



Joint Partnership Response to the publication of the Thematic Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review into Serious Youth Violence

Our city is a place where children and young people should be able to feel safe outside of their home and have every opportunity to lead full, vibrant and fulfilling lives.

Tragically, in recent years we have witnessed several incidents where young lives have been cut short as a result of violent acts committed away from home. These incidents, and others where young lives have been changed forever by the impact of violent acts, have left lasting marks on communities and the families left grieving for loved ones.

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership exists to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of people in Bristol and to put in place action, where required, to keep people safe from harm. A large part of that role is achieved by learning from past incidents and adopting new ways of doing things where doing so can bring about benefits for individuals, families and communities.

Following a series of tragic events in 2024 that saw multiple incidents of serious youth violence, some leading to fatal consequences, a review was commissioned by the safeguarding partnership to consider the systems in place to tackle this issue. This thematic review considered Max Dixon, Mason Rist, Darrian Williams and a fourth young person who suffered serious harm. Each of the incidents considered in this review took place within a three week period in early 2024.

Throughout the review period, families of the victims of serious youth violence and professionals who have worked to safeguard children and young people from harm, have been central to investigations undertaken. Their courage and preparedness to engage and be part of this review has been essential to ensuring that opportunities to learn from these incidents are not lost and will play key role in improving approaches in future.

The review set out to consider four key elements of the systems in place to keep children and young people safe:

1. Governance and operational structures for responding to serious violence
2. Improvement activity across the partnership
3. The consistency of responses to safeguarding children from harm outside the home
4. Educational attendance and inclusion correlating to a risk of serious harm to other children.

This review is not about individuals or the events that led to the tragic loss of life. It is about the safeguarding partnership, learning from what these tragedies tell professionals about serious violence in Bristol, particularly where harm is experienced outside of the home.

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Primarily, when looking at the situation in early 2024, the independent reviewers concluded that although Bristol was not lacking in effort, knowledge or skill in tackling youth violence, we need to improve our practice to ensure we do not reflect a “fractured and siloed system”.

To aid the partnership to evolve and meet the needs identified during the course of the review, seven recommendations have been shared for the safeguarding partnership to consider:

1. The partnership develops a clear, shared, strategic vision that explicitly responds to serious youth violence within wider, interrelated, forms of harm outside the home.
2. Multi-agency governance and co-ordination activity in relation to all forms of harm outside of the home is reviewed at strategic, operational and practice levels. Across the system there is clearly articulated purpose, alignment and accountability that identifies and reduces duplicate or superfluous activity.
3. The cross-government multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm are adopted and used to frame a holistic and evidence-informed approach. The Partnership Reflective Tool is utilised at its highest to support this.
4. A robust approach to the integration, reconciliation and analysis of whole partnership data and intelligence in relation to harm outside the home is developed at pace. There is a clear approach and accountability for its ongoing application.
5. A robust Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) model is implemented as the sole inter-agency forum for responding to harm outside the home. This includes a clear focus on disruption activity and a contextual approach to safeguarding in spaces and places, as part of an analytical response to risk.
6. A Prevention MACE is established and co-chaired by Education, alongside statutory partners, to better identify, understand and respond to early intervention and prevention needs. The Prevention MACE provides a single point of co-ordination and oversight for all prevention activity across the city.
7. Bristol’s prevention offer in relation to harm outside the home is reviewed and reframed, taking account of what is known in relation to the evidence-base and outcomes for current services. There is robust on-going strategic accountability for outcomes and funding arrangements.

The partnership has welcomed these recommendations and developed an action plan in response to implement the learning identified. This action plan includes the adoption of a partnership Harm Outside the Home Strategy with a multi-agency team dedicated to supporting those impacted by harm outside of the home. This new strategy sets in place many of the actions required at all levels of our city’s safeguarding partnership and will be overseen by the Prevention of Serious Violence partnership Board

Responsibility for delivering these recommendations and the actions of the newly adopted strategy will rest with all organisations who form the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership, in particular statutory agencies, schools and other education partners. **Our partnership is determined to embed meaningful change for children, their families and communities across the city.**

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The core partners of the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership are Bristol City Council, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board and Avon and Somerset Police.



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