

Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing
awards 2009

Greater Manchester Police

Operation Cougar

**Reducing Gang Related Firearms Discharges
Within the Metropolitan Division**



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



Greater Manchester
POLICE



Executive Summary

Reducing firearms discharges is a strategic priority for GMP. Between 01/04/2006-31/03/2007, there were 120 confirmed firearms discharges. A 5% reduction target was set for 2007-2008; but despite sustained efforts there was a further 20% increase totalling 145 offences.

Historically half of the Force's firearm discharges occur on the Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions. These areas contain street gangs who frequently use firearms to assert authority in ongoing feuds, adversely affecting the area. Consequently 60% of the discharges in this area are directly linked to street gangs.

The increase in total firearms discharges during 2007-2008 was also replicated in gang related discharges. The Gang related discharges that year included four murders. Two of these murders occurred in January 2008, leading to gang related tensions in Manchester being deemed critical for the first time in its entire history.

A problem profile was commissioned to provide a detailed multi-agency assessment of gang related discharge offences within the Manchester area. The report included victim, offender and location profiles and identified trends, times, and 'trigger events', which increased the likelihood of firearms incidents taking place.

In response to the situation being declared by GMP as a Force Level Critical Incident, a series of high-level Gold meetings were convened with representatives from key CDRP agencies. A strategy was produced to achieve the objectives of protecting and preserving life, ensuring effective working practices between all GMP resources and key partner agencies and to use enforcement tactics as a precursor to detailed and sustainable preventative intervention by partner agencies.

On the 14th February 2008, Operation Cougar was launched with the success criteria set at achieving a reduction in firearm discharges and gang related firearm discharges within the Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions. Operation Cougar incorporated innovative operational tactics coupled with new and revised partnership interventions to protect young people at risk of gang violence and achieve effective gang enforcement activity.

Following the implementation of Operation Cougar 14/02/2008-30/11/2008, firearms discharges within the affected area have reduced significantly. Total discharges have reduced by 69.3% and gang related discharges have reduced by 92.7%.

Operation Cougar has also impacted on Force-wide firearms discharges. In the current financial year, discharges are down 55.3%, (42 offences recorded to date compared to 94 last year).

Crucially, since the commencement of Operation Cougar's enforcement and safe guarding activity there have been no fatal gang related firearms discharges within the Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions.

State number of words: 395

Background

The Metropolitan Division is an inner city area of Manchester, suffering from social economic deprivation. It is a diverse community where 130 languages are spoken. It has a population of 145,000 residents plus 70,000 students. Historically, there has been mistrust and tensions between the police and wider communities, culminating in the Moss Side Riots in 1981.

Since 1980, there has been a history of gang and gun related crime on the Metropolitan Division.

During the late 1990s and early 2000, there were a significant number of high profile gang related murders, the nature of these offences makes them extremely difficult to detect. Consequently, Moss Side became synonymous with gangs and gun crime, typified in national and local media as "Gunchester".

During the years 2005 to 2007, a significant change took place in the profile, structure and volume of the gangs, to a point where there were 25 active factions affiliated to the two main gangs. The age range of gang members, reduced dramatically from 18-25 years, to 15-20 years.

In 2006, a 15 year-old child was shot dead in Moss Side. This sparked a significant reaction from the community about the increasing loss of young lives to gun crime. Gang related tensions escalated to a higher level, resulting in an increasing number of discharges across the Metropolitan and Old Trafford areas.

Community meetings were held, which gave an increased focus to the ongoing work between the Police, Local Authority, Community, and partner agencies to stem the increasing level of juvenile gun and gang violence.

Throughout 2007, significant increases in gang related shootings resulted in two murders. The police responded by increasing uniformed, armed and unarmed patrols, and the Xcalibre Task Force to prevent further incidents. These tactics had a short-term impact in reducing gang related shootings, but the problem continued.

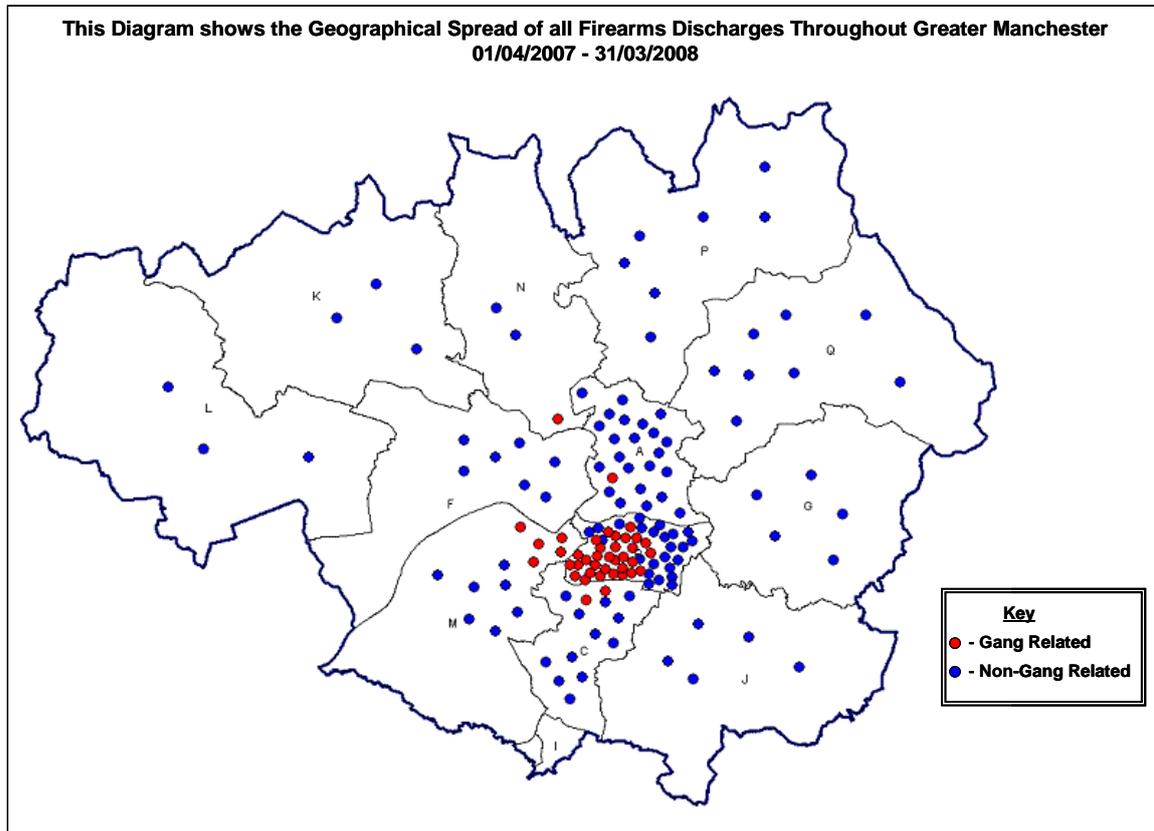
On Saturday 19th January 2008, in a case of mistaken identity, a 19 year-old male was shot dead in Old Trafford. The intended victim was a Doddington gang member and the perpetrators were from the Fallowfield Man Dem (FMD), affiliated to the Gooch.

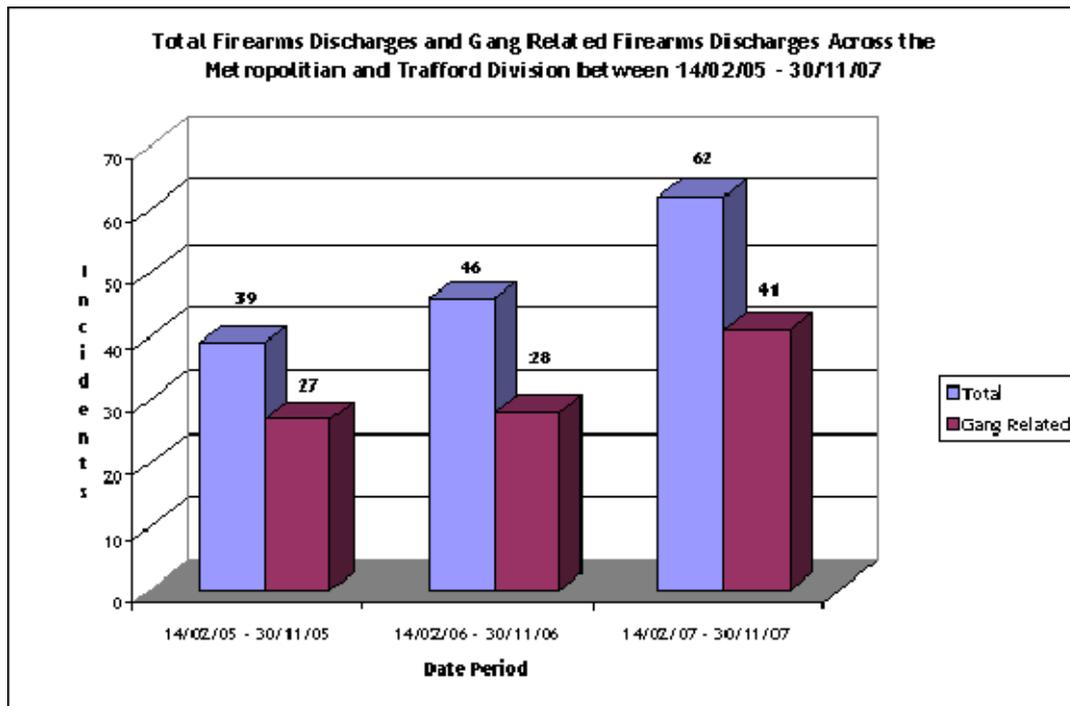
On Tuesday 29th January 2008, in a reprisal attack, a 15 year-old male, known to be a FMD gang member was shot dead in South Manchester.

As a direct consequence gang tensions and violence increased to such an extent that the Threat Assessment was reviewed and for the first time in its entire history, the gang threat in Manchester was defined as Critical. **Operation Cougar was born.**

Scanning

Between 01/04/2007 and 31/03/2008, there were 145 firearms discharges in Greater Manchester. Despite this being an extremely low proportion of total crime (0.048%) the damaging impact on community confidence, fear of crime and the reputations of the Police, CDRP, Partner agencies and business communities within Manchester were disproportionately high. The impact was further exacerbated by negative and sensationalist media coverage.





Analysis identified that 50% of all firearm discharges occur on the Metropolitan Division and Old Trafford area. This area represents 5% of the force's geographic area.

Temporal analysis showed that periods of increased activity were linked to spring and summer seasons, significant community events, anniversaries of the deaths of gang members and the release of prominent gang members from custody.

Application of an Intelligence Matrix identified that 70% of these firearms discharges are gang related.

Between 1999 and 2007, 55 people were killed by guns in GMP; of these 25 were murders that occurred on the Metropolitan Division, attracting significant media headlines. (Appendix A).

Gun crime has a detrimental effect in many ways:

- Reluctance within the private sector to invest in the area.
- Communities live in fear of gun crime; a community leader stated, "Almost everyone who lives here knows somebody who has been shot".
- In recent community consultation surveys, the majority of residents in the affected neighbourhoods did not name gun crime as a major concern whereas neighbouring less deprived suburbs of Manchester that have little or no gun crime perceive it as a major concern.
- A substantial amount of police and partners' time, resources and budget are spent on reacting to, investigating, treating or preventing gun crime, and its associated consequences.
- Year ending March 2008 saw an increase in gang related firearms discharges. There were 41 confirmed gang related shootings compared to 28 and 27 in the previous two years. There were four fatal gang related shootings compared to two in each of the previous two years.

Analysis

The following information sources were used to analyse the problem. Firearms Intelligence Desk, Metropolitan Division Operational Policing Unit, Force Firearms Threat Assessments, Manchester Multi Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS), Children's Services, Probation Service, GMAC, Education Service, Community consultation and surveys conducted with current and former gang members.

The following information gaps were identified:

- Storage locations of firearms.
- Supply network for firearms.
- Key motivations for gang members.

These information gaps were addressed utilising Source Handling, Key Individual Networks, Intelligence Interviews, and Overt and Covert Surveillance techniques.

The Firearms Intelligence Desk and the Metropolitan Division jointly reviewed the data collected, in order to produce a problem profile.

Key findings from the problem profile:

- Increases in gang tensions, led to an escalation in firearms discharges, which significantly amplified the risk of serious injury and murders.
- Firearms crime committed by younger gang members was chaotic and often occurred without clear motive. For example, unknown males walking through gang territories were at risk of being shot, and gatherings of youths in public places were likely to be subject to 'drive-by' style shootings e.g. Millennium Powerhouse, Zion Centre. Such incidents were opportunistic and by their very nature, indiscriminate and reckless.
- A significant proportion of firearms crime occurred between 1900hrs and 0200hrs.
- No specific day of the week was identified as being significant.
- Minor incidents, such as disputes involving graffiti, gang territory or relationships between rival gang members resulted in a disproportionate escalation of the levels of violence.

A profile of the gangs identified a number of common characteristics. These were recognised as being prevalent in both victim and offender groups involved in the same type of criminality.

The majority of current gang members are:

- Aged between 15 and 20 years.
- Black African Caribbean descent.
- From one parent families.
- Unemployed or infrequently attend school with no academic aspirations.
- Reside within a two miles radius of Moss Side.
- Involved in Anti Social Behaviour and opportunistic crime such as personal robbery and burglary.
- Do not drink alcohol or take 'hard' drugs as part of their gang lifestyle.

These youths were identified as being extremely vulnerable. Gang members are equally likely to be a victim or perpetrator of gun crime.

The vast majority of gang members come from broken homes living with their mothers and siblings, with no paternal influence. Such is the small geographic area within which the opposing gangs operate; gang related firearms discharges are often directed at the home addresses of gang members. This puts other family members, neighbours and community members in significant danger.

Scientific analysis of firearms discharge patterns showed a considerable level of inexperience in handling weapons, making the likelihood of hitting the intended target remote but increasing the collateral threat to innocent persons and property in the vicinity.

Analysis of intelligence indicated motives for gang membership are unique. Unlike the fiscal focus of historic gang activity, financial gain has little influence on current membership.

Key motivators include:

- Sense of belonging (gang members refer to each other as 'brothers' or 'soldiers').
- Kudos.
- Respect.
- Fear.
- Peer pressure (expectation from gang members that you 'chill' with a gang).
- Territorial rivalry (gangs identify with an established territory).
- Many young girls are attracted by the 'gangster image'.
- Excitement (gang members repeatedly agree they get a real 'kick' from intruding into rival gang areas).

It is by understanding and challenging these motivations that police and partner agencies can put medium and long-term strategies in place to effectively tackle gang related gun crime.

Intelligence and incidents indicated that gang members frequently toured opposing rival territories seeking other perceived gang members to attack. Consequently a large proportion of gang related firearm discharges are random and opportunistic.

Part of the gang lifestyle involves being visible. Gang members will 'hang out' on streets wearing gang 'colours' attracting attention. This in itself presents rival gang members with opportunities to attack. These gatherings create intimidation and fear within the community by both their presence and offending behaviour.

Within the profiled area, many opposing gang members have grown up together and attended local schools. They live within the same community and frequent and offend within the local area.

The removal of gang protagonists into other areas shows little evidence of displaced gang activity following relocation.

The following have also been identified as contributory factors to increases in gang related firearms discharges:

- Disrespecting opposing gangs.
- Goading gang members on Internet Chat Rooms or mobile phones.
- Graffiti in opposing gang territory.
- A firearms discharge by one gang may lead to a series of 'tit for tat' shootings.
- Trigger events where rival gangs are likely to attend the same event.

Response

In February 2008, a series of strategic meetings were convened to consider the findings of the problem profile and develop an effective response. Representatives from Manchester and Trafford Violent Gangs Board, XTF, MMAGS, Probation Service, Children's Services and the CDRP were present. Due to the increase in tensions between the rival gangs, community concerns and national media attention, the situation was declared a Force Level Critical Incident.

All partner agencies accepted that police enforcement activities in isolation would not resolve the longer-term issues of juveniles being involved in gang and gun criminality, and there was an urgent need to develop multi-agency short, medium and long-term solutions.

The overall objectives were to reduce gang related firearm discharges, identify and protect vulnerable people and improve trust and confidence within the communities. A detailed Gold Strategy (Appendix B) was developed to support the joint police and partnership response and included the following key areas:

- Identify a command structure and assign responsibility for deployment of tactics by partner agencies.
- Protect and preserve life.
- Ensure effective working between all GMP resources, Local Authority, CDRP, LCJG, Children's Services, Social Services, the wider community and media organisations.
- Use enforcement tactics as the precursor to detailed and sustained preventative intervention by partner agencies.

This strategy was implemented under the code name '**Operation Cougar**'.

A multi-agency response was developed, as previous police interventions in isolation had been ineffective in tackling the long-term issues. Proven tactics such as intelligence gathering were included in the response. The following Police, Partner and Community Interventions were implemented:

1. Police led enforcement activity to disrupt, prevent and detect gang criminality

Joint agency search operations directed at private premises and open land were conducted to recover evidence and disrupt gang activity. Police deployments included: Air Support, Dogs, Tactical Aid Unit, XTF, and Divisional Resources. CDRP resources included: Neighbourhood and Justice Manager, Children's Services, MMAGS and Environmental Services. Community Resources included Independent Advisory Groups and Street Pastors. The operations were high profile, receiving wide media coverage and resulted in the recovery of firearms, ammunition and the arrest of gang members.

Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO'S) were obtained against gang members committing offences of Violent Disorder (pre-conviction) and Anti Social Behaviour. ASBO conditions included non-association, prohibited use of pedal cycles and the banning of wearing bandannas and other types of face coverings.

Air Support was utilised to coordinate the response of officers to groups of gang members, enabling their identification and effective enforcement activity.

Gang members 'wanted' for offences were arrested expeditiously, stringent bail conditions were imposed and curfews were robustly enforced.

2. Intelligence led policing of gang areas and persons frequenting them

The XTF's knowledge of gangs was used to identify gang gatherings and coordinate uniformed resources in order to utilise powers under Section 60 (CJ&POA 1994). This activity discouraged gang members from carrying firearms and weapons.

Surveillance techniques were utilised to identify 'safe houses' and other potential hiding places used for weapons storage.

Constant police attention was aimed at discouraging gangs to gather in public places where they could be easy targets for rival gang members. Street Mentors and Street Pastors were engaged to develop rapport with young people. Consultation took place with key community groups including CARISMA, Moss Side and Hulme Independent Advisory Groups (IAG) and Trafford IAG.

Key Individual Networks were approached to identify community concerns and continue to develop an understanding of Gang issues.

Gang graffiti, demarking gang territory was photographed for intelligence and expeditiously removed by Environmental Services.

In partnership with Manchester City Council and Metronet, twenty-five wireless, portable CCTV cameras were introduced to cover key arterial routes, territorial pinch points and high-risk locations within Moss Side. The cameras were directly linked to the CCTV control room facilitating intelligence and evidence gathering for Operation Cougar.



Examples of CCTV coverage used to support Operation Cougar

Review Meetings sought ways to tackle new and emerging threats, which were scored and prioritised against the Force Harm Matrix. New tactics included;

- Swift relocation of a known gang member who had been subject to multiple-attack, following a joint agency assessment.
- Environmental scanning of gang related websites identified a 'Rap Track', which had been recorded by a gang member to insult opposing gang members. Joint agency intervention led to 'Track' this being removed from the website.

On both occasions the actions taken completely negated the threat.

3. Identification of juveniles potentially vulnerable to gang influence

Operation Cougar identified children at risk on the street who required 'safeguarding interventions', including at times, taking them home. This activity was supported by the service of letters to the person at risk and their parents. The letters, issued by the BCU Commander detailed the rationale for concern e.g. wearing body armour or specific types of clothing (Appendix C). XTF staff conducted home visits with parents to discuss specific concerns and provide advice.

This activity was followed by formal notification to Children's Services and MMAGS for a bespoke risk assessment process. Operation Cougar developed a 'Top Twenty' of young people most at risk based upon their gang association. This also supported the assessment of siblings at risk within the family.

Details of the juveniles were passed onto MMAGS and triggered an automatic home visit and assessment. Dependent on identified gang involvement the juvenile was then subject to Child Safe Guarding Meetings where partner agencies would discuss the threat in detail and devise a plan of action to divert the juvenile from gang activity.

4. Use of Emergency Police Protection Orders and Referral of Gang Members

Operation Cougar used existing legislation to innovatively protect children at risk of being shot by gangs. S46 of the Children Act 1989 provides for the removal and accommodation of children by police in cases of emergency. When presented with young people at risk of suffering immediate harm, without any available accommodation, Operation Cougar officers used Emergency Police Protection Orders (EPPO) to remove them from the streets into the overnight safety of police cells.

This initiative brought a positive reaction from the community where comments reported in the Manchester Evening News included "This operation sends a clear message to parents that they need to be responsible for their children. It also sends a message to social services" (Appendix D)

The initiative made young people at risk on the streets become aware of the significant possibility that they would be taken to a place of safety, potentially a police cell, if they chose to continually expose themselves to harm from other gangs.

Use of EPPOs highlighted inadequate provision within Children's Services to accommodate children at risk being removed to places of safety. A review of the practice was conducted internally, which led to a revision of protocols to address the issue.

5. Continued Multi Agency risk management of persons and groups at risk

Persons identified as being involved in gang issues were referred to MMAGS for assessment. Young persons identified as being at significant risk were made subject of a Multi-Agency Risk Management Process. This involved partners from agencies including MMAGS, Children's Services, Education, Housing and Police devising a specific action plan tailored to tackle the risk to each individual.

Practitioner's groups were established involving representatives from the relevant partner agencies who met on a monthly basis to discuss the progress of individual cases. Emergency meetings were called in response to significant increases in threat levels where necessary.

By reducing the risk of individuals becoming or continuing to be involved in gang activity and encouraging both the individual and their parent(s) or guardian(s) to seek other activities of interest for their child, the process could divert the individual away from gangs.

6. Schools Interventions

Operation Cougar's interaction with Manchester's young people naturally progressed to engagement with Manchester's Safer Schools Partnership (SSP). Schools in the area attended by gang members were prioritised and Operation Cougar staff conducted specially convened school Senior Leadership Team meetings to discuss gang issues.

A number of Manchester's schools had been in denial regarding gang issues for fear of becoming stigmatised. Head Teachers and staff responded positively to inputs, which identified which gang territory the school was located in, which pupils and former pupils were involved in gang and gun crime and how to identify pupils wearing gang insignia.

SSP agreement was reached to support a dedicated anonymous school intelligence scheme 'The Sharp System' which would be accessible to all pupils and enable gang and gun issues to be reported to staff and School Based Police Officers working closely with the Cougar team.

The Metropolitan Division's Safer Schools Partnership has become a key partner for Operation Cougar particularly in safeguarding children and reducing threat levels in schools.

7. Use of legislation to control those involved in gang related activity

To support Operation Cougar, Manchester City Council appointed a dedicated Anti Social Behaviour Action Team (ASBAT) officer to work alongside the XTF to gather evidence of Anti Social Behaviour by individual gang members and to present ASBO applications to Court.

This officer obtained ASBO's against individuals identified as posing significant risk through their gang related activity. By obtaining a modicum of control over the behaviour of individuals involved in gang activity this reduced the opportunities for these individuals to offend and also assisted in preventing them becoming victims.

8. Involvement of local community

The proposals of Operation Cougar were presented to the Moss Side & Hulme and Division-wide IAG's to demonstrate the multi-agency strategy to tackle the problem. The IAG'S were updated on a weekly and monthly basis of the results and progresses made and were involved throughout the process as observers and advisors.

Substantial media coverage helped gain the support and confidence of the local community and increased cooperation between the community and the agencies involved.

By enlisting the visible support of respected members of the community the positive messages were easily passed onto the whole community. This inturn increased public confidence in both the police and partner agencies and aided greater public co-operation.

9. Multi Agency Assessment of potential trigger events

Operation Cougar conducted an Inter-agency assessment of forthcoming events at iconic sites. These included the Millennium Powerhouse, Zion Arts Centre, Proctors Youth Centre, Hideaway Youth Project, Whiz Youth Project, Manchester Mega Mela and the Caribbean Carnival of Manchester.

Risk Assessments were conducted for each of these events between police, partner agencies, and event's organisers. The objective was to identify, assess, mitigate and manage critical risks around community youth events where there was a realistic threat to life from rival gang member attendance. This process enabled each event to be held without incident.

Assessment

Continuous assessment of resources and expenditure was carried out during regular Review Meetings throughout the operation to ensure an effective and adequate response.

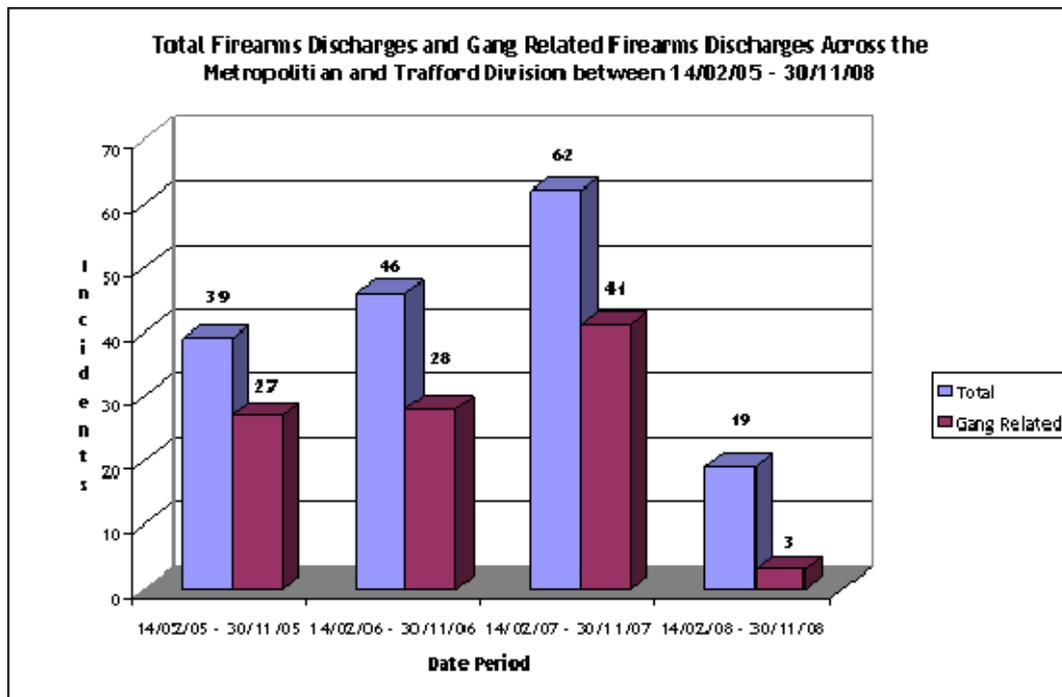
The Home Office Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) and ACPO have identified Operation Cougar as good practice. The methodology is readily transferable to other areas nationally and Birmingham's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership have adopted the 'Cougar' model.

Operation Cougar was launched on the 14/02/2008. Between Cougars launch and the 30/06/2008, there were no gang related firearm discharges in the Metropolitan Division and Old Trafford area.

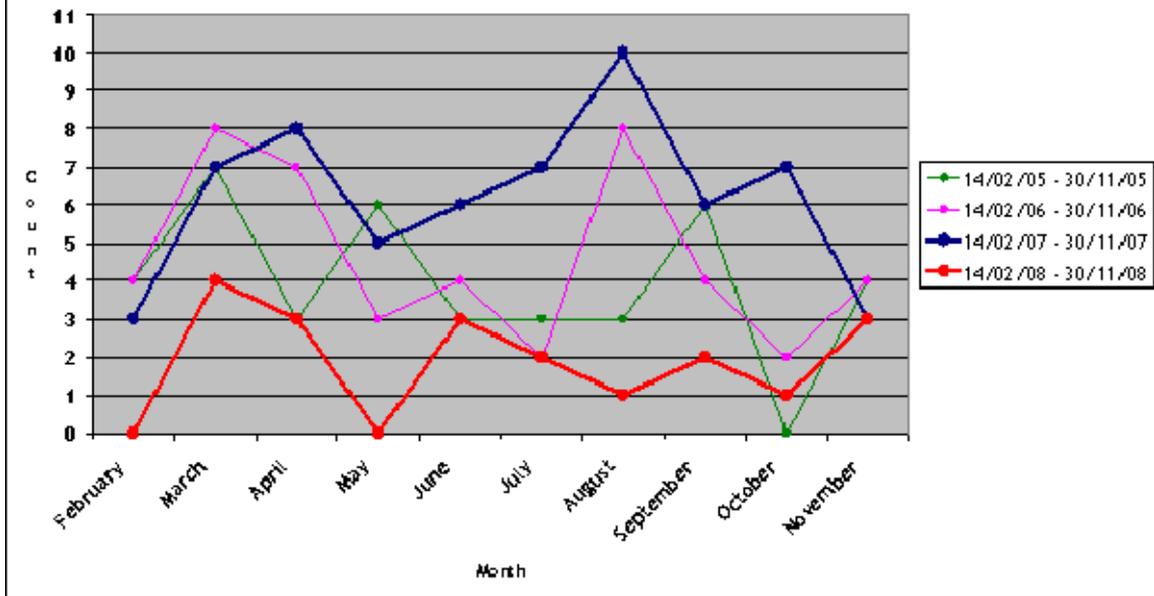
Since GMP commenced the recording of firearm discharges in April 2004 there had never been a calendar month without a gang related firearms discharge, prior to Operation Cougar.

Analysis demonstrates the significant reduction in gang related firearm discharges has continued to present date (30/11/2008):

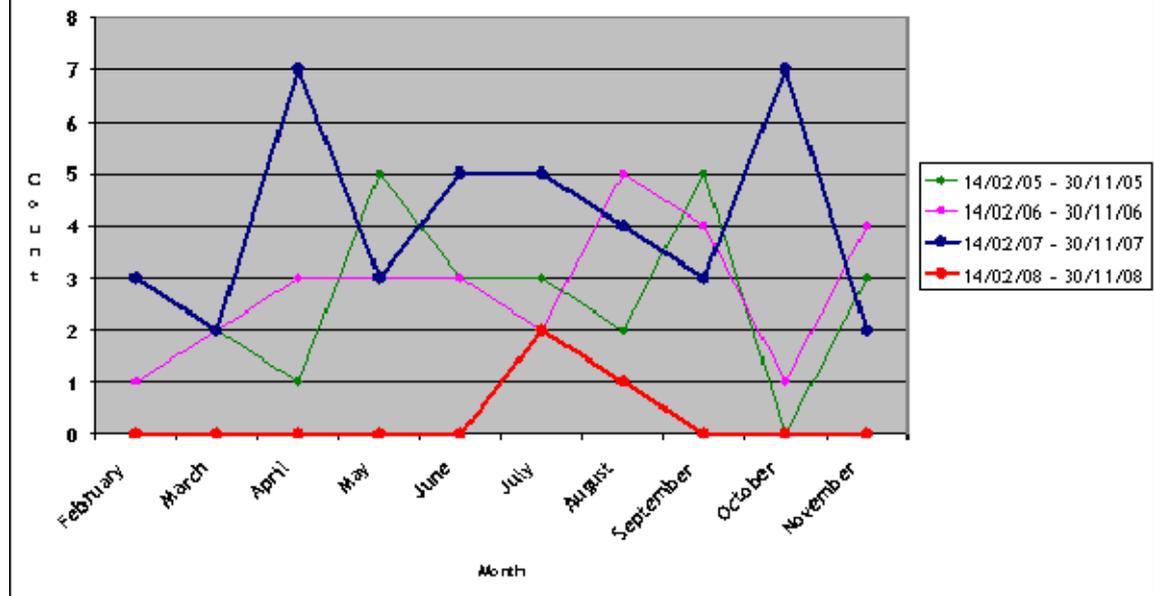
- Gang related firearms discharges across Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions **reduced by 92.7%** on last year.
- Total discharges Metropolitan Division **reduced by 76%** on last year.
- Total discharges Trafford Division **reduced by 25%** on last year.



This Chart Illustrates ALL Firearms Discharges Across the Metropolitan & Trafford Divisions over the 4 Year Period 2005 - 2008, between 14th February & 30th November each year



This Chart Illustrates the Number of Gang Related Firearms Discharges Across the Metropolitan & Trafford Divisions over the 4 Year Period 2005 - 2008, between 14th February & 30th November each year



Operation Cougar Results 14/02/2008 – 30/11/2008

In order to monitor the progression and the effectiveness of the tactics devised within the Gold Strategy, the following performance measures were established and collated. These were subject to assessment and evaluation with force command, partner agencies and community groups, as part of the structured review of Operation Cougar.

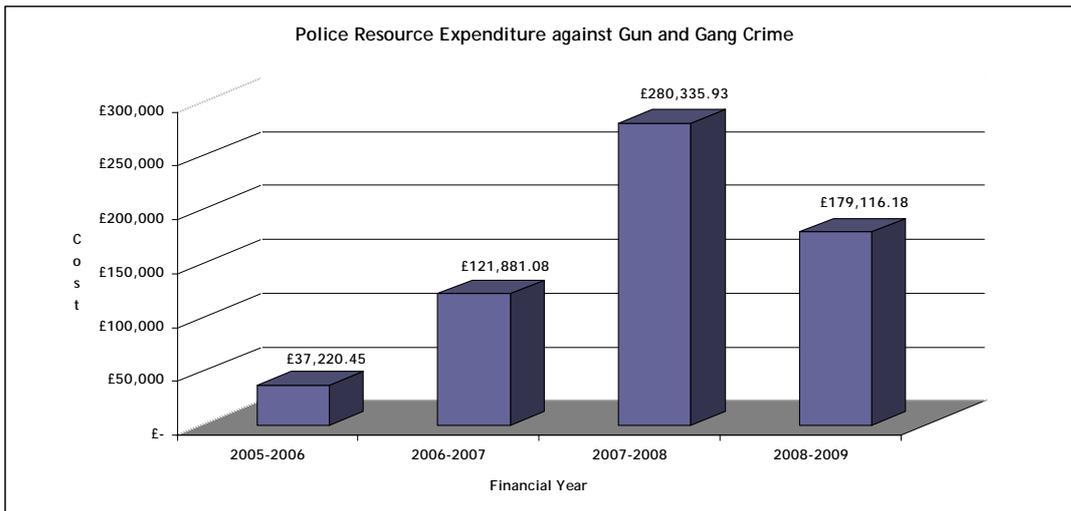
Performance Measures	Count
Operational Deployments	134
Gang Related Firearms Discharges	3
Total Number of Arrests	216
Crime Arrests	156
Public Order Arrests	28
Breach of Licence Arrests	12
Other Arrests	20
Number of Stop Searches	1493
Intelligence Submissions	1548
Disruption of Gang Activity	277
Firearms Recovered	9
Ammunition Recoveries	5
Number of Juveniles Removed from the Street	3
Number of Juveniles EPPO's	5
Referrals to Children's Services and MMAGS	27
Warning Letters Served	57

Section 60 & 60AA CJ&PO Act 1994, Stop Search Powers have been used extensively throughout Operation Cougar. Stop and Search has increased by 25% on the Metropolitan Division, despite this increase there has not been a single complaint regarding this activity. The expertise that has built up during Operation Cougar ensures that gang members, and not innocent people, are targeted for Stop Search. This tactic has received the full support of the wider community. Consequently, this activity has contributed to a 23% reduction in street robbery, which is the largest year to date reduction in GMP.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Prior to the implementation of Operation Cougar, armed response officers, additional force resources and divisional officers were deployed reactively within the Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions to address firearm escalation under the umbrella of 'Operation Starlight.' The chart below illustrates the increasing costs of Operation Starlight (2005–2008) and the year to date Operation Cougar expenditure (2008-2009).

Funds to support Operation Cougar were secured from Home Office (TGAP).

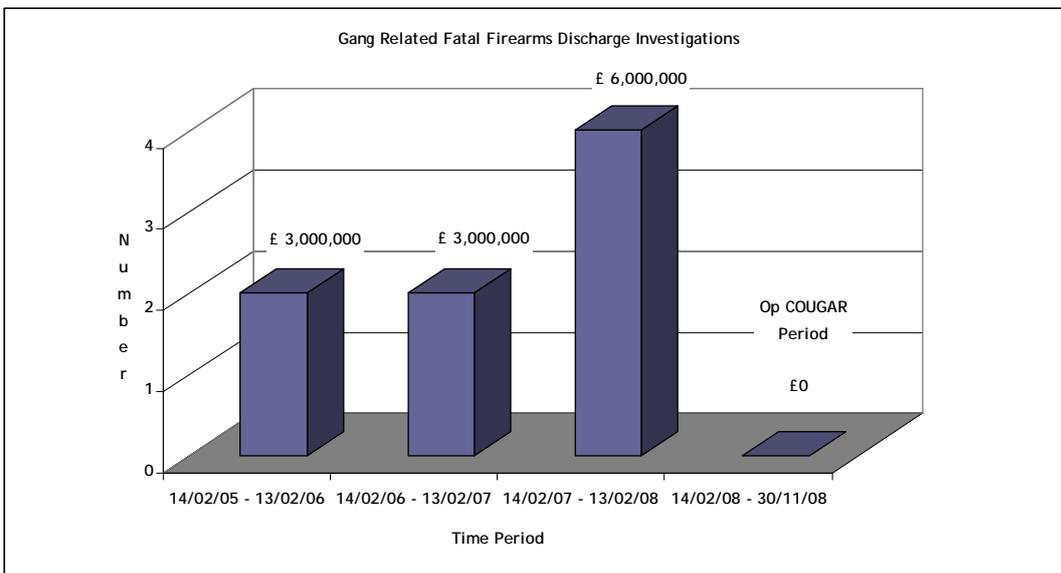


Between the 14/02/2005 - 14/02/2008 the Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions experienced 8 gang related firearms murders.

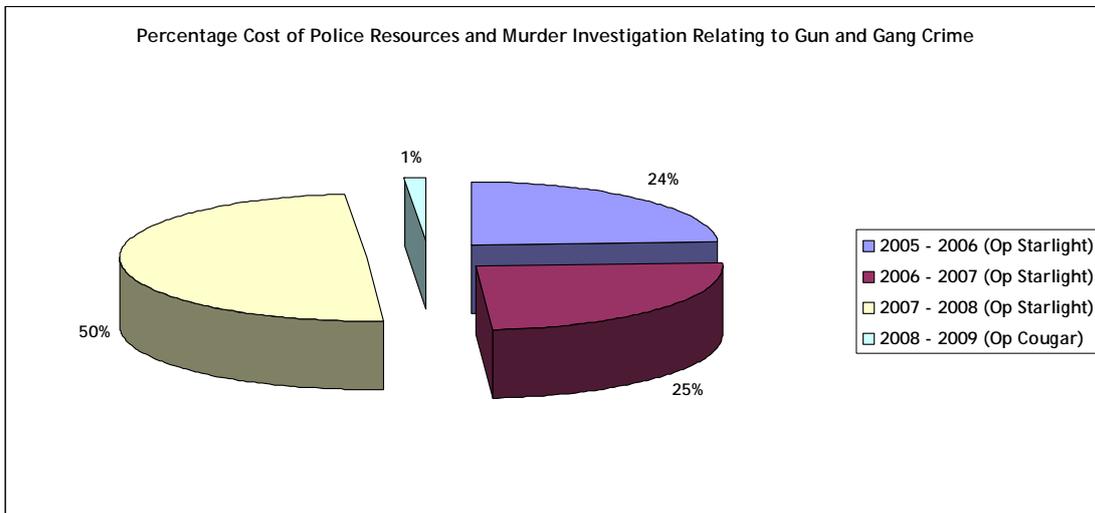
The average cost of a murder investigation is £1.5million. The very nature of gang related murders make them notoriously difficult to solve. They tend to be 'gang member' toward 'gang member' making witnesses reluctant to assist the police and are synonymous with the intimidation of prosecution witnesses.

Since Operation Cougar began on the 14/02/2008, there have been no gang related firearms discharge murders within Greater Manchester (illustrated below).

It has cost an approximate £12,000,000 to investigate these 8 murders.



Expressed as a percentage, Operation Cougar has contributed to achieving the lowest expenditure incurred tackling gang and gun crime and murder investigations during the previous four years, equating to just 1% of the total cost during 2005 – 2008.



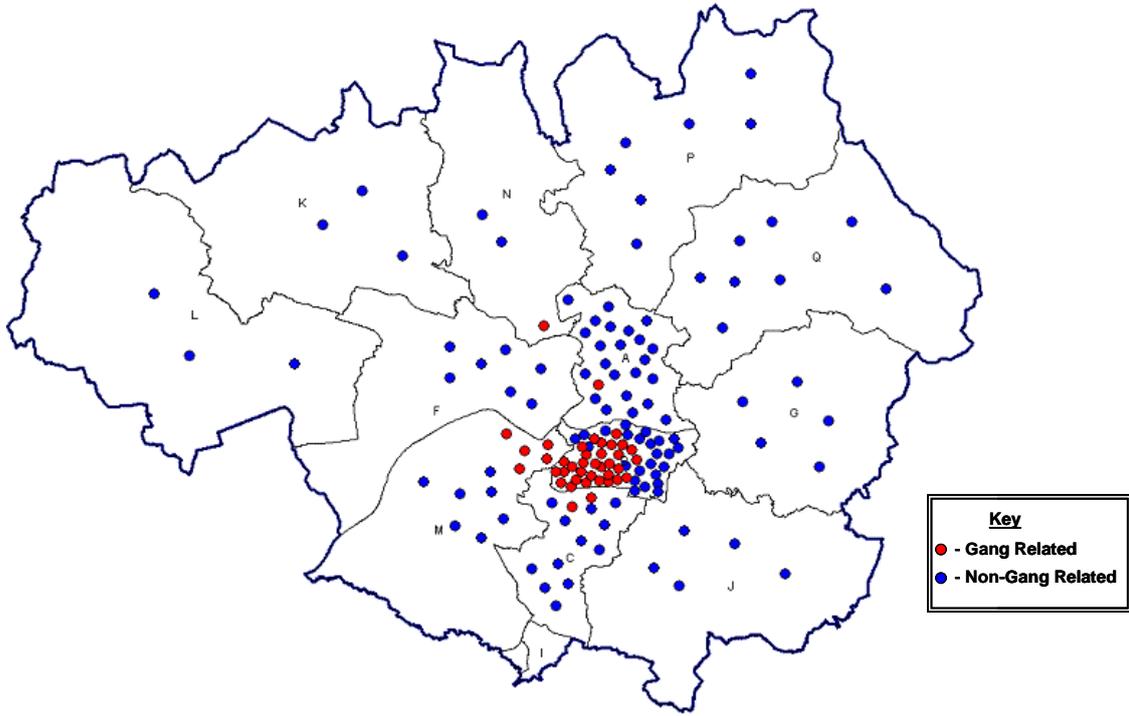
Community and Partner Consultation

A detailed review process was undertaken with police officers, partner agencies, community groups, media representatives and gang members who had been directly involved in gang activity.

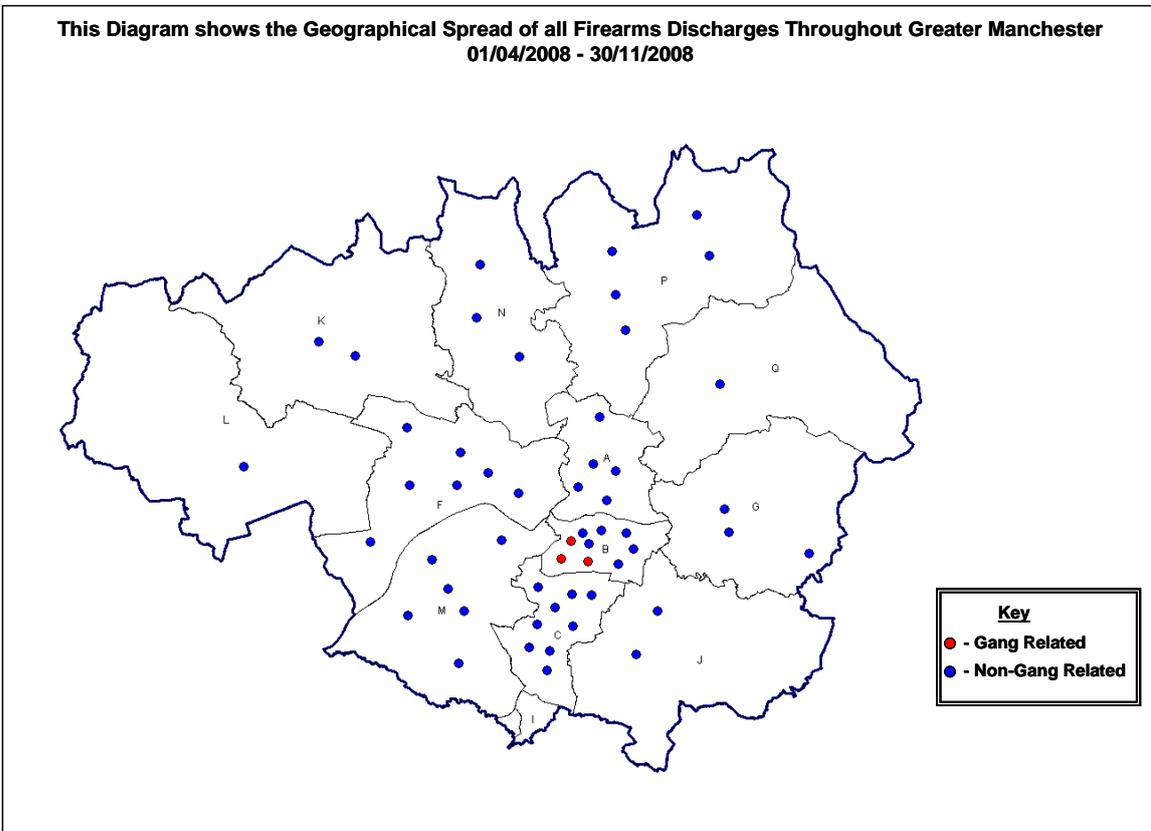
Questionnaires and focus groups revealed that:

- Within GMP there is strong belief in the purpose of Cougar, in that the majority of respondents thought there were clear reasons to initiate Cougar.
- The majority of people believed that current achievements in Cougar could not have happened without partners working together.
- The majority thought that the speed of progress would not have been possible without partners working together.
- The majority thought that all parties involved in Cougar would benefit long-term, and that those involved would be viewed as leading edge and innovative.
- Levels of trust and engagement have increased between the police and community group and between the Council and GMP.
- Police visibility and enforcement activity has been welcomed; visibility of officers, EPPO, letters for young people and high profile raids.
- Operation Cougar has created a “space”, a “pause” to enable agencies to intervene.

This Diagram shows the Geographical Spread of all Firearms Discharges Throughout Greater Manchester
01/04/2007 - 31/03/2008



This Diagram shows the Geographical Spread of all Firearms Discharges Throughout Greater Manchester
01/04/2008 - 30/11/2008



Conclusion

Gun crime has proved to be a particularly difficult problem for police and partners to tackle, often having a devastating impact on the lives of our communities. Despite considerable investment and resourcing, previous police led attempts to reduce gang related shootings have had limited success and sustainability.

Since its implementation on 14th February 2008, Operation Cougar has achieved its objective by significantly reducing gang related firearms discharges within the Metropolitan and Trafford Divisions. The strategy to conduct intensive engagement with gangs has also contributed to a significant improvement in the performance of all other 'Street Crime' areas with the Metropolitan Division achieving the highest volume reduction of Street Robbery in GMP.

Operation Cougar has become a catalyst for the development and provision of dedicated services to tackle gang issues. This has included integrated Violent Gangs Boards for both Manchester and Trafford Authorities. It has also supported the development of Manchester's Demonstrator Local Area Agreement for gangs and gun crime.

In a comparatively short period of time Operation Cougar has drastically reduced the risk levels within gang related neighbourhoods of Manchester and has prevented the deaths of children and adults exposed to gang activity.

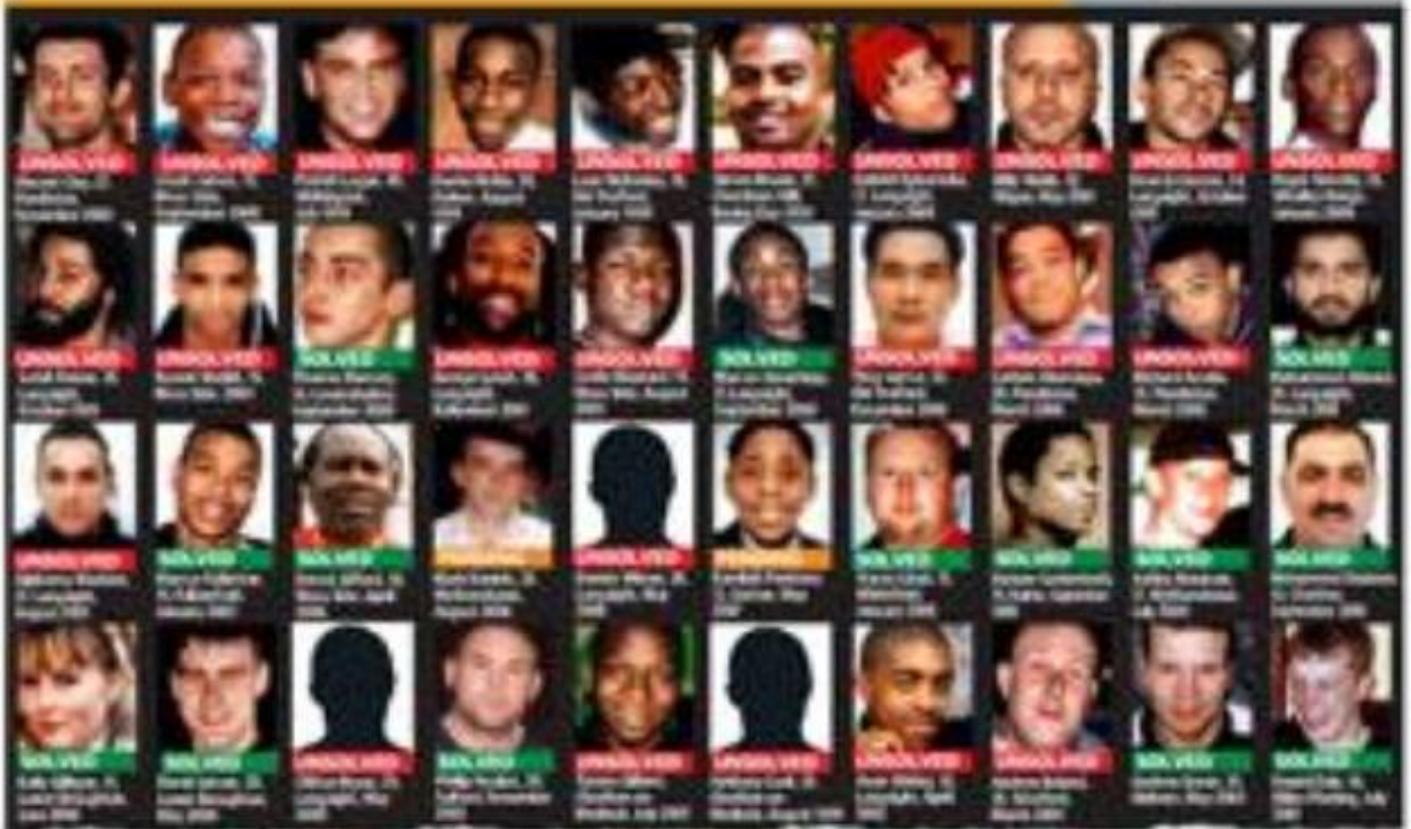
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The voice of Greater Manchester

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HOW MANY MORE?



All of these people have been killed by guns in Greater Manchester since 1999

Special report
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Gang Tensions

Thursday 14th February 2008

Chief Superintendent David Keller.

GOLD STRATEGY

This Gold Strategy relates to the recent and ongoing spate of firearms incidents and increased tensions between rival gangs across the Manchester Metropolitan Division, Trafford Division and South Manchester Division (resulting in the murders of Halton McCollin (M Division) and Lewis Braithwaite (C Division)).

The intelligence assessment suggests that current tensions are critical and there is an increased risk of firearms discharges.

Members of the Greater Manchester Police will act in accordance with the principles of the Human Rights Act, specifically Article 2, Right to Life and will police the current tensions within the Vision of the GMP, 'fighting crime, protecting people'.

The purpose of this Gold Strategy is to identify a command structure and assign responsibility for the deployment of tactics to be used in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. Protect and preserve life of the public, police, emergency responders, potential victims and subjects.
2. Proactively identify young persons, who by virtue of their behaviour or location or time of day (for example, out on the street in the early hours) may be at increased risk of falling victim to gun crime. Such individuals should be removed to a place of safety by returning them direct to their homes, families or into the care of the Social Services (Emergency Police Protection Order Proceedings). This strategy directly supports Article 2 of the Human Rights Act (Right to Life).
3. Prevent escalation in firearms discharges and tensions across the BMC Divisions.
4. Recognise that current tensions go beyond geographical boundaries and may manifest themselves across the BCM (and other divisions).
5. To ensure effective joint working between all police and partner agencies and specifically, A, B, C, M Divisions, SCD, XTF, Operation Xcalibre, TFU, TAU, Force Press Office, FIB, MMAGS, CDRP, Local Authority, LCJB/G, Children's Services, Social Services and where appropriate the wider community, and any other organisation or agency deemed necessary and appropriate.
6. Develop a better understanding of current tensions through improved intelligence analysis and assessment via weekly threat / risk assessment.
7. Produce a prioritised threat / risk assessment around the FMD / HCC and other persons likely seek retribution for previous issues.
8. Arrest and prosecute subjects using any legislation.
9. To arrest and successfully prosecute offenders involved in recent firearms activities. Gold will also look to support the operational implementation of any investigation or operation that supports this overall strategy during arrest phases.
10. Reassure and engage with the wider community and elected members.
11. Develop a robust media strategy with key messages, highlighting successes during the last two financial years.
12. Document operational orders and create an auditable and accountable command structure, utilising the GSB system.
13. Minimise corporate risks.



**Manchester Metropolitan Division
Letter of Concern Regarding Personal Safety**

Dear:

Date:

I have provided you with this letter to inform you of concerns that I, and the Greater Manchester Police have regarding your personal safety.

These concerns relate to increased tensions that exist in the area. You may be aware of firearms incidents that have occurred in recent times. Some of these incidents have resulted in serious injury and, tragically, in some cases, fatality.

I believe that you are at an increased level of personal risk and injury, and that you may suffer serious harm by engaging in a number of activities. Some activities may include:

- Attracting attention of individuals associated to gangs who may use firearms.
- Gathering in areas where gang-tensions have increased.
- Inadvertently giving the impression that you may be part of a gang.
- By virtue of the time of day, location, association, style of clothing, and your behaviour, making yourself otherwise vulnerable.
- You are requested to take these concerns seriously and recognise that you have a responsibility for your own personal safety.
- You are asked to refrain from gathering as part of a group or gang in these areas.

Specifically, and in relation to your own activities, the following has caused concern for your personal safety:

Example summary of concerns:

'At (time, Day, Date, Place), you were (seen wearing body armour) outside (specific location). I observed that you (specific actions). This type of activity could lead others to conclude that you:

- *Are a member of a gang,*
- *Associate with people who are members of gangs or,*
- *Are sympathetic to members of gangs and,*
- *This behavior could increase your level of personal risk or serious injury.*

You are now advised that GMP has recorded your activities. In the event of you being charged at any future date with a criminal offence, the prosecution may seek to introduce this information into evidence, to provide proof of your lifestyle or character.

We will take positive and robust action against any person that engages in criminal activity, especially those engaged in gangs and gun crime, and we will pursue such individuals relentlessly.

The fact that you have been served with a copy of this letter does not imply that you have done anything wrong. But, you are asked to consider your position, behaviour, activities and personal safety, and to consider if you are putting yourself or others at risk.

**Chief Superintendent David Keller,
Divisional Commander,
Manchester Metropolitan Division.**

Time Served:

Date Served:

Officer Serving Letter:

Signature of Recipient:

Signature of Appropriate Adult (where appropriate):

Should you wish to provide any information regarding gun crime, please contact:

- **Crime Stoppers: 0800-555-111.**
- **XTF Confidential Hotline: 0161-856-4438.**



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New plan to save kids from gangs

Exclusive Sarah Lester
 25/ 4/2008

YOUNG gang members could be placed in care or even locked in police cells to stop them becoming victims of gun crime.

It is the first time that child protection legislation - usually used for those who have suffered abuse - has been used in the war against Greater Manchester's armed gangsters.

The youngsters, who have not committed an offence but are suspected of involvement in gangs, face being taken off the streets by police and either taken home to their parents or put in police cells for their own protection.

They all will be referred to social services and, as a last resort, could end up in care.

Police launched the operation, codenamed Cougar, after concern about a drop in the age of boys involved with gangs.

Tensions between rival street gangs are currently at a 'critical level - the highest possible - following the shootings of Louis Brathwaite and Halton McCollin.

The new tactic has already dramatically cut the number of gang-related incidents in Manchester and is a direct attempt to save lives. It has been welcomed by anti-gun campaigners.

Erinna Bell, of Moss Side action group CARISMA, said: "This operation sends a clear message to parents that they need to be responsible for their children. It also sends out a message to social services."

At risk

Fourteen youngsters have so far been identified as 'at risk' and referred to social services. Already police have arranged face-to-face meetings with officers, boys and their parents at their homes. One boy aged 15 was kept in a cell overnight rather than being allowed out on the streets because police were so concerned about his safety.

Officers took out an emergency police protection order when his mum admitted she couldn't cope.

When an out-of-hours social worker could not find a bed for him police took the tough decision to keep in him in the cell for his own protection. His mum was then given the support she needed to keep him safe and he is being helped out of the gang culture.

All the teenagers and parents are given a letter personally written by Chief Supt David Keller which tells them that police believe their behaviour means they 'could suffer serious harm'.

He said today: "If a youngster is hanging around in a known gang area then as far as I'm concerned they are putting themselves at risk of being shot. This is the first time that gang members have been treated as 'children at risk - as victims.'"

Chief Supt Keller's letter details how gathering in certain areas, with certain people and wearing certain clothing has caused 'concern' for their personal safety. It warns that GMP has logged their activity which could be used in future court actions.

The letter, which has to be signed by parents to prove they have read it, adds: "The fact that you have been served with a copy of this letter does not imply you have done anything wrong." The operation is currently running in Fallowfield, Moss Side, Hulme, Whalley Range, Longsight and Old Trafford - but the technique could be extended.

Manchester council's Jim Battle said: "It is a great example of the police, council, care services and parents working together to recognise that young people are at risk and to work to make sure they are protected."

Select the link on the right to read the letter from Chief Supt David Keller.

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Chief Supt David Keller

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