Reading Local Policing Area:

Public health approach to early intervention.


Introduction

Around 80% of Prolific Offenders receive their first sanction as a child. In their first week following release from prison men are 28 times more likely to die from drug related causes than the general population, rising to 69 times more likely for women. A single prolific offender will cost society between £1.3 – £2.3 million and having a head injury increases the risk of offending by at least 50%; 60% of adults and 30% of young people in prison have a history of head injury.

There is clearly a case for closer collaboration between system partners and work has begun to pull this together. The Policing, Health and Social Care Consensus was published in February 2018 and is supported by a report from the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing, Work continues at a national level to embed the consensus into everyday activities. The Policing Vision 2025 (p.7) contains a clear direction of travel to work across sectors and in stronger partnerships:

By 2025 local policing will be aligned, and where appropriate integrated, with other local public services to improve outcomes for citizens and protect the vulnerable.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring policing is increasingly focused on proactive preventative activity as opposed to reacting to crime once it has occurred.
- Working with our partners to help resolve the issues of individuals who cause recurring problems and crime in the communities they live in; reducing the requirements that these people place on the public sector and policing specifically. (...)
- Working with partners to foster a culture shift around the delivery of public protection, away from a single organisation mentality towards budgeting and service provision based on a whole-system approach, pooling funds where appropriate to achieve common aims for the benefit of the public.
- Adopting a place-based approach with more multi-agency teams or hubs to tackle community issues requiring early intervention across a range of agencies and organisations. Moving beyond single-service based practice to "whole place"
approach to commissioning preventative services in response to assessments of threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. [emphasis added].

Background

The Reading Local Policing Area (LPA) has, over the last three years, been working towards a trauma-informed\(^vii\) policing model to support its focus on early intervention\(^ix\) as part of a public health approach\(^i\) to reducing crime and building stronger, more resilient communities.

Reading LPA’s focus on trauma-informed practice started with the development of Operation Encounter, a response to violent drug dealers taking over vulnerable adults’ homes to deal from (a practice known as Cuckooing\(^x\)). The victims were always exploited and sometimes subject to modern slavery\(^xii\). The police led a multi-agency partnership to prevent this form of exploitation and the success led to Operation Eraser, a further multi-agency partnership to combat street-level dealing from criminals travelling into Reading from surrounding cities (known as County Lines\(^xiii\) dealers).

Successes in working in these partnerships continues to this day and as our trauma-informed approach has developed many of the suspects have had their adversity identified in partnership strategy meetings and have been diverted into non-custodial programmes.

The national Troubled Families Programme\(^xiv\) (TF), and a focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences\(^xv\) (ACE), added further emphasis on transformation in partnership working\(^xvi\). Emerging local analysis has shown that two-thirds of the young people dealt with in our County Lines operations have four or more ACEs\(^xvi\).

As partnership working evolved, so did the nature of community engagement and problem-solving. Reading LPA began to build capacity within its staff to develop skills and continued to use the public health tenets of empirical and experimental practice\(^xviii\), in one such example they adopted a World Café approach\(^ix\) to hosting large group dialogue with neighbourhood communities and partner organisations\(^xx\). This required a re-think of problem-oriented policing and the methods used to work with communities and organisations in a strengths-based methodology (Asset Based Community Development). To encourage inter-personal communications a Thinking Environment programme\(^xxi\) was introduced and provided officers and staff with enhanced skills in active listening and decision-making, this was offered to others and partially rolled-out to local government partners.
Operation **Enrich**, evolved from a front-line officer’s problem-solving approach to recidivism, it pulled together a range of partners and aimed to support and divert vulnerable women from domestic abuse, exploitation, and criminality. As the partnership embedded this became The Enrich Programme and during its second year this programme won the 2017 *Howard League for Penal Reform* award for innovation in community diversion; against strong competition from across the UK. The LPA Commander has since been invited to be a judge for the 2018 awards.

As co-production of services became more routine Operation **Epping**, an investigation into peer-on-peer youth sexual violence, was raised into a joint Senior Management Group (SMG), with a wide range of partners from community organisations and across health, education, and social care represented in a decision-making panel that could drive business and unblock systems. This senior group was supported by an Operational Board of multi-agency frontline supervisors tasked with getting things done.

Epping gave a roadmap for seamless and inclusive co-creation of service pathways and has become the default partnership model for Reading. This led to Operation **Educate**, investigating youth violence and **County Lines** issues across the policing area, with a joint frontline team taking a trauma-informed approach to those young people identified as suspects or victims. The operational police section of this team is part of the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) and takes on specialist liaison (antisocial behaviour, mental health, schools, etc.), and case-management as well as an enforcement and protection role. The MAST team works with drug and alcohol, mental health, social work, youth, and homelessness outreach staff in a coordinated approach to the complex issues they encounter.

When staff teams need to become mobile, Operation **Enormous** brings them together in a double-decker bus provided through a crime reduction partnership with **Reading Buses**, the Reading-based British Army 7-Rifles Regiment provides medics to augment the team.

**Co-ownership**

To support this work a cross-sector collaboration (Think Tank/Ginger Group) under Operation **Evert** has been created, this is known locally as **Joining the Dots** and is a strategic group of public organisations championed by the LPA Commander, the CEO of the Local Authority, and the CEO of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, with support from private organisations, community and faith organisations, and academics - all focused on ensuring that services make the most of their resources and leverage further resources where possible: reducing demand for public services and reducing the cost of delivery. A smaller team of representatives from these sectors, together with specialist skills volunteers, meets weekly to
maintain grip and pace and this team is known as the Portfolio Office. By way of example; three of the central projects being overseen by the members of the Portfolio Office are:

1. The development of a Social Impact Bond (SIB)\textsuperscript{xiv} to support young people\textsuperscript{xxv}.
2. Developing a preventive partnership approach to crisis.
3. Creating accessible partnership data for preventive action across Reading.

The learning from these national committees is being fed back into frontline practice and is being augmented by experiences from Join the Dots partners to create opportunities for innovation. This remainder of this document looks to provide a brief outline of some of these innovative activities, many of which focus on providing positive experiences and understanding of Adverse Childhood Experience assessment to guide a trauma informed response to crime and vulnerability. This framework allows partners to have a shared understanding of the expression “Early Intervention”. For the Police this term means a fast time response, prevention, and diversion activities to improve outcomes before they get out-of-hand, however for partners this term is often used to describe early years action to support children.

We need to continue to capture the learning from this work to understand the impact on the individual and the organisations, to educate others and influence force and national direction. It is our responsibility to ensure we treat people in a way that they need to thrive, else we risk criminalising people coping with the impact of trauma on their lives.

**Landscaping Reading**

Scanning the LPA’s preventive activities provides an understanding of who was involved and provides a map of the available assets. Staff and service users were spoken with to understand any change of thinking processes and to understand the difference this approach made to them. This informs the current direction and will support future plans.

**Troubled Families Programme – An opportunity to transform frontline services**

Reading has 65,000 households and around 1,300 of them are worked with in the Troubled Families (TF) programme. Reading area has focused on neglected children as the entry point to the programme. The TF Management Board is chaired by the LPA Commander. Nationally some areas have set up temporary TF teams, however the funding comes to an end in 2020. Reading have focused on changing how the system works, transforming the Early Help offer
into an integrated ecosystem to ensure a future for a whole-family approach and family-centred crime prevention activities.

Since November 2017 Reading Borough Council have operated a “single point of access” into Early Help and wider Children’s Services. Previously, professionals referred individuals to either Early Help or Children’s Services and if they referred them to the wrong team there was built-in risk and delay whilst they were re-referred. Now with only one entry point the staff can ensure the right teams are allocated the right families to work with, enabling a quick response whilst reducing risk.

The TF Integrated Dataset helps frontline workers consider the best way to support a family. Those data are drawn from, amongst others; the police, DWP, education, drug and alcohol teams, health and social care. To make this data accessible and useful a display function called Family View is being developed to inform frontline decisions and tactics of most value. A more strategic view of the data will provide an understanding of the top pathways into difficulties, what the common sequences are, and how Reading partners can work together to prevent them (this is a Joining the Dots Project, supported by academic researcher partners).

**Operation Enrich – diverting women from custody.**

In 2015 an idea emerged and a plan was instigated to divert repeat incidents to the police concerning a small cohort of vulnerable women. This was developed by an officer who could see the lack of support for women and a limited role for the police beyond initial safeguarding or prosecution. The programme has developed over the last three year and Enrich currently supports 32 women. The Enrich approach has been acknowledged as transformational, with the delivery partner, Alana House, winning a national award from the Howard League for Penal Reform. An example of the success can be measured by a member of the initial cohort. She was arrested 22 times in the six months before the scheme, she has been supported with housing, counselling and courses such as self-esteem development. She has not been arrested since. The improvement in this woman’s quality of life is significant and the reduction in demand is evident. In summary the first year of the programme made the following difference:

- All women reported increased self-esteem and self-confidence
- All women have seen a reduction in their calls on police time
- All women have maintained non-offending status during the project
- Increased participation in support and accessing of mainstream services
- Some women have been supported into safe accommodation
• Some women have been supported to improve their financial situation
• Improved partnership working between agencies
• Some women accessing further education
• Some women accessing mental health support, including the in-house counselling.
• Two women supported into work

**Multi Agency Support Team – championing the trauma informed approach**

Child drugs exploitation is a national issue with roots in organised criminality. The police have to work in partnership to try and tackle to various aspects of this complex problem. Traditional policing around the pursuit of the drug dealers have to be augmented with more emphasis on early intervention and diversion. Understanding why children are dealing drugs and carrying knives is pivotal to coordinating an effective response.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are essentially key indicators of childhood trauma that fundamentally affect the behaviour, wellbeing and prospects of countless children. Although some trauma is easy to identify, such as parental separation or physical abuse, some children are exposed to incredible and unimaginable risk as part of drug dealing gangs.

County Lines use child criminal exploitation to move drugs and money. It is a major issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons\textsuperscript{xxviii}. Violence, incidents of kidnap, use of weapons and ruthless debt control are common themes against the children, exposure to this gang exploitation has the potential to generate emotional and physical harm\textsuperscript{xxix}.

Identifying signs of the above trauma is a challenge for all professionals charged with protecting our children. In Reading, a team was set up to identify children who were being criminally exploited or at risk of exploitation. It pulls together information from schools, education, social care, health, and criminal justice to try and put together a full picture of risk and opportunity around the children.
Trauma informed policing plays a big part in achieving some of the goals. Officers in the team relentlessly pursue the organised criminals bringing harm to our communities in order to stabilise the environment and will also look to support and wrap around those who need diversion and rehabilitation.
Youth provisions have been cut nationally and work is underway with projects like the Boxing Clever clubs\textsuperscript{xxx} to provide some targeted mentoring for a cohort of hard to reach children. Reading police placed a bid to secure funding for a year from Get Berkshire Active and funding is now being sought to keep the project running long-term. Working with our Liaison and Diversion partners from the NHS\textsuperscript{xxxi} means that interventions can be provided at the earliest possible stages. Working closely with the Youth Justice Board\textsuperscript{xxxi} and partners (the LPA Commander Chairs the Youth Justice Partnership Board for Reading) an informal Community Court is being established to provide further diversionary options (see below).

Long lasting activity around positive prevention and disruption means that the intelligence picture around County Lines increases, data can be used to accurately map the level of offending and identify individuals who are causing the most harm and also those who need the most help. Although in the early stages, the team have seen some excellent results in terms of convictions as well as really incredible stories around rehabilitation. We hope we can continue to make a difference in young people’s lives in Reading.

What next:

- Align our partners – True collaboration and information sharing
- Increase the knowledge of our staff and partners, identify best practice and consistently apply it
- Mirror units in our partner organisations – putting the best resources together
- Evaluate the response – Seek constant improvement
- Significantly increase our youth provisions around prevention and diversion
- Early Intervention – Engaging a holistic approach starting from as early as possible

**Operation Educate: working together to reduce vulnerability**

“Educate” began as a police operation looking into violence between young people in Reading and then became a joint Senior Management Group (SMG) with other agencies aiming to bring information and resources together to tackle the emerging issues across the criminal justice, community, health, education, and social care system – in other words, taking a public health approach to prevention. The way we all handle missing episodes, reports of
exploitation, and incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour have been examined and integrated models developed to improve the effectiveness of our “One Reading” approach. This project is now moving into the Local Children’s Safeguarding Board governance framework to take a wider approach, gaining momentum form Pan-Berkshire groups.

County Lines: links to the rough sleeping and street population

The LPA Neighbourhood team patrolling the town centre became aware of the presence of several County Lines dealers from departure locations across the country including; Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham, and London. They developed a problem-solving objective to identify and pursue through the courts the individuals causing most harm to the local community, disrupting their criminal business and preventing them from establishing themselves in Reading. Stage one focussed on stabilising the situation by pursuing those involved in County Lines. Those who were identified as substance dependant were identified with follow up visits to present opportunities for the individuals to start drug rehabilitation with the Reading substance misuse team (IRIS). Several individuals were homeless and were funding their habit through criminal activity or begging. Wrap around care was also provided to individuals on a bespoke basis, charities including Launchpad (housing for vulnerable people) and St. Mungo’s (rough sleeping outreach) supported individuals with benefit claims and housing applications. These individuals were dealt with primarily as victims rather than offenders for possession of illegal drugs, although criminal activity, where identified, was dealt with appropriately. By focusing on evidence-based Neighbourhood Policing tactics and sound problem-solving methodology an approach was taken, working together with others, which has seen us target the 4-P’s of threat and vulnerability reduction toward a sustainable Recovery stage of embedded neighbourhood care.

Community Court: diverting young people from crime

The vision for the Reading Community Court is to divert children from the criminal justice system and present them with a positive influence to help prevent further offending behaviour. The Community Court is a voluntary process, with the aim to have the maximum input on young first time offenders to avoid them entering the criminal justice system, it is hosted at Brock Barracks, Reading. 18 successful candidates out of 40 applicants are now trained in the court process. They are all young volunteers (15-25 year old) from, amongst others; Reading University law students, National Citizen Service students, Police Cadets, with some from local schools. The process follows the court process with the advocate presenting the case to the panel who agree on the resolution. The process aims for the young person to face up to the reality of what they have done in front of their peers with a bespoke outcome for each
case. This may include educational support or work experience opportunities. The volunteers received training sessions, which are scenario based, from a range of government, private business, and charity organisations, including; 7-Rifles, Reading Youth Offending Services, NHS Liaison and Diversion, Oracle shopping centre, Kicks (Reading FC Community Trust), The Annex Project (trauma advisers) and Magistrates Courts officers.

**Police Cadets: engaging with young people**

Reading LPA run a Volunteer Police Cadets scheme to empower young people to lead social action in their communities.

“The purpose of the VPC is not to recruit police officers of the future, but to encourage the spirit of adventure and good citizenship amongst its members. We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive regardless of his or her background. We encourage young people from all backgrounds to join the VPC, including those who may be vulnerable to the influences of crime and social exclusion.

The Aims of the VPC are:-

- To promote a practical understanding of policing amongst all young people.
- To encourage the spirit of adventure and good citizenship.
- To support local policing priorities through volunteering and give young people a chance to be heard.
- To inspire young people to participate positively in their communities.

The VPC has a diverse group of young people aged 13 - 18 years, who have a joint desire to support their local communities and gain a practical understanding of policing. Units normally meet at a local school or community venue once a week and are led by police officers, police staff and volunteers. In addition, cadets develop their leadership skills by undertaking challenging social action projects in their communities with an expectation that they will volunteer 3 hours a month. Examples of these projects include supporting older members of the community understand cyber-crime, fund raising for charities, and road safety campaigns.”

**Op Enormous/First Stop: flexible frontline partnerships**

Reading has a vibrant nightlife which creates an increase in footfall from visitors from 9:00 pm until at least 5:00 am, to improve safety for all visitors the idea of early engagement and diversion joint schemes has evolved and now makes a considerable contribution to a safe
nigh time economy that has been recognised with Purple Flag status. Op Enormous - working with our crime reduction partners, including Reading Buses, and First Stop supported by South Central Ambulance Service advanced paramedics and Reading Street Pastors

The concept is a simple one, bring partners together. The front-line tactics and partners involved have also evolved. Key benefits: -

- Local authority early intervention and identification of licensing breaches preventing crime and disorder.
- Enforcement of double parking blocking exit routes from the town centre allowing free flowing traffic.
- Joint tackling of anti-social behaviour from moped users.
- Police early arrival at incidents before they escalate preventing crime.
- Joint engagement with local Street Pastors and RAHAB (charity supporting women from exploitation).
- Joint patrols with 7-Rifles Army medics who provide accredited first aid in an emergency responder capacity. Advanced medical aid available at the First Stop town centre hub.
- Partnership engagement for more traditional support to the community. Such as a street in Reading where it was believed several women were living and working in prostitution. The bus parked in the street and staff from multiple agencies were present to provide support to the women regarding their rights and to provide support where needed.

**Mini Police: engaging with schools, young people, and families**

Mini-Police was initially set up in Durham Constabulary in 2011 as a fun and active volunteering opportunity for 9-11 year-old children. Mini-Police was set up to provide young people the opportunity to gain an interest in the police, and subsequently support force priorities, through participation in community engagement events. Children who become part of the programme help to tackle local issues as highlighted by their own communities. By assisting the police service and partner agencies, they can also carry that ownership of responding to local issues and take pride in the community they live in.

The Mini Police launched in Reading in the summer term 2017. The project addresses a large number of priorities for the police and wider community. Three schools were selected due to the impact the police could have on the most diverse communities. Aims include:
• To ensure children’s first contact with the police as an organisation is positive and exciting and has the ability to shape their attitude in the future.
• Increase trust between officers and families within the community, as well as directly with the teachers/school and the young people themselves.
• Strengthen the link between the police, schools, and local area.
• Offer pupils a unique and extra-curricular activity without any additional budgeting for the school.
• To reach different areas of society, particularly areas which have been traditionally difficult to reach, including those with social deprivation, low employment, high crime and those which are culturally diverse.

Early research with the University of Reading is showing good results in support of neighbourhood policing principles, e.g.

the quantitative data and the responses from the Mini-Police suggests those involved in the programme are less likely to see the police as scary or aggressive, thus improving perceptions of the police (research question #1). The qualitative data suggests this is largely due to positive contact with police officers and seeing another side of policing.

Next steps:

1. Working with a wide range of partners to create a Trauma Informed Community in support of our aims; as ambassadors for our approach to community development, youth engagement, family and community coaching.
2. Working with the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board to build an ACE Panel as a subgroup to the full Board. This supports our aim to create a trauma pathway for self-healing communities.
3. Supporting national working groups to encourage a system wide build-out of capabilities to take a Public Health approach to crime.
Commander, Reading Local Policing Area


Trauma-informed practice takes into account the varied responses to trauma that can bring people into contact with the police and prompts frontline practitioners to ask ‘what happened to you’ rather than ‘what’s wrong with you’. It also takes into account the impact that dealing with trauma has on frontline practitioners and therefore creates an emphasis on workforce wellbeing and self-care; see https://gucchdtacenter.georgetown.edu/TraumaInformedCare/TraumaInformedCare_postcard.pdf for more information [Accessed 3 June 2018].

Early intervention is about taking action as soon as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become more difficult to reverse. http://www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention/ [Accessed 2 June 2018].


For more information see: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery [Accessed 20 July 2018]


Partnership working is shorthand for working with others from all sectors to reduce crime and vulnerability, improve life chances, promoting safer neighbourhoods and community cohesion.

Research suggests that people with 4 or more aces are 7 times more likely to be involved in recent violence, and 11 times more likely to be incarcerated. 64% of those in contact with substance misuse services and 50% of people affected by homelessness had 4+ ACEs. See: https://www1.bps.org.uk/system/files/user-files/Division%20of%20Clinical%20Psychology/public/ACES%20and%20Social%20Injustice%20DCP%20SW.pdf [Accessed 20 July 2018]


See video of one such event here https://youtu.be/OqDGVK6dHDA [Accessed 3 June 2018]

For more on Nancy Klein’s methods see http://www.timetothink.com/thinking-environment/ [Accessed 2 June 2018]

See http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/7705/item8-BudgetMonitoring/pdf/item8-BudgetMonitoring.pdf for an indication of the preventive impact of Epping [Accessed 3 June 2018]
For a video of a celebratory Joining the Dots event see https://youtu.be/LA90_t5zNkw [Accessed 3 June 2018]

Working with the University of Oxford see https://golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk/basics/introduction-social-impact-bonds/ for more information on SIBs [Accessed 3 June 2018]


For background information see: https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/health-just/ liaison-and-diversion/about/ [Accessed 16 July 2018]

For a YJB Briefing on Trauma Informed Practice see: https://yjresourcehub.uk/our-community/resources-for-sharing/item/495-trauma-informed-youth-justice-briefing.html [Accessed 21 July 2018]


See the UK Serious and Organised Crime Strategy summary for more information on the 4-P’s here:

See: https://vpc.police.uk/ for additional information on cadets [Accessed 16 July 2018]