

## **Case Study Threat to Life**

Since 2013 there has been an ongoing dispute between two organised crime groups in Greater Manchester. OCGA is based in south Manchester and OCGB is based in North Manchester. The two OCGS have multiple links through family, associates and business.

The main dispute is over drug dealing though both OCG's are also involved in money laundering, benefit fraud and have access to firearms.

There have been ongoing disputes between the two groups resulting in violent assaults and shots being fired at the home of both the OCG's associates.

The most recent incident escalated the risk when members of OCGA shot at the home address of the head of OCGB, for the purpose of this case study he will be referred to as B. At the time of the shooting both B's children and partner were present.

Fortunately no-one was injured but this immediately escalated the risk to family members associated to OCGB and OCGA due to potential reprisal attacks.

As the incident occurred out of hours the police made a referral to the Emergency Duty social work Team for assistance and a joint visit took place to the family to assess the risk and identify a place of safety.

Due to intelligence suggesting the intended target of the shooting was B a joint children's services and police assessment identified him as too high risk to remain residing with his children, even if this was outside of the family home. It was also assessed as too high risk for his partner and children to remain in the address and the rationale for this was that the address was clearly known to be associated to B so if someone were to make an attempt on his life again it is likely they would target the address.

Due to this the family were moved to a hotel that evening and B was moved to extended family outside of the North West region minimising the risk to B.

Greater Manchester Police convened a Gold Meeting the following morning to identify all the risk factors and determine a safeguarding strategy for all those involved. This was chaired by the superintendent and attended by a senior manager from Children's Services. The discussion focused on the current intelligence and threat level to B and both his family and associates. It was determined that due to the capability of B's rival associates to carry out such an attack the threat to his life was real and imminent which determined a High Risk Threat To Life score.

The high risk threat to life score meant that anyone having frequent contact with B could also be at risk as they may be injured by mistake if someone tried to harm him or they could be targeted if B's rivals could not harm him directly. Consequently a safeguarding strategy had to be implemented to ensure that anyone having frequent contact with B was safeguarded. This included both adults and children.

During the discussion it was identified that B had two more children from a previous relationship and all agreed an urgent visit needed to take place to ensure the children were not at risk.

During the visit it was highlighted that B had been having frequent contact with the children and that the address was known to be associated to B as he had previously resided there. Due to him being assessed as high risk, the house potentially being a known location to B's rivals and in close proximity to the property that was shot at it was agreed that the mother and children needed to move from the address immediately. The rationale for this assessment was that OCGA may try and target this address if they can not locate B.

The mother identified a family member to reside with in another area of Manchester. Police and children's services checks identified no concerns with the address or the occupants and the family were moved immediately. A police marker and urgent response were also implemented at the address for additional safeguards.

A strategy meeting was convened at the earliest opportunity which in this case had to take place after the visits to the families as moving the children to a safe location was the initial priority.

The strategy meeting was attended by police, probation, children's services, schools, health and housing. The discussions focused on how to cause minimal disruption to the children's lives whilst ensuring they were safe. This included consideration of any risk to the children continuing to attend their current school.

At this stage it was assessed that it was safe for the children to continue attending as long as the school reported any concerns to police immediately if people of concern presented at the school or if B presented to collect or see the children.

Housing options were explored so both families could be relocated to another property due to concerns that their addresses were known to rivals of B. Potential areas were identified that were considered to be safe based on police information that B's rivals were not active in these areas and they were at a reasonable distance from areas of concern.

Working agreements were agreed for both mothers and B regarding any contact with the children. Both agreements stipulated that B was not to have direct contact with the children until and dependant on a joint children's services and police risk assessment that identified the risk had reduced significantly so the children would not be at risk of harm in his presence.

The agreements also set conditions about areas the families should not visit due to potential risk of harm.

The strategy meeting concluded that the threshold for a section 47 enquiry (as outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2016) was met due to the significant risk of harm presented to the children as a result of their father's lifestyle and criminality.

Further assessment with B, the children and both mothers took place following the strategy meeting. The assessment also included gathering information regarding B's offending history and previous threat to life incidents.

The assessment concluded the section 47 enquiry and identified significant concerns for the children due to their father's involvement in organised criminal activity including drug dealing and potentially firearms. It also identified that both mothers were limited in their capacity to safeguard their children as they did not acknowledge the risk this behaviour and lifestyle could cause or they were too fearful of B to admit this to professionals at this stage.

Though it was acknowledged both mothers had adhered to the working agreement with children's services and agreed to move from their properties when the incident initially occurred indicating they knew their children were at risk of harm.

A review strategy meeting took place where the outcome of the section 47 enquiry was discussed and it was agreed by all parties at the meeting that all four children should be referred for an initial child protection conference due to the likelihood of the children suffering significant harm if appropriate support from agencies was not implemented.

As part of the safeguarding plans it was recommended that specific work was undertaken with both mothers to explore their understanding of the organised crime activity that B was involved with and their ability to keep the children safe from this. It was also acknowledged that the mothers would need support in challenging B's decisions/actions with regard to the children and this required domestic abuse services. Though neither woman reported being a victim of domestic abuse there was intelligence to suggest that it was a factor of both their relationships with B.

The mothers unfortunately did not have a positive relationship and therefore were not able to support each other through this but had wider family support.

Additionally it was requested that B accesses a parenting course and anger management through his probation appointments as it was identified that domestic abuse was a feature of his previous relationships and violent assaults were prevalent in his offending history.

It was also acknowledged that he had demonstrated no understanding of the risk his lifestyle presented toward his children and as he remained subject of High a Risk Threat to Life warning direct contact with his children was not able to be reinstated at this point. However it was agreed that the parenting course would give him the opportunity to explore his role as a father and consequently to address the impact of his behaviour and lifestyle on his children.