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The logo for The Centre for Social Justice, featuring the text "THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE" in white, uppercase letters on a dark red rectangular background.

## **PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

# **Time to get tough on the root causes of gang violence, says CSJ**

***Agenda-setting conference to explore Britain's toxic gang culture takes place this week***

A failure to get to grips with the root causes of violence has allowed a gang culture to blight communities across the UK, a major conference will hear this week (Saturday, Jan 12 – see below for details).

MPs will be joined by leading figures from policing and the voluntary sector as well as youngsters and parents who have experienced gang culture first hand at a widely-anticipated event.

The conference, *Tackling Gang Culture*, comes after the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) published a report that said a Government strategy to remove gang leaders following the 2011 riots had been counter-productive by creating a power vacuum in which younger gang members grabbed power on a wave of violence.

It is hoped Saturday's event, being hosted by leading urban youth charity XLP and the CSJ think-tank, will help produce a clear strategy on how to tackle a gangs epidemic that has led to the deaths of scores of youngsters.

Speakers include former Government Minister David Lammy MP, Deputy Liberal Democrat leader Simon Hughes MP, Chief Superintendent John Sutherland and community cohesion campaigner Les Isaac OBE.

The event will cover a host of subjects – including: girl gangs, policing methods and potential solutions.

Patrick Regan, founder and Chief Executive of XLP, said:

*“Tackling Britain's Gang Culture will see leading figures come together and there is huge potential for this conference to significantly influence future policy.*

*“We cannot continue to haphazardly paper over the cracks – we need a tough and intelligent response that deals with the root issues of gangs, offers positive*

relationships and role-models and provides alternatives that lead to long-term, sustainable answers to gangs.

The widely-reported CSJ study, *Time to Wake Up*, looked at how gang crime had changed since the riots of 2011. The report – which accused politicians of being “asleep at the wheel” over gangs – said political commitment had been waning and that the Government and local authorities mistakenly assumed that by launching a national strategy it represented job done.

Christian Guy, Managing Director, said: “I don’t know how many children we need to bury before we genuinely start to get to grips with the root causes of Britain’s gangs epidemic. Tough on crime slogans are not enough and we need to start working with young people and communities to prevent youngsters from joining gangs in the first place.”

Mr Lammy became a leading voice on the need to tackle gangs following the riots, which started in his Tottenham constituency. In an address to Parliament he attributed part of the cause for the riots to, ‘a Grand Theft Auto culture that glamorises violence. A consumer culture fixated on the brands we wear, not who we are and what we achieve. A gang culture with warped notions of loyalty, respect and honour’.

Speaking before Saturday’s event, he said: “More than a year on from the riots, we face many of the same issues we did then: inequality, deep rooted poverty and unemployment. We must never stop questioning what can be done and how we can all work together to ensure this never happens again.

“That’s why debate and discussion are so important – that’s why the *Tackling Britain’s Gang Culture* conference is so necessary – to help people move forward with their responsibilities and the government to move forward with enforcing our basic rights.”

Gracia McGrath, the director of Chance UK, will take part in a panel discussion at the conference.

She said: “The reality of gangs passes many people by, they see it as the stuff of rappers and TV dramas. But for some of our kids, it is what they have to deal with daily. Many of the young people we meet are reluctant gangsters.

“This conference will challenge our stereotypes and delve deep into the complex pressures young people growing up in disadvantaged communities have to deal with on a daily basis.”

***Tackling Britain’s Gang Culture* will take place at the XLP Urban Training Centre, All Hallows-on-the-Wall, 83 London Wall, London, EC2M 5ND, on Saturday, January 12, 2013, from 9.30am.**

Journalists and photographers interested in attending the event should contact Chloe Stone on 0207 256 6240 or [chloe.stone@xlp.org.uk](mailto:chloe.stone@xlp.org.uk) to reserve a place.

## **Tackling Britain's Gang Culture: The Conference**

**9:30 – 10:00** Doors open, arrival and register

**10:00 – 11:00** Patrick Regan OBE and Ethan Bernard: *Introduction and Overview*

**11:00 – 11:20** Jennifer Blake: *A Girl's Perspective*

**11:20 – 11:40** **Break**

**11:40 – 12:10** Chief Superintendent John Sutherland: *A Policing Perspective*

**12:10 – 12:40** Discussion Groups: *Shared Experiences*

**12:40 – 1:40** **Lunch**

**1:40 – 2:00** Interviews: *A Parent's Perspective*  
*A Young Person's Perspective*

**2:00 – 2:15** CSJ: *A Policy Perspective*

**2:15 – 2:30** Rt. Hon. David Lammy MP: *What Needs to Happen Now?*

**2.30 – 2.50** **Break**

**2:50 – 3:50** Panel Discussion with: Jennifer Blake, Rev. Les Isaac OBE, Rt. Hon. David Lammy MP, Gracia McGrath OBE, Chief Superintendent John Sutherland , Simon Hughes MP – *How Do We Bring About Change?*

**3:50 – 4:00** Rev. Les Isaac OBE: *Closing Remarks*

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or Ross Reid of the Centre for Social Justice on 07780 707322.

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