

Further information and documentation relating to the **CIRV project** can be obtained from:
the CIRV team on
T: 0141 276 7465
 or
CIRV@strathclyde.pnn.police.uk

VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT
CIRV
 Community Initiative to
 Reduce Violence

VIOLENCE
 reduction unit

VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT
CIRV
 Community Initiative to
 Reduce Violence

**Self
 Referral
 Sessions**

**the
 violence
 must stop**

Introduction

The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) is a multi-agency, community based project whose aim is to secure a rapid and sustained reduction in violent behaviour amongst gang members across Glasgow. The initiative has at its core a focused deterrence strategy coupled with diversion and personal development. It is based on existing programmes introduced to tackle gun related gang violence in the USA, but adapted to a Scottish context.

A partnership group including police, social service providers and the community has been established to deliver a clear message to gangs: 'the violence must stop'.

This message is communicated through a number of different mechanisms, including Self Referral Sessions, direct contact through street workers, police, prisons, teachers, school campus officers, community outreach workers and, when the time is right, the media.

This note will concentrate on the Self Referral Sessions.

What is a Self Referral Session?

- A Self Referral Session is essentially a carefully constructed piece of “drama” designed to directly and clearly communicate the message that the ‘violence must stop’ to gang members.
- It is a stated expectation that violent gang members attending pass on messages heard in the session to others.
- The session gives chosen members of the community the chance to explain their feelings regarding violence.
- It also highlights the services and programmes available for those choosing to get out of a violent gang lifestyle.
- The Self Referral Sessions are held in a courtroom to stress the seriousness of the proceedings upon those attending.
- Gang members are seated in the public area of the court with an audience of selected guests seated opposite.
- These guests represent members of all agencies involved in the project and include community members who can testify to the damage violence has caused them and the place they live.

Security and Staff

- Security in the courtroom, court building and surrounding areas is vital to ensure the safety of all involved in the session, including the clients themselves.
- Sufficient uniformed police resources are vital to prevent instances of violence or disorder taking place in the areas surrounding the court building.
- It is recognised that this session will increase the amount of people entering the courts, therefore it is necessary to have extra police and security staff on duty to cope.
- Use of scanners for weapons is recommended.
- There is a balancing act between having sufficient officers inside to ensure the security and safety of all concerned and also as an example of the resources on offer to the police to deal with violent crimes. Too many officers inside the room might be seen as intimidating; too few and it may be perceived as not taking the issue seriously.
- Sufficient staff must be on duty for the session to run efficiently.
- Duties include staff booking in all clients and handing out leaflets and cards, logging in guests and operating the IT presentations during the event.

Planning and Running the Session

- Planning the session is complex and is begun up to three months in advance.
- To assist the process, a comprehensive check list has been developed. (This document can be obtained from the CIRV team).
- The session itself should last no more than 90 minutes in total. This ensures messages are delivered effectively while not losing the attention of the gang members.
- The session is split into three distinct parts and messages: law enforcement, community message and finally services and opportunities available.
- The law enforcement message is delivered by a senior police officer who talks about the new law enforcement strategy. It should be emphasised that this is the way business will be carried out in future.
- Crimes committed by members of a violent group will attract the coordinated efforts of the police.
- Other speakers can back up the law enforcement message in their field of expertise, e.g. Accident and Emergency Doctors outlining the effects and providing graphic images of violence and prosecutors outlining the court process.
- Community speakers should be chosen who can deliver the message that they have had enough and that the violence must stop. These should include:

- Parents whose children who have been victims of gang violence tell their stories, describing the deep pain that they carry with them daily and revealing to the attendees what their own parents will endure.
- Ex-offenders describing the negative consequences of living a violent lifestyle. Serving long prison sentences is incredibly difficult, their friends did not visit them in prison, their mothers endured terrible pain and anguish, their partners left them and they missed seeing their children grow up. There was no glory in “the life,” only pain and regret.

- The final part of the session is delivered by speakers who can explain there are ways out and opportunities do exist for those who wish to change.
- They outline the initiatives, courses and employment opportunities available and explain that in order to access them they should call the CIRV helpline (See Card opposite) .
- The final speaker should remind attendees of the messages and urge them to take the information back to their groups.



Client Engagement Process for Self Referral Session



For those who want to read more about the role of CIRV, Self Referral Sessions and research, the following references may be useful:

1. Braga, A.A., Kennedy, D.M., Piehl, A.M. (1999). “Youth Homicide in Boston: An assessment of supplementary homicide report data” Homicide Studies, Vol 3 No 4, November 1999, 277-299, Sage
2. Braga, A.A., Kennedy, D.M., Piehl, A.M., Waring, E.J. (2001), “Problem-Oriented Policing, Deterrence & Youth Violence: An evaluation of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire” Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, Vol 38 No 3 (August 2001)
3. Braga, A.A., Kennedy, D.M., Piehl, A.M., Waring, E.J.(2001) “Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project’s Operation Ceasefire” National Institute of Justice Research Report (September 2001)
4. Engel, R.A. et al (2008), “Implementation of the Cincinnati initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV); Interim Report” University of Cincinnati Policing Institute
5. Donnelly, PD., Tombs, J. (2008), “An Unusual Day in Court” British Medical Journal, 2008, 337: a2959
6. “Future CIRV/VRU Practice Notes”

Further Reading: