



Metropolitan Police Authority



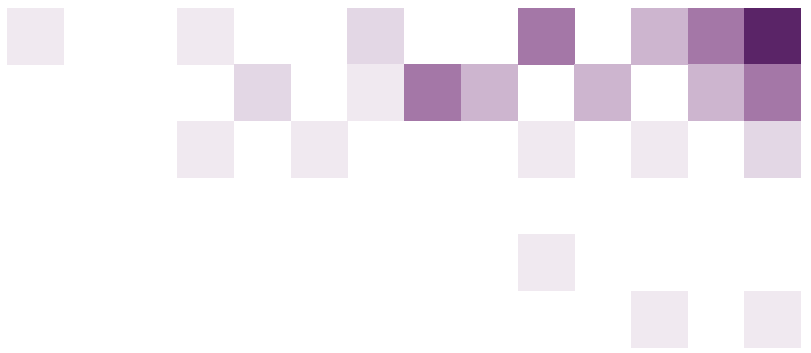
**Seen and Heard –  
Young People, Policing and  
Crime: An MPA Report**



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# Foreword

Much has been written in recent years about increasing violence among our young people and the fear this has evoked in adults. The aim of the Youth Scrutiny was to build a fuller and more comprehensive picture of youth crime. The vast majority of young people are neither violent nor criminals. Some are victims and often the voice of victims is lost. We wanted to understand better what drives some young people into criminality. We wanted to hear from young people about their views as citizens, as victims and as perpetrators of crime and much of this scrutiny has been geared to giving them a voice.

Understanding the multiplicity of views of our young people, can, we believe lead to better policing. The Youth Scrutiny has also heard from those involved in working with young people in a variety of roles, from youth workers to those responsible for policing young people, from policy makers to researchers.

We have been impressed by how much good work is being carried out and developed by the Metropolitan Police Service, sometimes beyond what many would consider the traditional remit of the police. We hope that this scrutiny, carried out with the support and involvement of the Metropolitan Police Service, will lead to further improvements. We recognise that the police cannot do everything and many organisations need to be involved and take on leadership roles. Above all, we want to see young people themselves becoming more involved in shaping policing.

One of the challenges that we face is increasing young people's confidence in service providers and in particular, the police. Throughout the Youth Scrutiny we heard of young people's positive experiences with police officers, but we also heard of the long-term impact of negative encounters. It is clear that, although progress is being made, there is still room for improvement.

We would like to thank, on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Authority, Camila Batmanghelidjh from Kids Company and Susannah Hancock supported by David Harvey and Paul Levy from the Youth Justice Board for informing the development of the Youth Scrutiny. We also thank the many MPS officers who contributed to and supported this work. In particular we owe a special thanks to MPA staff involved, especially Hamera Asfa Davey and Andy Hull overseen by Siobhan Coldwell who have worked tirelessly. We also wish to thank all the adults and young people that took part in the process.

Finally, a special mention must be given to the 26 young people from the MPA Youth Scrutiny Reference Group whose contributions over the past six months, whilst challenging, were invaluable.

The MPA will continue the work begun with the Youth Scrutiny by ensuring that further opportunities are given to London's young people to inform the Authority's work and by actively pursuing and monitoring the implementation of the report's recommendations.

May 2008



Cindy Butts



Richard Sumray



John Roberts



# Introduction



This report is based on the findings of a six-month programme of community engagement with Londoners, which was devised and delivered by the MPA in 2007 – 08. It contains an analysis of these findings and recommendations for the MPS and other bodies.

In taking forward the Youth Scrutiny the MPA proceeded according to community engagement principles. Until now adult commentators have dominated the youth crime debate, and, in order to redress this imbalance, it was imperative that consultation was targeted towards hearing from young people directly. To ensure that young people had an opportunity to inform the direction of the Youth Scrutiny, a reference group made up of young Londoners was assembled.

In considering youth crime, the representation of young people in the media and the resulting negative public perceptions of young people cannot be overlooked. This negative portrayal demeans Londoners, young and old alike. One of the aims of the Youth Scrutiny was to explore the causes and pathways to youth offending but the MPA aimed also to recognise the positive contributions made by young Londoners.

Whilst the vast majority of young people are not involved in crime, the MPA has not ignored the recent increase in serious youth violence. This increase is one of the few notable changes in youth crime in the last six years. However, it is important to remember that the overall level of youth offending has remained stable over the last six years. In addressing youth violence and youth offending it is clear that some existing practices and policies have been ineffective. Stakeholders who took part in the youth scrutiny suggested that a joined-up response by statutory service providers focusing on early interventions which took into account the needs of young people and their families would have the most impact on youth crime.

The principal aim of the MPA youth scrutiny is to make London a safer place for young people. In considering the recommendations, service providers, including the MPS, need to accept that a commitment to tackling youth crime has to be long term and sustained and that only by recognising the needs of young victims and young offenders can a sustained change be brought about.

Whilst the Youth Scrutiny was undertaken in London and the remit of the MPA is confined to the Capital, the findings and advice offered in the report may be useful and applicable nationwide.

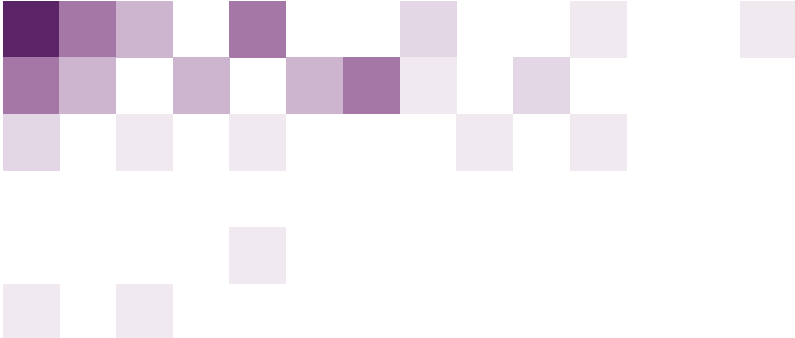
In planning the consultation programme for the MPA Youth Scrutiny it was agreed that a multi method approach would be adopted to ensure that as many young people as possible had the opportunity to take part. Appendix 1 outlines the methodology.

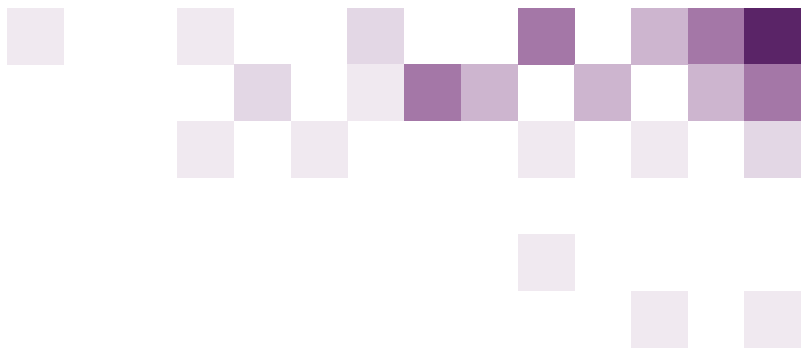


# Executive Summary

The MPA has sought Londoners' views on young people's experiences as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of crime in the capital. A diverse selection of more than 1,000 young and adult Londoners took part in the various consultations. Our analysis of their views has resulted in the following findings:

1. The number of young people that are involved in offending behaviour is significantly lower than the public currently perceive it to be.
2. A balanced portrayal of young people in the press that includes their civic engagement and positive activities is needed to address intergenerational tensions.
3. As with adult Londoners, fear of crime and personal safety is of key concern to young Londoners.
4. Young people who are disaffected and feel cut off from mainstream society are more likely to act in a territorial and tribal way and are more likely to believe that violence is a viable response to wrongs or perceived wrongs.
5. Young people are extremely concerned about reporting crimes to the police. This concern is exacerbated by how young people are treated by the police.
6. Young offenders and young victims are often the same group of young people. In order to develop appropriate interventions for young people at risk, this connectivity needs to be taken into account.
7. Young people do not consider current criminal justice outcomes as effective deterrents.
8. The current press depiction of gangs and gang culture is not a true reflection of actual gang activity in London and can hinder the identification of appropriate solutions to address this concern.
9. Young people's fear of victimisation encourages them to carry weapons out of self-defence.
10. Individual encounters between young people and police officers have a direct bearing on the perceptions that young people have of the police service as a whole. A single negative encounter can result in an overall negative impression of the entire service.
11. Individual positive relationships between young people and police officers can play a crucial role in whether young people are confident to seek support and advice from the police.
12. Stop and Search remains a key concern for many young people. Whilst young people may recognise the value of this police tactic they are concerned by how it is implemented by individual officers.
13. Whilst central MPS staff are clear that young people should be part of the crime-prevention solution, young people's experiences at street level indicate that this corporate message is not recognised or understood by all officers.
14. Some young people are unprepared to hear stories of positive encounters between the police and other young people.
15. Partner organisations welcome the MPS's dual focus on engagement and enforcement, recognising that a twin track approach is more likely to have sustained impact on crime prevention.

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16. Concerns were expressed regarding the role of non-police statutory service providers in the realm of crime prevention. It was felt that services such as Health and Children's Services could play a more proactive role in this arena, especially through information sharing and early intervention of young people at risk.
  17. Adult stakeholders suggested that MPS staff working in local partnerships should develop a better understanding of the roles and remits of the agencies that they work alongside.
  18. The MPS Youth Strategy, which outlines a corporate, joined-up response to youth crime, is commendable. It is clear that the MPS are committed to and recognise the crucial role of prevention work in addressing youth crime. However, there is also recognition that in order to build the confidence of young people this work needs to be developed and sustained.



# Recommendations

## Chapter 1 – Young people as citizens

### **Recommendation for Local Authorities**

Recommendation 1: Local Authorities should:

- a) involve young people in devising services to reduce and prevent crime;
- b) ensure that workers supporting young people and young people themselves are provided with relevant training and support so that they can contribute effectively;
- c) make use of intergenerational projects that bring young people together with adults in positive interactions.

### **Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Service**

Recommendation 2: In taking forward the Safer Neighbourhoods young people’s priority, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams should:

- a) use Safer Neighbourhoods Panels and Young People’s Panels to develop positive interactions between adults and young people;
- b) ensure young people’s priorities inform the local priority-setting process;
- c) ensure that all Safer Neighbourhoods Panel priorities are informed by accurate data on youth crime and do not unintentionally criminalise young people.

Recommendation 3: Safer Schools Officers and Safer Neighbourhoods Teams should develop links with providers of youth provision to be able to signpost young people to positive activities.

### **Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Authority**

Recommendation 4: (Via the MPA borough link members) The MPA should ensure that the Community Police Engagement Groups, which it funds, actively engage young people in their activities.

Recommendation 5: The MPA should mainstream the engagement and participation of young people throughout its work.

## Chapter 2 – Young people as victims and witnesses of crime

### **Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Service**

Recommendation 6: The MPS should increase the visible police presence in areas surrounding schools and colleges at the end of the school and college day.

Recommendation 7: The MPS should increase the visibility of Safer Transport Teams at busy transport hubs and at identified crime hot spots on transport networks, in particular those that are used by large numbers of young people.

Recommendation 8: In partnership with relevant agencies the MPS should improve reporting mechanisms for young people. This should include:

- a) developing and promoting a range of young-people-specific reporting mechanisms;
- b) considering how Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers can receive crime reports and information directly from young people;
- c) carrying out a specific audit to identify good and promising practice concerning youth-friendly reporting mechanisms and ensuring that examples of good practice are shared corporately and with relevant agencies.

Recommendation 9: Recognising the importance of early intervention, the MPS Youth Strategy Board should consider how information collected via Merlin could be used to refer young people at risk to other relevant statutory service providers.

### ***Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Service, the London Criminal Justice Board and the Youth Justice Board***

Recommendation 10: In questioning young people who have been coerced into crime, MPS officers and the Criminal Justice System (CJS) should take into account the causes and context of the offending behaviour in order to provide measured responses.

Recommendation 11: The Metropolitan Police Service, the London Criminal Justice Board and the Youth Justice Board should expand and develop current interventions for young people at risk of offending behaviour in order to support those young people who are at risk of victimisation.

### ***Recommendation for London Victim Support***

Recommendation 12: London Victim Support should develop and promote youth-specific victim support services in every London borough.

### ***Recommendation for Local Authorities***

Recommendation 13: Recognising that early intervention approaches are cost-effective in the long term, statutory service providers should consider how current resources could be reallocated to focus on early intervention projects.

### ***Recommendations for the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health***

Recommendation 14: The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health should research national and international early intervention programmes to assess what good practice exists and ensure that this information is disseminated.

## **Chapter 3 Young people as perpetrators of crime**

### ***Recommendation for Local Authorities***

Recommendation 15: Encourage and fund detached youth work, recognising that:

- a) building positive, life-changing relationships with socially excluded young people in their terms and on their turf is time-intensive and requires sustained input; and,
- b) detached youth workers, such as Camden Youth Disorder Engagement Team, can provide a positive reactive response to youth disorder, as they are able to signpost the young people at hand to diversionary projects and relevant service providers.

### ***Recommendations for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships***

Recommendation 16: The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in each London borough should agree a uniform approach to identifying young people at risk in order to agree the allocation of resource and service provision.

Recommendation 17: As part of their strategic assessment process, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships should utilise MPS data on serious youth violence in order to ensure that resources are appropriately focused.

### ***Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Service***

Recommendation 18: The MPS Youth Strategy Board should disseminate the corporate MPS definition for the term 'gang'. This definition should be understood corporately and communicated consistently.

Recommendation 19: In order to achieve a reduction in the number of young people carrying weapons, the MPS Youth Strategy Board should, in addition to Operation Blunt 2 and other short-term measures, understand and address the





reasons why young people carry weapons – including fear of crime – whilst continuing to develop and promote anti-weapon messages.

Recommendation 20: The MPS Youth Strategy Board should acknowledge that young people in gangs are at risk both of further offending and of victimisation. Consequently MPS responses to meet the needs of these young people should take this risk into account.

Recommendation 21: The MPS should develop the role of engagement and prevention in taking forward the critical performance area of reducing young people’s involvement in serious violence.

**Recommendation for the London Criminal Justice Board**

Recommendation 22: The London Criminal Justice Board should recognise the concerns young people have regarding the CJS and:

- a) provide youth-friendly information on youth justice; and,
- b) tackle the myths that some young people have of custodial and community sentencing.

**Recommendation for the Department for Children, Schools and Families**

Recommendation 23: It is evident that laws relating to alcohol and drug use and abuse confuse young people and therefore existing and upcoming awareness campaigns should seek to address this confusion.

**Chapter 4 Young people and the police**

**Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Service**

Recommendation 24: The MPS should consider how young people and youth organisations could

provide input into initial police probation training and ongoing training for officers.

Recommendation 25: As part of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams young people’s priority:

- a) officers should engage with youth workers in their wards and use this as a hook to develop positive relationships with young people;
- b) where possible, officers should be encouraged to take part in local diversionary and prevention programmes with young people, thereby allowing officers to develop positive relationships with young people.

Recommendation 26: The Central Safer Neighbourhoods Team should corporately share examples of positive engagement of young people by particular Safer Neighbourhoods Teams with all Safer Neighbourhoods Teams.

Recommendation 27: Where possible Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers should engage and participate in extended school programmes.

Recommendation 28: The MPS Youth Strategy Board should ensure that all MPS officers and staff are familiar with the corporate MPS messages regarding young people.

Recommendation 29: MPS officers should follow relevant Standard Operating Procedures and ensure that they display courtesy and consideration when stopping and searching young people.

Recommendation 30: The MPS should provide clear information to young people on police tactics and operations that are taking place in areas or spaces used by young people, for example: the introduction of knife arches or the implementation of a Dispersal Order.

Recommendation 31: The MPS should provide information to Londoners regularly on the progress of cases and arrests, especially where young people are involved as victims or perpetrators. Consideration should be given to using language and utilising information mechanisms that are young-people-friendly.

Recommendation 32: Safer Neighbourhoods Teams should develop links with private schools in their areas.

Recommendation 33: In order to improve the confidence of young people, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers should consider how young people could provide feedback to officers on positive and negative experiences that they have had with the police.

### ***Recommendation for the Independent Police Complaints Commission***

Recommendation 34: In order to improve young people's confidence in the complaints system, the Independent Police Complaints Commission should continue to ensure that the system is accessible to young people and should continue to highlight and promote outcomes of complaints.

### ***Recommendation for the Association of Police Authorities***

Recommendation 35: The Association of Police Authorities should continue to build on existing marketing campaigns to improve young people's understanding of stop and search and should identify additional communication and information mechanisms to raise awareness of young people's rights in regards to stop and search.

### ***Recommendation for the Metropolitan Police Service and the Metropolitan Police Authority***

Recommendation 36: The MPA and the MPS should provide clear information to Londoners on

how regional and borough-wide policing priorities are developed and set.

## **Chapter 5 The role of non-police agencies in crime prevention**

### ***Recommendations for Local Authorities***

Recommendation 37: The key responsibilities of every agency involved in a crime and community safety partnership should be made available to all partner agencies.

Recommendation 38: Local Authorities should:

- a) undertake a review of existing youth provision to ensure that it meets the needs of young people;
- b) proactively involve young people in the development of local youth provision to ensure take-up of activities;
- c) promote existing youth provision, using a variety of young-people-friendly communication mechanisms;
- d) ensure that youth provision is available at relevant times of the day and year and that it provides opportunities for skills development.

### ***Recommendations for the Metropolitan Police Service***

Recommendation 39: MPS officers working with child victims of rape and sexual exploitation should ensure that young people are signposted to specialist agencies to prevent further victimisation.

Recommendation 40: In regards to young people who are at risk of further victimisation, MPS officers should ensure that information collated via Merlin is shared with relevant partner agencies.



Recommendation 41: MPS should outline and promote the role of Safer Schools Officers to young people, teachers and other agencies in the school environment.

Recommendation 42: Safer Schools Officers should work in partnership with other agencies that are based in schools to ensure that a joined-up response is provided to vulnerable young people in these settings.

Recommendation 43: Frontline officers should be provided with an understanding of the communities and geographical areas that they are responsible for policing. Relevant community and voluntary groups can provide information on both.

### ***Recommendation for the Department for Children, Schools and Families***

Recommendation 44: The Department for Children, Schools and Families should consider how the extended school programme could be used to address the crime prevention agenda and in particular how youth projects providing crime prevention and intervention programmes can support vulnerable young people in schools.

### ***Recommendations for the Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families***

Recommendation 45: The Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families should encourage a proactive involvement of borough Health and Education agencies in borough crime reduction partnerships and should consider and develop guidelines on how these agencies can fully support the crime prevention agenda.

Recommendation 46: The Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families should encourage borough Health and Education agencies to proactively share information on young people in need and at risk with relevant partner agencies.

### ***Recommendations for the London Community Safety Partnership***

Recommendation 47: Recognising that currently there are a number of London-wide boards which consider issues relating to youth crime, the London Community Safety Partnership should critically assess the remit and role of these boards and consider how this work can be better aligned and streamlined.

Recommendation 48: The London Community Safety Partnership should consider the development of colocated multi-agency service provision for young people at risk.

## **Chapter 6 – Young people and the media**

### ***Recommendations for Local Authorities***

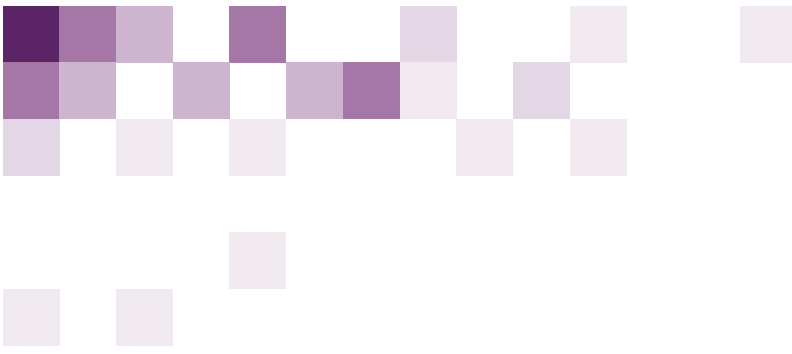
Recommendation 49: The ACPO approach of providing young people with media training and a monthly newspaper column to share views, concerns and needs should be adopted and rolled out across the capital. Young-people-specific magazines alongside mainstream national and local press should also consider including regular contributions from young people.

Recommendation 50: Counter negative portrayals of young people by promoting positive stories of young people in the local media.

### ***Recommendations for the media***

Recommendation 51: Consider how press, radio, television and digital media can be adapted to:

- a) provide a voice for young people;
- b) provide guidance and positively influence young people.



***Recommendation for all organisations working with and providing services for young people***

Recommendation 52: All service providers, including the media, should consider the language that they use when speaking to or about young people. Consideration should always be given to avoiding pejorative and offensive language as this impacts negatively on young people and exacerbates fear of crime.

# Chapter 1: Young people as citizens

## Summary

The number of young people involved in offending behaviour is smaller than the public perceive it to be. Little consideration is given to the much larger number of young people who are involved in London's civic life and positive activities. The benefits of involving young people in London's civic life should be promoted and celebrated by adults and young people alike.

### **The extent of youth offending**

*'Young people in London are an enormously important part of London and an enormous asset... The Met's view is that young people are not the problem; they are the solution.'*

Sir Ian Blair, Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service.

Adult stakeholders that took part in the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) Youth Scrutiny felt that even though many adult Londoners had little direct contact with young people (other than their own children), there was a pervasive belief amongst them that young Londoners were out of control; that they congregated in 'gangs' and harassed and terrorised anyone they came into contact with. However, adult stakeholders were clear that this depiction of 'feral' youth, aware of their own rights but with little care for social responsibility, had little resemblance to reality.

The Office for National Statistics<sup>1</sup> (2006) produced a mid year population estimate for London. This estimate indicates that:

- there are over 7,512,400 Londoners, of which 1,801,400 are aged 0 – 19 years. Approximately 25% of the total estimated population of London is 19 years or under;
- considering the age of criminal responsibility<sup>2</sup>, the mid-year estimate for the number of 10 – 19 year old Londoners is 859,000. Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) crime data (March 2008) for 10 – 19 year olds indicates that 55,439 young people were accused of crime in the year April 2006 – March 07. This suggests that only 6% of those young people above the age of criminal responsibility in London in this period were accused of committing a crime.

This is not a complete picture – the MPS data is for detected crimes only – but it does indicate that the number of young people accused of offending behaviour is significantly lower than many perceive it to be. It is also worth highlighting that the MPS data shows that youth offending has not in fact increased, but has remained stable for the past six years.

### **The MPA Youth Scrutiny Reference Group**

Young people told the MPA repeatedly that the public perceptions of young people were upsetting, stereotyping and added to intergenerational tensions. They spoke about the good works that young people were involved in throughout London and were anxious that these were recognised and celebrated.

Throughout the consultation the MPA collected many examples of projects that young people are involved in or are leading on. These examples are detailed later in this chapter.

1 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority. It is charged with the collection and publication of statistics related to the economy, population and society of the United Kingdom at national and local levels.

2 Children under the age of 10 are below the age of criminal responsibility and cannot be charged with a criminal offence. When children reach the age of 10 they can be arrested, charged with crimes and taken to court in the same way as adults. However, from the age of 10-17 young people appear in youth courts.

In devising the terms of reference for the MPA Youth Scrutiny, the MPA was keen to ensure that community engagement principles were firmly embedded in the approach that was to be adopted.<sup>3</sup>

The MPA not only has a responsibility to ensure that the MPS are effectively engaging with Londoners but also has a responsibility to ensure that Londoners have the opportunity *'to shape and strengthen the civic governance of policing in London.'*<sup>4</sup>

In taking forward this responsibility the MPA recognised that young people needed to be involved in the development of the Youth Scrutiny from its outset and not just in subsequent consultation opportunities.

It was agreed therefore that alongside the adult Youth Scrutiny Panel made up of MPA Members and external colleagues, a group of young Londoners would be asked to advise and guide the process. This group was known as the Youth Scrutiny Reference Group (YSRG).

Throughout the six-month period this group remained engaged and committed to the Youth Scrutiny, however, it soon became clear that their commitment was not unique. Young people that took part in the specialist focus group discussions

and those that took part in the four large set piece events were also keen to speak up, have their voices heard and their opinions taken into account. Often what was said was challenging, emotive and uncomplimentary towards the police. However, it was hugely impressive that so many young people were prepared to give up their time to take part in the events. This was recognised and appreciated by both the MPA and the MPS officers that took part in the consultation activities.

### **Young Londoners involved in civic activities**

Alongside this direct engagement of young people in the MPA Youth Scrutiny, the MPA also heard from adult stakeholders about the numerous civic engagement opportunities that young people were involved in either at a regional or local level.

These included, for example:

- Young Black Positive Advocates (YBPA)<sup>5</sup> training police recruits at Hendon Police Training College on how to interact and engage with young Londoners;
- Greater London Authority (GLA) Peer Outreach Workers<sup>6</sup> and the MPS Youth Advisory Group (MYAG)<sup>7</sup> supporting a Transport for London (TfL)<sup>8</sup> multimedia campaign to improve behaviour on the transport system;

<sup>3</sup> A methodology can be found in Annex 1.

<sup>4</sup> MPA and MPS Community Engagement Strategy 2006 – 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Young Black Positive Advocates (YBPA) is a youth organisation run 'by youth for youth' and provides a platform for young people's voices to be heard.

<sup>6</sup> Greater London Authority (GLA) Peer Outreach Workers ensure that a wide range of children and young people across London know about civic engagement opportunities.

<sup>7</sup> The MPS has a total of five London-wide Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs), known as Corporate IAGs. These are the Youth Advisory Group; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender IAG; the Disability IAG; the Gypsy and Traveller IAG; and the Independent Advisory Group, which focuses on issues of race. In addition to these, specific areas of MPS work are supported by bespoke Advisory Groups such as the Trident IAG. Operation Trident is a Metropolitan Police Service initiative set up to deal with gun crime in London's black communities.

<sup>8</sup> Transport for London (TfL) provides bus, river and some light rail services, maintains London's main roads, regulates London's licensed taxi service and runs the Tube.



- the 500 young people who are currently members of the UK Youth Parliament<sup>9</sup>, actively campaigning to involve young people in the political arena;
- a youth management committee at the AHOY centre<sup>10</sup> which meets monthly to consider current and future activities;
- a group of ten young people in Richmond involved in the recruitment of Local Authority staff;
- young people from the Lewisham Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP)<sup>11</sup> trained by Children’s Services to carry out consultation with other young people;
- a group of young people trained by London Youth<sup>12</sup> to facilitate a series of consultation events for the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)<sup>13</sup> on access to the complaints system and how to increase confidence in reporting crime;
- young people working alongside Beatbullying<sup>14</sup> staff in facilitating sessions in schools, youth and community groups on how to manage and challenge bullying behaviour.

Many more young people are involved in positive activities across London. Examples include the MPA and MPS Kickz<sup>15</sup> project working with London’s professional football clubs, which is

currently engaging 6,000 young people in football related activities. Or the youth club SE1 United<sup>16</sup>, which has up to 1000 young people taking part in its youth activities.

These examples, whilst not comprehensive, indicate that when given the right opportunities young people are happy to be involved in participatory activities. They also indicate that adult stakeholders recognise the value of involving young people in service and policy development. It is clear that a great deal of thought has been given by adult stakeholders to how best involve young people and to what support they require to ensure that this involvement is continuous and useful to agencies and young people alike.

It is useful to reiterate why it is essential to involve young people in London’s civic life. The MPA recognises that involving young people requires an adoption of informal and formal consultation methodologies and therefore can prove to be challenging. However involving young people in a sustained and useful manner provides benefits for agencies, for young people and for local communities:

1. by involving young people and acting on their concerns, agencies ensure that young peoples concerns become part of the problem-solving process and that solutions take into consideration their requirements and needs;

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9 The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) is run by young people for young people and provides opportunities for 11-18-year-olds to use their voice to bring about social change.

10 (Adventure, Help and Opportunities for Youth) AHOY is a charity that has a sailing and boating centre on Greenwich Reach. The centre runs activities for both disabled and non-disabled young people.

11 Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) aim to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending by 8 to 13-year-olds who are considered to be at high risk of offending.

12 London Youth is a network of over 400 youth clubs serving 75,000 young people across the capital.

13 The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) ensures that complaints against the police are dealt with effectively.

14 Beatbullying aims to reduce and prevent the incidence and impact of bullying between young people.

15 The Kickz programme is targeted at some of the most disadvantaged areas of London. Kickz offers 12-18 year olds the chance to take part in positive activity three nights a week, 48 weeks of the year.

16 SE1 United is a youth forum based in Waterloo for young people aged 10 – 21 years.

2. involving young people in decision-making sends out a positive message that young people are valued as integral members of a community;
3. by participating in decision-making young people become aware that their opinions and needs are considered important.

### **Conclusion**

The onus to change adult perceptions of young people should not lie solely with young people, as often it seems that young people have to 'prove their worth'.

The small number of young people involved in offending behaviour does not represent all young Londoners. By promoting the good work that young people are undertaking in London, service providers can not only tackle popular misconceptions but can also ensure that young people feel recognised and valued.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

*Recommendation 1:* Local Authorities should:

- a) involve young people in devising services to reduce and prevent crime;
- b) ensure that workers supporting young people and young people themselves are provided with relevant training and support so that they can contribute effectively;
- c) make use of intergenerational projects that bring young people together with adults in positive interactions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE**

*Recommendation 2:* In taking forward the Safer Neighbourhoods young people's priority, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams should:

- a) use Safer Neighbourhoods Panels and Young People's Panels to develop positive interactions between adults and young people;
- b) ensure young people's priorities inform the local priority-setting process;
- c) ensure that all Safer Neighbourhoods Panel priorities are informed by accurate data on youth crime and do not unintentionally criminalise young people.

*Recommendation 3:* Safer Schools Officers and Safer Neighbourhoods Teams should develop links with providers of youth provision to be able to signpost young people to positive activities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE AUTHORITY**

*Recommendation 4:* (Via the MPA borough link members) The MPA should ensure that the Community Police Engagement Groups, which it funds, actively engage young people in their activities.

*Recommendation 5:* The MPA should mainstream the engagement and participation of young people throughout its work.



## Chapter 2: Young people as victims and witnesses of crime

### Summary

The consultation highlighted that safety was a key concern for young people and that young people are at particular risk of victimisation in the hours after school or college.

Some young people place an emphasis on territory, which impacts negatively on their mobility.

Young people are extremely concerned about reporting crimes to the police. The treatment of young people by service providers has a bearing on whether they choose to report crimes.

Considering young people exclusively as either victims or offenders is a false dichotomy: the risk factors that can result in a young person being victimised can also result in offending behaviour. In addition, service providers need to be aware that some young people are coerced into offending behaviour.

### Introduction

One of the key areas of the consultation was an exploration of the needs of young victims and witnesses. Factors covered in this part of the consultation included:

- adult perceptions;
- young peoples fear of crime;
- young peoples safety on public transport;
- managing behaviour and young people's solutions;
- territory;
- reporting crimes;
- homophobia;
- proposed reporting solutions;
- a sea change?
- the experiences of young people who report crimes;
- young people – hidden victims?

- the impact of negative encounters with the police;
- role of service providers;
- victims and offenders: a false dichotomy?
- the impact of early trauma;
- the impact of coercion on young people;
- the court experience.

### Adult perceptions

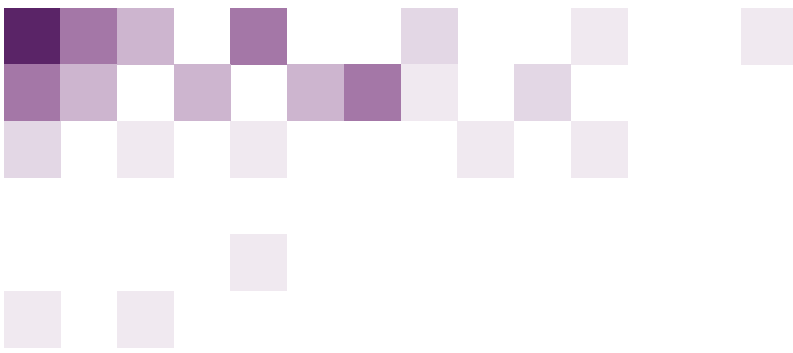
Publicity has been given to the TS Rebel survey (2007), which asked British adults about the fear of crime. This survey found that 41% of the 1,557 participants were afraid to walk past a group of youngsters. It revealed that a fifth of adults had cancelled plans for an evening out because of the threat of intimidation from youngsters loitering on the streets. On a more measured note, a spokesman for the charity stated that:

***"We have a country paralysed by a fear of its young people. We need to break down barriers and integrate youngsters into society's mainstream."***

The findings then went on to be featured in the European edition of international Time Magazine (April 2008) which concluded with the over generalisation that:

***'Britons are frightened of their own young.'***

The representation of young people by the press and the consequent impact of this are considered in Chapter 6 of this report. It is of concern that in the representations of Britain being terrorised by hordes of 'feral' youth, very little consideration is given to the concerns and fears that young people themselves have about personal safety. Many of the young people that the MPA spoke to focused on the fear of crime and how this fear impacted on their daily lives.



### **Young people's fear of crime**

Young women from the Face 2 Face Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth group<sup>17</sup> and young men from the Somali Youth Development and Resource Centre (SYDRC)<sup>18</sup> told the MPA that the safety of young people was often dependent on geographical location.

The Face 2 Face young women explained that they felt safer in central London than in east London because people were more open-minded in central London. Clearly this perception was partly based on the sexuality of the young women, who recognized that the established LGBT scene in central London allowed young people to be 'out' in a safe environment.

The young men from SYDRC explained that personal safety was dependent on whether a young person knew an area well, and that most of London, other than their own 'endz'<sup>19</sup> was not safe. More consideration is given to this 'endz' phenomenon later in the report.

The majority of the Bromley College<sup>20</sup> group of consultees were not confident to travel around their immediate vicinities on their own. Again, this concern was linked to the personal circumstances of these young people, many of who have experienced bullying on public transport.

### **Young people's safety on public transport**

Many young people mentioned travelling on public transport during the discussions on personal safety.

The young men from SYDRC explained that on their journeys home from school, tensions arose between groups of young people from different schools.

This was picked up by Professor John Pitts who explained that one of the reasons that violence

occurred on buses was because on the way to and from school or college young people were entering areas that were not part of their own territories.

### **CASE STUDY: ENFIELD COMMUNITY HELP POINT SCHEME (CHPS)**

Community Help Points (CHPs) aim to help children and young people who have a momentary fear while travelling in and around Enfield. CHPs provide safe havens for young people who feel threatened or need help in any way. Any young person who is a victim of crime or bullying or who may be lost or just simply feel vulnerable can seek help, guidance or support where they see the CHPs sign.

Staff working at businesses in the CHPs scheme have received full training and are able to calm a frightened young person. They have also undergone checks with the Criminal Records Bureau

All Enfield pupils are given details of premises that are in the scheme and will be able to identify the nearest help points on the routes of their most common journeys, whether to school, leisure centres or other activities. Safer Schools Officers will ensure that pupils are aware of this scheme and how and when to use it, while letters are being sent to parents and carers.

Enfield Local Safeguarding Children Board, Joint Service for Children with Disabilities, Enfield Children and Young Persons Services, Children's Fund and Youth & Partnership Unit (including Police Safer Schools Team) working with local businesses have devised this scheme.

17 Face 2 Face provides a confidential support service for young people aged 11 – 21 in Waltham Forest.

18 The Somali Youth Development and Resource Centre is an umbrella organisation working with Somali young people and their families in Camden.

19 The term 'endz' is defined in the Urban Dictionary as meaning 'a street' or 'an area'.

20 This group of young people have learning support needs.



The MPA YSRG spoke about avoiding the top decks of buses; avoiding particular bus routes at particular times of the day; and even making decisions about which was the safest bus stop to begin or end a journey at.

These comments were supported by findings from the MPA Youth Survey<sup>21</sup> which indicated that one of the most common locations for youth crime was outside school and that young people were most likely either to be victimised or to commit a crime in the hours after school or college, between 3pm – 5pm or late at night.

It is also worth mentioning that the MPA YSRG expressed an almost fatalistic attitude to what can occur on public transport, explaining that certain events were inevitable.

***'You come onto a bus, displaying your wares: iPods etc. The day that you are on your own, you will be attacked. People study each other.'***

This links to comments made by adult stakeholders. Jacob Whittingham from SE1 United and the Face 2 Face youth worker both stated that young people were more prepared to put up with particular types of low-level crimes, as these were part of the makeup of their lives.

### ***Managing behaviour and young people's solutions***

Young people were asked what impact fear of crime had on their lives and what actions, if any; they had taken to limit further victimization. One of the young people in the MPA YSRG stated that after having being mugged on three separate occasions he had avoided the bus route that the

third attack had taken place on. However, it soon became clear that this response did not match with the responses of the vast majority of the group, who were clear that they would do *'what had to be done'* to protect themselves and their property. It is unclear whether these responses were based on group dynamics and a need to put up a 'front'<sup>22</sup> but there was one additional considered response.

***'Even if someone took all my stuff and yet no one got hurt, for me that would be better than someone taking all my stuff and someone getting hurt.'***

All the young people who spoke about personal safety were asked what the police could do to tackle young people's fear of crime. Their responses would not differ to adult responses if they were asked the same question:

- visible police presence on the streets at particular times of the day;
- visible police presence on buses at particular times of the day or night;
- ensuring that all CCTV cameras on public transport worked and were being used.

The young people from Bromley College also requested that town centres and transport hubs had a visible police presence at particular times of the day.

21 356 young people took part in the MPA youth survey, which was available to complete online and off line from January – February 2008. The survey was open to young people aged 10 – 21 years, with the majority of the respondents aged 13 – 15 years (43%) and 16 – 18 years (31%). 39% respondents were male and 53% were female. 8% did not state their gender.

22 The term 'front' is defined in the Urban Dictionary as 'thinking and acting in a way that shows that you are braver than you actually are.'

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

**Recommendation 6:** The MPS should increase the visible police presence in areas surrounding schools and colleges at the end of the school and college day.

**Recommendation 7:** The MPS should increase the visibility of Safer Transport Teams at busy transport hubs and at identified crime hot spots on transport networks, in particular those that are used by large numbers of young people.

### Territory

In recruiting for the MPA YSRG, the MPA were repeatedly told by youth and community workers that their young people would not participate in the group because they did not feel safe using public transport to make long journeys. They explained that young people were concerned about leaving their 'endz' and travelling through other 'endz' to attend meetings.

It soon became clear that this concern was curbing young people's mobility, impacting on their ability to engage fully in opportunities available to them and fuelling perceptions they had of other parts of the capital.

To gain a clearer understanding of 'endz' the MPA YSRG were asked what this term meant to young people.

The group explained that certain parts of south London had their own colours, codes and names, which linked these areas to particular groups of young people and to particular gangs. They explained that young people felt protective of their 'endz' and that young people were bought up to respect and love their 'endz'.

This relationship with an area can limit the behaviour of young people. Young women from Lewisham Youth Offending Team (YOT)<sup>23</sup> informed the Youth Scrutiny that girls were free to travel about London but that it was more difficult for young men as they would be challenged by other groups of young men. They further clarified this by stating that:

***'If you are known for what you do [criminal or anti social behaviour] you won't be able to go to particular endz. But if you are not known you can go anywhere.'***

The MPA YSRG compared young people's relationships with their 'endz' with other types of prejudices. One young person stated that if a young person entered a different area, the reaction was almost as if they belonged to a different race to those that lived in the area. Whilst others stated that young people should not see London as a series of postcodes and that young people should not bind themselves to particular areas.

***'When you are killed...your endz is the first place that will forget about you. Your boys will be the first people to forget about you.'***

Camden Council consultees added an extra dimension to the 'endz' debate by explaining that young people can also be territorial about the schools that they attend. They explained that this can result in tensions arising and fights between young people from different schools.

Camila Batmanghelidjh from Kids Company<sup>24</sup> provided an explanation as to why some young people had such strong loyalties to their areas.

<sup>23</sup> There is a YOT in every local authority in England and Wales. YOTs are made up of representatives from the police, probation service, social services, health, education, drugs and alcohol misuse and housing officers. Each YOT co-ordinates the work of the youth justice services locally.

<sup>24</sup> Kids Company offers practical, emotional and educational support to vulnerable inner city children and young people. The services offered are holistic, child-centered and multi-disciplinary.



She explained that young people who were cut off from mainstream civic culture due to economic and social deprivation and those who lacked strong supportive family connections created their own alternative cultures, resulting in a disproportionate value being placed on one's area.

### Reporting crimes

***'Word of mouth is so fast, it's faster than evidence, and if you told the police what you knew, other people would find out.'***

Young person

Throughout the consultation process, adults and young people spoke about the widespread street culture of *'no snitching'*. Youth workers told the MPA that young people did not feel that reporting was *'worth putting your life at risk for'* and young people told the MPA that snitching was the *'lowest of the low'*.

Young people explained that as the police could not guarantee their safety they were not prepared to report crimes. Crucially, young people were not only concerned about their own safety but were also aware that should they report a crime their family and friends could be targeted in revenge attacks.

A good example of this concern was outlined during the north east London consultation. Young people in Tower Hamlets expressed concerns about the impact of drug dealing and drug use on their estates. *'Drugs have ruined the community and we do not think that anything is being done about it.'* In response, the Borough Commander outlined what had been done to date in the borough, explaining that 247 class A drug searches had been carried out along with the prosecution of 350 people for drug dealing. He asked the young people what they would like the

police to do, explaining that the police relied on intelligence and information from the community. However, Tower Hamlets young people were adamant that they could not report drug dealers, explaining that:

***'It's not just about my own safety but also the safety of my family too... I have seen people's homes burnt down.'***

Approximately 40 young people attended the north east London event. They were asked to indicate by a show of hands how many would be prepared to report drug dealing to the police. Half of the young people in the audience indicated that they would not be prepared to report for fear of reprisals.

The *'no snitching'* phenomenon is not simply a London problem. Crimestoppers<sup>25</sup> (2002) national survey of crime amongst under 16's found that 51% of the 1,064 young people that took part in the survey, had not reported being a victim of crime to the police.

The MPA youth survey also found that the *'no snitching'* street culture resulted in a large proportion of youth crime going unreported. This included serious crimes such as robberies, assaults and stabbings.

- 17% of respondents had been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months but only 47% of them had informed the police;
- 33% of respondents had witnessed a crime in the past 12 months but the majority (63%) of them had not informed the police.

The survey did not include questions on why young people had not informed the police. However, responses to a question on confidence<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Crimestoppers is an independent charity helping to find criminals and solve crimes.

<sup>26</sup> Young people were asked, 'How confident are you that the police in London would respond appropriately to your needs?' The response options were as follows: very confident; confident; not confident and not at all confident.

provide some indication. Explanations given for the 'not confident' or 'not at all confident' options, included:

- slow response times or that the police do not turn up at all (52 respondents);
- that they do not listen to young people or take their issues/incidents seriously (20 respondents);
- that they do not understand, respect and/or are prejudiced against young people (12 respondents);
- that they took no action when the respondent was a victim of crime (12 respondents).

***'They don't come when you really need them because they think it's a waste of time.'***

***'Because if you told the police something that happened to you they will either laugh at you or they won't really care.'***

***'Because we are kids and no one listens to us.'***

Quotations from the MPA youth survey

The consultation undertaken by the 18 Borough Community Police Engagement Groups (CPEG)<sup>27</sup> with young people also stressed the importance of dealing sensitively and sympathetically with victims of crime. Young people said it was important that police did not infer that young people had been victimised because of how they had behaved.

Interviews with adult stakeholders mirrored the MPA survey findings. The Face 2 Face youth worker and Jacob Whittingham explained that young people would be willing to report crime if they were confident that reporting would result in a positive change occurring.

The decision to report or not report, however, is more complex than a lack of confidence in the police and the prevailing street culture of no snitching.

The MPA also heard from stakeholders that young people were prepared to accept certain types of behaviour that adults would be unwilling to countenance. For example, young people from St Paul's School<sup>28</sup> told the MPA they would only report violent crimes.

Jacob Whittingham stated that for some young people choosing not to involve the police was a matter of pride and that they preferred to deal with the matter themselves. Young people from the SYDRC agreed, saying they would only report a crime if the perpetrator was unknown to them.

Also of concern is the fact that young people are not familiar with the terminology and definitions used by the MPS. The Face 2 Face youth worker said young people did not understand the term 'hate crime'. Without this understanding it might be more difficult for LGBT young people to report an LGBT hate crime, as they are unlikely to know about the MPS responses to hate crime.

She went on to say that some young people were unaware of what constituted a crime. Jacob Whittingham agreed, stating, for example, that the theft of lunch money was seen as an everyday occurrence. Young people did not see

<sup>27</sup> Londoners can raise local policing concerns and help improve the quality of the local police service through involving themselves in borough-based Community Police Engagement Groups (CPEGs), formally known as Community Police Consultative Groups. CPEGs are independent voluntary groups, funded by the MPA and managed and chaired by members of the local community.

<sup>28</sup> Two groups of young people from the private school St Paul's took part in the consultation. The first group were from the middle school, Colet Court, and were aged 7 – 13 years, and the second were from the upper school, St Paul's, and were aged 13 – 18 years.



this behaviour as criminal and many would be surprised if they were told that it was. This lack of understanding of what constitutes a crime may also add to the under-reporting of crimes by young people.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

**Recommendation 8:** In partnership with relevant agencies the MPS should improve reporting mechanisms for young people. This should include:

- a) developing and promoting a range of young-people-specific reporting mechanisms;
- b) considering how Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers can receive crime reports and information directly from young people;
- c) carrying out a specific audit to identify good and promising practice concerning youth friendly reporting mechanisms and ensuring that examples of good practice are shared corporately and with relevant agencies.

### Homophobia

In recruiting for the MPA YSRG a number of specialist groups requested that the MPA hold dedicated discussions with their young people. This request resulted in the MPA arranging six ad hoc conversations with specialist groups. The first two of these sessions were held with the LGBT youth group Face 2 Face and the second with a group of young people with learning support needs from Bromley College.

In these discussions, inevitably the Face 2 Face young women spoke about homophobia and the young people from Bromley College spoke about

the bullying that they experienced on buses from other young people.

These findings were shared with the MPA YSRG resulting in a troubling discussion on homophobia.

There was recognition by the vast majority of the group that the harassment and bullying of young people who were 'different' was unacceptable. However, this recognition did not extend to homophobia.

There was collective disgust expressed about homosexuality. (It is worth noting that most of the comments focused on gay men as opposed to lesbians or bisexual young people.) The group justified their disgust by explaining that many of London's young people were homophobic, informing the MPA that the term 'gay' was used at street level and in schools to describe things that were embarrassing, uncool and generally considered '*not good enough*'.

These comments indicating that homophobia is prevalent amongst young people were supported by the Stonewall (2007) secondary school survey<sup>29</sup>. This found that:

- almost two thirds (65%) of young lesbian, gay and bisexual participants had experienced homophobic bullying in Britain's schools;
- 98% of gay pupils hear "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" as a term of abuse at school; and finally,
- of those who had been bullied, 92% had experienced verbal homophobic bullying, 41% physical bullying and 17% death threats.

<sup>29</sup> Stonewall asked young people from Great Britain who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (or think they might be) to complete a survey about their experiences at school. The survey received 1,145 responses from secondary school aged young people. The Schools Health Education Unit on behalf of Stonewall conducted the survey. Just under half the respondents were girls (48%). 14% were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and 12% were disabled.

The comments made by the MPA YSRG members indicated that the Stonewall survey was true to the experiences of the LGBT young people that they had come in contact with. The MPA were told that:

- one group member had beaten up two gay men for being gay;
- another had attended a school with a young girl who was bullied at school because her mother was a lesbian; and finally,
- another stated that a young man in his school was forced to leave when his peers found out he was gay.

When asked if there were similarities between racism and other types of prejudice such as homophobia and disablism, many of the young people were unable to draw these links. The majority of the Black African and Black Caribbean members were angry that an equal comparison could be made between racism and homophobia. They were clear that whilst skin colour was innate and could not be changed, people could choose their sexuality and could choose how they publicly presented themselves.

However, the majority of the group were clear that disablism was as unacceptable as racism and to some degree of even more concern, because disabled people were less able to defend themselves.

Some YSRG members were of the view that even if prejudices remain, action and behaviour could be altered. Others did not think this was possible.

However, the debate ended on a positive note with a contribution that drew comparisons to the civil rights movement.

***'[In response to a comment 'you can't change how people think']... This is not true. In the USA only a few decades ago black and white people lived separate lives. This changed due to the actions of people like Rosa Parks and therefore tackling racial discrimination and hatred has come a long way.'***

The comments made by the MPS YSRG highlight the need to provide young people with clear explanations on terminology such as hate crime so that they are aware that their experiences will be recognised and responded to appropriately by the police. It is also clear that teachers and other school staff need to be more proactive in addressing homophobia in the school environment. The Stonewall survey found that homophobic bullying had a direct impact on the education of young people. They found that:

- half of those who had experienced homophobic bullying had skipped school at some point because of it and one in five had skipped school more than six times.

The survey also found that in those schools where clear messages were given on the unacceptability of homophobia, LGBT young people were 60% less likely to be bullied.

Schools and the MPS should also consider the support that Safer Schools Officers could provide in this work. Safer Schools Officers need to balance their specific reassurance roles within schools with their overall enforcement role. LGBT young people need to have the confidence to report or pass information to Safer Schools Officers about their experiences and know that appropriate actions will be taken. Interventions could take many forms. A form of Restorative





Justice (RJ)<sup>30</sup> could be adopted to impress on young people the impact of homophobia, coupled with more formal approaches via Citizenship classes, which could look at and celebrate LGBT history and LGBT contributions to modern life.

### **Proposed reporting solutions**

One of the other clear themes that arose during discussions on reporting was the reluctance of young people to enter a police station to report a crime. This was not simply because young people were worried about being seen entering a police station but also because young people did not find police stations accessible or welcoming environments.

Throughout the youth scrutiny, young people and adult stakeholders put numerous suggestions forward on alternative reporting methods:

- a youth-specific Crimestoppers;
- a free, direct texting service to the police;
- a third party reporting site where a trusted adult can collect the information and act as a conduit between the police and young person; and finally,
- a third party reporting system that provides support throughout the criminal justice process.

Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS, explained that in his opinion there was not a good understanding of why young people chose not to report crimes and that this needed to be addressed. It was important however to ensure that:

- young people had clear information on the various reporting mechanisms available; and,
- good practice in regards to reporting was identified and replicated across London.

Adults and young people informed the MPA that in all instances, whether a case proceeds to court or not, victims and witnesses should be kept updated and provided with feedback on any actions that have been taken.

In light of the suggested solutions, the MPS could consider how the roles of Safer Neighbourhoods Officers and Safer Schools Officers could be harnessed and developed. Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS, stated that Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers collected information and intelligence on a daily basis. Throughout the consultation process we heard from young people and adults about the importance of the individual relationships that can develop between police officers and young people and in the reporting context this individual relationship is crucial. By the very nature of the community engagement and reassurance role that Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers have with young people they are perfectly placed to take reports from young people. This appears a straightforward proposition but at an expert witness session a Safer Schools Officer explained that it was not. He explained that he was unable to log reports made to him at school so often he advised young people to report at their local police station. The MPS should consider how the information and intelligence collected on a day-to-day basis by Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers could be formally utilised by local partners and MPS colleagues.

### **A sea-change?**

There were two notable contributions made by adult stakeholders that indicate that a change is occurring at a community level, and that, depending on the approach used by service providers, it is possible to impress on young people the importance and necessity of reporting.

<sup>30</sup> Restorative Justice (RJ) processes give victims the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers to their questions and to receive an apology. It gives the offenders the chance to understand the real impact of what they've done and to do something to repair the harm. RJ holds offenders to account for what they have done, personally and directly, and helps victims to get on with their lives.

Jacob Whittingham spoke about work that SE1 United had carried out with Mothers Against Guns<sup>31</sup>, which had had a noticeable impact on the young people that he worked with. He argued that emphasising to young people the effects of not reporting had a positive impact. It is clear that this emphasis alongside an appropriate delivery mechanism may encourage young people to recognise the necessity of reporting.

This experience had links to information provided by Officers from Operation Trident, who explained that communities themselves were driving this change.

***‘Due to the incidents that have occurred this year [the 26 homicides of young people in London in 2007] communities are saying enough is enough...’***

Operation Trident has also taken a proactive approach to encourage reporting. The team includes a Crimestoppers Youth worker and her role though straightforward is a challenging one – to encourage the use of Crimestoppers by young people. This has involved taking young people to Crimestoppers offices and showing them how calls are dealt with as they come in. This work is necessary as consultation with young people highlighted that there is scepticism surrounding confidential services. In a conversation with the MPA YSRG the young people told the MPA that they and other young people did not believe that Crimestoppers and other similar anonymous and confidential services were watertight.

However, the comments by Jacob Whittingham and Operation Trident officers provide an indication that change is possible and one of

the challenges facing the MPS is how they can support this cultural shift.

### ***The experiences of young people who report crimes***

It is important to note that some young people choose to report crimes. The MPA survey found that of the 17% respondents who had been a victim of crime, just under half (47%) had informed the police. Young people were not asked in the youth survey why they had chosen to report to the police, however, by considering the responses to the question on contact<sup>32</sup> with the police, it is possible to draw some general conclusions.

Over half of the 358 respondents, 55%, had had some contact with the police in the last 12 months. Respondents were asked to explain how they felt about the most recent contact. Amongst the most commonly given positive responses to this question the following are noteworthy in regards to reporting:

- quick response times;
- taking action to deal with the issue;
- police were helpful.

***‘They came to my house when it was burgled within 15 minutes and did all they could.’***

***‘I was assaulted and they quickly responded and did as much as they were able to in order to find the attacker.’***

***‘They were willing to help.’***

Quotations from the MPA youth survey

<sup>31</sup> Mothers Against Guns is a nationwide campaigning group tackling gun crime.

<sup>32</sup> The question asked was ‘Have you had any contact with the police in the last 12 months (this could be any kind of contact including face-to-face, on the phone or over the internet)?’



The support a young victim or witness receives from service providers will determine whether they choose to report an incident. Throughout the youth scrutiny the MPA heard from adults that it was crucial to provide young victims and witnesses with specific tailored responses. A few pointed out that to date the focus on youth crime, by all agencies and not just the police, had primarily been young offenders. They concluded that making a concerted effort to meet the needs of victims and witnesses would impact positively on reporting.

Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, highlighted an additional concern. He explained that there needed to be a clearer balance between expedience and the demands of due process, stating that although the current persistent young offender<sup>33</sup> pledge had reduced the period between arrest to sentence from 142 days to 71, the 71 day period was still a considerable amount of time and it was inevitable that victims would come in to contact with offenders during it. He explained that this was both a criminal justice concern and a child protection issue and that agencies needed to give more consideration to how young victims could be protected. He suggested that all cases involving young victims and offenders should be dealt with speedily.

### ***Young people – hidden victims?***

It is difficult to say with any assurance how many young people are victims of crime. One of the primary reasons for this is that under 16's are not

interviewed in the annual British Crime Survey (BCS)<sup>34</sup>, which is combined with police statistics to provide a picture of crime and victimisation in the UK. In addition, because young people are less likely to report crimes, it is impossible to establish a clear picture of how many young people are victims of crime on an annual basis.

However, the data that is available on youth victimisation indicates that children and young people experience greater levels of violent crime victimisation. The BCS (2005 – 2006) found that the risk of being a victim of violent crime is 3.4% for a British adult. However, recent MPS data (March 2008) shows that although young people are less likely to be victims of crime, they are more likely to be victims of violent crime. Young people are three times more likely to be victims of robbery; twice as likely to be victims of sexual offences; and 20% more likely to be victims of violence against the person (VAP).

### ***The impact of negative encounters with the police***

Young Voice Matters<sup>35</sup> (2004) states that in order to address the lack of visibility of young victims, the relationships that they have with agencies which have been set up to support them, needs to be considered. The impact of these relationships has a direct bearing on whether the needs of young victims are being met by service providers.

33 'A persistent young offender is a young person aged 10-17 years who has been sentenced by any criminal court in the UK on three or more occasions for one or more recordable offences and within three years of the last sentencing occasion is subsequently arrested or has information laid against him for further recordable offence.' Definition sourced from the Criminal Justice System website, [www.cjsonline.gov.uk](http://www.cjsonline.gov.uk).

34 The Home Office British Crime Survey (BCS) is an important source of information about levels of crime and public attitudes to crime as well as other criminal justice issues. The results play an important role in informing Government policy. The BCS measures the amount of crime in England and Wales by asking people about crimes they have experienced in the last year. The BCS includes crimes that are not reported to the police, so it is an important alternative to police records. The survey collects information about: the victims of crime, the circumstances in which incidents occur and the behaviour of offenders in committing crimes. Since the completion of the MPA Youth consultation, the Home Office have announced plans to extend the BCS to include young people.

35 Young Voice Matters is a registered charity which provides a voice to young people.

Previous research shows that the day-to-day interactions that young people have with the police have a direct influence on how they view the police service as a whole and consequently will impact on whether they believe their needs will be met. The interactions between young people and the police will be considered in detail later in the report, but additional comments have been included here as they have relevance to reporting.

In the MPA youth survey, the responses to the question on contact provided some useful insights into how young people view the police and how these perceptions would impact on the needs of young people as victims and witnesses. One of the most common reasons given by respondents who felt that their most recent contact with the police had been 'bad' or 'very bad' was that the police were unhelpful. Reasons given were generally related to the police not giving them proper answers, being stopped or questioned for no reason, and feelings of being treated badly. Another reason given for contact being 'bad' or 'very bad' was because the police had been rude or threatening.

***'The police turned up late to the crime scene and I was there providing help until they rudely told me to stand back. Then they didn't attempt to ask any questions about what had happened.'***

***'Because they responded poorly, came way too late, and were rude when we were trying to help.'***

Quotations from the MPA youth survey

Other reasons given for why contact with the police was 'bad' or 'very bad' focused particularly on how young people were viewed by the police.

***'I feel they stereotype us youths because of the way we dress and look.'***

***'The officer seemed to assume I was wasting time because of my age.'***

Quotations from MPA youth survey

Feedback from the consultation carried out by the 18 borough CPEGs concurred with MPA survey findings. The groups informed the MPA that the poor relationships young people have with the police creates a lack of confidence in the service as a whole and that the negative attitude is an aggregating factor which impacts on future contact that young people have with the police.

### ***Role of service providers***

As stated earlier, there was recognition amongst a number of the adult stakeholders that the needs of young victims and witnesses were not adequately being met.

Dee O'Connell, Children and Young People Team, Home Office, acknowledged that to date central government had paid little attention to the needs of young victims and that as a consequence young people were unwilling to come forward as they were unsure about the support they would receive.

Camila Batmanghelidjh stated that young people were worried that information they provided to service providers including the police would be leaked and consequently become known to offenders. It was not clear whether 'leaks' were deliberate or whether some service providers found themselves with access to information which they passed on unwittingly. Deliberate or not, if this is happening it will hamper any positive shifts that may be occurring in regards to reporting.



It is clear that service providers will not be able to address the needs of young victims and witnesses unless they are able to understand the impact of victimisation on a young person.

The Victim Support Westminster consultee informed the MPA Youth Scrutiny that young people felt stigmatised by victimhood and saw it as 'uncool' and that more confident young people were most impacted by victimhood.

She went on to say that young people are unwilling to testify as witnesses because they believe: that there is no chance of a positive outcome; that the police do not care about their safety; and, that there will be reprisals by the perpetrators.

Meeting the needs of young victims and witnesses is not only necessary because of the positive impact this will have on reporting, the subsequent impact on clear-up rates and community confidence, but also because there is growing evidence that there are close links between victimisation and offending.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR LONDON VICTIM SUPPORT

*Recommendation 12:* London Victim Support should develop and promote youth-specific victim support services in every London borough.

### **Victims and offenders: a false dichotomy?**

*'If we know that being a victim of a high harm offence may result in that victim becoming a perpetrator...we need to take intimidation very seriously.'*

Betsy Stanko, Head of Strategic Research Unit, MPS

The longitudinal study by University of Edinburgh (2003) indicated that young offenders and

particularly those that offend seriously and persistently are vulnerable to victimisation due to the very nature of their offending. The study found that teenage victims of crime tend strongly to be offenders and offenders tend to be victims.

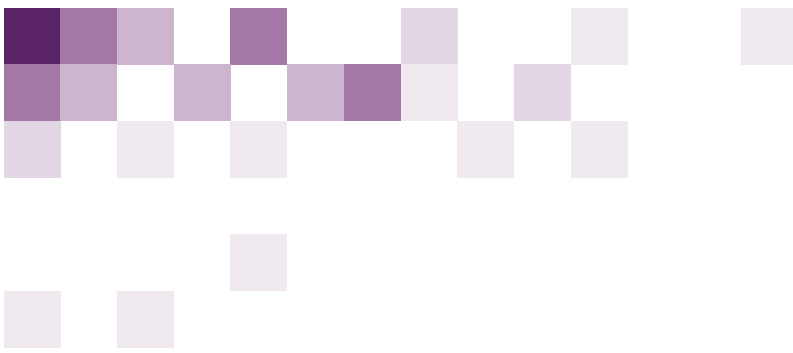
The key reasons given in the study for this link between victimisation and offending were as follows:

- that as teenage crime is a group based activity, young people run the risk of becoming victims of the offenders that are part of this group;
- that by offending young people make themselves vulnerable, in that they can not call on protection from service providers and in particular the police;
- the traits (for example, a willingness to take part in risky behaviour) that lead to offending can also lead to victimisation; and,
- being a victim of abuse in childhood, for example, can cause long-term damage that can increase the chance of offending at a later age.

Research by Owen and Seating (Victim Support 2007) also found that there was a correlation between young peoples involvement in violence as victims and offenders.

This research found that there were certain risk factors in a young person's life that made this link likely. They found that there were three key pathways, which explained how victimisation could lead to offending:

- retaliatory offending;
- displaced retaliation carried out by the victim; and,
- the victim befriending offenders.



These pathways were more likely to occur if the initial victim was exposed to particular risk factors. These risk factors were:

- a belief that the only way to deal with anger was through violence;
- that retaliatory violence was acceptable behaviour;
- that involving the police was ineffective and socially unacceptable; and finally,
- that by committing violence the victim would gain respect and protect themselves from further violence.

Owen and Seating (Victim Support 2007) explained that the two pathways, which indicated how offending can lead to victimisation were:

- retaliatory violence by the victim; and,
- a lack of protection for offenders from adults in authority.

### ***The impact of early trauma***

In understanding how victimisation can on occasion lead to offending behaviour, a psychological perspective on the relationship between behaviour and the brain was provided by Camila Batmanghelidjh, George Hosking from The Wave Trust<sup>36</sup> and the consultee from the Maudsley Hospital. The three spoke about the effects of trauma, stress, violence and abuse on a young child, and how this affects their behaviour in later life. They all emphasised the relevance of posttraumatic stress disorder in analysing the violent behaviour of some young people.

They explained that the brain is a piece of sophisticated computer hardware, programmed largely in the first three years of life. The brain determines how human beings think, feel and behave. How the human brain develops in relation

to its environment can be a critical determinant factor in terms of behaviour as the child grows.

The process of brain development is moderated by a child's relationship with its primary caregiver. In cases where caregiver and child are well attuned – where the caregiver responds to the infant's signals – his or her empathetic interactions results in a child who is able to put himself or herself in the mind of another and interact successfully. This sense of security protects the child from the effects of trauma, laying down the template for future interactions. These infants are able to understand each other's mental states and develop a sense of self.

In those instances where caregivers are absent or abusive, infants are observed to be incapable of regulating their hormones, soothing or comforting themselves, or regulating their arousal and emotional reactions (whether positive or negative). This results in the development of insecure attachments, in which the infant does not develop a mental representation of a responsive caregiver in times of need. Children exhibiting a disorganised response to insecure attachment can freeze in trance-like states, feel the unbearable impotence of a state of fear without resolution, demonstrate severely impaired reflective functioning, and are unable to dissociate painful memories as they lack anyone to help digest them. A victim or bully role becomes built into such children's psychology.

Failed attachment precludes proper empathetic development and empathy – or lack of it – is key to understanding violence. Camila et al concluded that violent offenders often show little or no empathy.

<sup>36</sup> Worldwide Alternatives to Violence (WAVE) Trust charity applies business strategy principles to the challenge of reducing violence and child abuse around the world.



The inevitable conclusion is that investment must be made in the first few years of children's lives in order to avert their becoming violent when older. Mitigating those factors which render a caregiver absent (e.g. prison) or abusive (e.g. drugs and alcohol) is critical. This mitigation might be achieved during pregnancy or infancy. According to such an argument, attending to the parent's social and emotional needs is the most effective preventative measure in terms of reducing violence perpetrated by young people.

In recognising the impact of early trauma on later offending behaviour, the MPS and other statutory service providers will have to accept that early intervention<sup>37</sup> will not produce quick wins. The role of the MPS in regards to early intervention is somewhat limited. Though senior officers recognise the importance of early intervention, the lead should be taken by Children's Services with the support and buy in of the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health. The MPS can support Children's Services by ensuring that information collected via Merlin<sup>38</sup> is shared as a matter of course with service providers and that where appropriate, referrals of young people at risk are made to relevant statutory service providers.

<sup>37</sup> Early intervention can be used to describe interventions that are taken at the point when young people first become involved in crime. It is also used to describe interventions that are taken to support very young children who due to their family backgrounds are more likely to become involved in offending behaviour when they become older.

<sup>38</sup> The Merlin database is used by MPS officers to collate information on young people at risk or in need. Information on all five Every Child Matters strands is also inputted in Merlin.

### CASE STUDY – NOTTINGHAM: THE UNITED KINGDOM'S FIRST EARLY INTERVENTION CITY

Agencies in Nottingham will be taking a coordinated approach to early intervention in order to achieve better outcomes for children, young people, adults and families. The early intervention approach will shift resources to tackle the causes of the problems, rather than just treating the symptoms.

A number of different schemes will use the early intervention techniques in the city. These include:

The family nurse partnership project – family nurses will help teenage mothers through pregnancy and early parenthood. The Family Nurse Partnerships will work through Nottingham's 16 Sure Start Children's Centres.

Mentoring Scheme for young people – young people at risk of becoming involved in serious crime will be given the opportunity to work with a mentor

Supporting victims of Domestic Violence – A Stronger Families Project will be established to provide support to children and young people who are experiencing domestic violence

The Sanctuary scheme – will help victims of domestic violence stay in their own homes rather than having to flee to a refuge and leave behind families, friends and work

The DrugAware scheme – will tackle illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco. It will raise awareness of the signs of substance misuse in communities and will also put into place easy access to information and services for young people and their families.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

*Recommendation 13:* Recognising that early intervention approaches are cost effective in the long term, statutory service providers should consider how current resources could be reallocated to focus on early intervention projects.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 9:* Recognising the importance of early intervention, the MPS Youth Strategy Board should consider how information collected via Merlin could be used to refer young people at risk to other relevant statutory service providers.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

*Recommendation 14:* The Department for Children, Families, and Schools and Department of Health should research national and international early intervention programmes to assess what good practice exists and ensure that this information is disseminated.

### ***The impact of coercion on young people***

There were also concerns expressed by adult and young consultees that some young people were forced into offending behaviour. This caused difficulties for service providers who needed to strike an appropriate balance between recognising the victimisation that young people had experienced and dealing with the offending behaviour.

Examples of this coercion tended to occur for two clear reasons: living in an area where there were high levels of crime, or due to the young person in question having been a victim of abuse. This division is somewhat artificial, in that, young people who live in deprived neighbourhoods – which are prone to high levels of crime – are also more likely to find themselves in vulnerable, abusive situations. This is evidenced in the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (Home Office 2004), which found that children and young people, who had four or more disorder problems in their areas, had a higher risk of being frequently victimised.

*Living in an area where there were high levels of crime:*

- Young people from the MPA YSRG told the MPA about children whom ‘elders’<sup>39</sup> forced to courier drugs or drug-deal. They were concerned that the police were targeting these children rather than dealing with elders. Camila Batmanghelidjh felt that the current MPS Youth Strategy lacked a clear understanding of the level of threat that some young people experience and that this issue should be recognised in future action plans. She stated that police resources should be focused on the individuals that were forcing young people to take part in offending behaviour rather than targeting young people who were forced as a matter of survival to take part in offending behaviour.
- Pitts (2007) found that approximately one third of the gang members in Waltham Forest did not want to be in a gangs but had been coerced into gang membership. Parents faced stark choices. They could tell their children not to join a gang and have their children face the inevitable negative consequences of this decision or they

<sup>39</sup> Street term used by young people to describe ‘bredren’ and older young people who look out for them. The term bredren is used to describe a good friend or a brother.





could be 'responsible parents' and allow their children to join a gang, as this would minimise the risks that their children faced. Pitts concludes that reluctant gangsters pose a challenge to the CJS. He explained that the law does not take into account the impact of local crime structures on young people and consequently the choices that young people made.

#### *Abused and vulnerable young people:*

- The adult stakeholder from NSPCC National Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service (NCATS)<sup>40</sup> stated that on occasion police officers were unable to recognise that a young person who had sexually abused another young person may also be a victim of grooming. This lack of recognition often resulted in a line of questioning which did not reveal the original abuse that had resulted in the later abuse taking place.

The Barnardos Exploitation Team also highlighted this concern<sup>41</sup>. They stated that criminal justice agencies were unable to recognise that young women involved in commercial sexual exploitation were also victims. This was further complicated as often these young women did not consider themselves victims, resulting in criminal justice agencies not taking into account the pathways that had led from victimisation to offending.

***'The Criminal Justice System does not see further than the black and white facts that are presented to them.'***

Barnardos Exploitation Team

***'I feel when it comes to youth sentencing...they should create another punishment for vulnerable and helpless young people instead of sending them to prison.'***

Young person

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE, THE LONDON CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD AND THE YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD**

***Recommendation 10:*** In questioning young people who have been coerced into crime, MPS officers and the Criminal Justice System should take into account the causes and context of the offending behaviour in order to provide measured responses.

***Recommendation 11:*** Metropolitan Police Service, the London Criminal Justice Board and the Youth Justice Board should expand and develop current interventions for young people at risk of offending behaviour in order to support those young people who are at risk of victimisation.

On an optimistic note, there is a growing recognition within the MPS that young people that are caught up in serious youth violence should be considered within the child protection framework. Operation Trident consultees explained that Merlin<sup>41</sup> reports are completed on young victims of shootings. By formally identifying these young people as at risk, the MPS will be able to ensure that these young people's needs are not overlooked.

<sup>40</sup> The National Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service (NCATS) offer an assessment, treatment and consultation service for children and young people who have been victims of and/or perpetrators of sexually harmful behaviour.

<sup>41</sup> The Barnardo's Sexual Exploitation Team supports young women to exit and recover from exploitation and prostitution.

Not all young people who are victims become offenders. Not all young people who live in environments where there are high levels of crime and violence will go on to become involved in offending behaviour and not all young men and women who are sexually abused will go on to sexually abuse other young people or become involved in commercial sexual exploitation. However, the findings indicate that a complexity of risk factors leave some young people vulnerable to collusion and exploitation and the onus is on service providers to take this into account when considering the types of service provision that are required for young victims and young witnesses.

In considering effective support services for young victims and witnesses, support agencies should consider the potential risk factors for any given young person, which could result in that young person becoming involved in offending behaviour or being further victimised.

### ***The court experience***

As stated earlier, some young people choose to report crimes. How they are treated once they have made a decision to do so has a huge impact on whether they would choose to do so again.

One of the consequences of a young person's decision to report will be appearing as a witness in criminal proceedings. Information provided by consultees indicates that this process can be an upsetting and worrying experience for some young people.

Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS, stated that young people did not perceive courts to be safe environments and to increase the reassurance of young people the MPS in partnership with the London Criminal Justice Board (CJB) were looking

at how to improve the court experience. As part of this work Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) have been deployed to six youth courts across the Capital. In addition a survey has been carried out in Camberwell Green Magistrates and Youth Court, which looked at young people experiences of the youth court process.

Young people are defined as vulnerable witnesses<sup>42</sup> and as such have access to a range of special measures<sup>43</sup>. Current special measures available for witnesses are as follows:

1. Screens to ensure that all witnesses cannot see the defendant in court;
2. Video recorded evidence;
3. Live TV links
4. Clearing the public gallery of the court;
5. Removal of wigs and gowns;
6. Aids to communication; and,
7. The use of an intermediary

One of the above options (1) provides complete anonymity. Evidence gathered through the youth scrutiny indicated that special measures were not being utilised fully.

The Camberwell Green Magistrates and Youth Court consultee stated that young people were not being given complete information at the initial reporting stage by police about the range of special measures available, which resulted in special measures applications not being made promptly.

There was also recognition by Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS, that there was a lack of awareness of special measures amongst officers.

<sup>42</sup> A vulnerable witness is a witness under 17 years of age at the time of a relevant hearing.

<sup>43</sup> Special measures are a range of measures available to assist some witnesses who give evidence in criminal proceedings. An application for a special measure is made to the Magistrate or trial judge who will make the decision as to whether the witness can use the special measures to give their evidence.



He said that this would be addressed in the London CJB's Youth Strategy.

Plotnikoff and Woolfson (NSPCC in partnership with Victim Support, 2004) undertook a survey with 50 young prosecution witnesses and found that 35 of the 50 were nervous in the pre-trial period. The vast majority (44) of the young witnesses gave information via TV link. 17 stated that they were upset that the defendant could see them on the TV link.

The Camberwell Green Magistrates and Youth Court consultee also expressed concerns about the TV link. She explained that a number of witness workers across London had expressed concerns that the TV link system did not offer anonymity to young witnesses.

The language used during a trial can also have a bearing on a young person's experience of the criminal justice process. 25 of the young people in the NSPCC and Victim Support study said that they did not understand some of the language used and had found questions confusing.

The Camberwell Green Magistrates and Youth Court consultee stated:

***'The youth court is meant to be child friendly and is very informal in its set up; however, often the language used by lawyers etc is confusing and not understood by the young people.'***

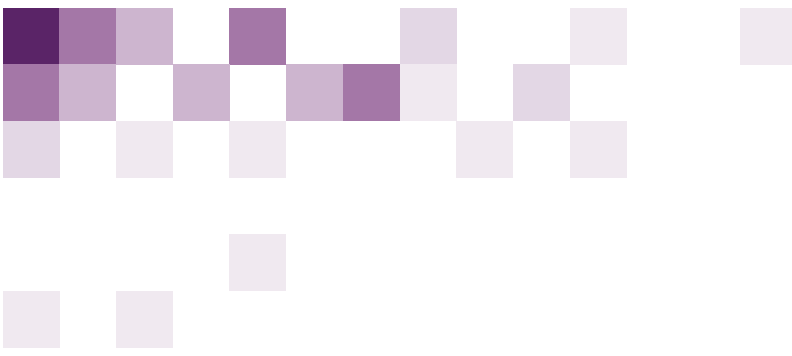
On a positive note, 25 of the witnesses from the NSPCC and Victim Support survey did state that they would act as a witness again, although many qualified this decision by going onto say *'if it was a serious offence'*, *'only if I had to'*, or *'only if I was the only one who saw the offence.'* 13 said quite categorically that they would refuse to act as a witness on any future occasion.

The majority (36) of the young witnesses spoke positively about the pre trial contact that they had with their support officer and 32 had found this contact helpful. The importance of this pre-trial contact cannot be over emphasised. The Camberwell Green Magistrates and Youth Court consultee explained there was a high dropout rate between the time of the actual report and the trial itself, indicating that pre-trial contact was essential. She explained that the young people who were most likely to turn up on the day of the trial were those with whom police officers have maintained contact. This contact did not have to consist of much, and varied between home visits and phone calls.

***'Some officers are also known to call the witness the night or day before the trial to ensure that they are ready for the trial.'***

It is worth highlighting the current work of the London CJB's Youth Strategy, which includes improving the court experience for young people. This work includes:

- looking at the youth court environment, with a focus on the safety of young people;
- the support needs of young people in regards to reporting;
- considering how to increase the numbers of young people who feel able to report;
- informing young people about the youth justice system and consulting them on its design in order to increase confidence in the system.



## **Conclusion**

The MPA findings highlight the importance of dealing sensitively with the needs of victims and witnesses. The young people that took part in the consultation did not believe service providers would meet their needs and this had a direct impact on whether they would choose to report crimes to the police or other trusted intermediaries.

The University of Edinburgh and Victim Support studies are also of concern as they highlight that the current separation of victims from offenders sets up a false dichotomy and that in reality these young people are often the same group of young people. The studies highlight that there are clear pathways from victimisation to offending and vice versa.

In the development of service provision that targets young people at risk of offending, consideration also needs to be given to working with young people who are at potential risk of becoming victims.

Only by effectively meeting the needs of young victims and witnesses can we begin to improve crime-reporting figures and increase young people's confidence in the CJS.

# Chapter 3: Young people as perpetrators of crime

## Summary

The causes of young people's offending behaviour are multi-faceted. In considering appropriate interventions this complexity should be recognised and taken into account. This is of particular importance because young people feel that current deterrents are not effective and do not prevent young people from offending. Responses to offending behaviour also need to take into account both the needs of the young offender and the acts that they have committed.

## Introduction

One of the aims of the Youth Scrutiny was to look at the reasons why young people get involved in committing crime and anti social behaviour (ASB). In previous sections of the report adults and young people identified the following causes:

- territorialism;
- coercion;
- grooming;
- retaliation; and
- the link between victimisation and offending.

This section of the report further explores the causes; looks at what the police and other service providers should be doing to prevent offending and also looks at particular areas of service provision that need improvement. Factors covered in this chapter:

- MPS data on youth crime;
- the causes of youth crime;
- young people and weapons;
- young people and gangs;

- the MPA consultation findings;
- MPS responses;
- young people's perceptions of the CJS;
- young people and drug and alcohol abuse;
- responses and solutions to young people's offending behaviour.

## **MPS data on youth crime**

Before looking at causes, it would be useful to consider the extent of youth offending. MPS data (March 2008) on youth crime and disorder indicates that:

- the overall level of youth offending has not increased; in fact the proportion of offenders aged 10 – 19 years has remained stable over the past six years.
- there have been two notable changes between 2005 – 06 and 2007 – 08: drug offending has increased from 20% to 32% and violence has decreased from 27% to 21%.
- however, young people commit an increasing proportion of serious crime<sup>44</sup>. [Operation Trident consultees highlighted that victims were getting younger and that the youth on youth homicides in 2007 – and the first half of 2008 – were a significant increase on previous years.]
- young people are less likely to be victims of crime than adults; however, they are more likely to be victims of violent crime.
- the peak time for youth offending is between 3pm – 5pm on weekdays
- 21% of offenders knew their victims, however for serious crime this rose to 48%.

<sup>44</sup> Serious Crime as defined by the Home Office consists of the following offences: homicide; child destruction (the intentional destruction of a viable unborn child); attempted murder; wounding or other act endangering life; grievous bodily harm without intent; causing death by dangerous driving; causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs; causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving and causing death by aggravated vehicle taking.

Violent Crime includes the following offences: violence against the person (VAP); sexual offences and robbery.

The two areas where changes have occurred are in serious crime and drug offending. The increase in drug offending from 20% to 32% is largely due to cannabis use and is also a reflection of police activity. There has also been an increase in serious crimes committed by young people. The data review shows that though there has been a reduction in serious adult offending this reduction has not been extended to young offending.

### **The causes of youth crime**

The reasons given by young consultees as to why young people become involved in offending behaviour fell into four broad categories.

#### **1) Boredom**

Young people told the MPA that there was little to do for young people and existing activities were expensive. With little to distract young people, the inevitable conclusion was that young people drifted into crime and ASB.

#### **2) Recognition and Respect**

Young people explained that for some of their peers offending bought kudos, respect and recognition from peers and the wider community – the importance of gaining recognition from older males was particularly highlighted. The MPA YSRG explained that young women's involvement in offending behaviour was linked to wanting recognition or acceptance from male peers.

There was also a contrary notion of respect amongst some young people, which differed from mainstream notions of respect. As stated earlier, Camila Batmanghelidjh explained that young people who were cut off from mainstream society created their own civil codes. These codes appear

to place particular emphasis on territorialism and behaviour. Young people come to believe that violence and violent responses are an acceptable method of dealing with perceived or actual wrongs.

Connected to the notion of respect was a fear of victimisation and recognition by young people that it was better to 'get in first.' The University of Edinburgh and Owen and Seating (Victim Support 2007) found that one of the pathways from victimisation to offending behaviour was a belief by victims that committing an initial act of violence would prevent further victimisation from taking place.

***'If you show fear to another young person it can bring it on further [violence]... if you show fear to a dog it will attack you, there is no difference.'***

Young person

The Damilola Taylor Trust (DTT)<sup>45</sup> consultees told the MPA that in extreme cases young people were prepared to secure permanent resolutions to disputes:

***'Young people get killed ...there is an end game mindset.'***

A few young people also said that for some young people enforcement measures such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts<sup>46</sup> and Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOS)<sup>47</sup> were 'badges of honour' and had become aspirational targets rather than deterrents.

<sup>45</sup> The Damilola Taylor Trust was set up in 2001 and is named after Damilola Taylor, a young boy who was killed by two teenage brothers in November 2000. The trust has a number of aims: to tackle the risk factors that can lead to crime; to develop holistic responses for working with socially deprived young people; and, to help and support victims of crime.

<sup>46</sup> An acceptable behaviour contract (ABC) or agreement (ABA) is an intervention designed to engage an individual in acknowledging their anti-social behaviour and its effect on others, with the aim of stopping that behaviour. It is a written agreement made between the person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and a number of relevant agencies

<sup>47</sup> Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) are court orders which prohibit the perpetrator from specific anti-social behaviours. ASBOs are issued for a minimum of two years and the aim of an ASBO is to protect the public from the behaviour, rather than to punish the perpetrator.



### 3) A lack of effective deterrents

This issue is considered in detail later on in this chapter of the report. Young people told the MPA that there were no real deterrents to prevent young people from becoming involved in offending behaviour. As deterrents were seen to be inadequate young people were taking increasing risks as they got older.

### 4) Need and Greed

In the Victims and Witnesses chapter young people explained that people who displayed their possessions were likely to be targeted. Every one of the young people from St Paul's School that took part in the consultation told the MPA that they had been mugged. They said that they were seen as 'easy targets' and 'rich pickings'.

It was clear however, that this was not a simple case of disadvantaged young people targeting advantaged young people. All the young people in the MPA YSRG had been mugged, in a few cases on multiple occasions. (Some of these instances had involved groups of young people targeting a lone young person.) The MPA group was socially and economically diverse and the victims of the multiple muggings would not consider themselves easy targets or rich pickings.

It would be fairer to presume that a desire for instant money (connected to opportunity) is a key motivator for some young people. Linked to this is a belief that there is a lack of legitimate opportunities available for young people. The consultation undertaken by the 18 borough CPEGs highlighted that whilst some young people lacked a work ethic others believed that their future employment prospects were limited.

Finally, there is one obvious factor that cannot be ignored. The issue of social deprivation has been highlighted in other areas of the report. However, as it has a direct bearing on offending it is also been highlighted here. The areas with the highest levels of youth crime are also those areas of

London that have the highest levels of multiple social deprivation. These areas for example are more likely to have high numbers of unemployed and are more likely to have overcrowded and/or poor social housing.

***'We are dealing with the damage and mental health that is born into economic deprivation and we do not know how to tackle this.'***

Betsy Stanko, Head of Strategic Research Unit, MPS

It may not be possible to deduce fully why some young people become involved in offending behaviour. The reasons given throughout this scrutiny were multifaceted. However, it is important to recognise causes so that appropriate interventions can be made at appropriate times. However, it is just as important to recognise that not all existing interventions are working and therefore alternative child-centred approaches, which meet the complex needs of young people, need to be developed.

### ***Young people and weapons***

The MPA findings and existing studies show that there are parallels between the concerns of young people and adults in regards to community safety. However, how some young people choose to respond to these concerns – including the carrying of weapons – was a cause of concern amongst the adult stakeholders who took part in the MPA Youth Scrutiny.

Repeatedly we were told by adults that, however ineffective the measure, young people carried knives for self-protection and self-defence. Young people reiterated this. They told the MPA that knife carrying was common amongst young people in their age group (guns were carried by young adults and elders); however, any object, which could be used to defend oneself and provide a sense of security, was worth carrying.

They and other young people also spoke about using dogs as weapons, explaining that the police were less likely to stop a young person with a dog.

Young people were aware there was a flaw in the proposition that carrying a knife provided security and self-protection because they knew that by carrying a knife they were placing themselves in situations that could have violent outcomes. They told the MPA that:

- there were consequences to carrying weapons. A young person who showed their weapon in an act of self-defence would need to be prepared to use it, as it was likely that the other young person's response would be similar or excessive;
- knives provided false confidence. The young person at the receiving end was not frightened of the young person wielding the weapon but of the weapon itself.

***'It's about power, not respect. A person who carries weapons thinks it brings respect but at best its fear and hatred and not true respect. The definition of respect has become confused with fear.'***

Young person

Despite this ability to rationalise the ineffectiveness of carrying knives as a self-defence measure, the fear of victimisation prevents young people from considering alternative approaches.

The Safer Schools Officer during his expert witness session spoke about two Year 11 pupils who had recently been excluded from his school because they had stolen hammers from the Design and Technology Department. The young

men had been worried about being attacked on their way out of school, and, despite being aware of the school policy regarding weapons and that exclusion would be detrimental for them in the run-up to their GCSE exams, they had felt compelled to protect themselves. The officers from Operation Trident said that it was essential that young people's fear of crime was examined and understood. Without this understanding, service providers would not be able to devise responses that were effective. Operation Trident officers explained that they were making concerted efforts to understand this fear via their programme of engagement with young people.

The account by the Safer Schools Officer takes us back to comments made by Pitts and Camila Batmanghelidjh that particular consideration needs to be given by criminal justice agencies to young people who feel that they have no alternative options and whose responses are based on a need for self-preservation.

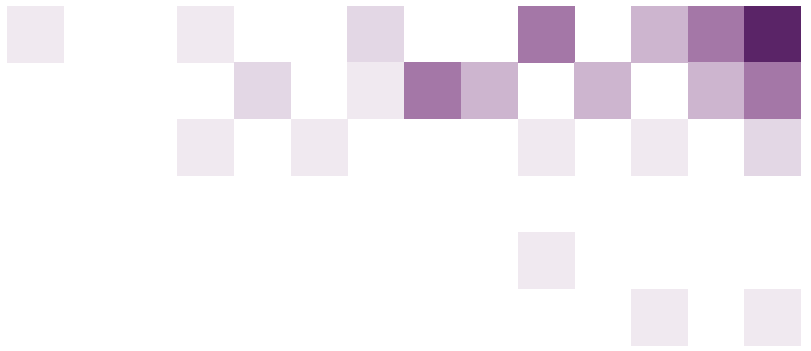
Camila Batmanghelidjh provided an insight into the reasons why young people carry knives. She explained that over the last decade, young people had begun to take increasing risks to attain a street credit rating<sup>48</sup>. Eleven years ago stabbing someone in the leg achieved substantial credit rating for young people. In 2008, committing murder would provide a young person with the same level of kudos.

She explained that 11 years ago weapons were in the hands of drug dealers, who used them to police their own businesses. In 2008, however, weapons were more commonplace and were being used as status symbols.

The young women from Lewisham YOT explained that groups involved in offending behaviour were often gender-mixed. They explained that young women were able to carry knives without being

<sup>48</sup> Credit rating: the young people that Kids Company supports do not feel part of mainstream society. Therefore they have created an alternative credit rating that provides their lives with a sense of personal value as well as recognition and approval from peers.





discovered by the police, because the police did not expect young women to carry knives. They explained that because young men were more likely to be stopped and searched, drugs and weapons were often handed over to girls to carry.

Connected to this are observations made by Camden Council employees who observed that young women could be particularly vicious when violent, often aiming to physically disfigure other young women. They said this was related to gender politics, as women are more likely to be judged on their physical appearances and therefore destroying a young woman’s looks would cause additional emotional damage.

### CASE STUDY – BRENT KNIVES AND WEAPON WORK

Brent police officers in partnership with the borough’s YOT, the Local Authority Community Safety Unit and the Gun Crime Coordinator raised awareness of the impact of gun and knife crime by providing a series of talks in Brent secondary schools.

An Accident and Emergency Consultant, the widow of a knife crime victim, and an officer from the borough’s murder investigation team all spoke about how gun and knife violence had affected their lives and work at form groups and assemblies in secondary schools throughout the borough.

The experience of the widow was particularly impactful for young people, as it provided a personal perspective of the consequences of gun and knife violence.

The talks provided an opportunity for school staff to discuss issues of rights and responsibilities at Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) classes.

Sessions were also held with young people from the borough’s YOT and with pupils at Pupil Referral Units<sup>49</sup> (PRU).

To build on this work, independent advisory groups (IAGs) will be set up in each secondary school. Safer Schools Officers will have links with the IAGs and information from IAGs will be fed into borough policing priorities and will be used as a platform to develop future work with young people in Brent schools.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 19:* In order to achieve a reduction in the number of young people carrying weapons, the MPS Youth Strategy Board should in addition to Operation Blunt and other short term measures, understand and address the reasons why young people carry weapons – including fear of crime – whilst continuing to develop and promote anti-weapon messages.

### **Young people and gangs**

There is a perception amongst Londoners that there is a growing gang problem in the capital. In considering this issue for the Youth Scrutiny, adult stakeholders highlighted that one of the reasons for this concern is the misuse of the term gang to describe a variety of different types of behaviour.

49 Pupil Referral Units are a special type of school, set up and run by Local Authorities to provide alternative education for children who cannot attend mainstream school.

***'Everyone meets up and does madness with each other. In my mind I never thought it was a gang, just friends'***

Young person

In attempting to address the lack of clarity as to what is meant by the term gang it is useful to consider research undertaken by Young et al (Youth Justice Board 2007). This research highlighted a number of key points:

- that as initial research into gang phenomena was undertaken in the USA, this research resulted in a definition that is often misused in the British context;
- that most offending by young people is group-related but that existing research has not sufficiently looked at the nature of these groups; and
- asking young people directly whether their groups are gangs does not always provide clear responses. They found that usually young people use the term gang to refer to their friendship groups whilst young people who are in fact involved in group-related offending do not use the term gang to describe their behaviour.

In the consultation that the MPA undertook, it became clear that the term 'gang' did not necessarily have negative or criminal connotations for young people. It was also obvious that their use of the term did not tally with the popular understanding of the term. For young people the term gang did not mean organised criminal activity; rather it defined identity, territory and culture. It was also used to describe feelings of belonging, protection and respect. In addition, young people informed the MPA that gangs provided safety and for some young people an alternative family.

***'Why are there gangs? Apart from the reasons that you might think why people are in gangs, one of the reasons is for safety and security. When you are in a gang you are safer.'***

***'If you are not listened to at home, gangs can look after you.'***

Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS and Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS supported the comments made by young people. They recognised that the media portrayal of the capital being rife with organised gangs was inaccurate, though they acknowledged that there were sections of the capital that had organised gangs.

Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, expressed concerns about the use of the term gang to describe and define certain behaviour which resulted in a lack of understanding of the actual issue and a development of responses that were not appropriate or suitable. He explained that many young people gained a sense of belonging from being part of a group and that it would be incorrect to assume that these friendship and peer groups were gangs.

Whilst the majority of young people that took part in the Youth Scrutiny did not use the term gang to describe organised criminal activity there was one notable exception. During discussions with the MPA YSRG, group members from south London boroughs named a number of gangs. These gangs had identifiable names, were linked to geographical areas and could be identified by the colours and clothes that they wore. These comments come closest to the American stereotype<sup>50</sup> of gangs, which is highlighted by Young et al.

50 "This stereotype is based on notions of hierarchy, and depicts rituals and symbols as essential attributes of gang membership, as well as ethnic homogeneity linked to neighbourhood 'turf'" (Young et al 2007).



Linked to this, the MPA found that some groups of young people had strong affiliations to the areas that they lived in and that on occasion this affiliation led to physical attacks on other young people that came into their areas. In considering some of the contributions made by young people regarding 'endz', it is important to keep in mind that serious youth violence may not always be connected to gang activity.

The young women from Lewisham YOT were clear that the 'madness' that was done by them when they met up with their friends was not gang-related. However, they did go on to state that a great deal of the crimes that were committed by young people were group-related activities and that group offending allowed young people to put on a 'front'.

The comments made by young people and the MPS Commanders highlight two key issues:

- The term 'gang' does not categorically define the day-to-day activities of young people. The term gang is used by service providers including the MPS to define a type of criminal behaviour. However, it is used by young people to define their social interactions.
- There are parts of London, which have recognisable gangs. The comments regarding south London highlight this. The MPS has undertaken initial research into the extent of gang activity in the capital and in light of the MPA findings it may be worth revisiting this research. An MPS consultee highlighted that 52% of the 26 homicides of young people in London in 2007 were gang related. Taking this into consideration and recognising that the nature of youth

offending is changing it would be wise to assess existing MPS research to ensure that it provides the information required to develop and inform MPS practice.

### **MPS responses**

During their expert witness sessions, Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS and Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS were clear that it was not wise to talk about serious youth violence in relationship to gangs because the two issues were not always connected. However, as stated above, they also recognised that there are sections of the capital that have organised gangs.

In May 2007 the MPS submitted a report<sup>51</sup> to the MPA that outlined an overview of the current gang profile.

In this report the MPS stated that the following definitions<sup>52</sup> are used by the MPS to define gangs and criminal networks:

- Peer Group – a relatively small, unorganised and transient group composed of peers who share the same space and a common history. Involvement in crime will be mostly non-serious in nature and not integral to the identity of the group.
- Gang – a relatively durable, predominately street based group of people who see themselves (are seen by others) as a discernable group for who crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.
- Criminal Networks – a group of individuals involved in ongoing criminality for some form of personal gain and which has links to National Intelligence Model Level Two Criminality<sup>53</sup>, or are having a significant impact on the community.

51 MPS Response to Guns, Gangs and Knives in London, Coordination and Policing Committee, Metropolitan Police Authority, 3rd May 2007.

52 These definitions have been coined by the researchers Hallsworth and Young.

53 The National Intelligence Model defines Level 2 as 'Cross Border issues – usually the actions of a criminal or other specific problems affecting more than one basic command unit. Problems may affect a group of basic command units, neighbouring forces or a group of forces.'

These definitions adopted by the MPS are useful in that they clearly identify different types of offending behaviour, therefore ensuring that appropriate responses are sought for each type of activity. The definition for 'peer group' is particularly helpful in regards to the MPA findings because it comes closest to the experiences of the young people that took part in the Youth Scrutiny consultation.

It is of concern that of those groups of young people who were involved in organised gang activity, 50% of gang members were from the Black African and Black Caribbean communities<sup>54</sup>. It is also notable that 87% of both victims and suspects in the 26 homicides of young people in London in 2007 were Black Minority Ethnic. However, the report highlighted that current resources, particularly from the voluntary and community sector, involved in intervention and prevention were almost exclusively focused towards the Black African and Black Caribbean communities and that support and encouragement needed to be provided to other communities affected by gun, gang and weapon criminality.

The MPA were told by Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS, that the disproportionate numbers of Black African and Black Caribbean gang members was due to a number of complex factors, including social and economic deprivation.

It is worth highlighting the work of Pitts (2007) in order to understand the impact of social and economic deprivation on criminality. Pitts looked at the significant impact of changes that had affected society throughout the last two decades.

His research found:

- an increasing income polarisation between the 'haves' and 'have nots';

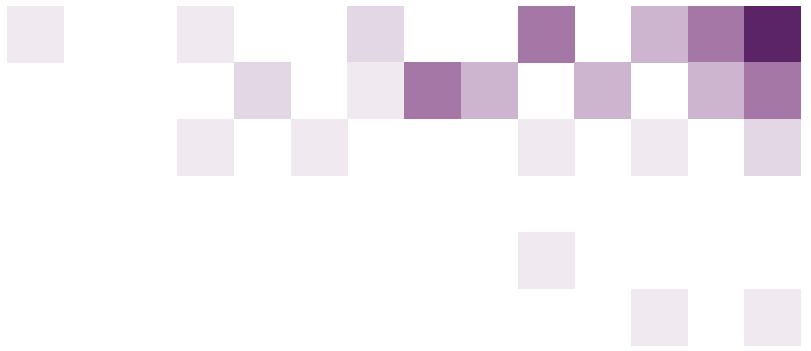
- an increasing concentration of disadvantaged communities in particular areas of London;
- increasing disadvantage based on racial and ethnic backgrounds; and,
- a concentration of criminal victimisation in areas of social deprivation.

The resulting impact of these changes has been that young people are now more likely to become victims and perpetrators; that victims and perpetrators are often the same in terms of age and racial background; that crimes are often more violent; and, are more likely to go unreported. He argues that social changes have resulted in changes in offending behaviour, some of which has led to the development of a specific gang culture.

The issue of young women and organised gang culture was also discussed with the MPS officers. Pitts had highlighted that very young women were vulnerable to being sexually used and passed amongst gang members. Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS, explained that community intelligence from Greenwich, Hackney and Newham indicated that gangs were using young girls, but that this was not a pan London problem. The MPA were informed that there was limited information on the needs of female gang members and that there was only two known all-girl gangs in the capital.

Only by fully understanding the extent of gang activity in the capital and considering which groups of young people are most likely to be impacted (as offenders and victims) can the MPS and other service providers ensure that responses are measured and appropriate. As part of this understanding, the MPS and relevant service providers must work towards having a collective understanding of what is meant by the term

<sup>54</sup> MPS Response to Guns, Gangs and Knives in London, Coordination and Policing Committee Metropolitan Police Authority, 3rd May 2007.



‘gang’ and ensuring that when this term is used in the public domain it is used appropriately.

A number of operations, which address serious youth violence, have strands of work that look at young people in relation to gangs.

In July 2007 Operation Curb was rolled out to every Borough Operational Command Unit (BOCU)<sup>55</sup>. In recognition that although the volume of violent youth crime has remained stable, the severity of violence has increased, Operation Curb was an MPS response to serious youth violence. Under Operation Curb, the majority of BOCUs established a Youth Engagement Team (YET) whose main goal was to proactively target young people of concern to the police. In addition, each BOCU identified a number of high priority violent young offenders who were targeted with intensive enforcement activity. Alongside the enforcement element of Curb, each BOCU was provided with additional resources for diversionary activities.

The work Operation Curb came to an end in April 2008, however, in response to the growing number of injuries and deaths by knives, in partnership with the MPA and the Mayors Office, the MPS agreed in May 2008 to continue with Operation Curb in a number of south and east London boroughs.

Operation Alliance is a partnership between the MPS and five Local Authorities. The principal aim of Operation Alliance is to reduce serious violence, including serious gang violence. Tactics being used include: targeted activities around particular venues; weapon sweeps (informed by intelligence); ensuring that all enforcement opportunities that arise are acted on; and home visits. Visiting the homes of young people who are on the fringes of criminal activity makes parents

aware of the consequences of their children’s behaviour.

Operation Pathways also seeks to reduce serious violence associated with gangs. It has not yet commenced. It will adopt a multi-agency approach with three main work streams and will initially cover some of the geographical areas covered by Operation Alliance:

1. The moral voice of the community – In partnership with the community, the voluntary sector, statutory agencies and law enforcement bodies, a clear message is given to gang members: *‘the violence will stop.’* This key message is supported by additional information that outlines what will happen if the violence continues and outlines support that can be provided to those members who want to exit gang culture
2. Help for those who ask – People who want to exit gangs will be provided with a multi-agency coordinated response
3. Consequences of continuing with violence – The whole gang will be held responsible for any violence committed by their members and all members will be targets for the CJS.

Operation Alliance has its basis in successful US projects including the Boston Gangs Project, which combined grass-roots community action alongside law enforcement.

A young person that took part in the north east London consultation made one interesting addition to the young people and gangs debate. He explained that a young person could mobilise a group of 50 young people in a number of minutes and that this indicated clear leadership skills.

<sup>55</sup> The basic street-level policing of London is carried out by 33 Borough Operational Command Units (BOCUs), which operate to the same boundaries as the 32 London borough councils apart from one BOCU, which is dedicated to Heathrow Airport. The BOCUs are the units that Londoners know as their local police.

These skills, which had been used for criminal purposes, could be harnessed and developed for legitimate ends with the support of service providers.

As stated previously a number of senior MPS officers suggested that young people who are involved in gang activity or on the fringes of gang activity should be considered under the child protection framework. Information collected via Merlin – which also now captures information under the five Every Child Matters strands – should be taken into account when considering interventions. Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS, explained that the Every Child Matters vehicle provides the police with an opportunity to consider alternatives to the enforcement route. Key MPS staff will be trained on how to identify young people at risk and every borough will have a dedicated officer who will be responsible for taking forward key child protection decisions. Alastair Jeffrey, Detective Chief Superintendent, MPS explained that as CRIMINT<sup>56</sup> information could be copied directly into Merlin, young people who came into repeated contact with the police would be immediately identifiable and information would be passed onto the Every Child Matters lead for the borough.

### CASE STUDY – CAMDEN YOUTH DISORDER ENGAGEMENT TEAM (YDET)

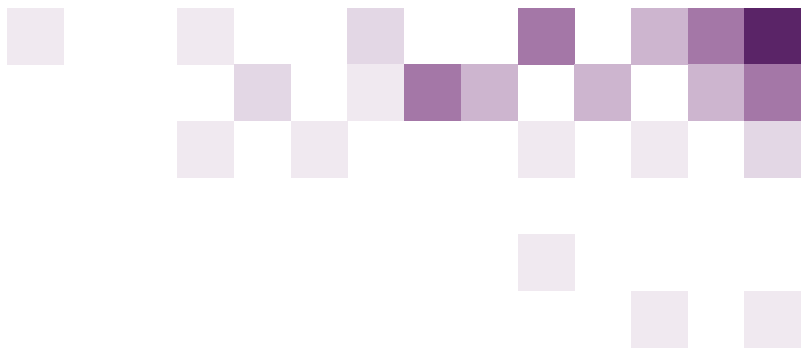
Camden Council's Youth Disorder Engagement Team works alongside the MPS Operation Curb YET. The role of Curb YETs is to target young people who have been identified as being directly involved in youth disorder with enforcement activities and to gain further intelligence relating to youth gangs and young people involved in group offending.

Unlike other youth workers YDET workers work directly alongside the YET. YDET interventions are reactive. MPS officers responding to an incident of youth disorder and violence, on arrival, call YDET workers. YDET workers then signpost identified young people to appropriate services and interventions.

To date YDET have referred young people to Connexions; Positive Activities for Young People; YISPs; Police Cadets and Local Intervention Fire Education. In partnership with the Curb YET and Safer Neighbourhoods Teams they have also taken part in pre-arranged home visits.

They have also supported Safer Schools Officers who require extra support/ presence at schools where there may be issues of youth crime and victimisation. Contacts have also been developed with youth clubs and youth workers in the borough for potential future referrals.

<sup>56</sup> CRIMINT is the MPS corporate criminal intelligence system.



**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIPS**

*Recommendation 17:* As part of their strategic assessment process, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships should utilise MPS data on serious youth violence in order to ensure that resources are appropriately focused.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE**

*Recommendation 18:* The MPS Youth Strategy Board should disseminate the corporate MPS definition for the term ‘gang’. This definition should be understood corporately and communicated consistently.

*Recommendation 20:* The MPS Youth Strategy Board should acknowledge that young people in gangs are at risk both of further offending and of victimisation. Consequently MPS responses to meet the needs of these young people should take this risk into account.

*Recommendation 21:* The MPS should develop the role of engagement and prevention in taking forward the critical performance area of reducing young people’s involvement in serious violence.

Young people were adamant that current responses to youth offending were inadequate. Young people told the MPA that prisons and young offenders institutes<sup>57</sup> (YOI) should be harsher environments; that life sentences should in fact mean life; and that sentences overall should be more severe. They were also concerned that on occasion there were too many legal loopholes and that sentences could be overturned on a technicality. In regards to the latter, it was not determined whether this observation was based on direct or indirect experiences or information that had been picked up through the media; however, it has been included here as it contributes to the overall perception amongst young people that the CJS is not effectively dealing with offenders.

In regards to community orders and community sentencing there were concerns expressed about the effectiveness or usefulness of this approach. A young man from St Paul’s School stated that to achieve his Duke of Edinburgh award he had been required to undertake three months of community service. He was aware that this was also used as a deterrent for young offenders and questioned whether this was therefore a suitable punishment. An officer from Operation Trident also queried whether community orders had a long-term impact on young offenders. He had received anecdotal information from police officers that had been present at YOT sessions where young people behaved inappropriately and anti socially and yet went unchallenged by YOT staff.

**Young people’s perceptions of the CJS**

*‘There are no disincentives against getting involved in crime – you know you are never going to get caught. There needs to be an appropriate level of deterrence and enforcement to prevent further involvement in crime.’*

*‘If they are allowed to keep pushing the boundaries even when their behaviour is being monitored ... then they know how far they can go and what they can get away with.’*

Young person

57 Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) are secure facilities (or prisons) that accommodate 15–21 year olds who have been committed to custody.

Young people were equally scathing about custodial sentences. The MPA were repeatedly told that YOIs were youth clubs or holiday camps

***[Young people] do not have faith in the justice system and hear about all the treats and luxuries in youth offending institutes.'***

One young person who had had a custodial sentence at a YOI admitted that the first two to three weeks of her sentence were hard, but then she became used to it. Concluding that, *'It's like being in your bedroom, but locked up.'*

Recent observations made by a member of the Prisons Officers Association tally with the comments made by young people. The member observed that jails are comfortable environments with relaxed regimes and that prisoners are happy as they have access to drugs, mobile phones and even sex. He explained that a drug-dealer regularly broke into one Yorkshire prison to sell drugs to inmates<sup>58</sup>.

The MPA YSRG stated that for some offenders prison and YOIs were opportunities to sit back and be 'looked after' without being affected by the day-to-day concerns of life outside. They told the MPA that young people's personal needs were met in YOIs – regular food and an opportunity to rest – whilst they could pursue leisure activities – access to PlayStations and *'get hench'*<sup>59</sup>.

Camila Batmanghelidjh explained that for some young people a custodial sentence would not act as a deterrent. She explained that only those young people who had something to lose by receiving a custodial sentence would be likely to see it as a deterrent, but those that had nothing to lose would not only be indifferent to a custodial

sentence but were also unlikely to be influenced by one.

This lack of impact was also commented on by the young women from Lewisham who stated that young people did not learn anything from their YOI experience and that they *'went in and came out the same.'* The MPA YSRG clarified this point further by stating that some offenders used custodial sentences as an opportunity to build further criminal contacts rather than as an opportunity to review their own behaviour.

However, young people were also aware that not all circumstances were this clear cut. They recognised that despite concerns regarding sentencing, prisons served a dual purpose – to punish the offender but also to protect members of the public from further harm. Linked to this, there was recognition that a custodial sentence also provided a reprieve for some offenders, in that they were protected from any retaliatory harm.

Despite this recognition, young people questioned the effectiveness of the penal system, stating that prisons could not work, because if they did they would not be overcrowded and reoffending rates would not be high. They expressed concerns about the difficulties that some offenders faced when coming out of prison: *'they can't get jobs, so they will commit more crimes.'*

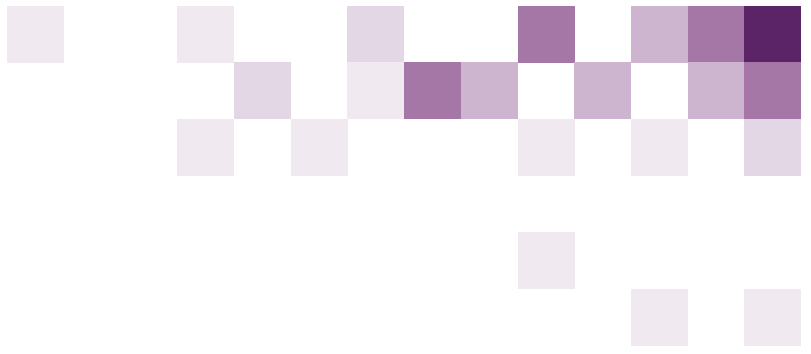
The MPA also learnt that young people are more punitive than adults. When asked why this was the case, they explained, *'because it is happening to us'* [violent crime].

One of the young people spoke about a social intervention approach to youth justice which was currently being utilised in Washington DC

<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that the Prison Service have been clear that action was taken immediately to address the break-ins and that at the time of these incidents prisoners were in their cells and did not have access to other areas of the prison.

<sup>59</sup> 'Get hench' is to work out and become muscular





and suggested that this approach should be considered and adopted for the London context.

**CASE STUDY – THE WASHINGTON DC TIME DOLLAR YOUTH COURT**

The Washington DC Time Dollar Youth Court turns justice over to teenagers. The court is a way to divert non-violent first time offenders from entering the juvenile justice system. First time offenders come before a jury of their peers who have the authority to sentence them to one or more of the following: community service; restitution; counselling; an apology; and finally, jury duty. Community service includes: being an after-school tutor; helping at DC homeless kitchens; assignments to resident councils in public housing; and, placements with churches helping seniors. The Youth Court is successful at reducing recidivism because it provides a forum whereby young people can reinforce messages to each other to be aware and conscious of their behaviour and the consequences of negative behaviour.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE LONDON CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD**

*Recommendation 22:* The London Criminal Justice Board should recognise the concerns young people have regarding the CJS and:

- a) provide youth-friendly information on youth justice; and,
- b) tackle the myths that some young people have of custodial and community sentencing.

**Young people and drug and alcohol abuse**

*‘Some young people who binge drink don’t set out to get drunk. They go to have fun because they are bored and have nothing to do.’*

Young person

During the course of the Youth Scrutiny, the MPA became aware that very little had been said by either adults or young people on the abuse of drugs or alcohol by young people. This was particularly interesting because during the Youth Scrutiny consultation period a number of high profile murder cases linked the drunken behaviour of the young defendants to the murders they had committed. The MPA thought it would be useful to determine whether the lack of comment by young people was due to drug and alcohol use having become a normalised aspect of youth culture or whether public interest in this topic was an artificial concern created by the media.

In regards to alcohol abuse, it is worth noting that there is a great deal of evidence that clearly indicates that the British public, regardless of age, have a difficult and problematic relationship with alcohol. Alcohol Concern (2004) found young people were drinking more and drinking more often than they previously had. Their research indicates that by the age of 13 young people who drink outnumber those who do not. Young people are mimicking the behaviour of adults in this regard. Alcohol Concern also found that one in three British men and one in five British women drink double the amount considered safe at least once a week.

Throughout the consultation period the only young people that spoke in any detail on alcohol abuse were the MPA YSRG. They stated that it was very easy to steal alcohol and named a number of supermarkets, which were seen to be easy targets. A few stated that legislation in shops

was not being enforced, as they were able to buy alcohol under-age without being challenged.

They were clear that alcohol abuse was not just a problem for London's young people but was also a problem in rural areas, where there are less activities to keep young people occupied. A lack of positive activities was also linked to 'binge' drinking. A few group members were clear that young people did not set out to get drunk, but with nothing to do, it became inevitable.

The Black African and Black Caribbean young people in the group were also adamant that 'binge' drinking was predominately a problem in the White communities and that White young people drank more than other ethnic groups.

The majority of the group felt that alcohol awareness should be part of Citizenship classes in schools and that information should be provided in the first few years of secondary schooling rather than in Year 10, when it was considered too late to be of any practical use.

There was more mention of drug use by consultees but again this was limited to a small number of consultees.

An adult consultee from Hounslow Youth Service said the reclassification of Cannabis had been an unsafe decision. She said that this had resulted in young people openly smoking cannabis and an increase in young people dealing the drug. She was clear that it was a gateway drug<sup>60</sup> that had a detrimental impact on young people's wellbeing.

Young women from Lewisham YOT also stated that younger people smoked cannabis but that only adults used harder drugs, such as crack.

Finally, the MPA YSRG felt that drugs were used by young people to *'forget things... to block out reality.'*

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

**Recommendation 23:** It is evident that laws relating to alcohol and drug use and abuse confuse young people and therefore existing and upcoming awareness campaigns should seek to address this confusion.

### Responses and solutions to young people's offending behaviour

***'One in seven young people who have been charged have already been brought to the attention of the police before. What protective factors should appear when they appear for the second time?'***

Betsy Stanko, Head of Strategic Research Unit, MPS

A number of stakeholders recognised that it was not the sole responsibility of the police service to deliver youth crime prevention initiatives and that the police were often dealing with the failures of other service providers. It was also highlighted that because service providers are priority-led and target-driven, prevention would not be a key concern for service providers unless it was an agreed local and/or regional priority.

Added to this was the paucity of information on what works in dealing with youth offending. Adult stakeholders told us that it was difficult to determine success and good practice when there was a lack of sustainable funding for projects, resulting in innovative programmes coming to a premature end.

60 The gateway drug theory is the belief that use of a lower classed drug can lead to the subsequent use of "harder", more dangerous drugs.



A clear picture of what was being delivered in each London borough would be useful in order to determine what was working, what was not and gaps in service provision. Alongside this an assessment of intervention projects being offered and whether these meet the needs of young people would be required.

It is worth recognising that currently there are a plethora of risk matrices and frameworks designed to identify young people at risk or in need and that consideration needs to be given to how these can be streamlined or how frameworks can be aligned so that they are complimentary. It may not be helpful to have one approach imposed centrally as it is clear that London boroughs have different requirements and needs. However, there also needs to be agreement at local level about the categories that will be considered to identify risk and how information will be shared across relevant agencies.

The ACPO<sup>61</sup> Youth Safety Assessment Tool (YSAT) is a good example of how boroughs can work collectively to identify young people who are offending, who are at risk of offending and who have been victims of crime. This toolkit was a result of recognition by the police that often officers came into contact with children and young people who were at risk before they became known to Children's Services and that this was an opportunity for the police, in partnership with other agencies, to determine how these children and young people could be supported and helped.

The ACPO YSAT is currently being piloted in the London boroughs of Waltham Forest, Havering, Lewisham and Greenwich. The aim is that by working in partnership with relevant agencies, sharing information intelligence and data, boroughs will be able to identify and prioritise young people who are most in need or at risk.

Professor John Pitts stated that the current approach of devising partnerships without identifying need was unhelpful. He suggested that the approach should be reversed and that partnerships should not be developed until needs had been identified. This would ensure that relevant agencies were involved from the outset and a one-size fits all approach was not adopted.

Stakeholders also recognised that different approaches would be required at different junctures of a young person's life. Whether these approaches were enforcement-specific or social and community based would be dependant on the needs of the young person at any given time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIPS

*Recommendation 16:* Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships within each London borough should agree a uniform approach to identifying young people at risk in order to agree the allocation of resource and service provision.

There was overall agreement that early intervention was crucial. It was suggested by a number of adult stakeholders that interventions provided at the point when young people first become involved in crime or even before that would be the most effective way forward.

Early intervention would also be beneficial for families who were experiencing difficulties. It was considered crucial to involve families and not simply target young people without any reference or consideration to their overall needs. Dee O'Connell, Children and Young Peoples Team, Home Office, highlighted the

61 The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) leads and coordinates the direction and development of the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

work being undertaken by the Scottish Panels<sup>62</sup>, which consider the 'needs' of the young person alongside their 'deeds'.

However, despite a uniform agreement regarding the significance of early intervention, adult stakeholders were concerned that early intervention programmes were not a priority for agencies. Due to resource limitations, agencies were often reactive rather than proactive.

Adult stakeholders also highlighted the need to support young people in transition. The London Probation consultee suggested that a tailored probation service for young people who were transferring from YOT provision to the probation service would be useful.

Recognising that young people leaving custody are at risk of reoffending and that therefore they required a comprehensive care package, Camila Batmanghelidjh suggested that alongside a need for smaller YOIs (which would allow for focused work) there was a need for closer links between YOIs and non-governmental organisations that worked with socially excluded young people. She said that this would allow young people to receive appropriate service provision at the completion of their sentences.

The recognition that young people who are excluded from mainstream service provision are at additional risk has been considered in the expansion of the MPS Safer Schools programme. All PRUs are to have dedicated police officers. Research by Powis et al (1998) found that young people attending PRUs are a high-risk group in terms of drug use and offending and would be an appropriate group for targeted interventions. Therefore a dedicated MPS service, which can support those young people at risk of offending or victimisation, is a well thought-out response.

The next suggestion, though fairly self-evident, was repeatedly put forward by adults and young people alike. It was felt that an increase in youth provision with activities that young people could enjoy, afford and want to partake in would act as an effective diversion. There were also suggestions that activities should be physically challenging.

***'Boot camp would work. On that programme Bad Boys Army, the boys come out better people'***

Young person

It is worth noting that a number of adult stakeholders spoke about the importance of developing responses that took into account young peoples broader community contacts and contexts. In developing responses it was suggested that parents, families, teachers and religious leaders should be included and consulted.

Linked to this, the role of youth workers as 'significant adults' in young people's lives cannot be overlooked. Young people that took part in the north east London consultation event spoke positively about the mentoring support they had received from youth workers, which had helped in exam revision and employment opportunities.

The significance of youth work in the lives of socially excluded young people in particular has been highlighted in work undertaken by Crimmens et al (National Youth Agency in association with Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2004).

Crimmens et al found that at their first point of contact with a street-work project:

- 30% of young people were not in education, training or employment; and,
- 45% had a history of offending.

<sup>62</sup> The Scottish Panel has a multi-disciplinary framework. Panels assess what interventions a young offender might need whilst ensuring that the welfare needs of the young offender are taken into account.



However, contact with a street-based worker or project appeared to help young people in many areas of their lives. Of 76 randomly selected young people in touch with the projects, Crimmens et al found:

- almost 29% were unemployed or not in education or training when the research team first visited the project. This fell to 21% at the second visit 3-6 months later;
- those deemed to be a core member of a group involved in 'anti social' activity declined from 18% to 4%;
- the numbers known to be offending diminished by almost a third, from 45% to 31%;
- the numbers of young people maintaining contact with statutory welfare agencies over the period increased from 4% to 15%.

The final bullet point has particular significance as it has linkages with the University of Edinburgh study, which found that a significant number of young offenders were not known to statutory welfare agencies. Ensuring that young people are maintaining contact with agencies that are able to meet their needs will have an impact on offending behaviour.

Workers interviewed by Crimmens et al described tensions between the demands of effective practice with the expectation they would be able to stop or change problematic behaviour in the short term. They found that street-based youth work could contribute to the control of young people. Control is rooted in a relationship of mutual trust and respect, and building relationships, particularly with high need/at risk young people, takes considerable time. The research concluded that hard-to-reach and more challenging young people, required street-work interventions which were medium to long-term, open-ended and flexible.

Professor John Pitts evaluation of the Lambeth X-it programme<sup>63</sup> also found that the good progress made by the project was linked to retaining long-term contact with young people

*'With young people deep in the mire you need to go the distance.'*

Nicola Dale, Chief Inspector, MPS, agreed, explaining that one of the key successes of the Kickz scheme was that it was long-term. This had resulted in coaches remaining committed to the scheme and taking on mentor-type roles with the young people.

#### CASE STUDY – MPS KICKZ PROJECT

The Kickz project is a partnership between the MPS, the Premier League, the Football Association and the Football League. There are 14 football clubs across London involved and there are currently 64 schemes in the capital.

Most schemes meet three nights a week, 48 weeks of the year, to engage with young people. Two nights a week football-based activities are provided, and, on the third, there is a range of activities allowing for more wide-reaching work to take place with young people.

Each scheme takes place on an estate that the MPS has identified in partnership with a steering group of local people. In making the decision on geographical location, the steering group ensures that the new scheme will not clash with other projects in the locality and that the scheme is available at times of the day when it will be most needed by young people.

<sup>63</sup> Lambeth's X-it programme, works directly with young people at risk of gang membership, offering them an alternative to gang life.

The Kickz target group are a mixture of young people who are known to the police and those who are not known.

Community confidence in the projects is partly based on the recognition that the Kickz schemes are long-term projects. Sustainability has ensured that football coaches are making long-term commitments to the schemes. A positive outcome of their long-term commitment is the development of sustained relationships with the young people taking part in the schemes.

There is evidence from the 10-long running Kickz boroughs that there has been a reduction in youth crime. For example, on the Henry Prince estate in Wandsworth there has been a 60% fall in crime.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

*Recommendation 15:* Encourage and fund detached youth work, recognising that:

- a) building positive, life-changing relationships with socially excluded young people in their terms and on their turf is time-intensive and requires sustained input; and,
- b) detached youth workers, such as Camden Youth Disorder Engagement Team, can provide a reactive and beneficial response to youth disorder, as they are able to signpost young people at hand to diversionary projects and relevant service providers.

There were also suggestions made by senior MPS officers leading on the MPS youth strategy that, where appropriate, front-line officers could use problem-solving approaches with young people rather than law enforcement routes. Where

necessary officers should decide whether it would be more effective to arrest a young person or whether an alternative intervention which takes into account the needs of the young person would be more effective. Interestingly some of young people did not agree. The MPA YSRG stated that police officers should not use personal discretion; rather they should follow agreed protocols to guarantee fairness.

### CASE STUDY – LEWISHAM RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

On April 1st 2008 a pilot Restorative Justice (RJ) in Neighbourhoods project was launched in Lewisham.

The project has a bilateral approach. There is a community aspect, which is run, by Lewisham YOT, the Education Service and New Cross Gate New Deal for Communities. This involves training residents, community wardens, housing officers, etc, in the New Cross area in RJ skills. Therefore when young people are committing low-level crime or ASB in their areas, the community are equipped to deal with the concerns rather than involving the police.

The police aspect also involves the training of police officers and PCSO in RJ skills. The training will encourage officers to consider other (non arrest) responses to youth crime and ASB.

The overall aim of this approach is to reduce first time entrants into the CJS.

The project has secured funding for three years.

The importance of the police service not being seen as the 'other' by communities was also highlighted in the MPA consultation. It is evident that the MPS need to work towards developing



general relationships with Londoners, which do not necessarily have a specified focus. This will increase the likelihood that when the MPS require intelligence and information from communities this will be forthcoming. Engaging with communities for intelligence and information purposes alone will not build positive and open relationships.

### **Conclusion**

The youth offending picture is a complex one, which requires holistic responses.

The MPA findings highlight that:

- though youth offending has remained stable, the proportion of serious crime committed by young people has increased;
- though London does not have a widespread gang problem there are gangs in particular parts of London, and some young people are more likely than others to be drawn into gang activity;
- young people carry weapons because they do not feel that service providers, in particular the MPS, are able to protect them from victimisation;
- young people are not confident in the CJS, either as victims or as citizens who observe that deterrents are not working; and,
- though there is recognition that early interventions are the most effective approach, service providers are driven by short-term objectives rather than long-term goals.

However, there are opportunities for quick wins alongside developing long-term responses. The quick wins require the MPS to build sustained contacts with young people, which have no end-motive other than developing positive contact. Alongside this positive contact, there has to be acknowledgement that approaches which take into account the needs of the young person and his and her family are more likely to have a long-term impact than those which simply look at the offender and the offence.

## Chapter 4: Young people and the police

### Summary

Each and every contact between a young person and a police officer has a direct bearing on the perceptions that young people have of the police service overall. Whilst young people acknowledged the positive impact of Safer Neighbourhoods and Safer Schools Officers, they also highlighted that tensions between police officers and young people had an historical basis which was further exacerbated by the police not responding to young people's concerns and experiences appropriately. Added to this mix, were concerns and anger regarding the implementation of stop and search procedures, which increased tensions between officers and some young people.

### Introduction

The interactions that young people have with individual police officers either as victims, witnesses or offenders or none of the above, have a direct bearing on their perceptions of the police service overall and whether they are confident that the police will support and respond to their needs.

This section of the report looks at the interactions that young people have with the police and covers the following areas:

- quality of contact;
- positive encounters;
- Safer Neighbourhoods and Safer Schools Officers;
- an historical legacy?;
- age and race profiling;
- *'London's police officers should be Londoners'*;
- Stop and Search;
- additional findings;
- police perceptions of young people;
- young peoples perceptions of other young people.

### Quality of contact

*'I am not saying that either police or young people are blameless, but it comes down to a lack of understanding or mutual respect.'*

Young person

*'Where I live we pretty much know the police that come around here and generally they are friendly and nice to talk to.'*

Quotation from the MPA youth survey

*'Policing is a real balancing act with both the protection of people and their homes and the rights of the individual'*

Ian Quinton, Commander, MPS

The conversations that took place with young people about their interactions with police and perceptions of policing were amongst the most emotive of the consultation. Time and time again, the experiences could be reduced down to one key issue – quality of contact.

Wake et al (IPCC 2007) highlighted that one of the key concerns for young people was a requirement to be treated with respect when making a complaint to the police. The survey also found that whereas young people were more likely to have interactions with the police they had lower expectations about these interactions.

Findings highlighted that officers need to have relevant skills – innate or taught – to work with young people.

Adults and young people spoke about the importance of training police officer recruits,





stating that raising awareness of the needs of young people with officers at the start of their careers would result in a change in practice from the outset. The GLA<sup>64</sup> consultee stated that the police should aim to *'be part of the furniture of young people's lives'* rather than simply engaging with young people when there was an incident they were investigating.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 24:* MPS should consider how young people and youth organisations could provide input into initial police probation training and ongoing training for officers.

### Positive encounters

Young people observed that there were *'two levels of policing'*. They explained that there was a difference between the police officers that young people encountered on London streets and those who were based centrally and were responsible for policy development. It was the officers on the streets who needed to change.

*'In New Scotland Yard the police are very different compared to how they are in Lewisham and how will you get your messages to trickle down to the police in our communities so that they come up to scratch?'*

Young person

Throughout the scrutiny, however, the MPA heard of positive encounters that young people had had with the *'officers on the streets'*.

The young women from Lewisham YOT spoke about a local officer called David. They liked David, stating that:

*'Everyone knows David. He can be all right depending on his mood. He can either say, "If I see you again I will arrest you," or will pick you up and dash<sup>65</sup> you.'*

A member of the MPA YSRG who told the MPA repeatedly that he hated the *'feds'* [police], named a local officer who was *'alright'* and who he was willing to speak to.

Professor John Pitts found in his evaluation of the Lambeth X-it programme that police officers that had been based in the borough for a period of time and were known to act on the commitments and agreements they made with young people were respected and liked. These officers acted as brokers between young people and other service providers. He went on to say that a key challenge facing the MPS was retaining officers in these posts and ensuring that they had the appropriate support to respond to the needs of young people.

A young person who took part in the central London consultation event also made this point in reference to stop and search. He explained that local officers who had been based in a geographical location over a period of time had the opportunity to develop positive relationships with young people. He concluded that young people who were known by officers would be less likely to be stopped.

The incessant movement of MPS officers from one role and posting to another was considered a hindrance to developing positive relationships between the police and young people.

<sup>64</sup> The GLA is the strategic citywide government for London. It is made up of a directly elected Mayor and a separately elected London Assembly.

<sup>65</sup> The Urban Dictionary defines *'dash'* as *'roughly handling someone'*.

Young people that responded to the MPA survey were asked to comment on the contact that they had had with police officers in the previous 12 months. Those young people who chose the 'very good' or 'good' categories to describe their recent contact gave the following reasons for why the contact had been positive:

- the police were helpful;
- generally a good experience;
- the police gave advice or information which was of use;
- the police listened and understood;
- quick response times; and
- taking action to deal with issues.

In addition to these encounters, a quarter of the young people (99) that took part in the survey had been involved in a youth project or other work with the police.

It is useful to look at why young people felt that the projects or work with the police was useful. The responses fell into the following three areas:

- a better understanding of the law and rights;
- a better understanding of policing and community safety; and
- exploration of career options.

An analysis of the responses also indicates that working with police officers on projects also tackled the negative stereotypes that young people have of the police and, though not stated, it would be fair to surmise that they are also likely to address the negative perceptions that some officers may have of young people. These responses are useful examples of the importance of positive encounters in developing longer-term relationships.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 28:* The MPS Youth Strategy Board should ensure that all MPS officers and staff are familiar with the corporate MPS messages regarding young people.

### **Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers**

In consultation with adult stakeholders the importance of Safer Neighbourhood Teams was highlighted. It was clear that adults could see the benefits of this initiative. It was therefore useful to determine whether these benefits were recognised by young people.

Young people from Bromley College and Face 2 Face were not particularly positive about Police Community Support Officers (PCSO), stating that they were more interested in speaking to each other than engaging with local residents.

The Lewisham YOT young women were fully aware of the limited powers PCSOs could deploy and were not impressed.

***'PCSOs think they are bad... you just need to tell them that they are not. They just walk up and down and follow you around. They need to be badder than the police because they do not have the powers that the police have.'***

A Camden Council employee added a worrying dimension to this derision of PCSOs. He said that it was likely that a streetwise young person who was aware that PCSOs had limited powers would seriously hurt a PCSO. He concluded that PCSOs were in difficult positions, they had to manage their community member role with



their enforcement one and this was not an easy balance. Young people that took part in the north east London consultation made similar comments, explaining that

***'Kids are not scared of PCSOs, I have seen young people throwing eggs at PCSOs.'***

Despite the negative comments about PCSOs there was also recognition that Safer Neighbourhoods Teams were making a visible difference to the communities that they were based in.

Young people from Face 2 Face stated that a visible police presence in their neighbourhoods was reassuring. Young men from SYDRC told the MPA that in the last few years the police presence in their neighbourhoods had noticeably increased and they were clear that this was a positive development.

***'They are there to protect you.'***

***'The police are doing a good job of cleaning up the local community.'***

When asked if they knew their local officers, the young people provided a wry response:

***'The police know most of the Somali youth, but that's because they have stopped us!'***

The young men were also positive about Safer Schools Officers. They stated that it was reassuring to have officers in schools.

The MPA findings corresponded with findings from the National Youth Association (NYA 2008) consultation undertaken for the West Midlands Police Authority. They found that young people

were positive about local beat officers. Young people stated that local beat officers engaged with them in a positive manner, treated them fairly and with respect. However, they were less complimentary about response team officers, stating that response officers spoke to them in a derogatory manner.

A Safer Schools Officer who spoke at an expert witness session drew a direct link between the negative policing experiences of young people and (inexperienced) response officers.

It would be unwise to draw the conclusion that police officers in particular roles are better at engaging with young people. It would be fairer to conclude that officers whose roles revolve around reassurance and engagement (Safer Neighbourhoods Officers and Safer Schools Officers) should be able to develop positive relationships with young people as they have the time and opportunities to do so. It would also be fair to conclude that positive encounters do not require specific skills and training and that all officers regardless of their role or responsibilities should have the ability to respond fairly and positively to young people. Treating young people with courtesy should be a given for all officers.

It is also of interest to note that an unexpected visible police presence can on occasion unnerve and concern young people. Young women from Face 2 Face, who valued a police presence in their neighbourhoods, said that they had been concerned to see officers in and around college. They were anxious about the implications of a police presence on a college site. Seeing officers outside their college campus had also concerned a few young people from the Bromley College group. They said that the police cars and vans had frightened them.

The MPA did not establish with these young people whether they knew why officers were present at their colleges. However, throughout

the scrutiny the MPA were informed about the importance of providing clear information to young Londoners. For example, young people told the MPA that if they were provided with clear information on the stop and search process, why it was utilised and what the MPS gained from this tactic, this information could help to tackle some of the resistance that young people had to the approach. These comments suggest that if the colleges had informed young people why there was a police presence outside their colleges they would have been less likely to comment on this presence in a negative manner.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

**Recommendation 25:** As part of Safer Neighbourhoods Team's young people's priority:

- a) officers should engage with youth workers in their wards and use this as a hook to develop positive relationships with young people;
- b) where possible officers should be encouraged to take part in local diversionary and prevention programmes with young people, thereby allowing officers to develop positive relationships with young people.

**Recommendation 26:** The Central Safer Neighbourhoods Team should corporately share examples of positive engagement of young people by particular Safer Neighbourhoods Teams with all Safer Neighbourhoods Teams.

**Recommendation 27:** Where possible Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers should engage and participate in extended school programmes.

**Recommendation 30:** The MPS should provide clear information to young people on police tactics and operations that are taking place in specific areas or spaces used by them, for example: the introduction of knife arches or the implementation of a Dispersal Order.

### **An historical legacy?**

At times during this section of the consultation with young people, responses to questions on perceptions and contact with the police were emotive. Many of the young people were uncompromising and inflexible in their opinions of the police. Many said that it was important that not all young people were stigmatised by the bad behaviour of the few and yet they were often unable to draw comparisons between how they were treated and how they in turn were responding to the police. Even those young people who had had positive encounter with local officers gave the impression that these encounters were unique and not the norm.

There was recognition by some of the young people and adult stakeholders that there were historical and social reasons for the distrust that young people had of the police.

In relation to stop and search, Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, commented that the black communities' experiences of stop and search had an historical context, which influenced debates on the issue. Jacob Whittingham spoke about the need for a cultural shift. He too stated that certain communities (the working classes; Black Africans and Black Caribbeans) had a historical mistrust of the police.

The historical legacy had resulted in young people having been brought up hearing negative stories about the police. Kids Count<sup>66</sup> and

<sup>66</sup> Kids Count is a grass-roots think tank aiming to find practical solutions to the broad spectrum of issues that affect children and young people in urban and rural communities.



Jacob Whittingham added that youth workers with an anti-police attitude passed on negative perceptions to the young people they worked with.

Often the reaction of young people when encountering police officers was a reflex reaction and not based on the actual incident at hand. The young people from the MPA YSRG stated that young people became instantly defensive when they met officers as if they were unable to see the individual behind the uniform.

The MPA were told that young people believed that the police deliberately targeted them. Young people that attended the north west London consultation event said that young people were targeted for stop and search by the police for no other reason than because of their age, how they were dressed, and, on occasion, because they were bored. The Safer Schools Officer agreed commenting that in order to meet borough police targets, officers deliberately targeted young people for stop and search.

### **Age and race profiling**

This feeling that the police are 'out to get them' was commented on by Jacob Whittingham. He stated that one of the difficulties facing the police was that young people were concerned about profiling. In other words, young people felt that their age was a primary factor in police deciding to challenge or confront them.

This perception seemed to be widespread. At the south east London consultation event and in relation to stop and search, young people expressed genuine confusion as to why young people were disproportionately targeted by police officers.

In the MPA survey young people were asked to comment on whether they were confident that the police would be able to respond to their needs as young people. 40% said that they were

not confident that the police would respond appropriately to their needs.

It is worth highlighting that a further analysis of results indicated that respondents who had had some kind of contact with the police in the last 12 months were slightly more likely to indicate that they were not confident that the police would respond appropriately to their needs. 64% of those respondents who were not confident/not at all confident that police would respond appropriately to their needs had had some form of contact with police, compared to 36% of those who had had no contact.

10% of the respondents who stated that they were not confident/not at all confident specifically commented that police officers did not listen to young people or take young people's concerns seriously. Comments included:

*'I find they tend to have attitudes and give the impression that we are wasting their time.'*

*'They are not always on time when you need them and sometimes they don't take you seriously.'*

Quotations from the MPA youth survey

Alongside the age issue, some of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young consultees stated that the police were racist. The young men from SYDRC commented in regards to stop and search that a black person in a nice car was still more likely to be stopped by the police than a white person. The young women from Lewisham YOT informed the MPA that not only were the police harsh in their treatment of young people but that black young people were dealt with particularly badly. A young white female member of the MPA YSRG observed that:

***'The police are more aggressive when arresting black people than when arresting white people.'***

The MPA YSRG discussed whether the issue was simply about race or whether other demographic factors came into play. Some argued that the police responded more quickly to calls that were made by people who had 'posh' voices and who lived in affluent neighbourhoods.

It is worth noting that a few of the group members argued that the police were not racist and that young people had to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour and how they interacted with officers.

***'There is no point in saying that the police are rubbish, we need to do something about it'***

The Black African and Black Caribbean young people from the MPA YSRG spoke about the impact of the 26 homicides of young people in London in 2007. They stated that:

***'If white kids were killing each other they would be doing something about it. It has become a crisis and nothing is being done about it.'***

A subsequent discussion focusing on the role of the media in failing to highlight that perpetrators had been identified and arrested by the police; along with MPA officers sharing anonymised data provided by the MPS on the progress on each of the 26 homicides, allayed some of the concerns that the group had expressed. However, the concern indicates that these beliefs may be widely prevalent in Black African and Black Caribbean communities. The MPS data indicated that progress has been made in a number of the 26 cases, but, unless this is widely known, Black

African and Black Caribbean communities will persist in the belief that the deaths of their young people are of little importance to the police.

The press also has a role to play. The sensational depictions of the 26 homicides in 2007 add to Londoners fear of crime and therefore the press have a responsibility to include follow-up features that highlight that investigations have resulted in arrests, charges and convictions.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE**

***Recommendation 31:*** The MPS should provide information to Londoners regularly on the progress of cases and arrests, especially where young people are involved as victims or perpetrators. Consideration should be given to using language and utilising information mechanisms that are young-people-friendly.

#### ***'London's police officers should be Londoners'***

One of the reasons given for the prejudice that young people said they experienced from officers was a belief that London's police officers were not Londoners and therefore did not have a cultural insight into London's diverse communities. Rose Fitzpatrick, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS, who took part in the north west London consultation event, informed young people that many MPS recruits were in fact Londoners. She explained that the introduction of the PCSO role had also encouraged and increased BME representation in the MPS.

Adult stakeholders had a somewhat different understanding of this issue. A youth worker at the south east London consultation event felt that as younger officers had grown up in London and were aware of the difficulties of policing the



capital, they were more likely to be apprehensive, resulting in negative encounters with young people. In his experience it was often older officers who were better at assessing and dealing with difficult situations. He went on to state that experience came with length of service but skills, such as conflict management, could be taught through training.

Young people from the MPA reference group also felt that younger officers were often more aggressive towards young people than older officers. They said that this was because younger officers were anxious to prove their worth.

The belief that London's officers are not Londoners may have an historical basis, and, despite the changing face of the MPS, this belief persists. One clear reason for this is that Londoners may simply not be aware that the MPS are working towards having a more representative force but the other rationale is that the police are not, as the GLA consultee stated, part of the furniture of young people's lives and therefore the changes they make go unnoticed and unrecognised.

### **Stop and Search**

Conversations with young people on stop and search were particularly challenging. In every consultation activity with young people the impact of stop and search was discussed. The discussions mainly focused on how stops were conducted rather than the policy itself. It is worth noting that at the north west London consultation event at which there were approximately 100 young people, young people were asked to indicate by a show of hands whether they thought stop and search was a useful tactic. Approximately half of the young people in the group indicated that the tactic was necessary. The IPCC also found in work that they carried out in 2007 with young Londoners on the complaints

system, that whilst young people understood why police used stop and search as a tactic they did not appreciate how they were treated whilst the stop was being conducted.

***It is important that the police treat us properly in all the minor encounters with us, otherwise they will just lose our respect and they should not be surprised if people are then not willing to come forward to provide information when something serious happens.'***

Young person

The MPA youth survey found that the most common reasons for why young people had had contact with the police in the previous 12 months were either if they had been a suspect of crime (23%) or if they had been stopped and searched by the police (18%). These young people were also more likely to have a negative opinion of the police.

The young people from SYDRC and Lewisham YOT had all experienced stop and search, with a few having experienced multiple stop and searches in a short space of time. The majority said that these experiences had not been positive. None of the SYDRC group had been given the 5090 slips<sup>67</sup> at the completion of the stop and search and a few had been told that they had to go to their local police station to collect the slip.

At the central London consultation event the discussions on stop and search were particularly complex and indicated that there was a divide in perceptions between those young people who lived in inner London boroughs and those that lived in outer London boroughs. There are a number of London boroughs and in some cases neighbourhoods within boroughs, which appear

<sup>67</sup> Since the 1st July 2005 police officers conducting stop and account and stop/search are required to complete a 5090 form. This form includes information on the grounds/reason for the search.

in the index of multiple deprivation<sup>68</sup>. These boroughs/areas are mainly clustered within the inner city London area. It became clear at the central London and north west London events that the boroughs that young people resided in impacted on how they viewed stop and search. Young people from outer London boroughs, regardless of age, gender and race were more likely to be measured in their responses to stop and search and were more willing to engage with officers to discuss ways forward.

***'The big issue is not the nature of stop and search but about young people knowing why it is necessary. People know nothing about it. There is a lack of knowledge.'***

***'There are many opinions [on stop and search] and there isn't enough young people working with the police to stop this situation.'***

The young people from the inner London boroughs generally responded differently to stop and search. The fact that these young people were present at events and were prepared to discuss and argue the stop and search tactic signified that they were engaged and committed, however, the impact of continual negative encounters with the police had resulted in them being unable to accept alternative viewpoints.

***'I find I get stopped more than normal... put yourself in that situation, you are trying to get a change but get harassed...it is really difficult to do something positive when you are always getting put down.'***

Despite this there were indications throughout the consultation that providing young people with clear information on stop and search could address part of the resentment that young people have towards the tactic.

***'I was stopped and searched. The PCSO explained to me why they had done it and I felt better then.'***

***'The people that don't know what stop and search is about... isn't it your duty to tell them?'***

Unfortunately this will not be enough if officers do not consider how they respond and react to young people when conducting a stop and search. There was some recognition by young people that how young people responded to officers had an impact on how they were treated in return. Young people that took part in the 18 borough CPEG discussions also recognised that young people had a responsibility to promote positive images of themselves.

***'Young people get defensive and the police get more offensive to take control of the situation.'***

Regardless of how young people respond, police officers should as professionals ensure that they treat young people with courtesy and respect. Information presented at the consultation sessions clearly demonstrated that officers could defuse even the most volatile situation if they respond with due care and courtesy. One of the young presenters at the north west London event, who had been arrested at a house party where shots had been fired, explained that what could have been a negative experience became a positive one because he was treated decently. Findings from

<sup>68</sup> The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004) is a measure of multiple deprivation at an area level. The IMD 2004 contains seven domains of deprivation: income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation and crime.





the MPA youth survey indicated that young people were more likely to have a positive opinion about the police if the previous contact with the police had been a positive one. This indicates that positive encounters are more likely to impact on confidence in the service, whilst negative encounters will continue to act as a barrier.

Throughout the consultation there were a number of examples of approaches that could be utilised to tackle young peoples perceptions and concerns of policing, which could also be utilised to tackle concerns regarding stop and search. For example, the work being undertaken by the YBPA with police recruits could be developed to consider the impact of stop and search on young people and their confidence in the service. Ian Carter, Inspector, ACPO, told the MPA about a similar project. He explained that police recruits in Essex are currently visiting schools to hear from young people about their experiences of stop and search so that they have a better understanding of the impact of negative contact.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

**Recommendation 29:** MPS officers should follow relevant Standard Operating Procedures and ensure that they display courtesy and consideration when stopping and searching young people.

**Recommendation 33:** In order to improve the confidence of young people, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers should consider how young people could provide feedback to officers on positive and negative experiences that they have had with the police.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF POLICE AUTHORITIES

**Recommendation 35:** The Association of Police Authorities should continue to build on existing marketing campaigns to improve young people's understanding of stop and search and should identify additional communication and information mechanisms to raise awareness of young peoples rights in regards to stop and search.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

**Recommendation 34:** In order to improve young people's confidence in the complaints system, the Independent Police Complaints Commission should continue to ensure that the system is accessible to young people and should continue to highlight and promote outcomes of complaints.

### Additional findings

Finally, there were a number of comments made by young people in regards to how police respond to reported crimes.

The MPA YSRG stated that the police did not deal with minor crimes robustly and that, on occasion, this resulted in more serious crimes being committed. The young people from St Paul's School agreed, stating that the police were more effective at dealing with serious crimes than minor ones.

The workers from Lewisham YOT said that they thought that existing policing priorities had the wrong focus. They stated that a focus on fare evasion and ASB on buses, though useful and

necessary, was overly harsh and that officers were failing to turn up promptly when young people were shot.

These observations also highlighted an overall lack of understanding of policing priorities and how these are agreed. Information should be made widely available outlining how and why decisions are made.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE AND THE METROPOLITAN POLICE AUTHORITY

***Recommendation 36:*** The MPA and the MPS should provide clear information to Londoners on how regional and borough-wide policing priorities are developed and set.

There was one other submission that is worth noting. Some young people recognised that the crime prevention focus did not solely lie with the police. The young people that took part in the 18 borough CPEG consultation sessions stated that parents, educators and other service providers had an equally important role to play in crime prevention. The MPA YSRG spoke about the importance of parental discipline and how a lack of it could lead to involvement in crime.

#### ***Police perceptions of young people***

During expert witness sessions, the MPA heard from police officers about police interactions and contact with young people.

Ian Carter, Inspector, ACPO explained that police were ill equipped to work with children and young people and that historically the service had relied on officers and police staff that were naturally adept at working with young people rather than adequately training them to be. However, throughout the consultation the MPA heard of

numerous examples of positive encounters and positive engagement between young people and police officers.

The scrutiny also heard from adults and young people about the impact of negative encounters in damaging existing positive relationships. A Safer Schools Officer spoke about his work with young people. He explained that building-trusting relationships with young people took time because of young peoples previous negative experiences with police officers.

Nicola Dale, Chief Inspector, MPS agreed that developing positive relationships between young people and the police is a long process. She explained that the Kickz programme provided an opportunity to build positive relationships between officers and young people. Safer Neighbourhoods Officers are expected to maintain contact with Kickz coaches. In turn, coaches can and do introduce officers to young people and involve them in Kickz activities. She informed the MPA that in boroughs where there are long running Kickz schemes, young people have wholly accepted local officers.

The scrutiny did not have a particular focus on police perceptions of young people. However it is possible to conclude the following:

- senior MPS officers are committed to the principles of community engagement and believe that an essential driver for tackling offending behaviour is building and maintaining positive relationships with young people. Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, explained that engagement was a key aspect of the MPS youth strategy and that engagement needed to be the process by which the MPS delivered policing to young Londoners;



- senior MPS officers, whilst recognising that serious youth violence is a significant issue, are clear that the vast majority of young people are law-abiding citizens;
- however, the consultation with young people indicates that there are differences between this commitment/understanding at a central level and the encounters that young people are having with local officers. Bridging this gap is a key requirement for the police;
- on the other hand, the survey and the consultation highlight that police officers are having positive encounters with young people across London on a daily basis. The MPS should promote these positive experiences in order to tackle the negative perceptions that young people have of the police and vice versa.

### **Young people's perceptions of other young people**

As stated earlier young people were keen to stress that adult perceptions of them were unfair. They were concerned that the popular perception of 'feral' out-of-control youth was adding to intergenerational tensions and were keen that adult Londoners had a more balanced image of them.

Taking this into consideration, one of the more troubling aspects of the youth scrutiny were the perceptions that young people had of each other.

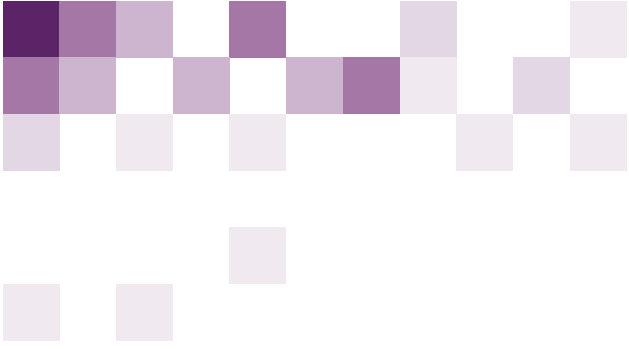
Throughout the scrutiny, there was a tension between the dominant youth voice which stated simply that all police officers were rubbish, uninterested in young people, racist and corrupt and a second voice which stated that this assessment of the current state of affairs was simplistic, that positive encounters between young people and the police did occur, and that young people also had a role to play in developing positive relationships.

Young people who had the courage to speak about their positive experiences were openly derided and told that their experiences were not truthful and that they had no right to comment, as they were not *'the right young people'*. One young person summed up the obvious frustration these remarks had provoked:

***'As a Londoner I have a right to speak about my experiences of policing in London. These are my experiences and yes they have been good ones.'***

The MPA YSRG who attended the four set piece consultation events felt that the events had been deliberately staged by the MPA to provide one point of view – a positive image of the police. Attempts were made by the MPA to ensure that young presenters provided a range of experiences at the four events – good, bad and indifferent – but the feedback indicated that the YSRG felt that the events had been biased in favour of the police. It seemed that the negative experiences recounted at the events had been forgotten, and those young people who shared positive experiences were recalled and judged.

Young people who were prepared to debate the rights and wrongs of stop and search received a particularly vitriolic response. These young people recognised that the central flaw with the policy was not the policy itself but how it was administered by officers on the ground and spoke about the need for young people to work with officers in order to devise ways forward. They were questioned by other young people on whether they had experienced stop and search and those that had not were told angrily that they should not comment on the rights and wrongs of stop and search.



It was impressive that young people who faced these reactions were prepared to stand their ground and were keen to argue that there was a myriad of experiences which all had to be acknowledged.

***'[In response to being told that young people should not comment on stop and search if they had not experienced a stop and search] If you have not been in Iraq it doesn't mean that you cannot comment on the war.'***

Young people were unable to recognise that a parallel can be drawn between their concerns regarding the depiction of all young people as 'feral' and their belief that the vast majority of young people had had bad experiences of the police. The reality is that, as with the media, which highlights the most sensational stories regarding young people, young people are quick to share their negative experiences of the police, resulting in the development of one perspective, which they are unprepared to have challenged.

It could also be inferred that the tribalism of young people, which is related to territorialism or 'endz' has a bearing on young people's perceptions of other young people. Young people who rarely travel outside their own 'endz' and whose friendship networks mainly consist of young people from their 'endz' are less likely to accept alternative experiences and viewpoints. It could be argued that the 'endz' phenomenon limits young people's awareness and adds to the negative perceptions that young people have of each other.

At the conclusion of the work of the YSRG, members were asked to share their negative and positive experiences of the Youth Scrutiny process. A number of members said that one of the key reasons that they had enjoyed taking part in the reference group was because the group's diversity allowed for different experiences to be heard and shared. This is important to highlight because it indicates that it is possible to bring young people together from different parts of London to share their experiences. The group worked within a safe and controlled environment and recognised that though they would be challenged, they would also learn from each other's experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Young people's perceptions of the police service are varied and inevitably are connected to the quality of day-to-day encounters with officers. Young people who indicated a lack of confidence in the service were more likely to have had negative contact with the police. Quality of contact was a running theme throughout all the consultation undertaken with young people.

In moving forward, challenging the perceptions that young people have of each other is as significant as addressing the perceptions that young people have of the police. It is important that young people who have positive experiences of the police feel able to share these experiences. It is also important that young people continue to debate with each other on policing policies such as stop and search. This will allow for the development of measured responses from young people and will also allow for the development of alternative perspectives – one in which there is recognition that mutual respect will help to address the perceptions that young people have of the police and vice versa.

# Chapter 5: The role of non-police agencies in crime prevention

## Summary

Partner organisations welcome the balance of enforcement and engagement adopted by the MPS, recognising that effective engagement is key to crime prevention. They also acknowledge that on the whole the MPS approach in regards to prevention work surpasses work being carried out by statutory partners and that on occasion the lack of effective interventions by statutory partners is an additional hindrance for the MPS.

There was recognition of the positive impact of the Safer Neighbourhoods Initiative and concerns that hard line enforcement tactics had a negative impact on positive engagement with young people.

Agencies also expressed concerns about existing partnership arrangements, stating that local officers required a better understanding of the work of partner agencies.

## Introduction

A key strand of the youth scrutiny were a series of 28 face to face interviews with adult stakeholders from a range of organisations: strategic and operational, regional and borough specific. This section of the report draws from these 28 face to face interviews. Where relevant, contributions made by other adult stakeholders (for example those who spoke at expert witness sessions) and young people have also been included. The following chapter covers:

- engagement versus enforcement;
- positive relationships;
- challenges;
- engagement versus enforcement – the MPS response;
- London wide partnerships;

- MPS partnership arrangements with non statutory agencies
- ways forward
- the role of non police agencies in delivering crime prevention;
  - 1 Health
  - 2 Children’s Services
  - 3 Youth provision
  - 4 Education
  - 5 Youth Offending Teams
- Information sharing.

## Engagement versus Enforcement

The MPA asked adult stakeholders to outline what they thought the MPS role should be in tackling young people’s involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators. The rationale behind this question was to determine whether partner agencies value the MPS focus on engagement or whether partners would prefer the MPS to focus on one area over another.

There was consensus amongst the adult stakeholders that the police needed to have both an enforcement and a prevention role. The role of engagement as an aspect of intervention was highlighted in particular by a number of stakeholders.

The consultee from 100 Black Men of London<sup>69</sup> told the MPA that it would be unrealistic to assume that the police would ever be able to prevent all crime, but by building relationships with communities, they are less likely to be seen as the ‘other’ resulting in an increased confidence in the service. The consultee from TfL reiterated this point. She stated that the police needed to be a trusted and a valued part of all communities

69 100 Black Men of London run programmes for young people and their families that focus on mentoring, education, health and well-being and economic development.

and that enforcement alone would not bring about social change.

*'It's all about interaction, if you can make that a good experience you will have better confidence [in the police service], more satisfaction, more trust and getting that right is critical for the police.'*

IPCC consultee

One consultee from Lewisham YOT informed the MPA that a balance between engagement and enforcement was crucial because it had direct benefits for partnership working. However, she also stated that this benefit was directly linked to having officers in post who were interested in and committed to partnership working.

### **Positive relationships**

The AHOY Centre and the Hounslow Youth Service consultees spoke about the positive relationships that their young people had developed with local Safer Neighbourhoods Teams. They explained that the success of these relationships was due to officers having a youth and community focus.

After having taken part in a face to face interview with MPA staff, the Hounslow consultee informed the MPA of an incident which she believed would impact on the relationships developed between Safer Neighbourhoods Officers and young people. Response officers in dealing with a complaint had been verbally and physically aggressive towards a group of young people. The youth worker explained that after this incident the young people had disregarded the hard work of the Safer Neighbourhoods Officers, choosing to focus solely on the incident with the response officers. She was aware that it would take time to repair the damage caused by the encounter.

The Richmond Children's Services consultee spoke positively about Safer Neighbourhoods Teams, but stated that the work of the teams would be further strengthened if local officers built professional networks with other agencies.

Finally, the IPCC consultee told the MPA that the work of Safer Neighbourhoods Officers would make a long-term difference. In his view the advent of teams heralded an opportunity for the police to build mutually beneficial relationships.

### **Challenges**

Adult stakeholders expressed concerns about existing partnership arrangements. They told the MPA that local police officers required a better understanding of the work of partner agencies and that this understanding was crucial to ensuring an effective response from local officers. For example, the Victim Support Westminster consultee explained that the police did not fully understand the role of Victim Support and in particular the referral process.

Stephen Bloomfield, Chief Superintendent, MPS, and the London Probation consultee spoke about the integral role of Borough Commanders. They explained that priorities that were of key concern for Borough Commanders and Local Authority Chief Executives were more likely to receive proactive action and focus. The London Probation consultee added that Borough Commanders needed to demonstrate a better understanding of partner agencies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

**Recommendation 37:** The key responsibilities of every agency involved in a crime and community safety partnership should be made available to all partner agencies.



The NSPCC NCATS team and Barnardos expressed concerns, which were particular to them as organisations that provide specialist service provision to vulnerable and abused young people.

The NSPCC NCATS consultee stated that the police were very good at identifying risk levels but struggled with having confidence in the evidence that children and young people provided. This was a particular problem when officers were questioning a young person who had sexually abused other young people as a consequence of the sexual abuse that he/she had originally experienced.

The consultee also felt that the police needed to have better links with other agencies, explaining that not all NCATS case work resulted in criminal proceedings and in those instances where there was evidence that a young person was at risk of further harm by family members, it was essential that the police shared this information with relevant service providers. In his expert witness session, Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS, also recognised that current information-sharing practices could be improved. He stated that the police hold a plethora of information on young people, which he suggested should be routinely shared with relevant partners.

The Barnardos Exploitation Team explained that because sexual exploitation cut across the work of several MPS business units it had been difficult to obtain buy-in from any one particular MPS business unit. They concluded that the police attitude towards exploited young women was similar to attitudes that had previously existed in regards to female survivors of domestic violence. The change in the police approach to domestic violence survivors has resulted in an increased confidence in the police service and the team felt that the domestic violence approaches should be modified and rolled out to meet the needs of exploited young women.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 39:* MPS officers working with child victims of rape and sexual exploitation should ensure that young people are signposted to specialist agencies to prevent further victimisation.

*Recommendation 40:* In regards to young people who are at risk of further victimisation, MPS officers should ensure that information collated via Merlin is shared with relevant partner agencies.

The consultation also highlighted that in some instances adult stakeholders were not familiar with MPS practices and policies.

The Beatbullying consultee questioned whether Safer Schools officers had an enforcement remit. This had a particular significance for Beatbullying because research undertaken by the Anti Bullying Alliance (ABA) had found that each week at least 450,000 young children are bullied at school (ABA 2005). Therefore Safer School Officers who demonstrate both their day-to-day reassurance/engagement work alongside their overall enforcement role are likely to be a supportive presence for vulnerable young people.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 41:* MPS should outline and promote the role of Safer Schools Officers to young people, teachers and other agencies in the school environment.

The consultee went on to say that there was a discrepancy between the roles of Safer School Officers in different boroughs. In some schools the approach of officers was proactive. Officers ran sanction programmes based on RJ

approaches whilst in other schools, very little was being done. He stated that Safer Schools Officers were failing to work in partnership with other school-based agencies. This lack of partnership working was preventing the development of holistic joined-up approaches.

A few stakeholders mentioned the need for sustainability. The Children's Society<sup>70</sup> told the MPA that often the MPS began new initiatives with great enthusiasm, but this enthusiasm was short-lived and initiatives were not sustained and developed. The London Councils<sup>71</sup> consultee agreed, stating that the MPS were good innovators but failed to replicate and build on this good practice.

The Victim Support Westminster consultee expressed concerns that 'hot topics' were funded on a short-term basis. The Kids Count consultee agreed, stating that the police were overly politicised, responding to local and central government demands, rather than dealing with the actual needs of Londoners.

The Children's Society highlighted a concern that is often raised by non-governmental agencies. The consultee stated that organisations such as the Children's Society should be adding value to the work of statutory agencies by providing specialist care and provision to young people rather than undertaking activities which were the responsibility of statutory service providers.

### **Engagement versus Enforcement – the MPS response**

*'If we see people fall into a river, do we pull out as many as we can, or climb to the top of the bank and find out who is throwing them in? How far does the police mandate run in that direction? How much is it a police responsibility and how much is it a responsibility for others?'*

Sir Ian Blair, Commissioner, MPS

MPS officers were also asked to outline what they thought the police role should be in tackling young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators. Again, this was to determine whether they thought the current balance between enforcement and engagement was correct and appropriate. Resolving this debate would ensure that there was a corporate understanding and awareness of the police role. This shared understanding would also assist interactions between the MPS and partners.

MPS Consultees from the Diversity Citizen Focus Directorate (DCFD) and Stephen Bloomfield, Chief Superintendent, agreed that the MPS should have an enforcement and engagement role. However, the DCFD consultee explained that hard-line enforcement tactics impacted on prevention work and caused tensions between the MPS and communities.

Stephen Bloomfield, Chief Superintendent, MPS, explained that historically the primary police role had been enforcement, however, research had consistently indicated that reassurance was key to addressing crime prevention. However, he concluded that the crime prevention responsibility did not lie with the police alone.

<sup>70</sup> The Children's Society is a national charity. Its current priority areas are: children in trouble with the law; runaway children at risk on the streets; disabled children without a voice and refugee children-facing exclusion.

<sup>71</sup> London Councils is a cross-party organisation, funded and run by its member authorities (all 32 London boroughs, the City of London, the Metropolitan Police Authority and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority) to work on behalf of them all, regardless of political persuasion. It also acts as the employers' organisation for the 32 London boroughs, providing advice, support and training, and representing them in negotiations.





***'The work of the MPS should be long term prevention and the MPS need to be firmer with partner agencies such as Education; Health and Social Services to ensure that they are meeting with their partnership agreements and protocols.'***

He went on to reiterate points made by Victim Support and Kids Count consultees, stating that the interplay between policing and politics can act as a barrier for the MPS, resulting in the development of short-term responses. He acknowledged that whilst responses to 'hot topics' were valid, requirements to provide an immediate response could take resources and attention away from long-term plans and priorities. He explained that a good example of this tension was the current challenge facing Neighbourhood Policing. In his opinion, Neighbourhood Policing will provide gains in the long term, but there were political demands for data which showed significant decreases in crime. He drew parallels between this approach and the new MPS youth strategy. The youth strategy is a long-term approach and its success is dependent on sustained and consistent focus of resources.

During his expert witness session, Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS, was asked to identify current gaps in the work that the MPS undertakes with partner agencies. In his opinion the following areas needed particular consideration:

- the role of Education in addressing crime prevention;
- poor case management; and finally,
- poor connectivity between boroughs. He explained that in instances where families used a range of services over a number of different boroughs – for example, living in one borough and attending school in another – responses failed to take into account

that a cross-borough response would be required.

### **London Wide Partnerships**

The MPS as a regional structure develops consistent approaches for the 32 London BOCUs. A lack of similar regional bodies to provide pan London direction to borough based statutory service providers has resulted in the development of a series of London-wide boards. These boards aim to provide pan London policy direction and the development of uniform operational responses for statutory service providers.

Adult stakeholders were asked to comment on London-wide boards such as the GLA/YJB led Guns, Gangs, Weapons Reduction Board and the London Youth Crime Prevention Board. In particular adult stakeholders were asked how effectively these structures met the needs of their individual organisations. Opinions were divided between those that recognised the relevance of these organisations and those that did not.

The consultee from 100 Black Men of London stated that the Guns, Gangs, Weapons Reduction Board meetings were 'talking shops' and a reactive response to current serious youth violence concerns. One of the two consultees from Lewisham YOT also felt that these structures were reactive and stated that they did not address risk factors such as lack of access to service provision, poverty, poor education and poor housing.

Operation Trident consultees questioned whether it was useful or effective for one board to address three key youth crime issues.

The Richmond Children's Services consultee did not feel that London-wide boards had relevance for outer London boroughs, explaining that outer London boroughs did not have the complex needs of the inner city.

Other adult stakeholders were unclear what support the London-wide boards could provide but recognised that they may have a purpose.

This purpose was outlined by a few of the consultees. The MPS Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate and the Operation Trident consultees explained that the London-wide boards brought relevant partners and organisations together. This was further emphasised by Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, who stated that the London Youth Crime Prevention Board had given the MPS direct access to Government.

Consultees from the MPS Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate and from TfL stated that the London-wide boards were good for information sharing and for ensuring that issues that were not normally considered by community safety partnerships (such as transport) were tabled and discussed.

Stephen Bloomfield, Chief Superintendent, MPS, explained that London-wide boards provided guidance to boroughs where existing borough partnerships were not working effectively.

There was caution expressed by the London Councils consultee who was concerned that the work of the London Youth Crime Prevention Board was short-lived. Stakeholders did not discuss what impact if any this would have but there was recognition by Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, that there was a need for a youth crime pan London board<sup>72</sup>.

One of the two consultees from the Lewisham YOT was also cautious in her response to the effectiveness of London-wide boards. She stated that the Local Authorities faced particular challenges when asked to take part in London-wide programmes of work.

It is worth highlighting that Lewisham is part of a cluster of London boroughs, which are often the focus of regional pilots and pathfinder projects. Lewisham is currently one of the two boroughs where projects devised by the London CJB's youth strategy are being piloted and is also one of the five Operation Alliance boroughs.

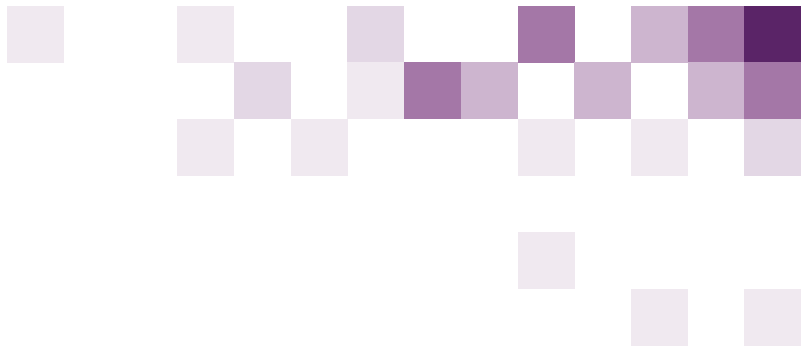
The challenges described by the consultee are not specific to Lewisham and therefore it is useful to highlight them in full here.

- the work of the Local Authorities tends to focus on long-term objectives and on occasion London-wide boards divert Local Authorities from collectively agreed long-term actions;
- this consequently has an impact on finances. Local Authorities may not be in a position to divert resources to take into account the aims and objectives of London-wide boards;
- boroughs are not provided clarity on the support that they will receive from London wide board in taking forward pan London recommendations;
- taking forward the work of London-wide board does not always coincide with the day-to-day requirements of statutory service providers, resulting in tension.

Despite the awareness that London boards could be useful mechanisms, the overall impression given by adult stakeholders was that boards are remote bodies, which have little or no connectivity to borough or neighbourhood initiatives. In addition, the sheer number of London-wide boards, some of which have similar remits and aims, is confusing and overly complex.

Their distance from young people is also noteworthy. The GLA consultee highlighted a

<sup>72</sup> Since the completion of the MPA consultation period it has been agreed that a Serious Youth Violence Board will be set up. The London Community Safety Partnership and London Councils are currently considering the remit of this new board and its intended core outcomes.



crucial gap in the work of the boards, stating that the boards had done little to involve young people directly. The MPA YSRG expressed particular concern that the London Youth Crime Prevention Board had had little direct contact with young people to inform its work. The Board’s rationale to utilise existing mechanisms such as the MPA YSRG to inform their policy development was not appreciated or understood. The YSRG stated that it was essential that London boards, which brought together key adult stakeholders, needed to have direct contact with young people. A lack of direct contact resulted in decisions that had little connectivity to young people’s actual experiences and concerns.

In order for the boards to meet the needs of the borough and neighbourhood partnerships it is clear that the next step must be a review of the structures as a whole, in order to determine how boards can be streamlined and simplified.

This challenge has been recognised by the London Community Safety Partnership who are in the process of undertaking a mapping exercise of all the boards. Key aims include: ensuring that boards are fit for purpose; and the streamlining of existing structures.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE LONDON COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

*Recommendation 47:* Recognising that currently there are a number of pan-London boards which consider issues relating to youth crime, the London Community Safety Partnership should critically assess the remit and role of existing partnerships and consider how this work can be better aligned and streamlined.

**MPS partnership arrangements with non-statutory agencies**

In taking forward the MPS youth strategy, the MPS has identified a number of corporate partners, which specialise in youth engagement, prevention and intervention work and which London boroughs will be encouraged to work with. There is a sound rationale to having a number of agreed partners. They allow for borough and neighbourhoods officers to pick activities from a ready-made list of approaches that meet with MPS objectives. This approach allows for a uniform approach to be developed across the capital and the development of standardised and comparable data.

However, there is also recognition within the MPS that the complexity and differences between London boroughs should allow for the development of organic approaches. Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, explained that whilst boroughs would be encouraged to work in partnership with identified corporate partners they could also continue working with local partners. In doing so they would need to indicate the following:

- how working with the identified group would meet with MPS priorities;
- existing evidence of past successful outcomes;
- information on governance structures; and finally,
- information on the Public Service Agreements that the identified group were working to meet.

In considering these partnerships, Camila Batmanghelidjh also suggested that the expertise of street based organisations such as Kids Company needed to be recognised and valued by the police and other service providers.



## Ways forward

The adult stakeholders provided a number of solutions on how MPS service provision could be improved. They suggested:

- releasing local officers for a number of hours on a regular weekly/monthly basis to take part in local intervention and prevention programmes, thereby allowing them to develop positive relationships with children and young people;
- training officers on how to interact with children and young people, in order to tackle the perceptions that officers have of young people and vice versa. Skills development in areas such as conflict resolution would also be useful;
- local officers need a good understanding of the geographical areas that they are responsible for policing. This could be provided in partnership with relevant non-governmental organisations<sup>73</sup>;
- Safer Neighbourhoods Teams develop professional linkages with other service providers working in their wards in order to provide a joined-up response to local situations;
- Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Safer Schools Officers develop closer links with Local Authority youth provision, in order to signpost young people to positive activities;
- that clear information on the responsibility of each partner involved in a strategic or operational partnership should be made available to all partners.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 43:* Front line officers should be provided with an understanding of the communities and geographical areas that they are responsible for policing. Relevant community and voluntary groups can provide information on both.

### ***The role of non-policing agencies in crime prevention***

One of the findings of the Youth Scrutiny was the number of consultees who stated that the police response to youth crime was more effective than responses by other statutory service providers. Some adult stakeholders told the MPA that the police were doing a very good job but were limited in what they could do because other partners were not providing adequate support.

The TfL consultee and Camila Batmanghelidjh agreed. Both commented that the police are often left to deal with the rest of the state's failures. The TfL consultee stated that the police are *'in an impossible situation. They are often asked to be all things to all people.'* Camila Batmanghelidjh supported this by adding that the police have been placed in an unenviable position. They are *'often left to pick up the pieces.'*

Comments on particular areas of service provision are explored below.

#### **1) Health**

It was suggested by a number of consultees that health needed to play a proactive role within Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs<sup>74</sup>) in order to prevent and reduce youth crime. George Hosking explained that The Wave Trust had anecdotal evidence, which highlighted the difficulties

<sup>73</sup> For example, Keib Thomas (deceased) was a community activist based at Southwark Police Station. He would arrange familiarisation tours of the borough for new police officers ensuring that they also met with local community groups

<sup>74</sup> The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act established partnerships between the police, local authorities, probation service, health authorities, the voluntary sector, and local residents and businesses. These partnerships work to reduce crime and disorder and are known as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships



that CDRPs are experiencing in encouraging the engagement of local health agencies. He highlighted the approach that had been adopted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which has defined violence prevention as a health issue.

Krug et al (WHO 2002) argued that violence was not just a law and order issue and that as a substantial proportion of the costs of violence are met by the health sector, the health sector should have a particular interest in violence prevention. It stresses the need *'for people to work together in partnerships of all kinds, and at all levels, to develop effective responses.'* This approach has been adopted in Scotland through the setting up of a Violence Reduction Unit in 2005.

George Hosking and Camila Batmanghelidjh suggested that the police had a role to play in encouraging and coordinating partners such as health who are currently not proactive in these partnership arrangements.

George Hosking went on to argue that many health professionals who came into contact with children and young people have access to vital information, which should be shared as a matter of course with relevant partners.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

**Recommendation 45:** The Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families should encourage a proactive involvement of borough health and education agencies in borough crime reduction partnerships and should consider and develop guidelines on how these agencies can fully support the crime prevention agenda.

## 2) Children's Services

Children's Services came under particular scrutiny. Adult stakeholders were concerned that the needs of young people at risk or in need were not being addressed by Children's Services and these unsupported young people were being drawn into criminality and anti social-behaviour.

The London Councils consultee said that more needed to be done to ensure that Children's Services had closer links with the community safety agendas in their boroughs. He explained that youth crime was not prioritised sufficiently in each borough's Children and Young People's Plan and a clearer focus on youth crime would ensure that funding priorities were reconsidered.

As stated above, it was argued by consultees that the police should take a central coordinating role in regards to child protection issues, ensuring that Children's Services and health had a more active role in the crime prevention agenda. However, there was also recognition by both police and non-police consultees that the police mandate should not be increased to monitor and ensure the compliance of other agencies.

The Director of the Children's Legal Centre<sup>75</sup> explained that there were a number of barriers that prevented young people receiving an adequate service through Children's Services. She categorized these as:

- policy pressure (service providers not wanting to interfere or intervene);
- financial pressure (the inadequate resourcing of Local Authorities); and,
- 'a rule of optimism'. She explained that a young person could be removed from home and placed in foster care but would be sent home once he/she was seen to be doing better. However, in the interim, the family

<sup>75</sup> The Children's Legal Centre is an independent national charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people. These findings are from the Kids Company (October 2007) conference 'No Bullsh\*t: What matters to every child – fresh approaches and winning solutions to working with vulnerable young people' (conference transcript)

would not have received the support that they required to ensure that the problems did not arise again. She stated that the current focus was incorrect, rather than focusing on the needs of the family, the focus was on mending the child.

A researcher employed by Kids Company provided data that indicates that statutory Children's Services are overwhelmed by both the extent of need in inner-city London and the lack of resources available to meet this need. This was reflected in the number of children referred to Children's Services, compared with the proportion reaching the core assessment that was necessary for intensive interactions.

For example, in one inner city London borough:

- 4,520 referrals were made to Children's Services in a year;
- just over half (54% – 2425 referrals) reached an initial assessment;
- just under a fifth (18% – 825 referrals) reached a core assessment; and,
- just 3% (160) of the referrals were registered on the child protection register

Of this 3%, 150 were subsequently deregistered within a year.

The Kids Company researcher provided data on three inner city London boroughs. Data on the other two boroughs was similar to that outlined above. In Local Authority B, 3,455 referrals were made to Children's Services, but only 250 (7%) were placed on the child protection register. In Local Authority C, of the 7,165 referrals made, only 215 (3%) resulted in young people's names being placed on the borough child protection register.

George Hosking explained that the proportion of referrals that resulted in a child protection case being registered was generally less than 5% because the thresholds for statutory interventions were set far too high. This had resulted in a significant gap between those children and young people who are referred for interventions and those that are finally registered as being in need of protection. The University of Edinburgh study, which looked at the pathways from victimisation to offending highlighted that the great majority of the young offenders from the study were unknown to the Scottish Children's Hearing or Social Work Systems. 72% of the self reported violent offenders at the age of 15 were not known by either service.

There is also national recognition that there is a significant lack of capacity in statutory services. Evidence gathered by the National Criminal Justice Board<sup>76</sup> to inform the development of a National Youth Crime Action Plan found that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Social Care and Housing had particular capacity issues.

The Director of the Children's Legal Centre concluded that there was a direct causal link between children in need receiving inadequate service provision and youth crime. She stated in some instances the needs of young people are not met until they entered the CJS. She identified current gaps in Children's Service's, stating that there was:

- insufficient access to professional support for families in need;
- a requirement for holistic services for young people;
- insufficient access to mental health services; and,
- an absence of good research on what works.

<sup>76</sup> The National Criminal Justice Board is responsible for supporting local criminal justice boards and has a specific responsibility for combating inequality and discrimination across the CJS.



Camila Batmanghelidjh also commented on the need for holistic service provision for those young people who were at the 'hard end' of youth crime. She argued that Children's Services should work in partnership with experts in grass-roots youth work such as Kids Company and develop child-centered multi-disciplinary services that young people can access at any time of the day or night.

### CASE STUDY – CROYDON FAMILY JUSTICE CENTRE

Croydon's Family Justice Centre is a unique venture. The 32 agencies based at the Centre work together to help victims of Domestic Violence, providing a coherent, joined-up response to victims. Professionals at the Family Justice Centre include an on-call duty and assessment social work service, advocates, police, solicitors, housing officers, Women's Aid, Victim Support, debt and benefits advisers, and probation staff.

The Centre is also involved in work with a particular youth focus:

The 'R U OK?' project run by Victim Support is for all young victims of crime and not just those that have experienced Domestic Violence.

The Sexual Exploitation Unit is a collaboration between the MPS, Barnardos and Croydon Social Services. This provides support to young women who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Finally, the business development charity EIA have been commissioned by the Borough Commander to involve young people from the John Ruskin Sixth Form College in raising awareness of Domestic Violence and the work of the Centre.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE LONDON COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

**Recommendation 48:** The London Community Safety Partnership should consider the development of collocated multi agency service provision for young people at risk or in need.

It was argued that not only are young people in need failing to have their needs met, but that current resources were targeted at those young people that were in least need of support. Polly Toynbee<sup>77</sup> stated that:

*'We spend most on the young people who need it least, and least at the time where we can make the greatest impact on children's lives. It is insane that we spend most per capita on young people at university, who are already well on their way to successful lives. We spend less on secondary school, which is a waste for children who have not learned to read. We spend less still on primary school, which still offers a chance of successful interventions.'*

Ian Clement<sup>78</sup>, youth crime lead, London Councils, commented that the interface between Local Authorities and the police was increasingly focused on two key Local Area Agreements (LAA)<sup>79</sup>: a reduction in first time entrants; and, a reduction in reoffending. Whilst Dee O'Connell, Children and Young People Team, Home Office, explained that LAA would provide an opportunity

77 These findings are from the Kids Company (October 2007) conference 'No Bullsh\*t: What matters to every child – fresh approaches and winning solutions to working with vulnerable young people.' (conference transcript).

78 Since taking part in the youth scrutiny Ian Clement has been appointed Deputy Mayor, Government Relations.

79 LAAs set the priorities for a local area. LAA are agreed between central government; the local authority; the Local Strategic Partnership; and, other key local partners. LAAs allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances.

to monitor service delivery to young people at risk and in need.

### 3) Youth Provision

There was a widespread perception amongst adults and young people alike that there had been a systemic reduction in youth provision. However, it is worth noting that the term youth provision covers a wide variety of provision: statutory, voluntary and private. In discussions regarding youth provision, most consultees did not comment specifically on what aspects of youth provision they were referring to. Use of the term youth provision is therefore fairly fluid in this section of the report. Where consultees have been specific, this has been reflected in the report.

Before examining the contributions of the adult stakeholders it would be useful to acknowledge a number of recent announcements made by central government departments and the previous Mayor of London in regards to youth provision funding:

- in January 2008, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families announced an investment of £30 million over the next three years to help sports colleges build new pitches, install floodlights and provide better drainage so that facilities could be used all year around;
- in February 2008, the Children's Minister committed a £31 million funding boost over the next three years through the Children and Young People and Families Grant programme, benefiting nearly 100 third sector organisations. Grants allocated would help a wide range of organisations including those focusing on teenage pregnancy, youth participation, bullying and supporting children in care;
- in February 2008 there was an additional announcement by the Secretary of State

for Children, Schools and Families, who announced a national £225 million play investment programme;

- in February 2008 the Culture Secretary and the Children's Minister announced the £25 million 'Find Your Talent' scheme, which would give young people in ten pilot areas the opportunity to experience high quality arts and culture. In addition, an additional £110 million investment would be made in 'Creative Partnerships' which would allow young people in schools opportunities to work with creative professionals such as artists, writers and actors.
- in March 2008, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families announced a package of £27 million funding and business support for five charities<sup>80</sup>, which provide an invaluable service to young people.

In addition, the previous Mayor of London in partnership with central government had agreed to deliver a £79 million 'London Youth Offer' to help provide more activities and services for young Londoners. This package will run over two years 2008 – 2010 and the aim is to:

- increase the range of services for teenagers;
- provide more support for parents;
- give young people new opportunities to gain new skills and raise their aspirations; and,
- encourage young people to get involved in decisions about the provision of services for them across London.

The above funding, which will benefit statutory and non-statutory youth provision, clearly provides young people with varied and additional opportunities. It may be useful for service providers to monitor the impact of these investments on take up of services by young people.

<sup>80</sup> The five charities are: Kids Company; UK Youth; Fairbridge; Speaking Up and Leap.





The announcements were of particular interest as throughout the youth scrutiny the MPA were informed that there was a dearth of youth provision in London.

During his expert witness session, Professor John Pitts explained that research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation had found that youth services in the UK had reached their peak in the 1970s and since this time had been steadily run down. This comment tallies with a statement made by the previous mayor Ken Livingstone in his 'Policing London – In the 21st Century' mayoral manifesto.

***'Since Mrs Thatcher abolished the statutory duty on Councils to provide youth services there has been a steady decline in funding and in the range and quality of positive activities for London's young people.'***

Workers from the Lewisham YOT spoke nostalgically about what had previously been available for young people compared to what was available now. They stated that growing up in London 10/20 years ago they had access to neighbourhood facilities and more resources had been available.

A Government Office for London<sup>81</sup> consultee explained that one of the reasons for the perception that there is a lack of statutory youth provision is because at a local level it has been difficult to determine what Local Authorities have funded. Though Local Authorities are formally required to report on what they spend on young people, these figures may not include money spent on the extended schools programme; the culture pledge or sports facilities.

Consultees also mentioned that there had been a decline in other types of leisure facilities. The Children's Society consultee stated that the closing down of local neighbourhood provision including cinemas; bowling alleys; discos; snooker halls and boys clubs had resulted in young people having to travel further to access expensive amenities that they could not afford.

Workers and young people from the Lewisham YOT also commented on the cost of using provision. Workers stated that a young person who was fortunate enough to find an activity that they were keen to be involved in often found that the next barrier was not having the funds to take part.

The Barnardos Exploitation Team also identified additional barriers to involvement. The team stated that having identified youth provision for their young women, the young women would report back that activities had been poorly organised.

Existing service provision also seemed to be in competition with something that was referred to by the Barnardos Exploitation Team as 'street culture'. It can be surmised that this refers to young people who prefer to 'hang out' socially in public places and who may not be interested in accessing formal provision. The lure of this street culture was said to be considerable and youth workers were not always able to compete with it.

Over and over again young people told us that they had nothing to do and that there were no facilities for them. They linked this absence of youth provision to youth offending and youth violence.

81 Government Office for London represents central government across the capital, delivering policies and programmes for eleven central government departments.

***'There is no money for us to go to youth clubs.... things are too expensive and that is the reason why young people rob each other.'***

Young person

***'We are now reaping the rewards of all the resources which we had in place years ago to work with young people and which were then removed.'***

Lambeth Women's Aid

Alongside this complaint that there was nothing to do, there was an additional complaint that existing provision did not meet the needs of young people.

***'Youth clubs are boring.... they are safe spaces but there is nothing to do in them.'***

Young person

Many of the young people from the MPA YSRG had negative opinions about existing youth provision. They stated that on the whole youth clubs were *'rubbish'* and that at reaching a certain age they became *'boring'*. They also recognised that not all youth clubs received adequate funding and therefore clubs were unable to provide activities that would interest or engage young people.

Young people who took part in north east London consultation event had a more measured response. They felt that youth clubs as a whole were *'good'* but the key was to ensure that they met the needs of the young people who used them. Their suggestions on what was required can be summarised into three key needs:

- equipment and venue – both need to be appealing and in good condition;

- activities – need to be engaging and should provide opportunities for skill development; and finally,
- youth workers – should be approachable and personable.

This group of young people also spoke about the difference that youth clubs can make in young person's life, giving examples such as support provided with job applications and GCSE re-sits.

Alongside the need to provide provision that meets the needs of young people, consideration also needs to be given to territorialism and how this can impact on the services that young people choose to access.

In responding to the difficulties that this poses, the MPS Lambeth Kickz scheme is hosted in a neutral area ensuring that young people from different areas can access the scheme. Nicola Dale, Chief Inspector, MPS, also explained that consideration has been given to hosting schemes at different locations each week.

This type of considered and careful approach has two benefits. It allows for the development of positive relationships between coaches/officers and young people, which then provide opportunities to develop inter-estate relationships.

Alongside concerns expressed regarding a lack of adequate provision and a lack of engaging activities, concerns were also expressed about how existing resources were specific (targeted at particular groups of young people or focusing on particular issues) rather than generic (available for all young people). Professor John Pitts stated that though funding for youth provision under the Labour Government had increased, the focus had been on targeted service provision, such as teen pregnancy work, rather than on generic work. Youth workers also commented that it was unreasonable that young people had to be



considered at risk or in need before they were able to access provision.

Comments made by Nicola Dale, Chief Inspector, MPS, in regards to the development of the Kickz scheme are relevant to youth provision as a whole. She argued that in considering the needs of any given borough, a number of steps needed to be taken:

- an audit of existing youth provision;
- an identification of what was working well and why;
- based on this audit a decision on what projects should continue to be funded; and finally,
- an identification of what was still needed.

As part of the London Youth Offer young people will be encouraged to play a key part in decisions regarding the development of youth provision in the capital. There is also recognition at a central level<sup>82</sup>, that young people should be involved in the development of youth provision in their boroughs and neighbourhoods. This is crucial, because whilst there are facilities available for young people, current provision does not necessarily meet young peoples needs.

***'From the youth service, the local area is 8 square miles in which there are 50 youth centres and 100 youth projects, from your house you're never more than 800 meters away from a project or centre.'***

Youth worker

***'If they were open longer hours people may go.'***

***'It is good that we have so many centres and projects but are they meeting the needs of the people? Some youth workers are not approachable; some centres have poor equipment.'***

Young people responding to the youth worker

The approach suggested by Nicola Dale, Chief Inspector, MPS, would address the concerns expressed by adults and young consultees:

- it would raise the profile of existing and effective youth provision in any given borough; and,
- it would highlight gaps, which required additional (or a reallocation of existing) funding.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

***Recommendation 38:*** Local Authorities should:

- a) undertake a review of existing youth provision to ensure that it meets the needs of young people;
- b) proactively involve young people in the development of local youth provision to ensure take-up of activities;
- c) promote existing youth provision, using a variety of young-people-friendly communication mechanisms;
- d) ensure that youth provision is available at relevant times of the day and year and that it provides opportunities for skills development.

82 Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities (July 2007) – HM Treasury and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

#### 4) Education

Research undertaken by the Institute of Community Cohesion after the 2001 riots in North England found that one of the impacts of an increasing transient society was less stable and cohesive school environments, resulting in some young people feeling that they were not part of their school communities. They found that pupils in schools with ever-changing populations were less likely to have a shared sense of acceptable and appropriate behaviour.

Beatbullying (2006) has also highlighted that some young people do not find schools safe environments. Their research has found that approximately 170,000 children truant every day due to bullying. The Stonewall survey with secondary schools found that more than half of the participants had experienced homophobic bullying in schools.

In this context the role of Safer Schools Officers and what they can and should be doing to support victims of bullying is crucial. In other sections of the report it has been highlighted that:

- Safer School Officers should run programmes of work with other groups and organisations working in the school environment to ensure that a holistic service is being provided to young people;
- Safer Schools Officers have a crucial role to play in tackling hate crimes and ensuring that young victims feel confident and able to report incidents to officers;
- the MPS should consider how information or intelligence collected by Safer Schools Officers could be formalised.

Though the majority of comments regarding Safer Schools Officers were positive, there were a few negative comments that are worth highlighting in order to improve overall practice. A few of the young people that took part in the north west

London consultation event commented that the officers in their schools were not particularly active and that rather than being a visible presence in their schools they spent the majority of the school day in offices. They also commented that when fights occurred in schools, officers were standing by rather than attempting to stop the fights.

These comments seem to suggest that it would be useful to have a consistent approach to the Safer Schools programme. There is recognition within the MPS that there needs to be a closer alignment between Safer Schools Officers and other borough and local teams. Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, explained that bringing Safer Schools Officers within the Safer Neighbourhoods framework would have benefits as it would provide support for officers but would also mainstream their work.

***‘Removing Safer Schools officers from the police service dynamic has resulted in officers feeling more supported by schools and not by the service.’***

The young people from St Paul’s School, said that they would welcome an on site schools officer. Currently there are 194 officers in London’s state schools and the aim is that all state schools will eventually have a Safer Schools Officer.

Adult consultees from Richmond and Kensington said that private schools in their boroughs would not want Safer Schools Officers imposed on them as there was a perceived stigma attached to having a school-based officer. They explained that there is an assumption amongst parents that Safer Schools Officers can imply that a school has crime and ASB problems.

It can be inferred that these schools and parents are not aware of the positive benefits to having an



on site police officer. Safer Schools officers are in schools:

- to reduce victimisation, criminality and ASB within the school and its community;
- to support school staff in dealing with incidents of crime, victimisation or ASB; and,
- to identify and work with children and young people at risk of becoming victims or offenders.

It seems that in private schools there is no awareness that it is not just young people in 'bad' schools who become victims of bullying, victims of hate crime or who experience difficulties in settling into a new school environment.

The feedback from the young people at St Paul's highlights that there is a need for all schools to have an officer allocated or embedded within the school environment. However, private schools are private properties and the MPS would not be able to put forward Safer Schools Officers unless they were invited to do so by head teachers. In light of this, it is crucial that Safer Neighbourhoods Teams build and maintain contact with private schools in their wards.

Consideration also needs to be given to further education sites and whether these too could benefit from a Safer Schools connection. It may not be possible to provide a service to all further education sites; however, a point of contact would be useful for colleges such as Bromley College, which runs education programmes for young people with learning support needs. The staff at Bromley College who were responsible for this class of young people said that the introduction of the Safer Schools programme had resulted in the College losing the police officer that had previously been attached to it. They stated that as the college was seen to be an adult college, little consideration had been given to the needs

of the young people with learning support needs who regularly experienced harassment on their journeys to and from the site.

Finally, comments were made by Jacob Whittingham that schools should be open to working in partnership with locally based youth projects. He suggested that the extended schools programme may provide opportunities for youth clubs to work more closely with schools but that currently there was little recognition that youth work could add value, for example to the Citizenship programme.

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

*Recommendation 42:* Safer Schools Officers should work in partnership with other agencies that are based in schools to ensure that a joined-up response is provided to vulnerable young people in these settings.

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

*Recommendation 44:* The Department for Children, Schools and Families should consider how the extended school programme could be used to address the crime prevention agenda and in particular how youth projects providing crime prevention and intervention programmes can support vulnerable young people in schools.

### 5) Youth Offending Teams

In his expert witness submission, Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS, explained that the original aim behind the setting up of YOTs had been to focus on prevention. However, from the outset YOTs were provided with resources that were targeted

at working with young people who were already in the youth justice system. He went on to explain that one of the key aspects of the work being undertaken by the London CJB was to address this tension. He explained that an assessment would be carried out on the work currently being performed by YOTs and consideration would be given to how much of this work could be mainstreamed.

Mainstreaming certain activities would allow YOTs to provide tailored responses for young offenders. The MPA heard that many YOTs are 'overwhelmed' by what is required of them, which can result in the adoption of uniform approaches rather than the development of tailored responses.

A number of consultees focused on the role of the police in YOTs. Stephen Bloomfield, Chief Superintendent, MPS, highlighted three key issues:

- inconsistent governance arrangements – he explained that some YOTs sat within Childrens Services whilst some were the responsibility of CDRPs resulting in the adoption of different approaches and methods between boroughs;
- that the current YOT funding arrangements were unequal; and finally,
- that the role of MPS staff within YOTs needed to be reconsidered. He explained that the MPS would be renegotiating the Terms of Reference for MPS officers within YOTs.

The YJB consultees commented that the YJB had expressed concerns regarding the low levels of MPS staffing in YOTs and the disassociation of these MPS officers from BOCUs. This lack of connectivity extended to other areas of the police service. The YJB commented that links between YOTs and Safer Schools Officers and

Safer Neighbourhoods Teams were also weak. Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, agreed, stating that police engagement in YOTs was variable and that the work carried out by police officers in YOTs was not always joined up to mainstream policing<sup>83</sup>.

Non-MPS consultees also had a number of comments to make regarding the MPS role within YOTs, many of which correspond to comments made by MPS staff:

- the London Probation Service stated that police officers had marginal roles in YOTs;
- a consultee from Lewisham YOT suggested that it would be helpful if YOT staff were able to negotiate with local BOCUs over which MPS staff would become part of the YOT team. She explained that the skills and interest of the individual officer played a large part in the effectiveness of their role in the YOT;
- the Victim Support Westminster consultee stated that her team worked closely with police officers in YOTs but the constant turnover was detrimental to this work; and finally,
- consultees spoke about tensions in partnership working, which arise from conflicting priorities and targets. The Kensington and Chelsea Community Safety Team consultee stated that whilst the MPS have a sanction detection target, YOTs have been tasked with reducing the number of first time entrants into the CJS.

The Kensington and Chelsea Community Safety Team consultee explained that his team were currently working with the borough YOT to ascertain whether the conditional cautioning approach adopted by Hackney and Lambeth boroughs could be introduced in Kensington and Chelsea. He explained that this would ensure that both MPS and YJB targets were met. He

83 A review of MPS involvement in YOTs is currently underway in partnership with the YJB.



explained that their was an additional positive reason for adopting this approach, current evidence indicates that 70% of young people who are reprimanded do not get involved in further crime.

There was also recognition that YOTs had a number of key strengths. Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS, explained that:

- YOTs were effective models of multi agency partnership working; and,
- YOT based police officers were fully signed up to YOT approach.

He also outlined two key challenges. He stated it would be useful to have a better understanding of:

- current YOT work with serious young offenders and whether these interventions are appropriate and effective; and
- the effectiveness of YOT responses overall.

Consideration was also given to the ACPO YSAT and the consequent impact of this approach being adopted across London. On the one hand consultees commented that the toolkit was essential, as it would ensure that young people who required early prevention and intervention support would be targeted, on the other hand there were concerns that YOTs who are already 'overwhelmed' would not have the capacity to work with these additional young people. Consultees also highlighted that YOTs work with young people who are on mandatory orders, however, young people identified via the ACPO YSAT would not be on orders and therefore it was not clear how young people who were reluctant to take part in non-mandatory programmes would be persuaded to take part.

### **Information sharing**

As highlighted earlier in the report, there is recognition within the MPS that current information-sharing practices are weak and require renewed consideration. Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS, explained that the MPS were not, as a matter of course, sharing information with agencies that could address the needs of vulnerable young people.

However, information provided by adult stakeholders highlighted that this failure was on both sides. There were concerns expressed by a number of stakeholders about how statutory agencies were failing to comply with existing information sharing practices. There was a consensus that current practices were not effective. Consultees told the MPA that:

- information sharing procedures outside of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)<sup>84</sup> and the field of Prolific Priority Offenders (PPO)<sup>85</sup> were poor;
- not all partners were complying fully with the information sharing guidance outlined in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. An impact of this was that suitable interventions were not being identified for young people in need or at risk;
- on some occasions information held about young people in need or at risk was not utilised by other partners who had a statutory duty to act on it..

It would be useful to consider why consultees felt that the MAPPA arrangements worked well. In regards to MAPPA there was agreement that a shared ownership of risk in addition to a statutory duty to deliver on the collectively agreed actions had resulted in an effective response. However,

84 MAPPA monitors and manages serious offenders. Each offender is managed by a panel, which includes the police, probation and prison services.

85 Research indicates that a small number of offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of all crime. The Prolific (and other) Priority Offender (PPO) programme prioritises and directs resources to these offenders

agencies also have a statutory duty to comply with the Crime and Disorder Act, which clearly states that any information which partners can demonstrate will aid the reduction of crime and disorder, can be and should be exchanged lawfully. The MPA findings indicate that not only are some partners failing to comply fully with their statutory duty, but also they are not being held to account for this failure

Betsy Stanko, Head of the Strategic Research Unit, MPS, suggested that the support of the London-wide boards should be harnessed to ensure compliance with information protocols. A central agreement and recognition that a failure in information sharing protocols is resulting in the needs of young people not being met could bring a renewed focus to addressing this concern.

Alongside this awareness, there also needs to be consideration by partners and between partners about what information is actually required by the police and partner agencies so that they can make informed choices. Betsy Stanko, Head of the Strategic Research Unit, MPS, explained that this need would be considered as part of the Operation Alliance programme of work. For example, she suggested it would be useful to have information on school exclusions and the reasons for the exclusions.

Creating central multi functional databases, which can provide complex information on each individual child and young person in need would require the commitment and support of all partner agencies. This suggestion is not unfeasible, however the MPS is unlikely to ensure buy-in unless partners are reminded of and recognise their duties under the Crime and Disorder Act. Sharing information on young people in need, where relevant and necessary, should happen as a matter of course though clearly at the moment it is not. The approach adopted by the WHO is relevant to this issue. The impact of youth crime on statutory resources is immense. By tackling the needs of young people at risk there is

opportunity to divert young people from offending behaviour and support those young people who are at risk of victimisation.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

*Recommendation 46:* The Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families should encourage borough health and education agencies to proactively share information on young people in need and at risk with relevant partner agencies.

### Conclusion

Interviews with adult stakeholders highlighted that in combining engagement and enforcement the MPS were more likely to build positive relationships with young people and thereby have a direct impact on youth offending.

Balanced alongside this positive recognition, the concerns expressed by agencies in regards to current partnership arrangements paint a troubling picture. The inability of service providers – due to poor resourcing resulting in a lack of capacity – to deal with the needs of young people perceived to be at risk or in need is having a direct impact on the youth justice system. Whilst there was recognition that early intervention is a significant solution to tackling youth offending, based on the MPA findings it seems that agencies are unable to act on this recognition for two reasons: a lack of resources; and, a tension between planning for the long term and responding to immediate need.

Whilst accepting that intensive interventions will have long term spending implications, statutory service providers also need to recognise that by working differently and reallocating existing resources a positive impact can be made to youth offending rates and victimisation.



# Chapter 6: Young people and the media

## Summary

Biased negative press coverage of young people has a number of impacts:

- it impacts on the perceptions that adults have of young people;
- it results in some young people playing up to these stereotypical depictions; and finally,
- it impacts on service delivery and policy development, resulting in service providers having to take into consideration public concerns whilst retaining a focus on long-term goals.

## Introduction

*'If you closed down the Evening Standard tomorrow, the fear of crime would plummet.'*

Lewisham Youth Offending Team

Throughout the youth scrutiny there was unanimous agreement between adult and young consultees that the press portrayal of young people was negative, frightening and of concern. This daily portrayal of the capital experiencing an epidemic of youth crime was resulting in Londoners feeling threatened and under siege. The MPA found that press coverage was:

- influencing the behaviour of young people;
- influencing the negative perceptions that adult Londoners have of young Londoners;
- affecting the policy decisions of service providers.

It is important to highlight that the references made by consultees to the media focused on newspapers as opposed to the media as a whole. In particular, young people and adults criticised

the free papers that are targeted at London commuters. Very few references were made about the portrayal of young people on television, radio or the internet. The following chapter looks at:

- the impact of negative coverage on young people;
- the impact of negative press coverage on adult Londoners;
- the use of pejorative language;
- the depiction of victims, witnesses and offenders;
- the impact on service delivery.

## ***The impact of negative coverage on young people***

The MPA findings corresponded to previous reviews undertaken of the press to assess the depiction of children and young people. As part of the Shape the Debate (2002 – 2003)<sup>85</sup> campaign, a review was undertaken of 74 tabloid and broadsheet articles about young people and crime, which showed that young people were referred to as thugs 26 times, and as yobs 21 times. A later study undertaken by Ipsos MORI<sup>86</sup> (2004) found that 71% of youth related articles in local and national press over a one-week period were negative, with only 14% being positive.

Many of the young people who took part in the MPA consultation were concerned that the 'bad' behaviour of a small number of young people was giving the vast majority a bad name. Coupled with this concern was the additional awareness that stigmatising all young people in this way would result in some young people questioning why they should be the responsible ones.

<sup>85</sup> Shape the Debate is a partnership of children's charities to involve children/parents/professionals in a debate about the portrayal of children and young people in media debates on crime and antisocial behaviour.

<sup>86</sup> Ipsos MORI is a research company, specialising in areas such as current public affairs.

***'What's the point of being good, if we are all portrayed as bad?'***

Both adult and young consultees were concerned that the negative portrayal of young people resulted in some young people embracing and playing up to the image that had been created of them, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy<sup>87</sup>.

***'If you are portrayed badly by people, then you are likely to react badly in return.'***

There was a feeling, again amongst both adult and young consultees alike that very rarely did the press choose to highlight positive achievements and contributions made by young people. However, there was also recognition amongst some consultees that positive press stories did not have the same ability to attract and engage Londoners and therefore negative sensationalist stories were inevitable.

There was also some understanding that in the last few years there had been a fundamental change in media. Information is now immediately available, often at the touch of a button; is fast changing, and, due to the plethora of breaking news stories and in order to retain the attention of the 'MTV generation', stories have to be extreme and sensationalist to catch attention. One young person commented that this was the real reason Londoners were so much more aware of crime, *'the media is so big and everything is always in the media.'*

A few young people made a general point about the coverage of London stories in the press. There was a feeling that London stories received greater coverage and had greater prominence in

the press compared to stories about other parts of the United Kingdom.

Young people were not only concerned by how they were portrayed by the press but also by what the press considered newsworthy. The MPA YSRG was surprised to learn that there had been considerable progress made by the MPS in a number of the 26 youth homicides in 2007. They expressed concern that the press had not provided updates on those homicides where perpetrators had been identified. Taking into account sub judice<sup>88</sup> stipulations, the press can and are able to state that a perpetrator has been identified and that a court case is pending.

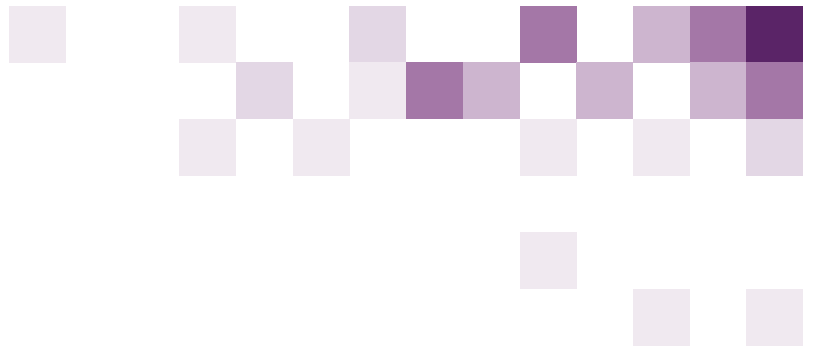
At the central London consultation event, a discussion on this negative press portrayal resulted in a small number of young people stating categorically that young people themselves had to take responsibility for the negative portrayal. They were clear that young people should not passively accept negative press coverage and that all young people had the ability to influence how they were depicted.

The MPA YSRG had some suggestions on how young people could take some responsibility in tackling the negative press coverage. They spoke about the need to utilise existing information and communication mechanisms to promote positive images and stories of young people. They suggested that radio stations such as Choice FM should be encouraged to provide slots to young people.

There was also a suggestion that nationwide newspapers should include young people as columnists as these papers had a wide circulation and had many thousands of readers.

<sup>87</sup> Young people who are labelled by the press as 'feral' and 'out of control' will change their behaviour to fit the label.

<sup>88</sup> In law, sub judice, Latin for "under judgment," means that a particular case or matter is currently under trial or being considered by a judge or court. In England and Wales it is generally considered inappropriate to comment publicly on cases sub judice, which can be an offence in itself, leading to contempt of court proceedings. This is particularly true in criminal cases, where publicly discussing cases sub judice may constitute interference with due process.



Finally, they suggested that there was a need for a national magazine/newspaper, which was produced for young people by young people. Though they recognised that utilising national media would raise the profile of young people's needs, there were also concerns that using this approach could result in young people's voices not getting the prominence that they required.

### ***The impact of negative press coverage on adult Londoners***

Adult consultees had a number of different concerns about the press portrayal of young people. A few adult stakeholders pointed out that the negative portrayal of young people had a particular significance for London's adult population. They stated that in reality most adults had little direct contact with young people on a day-to-day basis and therefore the press portrayal of young people was often the sole source of information for adults.

They also commented on the corrosive effect of these stories and how they can shape popular opinion. For example, a Children and Young People Now magazine member of staff stated that newspaper stories acted as 'background noise'. Five years ago very few Londoners had a clear understanding of ASB and very few would have considered this behaviour criminal. However, the press coverage of ASB had not only resulted in a better understanding of ASB but had also added to the demonisation of young people. A Kings College (2005) study on public attitudes towards ASB nationally, found that when talking about local ASB problems, the participants had focused largely on issues relating to children and young people.

### ***The use of pejorative language***

Adults also spoke about how the press had influenced the language that is used to describe young people or the behaviour of young people. Terms such as 'yob' and 'thug' have become popular descriptive terms to describe young

people. One adult stakeholder said that she had been shocked when a colleague at a RJ conference had referred to young people as 'yobs' throughout her presentation.

The press usage of these terms and public adoption of them has legitimised what are in fact unacceptable and prejudicial terms. It is difficult to find examples of other groups of Londoners who are consistently spoken about and referred to in such a pejorative manner.

Concerns were also expressed about the depiction of young victims/witnesses and offenders in the press.

### ***The depiction of victims, witnesses and offenders***

Beatbullying felt that the depiction of young victims could add to the disempowerment that some young victims experienced. Lewisham YOT was concerned that on occasion the press did not tell the complete truth about victims. Some victims were mythologized by the press, portrayed as 'angels' when the reality was somewhat different.

Officers within Operation Trident were concerned that there had been instances of the press allowing groups of young people to posture as gang members. Not only were these depictions irresponsible but also it was difficult to ascertain the validity of them.

DTT and The Children's Society expressed concerns with the depiction of young witnesses in the media. The Children's Society employee referred to the press vilification of young witness 'Bromley' during the first Damilola Taylor murder trial.

### ***The impact on service delivery***

There were concerns expressed by adults about how the press's influence on the public can impact on operational and strategic activity.

The Richmond Children's Services consultee commented that despite Richmond being the safest London borough with an affluent residential community, there was a widespread and constant fear of crime, which presented Local Authority staff with an ongoing communication challenge. This public opinion had directly impacted on the strategies that the Service devised to work with young people.

Officers from Operation Trident commented on the media frenzy that had surrounded the 26 youth homicides in London in 2007. They stated that it had been imperative that the coverage did not sway them from their long-term strategies and approaches.

The MPA Youth Scrutiny also heard of positive examples of how the press can be used to the advantage of young people.

Anthony Kendall and Ivor Etienne from Choice FM provided an example of how mainstream media can be utilised to provide community safety messages to young people. They spoke about the radio station's 'Peace on the Streets' campaign, which raises awareness of the impact of becoming involved in gang culture and the carrying of weapons. Due to their profile, Choice FM is able to attract celebrity support recognising that individuals who are known to and respected by young people are more likely to have a positive impact. Choice FM is hoping to continue its community-focused work by developing a radio station, which is run for, and by young people.

Other examples of good and promising practice included:

- London Councils has been offering media support to all London's Local Authorities so that they can tackle the negative local press coverage of children and young people more effectively. They are also encouraging them to flood local media with positive stories;

- linked to this example is the practice of Richmond Children's Services who plan each month's press coverage in advance, ensuring that positive stories about the work that is being done with young people in the borough is highlighted; and finally,
- in Essex a group of eight young people have been provided with the same media training that police officers receive. This group were encouraged to respond to local stories on young people in a column set aside for them by a local paper.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

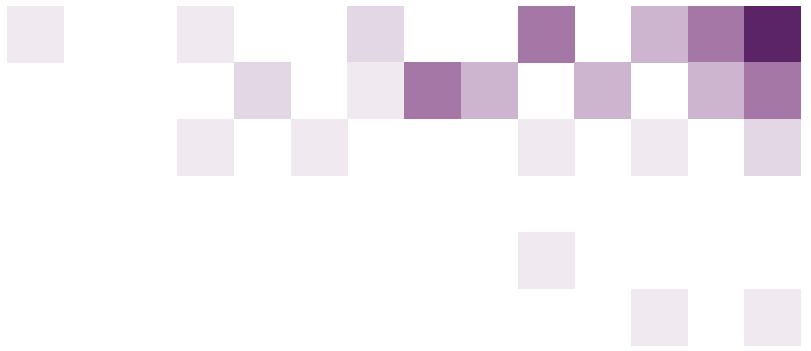
*Recommendation 49:* The ACPO approach of providing young people with media training and a monthly newspaper column to share views, concerns and needs should be adopted and rolled out across the capital. Young people specific magazines alongside mainstream national and local press should also consider including regular contributions from young people.

*Recommendation 50:* Counter negative portrayals of young people by promoting positive stories of young people in the local media.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA

*Recommendation 51:* Consider how press, radio, television and digital media can be adapted to:

- a) provide a voice for young people;
- b) provide guidance and influence young people.



**RECOMMENDATION FOR ALL ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH AND PROVIDING SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

*Recommendation 52:* All service providers, including the media, should consider the language that they use when speaking to or about young people. Consideration should always be given to avoiding pejorative and offensive language as this impacts negatively on young people and exacerbates fear of crime

# Appendix 1: Methodology

## Terms of reference

MPA officers drafted the terms of reference for the MPA Youth Scrutiny. These were revised by MPA members at MPA Co-ordination and Policing Committee on the 27th September 2007 and were approved by MPA Members at MPA Full Authority on 25th October 2007.

## Scrutiny panel

The MPA Youth Scrutiny was steered by a scrutiny panel.

The 6 panellists were:

1. Richard Sumray (Magistrate Member, MPA) [Panel Chair]
2. Cindy Butts (Independent Member, MPA) [Panel Vice-Chair]
3. John Roberts (Independent Member, MPA)
4. Camila Batmanghelidjh (Director, Kids Company)
5. Susannah Hancock (London Region Manager, Youth Justice Board)
6. Rose Fitzpatrick (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS)

The panel met 10 times during the course of the MPA Youth Scrutiny.

## Expert witness sessions

At most of the panel meetings, the panel heard testimony from one or two expert witnesses, who presented their perspective on relevant issues and then answered questions from the panellists.

The panel heard from 14 expert witnesses:

1. Alastair Jeffrey, Detective Chief Superintendent, MPS
2. Anthony Kendall, Ivor Etienne, Nadine Neckles and Leah McClean, Peace On The Streets, Choice FM
3. Betsy Stanko, Senior Advisor – Strategic Analysis, MPS
4. Dee O’Connell, Head of Children & Young People Team, Home Office
5. George Hosking, Chief Executive, The Wave Trust
6. Ian Carter, Inspector, ACPO
7. Ian Clement, Lead Member for Youth, London Councils
8. Jacob Whittingham, Youth Worker, SE1 United
9. John Pitts, University of Bedfordshire
10. Mark Simmons, Commander, MPS
11. Nicola Dale, Chief Inspector, MPS
12. Rod Jarman, Commander, MPS (x2)
13. Shaun Sawyer, Commander, MPS
14. Stuart Muir, Safer Schools PC, MPS

## Reference group

A Reference Group of 26 diverse young Londoners advised the MPA Youth Scrutiny:

1. Adebola Showemimo, SE1 United
2. Amani Hamid, Young Black Positive Advocates
3. Angelo Edades, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Consortium
4. Cleo Olekanni, SE1 United



5. Jack Mayorcas, United Kingdom Youth Parliament
6. Jacqueline Maughan, London Gypsy & Travellers Unit
7. Jane Nzeako, Havering College
8. Jean Marcos Maldonado Caizapanta, Latin American Project
9. Laura Cain, Bromley College
10. Laura Maughan, London Gypsy & Travellers Unit
11. Lauren Barnes-Fernandez, Phoenix High School
12. Levi Hill, Dalston Youth Project
13. Lori-Jane Forrest, Kids Company
14. Michelle O'Donough, YWCA
15. Ozzie Binns, MPS Youth Advisory Group
16. Peter Creswell, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Consortium
17. Rachel Lawrence, Karrot
18. Rafsan Choudhry, Stepney Green School
19. Raxit Joshi, Havering College
20. Samuel Agbesi, Young Black Positive Advocates
21. Selina Khan, YWCA
22. Spencer Addo, Young Black Positive Advocates
23. Stephen Cole, Kids Company
24. Steve Josue M Caizapanta, Latin American Project
25. Teshna Farquharson, Young Black Positive Advocates
26. Wahidul Islam, Stepney Green School

This group met 6 times during the scrutiny process, reality-checking emerging findings, helping shape the consultative programme, and offering invaluable advice throughout.

### Adult stakeholder interviews

MPA officers conducted face-to-face, one-to-one interviews with 28 adult stakeholders, spanning the statutory, private, voluntary and community sectors. The adult stakeholders were from the following organisations:

1. 100 Black Men of London
2. Active Change Foundation
3. AHOY Centre
4. Barnardos
5. Beatbullying
6. Camberwell Youth Court
7. Damilola Taylor Trust
8. Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate, MPS
9. Greater London Authority
10. Government Office for London
11. Hounslow Youth Service
12. Independent Police Complaints Commission
13. Kensington & Chelsea Community Safety Team
14. Kids Company
15. Kids Count
16. Lambeth Women's Aid
17. Lewisham Youth Offending Team
18. London Councils
19. London Probation
20. Maudsley Hospital

21. NSPCC
22. Operation Trident, MPS
23. Richmond Children's Services
24. Safer Neighbourhoods, MPS
25. The Children's Society
26. Transport for London
27. Westminster Victim Support
28. Young People Now

The interviews were all based on a questionnaire (see Appendix 2).

### Ad hoc consultations

To supplement the other consultative activities and to ensure we heard from relevant hard-to-reach groups, MPA officers performed ad hoc consultative sessions with 6 specific groups:

1. a learning support needs class at Bromley College, Bromley;
2. a Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual young women's group 'Face 2 Face', Waltham Forest;
3. Colet Court a private middle school in Barnes, Richmond;
4. St Paul's a private senior school in Barnes; Richmond;
5. young women from Lewisham Youth Offending Team, Lewisham; and finally,
6. young men from the Somali Youth Development Resource Centre, Camden.

### Borough-based community police engagement group submissions

All 32 MPA-funded, borough-based Community Police Engagement Groups (CPEGs) were asked to consult in their London borough with local young people. Guidance and support was offered to these groups to undertake this work. 18 groups submitted the results:

1. Brent
2. Bromley
3. Ealing
4. Enfield
5. Greenwich
6. Hammersmith & Fulham
7. Haringey
8. Havering
9. Islington
10. Kensington & Chelsea
11. Kingston
12. Lambeth
13. Merton
14. Newham
15. Richmond
16. Sutton
17. Waltham Forest
18. Westminster





## Hearings with young people and senior police officers

The MPA held 4 large hearings, with a senior MPS officer and 50 -100 young people in attendance at each:

1. Kids Company, Brixton, Lambeth;
2. Emirates Stadium, Arsenal Football Club, Islington;
3. Stepney Green School, Tower Hamlets;
4. Victoria Park Plaza Hotel, Westminster.

Sir Ian Blair, Commissioner, MPS, attended the final hearing. A number of young people at this hearing wrote comments or questions on post-it notes for him to answer afterwards. The Commissioner responded to every such comment or question in writing. A full transcript of these responses is available on the MPA website at: [www.mpa.gov.uk/downloads/issues/youth/youth-Qand%20A.pdf](http://www.mpa.gov.uk/downloads/issues/youth/youth-Qand%20A.pdf)

A full list of all the organisations that participated in the MPA Youth Scrutiny, including those that attended these 4 hearings, is included as Appendix 7 to this report.

## Online survey

The MPA produced a survey for completion by young Londoners. The survey was made widely available both online at [www.mpa.gov.uk](http://www.mpa.gov.uk) and in hard copy. 356 young people completed and submitted surveys.

## Reading and desk-based research

MPA officers read and researched widely in relevant fields, including attending a number of pertinent conferences and seminars. A full bibliography of all the documents read is included as Appendix 5 to this report.

## Report

This report presents a thorough analysis of the information generated from all of the above activities and makes recommendations for change.

## Appendix 2: Adult stakeholder questionnaire

### Current work

1. Currently what work is your organisation undertaking to tackle youth victimisation?
2. Currently what work is your organisation undertaking to tackle youth offending?
3. Currently what work is your organisation undertaking to address the needs of young witnesses?
4. Currently, what consultation are you undertaking with children and young people to inform your work to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses, and perpetrators?
5. How are the work/projects that you undertake decided/agreed?

### Partnership working

6. Currently what partnership arrangements are you involved in?
7. How well have these partnership arrangements worked, particularly those with the MPS? Please provide details of elements that have worked well and any that have not worked so well.
8. What do you think the roles of the MPS are in tackling young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses, and perpetrators?

### Questions for MPS officers/staff ONLY

9. How do different parts of the MPS work together to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses, and perpetrators?

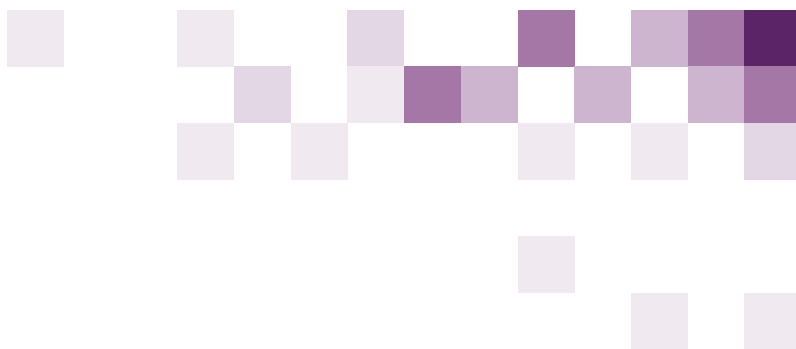
10. How do you think the MPS youth strategy 2007-2009 will impact on how the MPS work together to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators?

### Perceptions of young people

11. How do you think the media portrays young people as victims, witnesses and perpetrators?
12. How do you think this affects society's perceptions of young people as victims, witnesses and perpetrators?

### Structural arrangements to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators

13. Do the current London-wide structures in place to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators fulfil the needs of your organisation? If they do, how do they fulfil your needs?
14. If they do not, what improvements need to be made to the structures?
15. Do the current borough-based structures in place to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators fulfil the needs of your organisation?



## Identifying/sharing good practice

16. How do you evaluate your work to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators?
17. How do you use the information from evaluations?
18. How do you share details of your work to tackle young people's involvement in crime as victims, witnesses and perpetrators with colleagues and other organisations?

**Thank you for your co-operation**

# Appendix 3: Youth survey

## Young people in London and the Police – Youth Survey

**Your answers to the questions in this survey will help us to improve the service that young people receive from the police in London.**

This survey is completely anonymous – you do not have to write your name on it and the information you provide will be confidential. However, if you tell us about a serious crime that has not been reported to the police, we may be required by law to tell the police about it.

Some of the questions just need a tick to answer them, while some others will direct you to go on and answer another question. Sometimes we would like more information to help us understand, so we have left a blank box for you to write in. All the information you can give us will help.

Please return your completed survey to us by **29 February 2008**. You can either give it to your youth worker who will post it back to us, post it to us yourself in the freepost envelope provided, or address an envelope to the freepost address (Youth Survey, MPA, freepost LON17808, London SW1H 0DY) – you do not need a stamp for this envelope.

**Thanks for taking part in the survey.**

### Confidence in the police

- How confident are you that the police in London would respond appropriately to your needs?

**Please tick one**

- Very confident
- Confident
- Not confident
- Not at all confident

- Why?

### Contact with the police

- Have you had any contact with the police in the last 12 months (this could be any kind of contact including face-to-face, on the phone or over the internet)?

Yes  (Go to question 4)

No  (Go to question 7)

- What was the reason for your most recent contact with the police?

**Please tick all that apply**

- I was a victim of a crime
- I had witnessed a crime
- I had committed a crime
- The police thought I had committed a crime
- I was stopped and asked questions
- I was stopped and searched
- I was taking part in work with the police
- For advice/information
- Just for a chat
- Other
- If other, please explain \_\_\_\_\_



5. How do you feel about your most recent contact with the police?

**Please tick one**

- It was very good
- It was good
- It was bad
- It was very bad

6. Why?

**Your experiences of crime**

**As a victim:**

- 7. Have you been a victim of crime in the last 12 months?  
Yes  (Go to question 8)  
No  (Go to question 13)

8. What crime was it?  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Where did it happen?  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. At what time of day?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Did you tell the police?

- Yes  No

12. Did someone else tell the police?

- Yes  No

**As an offender:**

13. Have you committed a crime in the last 12 months?

- Yes  (Go to question 14)
- No  (Go to question 19)

14. What crime was it?  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. Where did it happen?  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. At what time of day?  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Did you tell the police?

- Yes  No

18. Did someone else tell the police?

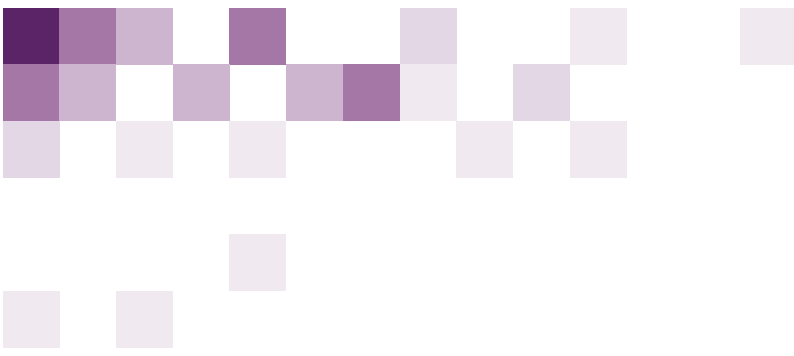
- Yes  No

**As a witness:**

19. Have you witnessed a crime in the last 12 months?

- Yes  (Go to question 20)
- No  (Go to question 25)

20. What crime was it?  
\_\_\_\_\_



21. Where did it happen?

---

22. At what time of day?

---

23. Did you tell the police?

Yes  No

24. Did someone else tell the police?

Yes  No

### Working with the police

25. Have you ever been involved in a youth project or any other work with the police?

Yes  (Go to question 26)

No  (Go to question 29)

26. What was the project or work?

27. Was it useful?

Yes  No

28. Why?

### Your solutions

29. What do you think the police should be doing to stop young people becoming victims of crime?

30. What do you think the police should be doing to stop young people committing crime?



### Information about you

***This part of the survey is optional and you do not have to provide the following information if you do not want to.***

***The reason we are asking these questions is that it will help us to understand issues that might affect some communities more than others.***

a) Are you: Male?  Female?

b) How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

c) What borough do you live in?  
\_\_\_\_\_

d) What borough do you go to school in?  
\_\_\_\_\_

e) What is your ethnicity (please tick one)?

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background

Chinese or other ethnic group

- Chinese
- Any other ethnic group

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background

White

- British
- Irish
- Any other white background
- Prefer not to say

f) What is your religion (please tick one)?

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other religion (please state _____) |                                   |

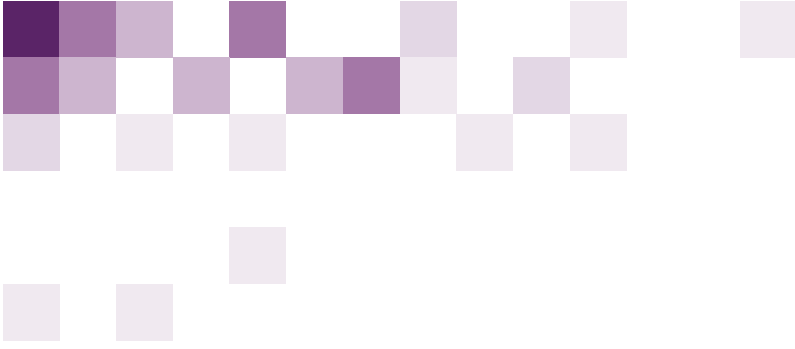
- \_\_\_\_\_
- No religion
  - Prefer not to say

g) What is your sexuality?

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual | <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual     | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

h) Do you have a disability? Yes  No

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Please return your completed survey to us by **29 February 2008**. You can either give it to your youth worker who will post it back to us, post it to us yourself in the freepost envelope provided, or address an envelope to the freepost address (Youth Survey, MPA, freepost LON17808, London SW1H 0DY) – you do not need a stamp for this envelope.

**Thanks again for taking part in this important piece of work.**



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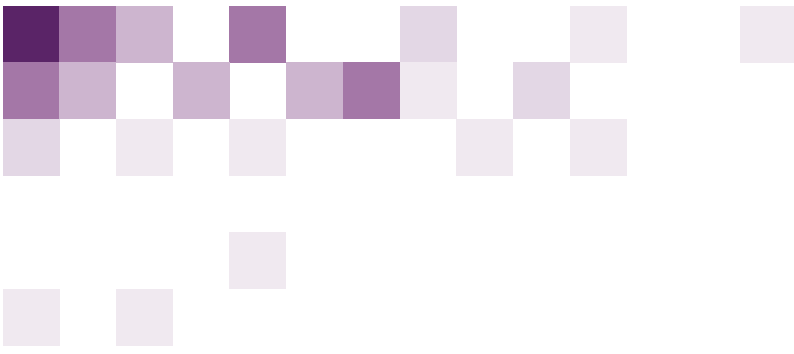
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## Appendix 6: Glossary of Acronyms

ACPO – Association of Chief Police Officers

ASB – Anti Social Behaviour

ASBO – Anti Social Behaviour Order

BCS – British Crime Survey

BOCUs – Borough Operational Command Units

CDRP – Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

CHPs – Community Help Point scheme

CJB – Criminal Justice Board

CJS – Criminal Justice System

CPEG – Community Police Engagement Group

GLA – Greater London Authority

IAG – Independent Advisory Group

IPCC – Independent Police Complaints Commission

LGBT – Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender

MAPPA – Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

MPA – Metropolitan Police Authority

MPS – Metropolitan Police Service

MYAG – Metropolitan Youth Advisory Group

NCATS – National Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service

NSPCC – The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

ONS – Office for National Statistics

PCSO – Police Community Support Officers

PHSE – Personal Health and Social Education

PPO – Prolific and other Priority Offenders

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

RJ – Restorative Justice

SYDRC – Somali Youth Development Resource Centre

UKYP – United Kingdom Youth Parliament

VAP – Violence Against the Person

WAVE – Worldwide Alternatives to Violence

WHO – The World Health Organization

YBPA – Young Black Positive Advocates

YDET – Youth Disorder Engagement Team

YET – Youth Engagement Team

YISP – Youth Inclusion and Support Panels

YJB – Youth Justice Board

YOT – Youth Offending Team

YSRG – Youth Scrutiny Reference Group



## Appendix 7: List of participants



100 Black Men of London	Damilola Taylor Trust
Active Change Foundation	Davenant Centre
AHOY Centre	Ealing Community Police Engagement Group
Arsenal Football Club	EC1 Youth Forum
Association of Chief Police Officers	Enfield Community Police Engagement Group
Barnardo's	Face 2 Face
Beatbullying	Fortunegate Community Housing
Brent Community Police Engagement Group	Foundation for Life
British Transport Police	From Boyhood To Manhood Foundation
Bromley College	Government Office for London
Bromley Community Police Engagement Group	Greater London Authority
Camberwell Youth Court	Greenwich Community Police Engagement Group
Camden Youth Disorder Engagement Team	Haileybury Youth Centre
Castlehaven Community Association	Hammersmith & Fulham Community Police Engagement Group
Catalyst Housing Group	Haringey Community Police Engagement Group
Charles Darwin School Biggin Hill	Harrow Youth Service
Choice FM	Havering College
Churchill Gardens Youth Club	Havering Community Police Engagement Group
City YMCA	Help Somali Foundation Group
Colet Court	Hillingdon Youth Service
Complimentary Education Centre	Holloway School
Copenhagen Youth Project	Home Office
Dalston Youth Project	





- Hounslow Youth Service
- Hype
- Independent Police Complaints Commission
- Islington Community Police Engagement Group
- Kensington & Chelsea Community Police Engagement Group
- Kensington & Chelsea Community Safety Team
- Kickstart
- Kickz
- Kids Company
- Kids Count
- Kingston Community Police Engagement Group
- Kingston Youth Service
- Kori Arts Youth Programme
- Lambeth Community Police Engagement Group
- Lambeth Women's Aid
- Latin American Project
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Consortium
- Lewisham Connexions
- Lewisham Council
- Lewisham Youth Offending Team
- Lewisham Youth Service
- London Councils
- London Gypsy & Traveller Unit
- London Probation
- Maudsley Hospital
- Merton Community Police Engagement Group
- Merton Youth Justice Service
- Merton Youth Service
- Met Youth Advisory Group
- Metropolitan Police Authority
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Newham Community Police Engagement Group
- Newham Youth Service
- NSPCC
- Ocean New Deal for Communities
- Phoenix High School
- Richmond Children's Services
- Richmond Community Police Engagement Group
- School of Oriental and African Studies
- SE1 United
- Somali Youth Development Resource Centre
- South Camden Community School
- Southwark Youth Service
- St John's Ambulance
- St Paul's School



Stepney Green School

Sutton Community Police Engagement Group

The Children’s Society

The Wave Trust

Tower Hamlets Youth Service

Transport for London

United Kingdom Youth Parliament

University of Bedfordshire

Urban Scholars Intervention Programme (USIP)

Victoria Park Plaza Hotel

Waltham Forest Community Action Team

Waltham Forest Community Police Engagement Group

Waltham Forest Youth Service

Westminster Community Police Engagement Group

Westminster Kickz

Westminster Victim Support

Woodhouse College

World of Hope

Y Team

Young Black Positive Advocates

Young People Now

Youth Justice Board

YWCA

Reference Group:

Adebola Showemimo, SE1 United

Amani Hamid, Young Black Positive Advocates

Angelo Edades, LGBT Consortium

Cleo Olekanni, SE1 United

Jack Mayorcas, United Kingdom Youth Parliament

Jacqueline Maughan, London Gypsy & Travellers Unit

Jane Nzeako, Havering College

Jean Marcos Maldonado Caizapanta, Latin American Project

Laura Cain, Bromley College

Laura Maughan, London Gypsy & Travellers Unit

Lauren Barnes-Fernandez, Phoenix High School

Levi Hill, Dalston Youth Project

Lori-Jane Forrest, Kids Company

Michelle O’Donough, YWCA

Ozzie Binns, MPS Youth Advisory Group

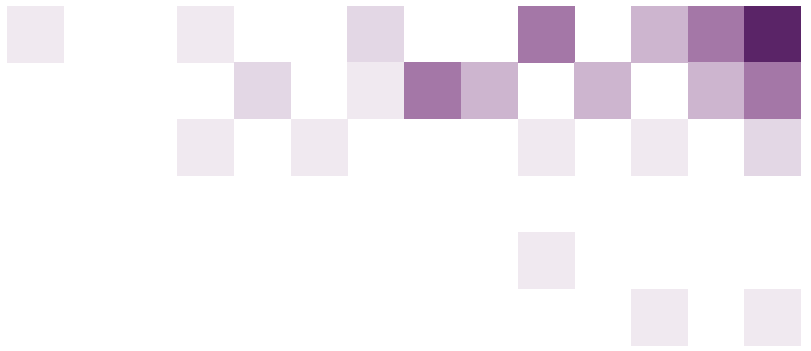
Peter Creswell, LGBT Consortium

Rachel Lawrence, Karrot

Rafsan Choudhry, Stepney Green School

Raxit Joshi, Havering College

Samuel Agbesi, Young Black Positive Advocates



Selina Khan, YWCA


Spencer Addo, Young Black Positive Advocates

Stephen Cole, Kids Company

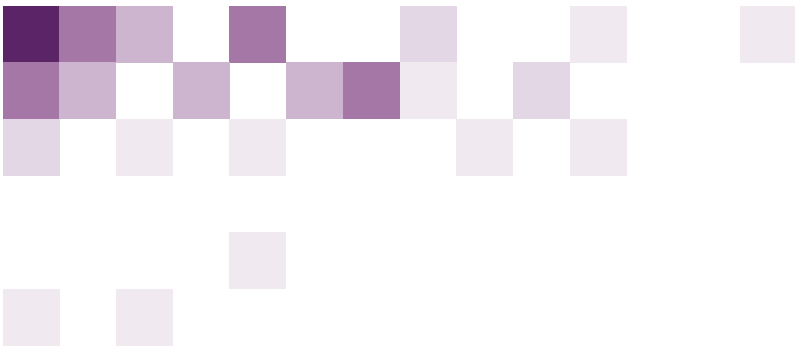
Steve Josue M Caizapanta, Latin American Project

Teshna Farquharson, Young Black Positive  
Advocates

Wahidul Islam, Stepney Green School



## **Appendix 8: Seen and Heard – Young People, Policing and Crime: An MPA Report (youth version)**



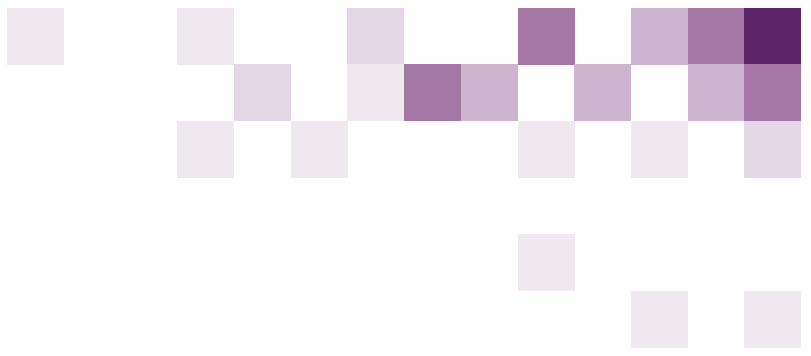
# SEEN AND HEARD

YOUNG PEOPLE, POLICING  
AND CRIME: AN MPA REPORT

I FEEL THEY STEREOTYPE  
US YOUTHS BECAUSE OF THE  
WAY WE DRESS AND LOOK.

THE POLICE SHOULD BE MORE  
HELPFUL TOWARDS YOUNG  
PEOPLE AND SHOW THEM THEY  
ARE THERE TO HELP... AND  
ARE NOT THEIR ENEMIES.

IF YOU TELL THE POLICE  
SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO  
YOU, THEY WILL LAUGH AT YOU  
OR THEY WON'T REALLY CARE.



YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AN ENORMOUSLY IMPORTANT PART OF LONDON AND AN ASSET... THE MET'S VIEW IS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT THE PROBLEM; THEY ARE THE SOLUTION.

COMMISSIONER SIR IAN BLAIR,  
METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE



## WELCOME

Much has been said about youth crime and the fear it causes amongst adults, but the fact remains: **the vast majority of young people are not criminals**. This year the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) decided to get the big picture on young people and crime and to hear from young Londoners themselves – be they victims, witnesses, those involved in crime or young people just wanting to have a say about youth crime. We also wanted to hear what young people think about the police, and what they feel the police and other organisations should do to tackle youth crime.

### The big picture

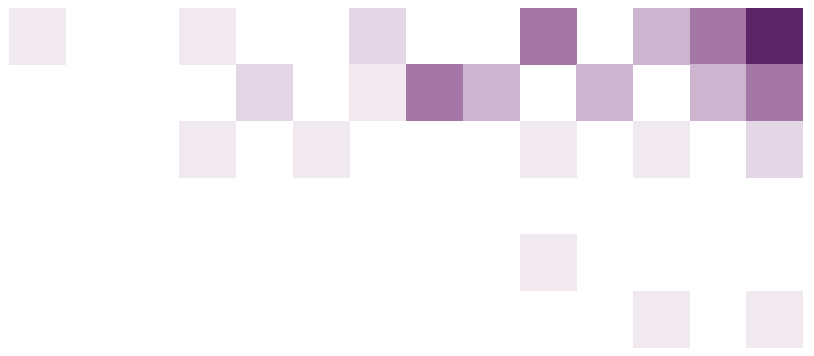
The main issues we wanted to look at were:

- **how can police and other organisations work together to give better support to young victims and witnesses?**
- **how can police and others – including youth workers, local authorities, and the justice system – work together to reduce youth offending?**
- **what drives some young people into crime?**
- **how can we help young people have a say in policing?**

To find answers we recruited 26 young Londoners to help us with planning our work. In total we spoke to about 1,000 young people and adults who work with young people. They took part in interviews, panel discussions, informal meetings and online surveys. The conversations with young people were challenging, revealing, and sometimes uncomfortable. This booklet summarises what we learned, and based on what we heard, suggests real ways in which we can make London a safer place for young people and adults.

TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE,  
FOR GOSH SAKE! THEY  
ARE HUMAN!





WE HAVE GOT TO ASK  
QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND  
THE LAW AND THE POLICE  
FORCE, AND GOT TO GIVE  
OUR OPINIONS TO IMPROVE  
YOUTH INTERACTION WITH  
THE POLICE.

YOUNG PERSON





## YOUNG PEOPLE AS CITIZENS

### Drop the stereotype

Young people say that public perception of them is often stereotyped. However, our work shows that given the right opportunities, young people want to be involved in projects that support their local community or their city – whether this is peer group work to improve behaviour on transport; supporting young people in reporting crime or taking part in the UK Youth Parliament.

The responsibility for changing adult perceptions must not lie with young people. **Adults must recognise the value of including young people in decisions about the services that affect their lives because:**

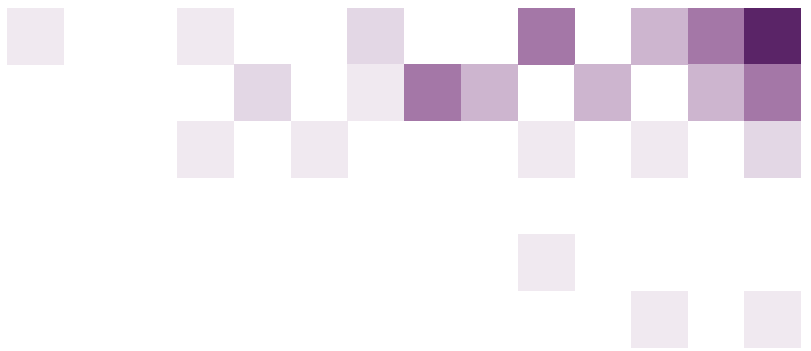
- solutions to problems will be relevant to young people if they have been involved in developing them;
- if young people are involved in making decisions, it indicates to them that they are highly valued members of their communities;
- when young people are asked for their opinions and decisions it makes them feel that they are important and valued.

### FACT BOX

Youth offences have not risen in the past six years, showing that the level of youth crime is much lower than the public believe it to be. In 2006-07, only 6% of London's 10 to 19-year-olds were accused of a crime.

LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE INSTEAD OF JUST ACCUSING THEM, GET THEM INVOLVED RATHER THAN STANDING BACK... SOMETIMES IT SEEMS LIKE THEY ARE (ADULTS) SCARED OF YOUNG PEOPLE.





# YOUNG PEOPLE AS VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

## Fear of crime

**Young Londoners are like adult Londoners - they are afraid of crime and fear for their safety.** Young people say their safety depends on where they are, and how familiar they are with the neighbourhood. Some young people refer to their neighbourhoods as 'endz'. They say they are safe in their own 'endz', but not in others.

Adults explained that 'endz' is a result of some young people – mainly from poor backgrounds and those without supportive families – creating their own alternative cultures. This leads to a higher-than-normal value being placed on a young person's immediate neighbourhood. This is worrying, because it prevents some young people from travelling around London freely and stops them taking part in activities in other parts of London.

## Young people don't report crime

Young people accept behaviour that adults won't – for instance they feel they only need to report serious crimes, not minor ones such as the theft of a mobile or an iPod.

The 'no snitch' culture is widespread. Young people feel that if they snitch the police can't guarantee their safety, leaving victims, their friends and family open to revenge attacks. This means a large amount of youth crime goes unreported, including serious crimes such as robberies, assaults and stabbings.

**Young people choose not to report crimes to the police and other agencies, because:**

- of a lack of awareness of what is actually considered a crime;
- of pride – young people would rather deal with incidents themselves than involve police;
- young people find police stations unwelcoming and unfriendly places.

## Getting young people to report crime

It's important to get young people to report crime. The police and other agencies need to consider new ways of allowing young people to report crime. Young people say they would definitely be more willing to report crimes if they thought something positive would happen as a result.

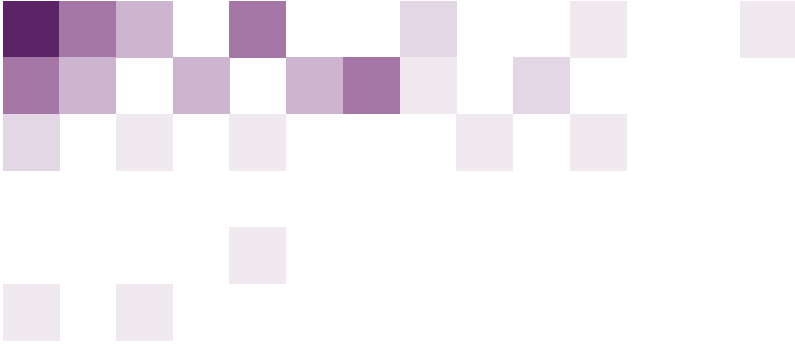
Encouraging young people to report crimes could help to break the link between being a victim and getting involved in crime. Young people who are regularly victimised may become offenders, and young people who offend can be victimised by other offenders. Reporting breaks this cycle. It can be encouraged in two ways:

- **stressing to young people the effects of not reporting. This can be reinforced by, for example, asking families of victims to speak about the impact of the crime on them and how reporting the crime helped the family;**
- **providing appropriate support for young people when they report a crime. If young victims or witnesses think their needs will be met positively, they will be more likely to report crimes.**

## Forced into crime

Some young people are forced into offending by other young people or adults. Young people say that the police should arrest those adults and young people who force young people to take part in crime, rather than those young people who have been forced into it.

Certain issues leave some young people vulnerable to being forced into crime. These are often called 'risk factors'. These factors can include child abuse and neglect, or living in a high-crime area where gang culture or crime is hard to avoid. It is the responsibility of those working with young offenders to take these risk factors into account when considering what support to give young people.



I AM NOT SAYING THAT  
EITHER POLICE OR YOUNG  
PEOPLE ARE BLAMELESS,  
BUT IT COMES DOWN TO A  
LACK OF UNDERSTANDING  
OR MUTUAL RESPECT.

YOUNG PERSON



#### FACT BOX

Young people are most likely to be victimised or commit a crime between 3-5pm, or late at night. One of the most common locations for youth crime and youth offending is outside school or on buses as schoolchildren travel home across areas they don't feel they belong in.



IF YOU ARE NOT LISTENED  
TO AT HOME, GANGS CAN  
LOOK AFTER YOU.

YOUNG PERSON



EVERYONE MEETS UP  
AND DOES MADNESS WITH  
EACH OTHER. IN MY MIND I  
NEVER THOUGHT IT WAS A  
GANG, JUST FRIENDS.

YOUNG PERSON



## YOUNG PEOPLE WHO COMMIT CRIME

### Why some young people get into crime

It's no surprise that the areas in London with high levels of youth crime are also those which have high levels of other types of crime and are poorer and more deprived.

There are many reasons why some young people get involved in crime. Young people gave us the following reasons:

- **recognition and respect: some young people gain a reputation by offending. Others believe that violence is an acceptable way to deal with perceived or actual wrongs;**
- **being forced into crime by adults or other young people;**
- **revenge: striking back at people who have done things to them;**
- **territorial conflict;**
- **lack of strong criminal justice penalties: some young people feel the sentences given for youth crime are too soft to prevent them offending;**
- **need and greed: some young people believe that there are few legitimate ways for them to make money and therefore taking part in crime is another option;**
- **boredom: young people have few interesting activities to take part in; those that exist are often expensive, poorly planned or difficult to get to.**

### Weapons: a false sense of security

Some young people carry knives and weapons for self-defence, and to give themselves a sense of security. But they also know that carrying a knife can create situations which could have a violent ending – If the other young person shows a weapon, they need to be prepared to use their own.

### Young people and gangs

**Adults connect the word 'gangs' with criminal behaviour, but for some young people, the word 'gang' is a positive word and can mean identity, territory, culture, belonging, protection and respect.**

The police and other organisations need to find a sensible response to gangs and they can do this by better understanding gang activity in London. There has to be an agreed understanding across London of what the term 'gang' actually means. We need to make sure that when the police and other agencies working in youth offending use the word 'gang' they are using it to describe criminal behaviour and are not using it to describe how young people socialise with each other.

### Failure of criminal justice deterrents

**Surprisingly perhaps, many young people believe that the criminal justice penalties for offending are too soft.** They are critical of custodial sentences (sentences which result in young people being sent to young offenders institutes), believe that prisons and young offenders institutes should be harsher, that life sentences should mean life, and that sentencing should be stricter.

### Finding solutions

**Young people and adults that spoke to the MPA gave us a number of solutions to tackle youth crime. They suggest:**

- **stepping in when young people first get involved in crime is essential;**
- **an increase of affordable youth activities will divert young people in danger of getting into crime;**
- **it is important to take into account young people's wider community contacts. They said that parents, families, teachers and religious leaders should be spoken to when decisions are made about how to support a young person who is involved in youth crime.**

### FACT BOX

The amount of serious crime committed by young people has increased. Young people are more likely to be victims of violent crime than adults.



# YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE POLICE

The contact that young people have with individual police officers – as victims, witnesses, offenders, or simply as Londoners – affects how they feel about the police service as a whole. It also affects whether they are confident that the police will support and respond to their needs. The main issue spoken about by many young people was the quality of the contact they had with officers.

## Direct contact with the police

**Good quality contact tends to occur between young people and officers who have been based in one area for a significant amount of time.** For example, many young people are positive about Safer Neighbourhoods Officers and Safer Schools Officers. These officers are building positive relationships with young people through their day to day encounters with them.

### FACT BOX

Beatbullying highlighted in their *Bullying and Truancy Report 2006* that approximately 170,000 children truanted every day because of bullying. Therefore the MPA feel that the work of Safer Schools Officers is important.

Youth projects involving police officers are another good way of improving contact between the police and young people. This can tackle the negative stereotypes young people have of the police and the negative stereotypes that the police have of young people.

Quite often young people respond to police officers in a way that is unrelated to the actual incident. Young people can be defensive when they meet officers and are unable to see the individual behind the uniform. Young people also believe that the police deliberately go out of their way to target them.

### FACT BOX

40% of young people that took part in an MPA youth survey said that they were not confident the police would be able to respond to their needs as young people.

## Age and race

Some young people feel that the police challenge or confront them simply because they are young people. As well as the age issue, some Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people stated that some police officers behaved in a racist manner.

However, others thought that young people need to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour and how they interact with police.

We learnt that Londoners might not be aware that the police are trying to be more representative of different races and cultures. We were told by police officers that many new police officers are Londoners, and that more BME Londoners are joining the police service. However, young people often do not notice these changes, maybe because young people don't see the police as part of their communities.

## Stop and search

**Stop and search is an important issue for young people.** We learnt that though some young people understand why stop and search is important in tackling crime, many are unhappy with how the police use it. We learned that by providing young people with clear information on stop and search, the resentment that young people have towards this practice could be tackled.

**But this is not enough.** Officers need to consider the way they speak to young people when carrying out a stop and search. They should be able to calm down even the most difficult situations if they respond with courtesy.

## Peer pressure: how young people's views influence other young people

There was a great deal of debate between young people about whether the police were good at interacting with young people. Quite often young people who spoke positively about the police were shouted at and put down by other young people.

The tribalism of young people can have a negative influence on their views of each other. A young person who stays in his or her own area ('endz') and whose friendships are with people from their 'endz' is unlikely to accept other viewpoints. The 'endz' issue can also encourage young people to have negative perceptions of each other.



THERE IS NO POINT IN SAYING THAT THE POLICE ARE RUBBISH, WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

YOUNG PERSON





## OTHER AGENCIES AND CRIME PREVENTION

Adults told us that crime prevention is not just the responsibility of the police and that other organisations need to support the police more effectively.

### What is needed?

Adults told us that while the police need to enforce the law they also need to be trusted and valued part of communities, and they can do this by speaking to and getting to know the communities in which they were based. They can also do this by building positive relationships with young people.

### Agencies failing to respond

Adults feel that the police responses to youth crime are often more effective than responses to youth crime by other agencies. They also told us that the police are often limited by what they can do because other agencies are not supporting young people at risk of becoming involved in crime.

For example, some adults feel that a few Children's Services are not supporting young people at risk, and that these young people are becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. Some adults even believe there is a link between the lack of a support a young at-risk person receives and youth crime.

### Lack of provision of youth facilities

Adults and young people feel that there has been a reduction in youth facilities and activities. There are fewer cinemas, bowling alleys, discos, snooker halls and youth clubs, which can mean that young people have to travel further to take part in expensive activities they can't really afford. While there are special activities aimed at particular groups of young people (for example projects for teenage parents), most young people feel there is nothing for them to do, and this, they believe, can lead to youth offending.

For youth activities to meet the needs of young people, we need:

- to look at current youth facilities and activities and work out what works well, and why it works well;
- to identify what projects are still needed;
- to include young people when making decisions about new youth facilities and activities.

THERE IS NO MONEY FOR US TO GO TO YOUTH CLUBS... THINGS ARE TOO EXPENSIVE AND THAT IS THE REASON WHY YOUNG PEOPLE ROB EACH OTHER.





## YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE MEDIA

Press portrayal of young people is often negative and can influence young people's behaviour.

The media rarely highlights young people's achievements and this can damage adult perceptions of young people.

### The impact of negative coverage on adults

Often adults have little direct contact with young people, so the portrayal of young people in the press is frequently the only view adults have of young Londoners.

The press often use negative terms for young people such as 'yob' and 'thug' and these have become popular terms used by many adults to describe all young people.

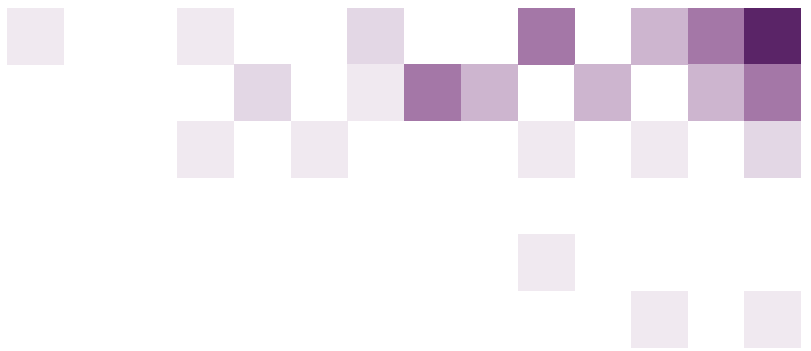
However the media can also be used to promote positive images of young people. For instance, Choice FM's 'Peace on the Streets' campaign raises awareness of the impact of being involved in gang culture and carrying weapons.

### FACT BOX

A study carried out by Ipsos MORI (2004) found that 71% of youth related local and national press stories over a one-week period were negative, with only 14% being positive.

THE PORTRAYAL OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA IS NEGATIVE. THEY ARE EITHER THUGS OR ASBO KIDS. THIS RESULTS IN SOME YOUNG PEOPLE THINKING, WELL WHAT'S THE POINT OF BEING GOOD, IF WE ARE ALL PORTRAYED AS BAD? THIS MAKES THEM ANGRY IF THEY ARE NOT LIKE THAT. BUT SOME YOUNG PEOPLE SIMPLY DON'T CARE AND LIVE UP TO IT.





# WHAT WE LEARNED: A NEW WAY FORWARD

Our conversations with young people and adults, helped us identify many ways to deal positively with youth crime.

While most of our advice relates to the police, some of our suggestions are aimed at helping other organisations working with young people. We believe that it is only by working together with other agencies that the police will be able to provide lasting solutions to youth crime.

The advice is based on the full MPA findings. For a copy of the full MPA report please contact the Oversight and Review Unit. Contact details can be found on page 13.

### Our advice to the police and other agencies working with young people:

- 1. Adults working in services and organisations that deal with children and young people's issues should **make sure they include children and young people when deciding how their services work.**
- 2. Safer Schools Officers and Safer Neighbourhoods Officers should interact regularly with young people. However, **all police officers should treat young people with courtesy and respect.**
- 3. **A visible police presence** at key times and locations for youth crime – near schools and on buses at the end of the school day, for example – is essential.
- 4. Police and other relevant agencies must **work together to improve the way young people report crime** and involve young people in designing reporting methods.
- 5. All organisations including the police **must make sure victims and witnesses needs are met.** This is important as evidence suggests that some young people who are victimised may become offenders.

6. Some young people are more likely to offend because of their personal or family circumstances. **Early support provided to these young people and their families can stop them becoming offenders at a later age.**

7. The development of new and existing youth activities in London should **include the participation of young people.**

8. Young people should be provided **with clear and simple information on police tactics** and operations taking place in their neighbourhood.

9. All agencies that provide services for young people should **strongly tackle myths about young people** and promote positive images of young people.

10. All agencies with a responsibility for the welfare of children and young people should ensure that they **work together, effectively sharing information** to protect young people from further harm or those who are at risk of getting involved in crime.

### Next steps

Recommendations for the police have been given to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to consider. In November 2008 the MPS will explain how they will take forward the recommendations. The MPA will keep an eye on progress made by the police and ensure that those Londoners – both young and old – who took part in our work are kept informed of any changes that have occurred.

There are a number of recommendations for other agencies. The MPA has contacted these agencies and asked them to consider the report and the recommendations that relate to their work. Recently the Government produced a Youth Crime Action Plan. This has similar ideas to the MPA report, which gives our recommendations added importance.



## GET CONNECTED

### Staying safe

If you have been a victim of crime or have been a witness to a crime and want to talk confidentially, contact Victim Support at 0845 30 30 900.

If you or someone you know is being bullied please contact ChildLine. ChildLine is a confidential service and can help you with any sort of problem you might have - big or small. Childline can be contacted on 0800 1111.

Further practical information on what to do about bullying can be found at [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org)

For further information on how to stay safe visit [www.met.police.uk/youngpeople](http://www.met.police.uk/youngpeople) Copies of the leaflet are available from the MPA. See contact details below.

Register your mobile phone with Immobilise at [www.immobilise.com/about.html](http://www.immobilise.com/about.html)

### Know your rights

To learn about your rights regarding stop and search visit [www.mpa.gov.uk/issues/stop-search/leaflet.htm](http://www.mpa.gov.uk/issues/stop-search/leaflet.htm) Copies of the 'Stop and search, know your rights' leaflet are available from the MPA.

### Reporting crime

There are many ways to report crimes. In emergency situations, you must call 999.

In non emergency situation when a police officer is not immediately required (for example graffiti, abandoned vehicles and minor anti social behavior) you can call 0300 123 1212.

Some non-emergency crimes can also be reported online at <https://online.met.police.uk/>

You can also visit your local police station or you can report anonymously through Crimestoppers at [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org) or on 0800 555 111. Details of your local police station can be found at [www.met.police.uk/local/](http://www.met.police.uk/local/)

### Play your part

Given the right opportunities, many young people are keen to be involved in activities that make their communities safer and more enjoyable places to live. The MPA and MPS have a number of opportunities for young people who are interested not only in making their communities safer, but who also want to have a say and make a difference.

#### Have your say

Every autumn the MPA asks Londoners to tell them what issues the police should focus on. Make sure you have your issues and concerns considered – visit [www.mpa.gov.uk](http://www.mpa.gov.uk) to take part in the annual consultation.

#### Volunteer police cadets

If you are aged 14-19 years, joining the police cadets is a good way of getting involved with the police. It's an opportunity to learn and develop new skills. To find out more contact [cadets@met.police.uk](mailto:cadets@met.police.uk)

#### Safer Neighbourhoods Teams

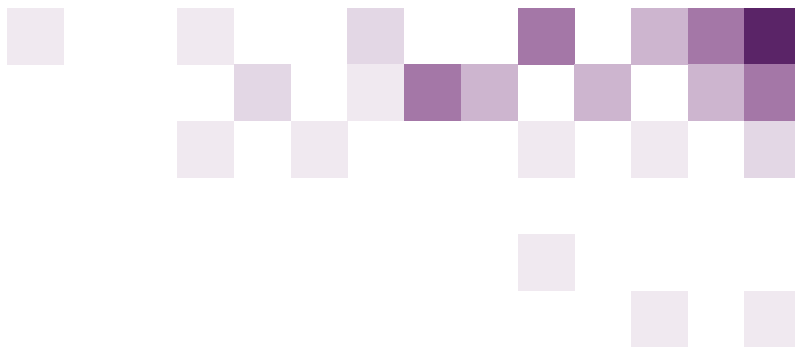
If you want to get involved in the work of your local Safer Neighbourhoods Team, visit [www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods/](http://www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods/)

#### Young Black Positive Advocates

Young Black Positive Advocates is a youth organisation run by young people, for young people. To find out how to become a member contact [chair@ybpa.com](mailto:chair@ybpa.com)

**If you do not have access to a computer and are interested in taking part in any of the activities above contact the MPA at 0207 202 0161.**





**How to contact us**

We welcome feedback  
and if you have any comments  
to make about this report please write to:

Oversight and Review Unit  
MPA  
10 Dean Farrar Street  
London  
SW1H 0NY

You can email us at: [review@mpa.gov.uk](mailto:review@mpa.gov.uk)

Tel: 0207 202 0161

For an accessible version of this report  
please contact the MPA at the address above.



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Metropolitan Police Authority  
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You can also e-mail us at: **[review@mpa.gov.uk](mailto:review@mpa.gov.uk)**

Tel: **020 7202 0202**  
Minicom: **020 7202 0173**  
Fax: **020 7202 0200**

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<b>Hindi</b>	<b>Punjabi</b>
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<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Turkish</b>

For a copy, please contact the MPA at the address above.

### **The Metropolitan Police Authority:**

- achieving real benefits for London
- making the police accountable to Londoners
- working in partnership to make London the safest major city in the world

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