

**TACKLING KNIFE CRIME TOGETHER
- A REVIEW OF LOCAL ANTI-KNIFE
CRIME PROJECTS**

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
INTRODUCTION	2
FINDINGS	4
ORIGINAL PROJECTS AND IDEAS	18
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
CONCLUSION	30
ANNEX A	31
ANNEX B	34
ANNEX C	41
ANNEX D	42

FOREWORD



In June 2010 I was asked by the Home Secretary to head up a fact-finding mission into the work of schemes designed to prevent young people carrying and using knives. To do this, I undertook a series of visits across England and Wales to projects, chosen by myself with Home Office support, which reflected a good variety of the work and issues happening across the country.

This report highlights the factors which, in my opinion, make a project successful and relevant to today's young people, and identifies some of the underlying causes of knife crime. My findings and recommendations reflect my opinion and those of the people I spoke to on my visits across the country.

To ensure consistency, a core set of questions were set and agreed in advance (Annex C). Although the questions were used as a guideline, the projects were not 'judged' on their answers: the Government wanted a more personal take on the work that is being done. My role was to actually go into communities, talk to people who have been affected by violent crime, and convey back to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary what society thought should be done to help combat it.

I also suggested that a panel of young people were selected to be my 'young advisers' and assist me in the review. The young advisers were chosen from different organisations from around the country, provided a cross section of the 13-24 age range and all had backgrounds which meant that they were well-placed to comment on knife crime and youth violence intervention schemes (biographies at Annex D). They were invaluable in helping me obtain information and providing a different perspective on each project. Many of them attend projects in their own cities and so were able to provide detailed knowledge on crime and their own communities, as well as being able to compare different cities and projects to their own to provide relevance and contrast. At the end of the visits I chaired a session in London that brought together all the young advisers and gave them a forum in which they could express their opinions on all they had seen and which, in turn, helped inform this report.

I would like to thank all of the organisations and young people I met on my visits, my young advisers, and the Prime Minister and Home Secretary for commissioning me to carry out this work.

INTRODUCTION

THE PROJECTS

Any project designed to stop young people carrying and using knives or deterring them from crime was welcome to be part of this review. We decided that the projects visited should be a cross-section of those across the country which provide programmes for young people within the 13-24 age range, although my key focus was on schemes for 13-19 year olds. We selected programmes from a range of organisations including those funded by central Government, local authorities, the police and voluntary and community sector groups. The projects I visited included those focusing on weapons awareness, positive activities (such as sport, music and drama), volunteering, mentoring, education, enforcement and employment prospects. The full list of projects I visited is at Annex B.

We aimed to undertake as many visits as possible during July and August 2010 to take advantage of the school holidays, which is when young people are most involved in the projects I visited.

I received many requests to attend projects, which is testimony to the amount of amazing work that is going on in communities, though unfortunately it was impossible to attend them all within the timeframe for my review. I therefore chose a selection that I felt best represented the different ways projects are tackling the various issues society faces and also took into consideration geographical and gender elements.

HOW ARE THE PROJECTS I VISITED TACKLING THE ISSUE OF YOUNG PEOPLE CARRYING WEAPONS?

During my review I visited London and then travelled to Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Stockton, Sheffield and Birmingham, often visiting

different areas and different projects within each city. Although each area was different and had its own specific local problems, the core causes of youth crime seemed to me to be the same across the board:

- poverty or for financial gain
- lack of opportunities
- gang mentality

It is these three factors that I believe were present in almost every city and community I visited, and which were also the most often mentioned as major causes of youth crime. The issue of knife-carrying is obviously also important, and the projects I visited pointed to two key factors behind this. Firstly, young people felt afraid that others were carrying weapons and so claimed they needed to carry knives themselves for self-protection: the 'fear' factor. Secondly, that other young people carried knives because it was seen as a fashionable or cool thing to do: the 'fashion' factor. These 'fear and fashion' factors that lead to the decision to carry a knife were both demonstrated and given as a reason at every project I visited.

Because most cities, and therefore most youth workers, are dealing with the same fundamental issues, the majority of the projects I visited use the same means and incentives to first entice and reach out to their target audience, and the same key strategies to try and change young people's mindset and attitudes. This in no way implies that all of the projects are the same – they all have their own individual ideas, passions and merits. But at a basic level, most of the projects use music, sport, days out or art as a way of engaging and working with youths, before introducing education, awareness, rehabilitation and mentoring through drama, workshops, one-on-one talks and presentations to

help show the consequences of carrying or using a weapon.

I found that quite often a cycle of volunteering develops, with some young people going through the process and then deciding that they want to give something back and use what they have learnt by becoming mentors within a project themselves. This, in my opinion, shows a great level of success in a project, that it results in a young person who has changed their life around enough to want to do the same for somebody else.

Before I completed my review, it was suggested this report take the form of describing the projects I had seen, answering the agreed questions and criteria, and using that information to help inform the success and relevance of current and future projects dedicated to stopping knife crime. Although young people have carried and used weapons for many years, I really do believe that this problem has escalated worryingly in the past few years and that the impact it has on communities and families is devastating. On the plus side, the fact that this issue has been highlighted more strongly in recent years means that there is now a great deal of amazing work going on in almost every city across the country - work that is quite often not recognised or rewarded, or sometimes even heard of. Having said this, it may be the case that some projects that have been running for many years are simply not relevant to today's youth. It is also true that, while it is all well and good trying to come up with new and original schemes to try and solve the problem, we are not going to find a magic cure overnight and so should not discount or ignore the importance of long-term projects that have had a degree of success and need more funding and support.

With all of this in mind, and after visiting all of the projects, I decided that a report listing the 'pros and cons' of each project would not be the best way of making use of what I had learnt. I discovered that there are a number of general issues and problems in relation to setting up and maintaining a project which need to be highlighted and addressed. I also learnt that not every project out there is looking just for funding, in fact, not every project needs funding or particularly large amounts of money to carry out its work. Sometimes support, networking and sharing best practice and ideas can do a great deal of good. Even simply publicising a project can help its members grow and allow its work to continue. After speaking to many youth workers, offenders, victims of violent crime, parents, Government departments, local authorities and police, I believe that this report can help not just by suggesting what makes a good knife-crime project, but also what is needed to make a good project, as well as what we as a society can do to help the cause.

I also feel that by doing this review I have discovered some original and underused ideas and schemes that could potentially be shared nationally and introduced into communities without requiring great sums of money or time and effort to start up. Finally, I have unfortunately found some gaps in the work that is being done with our young people which need to be highlighted and addressed.

FINDINGS

During my visits to projects up and down the country, I found a number of common problems and issues were raised by both projects and young people themselves, which are set out below. Some of the following findings may not be highlighting anything new, but they represent what I discovered after talking directly to projects and young people. The fact that these problems have been faced by young people for a long time means it is now time to tackle them.

BARRIERS BETWEEN POLICE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

From my visits, I found that there is unfortunately a feeling that there is sometimes a barrier between the police and some young people. This issue may not be new or surprising but it seems is still very apparent in today's society. Not too long ago, police would often patrol their local streets, regularly forming bonds with communities that in turn created a mutual respect, made people feel safe, and allowed the police to acquire intelligence regarding local crime and criminals, which helped them to do their job. I know that the Government is committed to tackling this by making sure that neighbourhood policing is a strong part of every community, but nowadays talking to the police is seen by some young people as 'grassing'. Many young people I spoke to said they do not feel confident or safe enough to report things to the police. This is obviously detrimental to finding out who is likely to harm communities, who may be carrying weapons and may also hinder the chance of bringing an offender to justice.

There is already work being done to address this problem, with organisations such as Crimestoppers setting up schemes that allow people to anonymously give information about anybody who may be

committing a crime. Unfortunately, I found that the mindset and attitude of some young people towards the police is still that they are not to be trusted. One reason given for this is that many young people feel they are all branded in the same way, as 'thugs' or 'hooligans', and treated with a lack of respect by those in authority. In return they do not offer respect to officers they encounter, which creates a cycle of unease and resentment.

Another major issue I found was that many young people said they find the process of 'stop and search' invasive and intimidating. There has been debate on how necessary and useful stop and search is, but in my opinion it is essential. I believe that the question should not be whether police stop and search but how they stop and search.

There is some good work being done on this in **Southwark**. The **Southwark Young Advisors** train police officers on the use of better and less threatening techniques with which to search citizens, with the aim of improving relationships between officers and the people they search. They have also worked with the police, who are using knife arches in their local area, interviewing and explaining the procedure to people who pass through the metal detectors. This sounds as if it is working well and could possibly be implemented more across the country, not only to address the concerns young people have, but also to begin breaking down barriers. By asking the advice of young people and giving them respect and an opportunity to contribute, the police may then earn respect back.

However, the issue of respect must work both ways. Police officers have a very difficult and sometimes unrewarding job to do and I am sure it doesn't help when they encounter silence, resentment or threats from young people and communities.

One project that aims to address this is **Lambeth Summer Projects** in **South London**, which uses a variety of initiatives to help build positive and continuing relationships between police, communities and young people in order to help reduce anti-social behaviour. They work closely with the police and bring them in to deliver workshops on crime and its consequences, initiating debates in which officers answer young people's questions honestly. I saw the 'Growing Against Gangs' positive life skills education programme - a seven session educational curriculum. It is targeted at young people in the 'transition' school years of 6 and 7 and is designed to address and challenge the attitudes, values, and beliefs that support gang affiliation, serious youth violence and other offending behaviour. I saw the first session of the programme where a front-line police officer challenged the perceptions of young people and acted as a teaching aid for the teacher. The young people were shown a piece of footage and asked to describe what they saw. They said things like 'a young black boy on a bike with a red hoodie'. The police officer then explained that this is quite often the only information they are given about who they are looking for. So when it comes to stop and search, it is not because the police are branding all young people the same but quite simply because they fit the limited description they have been given. This module has a great reaction and really opens young people's eyes to the fact that police officers are not out to get them or mistreat them. Again, this module could be used more as an educational tool as I think it is a very simple yet effective way to break down barriers.

With regards to the wider community, many people I spoke to said they feel there are not enough police officers patrolling the streets. To address this, some communities have taken the initiative to create their own

'street-based teams'. **Southwark Young Advisors** do this by having a team of young people who walk round their local estates and talk to other young people to get their opinion on what they think their community is like and what they would like to see or do. The advisors then take time to find various local projects and schemes and forward this information onto the young people they have spoken to enable them to participate. Because the advisors can relate to the young people they talk to, they can quite often offer advice about things that may be happening in their community and signpost them to key partners within the local authority, police and voluntary sector who may be able to help and offer guidance and support.

The fact that Southwark uses young people to lead the patrols is an added bonus as I feel young people engage more with peers their own age. I think if this was used more widely in the battle to prevent knife crime and anti-social behaviour, it would have a positive impact.

Another good example of street-based work is the **Street Pastors** scheme, which operates in many areas across the country and aims to tackle the effects of crime in communities by engaging with people on the streets and in night-time venues. It is an outreach approach to people who are socially marginalised, and those involved in criminal activity, and is staffed by volunteers recruited from local churches. I visited a Manchester scheme and took part in a late night walk with the street team. I was amazed at how many people they knew, how much information was passed on to them and what a difference they made. Estates that used to be notorious for crime and anti-social behaviour were now quiet and peaceful, doors were actually left open for the street pastors to come in and have a cup of tea

and a chat, and even local shop owners got involved by building relationships and imparting knowledge. The street pastors work closely with the police, drug action teams and local authorities to use their expertise and knowledge to achieve their aim of having a calming influence on their community. Their success is demonstrated by the young people whose lives they have turned around.

One of my advisors who took part in the street patrol said he found it interesting that on his two-hour walk around the community he did not see one police officer out on patrol. If communities followed the examples of Manchester and Southwark and got support to set up their own street-based teams, this could be a positive step towards making communities safer.

One city that recently implemented this was Sheffield, whose Street Based Team combines youth workers, teachers, youth providers, health professionals and other volunteers. They use minibuses fitted with computers and music equipment to engage with the young people they come across and find out their concerns. A joint briefing between various departments is always held at the start of each patrol, identifying areas that need attention. As the scheme is portable, they can travel to ‘hot-spots’ in communities and set up base, working with the young people there to educate them not just on weapon carrying but also on sexual health, drug misuse and other relevant issues. Other areas, such as Islington, use this idea, or a variation on it, and introduce activities such as cooking and employment and training advice. The scheme is very successful in the sense that it can be hard to motivate young people to attend projects, so by going directly to them that problem is overcome. By basing a team in an area for a period of weeks trust is built up, and once the young people

begin to listen to the worker, they can signpost them to positive activities in the area, or refer them to specialist services if needed.

In addition, **Sheffield Street Teams**, like many other areas in the country, have an operation called Staysafe in which they patrol after school to ensure children get home safely. They have the authority to remove a vulnerable young person and take them home or to a designated place of safety. A version of Staysafe is also used at football matches to deter young people from violence. It is worth noting that the police provide great support and partnership to many projects that aim to tackle weapon carrying and work hard to educate young people on the dangers and consequences of becoming involved in crime. Many projects I saw had police officers joining in or signposting young people to them, or are providing funding for the projects themselves.

NEGATIVITY IN THE MEDIA

Another key issue that was raised by young people was that they feel they are portrayed negatively by the media and branded as if they are all criminals or trouble-makers. They also felt that the more stories that the media tells about knife and gun crime, the more young people will feel that carrying weapons is a way to get notoriety and fame. By endlessly printing or showing stories about violent crime young people can become fooled into thinking it is glamorous, or it is the only way to get their name known to the world, and so will not worry about the consequences of being caught. Although we definitely need to highlight the problem of knife crime in our society, we also need to give our young people better things to aspire to. I believe that if young people were reading on a daily basis about their peers doing good things, whether this was simply doing well at school, doing

something heroic, doing good for their community or being lucky enough to fulfil their dreams, it would slowly start to make a difference and encourage them to have more positive aspirations.

It is clear that young people hold celebrities up as role models, be they sport stars, actors or musicians, but it is a fact that only a lucky few will be able to follow in their heroes' footsteps. If we can show young people that you may not become the next David Beckham, but that you can still play professional football and make some kind of career out of it, holding up local young people as examples, it may begin to change their mindset. There is the saying that 'good news doesn't sell,' but I believe that if the media made a conscious change and started promoting positive stories about young people alongside those about crime, it would give the impression that the next generation is not lost and hopefully have a knock-on effect. The recent **99% campaign in London** aims to do just this, by focusing on the positive young people we have. Their message is that 99% of young people are decent and admirable and promotes them positively. The campaign signposts young people to better opportunities, including volunteering and employment.

Many of the projects I visited said that they struggle to get any publicity or recognition in the press, even from their local papers. This is an issue not only when they are holding important events or fundraisers but even when they are trying to get their work known publicly to attract more young people, or to find sponsorship or funding. The simple act of supporting a project and promoting it locally could make such a difference in encouraging projects to keep going and young people to participate in them. Similarly, we need to start recognising and rewarding the work of the wonderful young people we have

in this country who do all they can to help their communities and make a difference, especially in the media and the public eye.

The **Spirit of London Awards**, launched in 2009, does exactly this. They allow communities and organisations to nominate young people who they feel have achieved great things, whether it be in music, sport, art, or social enterprise. Young people are given the chance to dress up, come along and mix and network with their peers and celebrities, and be recognised for doing amazing things. Many of the winners of last year's awards went on to become mentors to encourage other young people and show them how they achieved their goals. The awards ceremony was held again in November 2010 after proving a massive success and received even more nominations. I think this format could be adapted and used in other cities and used as a tool to promote success to our youngsters. The more we promote positivity in our society, the more it will become the acceptable and superior way to be represented and with the majority of our young people already doing the right things, I believe it is not hard to start turning this around.

I have heard many stories about organisations, including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and schools, rewarding kids simply for turning up to class or getting through a day without causing any trouble. Although I agree that vulnerable children who are having problems need to be treated differently and encouraged as much as possible when they do good things, I feel this reward process is not always the best way to do this. If young people receive football match tickets or get to go on trips for simply turning up to school, it may cause resentment to those who have been doing this all their lives without expecting any reward.

Similarly, if young people are given more help, support and attention because they have got into trouble, it may send the message that all young people should misbehave just to be noticed and taken care of. This concern was voiced to me by a parent who said that although her son wasn't currently very badly behaved, he could potentially veer down that path in the future and she almost wished he would get picked up by the police or youth workers just so that he would get help to ensure this didn't happen. We need to address the balance by continuing to work with young people who are at risk and vulnerable to straying into crime, but also be careful not neglect or dismiss those who wouldn't dream of it, who we should instead be holding up as role models.

LOCATION OF PROJECTS

Even when a city or a community has a successful project up and running, it can encounter many problems on a daily basis. One problem I found that is occurring nationwide is the rise of 'postcode' or 'turf' wars, which mean many projects and schemes are based in buildings and streets that are not accessible to many young people, even those who live fewer than ten minutes away. Throughout my journey I did not get very clear answers as to why these 'postcode wars' are happening. Many young people told me they don't even like the area they live in and have no respect for it, but still feel the need or the pressure to defend it. Although the reason for these 'wars' may not be clear, I believe the problem is getting more and more dangerous, is claiming lives and ruining communities and is affecting the good work that is being done to combat the problem, making many projects defunct and of no help to those they are trying to reach.

The Young Disciples project in **Birmingham** is one project facing this battle. Their building is based between the gang-affected Lozells, Handsworth and Aston areas - young people from these areas that are 'at war' with the others and so find it difficult to travel in to the project. Strangely enough, I found that once they are there, mixing with members of different areas and gangs does not seem to be much of a problem. A few of the projects I visited stated that they have a variety of attendees from different gangs and areas and it does not cause the issues you would expect it to, but simply getting to the project can sometimes be a matter of life and death for these young people. The Young Disciples combat this by collecting and returning their members from home, assuring them and their parents of their safety. I know other projects also use this method, which is admirable and worthwhile but it can be costly and time-consuming.

This issue also expands into schools, especially further education colleges and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Although a child may feel safe in their local school, if they are excluded they may have to attend a PRU in an area that is hazardous for them, and may have to mix with other young people that they have had problems with in the past. Similarly further education colleges do not just recruit locally, but from secondary schools from a much wider area, so there can be problems with gangs, causing young people to simply not attend at all. This clearly has a knock-on effect for their education and their lives.

It is difficult to know what the solution to this issue is. Wherever you base a project or a school, it may be in the 'wrong' area, but as this issue was raised a number of times, I feel it is worth bringing to people's attention. It is a shame that successful

projects are being avoided and not fulfilling their potential because of it.

LACK OF PROJECTS GOING INTO SCHOOLS

The biggest concern that was voiced throughout my review by the projects and schemes I spoke to was the fact that they are finding it extremely difficult to get into educational establishments and to get across the anti-knife crime message. They felt that many schools and teachers feel that having knife crime workshops in their schools might give the impression that they have a knife problem, which would affect the school's reputation. I know this is not the case for every school and area, some are happy to work with projects and local authorities in this battle, but it is the sad case that many schools across the country are not interested and will not consider spending money or time on these projects.

I find this attitude worrying and unnecessary, as much of the work that these projects do is preventative. The small minority of people who have actually used a weapon are often caught, and will be worked with in young offenders' institutions or youth offending teams. The key gap is work in schools to prevent it happening in the first place. Schools will often have sexual health awareness or drug misuse talks, which does not imply that every pupil will get pregnant or become addicts, but is informing young people of the choices they can make and the consequences for them. Anti-knife crime projects are simply doing the same – informing young people of the dangers of getting caught up in knife carrying, and the damage it can do to them and others. Peer pressure has a massive influence and although young people may go to a school with a good reputation in an area that doesn't have a problem with gangs or knife crime, if they travel to and

from school through areas where there is a problem, they may feel the need to carry a weapon to protect themselves, continuing the cycle and making the problem worse. Outside of school they may socialise with peers who do live this lifestyle and, without preventative education, they are left vulnerable to becoming involved themselves.

Many projects are voluntary and are happy to go into schools for no fee, or with just their running costs being covered, so cost is not a major issue. It is better for a school to take a chance and bring in a knife awareness project as a prevention measure to make young people aware of the problems and how to avoid being caught up in them, than to bring in a project once the problem has already started by which time people may have been hurt. If schools came together and recognised that bringing in such projects is not declaring your school has a problem but is about showing that you want to ensure it never has a problem, the stigma of knife-crime may be overcome and the problem begin to be reduced.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Hand in hand with education and awareness comes the debate about early intervention. Although there is some work being done with younger children, this seems to be limited as there is a worry that we should not really expose younger children to the issue of knife crime because it will traumatise them or they will not understand it. However, throughout my review, almost every project and youth worker I spoke to said we need to start intervening earlier if we are to prevent the current culture and behavioural patterns continuing into the next generation. There is a famous quote, attributed to St. Francis Xavier: "Give me the child until he is seven and I'll give you the man". Whilst seven may be deemed too young for some of

the content I experienced in the projects I visited, it seems to be the majority opinion that education and awareness needs to start at primary school level, particularly in the last year before they move up to secondary school and become more susceptible to peer pressure and influence. It is in the very first year of secondary school that most friendships and peer groups are formed and if we give our children the tools at a younger age to make wiser choices, they may not fall under the wrong influence.

The majority of the projects I visited have a target age of 13-18yrs. Although some of them begin working with children aged around ten, these tended to be mainly the 'positive activities' category, for example youth clubs and summer programmes such as **The Adventure Club** in **Liverpool** and the **Poplar HARCA Summer Scheme** in **Tower Hamlets**. These projects organise activities and trips for young people to keep them busy and active, but also organise prevention workshops to help with social interaction and personal development. The activities help them become team players and build relationships with their peers, as well as slowly introducing them to the dangers in society. Within these projects, the interaction and educational aspects I saw about knife crime were mainly through art, for example, with the young people making anti-knife crime posters or creating graffiti to express their desire for change. Although it was great to see them being introduced to the problem of knife crime which made them determined to make a difference, young people attending the Adventure Club even raised money for Victim Support by bag-packing. I do feel that we need to give younger children more credit and understand that they have probably already been exposed to a lot more negative influences than we are willing to accept. There has always been a concern about whether video games, films,

music and so on have a negative influence on young people, but the day-to-day reality of the news and worldwide issues also cannot be escaped. I believe that the issue of knife crime is sadly now one that is prevalent in society and so needs to be accepted, understood and prevented.

One project that I saw work with children as young as 8 in a calm, controlled and intellectually challenging manner was the **Croydon Youth Development Trust**. The youth workers initiated a debate with groups of young children on different issues such as the dangers of peer pressure, not obeying parents, carrying weapons and hurting others, and also introduced them to aspects of the law, all in a way that allowed them to express their own opinions and knowledge, which gave an insight into what children actually understand at this young age. The children would work as a team to answer questions such as 'What makes a good friend?' 'What makes a bad friend?' and then read their answers aloud to the rest of the group and listen to one another. This method allowed the workers to subtly work on the young children's attitudes and beliefs, whilst also allowing the children to feel like grown ups and that their opinions mattered. I was astounded by the maturity and solutions to scenarios that came from some of the children as young as eight and it proved to me that at this age they are already a lot more streetwise than we think. This may not be a good thing, but it is sadly a fact and we therefore must listen to the majority of youth workers and educators and begin to educate our children about the dangers at a much younger age than we currently are.

When I broached this subject with parents, many of them believed this was the right thing to do. I sincerely believe that with the right project or educational tool, working

with younger children could have a very positive impact on their crucial teenage years.

IMPACT OF CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

When I began this review, I automatically thought that the biggest problem all of the projects would be facing was lack of funding. Whilst this is certainly the case for most of them, another big obstacle many of them voiced was difficulty in getting Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance for potential volunteers. As I have already highlighted, quite a few of a project's volunteers are young people who have gone through the process themselves, turned their life around, and want to give something back. The problem is that many of them attended a project precisely because they had previously strayed down the wrong path, and so have misdemeanours or criminal activity on their record. As a result, when they are CRB checked they can find the results make it really difficult to get the positions that allow them to work with young people and become mentors in their own right.

For projects that are helping young people to get back into employment or find a career, it can be a massive setback when a young person's past stops employers taking them on, especially if it is for something minor that happened a long time ago. This can create a vicious cycle, with young people not wanting to go through the process of change for fear of being right back at square one when they have done so. It is heartbreaking that if a person does decide to work as hard as they can to create a better life for themselves, they are at the risk of being rejected and ending up once again with no opportunities and no hope.

Many projects are calling for a CRB review, which I know is currently taking place. The Home Office have explained to me that a CRB check is not a 'pass' or 'fail' but is actually a way of providing relevant information to employers and the decision who to employ is ultimately up to them. However, I think there is a need to try and find some way to combat the problem. This could be by only having what is relevant to a particular job specification on a CRB check. For very serious crimes it is understandable that this must stay on your record, but if a young person was caught with drugs at the age of thirteen but at the age of eighteen has grown up and is trying to earn a living, it makes no sense to me that they could miss out on employment because of this. I know there is work being done to encourage businesses to take on employees who may have small misdemeanours on their records. I think this is a step in the right direction and should be highlighted and campaigned for even more. Taking a chance on a young person not only has the potential to change their life, but also sends the message to others that it is possible to earn a decent living and have a better future.

HELP FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS WHEN COMING OUT OF PRISON WITH EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT/ HOUSING TO COMBAT RE-OFFENDING

Although there are services and departments that help young offenders when they re-enter society, many of the young people I spoke to said they still really struggle to begin any kind of decent life and it is this problem that normally causes them to re-offend. This issue is an amalgamation of some of the previous issues I have mentioned such as lack of education or lack of employment. This combination can make it hard for someone

who has committed a minor offence to put it behind them and start again. Many young people said they feel there is a lack of support, and that they are processed as a number and quickly forgotten about once they are out of the system - although society doesn't forget. If we are to try and reduce re-offending, I believe we must equip offenders with better tools and support to keep them from doing so again. Young people may not have a home to go to or a good family life, and so end up on the streets or moving from friend to friend, making the chance of them getting a job even less. Without money or focus in their lives, they easily get back into committing crime. Many young offenders said they actually became accustomed to life in a young offenders' institution, with some describing it as 'a holiday camp' - three hot meals a day, a place to stay, ways of being educated or earning a wage (no matter how small it may be), and quite often the opportunity to make friends or hang around with people they already know. Just as the new Government is making it more beneficial to work than to be on benefits, so too must we turn prisons and institutions back into places of punishment, where people want to get out and ensure they don't go back. To do this we must make life more worthwhile on the outside, through probation, rehabilitation and support and ensure that a young person has every chance they can to not re-offend.

The Prince's Trust Leaving Prison Mentoring Scheme aims to do this by giving young people one-to-one support from people with similar backgrounds. The project enables former offenders to become mentors and supports young offenders through their transition from custody into the community. They visit them whilst they are in prison once a month and deliver a motivational talk, sharing their life experiences and inspiring young people

that they too can turn their lives around. If required, supporters meet their young mentee at the gate on their release and ensure they reach their accommodation safely and continue to support their client with access to appropriate services for their resettlement such as benefits, health and accommodation.

When I visited this project, it was clear just how passionate the former offenders were, and what a difference they made to their protégées. Many of the volunteers had been mentored themselves and were proof of what this support and help could do. They were desperate to help as many young offenders as they could, but told me about some of the struggles they had encountered along the way. Again, instead of requesting more funding, they asked for more support and data sharing between agencies such as housing and probation that would help them to do what they do best.

I also want to mention a visit I did in 2009, before I undertook this report, to **Lakeview** boot camp in America. The young offenders there, none of whom had committed a serious or violent crime (they were mainly in for drug possession or selling), all went through the process of being mentored, educated and rehabilitated in an intense six-month period. When they completed their sentence, they came out on a Thursday and on the Friday morning had to report to their probation worker, where they were assisted in finding jobs or college placements. Nearly all of them had to start their placements the following Monday, giving them no time to meet up with old acquaintances or fall back into the trap of committing crime. They were assisted in finding accommodation, supervised regularly with drug and curfew checks twice a week, and given every help to integrate themselves back into society. To

spend this much time and effort on every young offender would prove quite costly, but I am sure it would not be as expensive as putting them in an institution for a second or third time. The Prince's Trust already has a great system in place that delivers this service but need the support, information and knowledge to continue making it successful.

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECTS/FUNDING

I found that knife crime projects and schemes across the country face a very difficult predicament in relation to funding. All of them do amazing work in their communities but they are constantly at risk of having to close down due to a lack of sustainable funding. This can result in children being turned back onto the streets without that network of support in their lives. I found that those who are lucky enough to get their ideas and charities up and running battle to stay open for more than a few years, as private and corporate sponsors may feel that it is best to fund new and original ideas rather than give money to one that has been going for a while. It is very hard to measure the success of a project on paper, something that I realised and accepted whilst doing this review. When so many projects are competing for the same pots of money, they may not have the best chance to get across exactly what they do on paper, which reduces their chances of getting funding.

As many youth workers I spoke to stated, a project needs to be sustainable as it takes a long time, many said at least a year, to build the trust of a young person and ensure that they are not drawn back into crime when they leave the project. For this reason, projects need to be sustainable: they need to be able to run for at least three, five, or ten years to make

sure they are as successful as possible. It is becoming clear to me that it sadly may be too late to reach or change certain members of this generation, so I believe we must prepare better for the upcoming generation. This means starting to work with them from the age of eight upwards and sticking with them until they have reached adulthood and are fully equipped to make informed choices. There may be some original and inspiring ideas that can make a big difference in a short space of time (marches, concerts and advertising campaigns are all brilliant at creating awareness and sending a message) but I believe the real work must start at a grassroots level, as early as possible and for as long as possible. It is devastating when projects that are at the brink of making a difference to a young person's life have to shut down, leaving them on their own and vulnerable.

I know there is no shortage of ideas or passion out there, and visiting just a tiny percentage of the work going on gave me hope that one day this problem will be significantly reduced. But projects cannot do it alone. Funding is obviously key, but so is publicity, linking up and sharing ideas, giving people knowledge on who to approach for help and coming together as a society to provide whatever expertise we can. If there is a business that cannot afford to fund a project but want to help, they could hire one of their young people or give them a work experience placement so they can get a taste of what their life could be like and gain some skills to help make that possible. If there is a project that needs funding but is not having much luck, why not link them up with similar projects in their area and see how you can pool resources and ideas to better help young people. Local papers could also massively help local projects by giving them a little bit of positive publicity every now and then.

I know it can be tough to get a project started, let alone keep it going, and this is something that in a time of recession and cuts is sadly not going to get any easier. Yes, the Government does need to invest in the next generation - it is not their fault our country is in such great debt, and communities can also help: the Big Society principle. We already have thousands of wonderful, inspiring people out there who are doing what they can, however they can, simply because they want to make a change. But without help, I feel many may feel they have to give up, which would have devastating consequences for today's young people.

LACK OF PROJECTS FOR GIRLS, PARENTS AND YOUNGER CHILDREN

Although I did not see even a quarter of the projects and work that is happening across the country, I felt the cross-section I did see, although impressive, did have some gaps.

I found that out of the twenty-three projects I saw, only two or three had initiatives specifically tailored for girls. Although it is clear that the typical young person most at risk at getting involved in knife crime is a young male, sadly, girls are also getting caught up in it, often by being asked to carry weapons, carry drugs and by being targeted by rival gangs. Some gangs now include girl members and although they may not be the ones physically causing harm, they can also play a part in causing untold damage, as in the 'honey trap' case of Shakilus Townsend. Although we must direct our time and efforts to those most at risk, we must not discount groups we think are not living this lifestyle, because there may come a time when they sadly do. This again, is where I believe schools and prevention measures are of the utmost importance.

One of the few projects I saw that had schemes specifically for their girl members was the **Butetown Pavillion Project** in **Cardiff**. This is a youth centre run by a very small team on an industrial estate in Cardiff, though 'youth centre' does not do it justice, it is actually more of a haven or a sanctuary for the young people who attend. As well as sports and music, Steve and his team give the young people help with writing CVs, applying for jobs, finding work placements, anything to help give them a better life. For young black men Cardiff has one of the biggest unemployment rates, but Steve and his team do all they can to combat that. Although girls can take part in all the activities offered, Steve also works on issues specifically relevant to them, such as sexual health education and teenage pregnancy. For example, by running a 'Bring Baby Home' scheme that allows girls to look after a pretend baby which helps them understand just how hard it can be when you have a child. Butetown Pavillion understands that girls may not always want to take part in sports or music activities and so has set up a small beauty salon in the centre where they can learn how to do beauty therapy. This not only gives them employable skills, but Steve says it is the best time and place to get them to open up to youth workers about the issues they may be facing.

The Young Disciples project in **Birmingham** also has a girls and young women's programme which aims to give girls time and safe space for themselves on a weekly basis. They can come together to escape the day-to-day reality of life in their areas and work on their passions, which at the time I visited was an anti-knife crime script. When I visited, the girls spoke about how hard it was on the estates where they lived and how much pressure and intimidation they feel, not just from boys but from other girls. All of them said that, although their

project was a great help to them, they would love to be able to do more, be that educational trips, funding for a short film or just the chance to involve more members.

The Adventure Club in **Liverpool** has piloted a very successful scheme for Muslim girls. Some youth activities may not be suitable for some young Muslim girls, and the Adventure Club runs a separate programme for them that allows them to mix socially with other young girls, including non-Muslim girls, out of school hours. The activities are the same as those delivered for other Adventure Club members, however, the staff team are sensitive to what they can and can not deliver based on experience from previous similar projects and working closely with parents and Somali community elders.

Most of the other projects I visited do welcome girls, and those that are sports-orientated often have girls' football teams or look to get young women involved in coaching, refereeing and so on. While the educational programs that go into schools talk to both boys and girls, I still feel there are not enough projects out there specifically tailored for young women. A lot of the educational workshops I saw seem to be geared towards young men carrying weapons; the consequences of them using them and the punishment they would receive as a result. I think more could be done to encourage girls not to be weapon or drug carriers, or sexual objects, and to encourage them to report anyone they know who is carrying or using weapons. Many of the girls I spoke to have family members involved in gangs and are weary of the consequences (police knocking on their doors, parents upset) but feel there is nothing they can do to change this.

In addition, I believe we need to encourage girls to aspire for more. By running

interesting programmes that deal with health and safety or first aid, we may encourage them to become nurses or doctors, or by having workshops and debates that they control and chair, open them up to the world of law. There are also many drama and theatre groups that have girls as members and enable them to express themselves, but I feel there may be scope to develop a project that works specifically with girls on the issues around knife crime.

Another element that I found lacking in the projects I visited was the bond between parents and their children. When talking about young people getting caught up in crime, parents are always mentioned or blamed for the upbringing they received. I fully agree that parents must be responsible for their child's upbringing and behaviour and that they must try and be aware at all times of what their children are up to. However, as it was explained to me throughout my review, it is not always possible for parents to do this. Children are at school almost as much as they are at home and those that do not attend school are often out of the house and hard to reach. If parents are working all hours to support their families, it can be hard to keep tabs on their children and quite often, when a police officer knocks on the door to inform them of their child's behaviour, they have had no idea of the life their child is living.

Once a parent is aware that their child may be behaving anti-socially or in danger of carrying and using a weapon, they must do all they can to put a stop to it. However, some parents simply don't know where to start or who to turn to about this, they may be scared to go to the police or authorities for obvious reasons and some are actually scared of their own children. Some parents find that as soon as their child walks out

of the door anything they have said is forgotten.

A good example of how parents can come together to help their children and local community is **Parent Intervention Takes a Stand (PITS)** in Sheffield. PITS are a group of parents whose children have been directly affected by serious youth violence and gangs in their local area, and who have disengaged from other services such as the police or local authority. The parents are very committed to making a difference in their community. They operate out of their own office on their estate and run activities for young people seven days a week to keep them off the streets and out of trouble. Since the group formed, anti-social behaviour in the community has reduced by 20%. When I spoke to the parents, they said they began this project because they were “sick and tired of burying their kids”. They also believe in ‘community parenting’, where everyone looks after each other’s children. If a young person is committing anti-social behaviour in their area and is seen by a neighbour or a friend, they fully expect to be disciplined by them or have the information passed on to their parents. I believe this sort of co-operation and support network is vital in communities but that it sadly seems to have been lost in recent years. Some parents do not make the effort to discipline or keep watch over their children yet resent those that do so for the good of their community. By coming together, PITS have tackled this, encouraged unity and instilled some sort of control and authority over their local area. This is a scheme that I think could work brilliantly across the country with parents coming together in every area to share their experience and knowledge to make their communities better and safer places.

One of the major problems that prevents parents from being able to stop their children committing crime is the breakdown of communication, discipline and respect. Many young male offenders do not have a male role figure in their life and so find it hard to accept authority and discipline. **The Young Disciples** project in **Birmingham** tries to address this by running the ‘In It Together’ programme specifically for fathers and their children to help them form some kind of bond and relationship. As well as inviting absent or struggling fathers, they invite older mentors to come along to give an example to the younger dads of what a good father is. In today’s society, people are having children younger and younger – to use the saying, ‘babies are having babies’. Some young people who have children themselves have no-one to turn to for support or advice, and as their children get older it can become harder and harder to control or discipline them as they were never taught how to. The Young Disciples’s idea of holding events to try and bring fathers and sons together is brilliant and could be developed further.

Most young people don’t want to be seen anywhere near their parents. I discussed ways of breaking down these barriers with the projects I visited, including getting parents involved as coaches or referees in the sports projects their children attend, or even having a ‘go-between’ mentor that the young person trusts who can discuss any problems with both the parent and child individually and try to bring them together. Obviously there are social workers who do this job but young people may not fully trust them or open up to them and so it would be good if the mentors from the project they attend were able to work on family relations. One of the projects I saw does a lot of work with parents as well as children and they find that it is very successful in opening up lines of communication.

Another idea that came up in a discussion with my young advisors was the idea of having 'Community Parenting Classes' where young people can come to seek advice and be mentored by other parents, and also discuss the issues and problems they have. Simply knowing that they are not the only ones going through this can make a big difference. Since my review, I have discovered that there actually are a number of projects that work with parents, but that there is not much funding to keep them going or make them as successful as they could be. I believe more work in this area is essential to tackling the problem of knife crime.

ORIGINAL PROJECTS AND IDEAS

All of the projects I visited were inspiring in their own right and tackled different aspects of knife crime. But there were some that stood out for me, not just because I had not seen or heard of anything like them before, but also because I felt they could be implemented or piloted across the country. For me, the following projects either addressed gaps that I hadn't seen much work on or were something that I felt could be expanded on.

UNITY (NOTTINGHAM)/KICKZ (NATIONWIDE)

Both these projects are football-based and are quite similar in what they do. They stood out for me because they combined almost all the elements I had seen in different projects and managed to convey them to a target audience of hundreds, or even thousands, in a way that was successful yet simple.

Unity is a cross-city initiative in Nottingham that engages young people at risk of gang activity, drugs and violent crime. It is a project that uses a football club to draw membership from different neighbourhoods, encouraging young people to develop positive relationships to help combat gang and territorial-based conflict. The idea is that members can come along and play on a professional football pitch, wear a club kit and take part in tournaments, provided they maintain a 'contract of behaviour' which includes addressing offending behaviour and drug and alcohol use.

For most of the members I spoke to, the key draw of the project is the chance of playing on a professional football pitch, as many would simply never get a chance to do this. In order to take part in the game, players must attend issue-based workshops that

educate and create awareness for them. I spoke to members who had been a part of the project since it started and most of them admitted they joined simply to play football, however, once they began to take part in workshops and began working as a team, their attitudes began to change and being part of Unity gave them a feeling of belonging and self worth similar to being a member of a gang, but in a decent and honourable way. It seems almost unthinkable that you would be able to get members of rival gangs to come together on the pitch and work as a team but the leader of the project, Morris Saumels, says that he believes this is simply the best way. Young people can be universally united over football and by throwing them together in the dressing rooms and on the pitch, he says there is no time for them to squabble or fight. If they want to win, which of course they do, they must work together, and this then sub-consciously filters out into their lives and onto the streets.

Unity now has over 600 members in Nottingham, many of whom have completely turned their lives around: they are in employment in media, sports and youth work placements and give the younger members hope and something positive to aspire to. The older members become mentors for the new younger ones, first by coaching their play and then by gaining their trust, allowing them to open up, and then trying to educate them on a better way to live their lives. When the younger members see others who may have previously been part of a gang, and even relatively high up in the ranks, wearing Unity's kit and making a statement that they are no longer a part of that, it gives them the courage and impetus to make that choice too and feel they can do so safely.

Although many projects tackle the issue of gangs through education and awareness, I felt that Unity was one of the ones that did so head-on and through action. They pick their members up in a minibus and take them to a neutral area so there is no risk of danger and by placing people in a safe environment, they can begin to work on the issues that are affecting them.

I saw one of the educational workshops that is compulsory for members to attend and found it outstanding. **Safe Passage-Catch 22** is commissioned by Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership and is designed to enable the most at risk young people to make positive and safe life choices. Through role play, real-life stories and actual experiments where audience members are made to get up and participate to show the damage weapons can do, they try to change the attitudes and behaviour of young people. The thing I found most powerful was their use of images of real wounds and display of real weapons to discuss the law and consequences of weapon carrying, and their engagement of their audiences. One young boy was invited up and asked to demonstrate in the simplest way how quickly it would take to lose his body amount of blood. This had great impact on the participants and also on me, as it was different to the usual methods that I had seen and really brought home just how easily you can lose your life.

The combination of Safe Passage and the work Unity does is exceptional, and a testimony to this is the lives that it has changed. Unity also helps deliver a project called Talent Studio, which is a national film making project created and led by young people that allows them to get involved in media and tell positive stories about issues that matter to them.

After seeing the potential Unity has, I believe that if their model was piloted across the country it would have outstanding results. It is a great package of positive activity mixed with education and mentoring, and tackles the issues of gang mentality whilst providing opportunities for a more positive future. It has also been able to reach out to a huge number of young people. I feel that if every city had such a scheme it would potentially have a great impact.

Towards the end of my review, I was introduced to a scheme called **Kickz** which, again by using the power of football, aims to engage young people who may be difficult to reach. The appeal with Kickz is that it has the backing of professional premier league clubs such as Arsenal and Tottenham who provide coaches to go into communities and teach the kids, as well as help create routes into education, training and employment. It also encourages volunteering within the projects and tries to break down barriers between the police and neighbourhoods.

Kickz is very similar to Unity, except that it is on an even bigger scale. It is a nationwide scheme, with a total of 38,000 members across the country. It goes into estates and communities and sets up a base, sometimes revamping or building new football pitches. This not only gives young people somewhere decent to play but also provides the whole community with something to take care of and get use from.

On paper Kickz could be deemed as just another sports-orientated scheme, but when I spoke to the young people involved, many of them credited it and their coaches for turning their lives around. Kickz coaches find out what their young people aspire to be or what skills they may have that could help them find employment and

send them on academic courses to further their career. They are on call 24/7 for support and advice with one coach even meeting a young person at seven in the morning to give him lunch money for that day. Kickz also helps relations between areas by setting up tournaments between different Kickz projects, again this helps with the issue of gang and turf wars. Kickz is partnered with the Premier League, Local Authorities and the Metropolitan Police. Police officers regularly patrol when the project is on, building bonds and respect with the young people. Again, Kickz combines many elements of a good project: it also recognises and rewards participants by holding an annual awards ceremony where young people and their coaches are honoured. Trips to overseas academies are arranged, and a wealth of opportunities is provided. Young people can go through the programme and become coaches and referees themselves, as many of them have.

I was so glad to see something similar to Unity projected nationwide as I really believe it is a great and effective model. While Kickz do run educational workshops and hold events, they are not compulsory for young people wanting to take part in games (as they are for the Unity project) which I felt might be a missed opportunity to grab their attention while they can, and use it to give as much awareness and education as possible. Both projects also run girls' teams and also have female participation in coaching and refereeing.

Combining all the elements of these two projects could make one very powerful knife-crime scheme. Although both projects are already up and running and very successful, as always the issue of cuts and funding poses a threat, with Kickz at risk of having to cut back. I think this would be such a shame as it would leave so many

young people at a loose end, without the role models and support they have become used to.

These two projects are of course not the magical solution and do not address every issue related to knife crime, but both go a very long way towards it and have such impact that I believe they should be nurtured and developed to continue their great work.

THE TEES VALLEY PROJECT (THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY – STOCKTON)

After my brother was murdered, and throughout my journey to understand youth crime, I heard about the idea of restorative justice but I did not feel that it was something that could be successful. As a victim myself, I knew that I would never want to meet the offenders who killed my brother or hear anything they had to say. However, I visited the Tees Valley project with an open mind and was prepared to at least listen to what they had to say.

This project develops and delivers a range of restorative approaches including family mediation, victim-offender mediation and victim awareness. They give training in restorative practice to schools, police and children's services but their key element is victim-offender mediation where they allow victims of crime to have a voice in the criminal justice system and tackle the patterns of victimisation and offending. The programme works alongside ten to eighteen year olds in the criminal justice system.

When I visited the project, I heard from a mother whose son had been severely assaulted and only just survived. After the trial and sentencing, Tees Valley approached Sheila to see if she would

be open to the idea of working towards meeting the young offender, David.

Before the victim and offender communicate, a great deal of preparation is done and numerous checks are made to ensure it is the right thing to do. Before taking part in restorative justice, Shelia says she “felt devastated and was really angry about what had happened to her son”. Shelia believed that the young boy responsible for her son’s injuries would be, “a giant, over six feet tall and unrepentant for his actions”. As a result, she lived in fear, thinking it would be just a matter of time before her son was assaulted again by the same boy.

Since meeting David and his parents, Sheila’s perception has significantly changed. She says, “he listened to me, looked me in the eye – I didn’t expect that. I feel a heavy weight has been lifted from me and my family and we can move on with our lives now”. Since meeting Sheila, David has turned his life around, stayed out of trouble with the law and is a positive role model for other young people. Sheila and David still keep in touch and have forged a positive relationship, something they both thought impossible before taking part in restorative justice.

After hearing Sheila speak, I began to realise that maybe some good could come out of the restorative justice process. It will obviously not work every case, and when dealing with murder or very serious violent crimes, it will be a much more personal and complicated decision. But in tackling more minor crimes, I believe it could have a massive impact in changing the attitudes of offenders and making them think twice about re-offending. I think it could also have a very positive effect on the victim, giving them closure, allowing them to express to the person who hurt them the

damage they have done and helping them realise that they were in no way to blame. Victims, especially those in the case of rape or domestic abuse, may blame themselves for what has happened and live their lives in fear or guilt afterwards. To be told that it was not their fault can put the victim’s mind at rest and allow them to get on with their life.

After seeing the work Tees Valley do, I am much more open to the idea of restorative justice and think that it can do good in some cases and within some communities. Some cities take this idea a step further by having communities hold ‘trials’ for minor offenders, with juries and judges selected from the community and the community deciding what a suitable punishment is. For example, if a young boy is caught vandalising property, the community could decide to make him repair whatever he has vandalised or pay back the community in some way to repent for what he has done. Putting power and authority back in the hands of the community may lead to a change, especially if young people are also allowed on the panels.

This will obviously not work in the case of more serious crimes but I believe if offenders were actually made to fully accept and understand the crime and damage they have committed, it would be the first step to them showing some remorse and accepting responsibility, which would then hopefully ensure they never repeated their actions. For young people caught with knives, to be put face to face with someone who has been a victim of knife crime or a mother who has lost her child may be the catalyst they need to ensure they will never actually use a knife. There are many projects that do use this technique when trying to educate first time offenders who have been caught with a knife but I think if it was compulsory,

not only would it hopefully reduce the number of young people who carry a knife but it would give victims and their families a voice to express the horror and tragedy it can cause. There are so many families out there who want to go into schools and young offenders' institutions and share their experiences and through restorative justice, their amazing stories could be put to good use.

GOODIES IN HOODIES (CARDIFF)

This was one of my favourite projects, not just because of its originality but also because of the small amount of time, cost and effort it took to start compared with the massive impact it has in its community. This project was started in Cardiff by a 16yr old schoolgirl who wanted to challenge the negative perception of young people. She was tired of older people branding them all the same and got together a group of young people to prove them wrong. She started by holding a 'tea on the green' event, where the teenagers and young people came together to actually get to know each other and break down the barriers and misconceptions that had arisen.

When others heard of the scheme and wanted to join, they had to prove themselves and earn their membership by doing good in their community in the shape of volunteering, manual labour etc. As well as earning a coveted 'hoodie' to show they are part of this project, for every hour of voluntary work they give they can exchange it for an hour's training in a subject of their choice or passion, which will help them gain employable skills for the future. They can also exchange it for driving lesson credits. Older participants are encouraged to run positive activities for younger members and they have joined forces with a local leisure centre to run 'Street Games,' where kids can take part in all sorts of activities. This not only gets

people attending their local leisure centre, it also again gives the members running the games more skills and some of them have since been employed by the centre in full time employment.

The fact that this scheme was started by one girl with no money or experience but a desire to make a difference and has grown and reverberated around the community is outstanding. The concept of 'Goodies in Hoodies' showing that not all young people are bad is great at tackling one of the biggest issues young people have with society. If young people can show this is not the case whilst being rewarded with things they are passionate about, they could bring about massive change in communities. This is a model that could be adopted and implemented anywhere and, most importantly, by any young person, enabling them to take responsibility and show exactly what their peers are really like.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the projects, discussing the different ways in which they tackled knife crime, and learning about the different obstacles they all faced, together with my young advisers, I have put together the following list of recommendations:

FOR MORE ANTI-KNIFE-CRIME PROJECTS TO GO INTO SCHOOLS

To help with this, head-teachers should be encouraged to allow projects in. It would be great to have a group including a project, a member of a victim's family and a police officer put together a presentation to take into an annual conference of head-teachers across the country which aims to show them that it is preventative and necessary and try to get as many heads as possible on board.

FOR KNIFE-CRIME PROGRAMMES TO BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS

Although I understand the Government's desire to give schools greater freedom to provide the curriculum that is most appropriate to their pupils, we need to overcome the stigma some schools have about talking about knife crime. In subjects such as Personal Social Health and Economic education (PSHE), young people learn about social and health issues that are relevant to them and that they will encounter in life and in society. Knife crime is now such a big issue, embedded in their culture that I, as well as many others, feel it is important to make them aware of this. With some head teachers being afraid to bring in programmes for fear it will affect their reputation, I think if all schools had some kind of knife crime programme, just as they all have sexual health and drug awareness programmes, this would help overcome the problem. This could be reading a book in English written by a victim of knife and gun crime and having to write a report or essay, or by enabling young

people to create their own drama and media projects. Whatever the approach, I think there should be something in every school that warns young people about the dangers of knife crime and gives them the truth about what it does to our society. Although I am not recommending that it is made compulsory in the National Curriculum I believe that educating pupils about the dangers of knives should be strongly encouraged, for example in schools that teach PHSE. This would overcome any stigma and fear associated with talking about knife crime in schools and would ensure this message reached as many young people as possible. The materials used could obviously be tailored to individual schools and age groups but as so many people, including teachers, feel it is necessary, this is something that really should be seriously reconsidered.

FOR THE CRB CHECK PROCESS TO BE REVIEWED

This is such an important issue and can be a major obstacle for projects and their volunteers. More work must be done to convince employers to take on those who have minor offences on their record.

I welcome the Government's recently announced Criminal Records Review, which is examining whether the criminal records regime strikes the right balance between respecting civil liberties and protecting the public. In addition, I know the Government is taking a fundamental look at this issue as part of their green paper on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (which aims to remove barriers to reintegration into society for offenders who have not been reconvicted of an offence for a specified time). In particular, I support their proposal to 'wipe the slate clean' once a young offender reaches adulthood for all but the most serious offences.

MORE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR DATA SHARING

Allowing agencies and projects to come together and have access to important data helps ensure that they are fully equipped and prepared to deal with individual young people. For example, if a primary school teacher knows that a young person is vulnerable or heading down the wrong path, they must be able to inform their secondary school teacher and ask them to be aware and keep watch over that child to ensure they do not go any further down that path. Privacy and confidentiality are clearly highly important, but sharing data between relevant agencies and services as much as possible will make a big difference. The **London Serious Youth Violence Board** are piloting a scheme in different boroughs where they facilitate meetings between schools, police, local authorities and various other departments to discuss hot-spots in the community, people at risk, and those who are causing the damage. This allows everyone to be aware and to give input on what they can do to help and I think it should be happening in every area across the country.

MORE EARLY INTERVENTION

This was one of the most important and widely called for issues raised with me in relation to educating young people about the dangers of knife-crime. If we cannot persuade schools to do this, we must fund and develop projects that are suitable for younger children and make them as aware as possible of the paths that may lie ahead for them in the future.

ONE COMMUNAL WEBSITE TO LINK CHARITIES TO FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND/OR A WEBSITE FOR PROJECTS TO LINK UP AND SHARE BEST PRACTICE/ IDEAS/ADVICE

The biggest thing that projects need is funding, and it is always very hard to find. Projects that are just starting out may have no idea where to look and so will automatically approach the Home Office or their Local Authority. In addition, businesses that wish to offer funding may not know where to look to find a suitable project. I believe that if there was one big database where projects could register what it is they do, and anyone who had funding or ideas to help could list their details, it would help link everyone up and give people a place to start looking.

In addition, projects are often very small and locally run by small teams of volunteers. Although they are all brilliant at what they do, when they encounter problems I got the sense they can feel very isolated and unsure of who to turn to. If there was a website that allowed projects across the country to link up to share their ideas, pool resources or ask advice, this would save a lot of time and energy. Some projects may feel that because they are all competing for the same pots of funding that they are unlikely to find help from other projects, but the truth is most projects would love to work together more and just need an outlet to do so. For example, if one project is lacking a mini-bus, they could link up and borrow one from another project in exchange for one of their workshops or something else they can offer. I think it would also be useful to have a discussion forum on the website where project workers can talk to each other and share best practice. Projects based outside of big cities may feel they

are overlooked, setting up a website such as this could help overcome this.

LESS ‘TICKING BOXES’/FORM-FILLING FOR PROJECTS AND MORE GRASSROOTS ADVISERS

I began this review with a set of core questions that I wanted every project to answer. Whilst these served as a good guideline, I would never have been able to learn exactly what it is each project does or feel the difference they have made to young people and their communities without going and seeing them for myself. And it was only through talking to a variety of people who had been affected by violent crime that many of the ideas and issues in this report started to emerge. Therefore, when government or other organisations decide who is suitable for funding, I feel it is of the utmost importance that this is not judged simply by reading a brief of the project and checking whether it fits a given criteria. Having a team of people who can go in and assess a project personally will give a much more honest and real evaluation and give projects a fair chance. It would not cost a great deal of money as the best people to do this might be people like my panel of young advisers - they provided invaluable advice and made very mature decisions. Young people would love the chance to have responsibility for their communities and show that the majority of them are not caught up in knife crime but in fact want to stop it. By using them to travel round projects and provide fair and accurate reports for funding purposes, projects will not only be better represented, but young people would also feel much more included and valued.

COMMUNITIES TO BE ENCOURAGED TO COME TOGETHER MORE

Community Resolve in **Bristol** is a not-for-profit social enterprise that recruits facilitators from local communities to resolve local community tensions. A large part of this work is with young people aged eight to twenty-five, and takes place in schools, youth clubs and on the street to involve young people in discussions about knife crime, gang issues and street conflict. Although sadly I didn't get to see the main aspects of their work, I did participate in a new event they were piloting where they held a meeting in a local youth club and invited parents to come along with their children to discuss issues of youth and safety in the community. Unfortunately, not many families attended (again demonstrating the problem of young people not wanting to associate with their parents) but the meeting was a great success in terms of coming up with ideas to combat this problem and other issues in the community. The participants broke up into groups and discussed topics relating to the safety of young people in the community and then each group gave a presentation of their ideas, sparking debates and providing possible solutions. I really enjoyed taking part in the debate and as a young person myself, felt glad to be able to air my views. “We think that Community Resolve’s preventative work around gangs and weapons use, working closely with police and schools, has played a major part in Bristol’s fall in knife crime over the last two years, a trend distinctly different to other UK core cities” said Inspector Paul Cox, Bristol District Youth Team, Avon & Somerset Constabulary.

I believe community forums should be publicised and developed more, and more effort should be made to get young people

attending, as they can be invaluable in giving advice on certain issues. At the meeting I attended there was a discussion on how to encourage more young people to come along, as most never hear about meetings like these, or may feel they will not be welcome. Ideas included sending a bulk Bluetooth text message or a social network invite (i.e. using technology that relates to young people) but the main issue for me is finding a way to show young people that their voices do count and will be welcome.

There are obviously different community meetings that go on but, working with the idea of the Big Society, it would be a great to have more of them and to allow all members of a community to have more say and power in what happens in their area. Meetings are all very well, but if people are not allowed to act on their ideas, or are not given support to make the changes they discuss they become pointless. I am sure communities would gladly accept more responsibility for their areas if this were given to them.

A CREDITS SCHEME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Two of the projects I saw in Cardiff, **Butetown Pavillion** and **Goodies in Hoodies**, use a brilliant incentive which not only encourages young people to participate but also benefits the community. Goodies in Hoodies runs a successful project called 'Active Opportunities' which is aimed at young people not in employment, education or training and aims to improve access to training and employment. Credits can be earned through volunteering hours, which can then be exchanged for courses such as coaching qualifications, forklift truck driving, CV and interview skills and driving lessons. Volunteering ranges from coaching, cheerleading and football to

work placements involving cleaning graffiti, painting local amenities or stewarding at local events.

Not only is this an excellent way to engage with young people and encourage them to do good, it also opens up a world of opportunities for them. By enabling young people to earn the right to drive, they are able to widen their search for jobs, which has a positive impact on their future. I think this is an idea that could be adopted nationwide: many young people would love to drive but may never be able to afford to learn. If they are given that freedom they will no longer be limited to the estates and streets they live on and also may feel much safer travelling to college, work placements and projects. It is such a simple scheme that both rewards the community and has the potential to make a massive difference to a young person's life.

AN AWARDS CEREMONY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Just as we have the Pride of Britain Awards, the BAFTAS and the Sports Awards for adults, I think we should have a nationally recognised awards ceremony for young people that gives them something to aspire to and allows them to be applauded for making the best out of their lives, whatever circumstances they may have encountered.

MORE INITIATIVES SPECIFICALLY TAILORED FOR GIRLS, PARENTS AND YOUNGER CHILDREN

I visited a couple of projects that try their best in these areas, and there may well be some brilliant ones that I didn't get to visit, but I believe that funding and time must go into developing projects that work with girls, parents and younger children.

MORE PROJECTS TO PROMOTE KNIFE CRIME EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Point7 and **4Change (Sheffield)** were two projects I saw that worked side by side to give young people aged between ten and seventeen a broader understanding of the real effects of weapon related crime. They aim to break down the false perception of prison and give the reality of what kind of life young people face if they continue to carry and use weapons.

4Change is part of In2Change **South Yorkshire**. It is unique not only in that it used real ex-offenders to perform role play and share their own experiences, but that it was based in a centre that had real-life sets that really brought home the reality of the stories they were telling and made the impact even more powerful. 4Change believes that part of the reason young people commit crime is because prison doesn't deter them, as many do not understand the effects it will have on them and their family. This project allows them to experience prison first hand, either by running the project in an actual prison itself, or by using real offenders and life-like scenery to challenge young peoples' misconceptions. The project tells the story of a boy called out by friends to come and fight and shows scenes with the boy and his mum pleading with him not to go, an incident involving a knife and then his life in prison, dealing with bullying inmates who threaten him and his family and showing exactly what prison life is like, right down to the size of the cell and the food they eat. There is no acting or exaggerating with this project, the offenders are speaking from experience and so they draw the young people in, with many of them opening up to them and telling them their fears and what life is like for them.

There are many interesting elements to this project such as being invited to guess what crime each member has committed in their past, and even guessing which offender is still incarcerated and will be returning to prison when the young people leave. This helps break down the misconceptions of who commits crime and why, and some of the offenders stories are so shocking that it wakes the audience up and makes them realise just how easily they too could end up in prison. The project started by taking young people into actual prisons, where their work was even more powerful, though due to safety issues it is not always feasible to do this. Although the centre where it is based has sets that make the project even more powerful, there is no reason why it wouldn't work without them, or why they couldn't be set up in schools or town halls.

Alongside 4change runs **Point7**, an hour long presentation led by a police officer who demonstrates real weapons, real injuries and shows CCTV footage of actual incidents with descriptions of the crime. The police use these tools to discuss the law and the consequences of carrying weapons. They show the damage this does not only to victims but also to their families by playing interviews with parents and siblings, and answer any questions the young people may have. The presentation is extremely powerful, moving, and educational, and proves that many young people don't know the law related to carrying knives and even believe it is legal in certain circumstances.

I found the combination of these two projects including both police officers and ex-offenders very powerful, and the fact they include both police officers and ex-offenders shows young people that the two can work together. The ex-offenders are brutally honest with the young people: they explain exactly what they have to look forward to if they continue to commit crime

and answer any questions as truthfully and knowledgeably as they can.

I think this model is perfect to go into schools. Not only is it so real that kids will relate to it without feeling like they are being preached at, but also because it involves ex-offenders, the young people feel these workers know exactly what their life is like and what circumstances they face. Making young people face the devastation of victims' injuries, their family's heartbreak and the reality of prison ensures they are fully aware of everything that comes with carrying a knife and may have the best chance of making them reconsider. In my opinion, 4Change and Point7 have everything needed to change young people's attitudes in an emotive, thought-provoking but original way. Safe Passage/Catch 22 is also a great educational programme for schools.

TARGET FIRST-TIME OFFENDERS AND THOSE AT RISK OF RE-OFFENDING

The Knife Crime Prevention Programme (KCPP) is a compulsory programme that is targeted at young people aged between ten and seventeen, convicted of knife possession and receiving a first tier or community penalty (excluding Curfew, Attendance Centres and Reparation Orders). It is now running in 93 areas across England and Wales, reaching all young offenders caught with a knife. It is designed to make young offenders realise the consequences of carrying a knife and is delivered in eight core modules consisting of attitudes to knife carrying, the law, health, social implications, managing conflict, victim/perpetrator interaction, public space awareness and exit strategies and ex-offender education. I saw the Liverpool version of KCPP in action.

All of the modules were briefly described

to me, but the one that I sat in on in the Liverpool project demonstrated the medical implications of using a weapon. I had seen many graphic images of real injuries in other projects and while this was often the element that made the kids sit up and take notice, what made this module different in its delivery was that it had a medical professional, in this case, an A&E nurse, delivering the presentation. He not only showed the young people images, he explained the full effects they would have on their victims, from scars to colostomy bags in a no-holds-barred, honest approach. Many injuries that young people guessed were minor and believed the victim would live were proved otherwise, drumming home the fact that there is no safe place to stab somebody. Interestingly, out of all the projects I saw, this is the one in which I saw the most participation and interaction with the audience, with the young people asking many questions about the images and injuries they were seeing.

The benefit of having a professional deliver this module was clear to see, and afterwards the nurse told me that he would love to see more medical professionals teaching our young people about the dangers of knife crime. Being a doctor or nurse is an extremely tiring and time-consuming job but if others were willing to deliver a module such as this it would have so much more of an impact than a police officer or teacher doing the same.

I did not get to see the other modules but heard a bit about each of them. I think this project is vital in trying to change the attitudes of knife-carriers and every first-time offender caught with a knife should be made to go through this programme. There is talk of the programme going into young offenders' institutions which I think is a great idea (it is currently being piloted in Feltham Young Offenders' Institution) as

a way of changing people’s mindsets and convincing them that carrying a knife can only have negative consequences.

- **Signpost young people** towards positive outcomes, ideas and solutions

AIM TO TACKLE THE CONCEPT OF FEAR AND FASHION OF KNIVES

Fear & Fashion, run by **Leap, (Westminster)** was an intensive peer education programme that aimed to deal directly with the ‘fear and fashion’ factor and explore and challenge young people’s beliefs on this issue to change their mindsets. Interactive workshops and games were used to get young people to quickly open up to explore and understand the reasons why they may carry a weapon. In group discussion, and by re-enacting real-life scenarios, participants were helped to examine the thought processes that they may often go through, and consider other ways of dealing with a situation, to help them make better choices the next time they encounter conflict.

Based on the findings from my visit, I believe that a good knife crime project will:

- Have an **educational aspect**
- **Consider both genders** and also parents or younger children where appropriate
- Have local **promotion and support**
- Be based in a **neutral area**
- Have access to reliable and **predictable funding**
- **Interact with other agencies** (for example, the police)
- Be **interactive with its audience**
- Be authentic – clearly reflecting reality
- Consider **victim interviews and impact**

CONCLUSION

When I was first asked to take on this role, I was honoured but also worried about the amount of responsibility that came with it. I did not feel experienced enough to decide which projects were ‘right’ and which were ‘wrong’, which ticked the right boxes, or which didn’t seem to be reaching targets. In my eyes, if a project helped one young person to turn their life around, then it had achieved its aim

But I soon realised why I had been asked to take on the role. It is common knowledge that young people can find it hard to open up to people in authority and that communities and project leaders may be wary of those in power, of having to answer to officials and constantly fill in paperwork to obtain funding or simply keep themselves and their work going. Sending me into communities, someone who had themselves been through a very personal and tragic loss, meant I could relate to many of the people these projects reached out to and the message and lessons they were trying to convey. It was possible for me to find information and possible solutions to the problem of knife crime that would be hard to uncover from a grant application form or a business plan. My role was about reaching out and listening to those at grassroots level, those that actually know what is going on in our streets, that work with young people every day and know how to get them to open up, and most importantly, about reaching out to the young people themselves.

I really believe the problem of knife crime has escalated in the past few years, and the impact it has on communities and families is devastating. But I am encouraged by the inspiring work going on out there which is being led by communities, local agencies, and young people themselves. This is something to be celebrated. We also must remember that the majority of young

people contribute positively to society and they should not be overshadowed by the actions of the minority. We now need to look at what more we can all do and work together so that fewer families face the tragedy of losing a loved one in the future.

ANNEX A

WHAT IS KNIFE CRIME?

‘Knife crime’ is any crime that involves a knife, and includes:

- murder or assault where the victim was stabbed with a knife
- robbery or burglary where the thieves carried a knife as a weapon
- carrying an illegal type of knife

WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTING CRIME, IN PARTICULAR VIOLENT CRIME?

There are many reasons why young people may commit crime, which is why it is so difficult to find any one solution to tackle this issue. During the course of my review, I asked a variety of people from offenders to youth workers their opinions on why youths can get caught up in the cycle of crime and received the following responses:

Poverty/for the financial benefits

Many of the young people I spoke to who have committed crime seemed to come from low-income families that do not have much to survive on. They said money does not often stretch to material or luxury items or sometimes even enough food, and so to obtain the things they want young people find alternative and dishonest means of getting them, putting them on the ladder to crime. Once they begin earning money from their illegal activities, greed and survival kick in and they commit more and more crime and whether it’s to fund the lifestyle they are now living or support their families, they find it very hard to stop. The financial benefits to young people appear to be very tempting compared to earning an ‘honest’ wage:

‘John,’ Gang Leader, South London: “Why work all day to earn £70-80, then have the tax man come and say ‘thanks very much I’ll take a quarter of that,’ when I can earn

the same, probably more, in an hour selling drugs?”

This sums up the mentality of some of the young people I spoke to. However, most do not seem to realise that when you start on the criminal ladder, whether it be supplying drugs or stolen goods, there is always someone higher up than you in the chain of command ready to take the majority of the money and it can take a very long time to earn the instant rewards they expect that would make the risk factor even slightly worth it. Crime, to many young people, especially gangs, is a business and is simply a means to a rewarding end.

Lack of education

I found that young people who commit crime tend to have been excluded or absent from school for long periods of their lives. They may not be academically minded, or may have suffered other problems at school, which can lead to frustration and anger - resulting in punishment and expulsion. Once a young person is not being educated, if they are not given other goals or paths to focus on they are vulnerable to being caught up in crime. Even if they begin to change their ways later in life, lack of qualifications and education may make it very difficult for them to obtain a job, and lead them to believe that there is no other way out.

A perceived lack of opportunities/facilities

One of the biggest reasons I was given for why young people commit crime was the perceived lack of opportunities, resources and facilities available to them outside of school. They felt that the number of youth clubs and other facilities has reduced dramatically across the country, leaving many young people with nothing to do except hang around their local streets. This

can set up a cycle of resentment within communities, with older people believing groups of young people that congregate are intimidating and automatically about to cause trouble, and young people, with no other place to go other place to go getting frustrated with being brandished ‘hooligans’ and ‘gangs.’ And when groups of young people are hanging around in certain areas and becoming bored and frustrated, they are more susceptible to being caught up in gang warfare and in danger of being hurt or hurting others.

Gangs

The issue of ‘gangs’ itself is also a problem. Not every group of young people coming together is a gang, but there are well-established gangs, often run by extremely organised crime networks, that can cause fear and havoc in a community. They may only be a minority but the damage they can cause is frightening. Many young people are forced to join gangs, whether to avoid being seriously bullied or hurt or because older siblings or family members are already involved. Pressure to join can also be a serious problem for girls, with many of them being used at a young age for weapon/drug holding or as sexual objects, being passed around other members and finding it very difficult to escape. To join a gang there is often some kind of initiation to ‘prove’ yourself, ranging from a low-level crime such as stealing, escalating to serious violent crime that comes with great risk and damage. Once a young person is in a gang, it can be almost impossible for them to leave without putting themselves or their family in danger. Even if they do decide to leave that lifestyle, only very few are able to do so unscathed and will constantly be looking over their shoulder, not just for members of other gangs they may have had problems with but also from their own.

Lack of suitable role models

Lack of suitable role models and mentors for young people was another major reason I was given underlying youth crime. This tended to be specifically said about the father-son bond, many young men said they do not have their fathers in their lives. Of course not every boy without a father is destined to commit crime, nor is every young people brought up by a single parent, but many youth workers and young people themselves said they felt having no fatherly bond or discipline does have a negative influence on young men, as they will look to find role models elsewhere, quite often not in the safest place. Mothers may be out all day or night working hard to try and support their families and if a young person is not in education or does not have discipline or supervision in their family life, they are vulnerable to being led astray, particularly by gangs. Many people said they joined a gang for a sense of family and purpose that they do not get at home. I got a sense that older siblings or young people who become parents at a young age may feel that they are the ‘man of the house’ and so have to provide for their family and help their mothers, and that as a result they commit crime to help supplement the household income.

Fear and Fashion

In response to the question of weapon carrying - in particular knives - most young people were split into two camps, with the majority being in the first. Fear of being attacked by someone with a knife causes young people to feel the need to protect themselves, so they carry a weapon. This is most certainly the case for anyone involved in gang membership, where they may come across any number of people wanting to hurt them on a daily basis and so freely admit they carry a knife to ensure this doesn’t happen. I also wonder how many

who say it is for ‘protection’ are telling the truth or believe it can be used as a valid excuse as the other worrying factor behind knife crime is about ‘fashion’. The simple fact is that some people deem it ‘cool’ and ‘glamorous’ to carry a weapon and will do it just to show off or to fit in with peers. Peer pressure is also a major factor, with older young people, especially in gangs, having an influence on younger ones and even forcing them to carry weapons. The perception of weapons both as protection and as a fashion icon, is something that seriously needs to be addressed.

Disability/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Another possible cause mentioned in regards to young people and crime is the lack of understanding and acceptance around disabilities, in particular Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Young people with this disorder find it hard to pay attention, stay focused or even function in ‘normal’ society. The association between ADHD and crime is becoming increasingly recognised and studies conducted in the US, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Finland and Norway suggest that around two-thirds of young offender institutions and up to half of the adult prison population screened positively for ADHD in childhood and many continued to be symptomatic in adulthood¹. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is also commonly associated with ADHD and longitudinal studies have shown that ADHD independently predicts the development of ASB². Although all of these studies may have limitations in their methodologies, it seems that the rate of young people and adults with ADHD in the prison population exceeds that reported in the general population (that is, 3-4% of children and 1% of adults).

Lack of Respect for Themselves and Others

I believe that some young people today have no respect or regard for themselves or others, or life at all. People can be murdered for looking at somebody the wrong way, or seriously harmed for a mobile phone. I believe this is because some of today’s youth do not respect the law or authority and so do not behave like decent members of society. I know this may be very small number, but it is still worrying and I believe the most obvious reason they behave this way is that they feel they have no hope or opportunity for their own life – they do not see a future for themselves and so do not care if they take it from others. I believe these are young people are the hardest to reach, though it may possible with enough help and rehabilitation, we must also sadly accept that some people are so far embedded in the life of crime and are so unwilling to be helped that the only solution is tough punishment and prison sentences.

¹ (Young, 2007).

² (Bambinski et al., 1999; Taylor et al., 1996)

ANNEX B - PROJECTS VISITED

4 Tier Mentoring, Manchester Young Lives, Manchester

This project aims to demystify the perceived allure and kudos of gun and knife crime and associated gang activity. This is achieved via a four-tiered mentoring programme, within which a group of young people is trained as peer mentors for primary school-aged children who have been identified through Manchester Young Lives's behaviour support worker. Project workers identify and train several ex-offenders/gang affiliates as 'Elders'. The 'Elders' subsequently deliver stand-alone critical/inspirational talks to an identified group of young people as a starting point toward demystifying gun, knife and gang-associated offending.

<http://www.manchesteryounglives.org.uk/>

The Adventure Club (Toxteth Activity Club), Liverpool

The project delivers prevention and early intervention workshops through activities taking place in the evenings, at weekends and school holidays as a diversion from crime. The project is delivering a three-year rolling programme which targets up to 25 young people per year on a programme of social interaction and personal development, retaining their interest for periods of up to six months through mentoring, education and training. This includes increased participation in physical activity, learning respect for others through peer mentoring, experiencing life outside of their normal living environment, develop citizenship skills and enhance their opportunities for future employment through participating in skills-based training up to accreditation level.

Catch 22, Nottingham Safe Passage

This service, commissioned by Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership, is designed to enable the most at risk young people to make positive and safe life choices. It aims to prevent young people at risk from becoming involved in serious violent crime, in particular crimes which feature firearms or knives. The project uses a range of tried and tested interventions to engage and divert up to 150 young people (14-19 years old) per year and works closely with partner agencies to ensure the most effective packages of intervention are used. Core elements of the intervention programme include: a cognitive behavioural approach which is central to changing the attitudes and behaviour of young people, an intervention programme designed to meet the needs of young people with an emphasis on evening and weekend work, and matching young people with local volunteer mentors.

Unity

This cross-city initiative engages young people at risk of gang activity, territorialism, drugs and violent crime. The football club membership is drawn from different neighbourhoods, encouraging young people to develop positive relationships. The club helps give the young people a sense of belonging and self worth, with attendance depending on them maintaining of a contract of behaviour. Members also attend issue-based workshops. Other services delivered as part of this project are the Talent Studio, a national film-making project created and led by young people who want to tell positive stories about issues that matter to them through their own short films, and Positive Futures, a national community-based inclusion programme for young people.

<http://www.catch-22.org.uk/>

Community Resolve, Bristol

Community Resolve has been working with young people across Bristol aged eight to 25 for over seven years. The project aims is to equip young people with the skills they need to better manage their daily tensions and pressures. The number of young people reached is increasing ever year (with over 2,500 supported in 2009 alone) and the number of young people self-referring to the project for support and guidance is also increasing.

<http://www.communityresolve.org.uk>

Fear and Fashion Programme, Leap: Confronting Conflict, London

The Fear and Fashion Programme was an intensive group work programme run by Leap: Confronting Conflict, which worked with young people at risk of carrying and using knives. The young people involved participated in a 4-day intensive and challenging leadership programme which promoted positive leadership skills and trained them to work as peer educators and deliver peer education workshops in their local area which explore issues of conflict, safety and knife crime.

Leap also works with schools to develop peer education programmes, and trains students to deliver anti-knife crime workshops and to mentor/buddy younger students. In addition, Leap trains school staff in conflict awareness and conflict management.

<http://www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk/>

Goodies in Hoodies

The Goodies in Hoodies project was set up by a young girl who wanted to challenge the negative perception of young people. The concept was very successful and has since broadened to include a wide range of youth activities, including:

- **Active Opportunities**, which works with those involved who have been or are likely to become involved in crime. Young people are invited to do volunteering work in their local community in exchange for every hour of voluntary work they are given an hour of training in a subject of their choice. The idea is that this training will help them to gain employment.
- **Street Games**, in which older participants are encouraged to run positive activities, such as football matches, for younger members of the group, which helps them gain coaching skills.
- **Youth Centre**: the project runs a summer scheme which offers a range of positive activities.

In2Change

In2Change works with ex-offenders, young people and families. It employs ex-offenders to work with schools, colleges, and excluded youths and aims to deter tomorrow's criminals by using people who faced similar challenges and changed their outlook on life as an example. It runs the 4 Change Project, an initiative that aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour amongst young people aged 10-17 and, in doing so, support the rehabilitation of existing prisoners..

<http://www.4-change.co.uk/home>

Kickz

Kickz uses the power of football and appeal of professional football clubs to engage young people who may otherwise be difficult to reach. The scheme aims to:

- engage young people (aged 12-18yrs) in a range of constructive activities
- create routes into education, training and employment
- encourage volunteering within projects and throughout target neighbourhoods
- break down barriers between the police and young people
- reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in targeted neighbourhoods
- increase playing, coaching and officiating opportunities for participants

<http://www.premierleague.com/page/Kickz>

Knife Crime Prevention Programme, Liverpool

This is a national programme which is targeted at young people aged 10–17 convicted of knife possession who are receiving a first tier or community penalty (excluding Curfew, Attendance Centre and Reparation Orders). The scheme is designed to raise awareness of the consequences of carrying a knife and has eight core components:

- Attitudes to knife carrying
- The law
- Health
- Social Implications
- Managing conflict
- Victim/perpetrator interaction

- Public space awareness and exit strategies
- Ex-offender education

Lambeth Summer Projects, London (Brixton, Clapham, Norwood and Streatham)

The Summer Projects aim to break down barriers, be they real or imaginary, between police, young people and the wider community by:

Promoting good citizenship and reducing the potential for young people to commit crime by introducing them to credible ways in which they can constructively use their leisure time

Helping to build positive and continuing relationships between communities and young people in order to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour and promote a reduction in the fear of crime and victimisation

Enhancing awareness of the needs of young people by promoting partnership between statutory, voluntary, private sector agencies and organisations to encourage their involvement in providing positive activities for young people

<http://www.lambethsummerprojects.co.uk>

Leaving Prison Mentoring Project, The Prince's Trust

The idea for this project came directly from young people who had experienced custody. In December 2006, HRH The Prince of Wales hosted a seminar called 'Breaking the Cycle of Offending, where young people said they wanted one-to-one support from people with similar backgrounds. Following this seminar, the 'Working One to One with Young Offenders' project was created.

The project enables former offenders to support young offenders through their transition from custody to the community. The supporters work as a team: they visit prison on a monthly basis and deliver a motivational talk to a group of young offenders. Supporters share their life experience to inspire young offenders that they too can turn their life around and live successfully. Once matched, supporters visit their clients monthly in prison and write letters to them. Supporters meet their client at the gate (if required) on their release to ensure they reach their accommodation safely. The primary role of a supporter is to inspire and motivate their client. Their secondary role is to support their client to access appropriate services for their resettlement needs, for example benefits, accommodation or health.

<http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>

Parent Intervention Takes a Stand, Sheffield

Parent Intervention Takes a Stand (PITS) was formed by a group of parents whose children were directly affected by serious youth violence and gangs in Burngreave in Sheffield, who had little faith in local services. The parents operate out of a converted shop unit on the estate and run activities for young people seven days a week, including football training (through Sheffield Wednesday Football Club), DJing, art and outwardbound activities. Through Sheffield Wednesday FC, PITs recently managed to get young people together from two different gang postcodes (the S3 and S4). Since the group formed they have developed a strong working relationship with partners and anti-social behaviour in the community has reduced by 20%.

The Pavilion Out Of Hours Project, Cardiff

The Butetown Youth Pavillion is situated in the Cardiff Bay area and is housed in a former warehouse and is now run by Cardiff City Council. Butetown Youth Pavilion is at the heart of the community and aims to provide opportunities for young people to pursue activities and interests as part of a wider developmental process, in which they learn about themselves and the society they live in. Over the past twelve years, thousands of young people have passed through The Pavilion Youth Project. Many came from challenging backgrounds and have since gone on to college and employment. Many former members have remained in contact with the project and some have returned as volunteers or members of staff.

<http://butetownyouthpavillion.co.uk/>

POINT7, Sheffield

POINT7 was created to give participants a broader understanding of the 'real' effects on the lives of 'real' people of weapon-related crime. The presentation's aims include giving participants a deeper understanding of:

- the consequences of carrying any illegal weapon.
- the types of weapons seized from offenders.
- the types of injuries caused by guns and knives

Poplar HARCA Summer Scheme, Tower Hamlets, London

The Poplar HARCA Summer Scheme runs youth clubs which provide an intensive 4 week programme of positive activities for young people. The young people are divided into groups according to age, with the younger group focusing on prevention

and the older group working with young people who have already been involved in anti-social behaviour or youth crime. The scheme offers a range of positive activities including sport, art, music and design.

<http://www.poplarharca.co.uk/Home>

The SAFE Programmes, Safer Stockton Partnership, Stockton on Tees

The flagship of this programme was two events held in local nightclubs organised by the local radio station Today's Favourite Music (TFM). The first was a 'SWEET' night, an under-18s rave which attracted over 2,000 young people. Target groups were referred by projects and put onto the guestlist. The second event was held in the centre of town and attracted over 500 targeted young people. The young people participated in a "battle of the DJs", and dance and graffiti workshops. Feedback from young people was very positive and the SAFE scheme contributed to a reduction in anti-social behaviour of 39% and criminal damage 63% compared to the same period the year before.

Sheffield Street Teams, Sheffield

In Sheffield, street-based teams form one part of an approach that has been developed and successfully rolled out in a number of areas across the city. The teams are deployed into priority areas in the early evening and staff engage with young people and signpost them to positive activities. Operation SStay Safe builds on the street-based team model and also has a clear protocol to support vulnerable young people who are deemed as being at risk.

Southwark Young Advisors, Southwark, London

Young Advisors are young people aged between 15 and 21, who show community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, regeneration and renewal. Young Advisors are locally recruited and professionally trained by the Young Advisors Charity to provide links between professionals, young people and their communities ensuring that plans and delivery are relevant and respected. The Southwark Young Advisors (SYA) have done extensive work with The Damilola Taylor Trust to organise campaigning events in London. The young people also support the 'Count me In' campaign which encourages young people to 'turn their backs' on knife crime and has over 37,000 members. Young Advisors from the project also work at a grassroots level to help change attitudes to knife crime in their area, they are part of 'street based' teams that walk around hotspot estates, engaging with young people and the whole of the community demographic, to hear their issues and concerns and signpost them onto positive activities. SYA have worked with the police on knife arches in Southwark, interviewing and explaining the procedure to people who pass through the metal detectors. They also provide stop and search training to local police with the aim of improving the relationship between police searchers and the young people they search.

<http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/>

Street Pastors Initiative, Manchester

The Street Pastors Initiative (SPI) is an interdenominational response to urban problems and aims provide a late night outreach service in inner city hotspots to reduce, diffuse and prevent gun and street crime and anti-social behaviour by engaging with socially excluded people who are involved in or at risk of criminal activity and substance misuse. It was pioneered in London in January 2003 and there are now over 100 teams across the United Kingdom. Each city project is set up by Ascension Trust and run by a local coordinator with support from Ascension Trust and local churches and community groups, in partnership with Police, Council and other statutory agencies. Each project is staffed by teams of volunteers, recruited from local churches who share a common concern for the social issues prevalent in the communities in which they live and serve.

<http://www.streetpastors.co.uk/>

The Studio, Croydon Youth Development Trust, Croydon

The Studio is a project run by the Croydon Youth Development Trust (CYDT) which provides a workshop-type facility where young people can meet to pursue their interest in music. It aims to:

- Introduce young people to the music industry
- Compliment the work of other CYDT projects by providing on-site and in-house opportunities for their young people
- Provide tuition in singing, playing instruments and writing music and lyrics, and offer the opportunity to perform to a live audience

- Act as a conduit to help young people demonstrate their talent to the professional marketplace

<http://www.cydt.org.uk/>

The Tees Valley Project, The Children's Society, Stockton-on-Tees

This project develops and delivers a range of restorative approaches including family mediation, victim-offender mediation, victim awareness, and training in restorative practice for schools, police and children's services to support preventative and diversionary efforts. A key element of the project's work is victim-offender mediation, which enables victims of crime to have a voice in the criminal justice system, deals with their fears and tackles the cyclical patterns of victimisation and offending. The programme works alongside 10-18 year olds on Final Warnings and Referral Orders, as well as those involved in more minor offending to improve their relationships and help them to take responsibility for their actions.

<http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>

Young Disciples, Birmingham

Young Disciples is a social exclusion project set up for young people and run by young people. The project works with hard to reach young people predominately between the ages of 15 – 25 years old but also with younger age groups (seven years upwards) during the school holidays. The project uses qualified counsellors as well as learning mentors. Birmingham Connexions personal advisers are also on hand to offer careers advice, employment training, talks and workshops. Workshops include roleplays and discussions lead by the young people on a range of topical issues, for example, how to approach interviews. In addition, qualified consultants and

NHS advisers lead discussions on sexual health and drugs awareness. A lot of the workshop topics are a result of suggestions the young people themselves.

<http://www.youngdisciples.co.uk/>

ANNEX C

QUESTIONS ASKED TO PROJECTS

Audience

- Who is the project aimed at?
- Why was it aimed at that group and does it reach the target demographic?
- Is it aimed at both genders?

Numbers

- How many young people does the project/programme reach?

Engagement

- How long is the project and do young people commit to the duration of the project?
- What are the levels of attendance and what are the drop out rates?
- How does the project deal with those who drop out?
- How do you encourage engagement?

Community Involvement

- Does the project work with the community and is it supported locally?
- Has the project sought out community involvement?
- Does it work with victims/victims families?

Results

- Has the project had a positive impact to date?
- What is the success criteria and is this being met?
- What is the feedback from the young people taking part in the project - do they think it is worthwhile?
- Has there been any formal evaluation of the project?

Cost

- How much does the programme cost and how is it funded?
- What are the main costs for the project?
- Sustainability
- Is the programme a long-term project?
- Does it have the potential to bring about cultural change in the community?

ANNEX D

BIOGRAPHIES OF YOUNG ADVISERS TO BROOKE KINSELLA

Ben Andrewna

Ben, 17, is a British Youth Council Ambassador as part of the Calderdale Youth Council and the Young Inspectors Team. As a young person he has been in and out of care but has got involved in his local community through his youth council and inspectors teams to help make a positive impact on his community. His experience in life and as part of inspecting local youth services would mean he was a real asset to the review.

Kim Cooper

Kim, 21, has been a Sefton Young Advisor for three years. As a Young Advisor, she is a trained, paid consultant supporting community leaders and decision makers to find ways of engaging young people in community life. During Kim's time as a Young Advisor she has carried out extensive research into young people's feelings of safety in their communities, delivered acclaimed training courses to professionals across the country and presented a lecture to 150 John Moore's University Criminology students. She also works in her local community as a youth worker.

Alika Jeffs

AJ, 19, is connected to a variety of youth projects aimed at tackling knife crime. As a Southwark Young Advisor he has worked as part of a street based team engaging with at risk and vulnerable young people and signposting them to positive activities including sport, education and work experience. AJ has worked closely with the National Young Advisors Charity, where he has made an informed contribution to a number of pieces of commissioned work. AJ is currently doing a full time apprenticeship in electrical engineering

and continues to be a positive role model to his peers.

Tara Jenks

Tara, 21, organised a Kidderminster Activity Day back in 2007, where she took a group of young people on an away day, after applying for a Community Cash Award from The Prince's Trust. Tara, who dreams of becoming a youth worker and wants to support young people who have not had many chances in life, saw that a number of young people in Kidderminster did not have a lot to do and many did not go away on holidays. She organised the trip from start to finish and 13 youngsters experienced abseiling, rock climbing and kayaking.

Aron Jervis

Youth taskforce member Aron, 22, has suffered the traumatic experience of being stabbed in the past. He got involved with the 'It Doesn't Have to Happen' Taskforce because he knows that nobody can get through to young people better than other young people.

Jacqueline Macaulay

Jacqueline is a Southwark Young Adviser who, for the past four years, has worked tirelessly to ensure young people within Southwark have a voice on issues that affect them. Working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, Jacqueline helped create and implement a stop and search training program which has been delivered to over 900 police officers. Jacqueline has previously joint-led a panel of young people advising a Minister on Department of Communities and Local Government policies that have impacted on and affected young people and is a dedicated advocate for the young adviser charity. Studying a Law degree at Brunel University, and with A levels in English, Psychology, Biology and History, Jacqueline hopes in the future to

work within the youth justice system or within family law.

Jannath Rankou

Jannath, 20, has been involved facilitating a joint programme with Westminster Young People's Services and LEAP's Fear and Fashion workshops which are about confronting conflict and promote anti-knife and gun crime awareness. Jannath also campaigns against knife and gun crime in the Westminster borough in London.

Joelyn Morrall

Joelyn, 19, is a Foundation Degree student at the Chickenshed, a charity theatre group. She participated in Chickenshed's recent production 'Crime of the Century' which looks at the impact of knife crime. The play was inspired by the stabbing of 14 year old Shaquille Smith. Joelyn is Shaquille's cousin (she plays the victim's mother in the piece) so her passion and keenness to speak out about the whole issue is huge.

Justin Sessay-Barnes

Justin, 23, has been involved facilitating a joint programme with Westminster Young People's Services and LEAP's Fear and Fashion workshops which are about confronting conflict and promote anti-knife and gun crime awareness. Justin also campaigns against knife and gun crime in the Westminster borough in London, working directly with gang-related and cross-border issues.

Eliza Rebeiro

Eliza, 17, has been campaigning since the beginning of 2008 for 'Lives Not Knives'. Eliza has spoken at schools, met with MPs and is a member of Youth Parliament. Eliza started the campaign by designing t-shirts in July 2007 and spread awareness by organising an event with three friends. She has spoken at places like City Hall,

Fairfield Halls, Faith Temple Conference and Calling the Shots. She has attended the 'Calling The Shots' workshops and received a certificate for the anti-gun knife and crime programme. Eliza held an assembly at Edenham High School for year 7s about preventing them getting involved with gangs and knives, as well as an event there for year 7 and 8s, with the help of a few girls that go to the school.

Ricardo Sharry

Ricardo, 20, a member of Bristol Young Advisors and other youth organisations, is part of a massive drive in Bristol to tackle some of the recent incidences which have affected young BME communities (mostly Somalian and Black Caribbean). Ricardo feels that many of these issues stem from impoverished communities which are deeply affected by racial tension, drug trafficking and territorial disputes. He is part of a project that seeks to bring a range of different organisations, agencies and members of the community together to look at what strategy could be employed to reduce the number of knife attacks in the city.

Shamayal Yakoob

Shamayal, 18, is one of the older It Doesn't Have To Happen (IDHTH) Taskforce members and has worked closely with Mo, his youth worker, to recruit young people and manage the Taskforce's work. Shamayal was a guest editor on Bebo, managed all of the flyer & sticker distribution, produced an anti-knife film for TrueTube, managed the 'chicken box' research, set up the Facebook group and helped on seeding for the 'Don't Shank Just Skank' video.

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