



Joint Partnership Response to the Thematic Child Safeguarding Practice Review on Cross-Border Peer-on-Peer Abuse and Child Criminal Exploitation

The Executive of Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership, South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership and North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership said in a joint statement on the thematic Child Safeguarding Practice Review on Cross-Border Peer-on-Peer Abuse and Child Criminal Exploitation (November 2021):

“We welcomed the opportunity to work jointly across the area to look at peer-on-peer abuse and child criminal exploitation in a focused way, considering the themes and the implications for multi-agency partner responses. We recognise these complex issues aren't constrained by local authority borders and require us to approach them differently.

“We are grateful to the young people and families who contributed to the review, helping us understand how we can improve. The review also incorporated the views of professionals from multiple agencies and we are thankful for their time and input.

“The increase nationally and regionally of young people being harmed through knife violence, drug supply and county lines is of grave concern to all of us and to communities, families and young people themselves. As partnerships, we continue to seek opportunities to better safeguard young people and find solutions that work.

“The independent reviewer listed some areas of good practice, acknowledging improved local knowledge on peer-on-peer violence and criminal exploitation and commenting on the strategic and operational responses that have been introduced, resulting in smoother and more effective interventions. We have used this review to learn what is working in neighbouring partnerships and which approaches we are able to grow.

“Most importantly, the reviewer also identified nine key recommendations to help improve how we keep young people safe. We accept them and, in response, we have put together an action plan outlining how we intend to deliver on the recommendations made by the reviewer. We are committed to delivering change as a result of these findings, to protect the most vulnerable in our community and keep young people safe.

“Regionally, since the review, we have invested in new educational inclusion programmes for young people at risk, knowing that educational exclusion is one of the primary factors in increasing vulnerability to harm. Our regional Violence Reduction Unit has funded new mentoring and diversion projects in all three areas. Avon and Somerset Police's Operation Topaz team has been expanded, with dedicated officers focused on disrupting and prosecuting adults who exploit and coerce children into violence and criminality.

“We have heard from young people, families and professionals how challenging it can be to exit these situations where there is conflict, violence or exploitation. Often young people do not initially recognise the risks they face. Getting support at the earliest opportunity is vital for us to be able to make a difference.



“We would like to remind young people and families that services are available. If you’re worried, speak to a trusted teacher, local youth service, a local PCSO or find out more about local specialist services on the safeguarding partnerships’ websites.”

ENDS

Notes:

Local responses to the issue are supported by the Avon and Somerset serious violence strategy and the work of the regional Violence Reduction Unit which operates a devolved model across the force. In Avon and Somerset there are five local Violence Reduction Units (VRUs).

In addition, each local area has a bespoke response:

- **In Bristol:** Safer Options has been introduced as a whole systems approach designed to combat criminal exploitation of young people and serious youth violence framed by Bristol's Safeguarding Children in our Communities Strategy 2020-2023 and the Serious Youth Violence Plan 2020.
- **In South Gloucestershire,** the (Response) Strategy for Tackling Serious Violence was launched in March 2020 and the South Gloucestershire’s Violence Reduction Unit leads the development and delivery of a multi-agency action plan to tackle the issues identified in the strategy and through the South Gloucestershire Serious Violence Problem Profile using a Public Health approach.
- **In North Somerset:** North Somerset Serious Violence Reduction Strategy 2021-22 provides a co-ordinated front-line multi agency model to provide sustainable solutions that prevent serious violence problems escalating.

The core Executive of the partnership in each area is made up of Avon and Somerset Police, Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and the local council. For further details on local arrangements and services available see:

- [Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership website](#)
- [North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#) and [North Somerset VRU website](#)
- [South Gloucestershire Children’s Partnership website](#)