



Violence Affecting Black Boys

How can we work better together to keep our children safe from harm outside their homes?

A local child safeguarding practice review (**LCSPR**, previously known as SCR or serious case review) is a learning exercise that takes place when abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, and a child has died or been seriously harmed. The review is not about blame. It is about improving practice for the future.

This thematic review serves as the LCSPR for the children whose circumstances met the LCSPR criteria.

11 Incidents

2 Boys murdered

12 Other children came to harm

1 ABOUT THIS REVIEW

This review explores the common themes in 11 incidents of violence that led to 14 children, mainly Black boys coming to serious and / or fatal harm between March 2023 and July 2024.

The review aims to understand the circumstances and factors that led to these incidents and to identify lessons to prevent future occurrences. Insights came from directly speaking to children, case records, and feedback from professionals gathered through learning events / rapid reviews.

2 THE CHILDREN

Black boys Most of the children were Black British boys (one girl) aged between 14 and 17 years. Three were from Asian or Middle Eastern backgrounds.

Neurodivergence Three boys had diagnosed neurodivergence. Neurodivergence was suspected in five other boys but not formally diagnosed.

Interrupted schooling Eleven boys experienced disruptions in their schooling, with eight subjected to school exclusions at the time of the incidents.

Criminal justice system Ten boys had previous involvement with the criminal justice system.

Other reoccurring features:

Drugs - Seven boys were known or suspected to have used drugs and were receiving support.

Transience - Nine boys had experienced movement between areas
Violence - All the children had previously been victims of violence, and four were known or suspected to have perpetrated violence.

Missing episodes - Eight boys had varying degrees of missing episodes.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) for at least eight children. This included domestic abuse and exposure to criminality.

Professional concerns for almost all the children and their families, which had been emerging for at least a year.

3 THE FOCUS OF THIS REVIEW

Lines of enquiry are questions or statements that help with exploring a subject and direct focus. For this review these were drawn from national and regional learning which echoed some of the reoccurring features in many of the children's backgrounds:

- Interrupted schooling increases vulnerability to youth violence
- Children with special educational needs and disability (SEND), speech and language difficulties and other complexity of need are more vulnerable to youth violence
- Previous criminal justice involvement increases vulnerability to youth violence
- What were the missed opportunities?



More overleaf

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4 FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL CHILDREN

Over 200 children and young people, many of whom were Black boys, shared their views through outreach activities. Comments mainly revolved around concerns for safety, how police were perceived, school as a safe environment, activities within their communities and mental health / emotional wellbeing.

Their valuable insights highlight the importance of coordinated responses across policing, education, mental health, and community services with a view to co-creating safer, more supportive environments.

“Youth violence is not an accident, or a surprise”
Young person on violence

5 WHAT THIS REVIEW FOUND

The review highlights that many children in Waltham Forest feel persistently unsafe due to prevalent knife crime, gang presence, and robberies, leading to a constant sense of threat.

- **Trust in police is fractured** especially among children from the global majority
- **Schools don't consistently feel safe.** Many children report of violence, racism, and bullying
- **Insufficient mental health support** felt by children and young people
- **Not enough youth spaces** which has increased vulnerability to harmful influences.

The review concludes that children with interrupted schooling, special educational needs, speech and language difficulties, and previous criminal justice involvement are more vulnerable to violence, especially when intersecting with ethnicity and gender. It calls for multi-agency safeguarding systems to harness opportunities for earlier intervention.

6 WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIPS DOING ABOUT THIS LEARNING?

Much of the learning gathered from this review was applied to practice as it developed, informing Waltham Forest's Serious Violence Strategy, which because of these incidents, among other concerns, has a primary focus on reducing knife crime injuries among children and young people under 25 years of age. Since these incidents of harm, the local Council has adopted a mission-based approach that places the protection of young people from knife crime at the heart of the partnerships' community safety and safeguarding efforts.

Six recommendations from the review are being acted on and centre around:

- enhanced safeguarding and community safety interventions
- closer working with schools
- rebuilding trust between young people and police
- increased activity and opportunities for young people
- better mental health support for Black boys and young men
- strengthening awareness of the issues raised in the review to support safeguarding and community safety responses

7 WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT THIS LEARNING?

- **PROMOTE / SUPPORT ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE** in children's safeguarding - [use these tools](#)
- **REFLECT** on
 - How this relates to your work? What role do you have in keeping children safe from harm?
 - Wider related themes such as transitional safeguarding – [watch this short film](#)
- **STRENGTHEN your understanding** of the themes in this review
 - Read Catch 22's [report on how alternative provision can shape children's futures](#)
 - Listen to [NSPCC's podcast on the importance of early intervention](#)
 - Watch [Unpacking Adulthood](#) via the Social Matters Podcast
 - Sign up to Safeguarding Partnership Training - [local training](#) and [regional training](#)
- **SHARE this briefing and Thematic Review** widely
 - Discuss this review in a team meeting - consider how it applies to your service(s)
 - Tell your colleagues about this review and the resources
- **REMIND yourself** of the importance of professional curiosity - [use this resource](#)
- **FAMILIARISE yourself** with [Waltham Forest's youth services directory](#) to signpost children / young people to activities