

# Links between domestic violence and gang involvement

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- 40% young people are in abusive relationships
- Up to 70% teenage mothers are in abusive relationships
- 2 women a week killed as a result of domestic violence
- 72 10-19 yr olds murdered in the UK in 2008 (12 girls)\*
- Unknown numbers involved in gangs but clear overlaps between risks and vulnerabilities

# Domestic violence and links to offending *(ONS, 2000)*

- 42% female young offenders had experienced domestic violence at home
- ¼ young male offenders (sentenced or on remand) had experienced domestic violence at home
- 1 in 3 young female offenders had been sexually abused

# Gang Definitions:

*Hallsworth & Young*

- **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.

# Who's at Risk of Joining a Gang?

*(project Safe Neighbourhoods)*

Gang members more often:

- are male (although female gangs are becoming more prevalent)
- have other family members or friends involved with gangs
- have seen excessive use of alcohol or other drugs in the home
- live with a single parent or with grandparents
- have poor academic performance
- see poor to non-existent job prospects
- are known for fighting and general aggressiveness in early adolescence, or have chronic delinquency problems
- experience poor living conditions or poverty
- have experienced social deprivation or isolation
- have needs that have been neglected or are unmet

# **Reluctant Gangsters (Pitts, 2008)**

1. Affiliation because of the risks to oneself and one's family from non-affiliation
2. Affiliation for protection from other gangs/crews
3. Affiliation to gain access to educational/recreational resources in gang territory
4. Affiliation because of lack of access to legitimate opportunity
5. Continued affiliation because of dangers inherent in leaving the gang

# Young people's understanding (ROTA, 2008)

- 'Gang, gun and knife culture'
- Being part of a click, protection, support
- Cultures and mindsets
- Normality

# Causes of gang culture (ROTA, 2008)

- Fear and protection
- Peer pressure
- Poverty/need for money
- Identity and exclusion
- Perceived or real lack of opportunity/education
- Lack of concern from govt
- Parenting
- Individualism/lack of community
- Lack of choice



# Motivation

Altogether five broad factors which motivate participation in territorial behaviour

*(JRF research 2008):*

- recognition and respect;
- protection of the neighbourhood;
- protection of girls;
- territoriality as a leisure activity;
- perceived personal safety.

# Protection of girls

*And this girl ... she got with a boy from ... quite a like a known area ... and then she got with the boy and then she said that he hit her, we said, she said that he hit her and then so like the whole of [particular area] ... there was like 80 to 100 lads were there. All tooled up like they had koshers, nun-chucks, baseball bats with nails came in the centre. Yeah riot vans come down, helicopters everything. And it was all over a girl. (18yr old male)*

# Girls role in gangs

- Partners, sisters, sexual partners, associates, weapon and drugs carriers, gang members
- Female endorsement of violent crime (participation/association)
- Risk of sexual assault/kidnap
- Girls less likely to be stopped and searched
- Rape as a weapon (cant s&s for rape)
- Sexual assault in playgrounds
- Underreporting and detection

*The girls play a background role to the gang.*

*They are there, and they are there for their boys but they are not as territorial as the boys are. They are proud of their areas and they are proud of where they come from and they stick by their lads, but they are not as visible ... for the girls it's part of hanging out with the lads.*

*Girls can feed it through wanting to have a boyfriend who is the biggest, baddest guy in the scheme, through wanting to make boys in their area jealous by deliberately cultivating friendships with guys from other areas. There are some negative aspects to girl power and that is one of them.*

*I mean you'll find this all over, girls are becoming a real bloody problem. Yeah, , they're hunting in packs, they're becoming very, very laddish in their behaviour ... very much heavily into drinking, that leads to an awful lot of violence and , they've continued with what they've always done, which is incitement to violence with the lads.*

(Bradford)

# Gender....some issues to consider

- Scape-goating of women – mother blame
- Sexualised images in the media that distort masculinity and objectify women
- What it means to ‘be a man’

# Young men may believe:

They have the right to "control" their female partners in any way necessary.

Expressing sadness = sign of weakness

"Masculinity" is physical aggressiveness

They "possess" their partner.

Men have the authority to punish a woman if she does not meet his needs

They should and can demand intimacy.

They may lose respect if they are attentive and supportive toward their girlfriends.

Scared of turning into their father



# Young women may believe:

They are responsible for solving problems in their relationships

She should be able to predict her partner's needs

Their boyfriend's jealousy, possessiveness and even physical abuse, is "romantic"

Abuse is "normal" because their friends are also being abused

His judgement is more important than hers

Her needs are not as important

They think they can "cure" the abusive boyfriend

There is no one to ask for help

# Links between gangs and domestic violence

- Alternative Families
- Similar risk factors
- Links to sexual assault
- Education
- Separation
- Parenting

# Alternative Families

- Young people call gangs their 'alternative families'. When young people are growing up in households with domestic violence they often look to their peers to become a substitute family and provide them with the support and acceptance that they can feel they lack at home.

# Similar risk factors (Pitts, 2008)

- Youthful: 16-24 year olds are most at risk of being in a violent relationship / inv in gangs
- Repetitive: The same people are victimised within gangs, and sometimes young girls can be victims in several relationships as well as experiencing abuse at home
- Symmetrical: Similar in terms of age, ethnicity and class
- Violence: Young people are surrounded by violence in society, their community and in their own relationships
- Under-reported: Victims of gang violence and domestic violence have many similar reasons for not reporting violence

# Links to sexual assault

- Girls tend to play an ancillary role in gangs
- Carry drugs/weapons
- Abusive relationships
- Rape as reprisal/weapon
  
- The Havens report that 30% of their referrals are under 18, with the most common age being 14-15. They are increasingly seeing young girls who are victims of gang rape.

# Links to Teenage Pregnancy

- Each year in the UK around 39,000 girls under 18 become pregnant
- 2004 nearly 61% of all under 18 pregnancies ended in abortion.
- Britain – highest TP rate in Europe (had reduced but is now increasing.....possible links to gang rape and reprisal???)
- Prevalence of experiencing abuse and violence from a partner is higher among teenage mothers than other young women
- young women who are being abused are 4 to 6 times more likely than their non-abused peers to become pregnant during their teenage years
- Up to 70 % of teenage mothers have experienced adolescent domestic violence

# Sexual Violence

- More likely to exp SV than any other age
- Girls (16-19) x4 likely to report sexual assault and rape (US data)
- Perps – dating partner or acquaintance
- Older partner – increased risk for victimisation\*
- Teenage Pregnancy
- US survey
  - 1 in 10 college males – described engaging in sex aggressive behaviour (meet legal def if rape)
  - ¼ acknowledged they had attempted rape
  - 43% used coercive behaviour to have sex

# Reporting

- Adolescents – limited exp in advocating for their own well being
- Minimise violent behaviours
- May not perceive the sexual act as a crime
- Denial
- Inexperience,
- Guilt
- Sex-role stereotypes
- Fear (hostility from police, reprisal from perp)



# Education

- Young people involved in gangs are often excluded from school. Young people experiencing domestic violence can also have problems with school for many reasons.

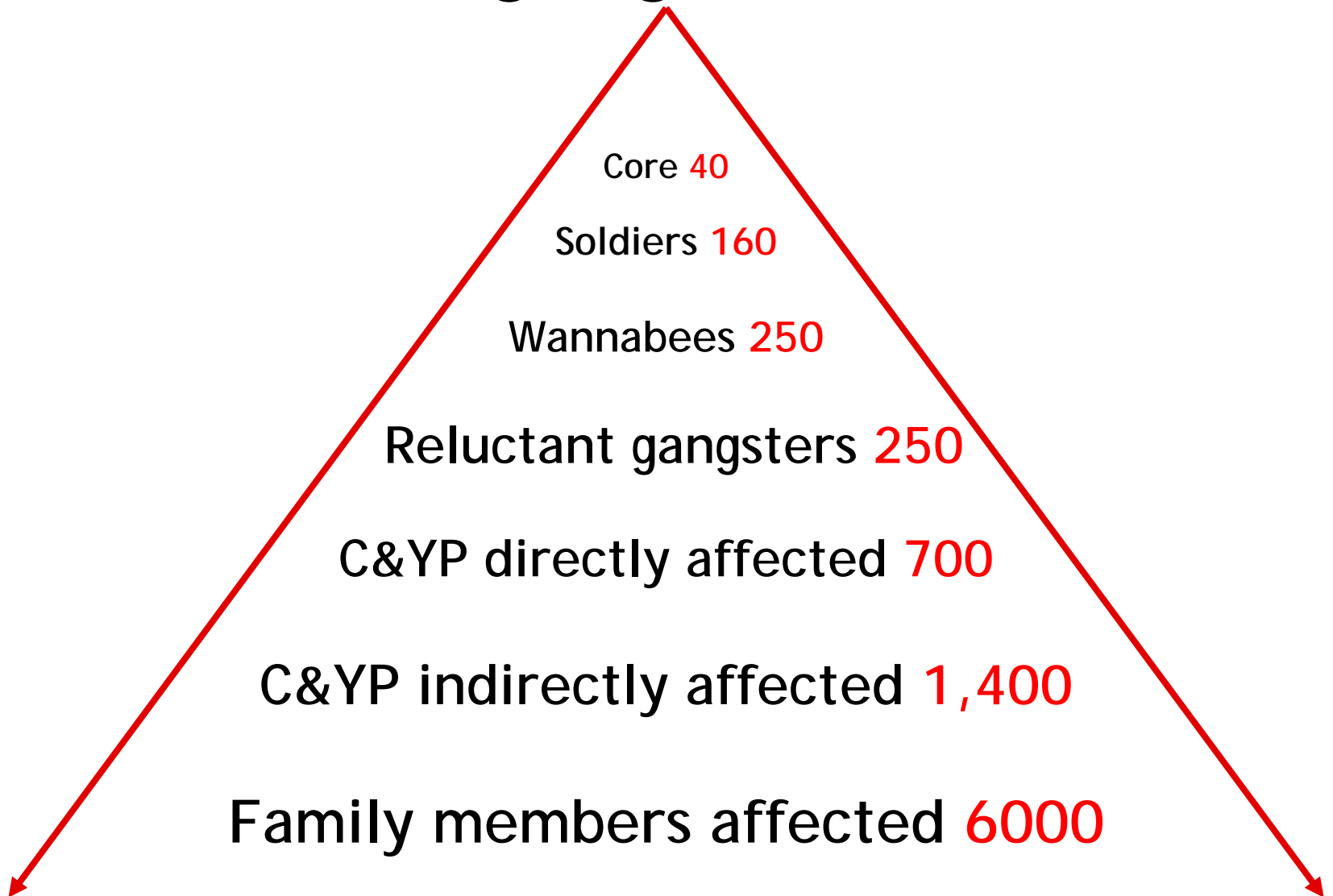
# Separation

- Leaving a violent relationship is a very high risk process.
- 76% homicide rate (London)
- The same can be said for a young people wanting to exit a gang. The fears of reprisal and isolation are similar in both cases.

# Parenting

- 75% of parents are unaware that their child is involved in a violent relationship. Parents of gang members also often report that they do not know where their children are and who they are with.

# How many people are affected by gangs?



## Example of best practice

- LB Islington. The Bronze Group
- Risk assessment panel/multi-agency
- 25 young people at one time
- Coordinate plan – nominate lead prof
- Police intelligence
- Use of websites
- YOS workers in custody suites
- Fri/sat night youth centres
- Magpii \*