

Understanding Serious Youth Violence and Our Role in Creating Change

Definition and Significance:

Serious youth violence encompasses violent behaviours committed by young people that result in significant harm, injury, or even death. This includes incidents involving weapons such as knives or firearms, gang-related violence, and other forms of criminal activity among adolescents. Addressing serious youth violence is critical for safeguarding communities, protecting young people, and preventing the devastating consequences associated with such behaviour.

The impact of serious youth violence and postcode "gangs" on school attendance can be profound, affecting not only the perpetrators and victims directly involved but also the entire school community.

Here's an overview of the impact that we have experienced at Compass School:

1. Perpetrators:

Decreased Attendance: Perpetrators of serious youth violence may experience irregular attendance due to involvement in criminal activities, including gang-related conflicts or criminal behaviours outside of school hours.

Educational Disengagement: Involvement in violence can lead to disengagement from education, as perpetrators have prioritised gang affiliations or criminal activities over academic pursuits.

2. Victims:

Reduced Attendance: Victims of serious youth violence have missed school due to physical injuries, trauma, or fear of further victimisation. Some have also expressed experiencing psychological distress, impacting their ability to attend regularly.

Emotional Impact: Victims have struggled with their mental health and wellbeing which has affected their academic performance and attendance.

3. Whole School Community:

Fear and Anxiety: The presence of serious youth violence and "postcode gangs" has created (at times) a climate of fear and anxiety within the school community, affecting all stakeholders.

Disruption of Learning Environment: Incidents of violence, whether within the school or its surrounding community, has disrupted the learning environment and has resulted in full and partial lockdowns and revised security measures which has further impacted attendance and educational outcomes.

Negative Stereotyping: Compass School is located in an area associated with gang activity and we have faced negative stereotyping, which can affect pupil morale, parental confidence in the school, and community perceptions of safety.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing: The pervasive influence of violence has undermined the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils, impeding their ability to focus on learning and academic achievement.

Our Contribution to Change:

Partnership Work with Police and Local Authority:

- Collaborate closely with police colleagues, agencies and the Local authority to develop coordinated strategies for preventing and addressing serious youth violence. This partnership ensures a comprehensive approach that leverages resources and expertise from multiple sectors.

Planning Meetings and Response Plans:

- We facilitate and attend regular planning meetings involving stakeholders from education, police, Childrens' Services and community organisations to develop response plans tailored to local needs. These plans outline proactive measures for prevention, early intervention, and support for at-risk young people.

Education and Awareness:

- We implement educational programs within school to raise awareness about the consequences of violence and promote positive conflict resolution skills. By empowering young people with knowledge and alternatives to violence, we can work together to reduce the likelihood of their involvement in Knife crime (or linked behaviours). Organise cultural capital sessions with external providers to engage young people in constructive activities that build skills, confidence, and resilience. These sessions have included workshops, mentoring programs, artistic endeavours and sports activities tailored to the interests and needs of pupils.

Op Spectre (Police Initiative on Tackling Knife Crime):

- We support initiatives like Op Spectre, which focus on tackling knife crime and reducing the availability of weapons in communities. By working in partnership with the police and supporting their efforts, we contribute to creating safer environments for young people.

Parental Engagement:

- We engage parents and carers through targeted efforts, signposting and partnership agency working with the aim of raising awareness about the risks of serious youth violence and providing support and guidance on how to recognise warning signs and intervene effectively.

Addressing serious youth violence requires a multifaceted approach that involves collaboration, prevention, intervention, and support. By working together with partners across sectors, engaging young people and their families, and implementing evidence-based strategies, we can make meaningful strides towards creating safer and more resilient communities for all.