didn't wanna do anything, didn't wanna have sex with him, but then I did have sex with him because I wanted him, I think all I ever wanted was to feel loved by him, and if he was happy having sex then that's what I'd do. **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester***

When I lost my virginity I was lying

*there thinking I wish this wasn't happening. **Young woman, 19 years old, Manchester***

And yet all female participants stated that it would always be preferable to be in a relationship with their sexual partner. Although, they did not always feel able to secure this.

*I don't know cos everyone wants that in a boy but it's seriously hard to find that so you're just gonna have to settle for, like in reality, you'll probably find out of the bunch and the rest you know. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

*Lads aren't interested in that though, use and abuse and then just fuck them off and move onto the next person. **Young woman, 19 years old, Liverpool***

Participants were frustrated with terms such as 'wifey', 'link', 'ting' and 'bit' used to describe their position in relationships, even though they subscribed to these terms and even aspired to some of them.

*Link – you just do a ting, it's just a bash and dash. **Girl, 14 years old, Manchester***

Girl A: I don't have a problem with wifey, but I hate it when boys call you a ting, I hate it when boys call you 'boom', well that's not as bad but I still don't like it.

Girl B: I'm not a link and we're not doing

a ting – no don't say that

Girl C: Boys like using the word 'link' cos it bigs them up, like yea I'm linking that, or I've done a ting with her already.

Girl A: We can't lie, we use it too, but I don't like being referred to as a link.

Girls, 14 and 15 years old, Birmingham Focus Group

*Wifey is different cos that's what you wanna be, wifey material is decent, a link is just trash. **Girl, 15 years old, Manchester***

*Like that's my bit, which is a little bit different it's in between wifey and link, you bit could know more than wifey could a business thing too, it's like a bit on the side, like if your wifey's had a baby and she's feeling a bit sore he knows he's got that one person he can go to. **Girl, 16 years old, Manchester***

Girls struggled to describe 'healthy' relationships. While most were able to list words they associated with a good relationship such as 'love', 'trust' and 'honesty', they failed to contextualise this list or apply it to real or lived experiences. For some participants their experiences had been so bad that they were unable to offer a response to describe a good relationship. This was true for girls as young as fourteen. Comparatively, participants could describe 'bad' relationships in detail and provide examples of how words such as 'violence' or 'distrust' were played out in real life

*Getting battered, bringing the kids up on your own. **Woman, 21 years old, Liverpool***

*Going on different, like when he's with you alone he's the nicest person ever and then when he's with his friends it's like two different people. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

*When they smoke weed cos it makes them so paranoid they're constantly attacking you for things and you haven't got a clue what they are on about. **Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham***

*Just to be trusted, my boyfriend used to come with to the toilet cos he didn't trust me not to use my phone in there, I was never alone. **Young woman, 19 years old, Manchester***

In relation to domestic violence, girls discussed their lack of belief that services could support them, particularly if the perpetrator also attended school with them.

But then I've had some pretty bad injuries from both my exes and their mates: fractured eye socket, I've had me jaw broke, broken collar bone, broken hands, broken legs. R broke both of my legs six months into being with me, because we was at a party and his friends given me a hug, and as he's done that he's touched me bum, like on purpose, and R dragged me out of the party by me hair and snapped both me

*legs outside with a baseball bat. Had a metal pole round me head, dung bells, you know the weight bars, I've been knocked out I don't know how many times, broken nose, they thought I had a bleed on the brain I was bleeding so much out of me left ear, I'm partially deaf in that ear cos of him. **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester (reflecting on relationships aged 15 – 19)***

*Cos they think like it takes away their pride, like if you're with their friends and you're a bit cheeky or you say something they don't like they'll drag you by your hair or something. **Girl, 15 years old, Liverpool***

*My boyfriend broke my nose when I was 15 and no-one helped, no-one has ever helped and I don't know what they would have done to help anyway, he watched me all the time, especially in school. **Young woman, 18 years old, Manchester***

*And they like pick and choose when they wanna see you, when it fits in with other stuff they're doing, and then they see you and then they drop you as soon as they're done with you, and don't care about you. **Girl, 16 years old, Liverpool***

For girls under the age of 16 it was not clear how they would be supported to exit violent relationships when refuge provision was only available for adult women. The context within which younger participants were experiencing

violence in relationships was not being matched by service response. This was demonstrated by participants' inability to visualise ways in which they could seek support.

Reporting sexual violence

Women and girls experienced sexual violence perpetrated by their partners, peers and criminal gangs. Incidents of sexual violence could involve single or multiple perpetrators. Involvement of multiple perpetrators was not always linked to criminal gangs. Likewise, participants discussed gang-associated sexual violence that involved a single perpetrator. However, regardless of links to criminal gangs, young women were reluctant to report sexual violence or seek support.

Across the country, women and girls discussed the use of rape and sexual assault as a weapon in criminal gang conflict employed against female family members and partners of gang members to threaten or punish. Rape was cited as a risk without prompting, and was often linked to the use of kidnap and other forms of torture.

Rape, tied up, tortured, other people looking for her cause they are looking for her boyfriend, kidnapped, girls that are in the gang can target her when she doesn't even know that she was in a gang cos of what her boyfriend has been doing, you don't realise but when

*it happens you realise, believe me. **Girl, 16 years old, Birmingham***

*Things what X done to me, pinned me to the couch and had sex with me and his friends have filmed it on their phones, and they've all had copies of it, and you learn to feel numb, when they're hitting ya and doing things to ya you learn to feel numb... I'm fucking crying me heart out inside but I can't show it, because I had to learn. Like since I've been in here I haven't stopped crying cos I can, just cos I can. **Young woman 19 years old, Manchester***

*I was just thrown into the back of this van and to this day I don't know what it was about; I just waited. When I asked me fella what had happened he just said I was fine and I should stop asking questions, I could not believe it. **Young woman, 19 years old, Liverpool***

In addition to rape, other forms of violence against women were also discussed in relation to criminal gangs. The use of physical violence and 'domestic abuse' by partners and other gang members was evidenced by young women.

On a good few occasions I'd be sat there on the couch eating me tea or whatever and one of his mates would walk in and if I didn't say hi to him he'd punch me. And I'd be like 'R do you wanna fucking say something? I said your mates just hit me', and he'd say 'yea well don't be

What's the point of telling someone, only worse will happen to you. At the end of the day you're fit, you're healthy – move on!

Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham

rude...’ In the end they thought that was fun, that’s what they’d do to me.

Woman, 20 years old, Manchester

If you make an enemy of him you make an enemy of all of them. Girl, 16 years old, Birmingham

Sexual exploitation was also raised by participants in relation to girls being passed around as property by criminal gangs, sold between gangs to settle disputes, used as sexual currency to pay off drug debts and forced into formal and organised prostitution.

Sometimes the people that you chill with want you to do certain things that you don’t want to do, but you have to do it because you’re part of that crew, you’re part of it. Girl, 16 years old, Birmingham

And X said look I haven’t got it give me til Friday and I’ll pay interest. And he said no, either he pays now, gets a beating or he looked at me, and X just shoved me forward and said I’ll pick you up in an hour. Woman, 20 years old, Manchester

My ex sold me, well he used me to settle this issue he had with X, and it worked, that is how much I’m worth round here. Girl, 17 years old, Birmingham

However sexual violence and exploitation was not confined to a criminal gang environment, particularly

for the younger female participants. Their experience of sexual violence where peers were the perpetrators, but were not criminally associated, was a cause of concern. Young women spoke casually about experiences of sexual violence and did not see it as a form of violence that was as significant, or taken as seriously, as gun and knife crime.

Girl A: There was a girl in our school, she’s not in this school no more, and she was gang-raped.

Interviewer: Whose fault was it?

Girl A: Hers.

Girl B: But this girl she still wears mini-skirts and that after it happened. Girls, 14- 15 years old, Birmingham Focus Group

Girl A: Yea X, all the lads had been on her before anyway and then she got raped by all of them in X park.

Girl B: Yea they did they all dragged her in there, and they ripped her knickers off and she had to walk home.

Girl A: That’s why she does not go to school anymore.

Girl C: She is a proper wrong-en.

Girl A: She’s done all kinds with everyone.

Girl B: And she’s got the pure cheek to call me a slag. Girls, 15 - 16 years old, Liverpool Focus Group

What would you report it for, that makes no sense. What’s the point of telling someone, only worse will happen

*to you. At the end of the day you're fit, you're healthy – move on! **Girl, 14 years old, Birmingham***

Young women and girls felt under pressure to engage in sexual relationships and struggled to have control over the direction of their relationships

*I'd know if he'd slept with someone else cos he'd go to the walk in get his four tablets, condom with me for the first week, and then nothing, and I'd know, and I'd say to him you're a dirty bastard, but then you can't say no to him **Woman, 20 years old, Manchester***

*He did make me have sex with him on a few occasions. I'd just given birth and I'd had 19 stitches inside and out, and the night I come home was like oh I've fucking missed ya, and I was like I don't wanna have sex with ya I've just lost a baby and not only that, I'm sore, but no we still had sex. I had to go back and have three stitches sown back because he ripped me more, but the doctors got funny with me about it, like we told you not to have sex, and I had to make it out like I was sex pest, like yea I'm sorry I couldn't help it I haven't seen him for weeks. And you're like hello can someone just say I don't believe ya and then I can open up to ya **(Anonymised area for safety)***

Key to all discussions was participants' unwillingness to report experiences of

sexual violence and exploitation. In relation to gang-associated sexual violence, fear regarding disclosure was even more pronounced and this was for two distinct reasons. Firstly, there was a risk posed to a victim given that multiple members of a gang may seek to silence her through reprisals even though there may have only been one perpetrator. Secondly, given her own criminal association, she blamed herself for her experiences and thought that agencies would be more interested in her links to offending rather than her victimisation. These fears were combined with wider scepticism surrounding the reporting of sexual violence amongst young people in general, which was rooted in multiple beliefs. Sexual violence was difficult to prove and if it was linked to an area of school, you had to see those people every day. As a young person you had limited control over confidentiality and information sharing.

For young women, their lack of confidence in services to respond appropriately to the sexual violence they experienced within and outside of criminal gangs meant that they would rather keep such issues to themselves. And yet the fear of sexual violence was ever present in their discussions across all three cities.





Key Findings for Boys

Male understanding of impact of Serious Youth Violence on women and girls

Nearly all of the male participants had a good understanding of the possible consequences for girls. Although, few seemed to appreciate the reality of the situation for girls, or indeed that many of them were responsible for placing girls in those situations.

Participants gave a range of reasons for female involvement in gangs and serious youth violence:

- For the reputation of being seen to be involved with a gang
- To boost their confidence and self esteem
- For protection
- Through association with either their families or their boyfriends

All of this was couched in a language of choice compared to the pressures that the boys experienced. The role of the family was described as a key factor for male gang involvement.

It's probably like 'cause... like, say my brother's in a gang and, like, he was in a gang and I grew up round here...then they'll think that I wanna join and follow him on their side...so people tag you and keep on saying, 'you this, you that'. 'Cause basically it's like if my brother does something bad, I'll get the blame for it, or I'll get shot through it 'cause he's not here to take the blame or take the shooting, they try and pass it down.

The role of peer pressure was also strongly highlighted, with many participants stating that it was increasingly expected that you would join a gang and that it was necessary for your reputation.

Everyone talks about gangs. If you're not in a gang, you're not part of what's going on.

People want to be seen as like the alpha male, like the rude boy, the bad boy. They'll be scared of him, they want to be the biggest, the best.

For some of the participants, the driving

Guys don't really get involved with gangs; it just is what it is. They don't really wake up and think, 'Yeah I need to get involved with a gang.' You're just doing what you have to do, isn't it? Like girls it's different. They can choose what they need to do in life you know what I'm saying?

force behind joining a gang was for protection from being bullied.

Most guys believe it or not yeah get involved in gangs because either they get bullied or they're scared of being bullied. The gang members get bullied by other gangs. You see it all the time in jails but they won't admit it.

Male participants perceived that they did not have a choice to join a gang. Conversely, they thought girls were in a position to make a choice.

Some boys might not see any other way out of it. Like if they've failed in school, then they'll think, 'God, this is the only way out'. But girls have a choice.

Finally, only a few participants reported that boys would join a gang for financial or material gain, or to meet girls.

Some cases it's actually because of the girls, like they see someone on road and they've been talked about by lots of girls, like gossiping and that, because girls like...they go 'oh yeah, I was there when he did this', or just to chat somebody's name. Yeah, so a guy might think 'oh yeah'...money and girls are the ultimate main two reasons why people would want to be known like that.

I think there's some money because brothers, they like to dress nice so they need to go out and get money, like they

might want to have a car. Money is like crucial, and I think most of us think if you have money, you can like get other stuff that goes like.

Given the assumptions that participants made about choice and agency, they were less sympathetic to pressures placed on girls who offended. Male participants assumed girls had chosen to be in that relationship or make that association. Therefore, girls were seen to have made the choice, however removed they were from an understanding of the consequences, to commit those crimes.

Girls are also used for things like carrying guns into clubs, carrying drugs, all of these things that you're going to be put in vulnerable situations, because you're seen as that easy route...a man is going to be searched thoroughly going into a club. A pretty girl might just walk in easily

Accessory to murder, definitely.

Being alibi as well, that's another one.

Like 90 per cent of the times if a policeman stops a lad he won't check the girl he'll just go for the lads. Say if they walked ahead, it wouldn't look like you were with them, if they don't look the same.

Many of the groups were keen to point out that this type of situation was not

necessarily gang related and that girls were often involved with crimes outside of a gang scenario or did not have to be in a gang to be involved.

She wouldn't have to be involved in a gang to [commit a crime]. It could be a mate but she wouldn't be involved in a gang...someone might hold something down for someone but they're not a gang member and the girl's not associated, it's a girlfriend...just loads of people could get involved through different avenues.

As was the case with young women, males identified feelings for, or being scared of, their partner as key drivers for girls' involvement in offending. In addition, male participants discussed financial/material gain and feeling included in a gang as other explanatory factors for female involvement.

For financial or material gain:

Sometimes you put yourself at risk to get nicked don't you, if you get a load of money, you wouldn't do it for free.

Because they are scared or frightened:

If their fella batters them then they're going to do it aren't they?

*Out of fear innit sometimes?
Sometimes they're scared.*

Because they care for their partner:

Cause she loves her man innit.

Because obviously they love the person. For example, say if I'd been selling a load of drugs and my girlfriend knew that the police was onto me, I think she obviously wouldn't want me to go to prison because she loves me and she'd be without me, know what I mean.

Because they want to be part of the gang and feel included:

They want to be part of the team.

Some girls like the thug love [Laughter]...They're attracted to the actual whole lifestyle...like the thug lifestyle and the adrenalin that comes with it.

However, while participants had been clear that gang-association was a choice for females, quite a few of the participants became confused when asked why a girl might commit offences such as carrying a weapon or providing an alibi. Many could not see a situation where a girl would not do such a thing and there was a clear expectation that she would.

If you're in a gang, then even if you've just been with the girl for a couple of days, you're the boss, whatever you say goes.

If it was like a relationship where you've been with her for a year or something, I

might say "I need you to be there for me today, so I need you to do this one thing for me."

She's my girl. What's wrong with you?

Some participants indicated that if a girl did not do as expected, then there would be repercussions.

[If] she grassed you up and she didn't lie for you, well when I get out man I'd give her some head butts I would, I tell you.

While participants held expectations of female loyalty, some groups also recognised that there were significant risks involved for girls and women that committed these types of crimes.

Criminal record if she is involved in holding anything for her man or her boys.

She might get in trouble with the police for like withholding information.

They can actually do time for that ... big time.

Therefore, while they could identify pressures on females to offend, the impact of male offending on females, and the risks of non-compliance, they failed to appreciate the meaning of this for gang-associated women and girls. This awareness did not translate into empathy or understanding. Indeed, the boys tended to minimise their own

control and ability to manipulate and influence the behaviour of girls.

Confusion regarding risk to females who want to exit gangs or relationships

Participants were unanimous in stating that girls and women all faced significant risk from association. Rival gang members who had an argument with the girl's boyfriend tended to be identified as the main source of risk. Risks commonly cited included kidnap, rape, getting stabbed or shot, being physically attacked, or ultimately being killed.

When someone can't get to you they go for the closest thing to you and more likely that is gonna be a woman.

I know there's cases of the whole...the whole gang having a turn on one girl as some sort of initiation or batteries or so it's called. You could get beaten if you tried to leave, you might get beaten by your boyfriend, you can't reveal anything that you've seen about your gang, they don't want you to reveal it to anyone else. So it's risky.

If he's doing business with the wrong type of people, what I class the wrong type of people, then they see you as fair game. Someone could kidnap somebody's girl because he owed someone money, and he's taking too long to pay it...They're...like, 'where's

my money?’ Now if you’re taking too long, they may see it as, ‘this is the way to hurry this guy up. Let’s take his girl.’ You know? There’s certain people, certain gangsters, certain places. Your girl could get raped, your girl could get really badly hurt, depending on who you’re dealing with.

Participants were aware that women and girls were associated with gangs and serious youth violence. They also believed that if girls wanted to exit these associations, this was also their choice. And yet, when questioned on specific scenario’s involving family members or partners, participants then gave confused and mixed answers as to whether:

- A woman or girl had a choice to exit
- If she did have a choice, whether this choice would be constrained by risk

Many of them felt that girls and women had placed themselves in many of these situations, or had become involved with a gang by choice. As a result, the group participants were not clear about why they might want to ask for help.

It’s like when you become a gang member there’s a package with it...you know when you go and buy a product from the shop you’re supposed to read the small print. [Laughter] The small print’s not in your face here so when you buy a car you could get a puncture, you could get a water leak, yeah, at

worse your engine can blow up. When you’re in this drug game yeah, because you’re selling destruction you could get robbed, you could get shot, you could get killed. All these things come with it so when you know about the package, don’t cry when it happens or blame other people.

If a girl or woman was trying to ask for help, her ability to do so often depended on whether the involvement was through a boyfriend or a family member. All of the groups had different opinions. In some groups, if it was your brother then it was easier to ask for help because it was your family. Whilst for others, the family connection made it harder to seek support.

You cannot snitch on family that is it.

Some participants thought that boys in gangs should never get their family involved.

If he was your real brother anyway he wouldn’t ask you to be doing those types of things.

Some groups thought that if a girl’s involvement was through her boyfriend, it was easier to walk away from the situation because there were no lingering ties. Yet for others this was potentially a more dangerous situation because of the likelihood of retribution or the gang making it difficult for her to leave.

My girlfriend starts speaking to police, and I think about it closely, I get locked up. If you got me in there, you think, 'who's the closest person that knew about my business?' You think, 'it's her'.

It's not safe...they're gonna find out who said so, who said that...when the guy goes to prison he might tell one of his friends to kill her or something like that.

The groups were asked who they thought a girl or woman could turn to for support. Some of the participants were adamant that there were only a few people who could be trusted with that type of information.

How do you get help? What do you do? Who do you get help from? Who do you go to and tell, 'Yeah, I've got my boyfriend's gun in my house?' You can't really tell no-one that.

That's why it's heavy, you can't talk.

If she's saying it to someone, obviously you never know who they'll talk to, pass it to someone and it just goes round and then that's how everyone knows. Obviously you can only tell certain people your stuff.

As was the case with female participants, risks and choice were bound up with scepticism of 'information sharing processes' and confidentiality. Male participants were

wary of females potentially disclosing to police or teachers, and indeed anyone who was seen as being in a position of authority.

Oh no, I wouldn't say go and talk to the police...You're saying going to the police and saying I'm involved with a gang of violence they're going to come and keep watching you.

If it was me personally, and I was in that situation, I wouldn't go to the police...Not because of any relationship that I had with the police, but the fact is aftercare, yeah, as [he] said, there's no aftercare. Understand? Maybe they say, 'okay, you can move off to Bangladesh'. Why are you really gonna wanna move to Bangladesh? Or they can change your description. You have to change your whole life some of the time just for them to get a case.

Many of the participants had little understanding of confidentiality and believed that any information you give someone, such as a teacher, would ultimately get back to the police or their parents.

That teacher...it depends on what sort of information you've gone to tell them about. If you've gone and told the teacher that you are holding a gun for someone else, they're going to have to call the police aren't they. They'd [teachers] start ringing homes and that....'cause they say it's

confidential and then one minute it's not...telling your mum this, that and the other yeah. They just could phone your mum and go 'hey, did you know? and you're like what!?'

Many of the groups highlighted the potential repercussions to the girl or woman if the gang found out that they had been speaking to the police.

You get nicked and then you get killed afterwards for snitching.

If you are associated with a gang and you're seen talking to the police you'll get known as a grass for it.

As was the case with female participants, male respondents believed that the only safe people to approach were family and friends.

Their mum or their dad, that's where they step in ... that's where they're meant to be. You don't need no counsellor or nothing. You've got to think yeah back in 1800 did people have counsellors and that? Did cavemen go to counsellors if they had a problem? No.

I feel like I can tell [my friend] anything and it's stored there and it will never get repeated. You need to find someone who really can keep their mouth shut. Like people who know things and you've never heard them say.

I only trust my friends and my family.

The groups were specifically asked whether or not they thought a girl who associates with a gang could report a rape to the police. Some of the participants were initially quite adamant that if a girl had been raped, then she could and should report it to the police.

She knows really and truly if she did get raped then she can go to the police.

I don't deal with the police so obviously I'd say no, but if its rape I'd say yes she can 'cos I don't associate with rapists.

Some of the participants recognised that although she should report it to the police, it would be difficult for her to do so. Perhaps this was because of the stigma associated with rape, because she could be called a 'snitch' or because of fear of reprisals.

I can imagine for a woman it's gonna be very difficult for her, especially if she knows them [her rapists]... then her friends, her social circle know them as well, it's very difficult.

She can but at the risk of something happening to her...She could get raped again, she could get stabbed.

If she reports that to the police man will hunt her down innit.

Obviously if people wanna trouble ya and they can't find ya then they're bring trouble to your mums door...Round here yea people just don't give a fuck, they don't care, if they wanna do you over they'll find her.

Some of the participants were quite adamant that the girl should not report the rape to the police. For some, this was because they saw the rape as her fault or because they thought the police would not support her.

I don't deal with the police but it's like the police are there to hunt us out not protect us, so why would it be any different for her?

Familial relationships and risks

The groups were all specifically asked whether they felt mothers or sisters had a role to play in supporting their sons or brothers if they were involved in gangs. The groups were almost unanimous in stating that it depended on the level of the boy's involvement. Once they had become involved to a certain extent, there was very little that mothers could do, with perhaps the exception of simply moving house.

When they're younger if they kept their sons busy doing other things it could help...But once they're in it deep then she can't really do nothing to tell you the truth.

Your mum ought to like start from a young age 'cause if like they don't start telling you what to do till you're like fourteen, you won't listen to them and all that. So like say you're in a gang, and she ain't been telling you what to do till you're fourteen, you won't listen

to her, so she can't do nowt about it.

Move...it's that easy. I think that's probably one of the best options, because if they stay there, then if they've been in a gang in that area and everybody knows them, it's going to be hard for the son ... the best thing that a mother can do is just move or start afresh.

One of the older groups was keen to stress that mothers are often unaware of their son's involvement and are unable to intervene. Some actually benefit from their son's gang involvement and are therefore unable to influence their decisions.

Behind their back he's someone else. Do you see? So sometimes you can't really blame a mum, because sometimes they are very naive and the young person's very skilful at creating that picture. And then you've got the other side where they collude with the young person and, for instance, the kid comes home, he's got a few extra quid, mum says, 'oh give us a...' you know, she's struggling, he gives her £20, £30 or they share. She smokes weed, he smokes weed. All of these things, she does not see that she's colluding with him, supporting him. It's too late for you now to turn round and say, 'you shouldn't be doing this, you shouldn't be doing that'.

Some of the groups felt that siblings

might have a stronger role to play in supporting their brothers.

If someone was doing drugs or anything or getting into trouble with gangs, they will more likely turn to their sister for help than their mother...I have an older brother, so if I got into trouble, I would tell him, because obviously I feel the sense of security because like he knows what can be done.

It has to come down to big brothers, really...That's the only way, he can look out for you. Think now, mum thinks she knows what's going on on the streets being that she's seeing. But she's not seeing what's going on, big brother knows why. He knows what streets are like. Your mum don't know what shit is on the streets. What it's like in 2010.

Like my sister cause when I was young she was always there for me whenever I was in trouble and I needed to talk it so she was like my sister, she was there, she was really good. She was the person I could speak to about anything.

Without prompting, many of the groups voluntarily mentioned that their fathers would have a stronger role to play than mothers or sisters in supporting boys.

Dad's would do a better job than mums...I'm backing as a boy you'd look up to your dad and listen to him more than a mum...when my dad died that's when I didn't give a shit no more.

It's like your dad is your idol, when you're a kid. He's the person you look up to. Because he's more powerful.

[Fathers are] more direct, more abrupt about it. When my dad says something, I just do it. When my mum does, I just try and argue out of it.

There was unanimous agreement across the groups that mothers and sisters were at risk. The level of risk that family members might be exposed to varied between and across groups, and was usually as a result of gang rivalries.

That's another weakness as well that they can get to, if they can't get to the gang then obviously family members are always a weakness, aren't they?

If you owe a geezer a few grand he's going to look for it another way...they're just going to come straight to your mum's and he'll kick off the door and he's going to have your mum there and that, do you know what I mean?

Family members face, for example, being robbed or burgled, their houses being targeted, being physically attacked or even raped.

Its mainly like their house, getting the door kicked in, windows shot at, set on fire things shoved through the letter box that kind of thing.

The family could get abused, they could get stabbed, shot.

Girls, they know that danger. It just attracts them, that little bit of excitement.

Some of the groups expressed the opinion that it was rare for mothers to be specifically targeted. If they were, then the situation was extremely serious and likely to result in severe retribution to the perpetrators.

But I'll tell you that day somebody beats up my mum is the day that person dies, it's ending, it's ending.

If anything happens to your mum then it's like a war yea, serious things, that has to be 'cos of some deep beef that is going on then yea that's what happens, but there would be consequences... That's war, if someone does something to your mum, it's deep.

There is a line that people don't cross when it comes to mothers, it's not crossed often, but it does happen...If the line is crossed, retaliation is certain.

Some groups felt that sisters were often exposed to a greater level of risk than mothers, particularly in relation to the risk of being raped.

They'll come and rape your sister but catch 'em raping your mum!

Two of the groups highlighted the potential harm to a mother's mental health due to their son's involvement.

Stressing your mum out...knowing that she'll probably go to your funeral before you go to hers.

If it's already past the point where she feels that she can actually do anything to change his behaviour, then it's worry. Every time he goes out, 'Is he gonna come home?' You know, when someone knocks at the door, Is it the police?" That in itself, that is a real risk. Do you know what I mean?

Good girls and bad relationships

When discussing girls and relationships, participants found it easier to list negative qualities of girls and to discuss difficult relationships. With regard to familial and intimate relationships, participants struggled to appreciate or to acknowledge the impact of their behaviour on the relationships they had, or the risk posed to their families and relationships.

All the groups found it extremely easy to list different 'types' of girls, and found it significantly easier to list negative 'types' of girls than positive ones.

Examples of negative 'types' frequently listed included: annoying, attention-seekers, bitches, crazy, dirty, fake, ho's, liars, rude, set-up chicks, stupid, ugly, man-heads, slags, street, and junkie.

I know slags...they just go, like, they just go for any boy they see, anyone. Anything...and they're dirty. They're properly dirty.

Some groups did list examples of positive ‘types’, although this was usually after groups had exhausted their negative ‘types’. Some examples of positive ‘types’ commonly listed included: beautiful, classy, cool, go-getters, ladies, natural, nice looking, nice personality, normal, posh, pretty, sexy, smart and trustworthy.

Girls whose families aren’t on the dole.

Girls that don’t have make up, girls that don’t wear the whole shebang. Girls that are comfortable in their own skin.

Go-getters, like a good girl that is working or in uni.

There was unanimous agreement across all of the groups that the most attractive ‘types’ of girls were ‘good’, ‘intelligent’ and ‘physically attractive’. It was also important to many of the participants that she had few, if any, past sexual partners.

It’s all about looks. Looks and personalities...how you act and how you carry yourself and stuff.

A little bit of geekiness is always good, if she likes to read books and them kind of things. We like that.

Well you don’t like dirty girls and she might have diseases and shit man.

All of the groups expressed that these types of girls were rare and

difficult to find.

The good girls obviously are more attractive because they’re harder to get.

Good girls were frequently referred to as those who were from a different area to where the boys and men lived or spent time. By contrast, girls from the local area were looked down upon.

It depends where you’re from ‘cos I’m from the hood then they’re just bare hood girls around there.

Compared to their discussions of girls, many of the groups found listing different ‘types’ of boys difficult, particularly where the group had previously classified girls using sexual behaviour. Many participants felt that it was a girl’s place to list different ‘types’ of boys and men.

Can’t say if one type of boy is better than any others – that’s just gay stuff.

I can’t sit here and say set boys are better than most it’s for girls to decide that.

You’d have to ask girls what they would say.

For those that managed to produce a list, the different ‘types’ listed were extremely varied. Some of the more common types listed included: bad, cheats, crackheads, crooks, drug

dealers, faggot or gay, funny, gangster, geeks, ghetto chaser, good, smart, players, racist, rapists, safe, sporty, twats, violent and weirdos. Across the groups there was a feeling that it was difficult to typecast boys and men as just one thing, whilst this was not something that had been difficult when discussing 'types' of girls. For example, distinctions between good and bad males were very blurred.

Obviously like with boys we can be on our gang thing and still be good people, but with bad girls that ain't the same.

Some of the groups were only really able to determine two types of males - those who were 'legitimate' and those who were not.

Obviously you've got your gangsters and then the ones that stay in school or whatever.

Some of us work in an office and some of us work on road, that's the main one, the difference that we can see.

Many of the group participants found describing a good relationship incredibly difficult, and when asked were unable to complete this task. Others, instead of answering, responded by saying that they were not interested in relationships.

Relationships are just a drama ting, like it's much better to just not be in them

and just see girls, you know link them or whatever, 'cos then you don't have to answer to them.

Some of the participants were able to list qualities that a good relationship might have, although it was clear that very few were speaking from experience of positive relationships. Qualities listed included: loyalty, honesty, equality, faithfulness, friendship, fun, good communication, integrity, love, respect, sex, stability, and trust. Interestingly, 'love' was rarely listed as a good quality.

Some of the groups listed material goods, such as a car, a house or being able to go on holidays, that they thought were necessary in order to have a good relationship. Some listed physical or behavioural female attributes that they thought were necessary for a good relationship, such as big boobs, blonde hair, blue eyes, or a girl who does not talk back. A girl's sexual history was also seen as important in a 'good' relationship.

History. She has to have a good history. I don't want no prostitute.

Conversely, when participants were asked what a bad relationship would look like, and what qualities it would have, they found this much easier. In answer to this question many participants, particularly from the younger groups, listed the qualities of

girls or women that they found annoying or that they did not like.

When they can't be bothered to have sex, you know like when you meet them and they're all there pushing themselves up on you and dat like on it all the time cos they wanna get you and then after a bit it dries up and like they're tired of whatever.

The ones that like to fuck the whole block behind your back.

Snakey girls, you know those types that you can't trust ever.

Some of the groups listed more general qualities that they felt a bad relationship would have. In this part of the discussion, it was clear that many more of the participants were speaking from experience. Qualities included a lack of faithfulness, jealousy, a lack of trust, cheating, stealing, arguments or violence.

Those women that get jealous always asking you where you been, who you been with, not wanting you to talk to other girls, you know and you're thinking the whole time 'why did I get involved with this crazy bitch?'

When she shouts and nags all the time, urgh, does my head in.

When describing the difference between a 'link' and a 'wifey', male

participants answers were similar to those offered by females. A 'link' was described by the groups in the following ways.

A link is kind of thought of with an expiry date.

A link is the type of girl yea that you would sneak in yea when no-one one was on road, and then when you're done with her just let her out the back door and don't even walk her to the bus stop man.

A link you just stop by and drop your load and bounce [laughs] and you're not bothered about you get me.

'Wifeys' were spoken about with considerably more respect and admiration.

A wifey is someone that you like, hold you, cherish and that, and that you want to be with. So that's a girlfriend and all that. A wife material, you know what I mean.

Like that's your girl, like you would take her places, introduce her to your boys, your family, that type of thing, it's not just a sex thing.

When asked whether a 'link' could become a 'wifey' there was considerable variation in responses, both within and between groups. Some participants felt that this could

She's not going to come to my house and expect me to say, 'Oh can I get you a cup of tea?' She knows what she is there for.

never happen.

She's not going to end up being your bird if you're just meeting up with her and having sex.

Some felt that it could.

Depending on how the link is, a link can move from link to a wifey.

Others felt that a girl had to be a 'link' before they could become a 'wifey'.

I don't think you can just meet a girl and change her into a wifey. She has to be a link first.

Your wifey's always a link first. She's always a link before your wifey.

This wide variation in responses from the groups mirrors the confusion displayed by female participants about their roles in relationships with boys, with girls being unsure about how to approach relationships due to an inconsistency in attitudes towards the concept of a 'link'.

Lack of awareness regarding consent, sexual violence and coercion

Participants' discussion of sexual relationships, consent and sexual violence were confused. When phrases associated to sexual violence such as rape were explicitly used, participants found discussions difficult and often became defensive. And yet, when such language was not explicitly used, participants spoke openly about coercive and violent sexual relationships. For many participants, this appeared to be the first opportunity they had to consider any of these issues and to have conversations on this topic.

Most groups agreed that 13 was an acceptable age for a boy to start having sex. Some thought it was up to the boy to decide when he felt ready to have sex. For a girl, however, 13 or 14 was considered too young by most participants and the most common response was around 16 – many participants linked the age to the legal limit.

17, 18 plus, yeah. They say 16, but I don't...16 is the absolute lowest, but before that, I don't know, it's just crazy man.

The law that we're having right now, at least 16. I'm glad that it's nothing less than 16. 16 is a good place to start off.

Most of the groups commented that if a girl started having sex at a younger age, then they were a certain ‘type’ of girl.

Yeah that’s another reason why you can tell what type the girls are. If a girl says she had sex when she was 14 then you know ...That can’t be a wifey...no way, that’s a joke.

Some participants thought that girls needed to be older than 16, particularly if it was their sister.

Girls younger than 21 don’t know what they’re doing, they’re confused.

Wow I reckon a girl should have sex when she’s like 24.

If it’s your sister and that then it’s like ban 16, 17, 18 you know what I’m saying...22 more like [laughter].

Some participants reported that age was not a barrier if the couple shared a similar age.

As long as it’s in the two year rule [laughter]...two years difference.

Only a few male participants felt that it was necessary to be in a relationship in order to have sex.

I think that’s ideal. I think that’s the way it should be in the perfect world, that’s how it would be, but that is not the world by any means.

I think it’s alright for a boy, but not really a girl.

When discussing their reasons for having sex, male participants cited pleasure, boredom, competition, control, or peer pressure.

The best feeling you can have in your life.

Because it’s something to do.

To build their reputation up and so they’re not a virgin anymore.

We were having a bet, we have a bet all the time.

So if she ever tried anything I’d just say, ‘Listen!’...If she tries to get above a level, you can tell her ‘I fucked you, you can’t tell me nothing’.

Male participants gave a variety of reasons why a girl would have sex. These included pleasure, material gain, peer pressure, pressure from their boyfriend or to maintain their relationship.

Now a lot of girls are moving like men – so they just want a quick fix.

Some girls are just like that. If they want a house, they’ll have a baby.

Some girls do it for fashion. If all her friends have had sex, and she hasn’t

had sex, she'll think, 'Oh I need to go and have sex with some people'.

I know guys that'll pressure girls into having sex.

Sometimes girls like doing it just to please the lad.

Coercion

When discussing scenarios where girls may have sex with more than one person from the same group of friends, more than one person at the same time or have been coerced into group sex, responses within and between the groups were extremely varied. In discussions about having sex with boys from the same friendship group, although not at the same time, some participants felt that this was completely unacceptable. Despite this, some said it did occasionally happen.

No, no, that's not right. Because it brings up all kind of things like the way you feel and while you were with her, and did you talk to her, when you were talking to her when we were together, were you planning this and all that? It's never going to be...I think it's just off limits, it's just straight off limits.

It is not cool for a girl to have sex with more than one person from the same group of friends, but it happens.

Some participants thought that sex with

multiple partners was acceptable.

You wanna bring a friend into the deal, or when I'm done someone else can blend that for a bit then yeah. If the man just wants a little beep, like a little sex he'll just beat it fast.

Depends on the timing, you know what I'm saying...if a girl has sex with him, and has it with him the next day, that's pretty poorish. If she has sex with him and has it with him the next year...

Different standards applied for boys and girls when talking about multiple partners.

There are some dirty girls who just get bashed by loads a man.

That's what a bizzle is...they can just chill with loads of people and then just have sex with nearly everyone.

A girl that goes round having sex with everyone is a slag but if a lad goes round having sex [that's okay].

It's not okay for her but its fine for us.

Respondents reported that certain 'types' of girls had sex with more than one person at the same time.

I'll do it, yeah, but fuckin' hell, I ain't looking for my girl from them who do that.

I'll share man...I know you're a ho but I'll share.

I've seen this. There were about ten people done it in a row...with one girl, yeah, and she was walking home with her legs open like this. It was funny [Laughter].

When presented with coercive scenarios, most groups became confused, often changing their mind mid-sentence or saying conflicting things. Some of the participants reported that a girl always had a choice to have sex.

If a girl wants to say no, just say no.

She could have walked out of the front door, if she come through it she could go out again.

She'll feel pressure, but it's still up to her whether she wants to have sex or not.

Some participants reported that girls would not admit to consenting to sex in order to protect their reputation.

Girls can always say no. They just act like they can't so that people don't call them slags when it gets out what they've done.

I hate that, and it can get a man into bare trouble...Why get into it if you can't handle the reputation? You should keep out of it, but don't get other men

into problems because you're ashamed of yourself.

Some participants seemed unable to differentiate between choice and coercion. Girls were assumed to have consented to sex by their actions, in lieu of giving direct and vocal approval.

It's like if I say to her 'are you coming to mine?' and she says 'I'm not coming for that' – then don't come then, that's fine just don't come.

Don't come into my house, you know into my bedroom now, drink my koolaid and all that and then say 'I don't wanna do that, I hate that'. Don't tell me, don't say 'ah we ain't having sex and all that', I hate that, don't do it. Tell me at the door so I can say you know what I'll check you later. Ya get me tell me at the door, tell me on the phone.

Male participants identified certain situations where a girl may be unable to say no.

They might even rape her. [I know] some girl got raped. She went to a boy's house thinking it was just one and there was about four boys there and then she said no, so I think they raped her.

He might have just battered her if she said no. These things happen, these things happen. It happened just for a young girl that was a friend of my

family, she went to see someone she liked, and they kind of...they done what they were doing, and then he went out of the room and his friend came in. And she was kind of just too scared to say no or do anything about it. And his friend came in and had a turn. These things happen, I've heard quite a few things about these things.

Some of the participants felt that the girl's ability to say no in this type of situation depended on their strength of character.

If your character was strong, then you probably wouldn't have been in that situation in the first place. So they prey on vulnerable girls. They let themselves be intimidated, taken advantage of, that kind of thing. So if they're a vulnerable girl they're going to be intimidated...they're going to feel like they're being bullied.

One of the older groups highlighted that the boys may not be willing participants.

Imagine if you got a couple of them in the crew that they're virgins. Yeah? It's a big thing, the first time you have sex with a girl, and someone laid it on for you. Do you know what I mean? And that gives him stripes, man, he's now somebody. Do you know what I mean? He's even more than whatever he was then, he's more now. 'Cause he can get you sex.

The boy could be the naive one. Like a boy's under pressure from his friends.

Rape

All the groups were extremely critical of the term rape. Yet when presented with sexually violent situations where the term rape was not used, the boys did not perceive the situation as rape.

I don't fuck with that shit there.

Raping in our circle is nasty. You can't do it.

The risk of rape was usually perceived as a result of gang rivalries or initiation rituals.

That's the only time, 'you did this, I'll find your girl and sort her out and you'd wish I'd killed you', but it's like you have to be cold, proper nuts or just proper mad about it innit, like it's not gonna happen for nothing.

Some mans out on this road ting are crazy and if you cross them that's what is coming to your gal.

Oh, yeah. I remember somebody saying about that, if the girl wants to join the gang...they'll make her have sex with them, or they'll rape her before she can come into the gang.

Some of the groups did not think gang association resulted in rape. Again, sex

was perceived as the responsibility of girls. Often, they were accused of deceiving the boys.

I think they lie and say they were raped just so that they don't look bad.

Most of the time when people talk about it round here it wasn't rape, she wanted to do it, but she's a slag.

I think it depends on the girl, because I also know girls that go out with gang members, and that could never happen. So literally they'll die fighting before they let something like that happen to them. It just depends on the girl, how vulnerable she is and how aware she is of what she's getting into.

For the majority of the groups, rape was thought to be the girl's fault. This was because they assumed she was aware of the risk of rape once she became involved with gangs.

This is what you get for trying to be a part of gang culture, you can't just dip in and out of gangs as you please.

If she wants to involve herself in man's things then she gotta expect man's risks you get me, you can't just be involved with that kind of lifestyle, you know get the rep, get the money and then not have to work at it.

If she gets raped by the people that are in the gang, then it's sort of her fault,

yeah. Because if she's hanging around with them sort of people, then she should know that, do you know what I mean.

A small number of participants placed the responsibility of rape with boys and gangs.

You can't blame the girl though....she won't be thinking 'right, they might rape us'. Do you know what I'm saying? It's just the boy's fault that.

Even if she's naked, she's not supposed to be raped.

My point is that it does not matter what she's wearing. Yes, you have to say to the girl, 'your judgement was terrible, you've gone into a group of guys who you know they are gang-bangers, you know they are rapists, you know they'll...' but it still doesn't... there's no justification for those boys to commit any kind of sexual act to that girl whatsoever.

Some participants felt that both males and females should share responsibility for rape.

If she got raped, yeah, 'cause she's hanging around with the people from the gang, yeah. Then obviously it's like, sort of half right. It's the gang's fault as well. But if she just got raped by chance, yeah, then it's no-one's fault really.

Hers and the gangs, both of them...Her fault for going with them...And their fault for actually doing it.

Domestic Abuse

Participants also discussed other forms of violence within friendships and intimate relationships. The majority of group participants told us that girls were sometimes violent towards boys.

I ain't had no girls be violent to me!

The groups reported that girls were violent for a variety of reasons.

Some dumbness like that. If you cheat on them or if you say to them, they're gonna try to slap you or some crap like that.

Like they might be under the influence of alcohol or drugs [laughter].

Now she's got protection, she's got a man or whoever it is, she thinks she's big in the game and no one can touch her.

'Cause they think that you won't hit them back but then they do. And then when they get hit back they start crying and all that.

All the groups reported that boys were violent towards women. Only a few participants felt that it was always unacceptable to hit a girl.

I wouldn't hit her, I would push her away or try and make her stop hitting me. But I wouldn't hit her. That's different to hit a girl.

It's not much of a reputation is it, a lad hitting a girl?

Some participants were quick to distance themselves from violence against women.

No one here is really gonna say if they've ever hit a girl.

Some participants stated that they would only ever hit a girl for a 'serious' reason.

They do, yeah, but not because they're pissed off. It's got to be a serious reason...Like if I have a girlfriend, yeah. I know someone yeah that had a girlfriend and she gave him herpes, isn't it. And he beat her up, isn't it. Right. That's a serious reason, man.

Obviously you don't hit them for no reason. I only hit if it's a big reason.

Some of them they do need to get hit. I don't believe in that, 'oh don't hit a girl'. I don't. Even though I don't like hitting girls, I don't believe in it because sometimes they do need to get hit man.

Others reported that it was acceptable to hit a girl if she had hit him, cheated on him, set him up or 'snitched' on him.

I'm not gonna lie, yeah, I bricked a girl one time 'cos she slapped me in my face, there was nuff man around and the gal slapped me hard in front of bare mans, nah I had to brick her though, I had to do it. Cos she was cheeky, she was like 'do you want me to slap ya, do you want me to slap ya', and I said 'if you've got the balls' and then she was like (claps hands) so I had to brick her back mate, I was like 'ah are you taking the piss'...she hit me so I hit her back... it'll make her think whether she wants to slap me next time won't it.

Because you know and I'll tell you this straight if a girl ever tried to set me up or snitch me out I'd be banging her teeth through the back of her face.

If I find out my girl has banged some next man I'm finding her and sorting it out there and then, bam! (claps his hands together).

Sometimes men will just hit girls because they're the kind that can't hit other men...They'll hit girls because they think they can't hit men, because they don't think they are hard enough.

Extreme violence was referred to in and outside of a gang context and participants seldom acknowledged their own involvement. In reference to sexual relationships, girls were expected to behave according to traditional assumptions around purity and chastity yet still have sex when required. Girls

who had sex outside of committed relationships were typecast as 'dirty' or 'slags'. Male sexual behaviour, by contrast, was not reported to be regulated by the same rules. Participants reported that it was acceptable for boys to have sex without repercussions. Addressing sexual violence within and outside of a gang context requires significant work with boys on these subject areas, in addition to providing services to girls.



Differences and Considerations for the Cities

While the above section demonstrates the similarities in answers from participants across the cities, it is important to note where there were distinct differences. This will be of particular use to city-wide decision-makers and service providers.

Liverpool

Role of drugs

Compared to other cities, in Liverpool references to drugs were significantly higher within interviews and focus groups. Drugs were raised by girls when discussing experiences of criminal gangs, risks, benefits, roles, and offending behaviour, even though the discussion tool only directly asked about drugs in one question near the end. Nearly all focus groups with boys made reference to girls as drug users. When speaking about girls as perpetrators of criminal activity it was in relation to storing and dealing drugs. Boys also described drugs as a key attraction for girls. For participants in Liverpool a conversation about criminal gangs was inextricably linked to drug dealing. This

was not the case in the other cities. Liverpool's responses to risk and offending, must take this into consideration when developing policy and practice, considering that much of the girls offending was linked to the risk related to drug carrying.

Some woman, her son left a key of crack cocaine in her house, he was inside, and then after two lads came to her house, battered her and put a gun to her head cos she'd lost the drugs, she was 62.

Woman, 27 years old, Liverpool

Cos say like you ended up living with them and like then your flat got raided both of you are going down if your fingerprints are on there. Girl, 17 years old, Liverpool

Girl A: They just use the girls to do the deals for them.

Girl B: Put things in their bras, knickers to get things done.

Girl C: No I've been there once before and I wouldn't go back there ever again where I've had to stick drugs in me bras for people. Girls, 16 years old, Liverpool Focus Group

*But the dealers are getting respectable, driving the nice cars, and they're buying all the properties and renting them to the kids and getting them to be the foot soldiers and messengers. The girls I know try and legitimise what their fella does, well he only sells coke, he doesn't sell smack. **Woman, 50 years old, Liverpool***

*Liverpool and we have connections in both cities, but it's supposed to be only white families in Liverpool, it's so frustrating cos no one is even looking at you like you could be in problems and you just want them to have it as a thought like, but they don't. **Young woman, 18 years old, Liverpool***

Ethnicity

Women and girls were frustrated at the perception that only white communities in Liverpool were affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence. Participants from the south of the city raised concerns that they were not seen as being at the same level of risk as girls from other parts of the city. As a result, they were often unable to access culturally specific support. These concerns were raised specifically by young women from Black Caribbean, Somalian and Pakistani backgrounds.

*The thing is you read the news, or the Echo or whatever and they are always talking about the same areas, as if this stuff doesn't affect us but it does. You feel so alone. **Girl, 16 years old, Liverpool***

*And when you come from our community it's not that easy to just speak up and ask for help; you think to yourself, do you know what this means for me and what my family are gonna say about it, I don't think so. **Girl, 15 years old, Liverpool***

I've got family in Manchester and

Following the FVV roundtable held in Liverpool, there are key areas where decision-makers in the city could respond to the needs of gang-affected women and girls. Reviewing strategic approaches to drugs sales/use and criminal gangs would be recommended given the strong links that were demonstrated in the responses from both male and female participants. In addition, challenging the ethnicity stereotypes surrounding criminal gangs in the city may improve the identification of women and girls from ethnic minority groups who are at risk of serious youth violence.

The safeguarding strategy for the city in relation to criminal gangs and serious youth violence, and the sexual violence report produced for Liverpool last year, provide good building blocks for strategic positioning on this issue. The city would benefit from merging these together into a basic strategic document and flow chart focused specifically on gender and serious youth violence. At present both documents are quite dense and would be relatively inaccessible for professionals seeking guidance to

respond to girls who disclose and where referrals need to be made. By learning from the response to serious youth violence and to sexual violence, the city has the potential to develop and circulate minimum standards guidance for identification, information sharing and referral processes.

Manchester

Impact on daughters

Compared to other cities daughters of men in custody for serious violence and gang-related offences were referred at a greater rate. For these young women there were risks and restrictions placed on them from birth that dictated their choices in relationships, associations and future ambitions. Either these young women remained associated to the same criminal networks as their father or they entered into relationships with boys from their area. Otherwise they fought against these perceived restrictions by deliberately seeking out relationships with rivals. Irrespective of the route, they found themselves at risk. *(Quotes not included due to risk)*

Threat and perception of serious violence

Death and threats of serious violence were raised by male participants at a much greater rate than in any other city. This was not necessarily linked to evidence of more women and girls being

subjected to serious violence. But it was definitely a perception amongst male and female participants.

Q: Do you think there are risks for girls if they're chilling with a gang member?

Boy A: Get beat up all the time. Get egged or they get spat on.

Boy B: Can get shot.

Boy C: They're putting themselves in danger of being shot and all sorts. It's ridiculous.

Boy D: They could get caught with firearms.

Q: Risk to girls and mothers?

A: Dead.

A: Death, serious injury.

A: The girl could just be taking a little drive through there and she's in the car getting pelted at.

A: If you're walking with your mum and then someone like a rival person sees you and they've got a gun or whatever they'll open fire on you even if there's your mum.

A: End up, probably, dead.

A: Could be raped.

A: Houses attacked or raided.

Well main thing is their house I would say, like if someone knows where your mum's house is then she's in problems. It could get raided, get robbed, torched up, shot at, all sorts really.

Cross-border tensions

Cross-border tensions were identified by

participants from Trafford and Manchester. Young women were concerned that at times of reduced violence, relationships across the border would form. However when an incident occurred it would be those girls who entered into cross-boundary relationships that would be accused of 'snaking' or 'setting up' men. These risks need to be acknowledged and addressed.

*And you see girls round here and you think you ain't from here, you ain't, what are you businessing for in here, you are getting into problems as soon as something kicks off. **Girl, 15 years old, Manchester***

*Yea you know at the moment it's kinda cool but we know it ain't gonna stay like that and then they have no idea what is coming to them, and it'll be their fault. **Girl, 17 years old, Manchester***

*No one cares though, so unless she's getting shot I don't think they'll ever talk about these kind of things. **Woman, 22 years old, Manchester***

The FVV roundtable in Manchester was chaired by the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board, taking a child-protection centred approach to reviewing the response of Manchester and Trafford to women and girls affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence. Throughout this fieldwork it was difficult to achieve coordination across

Manchester and Trafford and to generate balanced referrals from all statutory agencies. Given the amount of research that has been conducted in Manchester, there was noticeable referral fatigue of statutory agencies in the city. Referrals were generated from the voluntary and community sector and outreach at a greater rate than in the other cities. At the FVV roundtable there was an open approach to responding to the experiences of women and girls, including agreement to build on the relationship across the boundary between Trafford and Manchester to ensure that identification and referral can happen consistently.

The violence against women sector in Manchester has been proactive on this issue. But given the level of risk presented, they are struggling to meet needs of women and girls fleeing gang-related violence. This activity needs to be fostered and supported by the wider voluntary and statutory sectors in order to enable safe exit for women and girls.

Birmingham

Ethnicity

The key difference for the city of Birmingham was the conflation of ethnic and gang tensions. Female and male participants viewed gangs as being ethnically identifiable and clearly stated that they were aware of White British, Pakistani, Somalian and Black Caribbean

gangs (there may be others but these were the only ones raised by participants). As is the case in other cities, gangs were drawn from geographic areas, and participants identified that ethnic divisions between gangs were the result of housing. However, young women's responses to questions about relationships indicated that they were restricted to relationships with boys from their area. In some cases this also meant restrictions to dating boys of the same ethnicity. As a result, girls were confused when talking about relationships and choices in relationships. This needs to be communicated to practitioners. There is a clear role for the BAME sector to support girls to make decisions and intervene appropriately to keep young women safe.

No because I live here, I can't go up Handsworth or Edgbaston, you have to stay in ya area. So there is no point linking boys from those areas, I have to stick with my own. Girl, 16 years old, Birmingham

They stick with their boys and we stick with ours, it's like why cause problems, cos even if it's okay in school it's not okay out of school you know. Girl, 15 years old, Birmingham

The Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence Partnership between statutory agencies and schools facilitated referrals at a high rate. However, compared to Manchester,

the voluntary and community sector referrals were minimal. They seemed less willing to engage with new research since young people had already been referred over the years. The FVV roundtable was attended by voluntary sector groups from both the violence against women and youth sectors. There is a need to foster closer partnership working across those sectors in order to provide truly specialist interventions for women and girls affected by serious youth and gang-related violence.

While the strategic structures in Birmingham are capable of identifying men and boys who are affected by criminal gangs, it is less well-suited to identify and refer women and girls who are associated to these men. Hence this is where the attention needs to be focused. The safeguarding guidance to address criminal gangs in the city submitted to ROTA demonstrated a concise and accessible approach to identifying and referring young people at risk. This strategic and operational approach needs to be better communicated to professionals working directly with women and girls. These services must be engaged in the referral process to ensure that women and girls are identified.



Conclusions

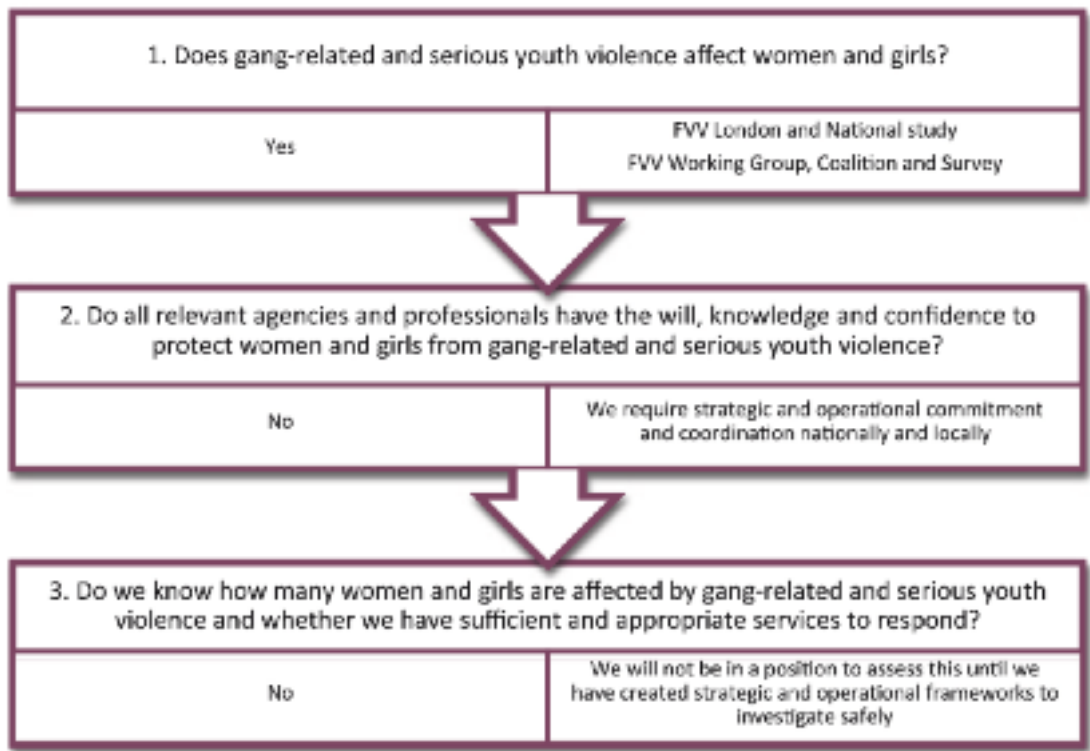
1. Gang-related and serious youth violence affects women and girls across the country, as relatives, partners and friends and those directly involved in offending.

The experience of participants from across England demonstrates greater similarities than differences in female experiences of serious youth violence. Similarities include: negative experiences; placement in male-dominated spaces; the use of sexual violence on girls and young women in and outside of criminal gangs; women and girls affected who access a range of services including all-girls schools and those who do not live in 'gang-affected' neighbourhoods. While male participants did not always display concern or appreciation for the impact of gang-related or serious youth violence on women and girls, they admitted that sometimes this involved serious violence and harm.

As a result we should no longer question whether or not gang-related or serious youth violence is an issue for women and girls across England. It is.

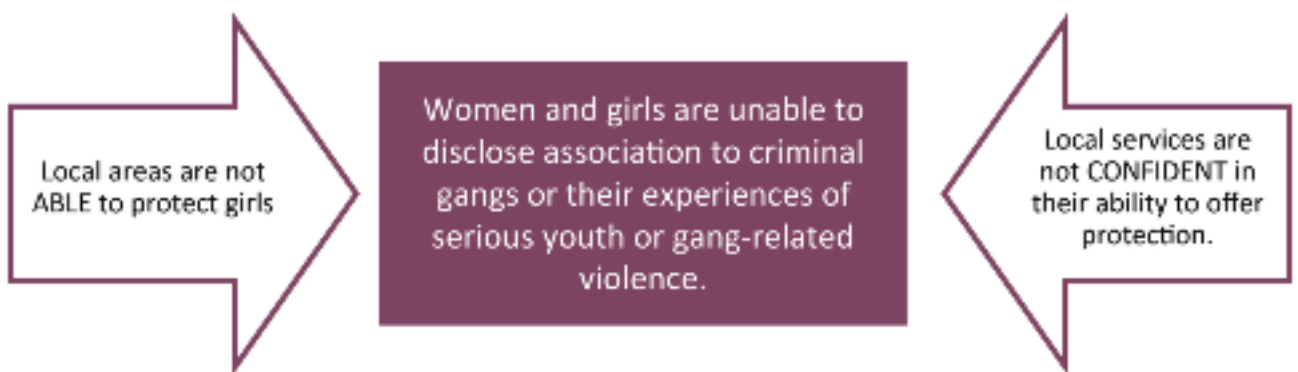
Our focus needs to be on creating an environment where disclosures can be made safely. Once this environment exists it will increase the ability of local and national agencies to commission prevalence studies and services to respond to risk and need.

We are at stage 2 of the below diagram. The recommendations in this report will seek to address stage 2, outlining central government, local authorities and voluntary and community sector roles in enabling this to happen.



2. Serious youth and gang-related violence against women and girls is a child protection and safeguarding issue. To respond effectively, we need risk management structures and processes.

The main barrier to girls disclosing risk and seeking support is their disbelief that services can manage the levels of risk that they face. Meetings with local authorities and voluntary and community sector groups validate these concerns. At present, it is not always the case that women and girls who disclose can be protected. There are two key explanations for this gap:



Ability

For some services, or local areas, the structures required to protect women and girls from serious youth and gang-related violence do not exist. In most areas, exit strategies, for girls under 18 in particular, are lacking. While refuges are attempting to work with women fleeing gang-related violence, there is no equivalent provision for girls’ under-18. Furthermore, it is not always the case that refuge provision is the most appropriate place for gang-associated women, for example those who have committed violence against other women, including enabling sexual assault.

In addition to exit strategies, not all services are able to identify girls who are at risk, in particular schools and health services. Participants discussed occasions where professionals had failed to ask the right questions regarding their safety or welfare. Additionally, some had been placed in inappropriate settings to address their risk of offending simply because these were all that was available. Not all local areas commission the specialist services or training required to enable staff to identify and respond to gang-associated risk faced by females.

Confidence

While girls may disclose to a range of individuals, it is only a small number of individuals in any local area who are aware of how to share information. As such, participants discussed incidences when either, information was shared inappropriately and confidentiality breached, or, when information was not shared when it should have been. This level of confusion limits the amount of confidence the public has in services, and the confidence services have in themselves. Models such as those adopted by Flixton Girls School and Lewisham Youth Offending Team (Appendix 1 & 2) demonstrate the increased confidence that is instilled once there is clarity on the information sharing processes. Without the ability or confidence to protect, we will continue to fail women and girls who are affected by serious violence.

3. Girls experience gender-based violence and this is not adequately addressed in policy or practice.

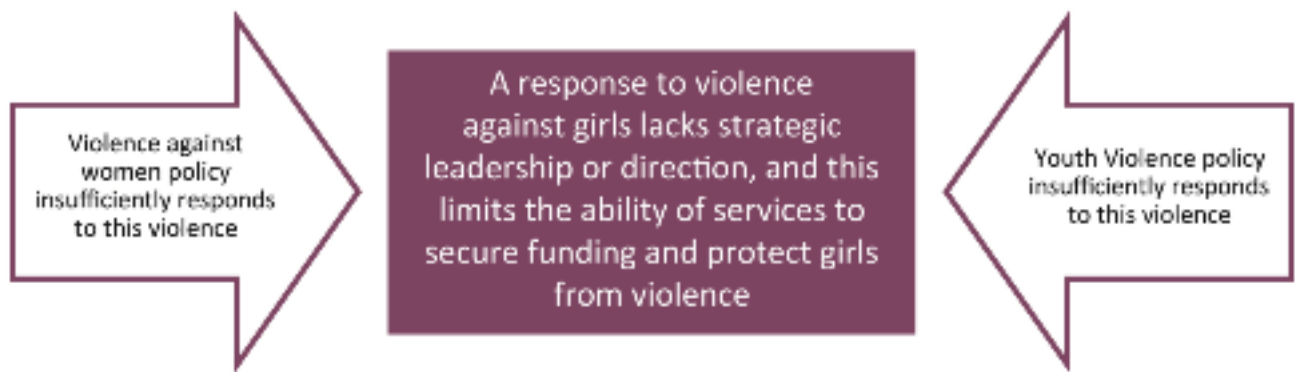
Girls and young women directly experience gender-based violence. Research participants disclosed experiences of gang-related and non gang-related gender-based violence. Girls and young women experience this violence when it is perpetrated by their peers and by men. The findings demonstrate that within intimate and peer relationships, girls experience, and are fearful of:

Physical violence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •injuries including broken bones, cuts, burns, stab wounds, kidnap and cerebral bleeding
Sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •rape perpetrated by partners who are also under 18, partners who are over 18, rape by peers and groups of boys, rape by peers of partners, sexual exploitation by peers, sexual exploitation by criminal gangs, rape as punishment within criminal gangs, rape as a threat to female gang associates, sold by boyfriends to others to pay off debts, videos or photos of sexual contact circulated over the internet or amongst youth groups, schools etc
Emotional violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •manipulation, experiencing lack of control in relationships, infidelity if they don't have sex, pressure to engage in sexual contact to secure relationships, staying slim and attractive to maintain relationships, emotional bullying of other females to maintain status

Male participants confirmed these fears and experiences, demonstrating confusion about which forms of violence were excusable, where girls were to blame and what consent actually meant in practice.

The policy on violence against women is insufficient when responding to gang-related violence.

The policy on youth violence is insufficient when responding to gang-related violence.



Such violence was not a marginal issue for participants nor was it something that they felt would only affect them during their adult lives. Local authorities and services, however, are ill-equipped to respond to such violence. How should a school respond if a perpetrator and victim attend the same school but no charges have been brought? What is the equivalent of refuge provision for a 15 year-old fleeing a violent relationship? These questions are not answered in current strategies, narratives or guidance documents on safeguarding or violence against women and girls. It remains a large and inexcusable gap, which demonstrates our inability, and thus our failure to protect children from all forms of violence.

4. National and local responses are required to fully address the impact that gang-related and serious youth violence has on women and girls.

Centrally, clear guidance, with minimum standards is needed to galvanise and enable local communities and local structures to respond effectively to violence against women and girls.

Across the cities there were far more similarities than differences in the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls. Findings indicate roles for both:



Without central government’s leadership on this issue, it is unlikely that all local areas will respond as required. When an issue is challenging to identify, it is easy to ignore. The impact that gang-related violence has on women and girls is one which will remain hidden as long as we fail to create conditions which enable disclosure consistently across the country. Without strong and committed leadership from central government in its strategic discourse and documents, not every local area will be compelled to respond. While each area is different, the minimum standards required to ensure children are protected from violence are the same. Local areas have consistently contacted ROTA for support and direction. This should be set by central government.

Differences across cities illustrate that there is a role for local authorities when focusing on the specific ways in which serious youth violence and criminal gangs affect women and girls in their communities. In addition, each city has its own local structures and strategies and these must incorporate the findings of FVV along with any central government response. A number of local areas, including those where

ROTA conducted its research, have submitted their local strategies on youth violence, criminal gangs and violence against women, and acknowledged the current inability of these strategies to address all of the concerns the research raises. Local areas need to build on the strategies and structures that they already have in place and align them with supporting documentation to adequately protect women and girls from gang-related and serious youth violence.

5. Men and Boys require support to understand the consequences of their attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women and girls.

Interviews with men and boys demonstrated:

- a.** The violent attitudes and behaviour that men and boys display towards women and girls within and outside of a gang context
- b.** The lack of understanding and responsibility men and boys had for both their attitude to and their role in the violence experienced by women and girls

While the focus of this research is weighted towards identifying and protecting women and girls who are at risk of gang-related and serious youth violence, it highlights the need for specific services which also address attitudes and behaviours of men and boys. These strategies and services must work in tandem, and such work would need to be delivered through specialist and universal services. Men and boys who were accessing universal services rarely had their attitudes towards women and girls challenged. Even in services that targeted specific groups of men/boys, reducing their attitudes of violence towards women and girls was not the aim of that intervention, and therefore certain comments and behaviours were left unchallenged. Professionals who work directly with men and boys engaged in serious youth violence need to be equipped to address their attitudes towards women and girls, in addition to their engagement in criminal gangs and weapon carrying.



Recommendations

Under our commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children under the age of 18 in the UK have a right to:

- Protection from violence (Article 19)
- Health and health services (Article 24)
- Protection from sexual abuse & exploitation (Article 34)
- Protection from abduction (Article 35)
- Protection from all other forms of exploitation (Article 36)

Under our commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, all women and girls have a right to:

- Be free of gender-based violence
- Have attention given to the specific needs of (adolescent) girls

At present, the current approach:

- Fails to prevent female association to criminal gangs
- Rarely identifies those at risk
- Places vulnerable girls in high-risk situations, such as male-dominated spaces or programmes.

Hence, in line with the UNCRC and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), we must afford sufficient safety upon disclosure to women and girls who are affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence.

In order to begin to have an impact, central, regional and local bodies must focus on structures and services which are essential to enable anything further to happen. The recommendations made in this report focus on creating the basic conditions necessary to:

- Identify women and girls at risk
- Enable women and girls to disclose safely
- Enable women and girls to exit gang-related violence

We acknowledge the gaps in relation to preventative recommendations. However, the crisis situations which are now arising require us to focus on actions. While the following recommendations do not cover all complex needs of women and girls at risk of, or affected by, criminal gangs and serious youth violence, they are intended to create a basis upon which further interventions can be built. Fundamental to all five recommendations for all practitioners, and policy/decision-makers should be the following questions:

What would be the impact of this service/policy on girls?

Would the impact be different for boys?

Would the agencies involved be different?

Would the risks be different?

In order to begin tackling the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls, ROTA recommends that:

1. The impact of serious youth and gang related violence is a child protection issue and should be seen as one in both policy and practice.

This should be:

- a. Delivered locally through safeguarding, in partnership with those who work on serious youth violence, criminal gangs and violence against women and girls.
- b. Voiced centrally through government addressing the broad gaps in safeguarding

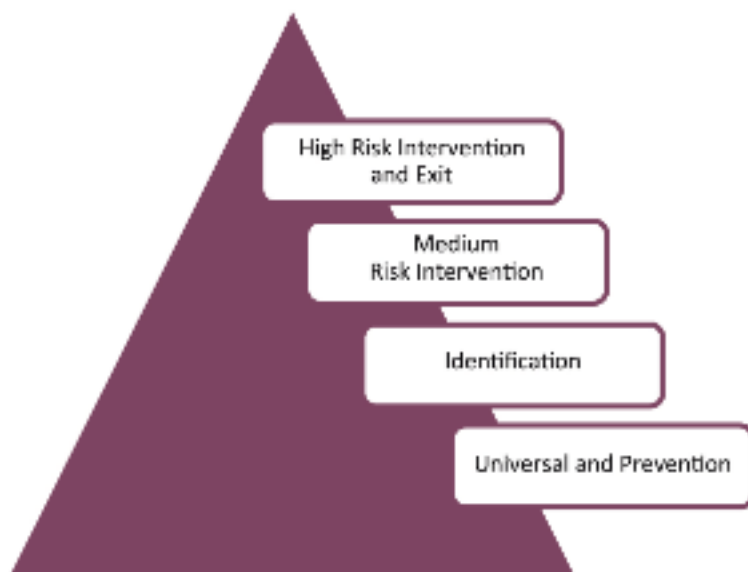


guidance on gangs and sexual exploitation, for example, responding to sexual assault within school or developing exit strategies for under 16 year olds, as refuge provision is not available.

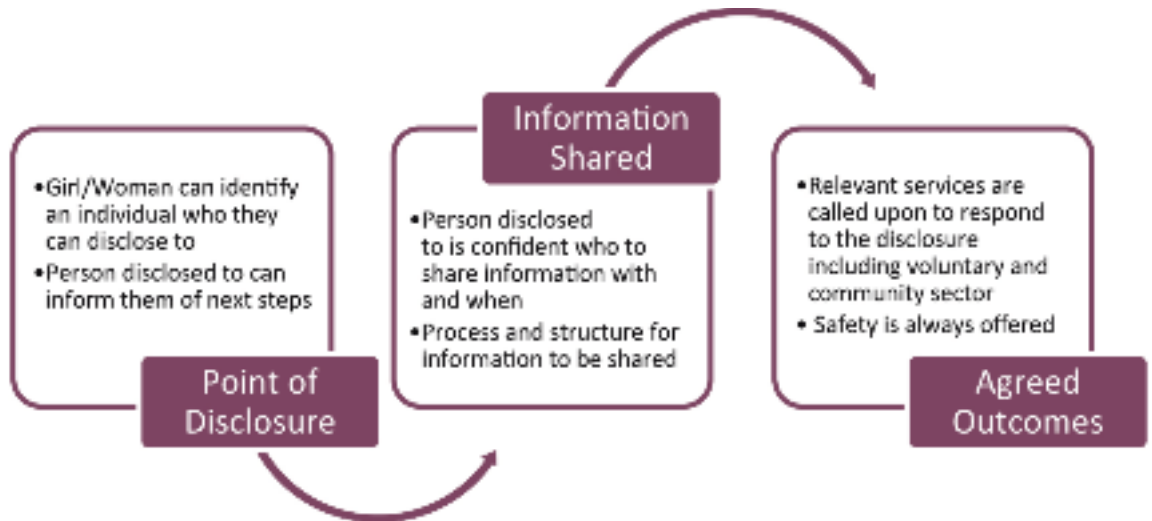
2. Local authorities require a strategic and operational plan for responding to the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls.

Such plans would:

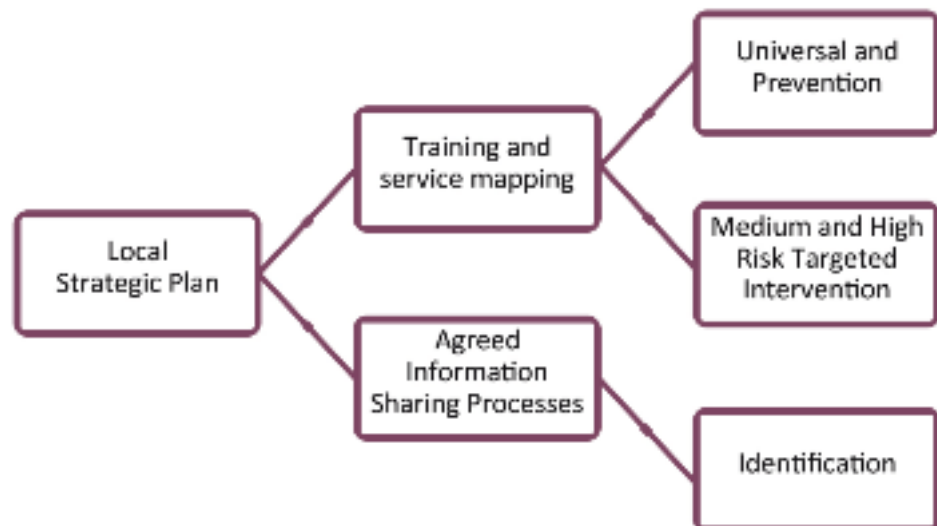
- a. Outline prevention, intervention and exit strategies for women and girls
- b. Have clear guidance regarding information sharing processes at each stage



c) Draw upon strategic and operational approaches to tackle violence against women

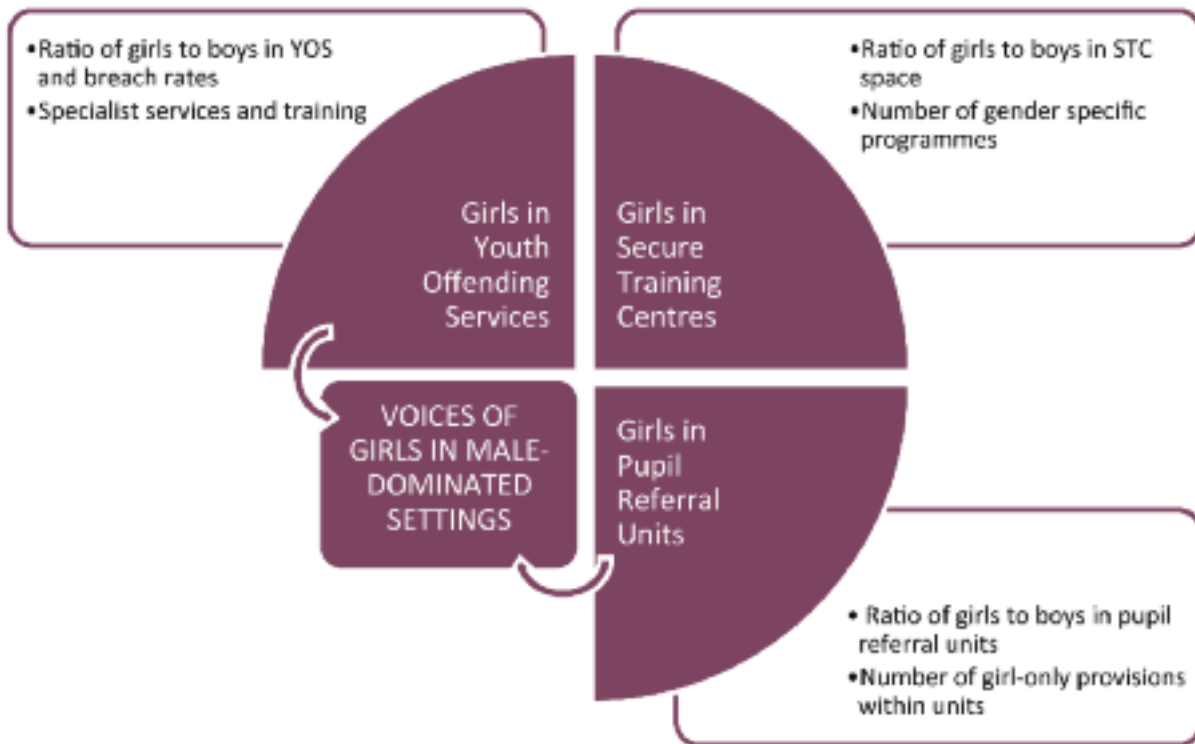


and girls, serious youth violence and criminal gangs



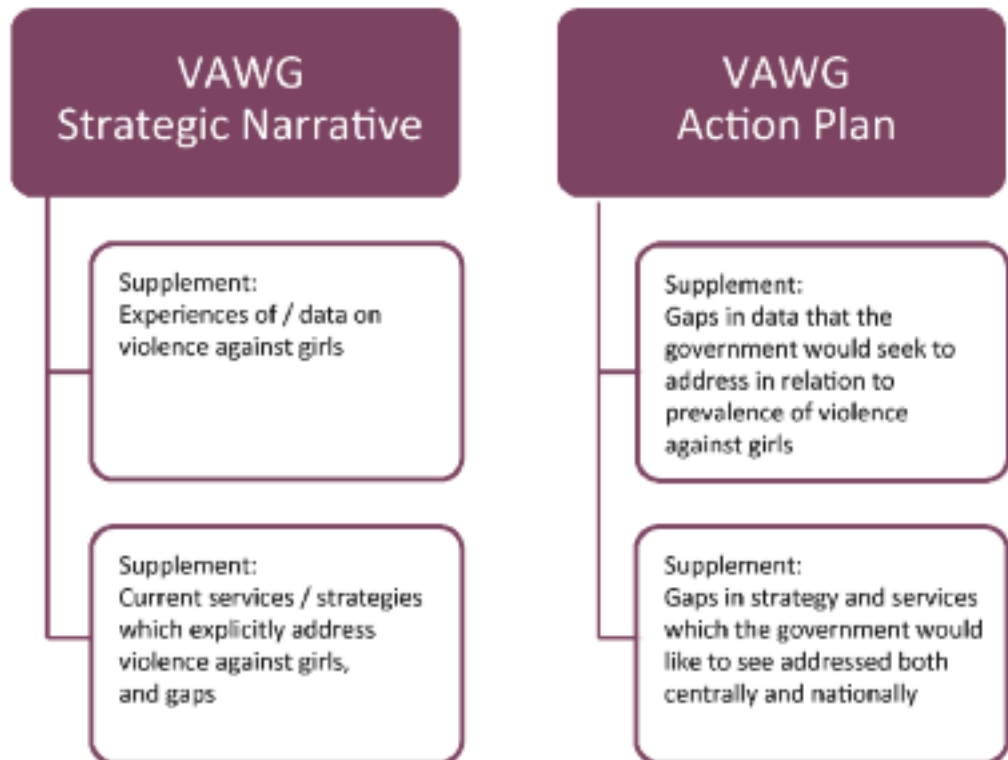
3. The Department for Education and the Ministry of Justice commission an independent inquiry into the experiences of vulnerable girls in male-dominated settings.

In the same spirit of the Corston Review, such an independent inquiry would seek to highlight the experiences of girls in settings that have been designed to work with boys, how practitioners have developed services/methods to address this imbalance, and whether changes in policy are required to make improvements to the situation.



4. The Home Office acknowledge and respond to violence directly experienced by girls, including domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual exploitation, by:

- a.** Supplementing its strategic narrative and action plan on VAWG with specific commitments to girls and young women under-18



b. Appointing a Girls Champion to ensure that all policy targeted at young people is gender-proofed and all policy targeted at women is youth-proofed across government departments



5. Voluntary sector organisations are funded to foster positive communications and partnerships in order to provide specialist provision, which:

- a.** Meets the needs of vulnerable women and girls affected by criminal gangs and serious youth violence (including prevention, identification, intervention/diversion and exit)
- b.** Addresses the attitudes and behaviours of men and boys, who are involved in criminal gangs and serious youth violence to women and girls
- c.** Identifies and intervenes with boys who are being coerced by older males into exploiting girls

Partners should hail from the following specialist areas:
Serious Youth Offending



Ultimately all agencies and departments engaged in addressing the impact of criminal gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls should be able to answer the following questions in relation to their services and strategies:

Are your strategies gender-proofed?

Is your intelligence on criminal gangs gender-proofed?

Have you enabled girls to make safe choices in relation to criminal gangs?

Do you offer specialist interventions, and at what stages?

Are your information sharing processes clear within and across agencies/departments/institutions?

Appendix A

Example of promising practice

Lewisham Girls & Gangs Forum

The Girls & Gangs Forum (G&GF) was established in November 2008 with the main aim of developing a joined-up way of working for local (and national) services who are working with girls and young women who are vulnerable and at risk of sexual, financial and criminal exploitation, through association with violent gang activity. Ultimately, creating a team around the child/family and addressing two of the Every Child Matters outcomes – stay safe and be healthy.

In addition to this, the G&GF also addresses the Gender Equality Duty and bridges the gap between girls/young women and boys/young men who are involved and/or at risk of violent gang activity, and feeds in to the Lewisham Youth Offending Service's Serious Violence Group, that focuses on boys and young men.

The objectives of the forum are as follows:

- To raise the profile of the girls and gangs issue, and the need for ongoing specific and targeted intervention for girls and young women – with frontline workers, management, strategic partners, families/carers, young people and the community
- To share information within the G&GF, including the names of young people, where appropriate - keeping in line with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Community Safety Partnership agenda and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- To keep abreast of available services for girls and young women in the borough, and identify where there are gaps in service provision.
- To introduce new, and build on, existing services and good work practice to ensure robust approaches and procedures to the safeguarding of girls and young women in the borough.
- To support the development of services with creative solutions, tailored to meet the fluctuating needs of girls and young women.

The Girls & Gangs Forum is a closed, multi- agency group, and is chaired by Ruth

Osborne (YOS) and the Vice Chair is Samantha Avril (Supporting People). Members meet monthly, and in addition to updates, specific girls of concern are discussed at the meeting. There are two sets of minutes, one detailing discussions and actions relating to specific young women and a generic set. These are then distributed to relevant forum members, on a need to know basis; the Girls & Gangs Steering Group providing strategic support to the forum and supporting the creation of tools, such as a tracking tool for girls who are raised at the forum, in order to identify young women of consistent concern, and patterns/trends in the borough.

As a result of a need highlighted by forum members and YOS workers, there is now a YOS 'Girls ONLY' group work programme that addresses the needs and risks of girls and young women who are vulnerable and at risk of sexual, financial and criminal exploitation, through association with violent gang activity.

Appendix B

Example of promising practice

Flixton Girls High School – ‘Positive Futures’

The Flixton Girls’ High School approach to addressing the controversial issue of young women involved in crime/gang activity is based upon strong and trusting partnerships, senior leadership buy-in and direction, staff who feel confident and competent, a well developed understanding of the issues, a willingness to be innovative and take risks, and the embedding of practice within a strong policy framework.

The system at FGHS has taken approximately 18 months to plan, implement and embed.

We have a tiered approach to raise awareness throughout the student body:

- 1.** Whole school – awareness-raising sessions
- 2.** Group work – directed support
- 3.** One to one – intensive support

Students may be referred onto the positive futures programme in several ways:

- 1.** recognised by the pastoral staff based on existing knowledge and concerns
- 2.** student self referral
- 3.** referral by external agencies who alert us of girls who may benefit from more intensive work
- 4.** parental referral

Staff training/involvement

- 1.** Strategic Co-ordinator – Trafford Community Safety Services visited school to brief the Senior Leadership Team about the Trafford position and how FGHS will play a key part in targeting young women
- 2.** Strategic Co-ordinator – Trafford Community Safety Services and Trafford’s Violent Gang Practitioner delivered training to all staff on the topic of young women involved in crime/gang activity. To raise staff awareness and enable them to cope with potential situations
- 3.** Controversial issues development group that includes key staff from school set up. The purpose of the group is to monitor and evaluate the effects of the positive futures programme and other initiatives aimed at controversial issues

4. Strategic Co-ordinator – Trafford Community Safety Services and FGHS Director of Care, Guidance and Support led Governor training in order to produce the FGHS Governing body controversial issues policy statement.

5. Introduction to Counselling Skills delivered by Director of Care, Guidance and Support to a group of key staff who will then become a crisis intervention team. This team will also be offered to identified girls and parents as a source of emotional mentoring.

Assemblies/workshops/tiered system

1. Tier 1 - Whole school delivery of assemblies to explore the risks of social networking for every year group. This will be done in conjunction with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) trained staff.

2. Tier 1 - Sexual exploitation education delivered to years 10 and 11 assemblies (whole KS4) in conjunction with health/external agency.

3. Tier 1 - Gangs and popular culture delivered to years 10 and 11 (whole KS4) through assemblies with support from Trafford Violent gangs Practitioner.

4. Tier 1 – Intensive ‘positive futures’ project involving small group work for years 10 and 11 (KS4) delivered in-house by FGHS Behaviour Coach. This is an adaptation of ‘Living to Die’.

5. Tier 3 - 1 to 1 mentoring service delivered in-house by the learner services team

6. Tier 3 - 1 to 1 counselling service delivered in-house by the learner services counselling team

7. Tier 2/3 – Introduction to Counselling Skills delivered in-house by learner services team to girls deemed to be at risk from gang activity. Targeted at developing skills to mediate/assess situations and deal with external influences. Helping them to help the people around them make the right decisions.

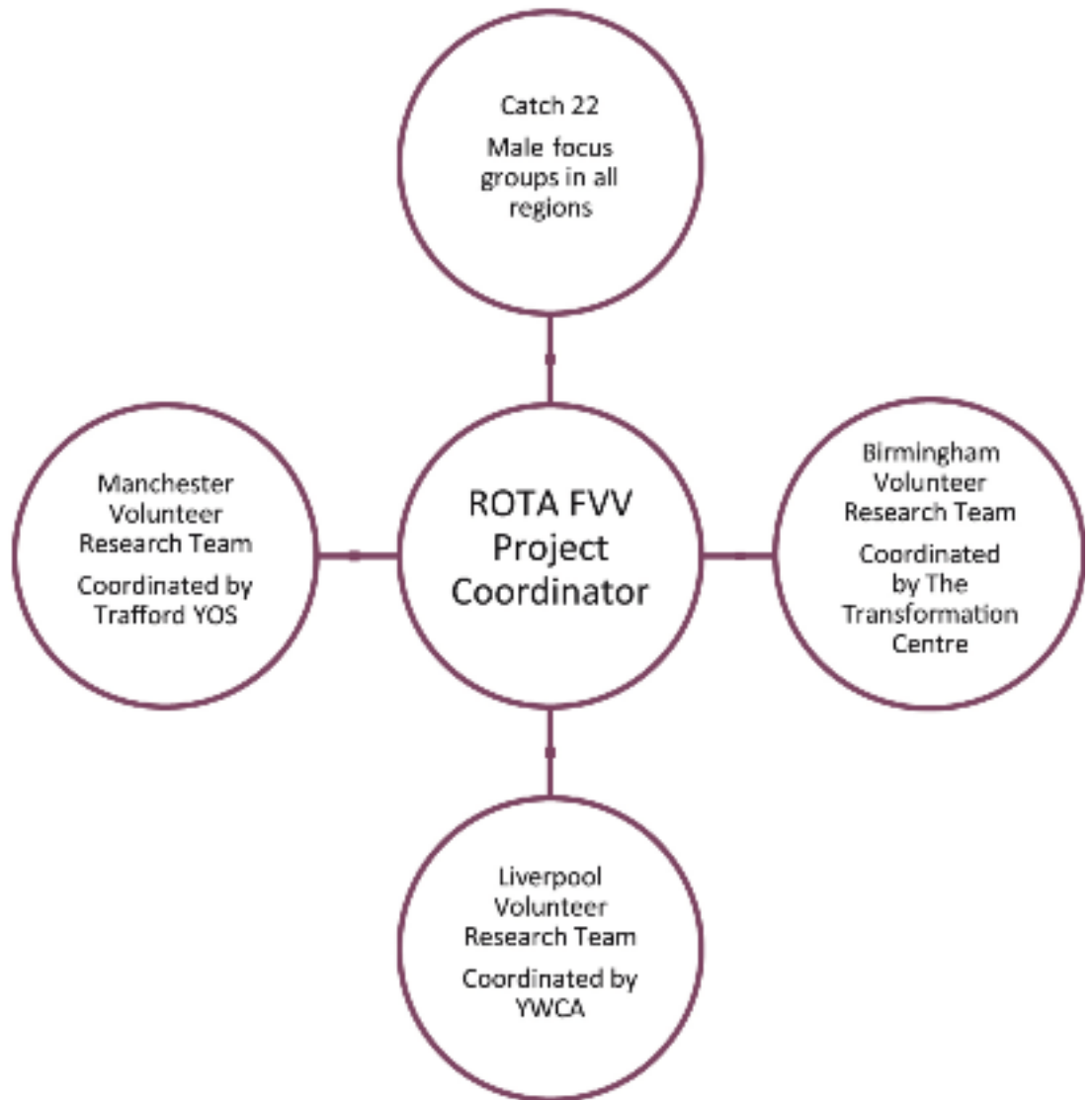
8. Tier 2/3 – Residential to remove identified students from Manchester/Old Trafford area, to take them from their comfort zone and help them to see an alternative life to the city.

Impact to date (approximately 180 girls per year group):

- 24 girls identified and through tier 2 positive futures programme
- 3 girls referred to tier 3 counselling service
- 4 referred to violent gangs practitioner
- All year 9 and 10 girls attended gang culture assembly
- Gang culture awareness embedded into year 9 PSHE scheme of work
- Assembly programme and PSHE programme focussing on sexual exploitation and online protection
- Year 9 Crime safety awareness day
- Forensic computer software ‘Securus’ in place

Appendix C

Project Structure





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