

1 Critical Events

During a 4-week period in Summer 2017, 3 teenage boys died, a further 2 boys died by the end of the year. All 5 were known to services for safeguarding and/or criminal concerns.

Partners were asked which other adolescents were they most worried about. 60 most vulnerable adolescents in Croydon - 23 Girls, 37 Boys were identified. The Vulnerable Adolescents Review commenced to understand their lives to help inform and improve future plans

2 Presenting safeguarding concerns

Presenting vulnerabilities, safeguarding & wellbeing concerns included those within and outside of the home:

- Perpetrator or victim of knife crime and drug related incidents
- Frequent and high number missing episodes
- Victims of sexual exploitation and/or criminal exploitation
- Perpetrator or victim of crime (incl. thefts, assaults)
- Gang membership or affiliation
- School exclusions and/or poor-attendance
- Concerns about risks to physical or emotional care & family dysfunction
- Known parental vulnerabilities including mental health issues, domestic abuse, criminal behaviour/imprisonment
- ED presentations for assault and stab wounds, or substance misuse

Croydon Vulnerable Adolescents Review (VAR)

The Croydon VAR sought to identify similarities/differences within the lives of 60 vulnerable adolescents, the review looked at shared data going back to their birth and current experiences.

[Download full report at www.croydonlscb.org.uk](http://www.croydonlscb.org.uk)

3 Findings of themes from the 60

- Early risks and vulnerabilities were known: 51% were first known to social care between 0m-5y old | 22% were first known 6y-11y | 27% were first known at 12y+ | with 27% known to Croydon Social Care specifically before 1y - and 52% before 5y
- Most children in the cohort were affected in some way by complex parental issues including absent father | domestic abuse | parental criminality | parental substance misuse | parental mental health | homelessness | bereavements | parental physical illness
- Working together across children and adult services did not achieve shared understanding or plans to support the child or family
- Often interventions and plans were limited to reacting to presenting behaviours and short term; failing to address the underlying needs of the child and community based risks
- There was over-representation of black boys (Caribbean heritage), parents spoken to challenged if the boys were white, would more be done to help
- There was a high rate of school exclusions, including from Primary School – of the 19 children who had primary school exclusions, all 19 later had criminal convictions
- Transition from primary to secondary was an issue, with many showing a deterioration of behaviour at secondary leading to moves to PRU or AP
- 70% had referrals to CAMHS. Age at referral range: 4y to 14y+
- Being both a perpetrator of criminal behaviour and/or victim of crime was present for most of the cohort - including thefts, assaults, knife crime and drugs offences
- 75% of boys were known to be involved with gangs or gang affiliated. 85% of boys went missing.
- 85% of girls known victims of CSE and 100% of girls went missing
- 25% were subject to more than one CP Plan and 75% of the cohort became looked after at some point, suggesting earlier interventions had failed, were not sustained and didn't respond to emergent risks
- One looked after young person (aged 15y) commented 'Where were you when I was 6?' – suggesting that intervention was too little, too late.

5 Partnership Actions

- Early help & prevention critical
- Recognition & response to child's emotional & wellbeing needed
- Integrated, whole systems approach need across agencies, families and communities
- Schools are the heart of multi-agency interventions
- Disproportionality linked to ethnicity, gender & deprivation requires attention & action

4 Learning

Early Years 0-6: Impacted by early adversities at home relating to their parent's own complex issues & limited capacity of parents to provide nurture, support and attachment needs. Parent and child needs were not integrated and received short-term interventions. Early intervention & prevention needs to address trauma and support attachment needs.

Childhood 6-12: Schools seen as pivotal in life of child, but often unaware of home difficulties. Responses to highly difficult behaviour included exclusions, referrals to range of services. School transition crucial period for child going forward but was not always in planned.

Adolescence 12-16: Pace and complexity of needs drove agency responses, interventions short-term focussed on stability & control. Whole systems approach to integrate needs and services not taken. Risky behaviours seen to increase. Impact of long-term emotional & MH needs, lack of trusted adult relationships influencing behaviours. In the main often treated as perpetrators not victims.

