



APPENDIX THREE

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Breaking the Cycle project was established to work with young people who were involved in or at risk of:

Serious organised crime, urban street gangs, county lines, those who were criminally exploited and/or exploiting others or who had higher than a yellow anti-social behaviour sanction, and those who have links to drugs, and weapons (either as users, found in possession of or suppliers).

More recently the project has added “missing” to its criteria, recognising that early indicators of exploitation can often be unexplained or out of character missing incidents.

The project is intensive and intelligence led, providing interventions which start where ever that young person is at. Our overall aim is one of harm reduction, protection and “*Breaking the Cycle*” of criminality. This means that work often starts on street based locations and through detached work sessions, working with referred young people and their peer group.

We record the push and pull factors for each individual in an attempt to get upstream of the driving factors of the exploitation we were seeing. We know how strong the some of the drivers are, and with a large proportion of our youth population living in relative poverty it can be very enticing to earn “easy” money through becoming involved in the drugs trade and exploitative arrangements. What we also know is that this comes at a cost greater than any young person ever originally imagined. We see young people who are on the fringes of drug misuse, becoming criminally groomed to supply locally, acquiring a drug debt and then taking greater risks to repay this debt, often leading and including county line activity beyond Bradford and West Yorkshire. We also see the significant impact this has on their families and friendship groups.

Breaking the Cycle Project was established in January 2019 in response to identified needs, since this date we have had 853 young people referred to the project to date. Of those referred 39% were considered to be at risk of or involved in Serious Organised Crime, 46% in Urban Street Gangs, 41% in County Line activity, 68% Criminally groomed or grooming others, 41% with higher than yellow Anti-Social Behaviour sanctions, 26% with links to weapons and 41% with links to drugs.

In many cases these young people present behaviours that are linked to early childhood trauma and this presentation often takes them further away from other support services like education. Our project has previously secured additional funding to bring 2 Education Safeguarding Officers into the team to work alongside Youth Work Practitioners to really drive the support and challenge to schools and education providers to remove barriers to reengagement in education, recognising the protective factor attendance in education provides, and we work closely with wider Youth Service colleagues providing support for those with poor mental health as part of our “Youth in Mind” work.

Drugs and weapons education is an integral part of our wrap around support, which is provided in a bespoke way to each individual. We currently have a drugs education worker embedded in the team. We have a voluntary relationship, intensively supporting young people from the offset - we build a

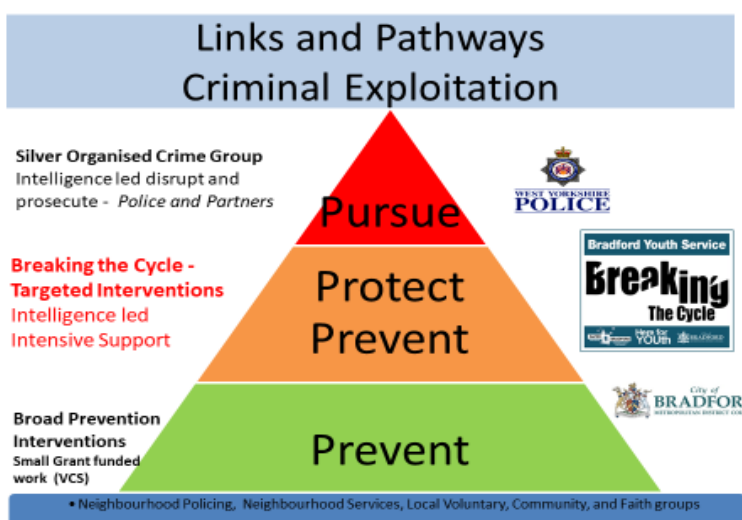
strong and trusted relationships that enables us to critically challenge young people, to layout opportunities to make positive change and to walk with them through those changes.

Every day is a new day and we do not ever give up on a young person, because our experience tells us that we need to be there for every little window of opportunity if we are to make a life changing impact on the young people.

Our work has seen a strong partnership approach to ensuring young people, whilst behaving criminally are also flagged and acknowledged as being exploited children, and that underpinning this we support keeping young people safe. Our work is open ended in that we offer more than a prescribed number of hours or weeks per intervention – it takes what it takes, we work at the pace of the young person concerned, supporting them to make informed choices. Where we have significant safeguarding concerns we will work with colleagues from Police and Social Care services to manage the risks and to ensure safety of the young person and those around them. We know from our experience that if we walk alongside them it is possible to influence and change their lifestyle. We have a strong track record of being able to “find” missing young people, we utilise our strong networks and reputation in communities and with young people, and their families to help us in this quest.

We are a project that has a committed full time youth work qualified workforce, we have a number of part time youth work staff members and those with lived experience. We have strong links to support services around domestic abuse, drugs misuse and education and will actively work with colleagues from these services to take them to the door of the young person.

We are committed to increasing the knowledge and skills of other professionals who work with young people to support this area of work and have undertaken training within children’s homes, supported living accommodations and further education colleges to ensure others are sighted on the indicators of criminal grooming. We are active campaigners in raising awareness and of disrupting those who exploit our young people. We work closely with the Silver Serious Organised Crime Partnership are currently supporting operations with British Transport Police and with Taxi Licencing to take steps to disrupt county line transportation of young people from our district.



District Triangle of intervention and disruption and help to “BREAK THE CYCLE”

We also know that the journey is often very hard for our young people, addictions, poverty and childhood experiences are often drivers, but also when we start a piece of work it is often not the young person who has a desire to change. We know that people who exploit children and young people put in a great deal of effort to this exploitation – we recognise that we have to put in more effort than the exploiter if we are to get ahead of the exploiter alongside filling any void with viable alternatives.

We are very successful in engaging difficult and harder to reach young people. 92% of those referred engage with us positively - we have to work really hard at this, maintaining voluntary contact, but with a bespoke commitment to each young person we can and do reduce their harm and exploitation.