

## Youth Intelligence Hub Annual 2023/24 Report

### Introduction

The Youth Intelligence Hub was established by Children's Services in October 2022 to safeguard and protect children and young people in Redbridge who are at risk of, or exposed to, sexual or criminal exploitation, violence, gangs, knife crime or other forms of exploitation.

The partnership meeting takes place weekly and is chaired by Sharon Springer Head of Service for Child Protection. The weekly meeting brings together senior operational leads to share real-time intelligence/information about youth crime, violence and exploitation and use this intelligence to safeguard young people, by disrupting, responding to and preventing crime, exploitation and anti-social behaviour.

This paper considers the impact of the intelligence hub and highlights some of the discussion and work undertaken by partnership working through the hub during the 2023/24 financial year.

### Impact to date

#### Child trafficking and exploitation

During the year a lot of work has been completed around the concerns of Roma children being arrested for shop lifting and street crime which came to light at the end of the previous financial year. Bogus addresses were being given and unsuitable appropriate adults were presenting at custody. Further concerns arose over the following quarters relating to trafficking, exploitation, conditions of the young people's homes.

An intelligence pack was created by members of the Youth Intelligence Hub and Children Services which was shared with police, this was escalated within the Metropolitan police and there is now a central police operation, Operation Purtsan, focussing on the wider issue which is affecting across London. Social workers have been advised by police when they need to cease visits with families and when they can resume so as not to affect any investigations taking place.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) in London were requested to not agree for children being bailed to the addresses of concern, this information was shared with courts across London. In the majority of cases, the courts were proactive in forcing parents to attend court with proof of address. The matter was raised as an item at the PAN London children in custody meeting which a London representative for youth courts attended to ensure that all courts were checking the bail address before release.

Housing Enforcement were sent addresses of properties where social workers had raised concerns about the living conditions when carrying out visits. This resulted in warnings and evictions, a couple of the properties have been boarded up.

Many of the young people were also providing addresses in neighbouring boroughs, complex strategy meetings were held involving multi-disciplinary teams and the new receiving boroughs, ensuring the intelligence gathered so far was not lost. When the cases transferred all the information collected, including the intelligence document was shared to support the receiving teams / boroughs.

Other joint work took place with British Transport Police, North London Engage Team and the Romanian Embassy. This is an ongoing issue within Redbridge and the UK, the police operation continues, and the hub will be updated when the police are in a position to do so. Information received by the hub will be shared with other agencies that are involved.

### **Sexual harassment of children**

At the end of the previous year and first quarter of this year there were reports of female students believed to be victims of sexual harassment at New City College.

Safer Schools Officers set up sessions in May with the cohort of students to offer support. The anti-social behaviour team increased their visual presence at the two locations students had said they felt unsafe or experienced sexual harassment after college. Banners referencing the 'Just Stop' campaign were put up in the area to help deter the behaviour.

No further reports of harassment were made following the interventions put in place.

### **Sexual exploitation of children**

After discussions held and information shared about young females, particularly OLAC/LAC, being targeted by older males at Westfield Shopping Centre in Stratford a high-level police operation took place. The young person who had been identified from the hub was moved out of borough following a placement breakdown, however, the operation will continue to protect other young people from the perpetrators.

Two OLAC females who were placed in a Redbridge care home were reported to be sexually abused in a property after being plied with alcohol and possibly drugs. The information was shared at the hub and the block of flats where the incident took place was identified, which was known to agencies for anti-social behaviour, possibly cuckooing and drug dealing.

Information was shared with neighbourhood police who increased patrols in the area paying particular attention to older males with younger females. The North East London Sunrise hub (formerly the CSA hub) offered training to the care home staff where the young people were placed. The intelligence that was shared with police resulted in a closure order on the block of flats which means that non residents cannot loiter in the communal areas or attend the property unless visiting a known resident. A family known to social care who reside in the block of flats told their social worker that their quality of life had improved following the closure order due to feeling safer in their home.

### **Physical assaults on young people**

A young person was physically assaulted at a property in Chigwell that was known for being attended by a number of missing OLAC and LAC. A representative from the hub attended a complex strategy meeting about the address hosted by a placing borough, the information shared led to a closure order being obtained by the police and the address being highlighted as a concern for the Redbridge CLA team.

Lots of incidents have taken place in Barkingside High Street, including stabbings and fights, therefore, the hub secured funding from the serious youth violence reduction unit to deliver assertive outreach in Barkingside. Lifeline carried out work with young people over the summer in Barkingside High Street and continue to patrol the area twice a week. Box Up began patrols in the area in quarter 3.

There is now a patrol on Barkingside High Street every week day:

Monday – Detached Team

Tuesday – Lifeline

Wednesday – Box Up

Thursday – Lifeline

Friday – Box Up

Since the increased presence of patrols on Barkingside High Street there has been a marked decrease in young people spending time in the area and there haven't been any incidents of concern.

Safer Schools Officers facilitated "Safety Week" to all year 7s in the first school term. Several partners from the intel hub contributed to the Junior Citizens event in October, which targeted year 6 students and focused on issues linked to contextual safeguarding in a proactive preventative way.

Other assaults that have taken place in Redbridge have been reviewed by the hub. Direct contact with places of education and young people themselves has been made to reduce the risk of retaliation. Junior Fit have put on sessions focusing on bullying and regulating emotions for students. Safer Schools Officers have engaged schools in conversations to explore how they respond to intelligence they receive and how this information is shared with other agencies.

Weapon sweeps have been arranged with the support of the ASB team, street cleaning and the Park Guard of any areas where intelligence has been shared that young people could be hiding weapons for later use. CCTV coverage has been increased in hot spot areas, this has been made possible with the evidence presented of concerns from different agencies collated at the hub.

### **Gang Activity**

In September, a detached youth worker reported to the hub that young people were reporting not feeling safe in Ilford Town Centre. It was thought that adults approaching young people belonged to three different gangs who were all dealing drugs in the vicinity of the Kenneth More Theatre.

Members of the hub identified cases of young people who can come to attention in that area, allowing soft intelligence to be built identifying potential gang/groups functioning in the area, which was shared at the location strategy meeting, chaired by community safety.

The police responded to this intelligence by creating Operation Chanion, which increased police patrols in the area, had temporary CCTV installed and authorisation of section 35 dispersal orders implemented in Ilford Town Centre on more than one occasion.

Operation Chanion ended in October and the results were:

- 22 Arrests
- 41 Pieces of ASB legislation used, including PSPO tickets and Anti-social warning letters.
- 4 individuals being given Community protection Warnings
- 3 People being given community protection notices with conditions.
- 10 positive street disposals, community resolutions / PNDS or PCRS.
- 82 stop and searches.
- Multiple intelligence reports
- 4 EBIKEs seized and the riders processed.

JFIT set up drop-in sessions once a week in the area for young people to attend. There was a huge decrease in activity in the area, however, there were reports of people previously being by the theatre spending time in an alleyway in Winston Way. This area was patrolled by the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

A young person who has been expelled after robbing a fellow student and has now joined the RAP is affiliated with a local gang, he has formed friendships with other students who have issues with the school he was expelled from and this caused concerns that there could be retaliation. Safer Neighbourhoods completed a weapon sweep and Safer Schools increased their presence at the school. A mapping officer from EXIIT has contacted Snap Chat to make them aware of the concerns around a group chat that has been set up sharing diss videos. Box Up patrols were sent images of the schools uniform so they can be aware if any students are in Barkingside High Street as this is not near the school.

In March there were a large number of young people in custody over a weekend for various offences including robbery of a large amount of cash, a stabbing by a machete and another who was hit by a car. Two of the young people are associates of a high level member of Drillford. During the following week an 18 year old who has been linked to the Leyton Boys was stabbed in the borough.

There is a leadership challenge within Drillford and this is causing friction with other local gangs.

All information, including a consolidated map has been collated and will be shared at a meeting in April with police.

### **Drug Dealing and County Lines**

During the year the hub has identified several Redbridge young people being arrested in Suffolk and the south coast. There have been some reports of young people being noticed with high value items and cash. Information has been shared with Operation Orachi which is actively tackling the closure of county lines.

Box up have briefed their teams about areas to patrol in Redbridge where drug dealing is suspected. Park Guard have carried out regular sweeps of their areas to locate any drugs and drug paraphernalia and the ASB team have created links in areas between interested parties to share information. The Engagement Hub has been utilised to do some preventative work.

A number of reports were made about drug dealing and cuckooing taking place at a property, extra security has been put in around the address, support services have been put in to assist the residents including NIA and Reach Out, the cadets have cleaned the area up and consideration will be given to who is placed at the address to ensure other vulnerable residents are not exploited. This will lead to the placement having a nice environment and being a productive and supportive place. One suspect was identified through sharing information and arrested in Slough at another cuckooed address and has links with a county line.

Intelligence received through the hub has continued to be passed on to Op Orachi, Op Raptor and shared with police forces and local authorities around the country, members of the hub have attended complex meetings involving all agencies. New county lines have been identified which have links to local gangs and following shared information, a case was presented to housing requesting a young person who has links with Drillford to be moved from their placement in the town centre due to the activity taking place. A county line has been taken down by Op Orachi and Box Up have been working with a couple of young people who had previously been involved in gangs.

Police have said that all the information that has been passed over to them has helped them safeguard young people and get intelligence on the adults involved to be able to charge them.

## **Drug Use**

Two separate referrals in relation to young people were received into MASH where they were meeting an unknown male at train stations to purchase edibles and then becoming unwell. The intelligence hub was unable to find a connection between cases. However, it learnt a number of young people were found at Chadwell Heath Academy. The school were offered drug awareness sessions by BeWise, community training on 'Take Action – Stay Safe' by Junior Fit (JFIT). School nursing were also made aware of the fad and asked to report back any future incidents to the meeting.

Operation Nightingale was put in place by police in response to concerns of drug use and anti-social behaviour in the Gants Hill area in the second quarter of the year. The hub shared with police intelligence it had received linked to Albanian young people meeting in the area and an unconfirmed allegation they were being targeted by a network who based themselves in a café within the region of the operation. Operation Nightingale saw extra patrols taking place twice a week in Gants Hill between 5pm and 2am. Following the first patrol in July there were 6 stop

and searches, 1 arrest, 6 ASB interventions, 1 TOR as well as business and community engagements.

In January there were reports about children as young as 11 years old taking drugs including crystal meth, MDMA and a herb from South America. Need To Know documents were completed and the information was shared with senior leadership and presented at Strategic MASCE. Via will be delivering training for practitioners in relation to substance misuse in young people.

Drug activity had been reported taking place in an HMO in Chapel Lane that temporarily houses vulnerable adults, following reports of this, the two residents who were involved were evicted and work took place with stakeholders to secure the property. No children lived in the property. Concerns about drug dealing behind Iceland in Chapel Road were raised, this issue was raised at Strategic MASCE. The area has been made more secure with metal gates and CCTV coverage.

THC vapes were reported to being used at and around a special provision school and another school that contained a liquid called spice which is a cheap and highly addictive drug. Information was shared with police, health, Via, Be Heard as One and Operational MASCE regarding the potential rise of stronger drug use by young people. Via have shared that the liquid is THC cut with another substance (vitamin E acetate) and that spice isn't an issue in the borough. Information will be shared with hospitals at a weekly meeting and any information gained will be reported back to the hub.

The special provision school have reported that the concerns around this drug were worse last term, however, it has been raised with all professionals that any drug use in young people should be reported and not normalised. The school have a zero tolerance policy to drugs and students are searched on entry.

## **Care Homes**

Numerous ASB concerns surrounding a care home in Redbridge had been escalated to a local councillor by residents, since the beginning of June 2023. The semi-independent care home was not regulated (nor required to be). A number of partners from the hub liaised and undertook visits to the home including the ASB Team, neighbourhood policing and the OLAC Project Manager, the intelligence was shared at the meeting and raised concerns about some of the internal policies the care home had in place.

Redbridge proactively moved children placed in the home and the OLAC Project manager liaised with the London boroughs who had placed children sharing concerns that had been raised. In August the hub learnt, the reports from residents had reduced and of the reports made, it was for minor issues. The youth engagement officer has since tried to engage the care home provider and offered to support future residents.

A stabbing occurred outside a property in the town centre between two adults, however, it brought to light a young person placed at the address by another borough. The property was unregistered and the management not engaging, information was shared with licencing who

issued Community Protection Notices and will issue fines for any breaches. Following work by the EXIIT team, ASB Team and Supported Independent Services the placing borough is no longer housing young people at the address.

Another care home has young people placed by a number of boroughs, following a referral regarding a young person where there were different accounts of the incident that took place, Leaving Care were asked to put in more support and the Safer Neighbourhood Team were made aware of the property. The placement has support workers attending but there is not a permanent adult presence. The Youth Engagement Team have attended the property but didn't enter, they are currently awaiting management to contact them to discuss the concerns.

VAWG are compiling a list of all residents in placements from Leaving Care. Risk assessments are being completed on all placements in the borough, however, this is a long process and hasn't been completed yet.

A spate of robberies of students from a school took place during the latter part of the quarter, the names of the suspects were identified to be placed in a care home nearby. One of the suspects had made a drill video on TikTok boasting about robbing people, he was arrested and on bail, he has now been moved to another placement. There are other young people placed in the care home who are believed to be involved but there is not enough police evidence for arrests. The Youth Engagement Team have attended the property and will continue to do so weekly, they explained the process around reporting young people missing to the workers.

Meetings are being held with placing boroughs to share concerns and hold them to account of how they are managing the risk of placing young people in care homes. Safer Schools Officers are attending the school to offer support. JFIT have offered sessions to both the victims of the robbery and the wider student body.

### **TikTok video**

The intelligence hub discussed a group of young people attending schools and filming TikTok videos. The videos were largely of non-violent acts but were being used to gain an online following. For example, young people entering school grounds and throwing crisps at teachers. However, concerns escalated when a new member of group was reported to have shown a knife to a teacher.

It was agreed at the intelligence hub that some early help support was required to prevent this escalating further. The meeting shared intelligence from all partners about what was known in relation to the group, which services were involved and how they could be diverted to positive activity and away from future arrests.

Initially Junior FIT (JFIT) could not get consent from the families to engage. The intelligence hub then tasked the school with hosting a meeting with the parents, safer schools officer and Junior FIT. Unfortunately not all of the students were accessing education, therefore Junior Fit and the Safer Schools Officer undertook joint home visits to the family, safer schools officer served the young people with a warning and strong advice to to engage in the provision. The



young people and their families agreed to work with Junior Fit who are focussing on nurturing their interests in media.

### **National Child Exploitation Day**

National Child Exploitation Day took place on 18<sup>th</sup> March. The members of the hub printed posters for their workplaces and raised awareness within their teams and organisations. CSW and FIT presented Safety Training Workshops and conducted a bake sale. The Child Protection Team completed pledges that were written on their hands and put together a collage. EXIT and Box Up ran a session which was attended by uniformed police for all the young people who attended the gym on 21<sup>st</sup> March to discuss exploitation and how it can affect them, it was well received and the young people were appreciative of the session.

### **Israel/Palestine Conflict**

Referrals were made from schools and an officer reviewed them before forwarding on to Prevent. A young person was assaulted and attended A&E. A staff member reported a hate crime to Prevent following abuse received outside of a mosque and a police partnership message was sent out. A further referral was made to Prevent and a LADO investigation took place to manage the safeguarding concerns.

### **Partnerships**

- Lifeline
- Box Up
- Multi-borough meeting has taken place with a number of other London Boroughs with more to be invited to future meetings to share information.
- Junior Citizen Roadshow
- ParentZone
- Problem Solving meeting is held weekly to share information and intelligence
- Street Doctors
- Leyton Orient (Youth Unity and KICKs)
- Via
- Be Heard As One
- BeWise

### **Attendance**

48 meetings took place during 2023/24. The meeting relocated at the beginning of June to help facilitate better attendance from the long term social work teams, YOS and address challenges with parking facilities at Lynton House.

The meeting has been well represented by Childrens Services, with MASH, Exploited Children's Team (ECT), Family Intervention Team (FIT) and Junior FIT (JFIT), Children Looked After (CLA) and Leaving Care attending regularly.



There is good representation from Safer Schools Officers, Community Policing, ASB Police, ASB Co-ordinator, Health and the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

Box Up are regularly attending the meetings to share updates about their patrols in Barkingside and engagement with young people in the borough.

CCTV and the Probation service will attend if their intelligence is required or to take forward a particular issue or action.

Education Welfare and Housing do not attend the meeting and we have not had any representation from these areas during the year.

This is a huge gap that needs to be addressed for the intelligence hub to continue to have the impact anticipated. This has an impact due to:

- Soft intelligence directly from schools and housing who have long standing knowledge of individuals.
- Voices of children
- The missing insights that can be shared when discussing cases.
- The chair's ability to task the agencies concerned to act.

There are occasional attendances by a school representative to observe meetings. A mapping researcher from EXIIT holds meetings with a number of schools and is continuing to engage the DSLs on a regular basis, in order to bring and feedback intelligence from our secondary schools.

Sharon Springer  
Youth Intelligence Hub Chair  
April 2024