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‘The Prime Minister is right to act on street gangs now – we are running out of time’, says CSJ

Gavin Poole, Executive Director of the CSJ, has issued the following comment in response to the Prime Minister’s statement to the House of Commons:

“As these riots make clear, we all pay the price for our broken society and street gang culture.

“Therefore, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) welcomes the Prime Minister’s announcement that the Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, its founder and patron, is to jointly lead a cross-government programme of action to deal with Britain’s violent street gang culture. During his time as CSJ Chairman, Iain Duncan Smith commissioned landmark work on British street gangs and the lives they destroy.

“As the Prime Minister’s statement makes clear, crime is always inexcusable but we have to recognise, too, that it has a context. Action on strengthening families, tackling educational failure, reforming welfare, ending drug and alcohol addiction is foundational to mending Britain’s broken society.

“And in relation to street gangs, the CSJ has led the debate through its 2009 report *Dying to Belong*. We urge the Government to make this paper the cornerstone of its new gang strategy.

“Our solutions, which have been informed by the best domestic and international action and experience, should be set in course over in the immediate, medium and long term. They will bring Britain back from the brink of rising gang crime, and they include:

- Adopting a clear understanding of street gangs and the young people who find their identity in them;
- Committed and visible leadership at the highest levels;
- Gang prevention zones in communities – to lead highly targeted preventative intervention;
- Full multi-agency collaboration and communication, to share key data on gangs and those in them;

- A new role for specialist anti-gang charities and organisations;
- And meaningful community engagement to build bridges between police, residents and young people.

“These proposals, and the many more which are contained in *Dying to Belong*, will lead to safer streets and begin the fight back against this growing crisis. They will also change the lives of the young people who are tragically tempted to participate in such devastating and destructive behaviour.

“The Government is right to act now. This disorder must be seen for the warning shot it is. We are running out of time.

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225 or 0203 008 8145.

To download a copy of the CSJ’s street gangs report *Dying to Belong* visit www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank established, by Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain.

In July 2007 the group published *Breakthrough Britain: Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown*. The paper presented over 190 policy proposals aimed at ending the growing social divide in Britain.

Subsequent reports have put forward proposals for reform of the police, prisons, social housing, the asylum system and family law. Other reports have dealt with street gangs and early intervention to help families with young children.

The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP stood down as Chairman of the Centre on his appointment as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in May 2010 and is now the Founder and Patron.