

## **Definition**

There is no national definition of serious youth violence. This protocol applies whenever young people may be involved in one or more of the following, particularly where there is reason to believe they have been exploited:

- Possession of a knife or other weapon regardless of any intention to use it;
- Threat of violence with a weapon;
- Violence where weapons are used;
- Any violence where young people may have been groomed, adversely influenced or coerced by others;
- Violence committed by groups of young people or young people and adults;
- Violence perpetrated against repeat and/or vulnerable victims;
- Possession of drugs with intent to supply;
- Robbery;
- Homicide.

## **Key principles**

- Young people's safety is paramount;
- Those involved are to be treated as children first and offenders second;
- Many who behave violently have themselves been victims and may continue to be victims. Some are traumatised and work with them needs to take full account of this;
- All screening and assessment of children will take full account of what they say and be based on known risk and protective factors;
- It is important to hear the voice of the child more widely. Some have told us this sort of crime is under-reported. Some are frightened and want more information about how to report knife crime and how to keep themselves safe – we will help them to access this;
- Agencies addressing this issue need to focus on disrupting the adults behind it;
- We are developing a more contextual approach to safeguarding and recognise that the risk of serious violence increases in certain geographical, social or other contexts. Planning needs to take full account of this;
- Parents/carers may feel out of their depth and would benefit from practical information and opportunity to discuss what they can do to help keep their child(ren) safe;
- Staff may be profoundly affected by this issue and need relevant training and regular, reflective Supervision.
- B&NES is an area of relatively low crime and although we know some young people have been involved in serious violence, numbers are low. We are taking a Public Health approach to ensuring the problem does not increase, focusing on the well-being of the whole community.

### **Vulnerabilities:**

The risk and protective factors for involvement in serious violence are very similar to those for criminal exploitation. Early onset of the following risks are a particular concern:

<b>Risk Factors include:</b>	<b>Protective factors include:</b>
Low socio-economic household status and social inequality	Economic stability and recreational and development programmes for children
Neglect and abuse in childhood, domestic abuse and other adverse childhood experiences	Extended family support and good family management
Hyperactivity/ conduct disorder / high daring	Low impulsivity
Friends that engage in violence	Good peer relationships
Involvement in anti-social behaviour	Positive/pro-social attitudes and social skills
Going missing	Gender equality in household
Substance misuse	Positive self-esteem and self-efficacy
Not engaged in education	Academic achievement

### **What should practitioners do?**

If there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the young person or anyone else, call 999.

If the risk is not immediate but still significant, follow usual safeguarding procedures and contact Children and Families Services on 01225 39631. If you have concern about a risk of harm outside usual office hours, call the Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615165

Otherwise, speak to your agency's safeguarding lead and initiate an Early Help Assessment to provide a full picture of the risk and any protective factors. Then make a multi-agency plan with the young person and their parents/carers wherever possible, to address the concerns identified.

The Early Help 'app' provides information about a range of preventative services with experience of working with young people who have been harmed or exploited and are at risk of offending, and with victims of violence. They include Connecting Families, Project 28 substance misuse project, Mentoring Plus, Youth Connect, Compass and the Young Victims' Service.

Future 4 Me works with Care and Custody Leavers, the Youth Offending Service works with young people who have committed an offence and the Adolescent Risk Team work with young people who have been exploited and are at risk of significant harm.