

Southwark Safer Schools Partnership (SSSP)

- Cllr Barrie Hargrove introduced the topic and highlighted some key themes that he would like to focus on during the discussion. These questions included; how are schools safer since SSSP? What has been the experience of young people? Has it involved effective team working with Headteachers (HTs), stakeholders and the police? Has it been successfully mainstreamed? How far has it tackled gun, gang and knife crime? To what extent are further resources required outside the SSSP?
- Cllr Hargrove would like to pursue a more thorough consultation on the SSSP using a comprehensive survey of parents, young people, governors, HTs and teachers. He also noted that there currently appears to be an issue on the ownership of the SSSP in schools, as schools do not want to be associated with having disciplinary problems. Cllr Hargrove also enquired what the vision for the SSSP was going forward as the police do not appear to be as proactive, for example with joint working initiatives.
- A Secondary HT commented that education and children services have been distrustful of scrutiny in the past as there has been confidential information disclosed that has ended up in the media which they can only assume was from Councillors. With regards to the SSSP the HT relayed that at a Southwark Secondary Headteacher meeting all of the HTs agreed that every Secondary school needs their own Police Constable (PC) attached to each school rather than schools share them as they need to be able to contact them quickly and rely on them at any time.
- The HTs agreed that PCs tended to be consistently much better than Community Wardens in the role as they had obviously had more training on how to communicate with young people. Also Southwark Police (unlike some neighbouring boroughs) saw the importance of the SSP and the PCs allocated to this role tended to be some of the more talented and capable officers who would often be fast tracked. Therefore the experience of the HTs of PCs in Southwark who are attached to schools is extremely positive.

- However with regards to the Community Wardens in this role questions were raised as to what training do they receive which would make them competent for this role, what is their background etc. Whilst the HTs agree some Community Wardens have been fantastic generally their involvement has been patchy whereas PCs have been widely commended in the partnership.
- The history of the SSSP was to improve the relationship between young people and the police who have generally been seen as the 'enemy'. The hope was to restore trust and for the police to be seen as a friendly face that can be relied upon. There was agreement that there should also be a PC in Primary schools as this relationship can not be built/repaid once the child is over 11. Also Early Years provides an important opportunity not only for very young children to build a positive relationship with the police but also for their parents and families too who may also be fearful of the police. It is important generally to change the negative impression that PCs are only involved when children and young people are in trouble so the SSSP also creates some much needed PR for the police.
- Generally the HTs see that there are still questions surrounding numbers required and what training is needed but all (Secondary?) Heads realise that some police presence is needed after school to protect the children and prevent crime. The PCs attached to specific schools are well placed to do it as they should know the children personally so can deal tactfully with the situation and make better judgement calls.
- There is also a general need for more positive initiatives to give Southwark's young people more to do and to tackle the idea that all young people are involved in gang or knife crime. Examples include young people putting on a fashion show, sport facilities and opportunities etc. HT asked what is currently happening with youth provision?
- With regards to youth gun, gang and knife crime HTs feel that the schools have been wrongly blamed for it even though it is not their fault. They have often been named and shamed in the media and then suffered accordingly.

- Primary HT expressed concern that whilst there is a need for a PC at every school there tends to be little consistency with PCs suddenly being moved to another detail after building up a relationship with the school and children without the Head knowing if they'll be back or that they are even going. They may reappear in 3 months time but it becomes hard to plan around them or include them in plans, so a recommendation would be for the police and schools to be more joined up and share information more within the SSSP.
- The SSSP is also vital in Primary as well as Secondary schools as youth crime is not just a secondary problem. There are some primary children involved in crime outside of school or maybe on the verge of heading down that path and early intervention could be a successful way of preventing crime later on in life.
- A recommendation from a HT is for the SSSP to involve more services than just police and schools, which are just a part of a broader Safer Partnership for children. For example including a family focus, social care and other 'team around the child' services.
- Reiterating an earlier point Heads believe there should be more *confidential* sharing of information between HTs and the police e.g if one of their pupils is going to court for a crime etc then the HT should be informed.
- PCs are not currently brought in as 'multi-agency staff' i.e. in meetings, but maybe they should be to strengthen and broaden the partnership.
- One HT called for the SSSP to make the journey between school and home safer and to understand the impact that the urban environment may have on young people.
- Despite some need for strengthening the SSSP Southwark's Children's Services does have very successful intelligence sharing with the police, youth offending team, community wardens etc.
- Especially at the highest level involving the 30 most at risk children where a specialist team does door to door visits.

- Also the Met is actively engaged with ensuring a joined up approach to children and youth safety with a move to create stronger
- relationships between HTs and Borough Commanders to encourage the sharing of 'soft' information.
- All of Southwark's secondary schools and colleges have also been issued with search warrants enabling them to search for suspected weapons at school. The police have been very sympathetic to the needs of the schools in understanding these measures are necessary but maintaining confidentiality in naming the schools that have incidents.
- On occasions where there has been an incident the youth offending team have reacted quickly and diffused incidents at the school. Perhaps it would reassure the public if they knew some of the measures in place that are working but without damaging the schools involved?
- Young people and the Police are learning to expect a different type of search to the previous 'stop and search'. This is similar to one you may expect in an airport and should promote a sense of security and is a move away from the feeling that the police are victimising children and young people. These are very different searches than those carried out on the suspicion of carrying a gun, however these searches are *only* conducted by a specially trained team and can easily be differentiated by young people.