Multi-agency analysis of serious youth violence and strategies to reduce offending and reoffending and increase opportunities for young people in Hammersmith and Fulham

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Abstract

Taking insights from tactics employed in Glasgow, a Violence Reduction Unit is being established in London to handle this issue from a Public Health approach. This project will consider the specific needs and resources of Hammersmith and Fulham in regard to serious youth violence, in the wider context of London to develop evidence-based recommendations and inform policy and development of the Public Health approach in the borough. Primarily, a literature review was undertaken and formed the basis of an interview guide. Subsequently, eight semi-structured interviews with experts in the field; such as community organisations and local authority were completed to inform a thematic analysis of the topic. Three main themes were interpreted from analysis; factors associated with serious youth violence, the Public Health approach and strategies to reduce offending and increase opportunities for young people, with associated subthemes. Thematic analysis allowed for pattern identification and suggestion of relationships between subthemes and wider themes. Using insights evaluated from interviews and the literature, a complete framework is proposed to form the basis of a context-specific Public Health approach in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Key words: Serious youth violence, Hammersmith and Fulham, youth offending, knife crime, violent offending, Public Health approach, thematic analysis, multi-agency analysis, evidence-based interventions to reduce offending

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Abbreviations

ACE   Adverse Childhood Events

MPS   Metropolitan Police Service

VCS   Voluntary and Community Sector

YHFF   Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation

1 INTRODUCTION

From 25 February to 17 May, the time taken to complete this project, there were 62 fatal stabbings in the UK. One in four victims are between the ages of 18 and 24, with convicted suspects most likely to be 16-24.[1]

Serious youth violence has been increasing steadily since 2013 and has necessitated a new country-wide approach. Taking insights from tactics employed in Glasgow, a Violence Reduction Unit is being established in London to handle this issue from a Public Health approach. Treating violence as a disease is a concept that has been notably utilised around the world, namely in Cincinnati and Glasgow and has resulted in a considerable change in their crime statistics.[2]

Hammersmith and Fulham, alongside other London boroughs has seen an increase in serious youth violence, particularly knife crime.[3] 16 year-old young men were the most common perpetrators of violent incidents involving knives in 2017-2018, with most incidents being committed by young men under the age of 18.[3]

1.1 Definitions

Serious youth violence is used to describe 'offences involving serious violence, where the victim is aged between 1-19.[4] This term has been used in this project as opposed to simply 'knife crime' which has a broader scope as there is no specificity of age. 'Youth offending' has not been used as this can encompass a wider range of offences such as non-violent burglary or anti-social behaviour, which although important issues, are not concentrated on in this project.[5] 'Gang crime' or 'gang violence' is a difficult term as the definition of 'gang' is unclear and blurred, so for clarity this term has not been included.

Young people between the ages of 1-19 were the focus for this project; however, organisations hold different views as to the appropriate age range of 'youth'. For example, Khulisa, a voluntary organisation who work in youth justice consider 'young people' as individuals up to the age of 34. However, the MPS considers a crime committed by any persons under the age of 18, a youth offence.[6] For the purpose of

this study, the age range of 1-19 was chosen due its alignment with the definition of serious youth violence.

The core elements of Public Health focus on the safety of populations rather than individuals. It is an interdisciplinary field that uses knowledge from various specialties including psychology and criminology but maintains its roots in science. In parallel with this, cooperative action is required from all areas such as education, policy and health. The Public Health approach to violence is a preventative method, as opposed to solely reactive. It works in a four-stage process from developing a basic foundation of knowledge of violence and collecting data, to subsequently understanding why violence occurs. Next, preventative methods are investigated and following this, interventions are implemented in a variety of sectors.[7]

In this project, the roles of key bodies are investigated such as statutory bodies namely, the Metropolitan Police and schools (inclusive of primary and secondary institutions, and academies). The voluntary and community sector is also focused on, with key attention to community organisations.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to inform policy and development of the Public Health approach in order to reduce serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham. To carry this out, the following objectives have been followed:

- Review the literature to understand and consider factors contributing to serious youth violence, including adverse childhood events, trauma and shame
- Undertake focused interviews with the partners of the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation working in youth justice
- Propose recommendations for evidence-based approaches to reduce offending and reoffending in Hammersmith and Fulham that increase opportunities for young people

1.3 Literature Review

Multiple search terms were used to conduct a literature review *(Appendix A).*

Abuse, household dysfunction and parental drug and alcohol addiction are among the most common forms of adverse childhood experiences.[8] Children who develop in such households are more likely to model aggressive behaviours and violent tendencies, this can be explained via a number of ecological and biophysical pathways.[9] This relationship has been confirmed by a number of studies[9,10,11] and a recent meta-analysis.[12] Researchers in Minnesota surveyed 136,549 students under the age of 18 and found an increased risk of 35-144% of violence perpetration per ACE experienced.[9] Following this identification of ACE as a risk factor for adolescent violent behaviours a shift must now occur, moving away from consequence management towards prevention and early recognition of unhealthy environments.[13]

In 1997 prison psychiatrist James Gilligan postulated that shame was the unspoken cause of violence.[14] Shame is considered as a social emotion rarely discussed, as its mere mention is felt to be shameful.[15] It is thought that an accumulation of these feelings can result in the shamed individual perpetrating the shaming individual to lessen the effects of the primary incident.[16] Using this theory, therapist Jonathan Asser conducted workshops in HMP Wandsworth, allowing prisoners to directly confront feelings of shame to understand their triggers and prevent a harmful overload.[15]

In parallel with shame, adverse childhood events have a traumatic effect on those exposed, and can impact their neuropsychological development.[17] This can lead to an inability for affected children to regulate their emotions, a predisposing factor for violence.[18] Children with such backgrounds require not only a safe environment to disclose the intimacies of their situation, but also the tools to build the emotional capacity to cope with stressors with an asset-based approach to ensure they feel valued throughout the process.[18]

The MPS definition of 'gang' is contentious in terms of its practical application in the UK.[19] It is appreciated by many that the term is easily applied to groups in the USA,

however it is debated as to how applicable the term is in London due to differing societal and economic factors. [20,21] Regardless of definition, there is a proportion of serious youth violence attributable to groups and associated conflicts that cannot be unrecognised. It is the significance of the risk factors leading to formation of these groups and the mentality whilst involved that is arguably more deserving of investigation. A recent study interviewing 69 self-identified 'gang' members or associates in London revealed that origins of membership were, societal factors such as school exclusion, unemployment, racism as well ACE existing within a mindset of active pursuit of instant gratification.[22] A 'gang state of mind' is a term that describes a destructive and dominant self, with personality traits deemed as vulnerable, concealed. Understandably, the effects of this can be detrimental as personalities susceptible to intimidation and abuse can be victimised or coerced to commit actions unwillingly. Canham suggests that the actions and attitude of authoritative figures can influence whether individuals form a group as opposed to 'gang'.[23]

Hammersmith and Fulham is individual in its composition, with specific needs that require consideration when developing an approach to encompass all. One in three children under 16 in the borough live in poverty, and the disparity of wealth discussed in interviews is apparent when observing average income per person.[24] The lowest average income is £23,800 (Edward Woods Estate) compared to the highest average income of £72,800 (Parsons Green and Woolham Ward).[25] The close proximity of severely deprived areas to the least deprived according to national Index of Multiple Deprivation scores in 2015, and appreciating the reality of such inequality provides an insight into the difficulties communities and individuals face (*Figure 1*).
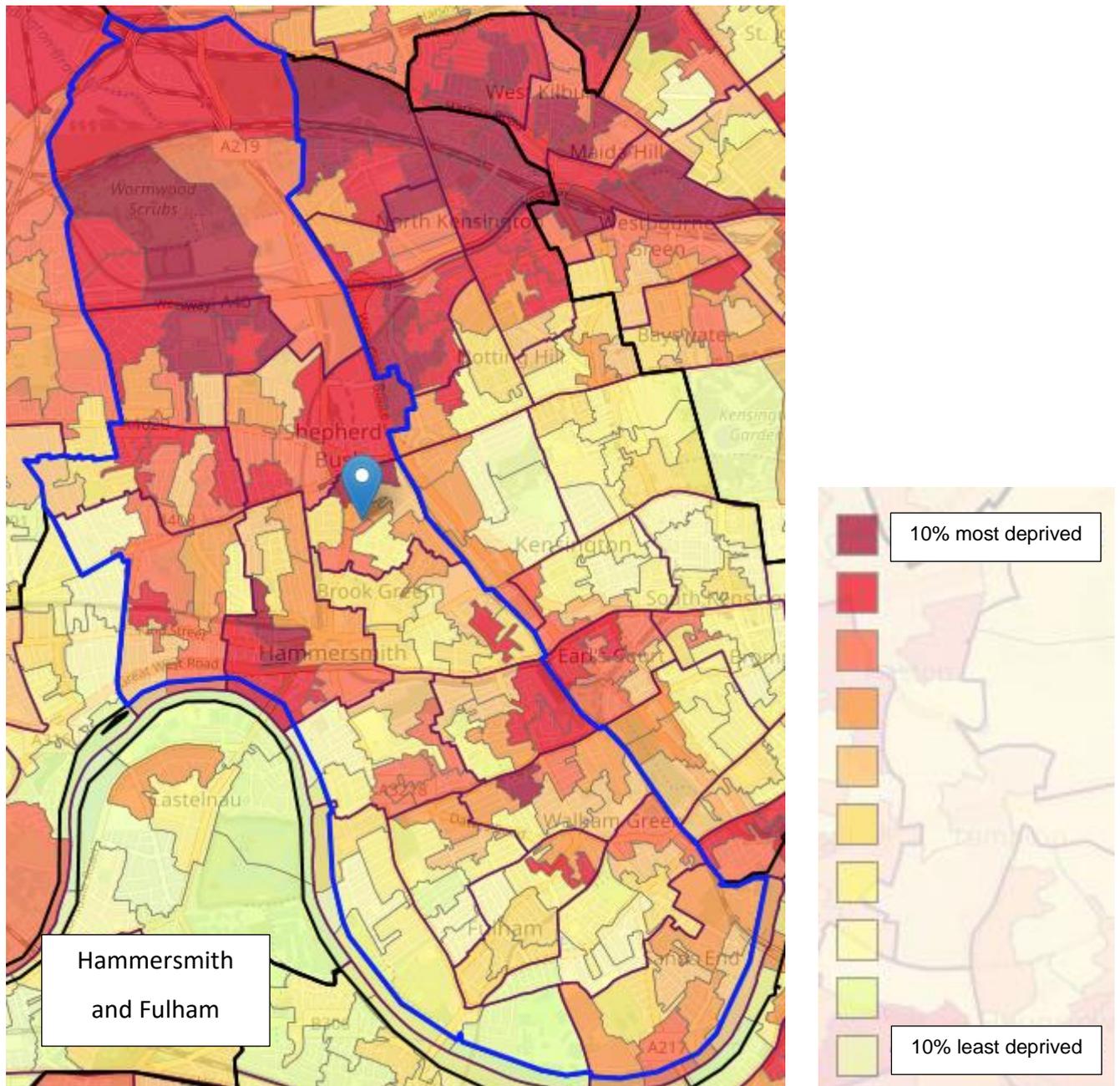
Figure 1: Mapping of Index of Multiple Deprivation scores in Hammersmith and Fulham 2015 (borough lines marked by the blue border)

The working practices of the MPS have by definition maintained an enforcement-based approach.[26] However, there is evidence that certain practices require revised training in particular, stop and search. Following findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime it was found that those who 'hang around' and have a low socioeconomic status are more likely to experience police contact. It is difficult to dissect how socioeconomic status is judged, whether this is via affluence, 'respectability' or physical appearance. In interviews with young people based in

London, it was understood that at times they felt unfairly targeted when dressed in a particular way, or in a 'hot spot' area, despite having no involvement in any criminal activity.[27] To tackle this, unconscious bias training was eventually approved for the MPS during the end of 2018 having been initially unrecommended in February 2018.[28] Direct involvement from members of the community in training programmes was piloted in April 2016 but was not wholly adopted due to time constraints and lack of sufficient community members.[28]

The 2018 Serious Violence Strategy published in April 2018 calls not only for law enforcement, but partnerships between local organisations and sectors such as education and health.[29] The origins for such an approach lie in Glasgow, where a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was implemented in 2005 to bring together public and community sectors.[7] Its success has been highly regarded as in 2005 the city was established as the 'murder capital' of Europe and through this approach their homicide rate fell by 50% between 2008 and 2018.[7] The impact generated from establishment of the VRU is unquestionable, however the time taken for a considerable change to be observed should not go unnoticed if we are to adopt lessons from Glasgow. Multiple factors can contribute to violence, from an individual to a macro level, and certain aspects can be influenced by community or individual means in the interim between establishing a working VRU and observed serious youth violence transformation *(Figure 2)*.
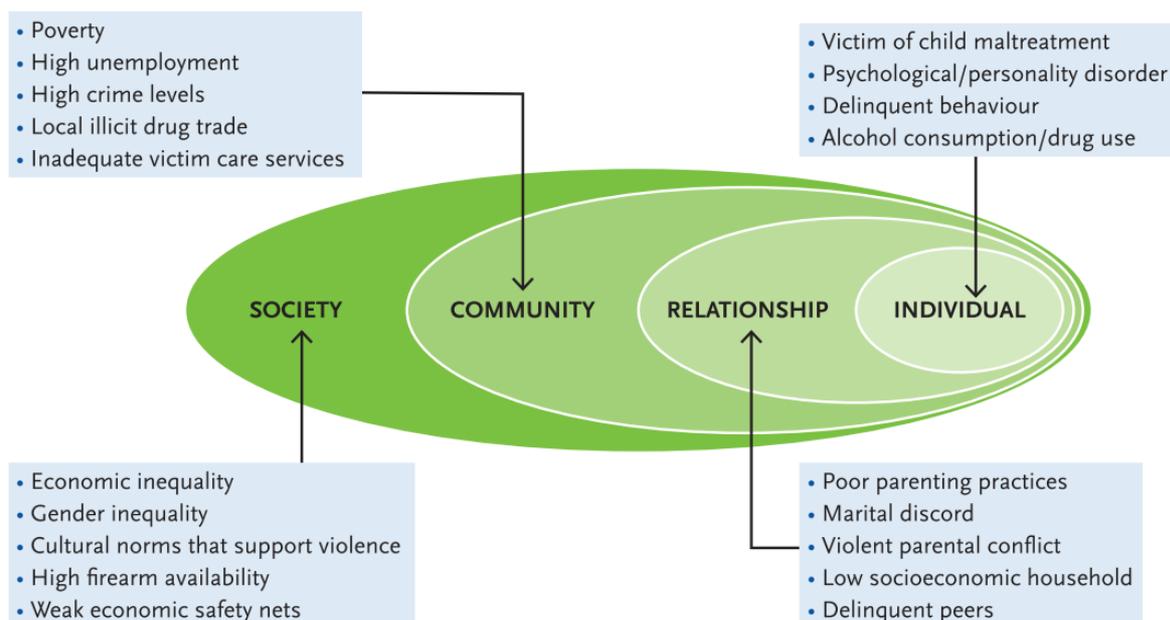
Figure 2: Schematic diagram to show cross-cutting factors for violence, adapted from revisiting evidence [11]

Local community organisations and their programmes have the potential to transform whole communities and through this, society as a whole. A recent study investigated the power of 23 collaborations targeted at preventing youth violence. The collaborations were grouped on the basis of their 'catalyst' for initial collaboration. The groups were, internal (driven by the community), external (driven by an external agency) or policy driven. Results from this review stated that internally driven collaborations had the greatest impact in changing laws to address the issue, and a combination of both internal and externally driven collaborations achieved successful policy change. A conceptual model was depicted, which suggested origins from the community would result in a sustainable difference.[30]

The vitality of multi-agency working has been suggested throughout to allow for a holistic approach to a multi-faceted issue.[31] In Hammersmith and Fulham there are three professional football clubs, that each have teams dedicated to working with young people. Alongside this there are multiple community organisations committed to youth justice within the borough.[25] Collaboration of all invested would generate a substantial foundation for the 'ground-up' approach.

The Serious Violence Strategy outlines clear actions for school. Recommended actions include exploring partnership models and working with the Department of Education and Ofsted to establish what further support for schools is needed.[29] In Scotland, school exclusions have reduced by 81% since 2006-2007 alongside their Public Health strategy.[7] Although there is some contention on the strength of association between school exclusion and involvement in serious youth violence,[26] any action taken to retain young people in education is a beneficial action.

Opening employment opportunities for those at risk of or involved with serious youth violence creates alternative prospects and for some, a 'way out.'[5] In a review of public health strategies carried out by The Big Lottery Fund, the importance of raising aspirations of young people and working with the corporate sector was highlighted.[32] Doing so on a practical level would involve developing symbiotic relationships between community organisations, schools and large businesses. Hammersmith Broadway contains multiple multinational companies, and employment in the borough is projected to increase by 1.6% annually until 2041. Among all London boroughs, this expected employment increase is the largest.[25]

Race has been used in the public discourse of serious youth violence, with young black men representing a typical 'gang' members or perpetuators of violence.[27,33,34] It is widely recognised that young black men are disproportionately affected by serious youth violence in London, and the media often echoes this. Young black men are more likely to live in poverty and experience social marginalisation at a level unparalleled to their white and Asian counterparts.[34] However, it has been found that young black people feel unfairly targeted by the MPS and media, despite being a minority group in Hammersmith and Fulham (31.9%).[25,27] It is important that the media publicise statistics along with the justification behind them, to ensure an accurate narrative is delivered.

2 METHODS

The initial literature review provided a basis of understanding however, data specific to serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham was essential to delivering comprehensive recommendations. Furthermore, due to the developing nature of the topic in London, insight and knowledge from current experts in the field required dedicated exploration in order to adhere to the research aim. No ethics approval was required.

2.1 Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for interview.[35] Selection was made through review of the partners of the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation (a key third sector membership organisation) involved in youth justice, with an established working knowledge of the field and the borough itself. 15 invitations to interview were distributed to selected community organisations, field researchers and youth services. Participants were invited to interview via an email detailing the research outline, aim, objectives and sample questions to provide a clear understanding of their involvement. Any declines to interview were due to a participant's schedule conflicting with the time-frame allocated for data collection.

2.2 Guided Interview

An interview guide was constructed using emerging themes following a review of the literature and the overarching research aim. Three key areas were outlined; factors associated with violence, the public health approach and strategies to reduce serious youth violence and increase opportunities for young people. Discussion topics were collected for each area *(Appendix B)*. Each key area was designed to gather detailed information and first-hand insight from participants in order to build on the knowledge foundation developed from the initial literature review. The interview guide and method were reviewed by the YHFF to reduce the potential for bias during formulation.

A semi-structured approach was taken to ensure necessary topics from the interview guide were discussed whilst allowing each participant a degree of freedom to share information not considered in the constructed guide.[35] To minimise interviewer bias, open-ended questions were asked in an indirect manner to ensure responses were not restricted in their content.

2.3 Data Collection

Each interviewed participant consented to being recorded, with the understanding that each would be transcribed and analysed. Interviews took place in quiet settings, typically in office spaces to minimise distraction and potential background noise interference in the recordings. Topics from the interview guide were discussed in chronological order, leading to each interview lasting approximately one hour.

2.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used as a tool for data consolidation and review.[36] A thematic analysis[37,38] was carried out using codes founded from the three key themes from the initial interview guide. Subthemes within each code were constructed from review of the interviews in conjunction with discussion topics provided in the interview guide as shown in figure 3. Individual subtheme analysis allowed generation of a maximum of three key points for each. Following this, potential relationships between subthemes were suggested through analysis of each wider code.

Each interview was chronologically coded, and subsequently reviewed to ensure selected codes accurately represented content. Data were selected for presentation to reflect participant breadth and common sentiments disclosed during interviews. No contradictory data came into view during analysis due to the open-ended nature of questioning. A randomisation process was used during data selection to minimise potential researcher bias[35]. A maximum of three key points for each subtheme were collected with associated quotes during data analysis. Quotes were subsequently numbered, and single quotes were selected for presentation using a random number generator.

3 RESULTS

Eight interviews were carried out over a six-week period, face-to-face or via telephone to accommodate if an in-person meeting was not possible. Each individual consented to a recorded interview and to be included in analysis. The participant organisations were as follows; Chelsea Football Club, Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Offending Team, Violence Intervention Project, Khulisa, Wipers, Key4Life and a field researcher.

Table 1

Coded Themes and Subthemes Derived from Interview Analysis

Theme	Subthemes
Factors associated with serious youth violence	Adverse childhood events
	Shame
	Trauma
	'Gangs' and drugs
The Public Health Approach	Contextual factors
	Role of statutory bodies
	Considerations for a Public Health approach to serious youth violence
Strategies to reduce offending and increase opportunities for young people	School and curriculum
	Employment
	Public attitude
	Community organisations
	Young offenders and community programmes
	Multi-agency working

Data analysis led to interpretation of three main themes with a range of associated codes *(Table 1).* Key findings will be presented from each theme, with attention drawn to commonalities.

3.1 Factors Associated with Serious Youth Violence

3.1.1 Adverse Childhood Events

Participants expressed that young men exhibiting behaviours of serious youth violence have typically experienced at minimum, one of such events. They emphasised that such circumstances can impact an individual emotionally and behaviourally in adolescence, into adulthood.

I struggle to think of any men that we've come across that has not been a victim of domestic violence, or survivor if you like. Some of the children who have grown up on an estate, say White City, have to be incredibly resilient to grow up there and not become involved. If that's compounded by neglectful parenting and poor school experience, maybe you've been excluded, I call it the 'perfect storm.' [P1]

3.1.2 Shame

Two consistent subthemes developed from ACE which were shame and trauma. Participants expressed that such emotion is not limited to a single experience and can be built upon over time. Furthermore, they stated that in the absence of supportive and containing relationships, these feelings and their associated responses can be exacerbated.

We have young people that have been brought up in perhaps really shaming households, or they've experienced neglect and abuse, so they carry around a lot more shame, so they're more prone to shaming experiences and the responses that come with it. [P4]

3.1.3 Trauma

As discussed with shame, trauma was said to be a direct result of any ACE. Following exposure to trauma, participants expressed the importance of supportive environments for children to disclose such experiences and manage their emotions in a healthy manner.

When I was 13, I lost one of my best friends to knife crime and never got any mental support. Teachers didn't want to bring that up with me because they knew it would make me more upset when really, I needed to know how to deal with that stuff. That's the problem, no one was around to deal with it so the only way I dealt with it was by putting others at harm. [P5]

3.1.4 'Gangs' and Drugs

Participants expressed that from their experience, a number of factors can lead to involvement with 'gangs' and drugs, especially unresolved feelings of shame and trauma. Another contributing factor mentioned was the need for belonging and peer approval that can be obtained from close group relationships.

There is something about those people who have all had similar experiences, they all want a sense of belonging. That sense of pride counteracts that sense of shame. Other people may get it from scouts or cadets, there's then a code of conduct that comes with being in those groups. [P4]

Financial incentive was expressed as the main underlying driver for drug possession and distribution at an early age for those growing up in poverty. Participants stated that in Hammersmith and Fulham children as young as 12 have been associated with such activity, guided by older generations often in the same area.

The way I grew up, council flat, we're not rich, we're broke so we're trying to make money, we're trying to be like others. There's older guys around that are showing us cars, girls and quick money. I was 12, 13 when I started. [P5]

It was noted that a distinctive characteristic of Hammersmith and Fulham was the existence of extreme wealth and poverty in close radius, distinguishing this borough from other areas in London where they may be more consistent socioeconomic status within close proximities. Participants felt this characteristic intensified the financial appeal of drug distribution in the borough.

In Haringey I never saw poverty like that, what you've got here is real poverty living next door to real wealth. They can physically see the wealth and that's what feeds the drug market. [P1]

3.2 The Public Health Approach

3.2.1 Contextual Factors

During this interview portion, participants shared features relevant to the UK and London, and more specifically Hammersmith and Fulham, in the interest that any effective approach would meet the borough's individual needs.

The 'gold standard' public health approach to violence has been appreciated as that taken in Glasgow. Key distinctions between Glasgow and London were made during discussions to highlight where participants deemed such an approach must be adapted.

I think you've got 30 plus London boroughs; I don't know how many health trusts so that's why you can't just pick up something and plant it. In Glasgow they're able to have the police, education and health all singing from the same hymn sheet but how do you get those 33 London boroughs to work in the same way? [P1]

A variety of characteristics associated with Hammersmith and Fulham were mentioned, including an exceptionally high reoffending rate, extreme disparity of wealth and potential areas for investment such as run-down youth clubs. The plethora of established community organisations, including 3 football clubs within the borough was also discussed, as a key resource for youth programmes and improving engagement with those at risk or involved in serious youth violence.

3.2.2 Role of Statutory Bodies

The role of statutory bodies was considered as a means with potential to strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of any approach. Proposed methods to improve working practices of key players such as the MPS and schools were mentioned, with particular attention given to training professionals.

Everything the police do is quite enforcement based, and as far as we're aware you need to get to young people before they get to that stage. We want to engage with the police to be able to recognise trauma in young people. A lot of enforcement-based stuff is not dealing with root causes, in fact it may make it worse by re-traumatising them. [P6]

Reducing school exclusions across the borough was expressed by all participants as vital to reducing offending. A variety of strategies were suggested to carry this out, for example improving existing alternative provisions and providing further training and support for teachers dealing with 'difficult' students.

There were so many classes that I enjoyed but they just ended up taking me out of it. Obviously, my behaviour had to change but I'm a kid at the time. There were so many options that they could have taken. [P5]

Definitely it starts at primary school. Not excluding kids for misbehaviour so quickly or creating alternative provisions that engage them and stimulate them and help them to fulfil potential. [P2]

3.2.3 Considerations for any Public Health Approach to Serious Youth Violence

The final subtheme transpired as the most prominent; factors that participants deemed relevant for consideration when developing an effective Public Health approach to this issue. A crucial point stated was concern for the time lag between implementation of any approach and visible change.

The public health approach is going to take ten years to really create change. I think what we need is opportunities for people now, because we've still got nine years of people facing the same problems they've been facing. [P2]

The importance of positive working relationships between all involved was highlighted, and particular connections that must be strengthened in order for an approach to be welcomed and implemented by the community themselves.

Start with those on the ground right now, who know the community and the area, have relationships with people who live in the area and ensure that these individuals / organisations are involved from the beginning in developing any approaches. [P7]

3.3 Strategies to Reduce Serious Youth Violence and Increase Opportunities

3.3.1 School and Curriculum

Changes in school culture and the curriculum itself were emphasised by all participants. Incorporation of emotional and social wellbeing into the primary and secondary school curriculum was consistently mentioned. Participants believed that doing so would provide young people with the ability to make decisions by evaluating the consequences, as opposed to acting impulsively. Primary school was understood to be the appropriate starting point for adapting education, as this is where early developmental stages are reached and behavioural responses are learnt.

Schools can no longer just worry about educating academically but also need to educate morally and emotionally – or bring organisations into the school setting that can do this work…and this should be part of the curriculum. [P7]

I think engagement in primary school is key, moving towards specific anti-offending messages during secondary school I think is important but at primary school creating an inclusive place is what we need. [P2]

3.3.2 Voluntary and Community Sector

From speaking to a range of community organisations, each work to particular aims such as creating meaningful employment opportunities for young people, improving emotional and social capacity to cope with stressors, providing alternative emotional outlets through sports and a range of others. The breadth of organisations within this sector was highlighted in each interview, as well as the value of such individuals to the community and their commitment to the cause.

A lot of our coaches are former participants, so they understand the areas… One of our former participants stopped the person, he saw the knife and stopped him by grabbing his arm and talked him out of it because he'd known him for years. [P3]

3.3.3 Young Offenders and Community Programmes

A clear finding regarding effective programmes from organisations is the difficulty in obtaining sustainable funding. The value of a programme being directly correlated to its duration was mentioned by a number of participants, with funding being a key determinant of this. Furthermore, ongoing support from organisations was appreciated as a vital element in producing sustainable change in young people.

Once I got into Key4Life after a couple of months that's when I started to like my surroundings. Luckily, I was able to stay on, and it was the ongoing support that helped me the most because over 6 months I never took as much out of it as I could have. But, because they kept giving me support, I got more out of it, then I was offered to become a Key Mentor and from there just going upwards. [P5]

Specific strategies to engage with young people and the understanding behind each was detailed by participants. For example, eating with young people after a sports session was described as an essential engagement tool to create a safe space for issues to be disclosed and meaningful relationships to be forged.

Understanding the theory underpinning programmes was considered vital to participants, especially those focused on therapeutic interventions concerning trauma and shame. Research into such areas was deemed as a priority in order to build on existing frameworks and create new provisions.

3.3.4 Multi-Agency Working

Partnerships between schools and community organisations were discussed in great detail, with many participants outlining their existing collaborative programmes which included dedicated school assemblies, long-term placement of organisations within schools to work with those at risk of exclusion and a similar programme in alternative provision units. For such relationships to be effective, especially in the context of long-term programmes, participants required schools to commit to a cultural change that can be upheld once the placement is complete.

We're having service level agreements with the school to say this is what we will provide but in order to do this to the best of our ability, this is what we need from you. We can only commit to places that can support our monitoring and evaluation and will provide us with the data we need so we can then provide them with the best service possible. [P6]

Relationships between organisations was mentioned by all as an action going forward, as each organisation acts at a specific point of a young person's journey. Some organisations have existing partnerships that can be used to refer a young person and ensure they have the individual support required in their situation. Larger organisations such as the YHFF provide a platform for community groups to network and engage in a joint discourse, which has been beneficial to those involved.

Everybody needs to be able to work together, we have to come to a consistent place [P4]

3.3.5 Public Attitude

Participants described overall public attitude as fear, with this narrative being perpetuated by the media, along with race. Race was expressed by participants as a factor that can isolate young black men via their portrayal in the media. The need for a shift was highlighted, to allow for young people at risk or involved in serious youth violence to reintegrate into their communities.

There's no such thing as black on black crime, just like there's no such thing as white on white crime, there's just crime. [P1]

Public attitude could really benefit from shifting towards inclusion rather than exclusion. So, there's 85,000 (roughly) male prisoners in prison right now and only 500 of them aren't coming out. We can't rehabilitate all of those people, it's entire communities' responsibility to take that on. [P2]

3.3.6 Employment

Equipping young people with transferable skills and confidence along with providing meaningful employment opportunities was understood as key to breaking or preventing the offending cycle. Relationships between certain community organisations and corporate partners has allowed for such opportunities to be created. Through this, young people have attained a viable income, gained self-worth and felt respected by institutions that they previously may had not been exposed to. Expanding corporate responsibility into this area was also discussed by participants, as a means to introduce such young people to new careers and environments, and employers to new potential candidates.

Loads of them are fed up, they don't have the opportunity so when we bring in people that are employers from big companies in London to talk to them, they feel important again. We never felt like we would have the chance to speak to people like that, we didn't think people like that cared to speak to us. [P5]

4 DISCUSSION

This project has allowed for primary qualitative data in the form of shared attitudes from experts in serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham to be collected, analysed and developed into a complete framework. The common notion interpreted from analysis was that a blanket London-wide approach to this issue will not be as effective as borough-specific interventions that consider an area's needs and resources. This principal finding is vital for policy makers and local authorities, as analysis has determined that although the Public Health approach is promising, substantial reductions in violent offending by young people in the UK will take time to be seen.

Relationships between subthemes and themes have been constructed from independent and wider theme analysis. A process between factors associated with serious youth violence has been proposed from interpretation of data *(Figure 3)*. Presence of ACE in the absence of support, such as a safe space or a containing relationship can result in an accumulation of shame and trauma. Such circumstances can increase the appeal of 'gang' membership and / or drug distribution, through a sense of belonging and respect, with no clear alternative route to achieving this. Choosing to focus on causes of 'gang' formation and membership could put an end to the debate of applicability of the USA definition in London, by removing the very circumstances that drive young people towards such associations. Entering into such territory increases the likelihood of violent offending, however a young person can engage in such behaviour without 'gang' or drug involvement as a result of unresolved feelings of shame and trauma. Appreciating that ACE such as physical abuse can have a profound impact, is a concept that can be used when working with young people. By providing a safe environment where healthy confrontation is permitted, vulnerable young people can engage with their feelings of shame or trauma as opposed to such feelings maintaining a hidden status. Furthermore, comprehending ACE as risk factors for violence, existing therapeutic interventions and professional training can be built upon to allow those working with young people at risk are fully equipped to improve their social and emotional wellbeing, and in turn their behaviour.[39]
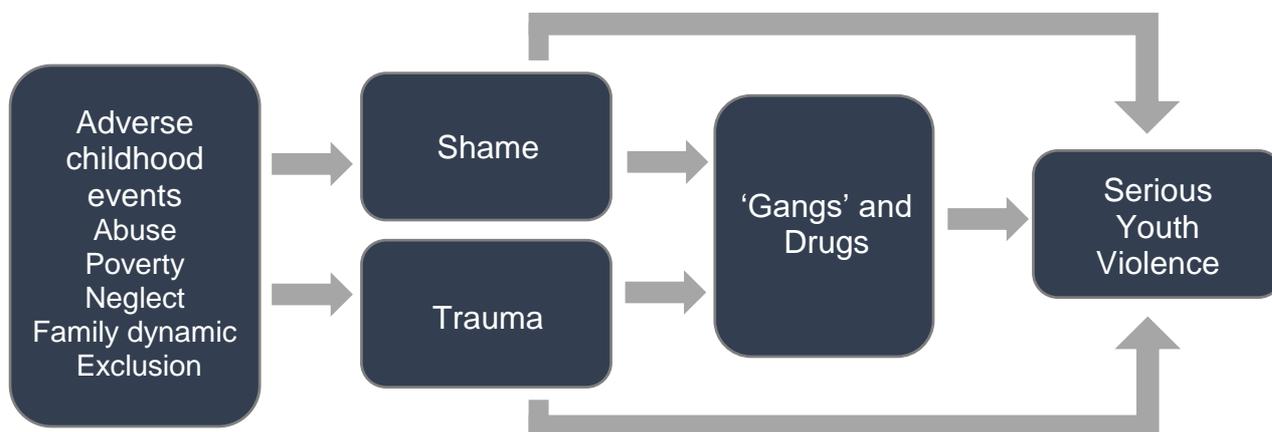
Figure 3: Schematic diagram to illustrate the relationships between factors associated with serious youth violence; adverse childhood events (including, not limited to abuse, poverty, neglect, family dynamic and school exclusion), shame, trauma, gangs and drugs (interpreted from data analysis)

An effective Public Health approach to tackle serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham can be formed through considering the elements within this theme in a specific order *(Figure 4)*. Contextual factors specific to the borough and the role of statutory bodies such as schools and the MPS must be appreciated prior to appreciating wider considerations for any Public Health strategy for serious youth violence can allow for development of an effective approach. The primary relationship is essential, as it dictates particular adaptations of any Public Health approach to the issue, to fit the borough profile of Hammersmith and Fulham. Without this, incorrect assumptions can be made, resources in the area cannot be fully utilised and any approach will not be effectively integrated into the roots of the community. Emphasis has been placed here as successful policy must be adopted and understood by the populations they are designed to support.

Figure 4: Schematic diagram to show the relationship between factors considered vital for an effective Public Health approach to serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham (interpreted from data analysis)

The implications of this relationship could be interpreted through the planned regeneration that is scheduled to be completed in 2035.[25] Six regeneration areas have been outlined, and to avoid ineffective community integration the council should aim to involve communities in development plans, especially those at the upper end of the Index of Multiple Deprivation *(Figure 1)*. In line with this, revisiting involvement of young people in stop and search training for the MPS could create a symbiotic relationship where young people appreciate the need for this practice, where it is carried out in a justified and respectable manner, by all standards. Integrating the community in such a way could bridge the current gap between local people and statutory bodies. This is vital to produce a cultural change in the borough where the community have an active relationship with the local council, the MPS and local schools, to strengthen the enforcement of any preventative measures put in place to reduce serious youth violence.

An interconnected network has been postulated as the relationship between subthemes in the final theme; strategies to reduce offending and increase opportunities for young people *(Figure 5)*. Each element coexists and operates effectively in a functional network, to provide an actively supportive environment for young people at risk or involved in serious youth violence. Recognising this structure can clearly identify areas for improvement, and maintains an underlying collaborative working method between all sectors, in line with any Public Health approach.

In Hammersmith and Fulham, many of these elements are in place and effectively working, most notably community organisations. However, this network highlights areas that need to be addressed such as public attitude, employment, school and curriculum. Using this network, these divisions can be tackled by multiple sources, for example the school curriculum can be adapted to include social and emotional wellbeing education through multi-agency working between local schools and the VCS. Interconnected solutions for one component can work to strengthen the complete network, stressing the importance of collaboration. A definitive starting point has not been identified as it has been designed as a dynamic process, where components can be enhanced simultaneously.
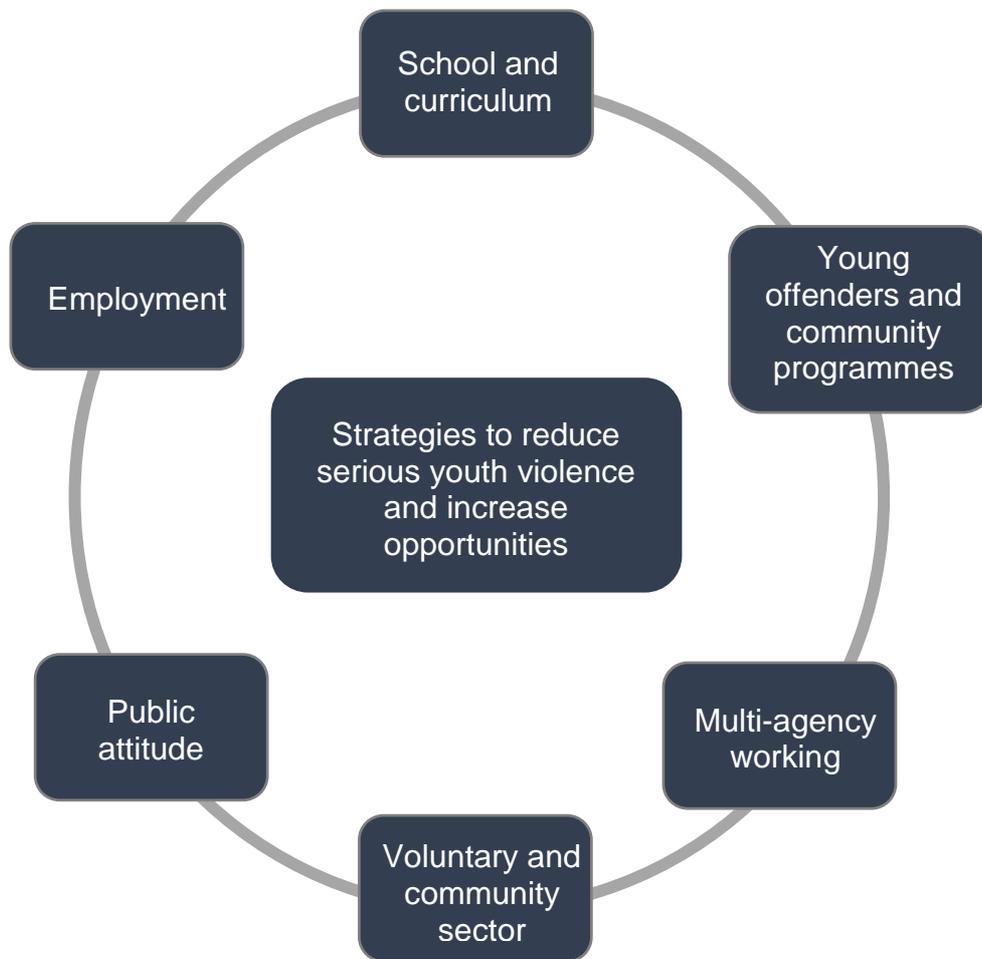
Figure 5: Schematic diagram displaying the network of elements contributing to strategies to reduce serious youth violence and increase opportunities for young people (interpreted from data analysis)

Finally, a complete network has been proposed, which links each wider theme and its corresponding subthemes into a framework of serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham *(Figure 6)*. Using this framework in parallel with the relevant literature and existing strategies would allow for a better informed, context-specific approach. With the addition of the Violence Reduction Unit and policy, this structure can be understood within the wider setting of serious youth violence in the UK. The inclusion of these two components emphasises that policy alone cannot yield a sufficient amount of support to foster transformation, meaning the value of resources such as the VCS cannot be overlooked during policy formation. A 'ground-up' approach is required to have a profound impact that is rooted within and pioneered by communities.

Factors associated with serious youth violence relate to considerations for any Public Health strategy to the issue, as they encompass the underlying roots of violence. This correlates to the primary step of a Public Health approach discussed earlier as this will establish a foundation of knowledge prior to exploration and development of any interventions. It is important to note that the strategies suggested do not require policy to be enforced, and can be imposed by services themselves, for example community organisations can form partnerships with local business to create employment opportunities for young people. This distinction has been made to address the time lag that can be observed from implementation of any Public Health approach to achieving measurable change.

The findings from this project build on existing literature by emphasising the importance of a Public Health approach due to its preventative elements, as opposed to simply curative. However, the distinction made in this project opposed to other documents is the need for a bespoke approach in Hammersmith and Fulham, and a complete framework that can be used in parallel with existing strategies for stakeholders to understand their role and potential contribution. The most recent proposal pertaining to this issue in London fails to clearly mitigate the inter-borough differences that can impact the uptake of any Public Health approach to violent crime.[29] Also, the analysis from the data collected outlines further implications not outlined in existing policy, for example equipping schools with the resources to raise the exclusion threshold, where such resources can be obtained from the community. This framework has been designed to be used by the VCS, local authority and other statutory bodies in order for each sector to understand their role and potential contribution, in conjunction with the Knife Crime Action Plan.[3]
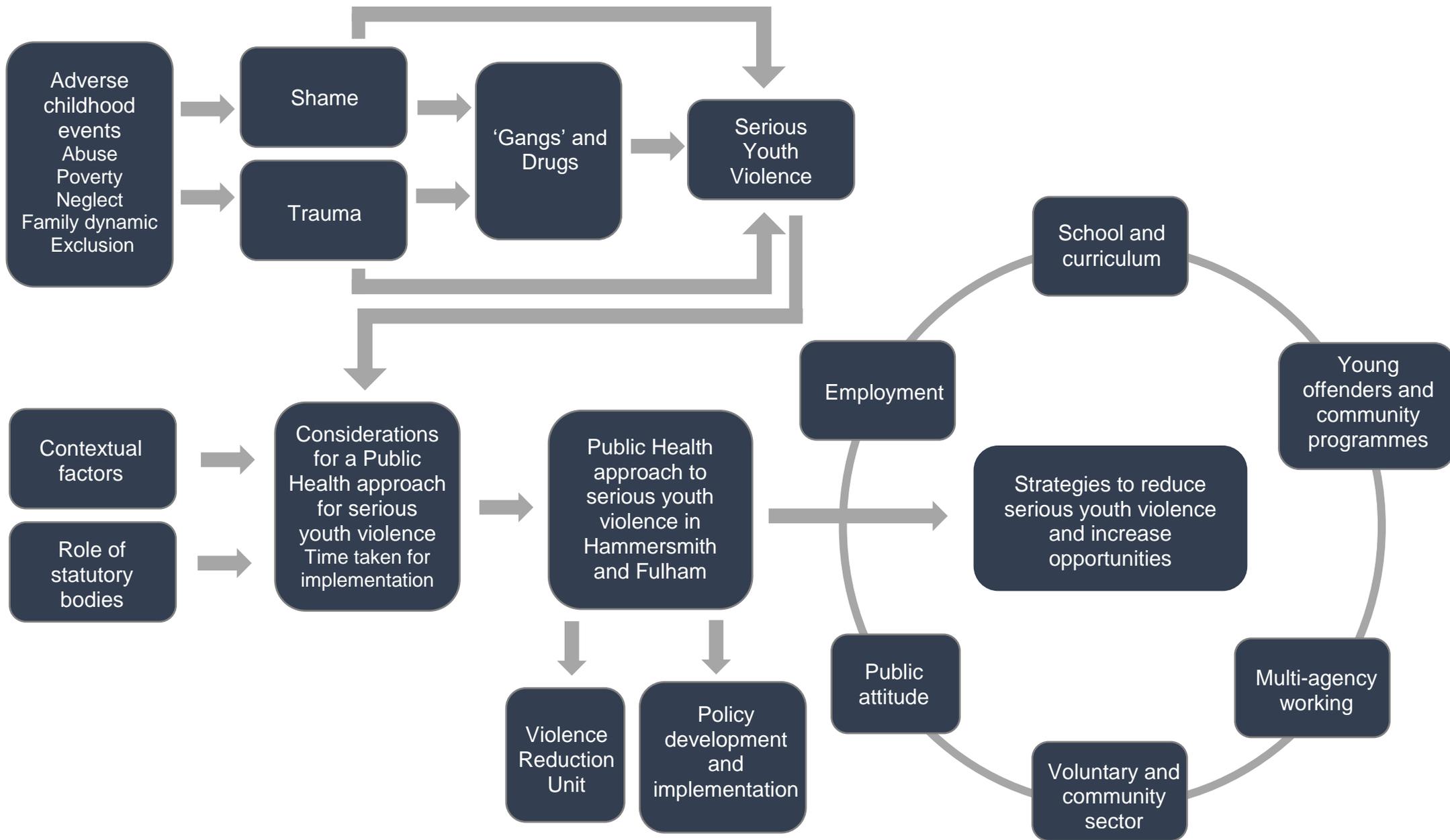
Figure 6: Framework to depict wider inter-theme relationships (derived from data analysis)

4.1 Strengths and Limitations

Due to time constraints, only a limited number of interviews were practical due to the resource intensive nature of transcription and data analysis. Despite this restriction, a wide breadth of knowledge was obtained as participants were from a range of organisations as outlined, and each had specific areas of expertise. Each participant had a significant background of experience underpinning their existing position, adding to the value of the data collected.

As with all qualitative research, data interpretation can be subjective. To limit subjectivity, analysis was reviewed by an additional researcher and examined in parallel with findings from the initial literature review. To reduce subjectivity further, quotes presented were determined using the described randomisation process, and all findings discussed were depicted by multiple participants.

Using a thematic analysis approach has allowed for flexibility and presentation of commonalities.[37] This method formed a skeleton for deconstructing complex, multi-faceted concepts and grouping them in a coherent way to be understood by fellow researchers, the VCS and local authority. Using this technique allowed for pattern identification and analysis of component relationships.

This project attempts to link all elements of serious youth violence in Hammersmith and Fulham into a complete framework using primary qualitative research, which as of completion has not been carried out by another group. This outline considers the specific needs of Hammersmith and Fulham in the context of London as a whole, providing an initial platform for further development in this borough, or adaptation in others. Using the method outlined, additional boroughs can undertake a focused examination to understand their distinct context and apply findings locally.

4.2 Conclusion

It is clear that serious youth violence is a priority for the UK and as a society we have a duty to create and maintain supportive environments for our young people to mature and access all available opportunities. Evaluation has proven the Public Health approach to be successful in reducing serious youth violence in affected cities. However, the societal, contextual and individual factors contributing to this issue in the UK and more specifically London, are unique due to the seemingly independent operation of the 32 London boroughs. Without in-depth investigation of individual societies and communities, any interventions or future policy risks producing an ineffective result. Utilising the knowledge and primary experience of field experts operating in Hammersmith and Fulham alongside the relevant literature, the structural framework proposed aims to inform action and policy for the area whilst maintaining a holistic approach. As a society, we have a duty to create and foster supportive environments for our young people to develop and grasp all opportunities available to them. In order to prevent failing the current generation of young people, it is imperative that we collaborate with field experts based in specific communities in such a way to uphold this duty.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Each recommendation has been considered carefully to be practical, realistic and applicable given the local context.

- YHFF to hold regular meetings with all member organisations working in youth justice for collaborative partnership working, determination of gaps and innovative ways to improve existing programmes

- Further research should be carried out into pathways of shame and trauma in contributing to serious youth violence, for development of young offenders and community programmes. The VCS should be supported in completing this.

- Engage with local businesses to connect with the VCS to coproduce employment and work experience opportunities for young people. Including young people in the projected employment development in the borough is a communal opportunity for local businesses to work with the local population and fulfil their corporate social responsibility commitments.

- Work with local schools and education partners to address new inclusions in the curriculum, such as social and emotional wellbeing and provide support to reduce permanent exclusions, as in Glasgow.[7]

- Provide opportunities for the VCS to collaborate with the local council to build capacity for asset-based programme monitoring and evaluation, emphasise strengths and inform examples of best practice to be used in policy documents.[40]

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW SEARCH TERMS

Primary Key Words and Search Terms

Serious youth violence

Youth violence

Knife crime

London crime

Hammersmith and Fulham demographics

Violent crime

Young offending

Interventions to reduce young offending

Community interventions to reduce young offending

Strategies to reduce young offending

Police policies young offending

Public Health approach to violence

Hammersmith and Fulham young offending

Violence Reduction Unit

Young offending programmes

Multi-agency working

Gangs

Drugs and young offending

Public attitude

Risk factors for violence

Databases

PubMed

Embase

Metropolitan Police Publications

Local Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Policies

UK National Government Publications

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Why do young people offend?

- Family dynamic
- Inequality and deprivation
- Drugs
- Exclusion
- Social group and peer pressure
- Victimisation

Do you think a Public Health approach to serious youth violence will be effective in the borough?

- Who is needed for a Public Health approach? - Grassroots organisations / voluntary sector / Public / Local authority / Police / Education / Health
- Does the approach in Glasgow need to be adjusted to be applicable in the UK?
- Is the community / population in Hammersmith and Fulham different to other London boroughs? If so, why?

Existing and potential strategies to reduce offending and reoffending, and increase opportunities for young people

- Curriculum
- Young offenders' programmes
- Community organisations
- Targeted community programmes
- Police
    - Stop and search
    - Knife injunctions
    - Increase in number of officers
- Alternative school provision