Breakthrough Britain

Dying to Belong

An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain

A Policy Report by the Gangs Working Group

Chaired by Simon Antrobus

February 2009

THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

About the Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice aims to put social justice at the heart of British politics.

Our policy development is rooted in the wisdom of those working to tackle Britain's deepest social problems and the experience of those whose lives have been affected by poverty. Our working groups are non-partisan, comprising prominent academics, practitioners and policy makers who have expertise in the relevant fields. We consult nationally and internationally, especially with charities and social enterprises, who are the the champions of the welfare society.

In addition to policy development, the CSJ has built an alliance of poverty fighting organisations that reverse social breakdown and transform communities.

We believe that the surest way the Government can reverse social breakdown and poverty is to enable such individuals, communities and voluntary groups to help themselves.

The CSJ was founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004, as the fulfilment of a promise made to Janice Dobbie, whose son had recently died from a drug overdose just after he was released from prison.

Chairman: Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP
Executive Director: Philippa Stroud

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This report represents the views of the Working Group as a whole and does not reflect at every point the individual opinion of each and every Working Group member.

Contents

	Preface by Iain Duncan Smith	9
	Chairman's Foreword	11
	Glossary	13
	Members of the Gangs Working Group	15
	Executive Summary	19
	Introduction	35
PART I:	State of the Nation	39
Chapter 1:	Identifying the subject - towards a standardised definition	39
	1.1 'Gangs' versus 'delinquent youth groups' – the discourse	40
	Defining the Gang	40
	Missing the point - the Delinquent Youth Group	41
	The role of perception	43
	Wannabe groups	43
	Living up to the name – a self-fulfilling prophecy?	44
	1.2 'Reluctant Gangsters'	45
	1.3 A complex concept - refining the definition	46
	1.4 The definition	48
	The street gang	49
Chapter 2:	The scale and nature of gang culture in Britain today	50
	2.1 Gang and gang membership	51
	Evidence from self reporting surveys	51
	Evidence from specific gang assessments	52
	London	53
	Glasgow	55
	Manchester	55
	Liverpool	56
	Birmingham	57
	Spreading past the core cities	57
	2.2 Criminal identity	58
	Wide ranging criminality	59
	The role of violence and the use of weapons	60
	Drugs	66

2.3 What impact does gang membership have on individual offending? 66
2.4 Is the situation getting worse? 67
The role of the media – spreading moral panic 67
Unreliable crime statistics 69
Gang and weapon violence on the up 71
Chapter 3: Profiling gang members 72
3.1 Age 72
3.2 Gender 73
3.3 Ethnicity 76
3.4 Education 78
Chapter 4: The emergence of the modern gang 80
4.1 The widening of the socio-economic divide 81
The global city 82
The changing nature of the labour market 83
Social housing – incubating social breakdown 84
4.2 The London context – the arrival of the 'Yardies' 85
4.3 Territorialism: from drugs to postcodes 86
4.4 Values – self-worth and the street code 88
4.5 The rise of the young soldiers 89
4.6 Glamorising the gangster life 91
Disadvantaged, disenfranchised and impressionable 92
Chapter 5: The alternative family and the 'alpha' male 94
5.1 The new family 94
Domestic violence – fear and violence as learnt behaviour 95
5.2 Living in the jungle 96
5.3 'Decent' versus 'street' 97
5.4 The 'Alpha' male – fatherlessness and masculinity 98
Chapter 6: Conclusion 101

PART II: The Myth of the Quick Fix 103
Chapter 1: Introduction 103
Chapter 2: Penal populism – deeds over needs 105
2.1 Missing the point with knife crime 105
2.2 The real impact of the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) 107
Chapter 3: Misunderstanding the problem and neglecting the solution 110

3.1 Sitting in ivory towers 110
3.2 Forgetting the lives inside 111
3.3 Restricting the third sector 112
Chapter 4: Failing to protect communities 115
4.1 Communities in fear 115
4.2 Policing without consent 116
Chapter 5: Failing to intervene early – the disconnect between statutory agencies 121
5.1 Slipping through the net 121
Chapter 6: Conclusion 125

PART III: Policy Recommendations 127
Chapter 1: Immediate action – enough is enough 128
1.1 Objectives 128
1.2 Learning from existing models 129
The Boston Gun Project and Operation Ceasefire, Boston, USA 129
Matrix Gun Crime Team, Merseyside Police, Merseyside, UK 134
Operation Staysafe, Merseyside Police and Liverpool City Council, Merseyside, UK 137
Violence Reduction Unit, Strathclyde Police, Strathclyde, UK 139
Hammersmith and Fulham Street Outreach Service, London, UK 142
1.3 Policy recommendations 143
Language, leadership and prioritisation 143
Defining and understanding the problem 145
Adopting a standardised definition 145
Understanding the problem – research and analysis 145
A Specialist Gang Unit (Gang Prevention Unit) 147
Independent consultants 147
Gang Prevention Zones 147
A specialist multi-agency response 148
Local authority responsibility – leading on the gang prevention strategy 149
The requirement of a serious case review and full public response 149
A new multi-agency model to tackle gangs 149
Independent Advisory Group (IAG) 151
Training 151

Effective deployment of resources 152
Cross-border collaboration 153
The model: a multi-pronged approach 153
Delivering a clear and direct message that the violence must stop and support is available 154
Enforcement 155
Identifying high impact players and establishing a nominals list 155
The 'call-in' 155
'Pulling levers' 160
Stop and search, knife arches and 'sweeps' 161
Putting communities first – regaining control of the streets 162
Intervention 167
Personalised intervention programmes 169
Hospital-based intervention 170
Mediation Plus 171
Resettlement 172
Drug and Alcohol Treatment 173
Early intervention for siblings of known gang members 173
Summarising the model 174
1.4 Conclusion and summary of Policy recommendations 175
Chapter 2: Building bridges between police and community 177
2.1 Objectives 177
2.2 Policy recommendations 178
Using the third sector to break down barriers between police and young people 178
Police training 178
Workshops 178
Regular positive police contact with young people 179
Police in schools 181
Safer Schools Partnerships 182
Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) 185
2.3 Conclusion and summary of policy recommendations 187
Chapter 3: Prevention – investing in the next generation 189
3.1 Objectives 189
3.2 Policy recommendations 190

Early intervention 190
Supporting and strengthening the family 190
Recognising the signs of potential gang involvement 192
Modelling positive behaviour 193
Mentoring 195
The cost of delay 198
Youth Provision and diversion 198
Reviewing and amending current youth provision 199
Outsourcing the delivery of youth programmes 199
Not just something to do – meaningful engagement of young people 202
The right person with the right skills 203
A long-term investment 204
Education 205
Engaging young people and raising aspirations 205
Tackling exclusion and truanting 208
Outsourcing the provision of alternative education 209
Delivery of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons by third sector organisations 209
'Nothing stops a bullet like a job' 210
Commissioning effective welfare to work agencies 211
Local authority and primary care trust provision of work experience 211
Making funds available for entrepreneurial young people 211
Community engagement and ownership 212
Community capacity building 213
Empowering and supporting community action 214
3.3 Conclusion and summary of policy recommendations 215

Appendix 1: List of figures 218
Appendix 2: List of case studies 219

Bibliography 220
Special Thanks 225

Preface

Iain Duncan Smith

I established the Centre for Social Justice to find new and effective approaches to tackling poverty and social exclusion, to champion the cause of our most disadvantaged communities and the generations left behind without aspiration or hope. *Breakthrough Britain* is a blueprint for doing just that. Identifying five key pathways to poverty – family breakdown, economic dependency and worklessness, educational failure, addiction and personal indebtedness – and highlighting the fundamental role played by the third sector in transforming lives, the report makes over 190 policy recommendations to reverse social breakdown.

I commissioned this report on street gangs because I had become concerned about the chaotic nature of the approach to what was often glibly referred to as gang violence. I and others at the CSJ felt that we needed to better understand what was really happening on our streets, otherwise we as a society stood in danger of losing yet another generation as they plunged through violence and criminality to hopelessness and despair. Britain's gangs are the product of these pathways and are found in our *most* deprived and marginalised communities. They are most commonly found in areas of high family breakdown, addiction, unemployment and worklessness. The modern gang is perhaps the best illustration of how broken Britain's society is.

The rise in gang affiliation and violence over the past few years shows a need for immediate, effective action. I have been shocked at the lack of clarity around the problem. Notwithstanding the absence of a universally applied definition of street gangs, various official bodies have acted to deal with the problem, whilst hamstrung by a paucity of data. It is unthinkable that a full and proper study of such a devastating problem has not been undertaken prior to setting policy.

Whilst I am embarrassed by the inadequacy of central and local government responses, I am encouraged by the work being undertaken in some of our most gang-impacted cities. The Violence Reduction Unit in Strathclyde and the Matrix Gun Crime Team in Merseyside are two examples of effective police-led initiatives and both have learnt from the highly successful model devised by the Boston Gun Project in America, one of the projects at home and abroad which the team visited during the making of this report. In Boston, Operation Ceasefire led to a 63 per cent reduction in youth homicides per month: I believe that a similar model could be equally effective in Britain.

I am also continuously inspired by the work of grassroots charities, working daily to tackle our most deep-rooted social problems. Organisations such as Eastside Young Leaders Academy, Chance UK, Young Disciples and BoyztoMEN are already providing the support and opportunities that give children and young people an alternative route to gang culture. We must resource and champion such organisations.

It is imperative that as a society we act now to stem the tide of gang culture and violence. Young people should not be dying on the streets of our great cities. This report and the recommendations contained within it offer hope to those communities devastated by gang violence. The policies cannot be implemented soon enough. Now is the time to act.

Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith, MP
Chairman, Centre for Social Justice

Chairman's Foreword

This report is an independent overview of the current landscape of gangs and gang culture in Britain today.

It provides a clear unifying definition of a gang and distinguishes it from the everyday activity of young people on the street. It also recognises that gangs are not a homogenous group: they are young people, young people who feel marginalised and disenfranchised in their communities. Their sense of belonging and being part of a family is on the street and in their gang.

There has been far too little action at all levels to tackle the situation we are in. Something needs to be done now to support these young people and this report makes the case for urgent steps to be taken to stop them killing each other on the streets. However, a key aspect of this action is the recognition that we must commit ourselves and gain commitment from our politicians at national and local level to support and invest in our communities over a much longer period of time if we are truly going to enable young people to make real choices in their lives.

This report acknowledges that investment in young people and the communities in which they live is the foundation of any caring society. During every stage of the inquiry we were constantly reminded by those who gave evidence that more has to be done to enable young people to use their leisure time productively. There is not enough of this type of support available, particularly for those young people who need it most.

With regard to a direct response to the pull of the street and the gang, we were made acutely aware that there needs to be more accountability at every level. There is a need for more rigorous data collection by central government and local authorities and intervention and collaboration across local authorities and local agencies is key. In addition, a more integrated, community-focused enforcement approach at a local level is critical to giving young people alternatives to the street and the gang. But leadership is without doubt the most important element of this, at central and local government level, and in the police. Without underpinning action on these issues, with strong community-based investment, we will do little to change young people's lives for good.

I would like to extend my thanks to the inquiry team who have contributed so much to the completion of this report. Their commitment, knowledge and expertise has enabled us to produce a piece of work which offers young people

hope for a better future. I am in their debt and inspired by their commitment to children and young people.

Simon Antrobus
Chairman of the Gangs Working Group

Glossary

Abbreviations

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
BCS	British Crime Survey
BCU	Basic Command Unit/Borough Command Unit (main opperating unit for police forces)
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BPD	Boston Police Department
GPZ	Gang Prevention Zone
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
OCJS	Offending, Crime and Justice Survey
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquecy Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SSP	Safer Schools Partnership
TGAP	Tackling Gangs Action Programme
TKAP	Tackling Knives Action Programme
TMDS	The Male Development Service (BoyztoMEN) (youth project)
VPC	Voluntary Police Cadets
WMMTS	West Midlands Mediation and Transformation Service
WMP	West Midlands Police
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Terms

Beef	Rivalry/feud
Bling	Gangster style, usually denoted by flashy, ostentatious jewellery
Crew	Gang
Elder	Gang leader
Endz	Area /territory

Face	Gang leader
Gangsta/ Gangster/ Gangbanger	Gang member
Rep	Reputation
Shotter	Street level drug dealer
Soldier	Street level gang member
Tiny	Very young gang member
Wannabe	Person aspiring to be a gang member
Younger	Mid-/ low-level gang member

Members of the Gangs Working Group

Simon Antrobus (Chairman)
Simon Antrobus has over 20 years experience in the voluntary and community sector. He has held senior positions in a number of national voluntary organisations, including Scope, the Parkinson's Disease Society and currently as Chief Executive of Clubs for Young People. Simon has served as acting Chairman of the National Council of Voluntary Youth Services and is currently its Vice-Chairman.

Charlotte Pickles (Author)
Charlie is the Senior Policy Advisor at the Centre for Social Justice and author of this report. Charlie read Modern History at the University of Oxford before joining the University's Admission's Office as an Access Co-ordinator. As Access Co-ordinator she worked with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to raise educational attainment and aspirations, running workshops, summer schools and conferences. Charlie also designed the University's first programme working with children in care. Charlie previously worked as Senior Researcher on the Economic Dependency volume of Breakthrough Britain.

Stephen Brooks
Stephen is National Network Development Manager for The National Black Boys Can Association. He works with external agencies to develop diverse intervention strategies to raise academic and social aspirations of black boys. He has worked with young people for over twenty years and has initiated several personal development programmes including accredited mentoring, social enterprise development, and rites of passage programmes for young men. He is a board member of several national and regional organisations and is committed to working to effect positive change especially for the most disadvantaged people.

Ginny Lunn

Ginny started her career as a teacher in Leeds then moved to Dublin to be involved in 'Youth Reach', a new initiative for young people excluded from school. There she developed new programmes and qualifications for young people to re-engage, motivate and develop their skills, including European youth leadership and peer education programmes. She joined the Prince's Trust in 1999 initially as Project Manager for 'Breaking Barriers' and went on to manage and develop programmes before being appointed Director of Policy and Development in 2007.

Gracia McGrath

Gracia McGrath has worked in third sector for more than 20 years and has been the Chief Executive of Chance UK for the last 7 years. Chance UK is an award winning early intervention mentoring programme. The programme works with 5-11 year olds who are identified as those most likely to go on to criminal, offending and anti-social behaviour later in life.

Roger Reid

Roger is the National Project Manager for Ascension Trust which is responsible for Street Pastor Initiatives in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. Roger's experience incorporates employment in both the private and public sector and includes eight years experience as a social worker during which time he gained a BA in Psycho-Social Studies. Roger has set up a mentoring/training programme which providines mentoring, counselling and after-care services in prisons and for ex-offenders as well as socially-excluded youngster in local schools.

Patrick Regan

Patrick is the founder and Chief Executive of XLP, a charity that has been working with young people and communities in inner city London for the past 12 years. The rewards and challenges of urban youth work have led Patrick to do a significant amount of research into youth justice, working cross culturally and communicating positive lifestyle choices. XLP is a grassroots organisation that continues to build relationships with young people in the midst of their situations on a daily basis.

Andy Smith

Andy is the founder and Chief Executive of Regenerate, a Charity based on the Alton estate in Roehampton. Andy lives on the estate and has initiated many projects working with hard to reach youth, including drop in centres, mentoring schemes, mobile youth centres, sports and music projects and supporting and facilitating young people from London estates in setting up projects in Africa.

Chris Stanley

Chris is the former Head of Nacro's Policy and Research Division and has responsibility for the Youth Crime Section, Mental Health Unit, Race Unit, Resettlement team and Nacro Cymru's Youth Offending Unit. Chris worked for Nacro for eighteen years and has written extensively on youth justice. He was also a member of the Audit Commission's Youth Justice Study Advisory Group which produced the report 'Youth Justice 2004 – A Review of the reformed Youth Justice System'. Prior to working for Nacro, Chris worked as a co-ordinator for a number of inter-agency alternatives to custody schemes, one of the first initiatives of this type.

Malcolm Stevens

Malcolm, until 1998, was the Government's professional adviser responsible for youth justice policy, children in custody and children detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure. From 1998 until 2005 he was the Director and Chief Executive of various services for children and in youth justice. He is the Director of JusticeCare Solutions and independent adviser/consultant to providers of healthcare, youth justice and children's services. Malcolm has authored various reports including an independent inquiry into the gang-related murder of a 15 year old boy in London.

Tracie Trimmer-Platman

Tracie has 25 years experience with young people, providers and practitioners. She is currently Senior Lecturer in Youth and Community Studies at the University of East London. Tracie has worked in both the voluntary and statutory sector developing specialism in crime diversion, therapeutic interventions, mental health and practitioner training. She has a sound background in developmental youth work.

Dr Howard Williamson, CBE

Howard is Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of Glamorgan and has been a practising youth worker for many years. He has worked on a range of 'youth issues' such as learning, justice, substance misuse, exclusion and citizenship at European and national levels. He currently co-ordinates the Council of Europe's international reviews of national youth policies. He has sat on a range of governmental committees and was a member of the Youth Justice Board between 2001 and 2008. He is a Trustee of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Professor John Pitts (Consultant)

John is Vauxhall Professor of Socio-Legal Studies and Director of the Institute for Applied Social Research at the University of Bedfordshire. He has previously worked as a street and club-based youth worker in London, a youth justice development officer, a group worker in a Young Offender Institution, and a trainer of workers in youth justice and residential social work. He has also acted as a consultant on youth justice and social work in the UK, mainland Europe, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. John has also undertaken a number of studies of gangs in the UK.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Over the past decade British society has seen an increase in gang culture and its associated violence. In addition, the composition and nature of gang culture has shifted: gang members are getting younger, geographical territory is transcending drug territory and violence is increasingly chaotic.

The general increase in gang-related deaths of young people and in particular a number of high-profile murders – for example those of 15 year-old Billy Cox who was shot dead in his own home in 2007 and 11 year-old Rhys Jones shot in the neck as he walked home from football practice in Liverpool in 2007 – have shocked society. Media coverage has, at times, been suggestive of an epidemic in gang-related youth violence.

Gangs are most commonly found in areas of high deprivation, crime and family breakdown

This report analyses the true nature and scale of gang culture in Britain; who is involved and what they are involved in; how Britain has reached this point; and what society can do to tackle it.

THE NATURE AND SCALE OF GANG CULTURE IN BRITAIN (PART I, SECTION 2)

Over the past decade the failure of national and local government to act decisively has allowed gangs to become entrenched in some of our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

- Up to 6% of 10-19 year olds self-report belonging to a gang[1]
- Police in London and Strathclyde have each identified 171 and 170 gangs respectively[2]
- Between 600 and 700 young people are estimated to be directly gang-involved in the London Borough of Waltham Forest alone, with an additional 8,100 people affected by gangs[3]

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1 C. Sharp, J. Aldridge, and J. Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey* (Home Office, 2006), p.39

2 London: *Lambeth boasts 25% of street gangs* (BBC News, 13th February 20098); Strathclyde: Information provided by Strathclyde's Violence Reduction Unit on a Working Group visit to Glasgow

3 J. Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*, 2007, Chapter 3

- In both Manchester and Liverpool around 60% of shootings are gang-related[4]
- At least half of the 27 murders of young people perpetrated by young people in London in 2007 were gang-related[5]
- In the past 5 years there has been an 89% increase in the number of under-16s admitted to hospital with serious stab wounds, and a 75% increase amongst older teenagers[6]
- The percentage of school children reporting having carried a knife increased by more than 50% between 2002 and 2005[7]

Confused and unreliable – a lack of knowledge and understanding

Although a number of localised studies have been by conducted by police forces and academics,[8] in addition to the Home Office's analysis of four British cities in their Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP), the prevalence of gangs, their membership and the extent of their criminal activity – including violence – is largely unknown.

Even more worrying are the contradictions present in the various studies. John Pitts' reports on the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Lambeth, for example, found 50-60 per cent more gangs than the Metropolitan Police (MPS). The Home Office's TGAP appear, however, to have identified fewer gangs than the MPS. The MPS found 171 gangs operating in London and the Home Office estimate that there are 356 gang members in the Capital. This would mean around two people per gang, which would not, by the Home Office's own definition, constitute a gang.

This situation is unacceptable, but perhaps not surprising given the disorganised and piecemeal approach to analysing gang culture and its associated activities in Britain.

DEFINING THE GANG (PART I, SECTION 1)

Prior to creating any plan to counter gang activity, first there must be a clear understanding of what constitutes a gang. Despite the Home Office establishing a definition in 2004,[9] this has not been universally adopted by

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4 Liverpool: Superintendent Richardson, Merseyside Police, informed the Working Group that around 60 per cent of firearms discharges are gang-related; Manchester: K. Bullock and N. Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a Crime Reduction Strategy," *Home Office Crime Reduction Series Paper* 13 (2002), p.33

5 *MPA Youth Scrutiny* (Metropolitan Police Authority, May 29, 2008), pp.54-5

6 *Cherie Blair: 'I fear for my children'* (The Independent, 2nd July 2008)

7 Data comes from the Youth Justice Board's Youth Surveys, conducted by MORI, and school children were asked if they had carried a knife in the past 12 months; Chris Eades et al., *'Knife Crime', A review of evidence and policy, second edition*, Whose Justice? (The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, December 2007), p.12, Figure 1

8 For example Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*; Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*, The Deliberations of Lambeth Executive Commission on Children, Young People and Violent Crime, November 2007; and Judith Aldridge, Juanjo Medina, and Robert Ralphs, *Youth Gangs in an English City*, Research Report (University of Manchester)

9 The Home Office refers to Delinquent Youth Groups rather than Gangs; Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, pp.1-2

those involved in tackling gangs. It is difficult, if not impossible, to produce a *national assessment* of gang membership and activity if police forces and agencies working with at risk young people have varying perceptions of what constitutes a gang. As a result, our understanding of the true nature and scale of gang culture in Britain is, at best, limited.

The Working Group recognises that the first step to tackling a problem must be to accurately define it. After assessing all of the various definitions used in Britain and taking into account those used in America, the Working Group has devised a definition to be applied universally. It is this definition that has been used throughout the report:

Tackling gangs has too often been left to police. A multi-agency approach is needed

> *A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.*

POOR DATA AND ANALYSIS (PART I, SECTION 2.4.2)

Further hampering our understanding of gang activity in Britain is the paucity of accurate and reliable data on gang-related crime and violence. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. There is no specific requirement for police to record group involvement in a crime and given the lack of standardised definition even were they to, the information would not necessarily be helpful: the majority of youth offending is committed in groups[10]
2. A significant proportion of gang-related crime and violence is not reported to the police. This is evidenced by the disparity between police recorded assaults and the number of people attending A&E departments for assaults with a sharp object[11]
3. It was only in May 2008 that the Home Office announced that under-16s will be included in the British Crime Survey and a significant number of gang-involved young people will fall into this category

BLURRING THE LINE BETWEEN GANGS AND KNIFE CRIME

Indicative of this confusion is the current view of knife crime. Despite the problems with assessing the prevalence of *gang-related* crime and violence, knife crime and gang culture are too often seen as mutually inclusive. Gang members undoubtedly carry and use knives, but these are by no means

10 *Groups, Gangs and Weapons* (Youth Justice Board, 2007)

11 Peter Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence* (Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, June 2008), p.21, Fig.7

synonymous. Knife carrying appears largely to be motivated by fear and not a desire to defend territory or reputation:

- 85% of young people who report carrying a knife claim to have done so for protection and just 4% have used it to threaten someone, 1% to injure someone[12]

Young people at youth charities told the Working Group that family breakdown and drug addiction were key drivers of gang involvement (photo of XLP)

A failure to separate the issues of knife *carrying* and knife *use* further confuses any analysis of gang culture in Britain and hinders effective policy-making. This is, at least in part, why the Government's approach to knife crime is proving ineffective. Despite heralding early success,[13] police data shows that between July and September 2008 murders and other homicides involving knives increased by 10 per cent and knife robberies increased by almost 20 per cent.[14] Given that the Government's flagship Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) was launched in June 2008 this data clearly raises questions about the programme's effectiveness.[15] Programmmes which fail to tackle the *drivers* behind knife crime – both carrying and use – will only ever have limited success. The same is true for tackling gangs.

Profiling the gang

Although patchy, the limited quantitative and qualitative data available in Britain – coupled with evidence from American studies – does provide insight into who is involved, what they are involved in and why they are involved.

Academic research and anecdotal evidence reveals a number of characteristics and experiences that appear common amongst gang members, many of which are the risk factors associated with offending in general. These include a variety of familial, environmental and personal risk factors.

THE GANG MEMBER

Age (Part I, Section 3.1)

The 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) found gang members throughout the survey's age range of 10-19.[16] MPS research found gang members were typically aged between 12 and 25 and this appears similar in Manchester.[17]

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12 Stephen Roe and Jane Ashe, *Young People and Crime: findings from the 2006 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin (Home Office, July 2008), p.14

13 *Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Fact Sheet* (Home Office, December 2008)

14 *Knife-point robberies, murders with knives and burglaries increase, crime figures show* (The Telegraph, 22nd January 2009)

15 *Knife-point robberies, murders with knives and burglaries increase, crime figures show* (The Telegraph, 22nd January 2009)

16 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.4

17 "Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester", Dennis Mares, in M.W. Klein et al., *The Eurogang Paradox: Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the U.S. and Europe*, 1st ed. (Springer, 2000), p.160

Witnesses speaking to the Working Group in Liverpool and Glasgow also confirmed this as the general age range.

Worryingly, the Working Group was told by senior police officers and practitioners that gang members are getting younger and this appears evidenced in the declining age of gun crime offenders:[18] the rise of the young soldiers.

Gender (Part I, Section 3.2)

Gang membership is largely a male preserve: 98 per cent of gang members identified by TGAP were male.[19] Girls do, however, play a number of ancillary roles in gangs:

- As foot soldiers, setting up rival gangs
- As carriers, holding and hiding weapons and drugs
- As mother figures
- And most commonly as girlfriends or to perform sexual acts. They are often passed around gang members and rape is not uncommon

These roles have a devastating impact on girls and young women in gang-impacted communities, further reducing already very low self-esteem and worth.

In addition, police data shows a significant increase in female street violence over the past few years, though this is not always gang-related.

Ethnicity (Part I, Section 5.3)

Overall, the ethnicity of gang members tends to reflect the ethnicity of the population living in that area. Hence gang members in Glasgow and Liverpool are predominantly White, whereas gang members in Manchester and London are predominantly Black. The higher proportion of Black gang members overall reflects the disproportionate presence of Black communities in deprived inner city neighbourhoods.

Educational experience (Part I, Section 5.4)

The majority of gang members either self-excluded (truanted) or were officially excluded from school.[20] This is perhaps unsurprising given that gangs are street-based and young people not in school are much more likely to be spending large amounts of time unsupervised on the streets. In addition, young people with poor, if any, qualifications are unlikely to gain meaningful employment and thence activities such as drug dealing may appear an attractive alternative.

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18 *The experience of gun crime in London* (Victim Support London, 2006)

19 Paul Dawson, *Monitoring data from the Tackling Gangs Action Programme* (Home Office, May 2008), p.4, http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/testbed/violentstreet011a.pdf.

20 See for example Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.26; Aldridge, Medina, and Ralphs, *Youth Gangs in an English City*; and John Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*, The Deliberations of Lambeth Executive Commission on Children, Young People and Violent Crime, November 2007, Unpublished, Chapter 2

GANG-RELATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Wide ranging criminality and the impact of gang membership on offending (Part I, Sections 2.2.1 and 2.3)

Research shows that gang members tend to be engaged in a wide range of criminal activities: drug dealing to robbery, assault to rape.[21] They are also prolific in their offending. Gang members identified by TGAP averaged 11 convictions[22] and Bullock and Tilley's research found that South Manchester gang members averaged 12 arrests.[23] The OCJS found that the six per cent of people self-reporting as gang members were responsible for over a fifth of all core offences and 40 per cent of all burglaries.[24]

Furthermore, gang membership itself has a direct impact on an individual's offending, over and above the impact of affiliating with delinquent peers. The OCJS found that 63 per cent of gang members admitted committing an offence in the previous 12 months compared to 43 per cent of non-members with delinquent friends.[25] Gang membership was also found to increase offending behaviour in a number of U.S. studies.[26]

Drugs (Part I, Section 2.2.3)

The street-level drugs market is intricately linked to gangs. Pitts estimates that an Elder's (gang leader's) drug dealing income in the London Borough of Waltham Forest is in the region of £130,000 per annum and a lowly foot soldier's is around £26,000.[27] It is well documented that a number of gangs controlled the drugs market in Manchester.[28] Numerous witnesses to this inquiry told the Working Group that drug dealing was often seen by gang-involved young people as the only viable way of making money.

In addition, the OCJS found that three times the proportion of gang members took drugs in the previous 12 months compared to non-members.[29] Witnesses highlighted in particular the use of skunk amongst gang members and the role this is playing in the increasingly chaotic nature of gang violence. The Centre for Social Justice's Addiction report in Breakthrough Britain highlighted the impact of these very strong forms of Cannabis, in particular noting their potential to induce psychosis and paranoia. The use of drugs such as Skunk will reinforce the already paranoiac culture of gangs.

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21 See for example "Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester", Dennis Mares in Klein et al., *The Eurogang Paradox*, pp.155-6; Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*

22 Dawson, *Monitoring data from the Tackling Gangs Action Programme*, p.4

23 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.26

24 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.12

25 Ibid., p.vii

26 James C. Howell, *Youth Gangs*, OJJDP Fact Sheet (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, December 1997)

27 See for example Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 4

28 See for example Peter Walsh, *Gang War: The Inside Story of the Manchester Gangs*, New Ed. (Milo Books, 2005)

29 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.8

The role of violence (Part I, Section 2.2.2)

Respect is crucial amongst gang members and to be feared is to be respected. Violence, therefore, is a form of street currency. Violence is also self-perpetuating as to save face – and therefore maintain a reputation – a gang member must retaliate.

This is central to explaining gang violence in its present form. Whereas historically gang violence would have been more directly linked to drug turf and the enforcement of debts (see section 2), now violence is commonly triggered in one of two ways:

The Working Group visited Los Angeles to learn about the city's Gang Reduction and Youth Development programme. This mural in one of LA's most gang-impacted neighbourhoods has the names of murdered gang members along the top

- *A single, often minor, act of disrespect*: for example someone looking at a gang member in the 'wrong' way. To maintain his reputation the gang member must respond, normally through violence[30]
- *Territorial conflict*: for example someone from a rival postcode entering a gang's territory. This is seen as an affront to the gang's power and reputation, and hence to reinforce this the 'trespasser' must be punished[31]

Weapon use is also high amongst gang members. The NEW-ADAM programme found that gang members were between two and three times more likely to have been involved with weapons in general – and guns in particular – than non-member offenders.[32] OCJS findings support this: over three times the proportion of gang members had carried a knife in the previous 12 months compared to non-members.[33]

THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'MODERN GANG' (PART I, SECTION 4)

Gangs are not new to Britain, but the nature and scale of current gang culture is fundamentally different from that of previous generations. The modern gang is the product of the changing economic and social landscape of British society over the past few decades.

The widening of the socio-economic divide, the global city and the changing nature of the labour market

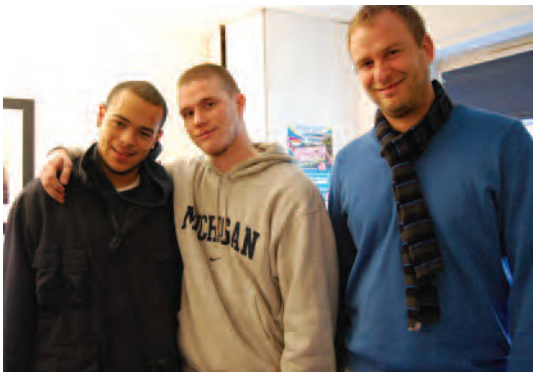
The past few decades have seen an increasing socio-economic divide between the haves and the have-nots which, coupled with an environment of intense and overt consumerism, is often explicit in the global city where poverty and

30 See for example, *Mark Dinnegan, 14, murdered over 'dirty look'*, The Telegraph, 30th May 2008; *Boy 'stabbed to death over a dirty look'*, The Mail, 30th May 2008; and *Teenager stabbed for 'dirty look' at gang member*, The Times, 29th December 2007

31 See for example, *Boy,16, shot dead in gun battle*, The Guardian, 19th October 2008; Postcode *gang killed brave Paul*, Stratford and Newham Express, 16th April 2008; and *London's gang wars claim the first teenage victim of 2008*, Evening Standard, 2nd January 2008

32 T. Bennett and K. Holloway, "Gang Membership, Drugs and Crime in the UK," *British Journal of Criminology* 44, no. 3 (2004): p.317

33 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.8



Leon and Warren talked to the Working Group about growing up on a gang-impacted South West London estate. Andy Smith runs a charity on the estate to support young people to exit gang life

wealth sit side-by-side. The decline of industry and the rise of the knowledge economy have been instrumental in this: significant parts of the working class have become the workless class and their income has plummeted accordingly.

Particularly hard hit were young people, and in particular young men. Between 1984 and 1997 employment amongst 16-24 year olds decreased by almost 40 per cent and by winter 2006/07 youth unemployment had increased by a further 18,000 on its 1997 level.[34] Work not only provides regular income, but also provides a sense of purpose, identity and belonging. It is no coincidence the highest prevalence of gangs is found in areas with the highest levels of general worklessness and youth unemployment: the gang as an alternative to mainstream employment, offering the same advantages

Social housing – incubating social breakdown

In addition to a changing labour market came a shift in the function of social housing: no longer were council estates home to working, stable families and long-term residents. The introduction in the 1980s of *right-to-buy* coupled with a major reduction in new building and a shift in allocations policy has meant that social housing is now home to some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and families.

The majority of social housing households are now headed by young, workless lone parents and single men and women, often with incomes below the poverty line.[35] Gangs are, unsurprisingly, most commonly found in these highly deprived areas.

Self-worth, the street code and the rise of territorialism

These factors together have created, in certain communities, a generation of disenfranchised young people. Alienated from mainstream society these young people have created their own, alternative, society – the gang – and they live by the gang's rules: the 'code of the street'.[36]

As gangs have become more common over the past decade, territory has become increasingly important. For many gangs, defending geographical territory – often a postcode – has become part of their raison d'être, an integral part of their identity. This, together with the declining age of gang members, has contributed to the increasingly chaotic nature of gang violence.

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34 Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*

35 For an in-depth discussion of social housing see Kate Davies, *Housing Poverty: from social breakdown to social mobility* (The Centre for Social Justice, November 2008)

36 Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*, 1st ed. (W. W. Norton & Company, 1999)

THE ALTERNATIVE FAMILY AND THE 'ALPHA MALE' (PART I, SECTION 5)

Alongside the socio-economic changes detailed above has been the breakdown of the family unit. Experience of family breakdown and in particular fatherlessness is a key driver of gang-involvement: gangs are most commonly found in areas with a high proportion of lone parent families. *The gang, for a significant number of young people growing up in our most deprived communities, has become a substitute family with the gang leader as the 'father'.* The lack of positive male role models has meant that the masculinity being modelled to gang-involved young men is that of a hyper-alpha male.

In addition, many gang members have experienced:

1. Domestic violence, either as witness or victim
2. Poor parenting, particularly a lack of parental supervision

Their emotional, psychological and physical development may, therefore, have been impaired in childhood.

Government has failed to stem the tide of gangs (Part II)

The lack of leadership shown by central and local government has meant that Britain has failed to understand and act on the growing problem of street gangs. In many areas, the task of tackling gangs has been seen as almost solely the responsibility of the police by politicians who have made enforcement their main focus and taken an increasingly punitive stance.

It has taken community and media outcry for the Government to produce a strategy for tackling gangs. Despite an obviously increasing problem with gang activity and violence over the past decade, the Government was defining its approach to the issue as recently as May 2008.

Even with the publication of the Government's guide to *Tackling Gangs*, there remain a number of key issues which continue to undermine any attempt to tackle Britain's gang culture. These include:

- Poor leadership and guidance at the most senior levels in central and local government and poor co-ordination between agencies
- Too great a focus on penal populism – responding to and looking for headlines – at the expense of addressing the drivers of gangs and violence
- A failure to take a long-term approach to the problem with the implementation of temporary short-term programmes
- A failure to communicate with gang-impacted communities over a sustained period of time
- A focus on physical regeneration of infrastructure without transforming the lives inside the buildings
- Poor resourcing and support of grassroots charities tackling the drivers and symptoms of gang culture

Furthermore, witnesses to this inquiry have repeatedly cited concerns regarding the failure of some local authorities to recognise the problem of gangs as part of their statutory safeguarding children duties: gang members are often known to numerous statutory agencies whose failure to communicate and share data can have devastating, even fatal, consequences.

Policy Recommendations (Part III)

The Working Group believes that immediate action implementing short-, medium- and long-term strategies *can* reverse the rising trend of gang culture in Britain. National and international models show that with political will, sustained commitment and a targeted, truly multi-agency approach, gangs can be successfully tackled: all children and young people can be engaged in mainstream society and access mainstream opportunities.

This report sets out a blueprint for tackling Britain's growing gang problem. As gangs are highly localised the exact details of the policies detailed below should be worked out at a local level. The recommendations are divided into three sections: (1) the immediate response, (2) medium-term proposals for building trust and positive relations between the police and young people and (3) a long-term approach to prevent future generations of young people from becoming gang-involved.

The Working Group stresses that *success rests on the implementation of the full range of policies* outlined below: this is not a pick and mix. Implementing the short-term recommendations without the long-term proposals, or the enforcement tactics without the intervention and prevention models will lead, at best, to limited success.

THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Immediate action is needed to disrupt gangs and prevent violence. The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire had impressive results tackling gangs and violence in the U.S. city – a 63 per cent decrease in youth homicides per month – and this model should inform the UK's response to gangs. A number of UK initiatives – including Merseyside's Matrix Gun Crime Team and Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit – have implemented the Boston model with very promising early results. (See Part III, Section 1.2 for case studies)

The key elements for a successful gang prevention initiative include:

- A thorough understanding of the local problem and what is driving it
- Committed and visible leadership at the highest levels
- Full multi-agency collaboration and communication (data sharing)
- A multi-pronged approach combining enforcement, intervention and prevention
- An honest and targeted approach
- Meaningful community engagement

It is these principles which have formed the basis of our proposals for a gang prevention model.

Recommendations:

Identifying, understanding and prioritising the problem

1. Senior officials – including the Mayor or Leader of the Council and Chief Constable – should publicly commit themselves to tackling gangs as a priority – this is particularly important for elected officials such as Mayors and Council leaders
2. A standardised definition of a gang should be adopted universally
3. A specialist Gang Prevention Unit should be established within the Cabinet Office (central government), staffed by specialists and academics from the field of gangs and disenfranchised young people. The Unit should make an initial analysis of which local authorities are gang-impacted and evaluate current initiatives tackling gangs
4. Gang Prevention Unit specialists should act as Independent Consultants to those local authorities identified as being gang-impacted and work with the local authorities to analyse the local problem and need
5. Gang Prevention Zones – small geographic areas with a significant gang problem – should be established and a full needs assessment conducted

Devising and implementing the model

1. Local authorities should publicly take the lead on gang prevention and be held accountable for doing so. In the event of a gang-related death of a young person a Serious Case Review should be undertaken and a full public response made by the local authority and any other relevant agencies
2. A new multi-agency model should be established composed of Strategic, Tactical and Operational Teams plus an Independent Advisory Group. Each team should have representatives from *all* agencies working with or coming into contact with at risk young people in Gang Prevention Zones
3. Appropriate, specialist training – devised by the Gang Prevention Unit – should be provided to all personnel working in Gang Prevention Zones
4. Local authorities should conduct an audit of current expenditure to ensure that investment is needs-led. This is likely to mean a re-targeting of some funds to Gang Prevention Zones. Additional funding should be made available by central government for use in Gang Prevention Zones
5. A multi-pronged approach should be implemented combining enforcement tactics with intervention and prevention programmes and a clear message that the violence must stop should be delivered to gang members before enforcement begins

6. Enforcement tactics:
    a. High impact players should be identified and, using specified criteria, placed on a nominals list.[37] Identification as a nominal should then trigger targeted, sustained attention
    b. 'Call-ins'- where key gang members from rival gangs are brought together to listen to a range of speakers – should be conducted before an enforcement operation is begun, and subsequently when necessary
    c. All enforcement agencies should be engaged in targeting nominals, ensuring every lever possible is being used to send the message that gang activity and violence must stop
    d. Stop and searches, knife arches and sweeps should be employed as appropriate
    e. Consideration should be given to the introduction of a gang specific civil order
7. It is absolutely imperative that young people are given support in exiting gang life: a way out. Effective intervention programmes should be running simultaneously with enforcement tactics and local authorities in Gang Prevention Zones should review current youth provision to ensure that services available meet the needs of gang-involved young people
    a. Intervention programmes should be personalised to ensure that support is appropriate to the individual, both practical and therapeutic interventions are likely to be necessary
    b. Youth workers should be based in hospital emergency departments which experience high admissions of young people with assault wounds
    c. Gang Prevention Zones should include a mediation service in their youth provision
    d. Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should work together to ensure resettlement opportunities for gang members unable to remain in their area
    e. Intervention should automatically be triggered for siblings of known gang members and mentoring should be considered to provide an alternative, positive role model

MEDIUM-TERM ACTION

In order to tackle gangs effectively, positive relations must exist between the police and young people and the wider community: trust in the police needs to be increased and a more measured and sensitive approach to young people needs to be fostered.

There are numerous examples around the country of police and young people working together on programmes, via third sector organisations, which have challenged stereotypes, built trust and changed attitudes.

The Working Group believes that the principles employed in initiatives such

as Second Wave's programme with Territorial Support Group 4, Hackney Police's work with Chance UK and the Prince's Trust's Team programme can be translated into a best practice model which can be used by all police forces.

In addition, the Working Group believes that greater involvement of police with their local schools will help to normalise positive relations between police and young people.

Recommendations:

Using the third sector to break down barriers between police and young people

1. The National Policing Improvement Agency should develop a police training programme based on the Second Wave / TSG4 initiative in which TSG4 officers attend monthly workshops with young people at the youth charity Second Wave
2. Refresher workshops should be established, facilitated by one or more local youth organisation/s, in which police and young people work together
3. Police forces should make working with local youth organisations part of general practice. This should include regular youth consultations, police participation and the provision of funding and resources for joint projects

Police in schools

1. Safer Schools Partnerships should be rolled out to all secondary schools and Further Education and sixth form colleges in Gang Prevention Zones. Each school or college should have a fully operational police officer seconded full-time, either as part of the senior management team or the behaviour and education support team. Funding should be provided and ring-fenced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Home Office
2. All secondary schools and colleges in Gang Prevention Zones should either have a Volunteer Police Cadet programme or be affiliated to one nearby. The programme should be based on the MPS model and funded by Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Home Office

The Metropolitan Police Service's Voluntary Police Cadets programme provides positive and structured activities for disadvantaged young people

LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN THE NEXT GENERATION

To reverse gang culture in Britain, any strategy must include long-term preventative elements: it must tackle the *drivers* of gang culture, not just the symptoms.

Part I identified a number of key drivers including:

- Family breakdown and dysfunction
- A lack of positive role models
- Educational failure

- Mental and emotional health problems
- An absence of aspirations
- Unemployment and underemployment
- Discrimination and stereotyping
- Poverty

A sustainable solution to gangs relies on preventing young people from getting involved in the first place and this requires considerable investment in the next generation.

The policy recommendations in this section are designed to provide the environment, opportunities and hope that will make gang membership unnecessary.

Recommendations:

Early Intervention

1. The Working Group fully supports the recommendations made by The Centre for Social Justice's Early Years Commission and Family Breakdown Working Group and the recommendations contained in the Graham Allen MP and Iain Duncan Smith MP report *Early Intervention*. These include:
    a. The establishment of Family Hubs in the heart of disadvantaged communities
    b. The provision of non-stigmatising relationship and parenting education and support provided by effective third sector organisations
    c. An enhanced role for Health Visitors in the delivery of both targeted and universal support for families
    d. Greater access to bespoke mental health services for children and adolescents
2. Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should look at commissioning third sector *youth* organisations which also deliver parenting support
3. Workshops on recognising the signs of potential gang involvement should be run for professionals and parents in Gang Prevention Zones. These should also cover what to do if there is a suspicion that a young person is gang-invovled
4. As part of their multi-agency strategy local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should commission third sector early intervention projects. Local authorities should ensure that amongst these projects are organisations specialising in working with disenfranchised young *males*
5. Local authorities should resource third sector mentoring programmes in Gang Prevention Zones. Special attention should be paid to the type of mentoring project resourced

Youth Provision and Diversion

1. Local authorities should audit current youth provision in Gang Prevention Zones – reviewing appropriateness and hours of service in particular – and prioritise funding for organisations which work to *transform* the mindsets of young people
2. The delivery of youth programmes should, in the main, be outsourced to third sector organisations with appropriate funding and support
3. Gang Prevention Zones should pay particular attention the quality of staff in youth projects – encouraging organisations which use ex-gang members – and prioritise projects working with young people on a long-term basis

Erin Gruwell told the Working Group that teachers need to understand the challenges facing their students and ensure that classes are relevant and engaging

Education

1. The Working Group fully supports the recommendations made by The Centre for Social Justice's Educational Failure Working Group and make particular note of the proposal of Pioneer Schools
2. Local authorities and schools should consider how best to reform class content and teaching methods in order to engage and therefore raise the educational achievement of pupils in Gang Prevention Zones. The Working Group recommends that schools learn from the *Freedom Writer* model and local authorities consider commissioning the *Freedom Writers Foundation* to deliver workshops for school staff in Gang Prevention Zones. The Freedom Writers Foundation was born out of the teaching methods of Erin Gruwell, who despite being given an 'unteachable' class in an inner city school in Long Beach, California, succeeded in supporting all 150 of her students to graduate
3. Schools in Gang Prevention Zones should look at how they can raise aspirations amongst their pupils and encourage successful professionals to deliver presentations and workshops in the schools
4. Local authorities and schools in Gang Prevention Zones should look at ways of tackling disruptive pupil behaviour, truanting and exclusion. This should include the provision of on-site therapeutic programmes and alternative education units and consideration should be given to implementing restorative justice sessions
5. Schools in Gang Prevention Zones should use Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons to tackle the issue of gangs and weapons. These sessions should be outsourced to third sector organisations whose staff have direct experience of dealing with gang-involved young people

Employment

1. Local authorities should commission effective welfare-to-work agencies to help young people in Gang Prevention Zones find and retain legitimate employment

2. Local authorities and Primary Care Trusts with Gang Prevention Zones should consider establishing a work experience programme for gang-involved and at risk young people
3. Gang Prevention Zones should look at making funds available for gang-involved and at risk young people with entrepreneurial talent. Local authorities should look to partner with organisations already delivering similar initiatives or commission an effective third sector youth organisation to pilot a scheme. As well as grants any initiative should provide mentoring from successful entrepreneurs and businessmen

Community mobilisation

1. A community group should be set up in Gang Prevention Zones to provide the 'moral voice' and mobilise the community to tackle gang culture. They should work closely with statutory and non-statutory agencies as well as other community and faith groups. The Working Group recommends that the role of community group is combined with the Independent Advisory Group and is therefore represented at the multi-agency Strategy team meetings
2. Politicians and policy-makers should engage with communities in Gang Prevention Zones in order to understand the problem and encourage community action. Engagement should be facilitated by the community group/Independent Advisory Group so as to provide credibility and engagement should be meaningful and long-term

Conclusion

Gang culture in Britain is becoming increasingly entrenched in our most disadvantaged communities. It is imperative that central and local government act immediately and that all agencies working with gang-involved young people and those at risk of involvement co-ordinate their response. Strong and visible leadership is needed at the highest levels.

The Working Group is confident that with the full and swift implementation of the policies contained in this report, Britain can tackle gang culture and ensure a positive future for our young people.

Introduction

> 'JaJa had grown up looking at drug dealers and thieves, arguing, robbing, stabbing and shooting each other outside the kitchen window of his council block. Most of the others had grown up alone on the streets or watching their mothers and brothers disappear into a dazed, crack-fuelled fog.'[1]

Over the past decade the term 'gang' has entered common parlance. As the number of young people dying on the streets has increased – in 2007 26 young people were murdered on the streets of London alone – so too has the media frenzy surrounding the development of a supposedly American-style gang culture in Britain.

Yet, despite the well-publicised increase in gang affiliation and violence over the past few years, our understanding of the true nature and scale of gang culture and membership in Britain remains limited. It appears that policy is being developed without a full understanding of the problem. It is unthinkable that a proper study of such a profound and enduring problem has not been conducted prior to setting policy.

This may explain why, in many areas, the task of tackling gangs has been seen as almost solely the responsibility of the police, by politicians who have made enforcement their main focus and taken an increasingly punitive stance.

Any *long-term* strategy must understand and tackle the *drivers* of gang culture, through the full co-ordination of statutory and non-statutory agencies working with at risk and gang-involved young people. The police are picking up the pieces when other agencies have failed to intervene.

An alternative society

Gang culture represents the creation of an alternative society, which in many aspects parallels that of mainstream society. A desire for status, respect, material wealth and sense of belonging are key drivers of human behaviour. The difference lies in how these are achieved. Whilst the majority of the population looks for status and wealth through progression in legitimate employment and finds their identity and a sense of belonging through their family, young people from dysfunctional families who live in deprived areas of

1 Tim Pritchard, Street Boys: 7 Kids. 1 *Estate. No Way Out. The True Story of a Lost Childhood* (Harper Element, 2008), p.318

high unemployment, crime and violence and who are marginalised from mainstream society can potentially find it through the gang.

The examples of 'Michael' and 'Tom' below, illustrate how, although overarching aims may be similar, personal experiences and the opportunities open to young people can dictate the path they follow.[2] The illustrations are lengthy, but it is crucial to understand the human impact and to appreciate the challenges facing some of our young people.

This report is an analysis of the gang situation in Britain today, examining how we reached this point – the *drivers* – and how we can reverse it.

ILLUSTRATING THE DIVIDE

Michael, gang member, 19

Michael grew up on a tough estate in the heart of a deprived inner city area. He was brought up by his single mother after his father left them when Michael was still a baby. His council flat was at the centre of the estate and every time he entered or exited the tower block he passed the local 'crew'. The local 'crew' used his block as a base: hanging out, selling drugs and smoking skunk. Although they didn't seem to do very much during the day, these older boys always seemed to be enjoying themselves: they had money, nice cars and designer clothes and the local girls were always on their arms. People showed them respect and Michael was impressed that they protected the area from outsiders: from a very young age he had seen them beat and stab people who came into the estate uninvited.

Michael attended the local primary school where he formed close friendships with four other boys, all from his estate. Michael's mother worked two jobs to provide for her children – in the day she worked as a cleaner and in the evenings she worked as a waitress in a local restaurant – so he and his siblings went for days without seeing her. When his mother was around she was exhausted, and Michael resented the fact that, despite all the hours she worked, money was always tight.

Michael was the oldest and so was expected to look after his younger brother and sister. He never seemed to get around to doing his homework as he was either caring for his siblings or running errands for his mother while she was at work. Because he rarely did his homework, he found it hard to keep up in class and would distract his friends, leading his teacher to label him a trouble-maker and keep him out of class as often as possible.

As Michael got a bit older the 'crew' started to notice him and began asking Michael to run little errands – like taking a package across to a different estate or hiding a bag in his room – and in return he got new trainers and clothes

2 These examples bring together the life experiences of a number of the young people interviewed for this paper

and was occasionally allowed to hang around with the boys. He would ask them questions about what they did. Even though Michael's mother was always telling him to stay away from the older boys, he loved the feeling of importance he had from being associated with them.

Michael hated secondary school, he found his lessons dull and his teachers were always criticising him because he was so behind in reading and writing. Michael couldn't see the point of school – it hadn't helped his mum – and he increasingly used lessons to make his friends laugh at the expense of other pupils, which frequently led to fights and Michael being temporarily excluded. Michael didn't mind being excluded as it meant more time with the crew on his estate, none of whom appeared to have finished secondary school.

The more time he spent on the estate the more he aspired to be like the older boys he looked up to and the more involved he and his friends became in their activities: fighting, drug dealing, robbery and car-jacking. Michael looked out for his mates and they looked out for him. They were like a family. After a particularly violent fight at school, Michael was permanently excluded. While his mother was devastated, he didn't care: he could make a couple of hundred pounds a day from dealing and more from selling what he stole. He knew he made more money in a week than his mum did in a month and so used some of it to buy food and pay bills. The rest he spent on designer clothes and jewellery.

Michael and his friends got more and more involved in criminal activity and eventually found they were the ones now protecting the estate: many of the older boys were in prison or dead. It was Michael's group that now became known as the estate crew and they all knew they had to use violence to defend their territory and their reputation.

Tom, law student, 19

Tom grew up in a quiet, leafy suburb at the edge of the city. His mum worked part-time as a therapist and so was always at home when he finished school. His father was a successful lawyer who managed to get home most nights to see Tom before he went to bed.

Tom loved going to his small, local primary school and would go home and tell his mum and dad about the projects he was doing. His parents would take him to the local library and to museums at the weekend so that he could learn more about the things he was looking at in class. Like his parents, Tom's teacher was always impressed by Tom's curiosity and knowledge and made a point of encouraging and praising him.

Tom's parents hosted lots of dinner parties and as Tom got older he was allowed to stay up and speak to his parents' friends: successful professionals who had money, nice cars and designer clothes and were happily married. He aspired to be like them and asked questions about what they did and how they got there. Sometimes they brought their older children with them – who were

all studying at different universities around the country – and Tom would ask them questions. The freedom they had sounded exciting and Tom knew from an early age that he wanted to go to university and then get a similar job to one of his parents' friends. Everyone he told about his ambitions told him the same thing: he needed to work hard at school and get good qualifications.

Tom loved secondary school. He attended a successful selective school that prided itself on its academic environment. His parents were very proud of him when he was elected Head Boy and Tom loved the feeling of importance he gained from the position. Tom stayed most afternoons after school to take part in extra-curricular activities with his friends and, when he was old enough, he got a Saturday job at the local supermarket to supplement his pocket money. When he reached sixth form, Tom was encouraged by his parents and his teachers to apply to top universities and his school provided additional classes on writing his application and making the best possible impression in interviews.

In his first year at university, Tom decided he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become a lawyer; he had seen how much respect and money his father received. As his parents were funding his degree, Tom was able to save quite a lot of his student loan and, as well as travel, take an unpaid internship at a law firm which has given him a lot of confidence for applying for training contracts.

PART I: STATE OF THE NATION

ONE
Identifying the subject – towards a standardised definition

Prior to any analysis of gang culture in Britain, we must first establish a coherent and standardised definition of what a 'gang' is. A number of high profile murders – such as that of 15 year old Billy Cox in London and 11 year old Rhys Jones in Liverpool – and the accompanying media coverage, have ensured that over the past decade the term 'gang' has entered common discourse.

There now appears a tendency to apply the word 'gang' to any and all groups of young people engaging in any and all forms of anti-social behaviour. This knee-jerk response to what is often petty, though intimidating, (criminal) behaviour is profoundly unhelpful. The vast majority of groups of young people are *not* gangs, and the labelling of them as such can have negative consequences for all involved (see below).

This confusion is, in part, due to the absence of a standardised definition of a gang. Despite the Home Office establishing a definition in 2004 – albeit for a 'delinquent youth group' (see below for further details) – this has not been universally adopted by those involved in tackling gangs. It is difficult – if not impossible – to produce a national assessment of gang membership and activity if

police forces and agencies working with gang-involved young people have varying perceptions of what constitutes a gang. When developing a response to a problem the first step must be to accurately define it; this first step has been missed in relation to gangs in Britain.

> "It does concern me…just because it's a group of young people in a street, by the bus shelter, it doesn't necessarily mean they're a gang"
>
> Jenny Deeks, Regional Director, School-Home Support

This failure to act swiftly to define a gang and to ensure that the definition is applied universally has had a grave impact on our understanding of gang culture in Britain today. The Working Group recognises this fundamental flaw in the current approach and hence provides a single definition for application by *all* relevant agencies, including central and local government and the police (see Part I, Section 1.4).

The following discussion outlines some of the challenges that academics have faced in defining a gang and the confusion that has reigned by not establishing a universal definition.

1.1 'Gangs' versus 'delinquent youth groups' – the discourse

Much discussion has centred around the relevance to the UK of the American definition of a gang. Historically, academics and experts have argued that the UK does not have 'gangs', indeed the Eurogang Network was established to provide a definition applicable to the *European* 'gang' model. It is to this end that terms such as 'delinquent' (Home Office)[3] or 'troublesome' (Eurogang Network) youth groups have been advanced. However, as the following discussion shows, the core 'ingredients' are too similar to make the distinction helpful. The key lies in distinguishing the 'gangs' from the 'delinquent youth groups', rather than in distinguishing between American and European models.

1.1.1 DEFINING THE GANG

Discussions around the 'gang' are usually traced back to 1920s America. Academics such as Thrasher highlighted the growing problem of gang culture and control in Chicago. In his 1927 work, Thrasher defined the gang as:

> '[A]n interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and then integrated through conflict…and characterized by meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning. The behaviour develops a tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, group awareness and attachment to local territory.'[4]

More than half a century later, Walter B. Miller's definition supported Thrasher's depiction of a (at least semi-) structured body of young people engaging in criminal activity:

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3 C. Sharp, J. Aldridge, and J. Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey* (Home Office, 2006)

4 As cited in, *Groups, Gangs and Weapons* (Youth Justice Board, 2007), p.24

> 'A group of recurrently associating individuals with identifiable leadership and internal organisation, identifying with or claiming control over territory in the community, and engaging either individually or collectively in violent or other forms of illegal behaviour.'[5]

London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), who have recently undertaken a review of the scale and nature of the capital's gang culture, use Hallsworth's and Young's 2004 definition:

> 'A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.'[6]

In their Glasgow Gang Assessment, Strathclyde Police's Violence Reduction Unit adopted a much broader definition for their analysis, reflecting the Home Office's 2004 definition (see below):

> 'A group of three or more people who associate together, or act as an organised body, for criminal or illegal purposes.'

This clearly demonstrates the need for a standardised definition for use by enforcement agencies and statutory and non-statutory agencies working with at risk young people in Britain.

1.1.2 MISSING THE POINT – THE DELINQUENT YOUTH GROUP

In their 2005 comparison of gangs in America and the Netherlands, Esbensen and Weerman note the European sensitivity to using the term 'gang'. Discussing the Eurogang programme's adoption of the term 'troublesome youth group', the authors state that:

> 'In some languages or national contexts, the word gang either cannot be translated or carries with it such an emotionally charged meaning that it cannot be used meaningfully, consensus was reached to describe such groups as troublesome youth groups.'[7]

The emotive nature of the term gang is clearly visible in media coverage of 'gang' culture and crime and the dominance of the American model can indeed be misleading: some gangs in the UK may have adopted the names of the infamous Los Angeles Bloods and Crips, but the scale and nature of their organisation, activity and violence is not (*yet*) comparable.

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5 As cited in, J. Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*, 2007, Chapter 1

6 *Getting Real About Gangs*, Hallsworth and Young, 2004 in Criminal Justice Matters 55

7 *A Cross-National Comparison of Youth Gangs: The United States and The Netherlands*, Frank M. Weerman and Finn-Aage Esbensen in *European Street Gangs and Troublesome Youth Groups*, Scott H. Decker, 2005

The Eurogang Network settled on the term 'troublesome youth group' and defined one as '*any durable, street-orientated youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity*'.[8]

The Home Office in 2004 used similar criteria in their identification of 'delinquent youth groups' in the UK. They identified such groups as having 'durability and structure and whose members spend time in public spaces and engage in delinquent activities together'.[9] The report highlighted five key defining points:[10]

- Young people who spend time in groups of three or more (including themselves).
- The group spend a lot of time in public places.
- The group has existed for three months or more.
- The group has engaged in delinquent or criminal behaviour together in the last 12 months.
- The group has at least one structural feature (either a name, an area, a leader, or rules).

> "…if we tarnish all young people with the word "gang" then we are missing the point. Because there are some young people who like to move around in 6s or 7s because of safety…there are 6 or 7 of your mates, you went to the same school, like to hang out in the same area – but then there are young people who specifically do negative things, make money from drugs, are willing to kill, willing to claim their postcode, willing to wear colours to reflect the set that they move in..."
>
> London Youth Offending Team worker

The definitions produced by both the Eurogang Network and the Home Office are so closely reflective of the above definition of a 'gang' by Miller as to question the usefulness of the 'troublesome/delinquent youth group' distinction. The semantics appear to cloud the recognition of – and therefore the prevention of – a gang problem in the UK. Malcolm Klein in his 2001 book *The Eurogang Paradox* argues that there has been a 'tendency to deny the existence of gangs in Europe because they do not fit the stereotype'.[11] A 2007 Youth Justice Board (YJB) report on gangs went further, stating that one of the consequences 'may have been a measure of denial at the policy level of problems of serious group-related offending by young people outside the USA.'[12]

Given that the majority of youth offending is committed in groups (as the above YJB report noted), the term gang is important in distinguishing a more

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8 As cited in, *Groups, Gangs and Weapons*, p.27

9 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.1

10 Ibid., p.2, Box 1.1

11 Introduction to Part I in *The Eurogang Paradox, Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*, edited by Malcolm w. Klein, Hans-Jurgen Kerner, Cheryl L. Maxson and Elmar G. M. Weitekamp, 2001

12 *Groups, gangs and weapons*, Tara Young, Marian Fitzgerald, Simon Hallsworth and Ian Joseph, Youth Justice Board, 2007, p.27

identifiable group – often involved in more serious and violent criminal activity – from a group of young people offending together.

C. R. Huff provides a helpful summary distinction:

> 'What separates a gang from other adolescent groups is (1) the gang's more routine involvement in illegal activities; (2) a more deliberate quality of these illegal activities; (3) a greater tendency to claim some 'turf'…and (4) generally, better developed leadership.'[13]

1.1.3 THE ROLE OF PERCEPTION

Malcolm Klein highlighted an additional dimension of definition in his 1971 book *Street Gangs and Street Workers*. In reference to the process of gang formation, he noted the crucial role of social perception and reaction. Hence for Klein, a gang was a group of young people who:

> '…(a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighbourhood; (b) recognize [sic] themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name); and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or enforcement agencies.'[14]

Hallsworth and Young also integrated this element into their recent definition of English street gangs (see above section 1.1.1).

If gang membership provides an identity, then the claim to belong to a gang is a clear expression of who you are, which in turn informs the definition of a gang. As Klein argues, 'for many gang members, and for those fully committed ones…the gang becomes a "master identity". What is done to it, for it, and with it becomes a source of self-reinforcement.'[15] Hence, recognising oneself as a gang member, and indeed understanding oneself through this context, is crucial to any definition.

Nevertheless, perception alone is not sufficient. It is possible that some young people claiming to be members of gangs are influenced by the seeming status and glamour of 'gangster culture'. In reality their 'gang' is a friendship group with a name which engages in spontaneous anti-social/criminal behaviour, rather than a semi-organised, violent gang engaging in a wide range of criminal activity.

1.1.4 WANNABE GROUPS

Robert Gordon's 'Wannabe' category in his five point typology of youth groupings neatly summaries those groups commonly mistaken for gangs:

> '…young people who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting,

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13 *Gangs in America*, C. R. Huff (Sage, 1990)

14 *Street Gangs and Street Workers*, Malcolm Klein, 1971

15 "Resolving the Eurogang Paradox", Malcolm W. Klein, p.10, in *The Eurogang Paradox, Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*, edited by Malcolm w. Klein, Hans-Jurgen Kerner, Cheryl L. Maxson and Elmar G. M. Weitekamp, 2001

> impulsive, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups of youths. Wannabes will often claim 'gang' territory and adopt 'gang-style' identifying markers of some kind'[16]

This is in comparison to his definition of a Street Gang:

> '…groups of young people and young adults who band together to form a semi-structured organisation, the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behaviour or organised violence against rival street gangs. They tend to be less visible but more permanent than other groups.'[17]

The distinction between a Wannabe Group and a Street Gang is helpful – although Gordon's presentation of criminal activity as a gang's raison d'être is problematic, see Section 3.2 for further discussion of gang motivation – and it is particularly important given the fluidity of gang structures.

> "They were powerful enough to issue an ultimatum to almost all of the young men on the estate: you are with us or against us, and if you don't join us in the war you will be shot or will have to leave. It worked"
>
> Peter Walsh on Manchester's gang wars[218]

Some of these 'wannabes' will go on to become fully fledged gang members, either through joining an existing gang or as a result of their wannabe group developing into an actual gang; its members identifying more and more with the group and becoming increasingly involved in crime and violence. Numerous witnesses to the inquiry have commented on the fact that friendship groups have been the origins of various gangs, as one young male in his early teens said: 'people who ask you to join a gang are people you've been to primary school with.' Leon, a founding (former) member of the South West London gang SUK, told the Working Group that his gang had grown out of a 'close group of mates getting in fights and robbing other areas'. Tim Pritchard's excellent account of the development of Lambeth's notorious Peel Dem Crew (PDC) clearly shows a gang emerging from a (wannabe) group of disenfranchised friends.[19]

Hence although wannabe groups are not strictly gangs, intervention at this stage is absolutely essential.

1.1.5 LIVING UP TO THE NAME – A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY?

As already noted, caution must be taken when applying the term gang. In addition to this concern, the YJB notes that indiscriminate use of the term could 'serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy, creating problems where none existed and/or further inflaming the situation'.[20]

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16 As cited in, Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 1
17 As cited in, Ibid Chapter 1.
18 Peter Walsh, *Gang War: The Inside Story of the Manchester Gangs*, New Ed. (Milo Books, 2005), p.23.
19 Pritchard, *Street Boys*
20 *Groups, gangs and weapons*, Tara Young, Marian Fitzgerald, Simon Hallsworth and Ian Joseph, Youth Justice Board, 2007, p.27

Although it is doubtful that applying the term will create problems 'where none existed', it is viable that application of the term may reinforce and therefore heighten an existing problem. This is of particular note for the media and agencies working with at risk young people. As we have noted, identification with the gang is a key element of gang culture and hence care should be taken not to deepen this mentality through an overemphasis on the group dynamic.

1.2 'Reluctant Gangsters'

John Pitts' analysis of Waltham Forest gangs, *Reluctant Gangsters*, highlights a little reported issue: a significant proportion of gang members are not so out of choice. He notes that the 'increasingly dangerous environment served as a stimulus for many previously unaffiliated young people to join their local gang as a means of self-defence', particularly when 'residence became synonymous with affiliation'.[21] John Heale makes the same observation in his book on British street gangs, referencing in particular the 'beef' (rivalry) between Tottenham's and Hackney's gangs:

> 'As the beef between the two areas grew, it meant that residence and affiliation became the same thing.'[22]

A number of people giving evidence to the Working Group have also argued that, in some areas, living in a particular postcode automatically identifies you with that territory's gang. Hence for many young people, non-affiliation is irrelevant to rival gangs, and thus the protection offered by the local gang is essential. Melvyn Davis, founder and Director of The Male Development Service (BoyztoMEN), described the situation in the areas he works in:

> 'You're on this estate. Now, young people on this estate will be under the protection of the Elders of that estate, whether they're involved or not. So they know that if they go to South Kilburn, if they go to another area within Brent, just because of where they're coming from, they could be a victim. Urban legends of somebody from this estate killed somebody from that estate. [As] they can't get that person who did it, they'll get somebody else. So you've got young people who will, not by virtue of the fact that they're involved in any criminal activity but because they live in a particular area, particular estate, if the person says "Do this for me, do that for me" it's not a question of whether it's illegal or not. I need to protect myself. If I don't, I've got that gang over there who are my natural enemies anyway, and I've also got the people that I live with who I need to take on board, who are going to be against me. And so suddenly you've got young people now who have got the internal conflict of "How do I *not* get involved"…So there's almost an inevitability that these young people, they

21 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 6
22 John Heale, *One Blood: Inside Britain's New Street Gangs* (Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2008), p.34

stay inside, they hide, they pretend to be part of something in order to find means and ways of getting out. And those young people are given no credit, they're not even recognised for the fact that they're not *choosing* to be in a situation like that…'

1.3 A complex concept – refining the definition

'The twin tendencies to stereotype gangs as all similar or to ignore the issues of gang structures have been harmful to research, to policy, and to public understandings of gangs.'[23]

In recognition of the complexities of contemporary gang culture, Klein presents a five point typology of Gordon's Street Gang: the Traditional gang, the Neo-Traditional gang, the Compressed gang, the Collective gang, and the Speciality gang. Klein's models can be summarised as follows, all but the Speciality gang engage in a 'wide variety' of criminal activity:

Traditional	This is a large (100 plus members), long-standing (20 years or more), territorial gang with sub-groups based on age or area, and whose members cover a wide age range.
Neo-Traditional	This is a medium to large sized gang reflecting the make-up of the Traditional gang but having been in existence for 10 or less years.
Compressed	This is a smaller gang with a shorter history and a narrow age range. It may or may not be territorial and has not (yet) formed sub-groups.
Collective	This model is similar to the Compressed gang, but has existed for longer and has a wider age range with more members (medium to large sized).
Speciality	This group focuses on a few offences and becomes characterised by this speciality. It is small without sub-groups and has a well defined territory (either residential or based around the specific crime).

23 Resolving the Eurogang Paradox, Malcolm W. Klein, p.10, in *The Eurogang Paradox, Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*, edited by Malcolm w. Klein, Hans-Jurgen Kerner, Cheryl L. Maxson and Elmar G. M. Weitekamp, 2001

Klein in his research found the Traditional and Compressed gangs to be the most stable, with the Neo-Traditional and Collective gangs morphing into one of the other categories. The Speciality gang was the most likely to disband. There appears a strong correlation between duration of existence and level of organisation: the older the gang the more organised its structures and operations.[24]

The distinction between different types of gangs is crucial: without this we cannot hope to tackle gang culture. John Pitts in his 2007 report on gangs in the London borough of Waltham Forest combines existing typologies (including that of Klein above) and the specific traits of Waltham Forest gangs to create a six point typology.[25] This typology is specific to the borough's gangs, but is invaluable in helping us to understand the nature of the UK gang problem.

1.	**The Articulated Super Gang**	This is an organised gang with historical links to organised crime and involved in the drugs business. It has a broad age range and sub-groups. It has a name and is territorial (based on both residential and drug-dealing areas).
2.	**The Street Gang**	This is a relatively durable, street-based group of young people for whom engagement in crime and violence is part of their identity. They perceive themselves and are perceived by others as a gang. It has age based sub-groups, is less than 10 years old and is territorial (either residential or based on criminal opportunity).
3.	**The Compressed Street Gang**	This is a new, relatively small gang with a narrow age range and no sub-groups, for whom engagement in crime and violence is part of their identity. They perceive themselves and are perceived by others as a gang. They are territorial (residential).
4.	**The Criminal Youth Group**	This gang's raison d'être is criminal, focusing on a few offence types. It is small and recent with a narrow age range. It is territorial (residential or based on criminal opportunities).
5.	**The Wannabees [sic]**	This is an unorganised group of young people engaging in spontaneous social and criminal activity. It may adopt 'gangster' trappings and lay claim to territory, but this gang is loose with fluid membership.
6.	**The Middle Level International Criminal Business Organisation**	This gang is composed primarily of adults and may be the London end of an international crime network. They also engage in street-level drug dealing using young people as runners.

24 See *The Impact of Organisational Features on Gang Activities and* Relationships, Scott H. Decker in *The Eurogang Paradox*, Klein et al, 2001

25 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 3

Policies and initiatives for tackling the Traditional or Articulated Super gang will, by necessity, be different from those implemented to tackle Wannabees [sic]. However in this report we will be focusing primarily on the middle four of Pitts' typologies (2-5): variations of a youth street gang.

1.4 The definition

Defining what we mean by the term gang is crucial to tackling gang culture and the associated (often serious and violent) crime. The terms 'delinquent youth group' and 'troublesome youth group' are of limited use: it is the distinction between different groups of young people rather than the term itself that is important for any gang prevention strategy. For this reason, establishing what actually qualifies as a 'gang', and distinguishing this from other groups, is crucial. Within this, it is vital to note that the majority of street gangs in Britain are born out of friendship groups and are fluid.

For this reason, the Working Group believes that the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention have produced the most useful gang definition:

> '…a youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: a gang name and recognizable [sic] symbols, identifiable leadership, a geographic territory, a regular meeting pattern, and collective actions to carry out illegal activities.'[26]

Using this definition – and looking at data collected on gangs in the UK and internationally – and also recognising the role of inter-gang violence, we propose the following definition to be adopted in Britain:

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.

It is this definition which is used throughout the report.

In addition, we recognise the importance of the typologies put forward by Klein and Pitts. The complexity of gang structures must be understood by, and inform the actions of, policy makers and practitioners alike.

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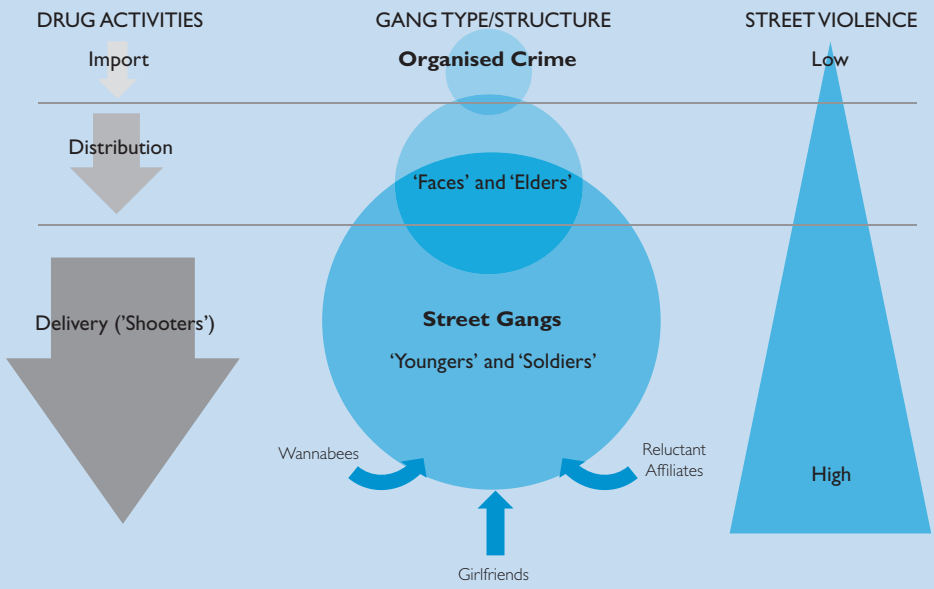
26 James C. Howell, *Youth Gangs*, OJJDP Fact Sheet (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, December 1997), p.1

Figure 1.1: Schematic of gang type and activities



1.4.1 The street gang

The schematic below provides a basic illustration of the position of the street gang, and its role within the drugs trade and spectrum of street violence.

In short, the street gang (of vastly differing degrees of organisation) consists of those on the frontline of the drugs trade and those perpetrating the majority of street violence. The following sections seek to explain the street gang phenomenon – identifying who is involved, why they are involved and what they are doing, and how Britain reached this point.

TWO
The scale and nature of gang culture in Britain today

> 'Presently there is still little known about street gangs in Britain. The British do not perceive street gangs as part of their "civilised" society, which partly accounts for the lack of coherent research into this subject.'[27]

Although some research has been undertaken since Dennis Mares wrote this in 2001, understanding about gang culture in Britain is poor. The prevalence of gangs and their membership amongst young people in Britain is largely unknown. A number of papers have been written on gang membership in particular areas – compiled by police and academics – and a number of self-reporting surveys have included questions on gangs, but a national assessment has not been undertaken.

The closest anyone has come to estimating a national total for gang membership is Bennett and Holloway using New English and Welsh Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (NEW-ADAM) programme data. They estimated the total number of gang members in England and Wales to be 20,000, with a confidence range of 5,000 either way.[28] However this – as Bennett and Holloway themselves note – is likely to be a significant underestimate for a number of reasons: (1) the programme only covers those aged 17 and above, and we know a high proportion of gang members are younger (2) it only covers gang members in the arrestee population, and (3) the data is from 1999-2002.

In addition, much of the information we do have on gang membership and activity is limited, not least due to the lack of a clear, standardised definition of what actually constitutes a gang. Furthermore, few police assessments of gangs are publicly available and self-reporting surveys are susceptible to exaggeration or untruths.

Further restricting our assessment, the YJB note that the 'Home Office does not require information on whether any given offence was committed by an individual or a group.'[29] There is no requirement for police to record group

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27 "Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester", Dennis Mares, in *The Eurogang Paradox, Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*¸ edited by Malcolm w. Klein, Hans-Jurgen Kerner, Cheryl L. Maxson and Elmar G. M. Weitekamp, 2001

28 T. Bennett and K. Holloway, "Gang Membership, Drugs and Crime in the UK," *British Journal of Criminology* 44, no. 3 (2004): pp.312-313

29 YJB, 2007, p.51

involvement of any sort when entering details on the main data systems. This is a significant oversight: appropriate and effective strategies cannot be established to tackle a largely unspecified and unmeasured problem.

Nevertheless, by collating the information that is available, together with anecdotal evidence, we can start to form a picture of the scale of gang culture in Britain.

2.1 Gangs and gang membership

Before analysing the limited data available on gang membership, it is important to understand what we mean by the term membership. Gangs, and hence its members, are fluid. Unlike many U.S. gangs, British gangs are unlikely to have written rules, or strict and defined initiation rites. As we noted in Part I, Section 1.1.4 above, gangs often develop out of the friendship groups of disenfranchised young people.

2.1.1 EVIDENCE FROM SELF-REPORTING SURVEYS

The Home Office's Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) 2004 estimated that overall six per cent of 10-19 year olds belonged to a gang ('delinquent youth group') – although 10 per cent self-defined themselves as gang members. However, when taking only those young people whose responses fitted all of the Eurogang Network criteria, this figure drops to three per cent.[30] When adding the criteria 'Group has at least one structural feature (name/area/leader/rules)' to the Eurogang Network criteria this drops further to just two per cent of respondents. It is this more stringent definition that fits most closely with our definition of a gang. When looking at different age categories this figure increases to three per cent for 10 to 15 year olds.[31]

According to the OCJS survey data, around 90 per cent of gang members said their gangs consisted of between six and 50 members, with roughly equal proportions for the size categories six to ten (32 per cent), 11 to 19 (27 per cent), and 20 to 50 (30 per cent).[32]

Smith's and Bradshaw's 2005 report,[33] which used longitudinal evidence from The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, found that 20 per cent of young people said they were gang members at age 13, but this dropped to five per cent at age 17. However membership of what the study terms 'hard core' gangs – those with both a name and a sign or saying – remained fairly steady (around 2 per cent at age 13, 4 per cent at age 16 and 3 per cent at age 17). These results are based on the young person's response to variations of the question 'Would you call the group of friends you usually hang about with a "gang"?'. If answering 'yes'

30 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, Appendix B, pp.39-40, see Table B.1 for criteria

31 Ibid., Appendix B, Table B.3

32 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*.

33 *Gang Membership and Teenage Offending*, David J. Smith and Paul Bradshaw, Number 8, The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, 2005

they were then asked if their gang had a name and if it had any 'special sayings or signs'. No mention was made of criminal or violent activity.

It is unlikely that those young people stating that they were in a 'gang' with no name, sign or saying were actually members of a gang. This is supported by the precipitate decline in membership of this category between the ages 13 and 16: the 'gang' is not durable. The two to four per cent of young people belonging to groups with two structural features is a more realistic estimate of gang membership based on our definition in Part I, Section 1.4, and is in line with the Home Office's Offending Crime and Justice Survey statistics.

For their report Groups, Gangs and Weapons (2007), the YJB surveyed Youth Offending Team (YOT) managers. Of the 68 that responded, 62 per cent said that they were aware of 'troublesome youth groups' in their area.[34] It must be noted that 16 (almost a quarter) of the responses were from YOTs in London, and in England and Wales the majority of gangs are found in this city. Over half (54 per cent) of respondents noted that the YOT had specifically identified the groups as a local problem, and of these just over half reported that this had been officially recorded. This again demonstrates the unsatisfactory nature of reporting gang presence.

2.1.2 EVIDENCE FROM SPECIFIC GANG ASSESSMENTS

Little has been (publicly) written about gangs outside of London, and even in London our knowledge is patchy. The following analysis demonstrates just how difficult it is to provide any meaningful conclusions about the scale of gang culture in Britain. It reveals the dire need for a comprehensive geographical assessment of a problem which is destroying communities and costing lives.

Figure 1.2: The Home Office's Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP), established in September 2007 offers the following geographical analysis of gang membership[35]

TGAP Area	Number of gang members	Percentage of gang members who are White	Year
London	356	2.5%	2008
Manchester	76	8%	2006-7
Birmingham	127	3%	2006-7
Liverpool	96	96%	2006-7

34 68 out of 155 YOTs across England and Wales responded. The definition used for troublesome youth group was roughly that of the Eurogang Network

35 As cited in Peter Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence* (Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, June 2008)

London

Gangs

One website, *Gangs in London,*[36] lists the gangs operating in each borough. Although the information must be used with caution, it is a useful tool in creating an overall picture. It names, for example, 21 gangs in Hackney, 9 in Lewisham, 13 in Haringey and 13 in Newham. The website also maps the gangs – showing which gang claims which 'turf' – and highlights the clear correlation between level of deprivation and gang prevalence.

Intervention programmes are needed to help young people to exit gang culture. Youth projects should equip young people with life skills and raise aspirations.

As an official assessment, the MPS have identified 171 gangs in their Pan-London Gang Profile.[37] This represents an increase of two gangs on their 2006 assessment. The largest numbers of active gangs were found in the London boroughs of Hackney, Waltham Forest, Brent, Lambeth and Wandsworth. However, based on the Home Office estimate of 356 gang members in London (see Fig 1.3 above), this would mean around two people per gang, which would not, by the Home Office's own definition, constitute a gang – another indication that the true scale of gang culture is unknown.

John Pitts has conducted specific studies of gang prevalence in two of these boroughs – Waltham Forest (2007)[38] and Lambeth (2008).[39] He concludes that, at the time of writing, there were 18 named gangs in Waltham Forest and over 40 gangs in Lambeth.

This potentially exposes a significant underestimate by the MPS. The MPS report cites 11 gangs in Waltham Forest compared to Pitts' 18,[40] and 27 compared to Pitts' 40 plus in Lambeth. Pitts' estimates are at least 50 per cent higher than those of the MPS for Lambeth, and over 60 per cent higher for Waltham Forest. Although we must be cautious when extrapolating from these figures, we can confidently conclude that the actual number of gangs in London is considerably higher than official police statistics reveal.

Membership

Membership of gangs is just as difficult to ascertain, not least due to young people claiming membership without actually being actively or intimately involved. Nevertheless, the Safer London Youth Survey 2004 found that, when taking membership as belonging to a gang with both name and territory, around four per cent of the 11-15 year old respondents were gang members.[41] This definition is not

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36 www.piczo.com/gangsinlondon, much of the information provided by the site is from 2006

37 This document is not in the pubic domain and therefore an evaluation of its content is not possible. Any information cited is obtained from other documents referencing the MPS report

38 *Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest* , John Pitts, February 2007

39 Pitts, J., *Young and Safe in Lambeth, The Deliberations of Lambeth Executive Commission on Children, Young People and Violent Crime*, 2008, Unpublished

40 However he notes that some may be subsumed within two super gangs leaving 13; Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*

41 The survey covered over 11,400 11-15 year olds living in Inner London, *Findings from the Safer London Youth Survey 2004* (Communities that Care, July 2005), p.10

particularly robust – and hence is likely to include many *groups* rather than *gangs* – but the data is still indicative of a significant problem.

Using a full definition and based on in-depth research, Pitts estimates that in Waltham Forest around 600-700 young people aged 10-29 were directly involved in gang activity at some point in the Autumn of 2006. This accounts for one per cent of this age range. Over a third of these are classed as *Reluctant Gangsters* (250), over a third as *Wannabees* (250), and the remainder as *Soldiers* (160) and *Core* (60) members.[42]

Figure 1.3: Structure of larger Waltham Forest gangs by type of membership, Autumn 2006 (from Pitts, 2007)

Type of membership	Number and percentage of membership
Core Members/Elders/Faces	5 (7%)
Soldiers/Youngers	10 (14%)
'Shotters'/Street Drug Dealers	10 (14%)
Wannabees [sic]/Girlfriends	10 (14%)
Occasional (Ambivalent) Affiliates	20 (28%)
Reluctant Affiliates	10 (14%)

Pitts provides a useful breakdown of membership 'type' for some of the larger Waltham Forest gangs. The overall breakdown, together with Fig 1.3, shows that the majority of 'members' are on the fringes of the gang with core members accounting for a minority – albeit a significant minority.

> "I've never been in that situation where I've had to hold a friend of mine dying with blood all over me, but if you've seen it three or four times, it's not an issue – of course you become desensitised to it. So if you get into an altercation with somebody else you don't have that fear about what they could pull on you. You'd just make sure that situation is completed – you're the one that's pulling [the knife]."
>
> London Youth Offending Team worker

Pitts' membership breakdown suggests that large gangs in Waltham Forest have around 65 members. In comparison, the dominant Lambeth gang, the aptly named *Poverty Driven Children (PDC)*, boasts 2,500 members on its website. However, witnesses to the Lambeth Commission place PDC core membership at fewer than 100, making it comparable with large Waltham Forest gangs. This again demonstrates the difficulty of measuring the extent of the problem, and highlights the need for community-led assessments.

In addition to actual membership – voluntary or otherwise – Pitts estimates that a further 8,100 people are affected by gangs in Waltham Forest. This accounts for 2,100 children and young people either directly or indirectly affected, and 6,000 family members.

42 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 3 and Fig. 9.2

Approximately four per cent of the total population in the borough are adversely affected by gangs.

Glasgow

In 2004, Strathclyde Police identified 170 gangs operating within their geographical remit.[43] Glasgow city, with a population of around 600,000, is home to around 100 of these gangs. This is in comparison to London's 7.5 million residents and (police estimated) 171 gangs. Strathclyde Police data showed that in 2005 there were around 1,760 people involved with gangs in Glasgow.[44]

Illustrating the extent of Glasgow's gang problem, Strathclyde Police name nine gangs in sub-division EA in East Glasgow, an area of just over three square miles. The largest, Haghill Powery, has 32 identified members, the second largest has 18 members. Membership is significantly smaller than that for large London gangs, but the number of gangs found in a small geographical area is comparable. Also comparable are the characteristics of the gang-affected areas: high levels of deprivation, youth unemployment, worklessness and social breakdown.[45]

Manchester

The website, *Gangs in Manchester*,[46] names 15 gangs in the city dubbed 'Gunchester'. These are found predominantly in the deprived areas of South Manchester and Salford.

In their 2002 report on gangs and guns in Manchester, Bullock and Tilley, stated that there were 'currently four major South Manchester gangs…currently known to the police.' Although they emphasise that 'the situation regarding gangs is fluid…What we have is a snapshot of the situation in 2000/2001.'[47] Current assessments put the figure much higher. The authors note that police knew of just under 200 young people (aged under 25) affiliated to the four gangs, with a further 30 involved but not tied to a specific gang. Taking the limitations of police information into account, the authors estimate that around 470 people were probably gang-involved in 2001.[48]

Dennis Mares collected ethnographic and qualitative data on Manchester gangs during 1997-8. He states that, according to gang members and police, both the Gooch and Doddington (Moss Side gangs) had around 90 members. However, as significant numbers were, at the time of writing, in prison, each gang probably had in the region of 40 *active* members. Mares notes that some sub-groups had formed around age and friendship, but that neither gang was hierarchical. Mares places these gangs in Klein's neo-traditional category, with the suggestion that they could (though he is sceptical) develop a traditional structure over time.[49]

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43 Information provided by Strathclyde's Violence Reduction Unit on Working Group visits to Glasgow

44 Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, p.83

45 See *Breakthrough Glasgow* (Centre for Social Justice 2008) for an analysis of the socio-economic conditions in Glasgow's East End

46 www.piczo.com/gangsinmanchester

47 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.23

48 Ibid., p.25

49 Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester, Dennis Mares, pp. 155-7, in *The Eurogang Paradox, Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*¸ edited by Malcolm w. Klein, Hans-Jurgen Kerner, Cheryl L. Maxson and Elmar G. M. Weitekamp, 2001

Mares also places Salford's gangs in the neo-traditional category. He claims that most Salfordian gangs have been in existence for at least a decade, and that membership is usually in the region of 25-60. He argues that membership may be smaller for these gangs because of recruitment by organised crime when members reach their twenties.[50] Peter Walsh's book on Manchester gangs, *Gang War*, provides a clear illustration of the difference between the Salford 'firms' (organised crime) and the *gangs* of South Manchester.[51]

Today there are in excess of a hundred splinter gangs in the city, 'all of which claim their own identity but still align themselves to one of the three main groups [Gooch, Doddington and Longsight].[52]

Liverpool

According to the Street Weapons Commission report, the two main gangs in Liverpool are the Croxteth Crew and the Strand, both of which are known to 'exercise violence, including using knives and guns, over dealing rights and debt enforcement.'[53] The gangs appear originally to have been the product of two crime families and tit for tat shootings and other reprisals between the gangs have continued since 2004.[54] The tragic murder of Rhys Jones in August 2007 – caught in the cross-fire when Sean Mercer, a member of the Crocky Young Guns, shot at rivals the Strand Gang – was the result of this long-term rivalry.[55] A Home Office report places membership at 20 a piece in 2005.[56]

On a Working Group visit to Merseyside, Superintendent Richardson (Matrix Gun Crime Team) stressed that the city's gang are 'loose affiliations of people from the same geographical area'. He noted that since Merseyside Police's arrest of the Croxteth Crew's senior leadership, there has been limited organisational and hierarchical structure amongst Merseryide's gangs. Whilst recognising a gang presence, he warned against overemphasising gang culture in the city.

Nevertheless, a project looking at young people's perception of guns and gangs in Toxteth, a deprived area just south of the city centre, found that young people were either scared of gun culture and gangs, or thought it 'cool' and 'normal'. According to the report's authors:

> 'The majority of the young people we engaged with had a personal story involving guns, whether it concerned someone close or someone they knew.'[57]

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50 Ibid, pp. 157-8
51 Walsh, *Gang War*
52 Bob Golding and Jonathan McClory, *Going Ballistic: Dealing with guns, gangs and knives* (Policy Exchange, 2008), p.51
53 Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, p.68
54 *Tackling Gangs: A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners*, p.18
55 For coverage of the Rhys Jones shooting and conviction of Sean Mercer and his accomplices see, for example, *Rhys Jones killer Sean Mercer gets 22 years* (The Guardian, 16 December 2008)
56 *Tackling Gangs: A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners*, p.18
57 As cited in Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, p.70

The Working Group received a similar response from young people in Knowsley, a high deprivation area of Merseyside. Pupils at one secondary school told the Working Group that the surrounding areas were highly territorial and named at least three local gangs. The perception of young people in deprived areas of Merseyside is that gang culture and violence is pervasive in their areas.

Birmingham

Birmingham's gang problem was brought to national prominence with the murders of Letitia Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis at a New Year's Eve party in 2003. Shakespeare and Ellis were the innocent victims of a drive-by shooting using a Mac-10 submachine gun, the result of a gang feud.

Young Disciples, a Birmingham-based youth charity, works with young people living in gang-impacted communities and provides therapeutic and practical support to help them take a positive path in life

On a visit to Birmingham, the Working Group heard that gangs were prominent in the city's disadvantaged areas such as Lozells and Hansworth and in nearby Alton. Marc Edwards, co-founder of the gang intervention organisation *Young Disciples*, told the group that 'gang culture and disenfranchised lifestyles are a normality within inner city Birmingham'. Staff at Young Disciples talked about the wearing of bandanas to depict gang colours as a common feature of some inner city schools.

Dr Derrick Campbell, gangs expert and practitioner, informed the Working Group that the two most notorious gangs in Birmingham are the Burger Bar gang and Johnson Crew, both of which are highly territorial. The Burgers are smaller in number, whilst the Johnsons consist of different factions, including Asian, Black, White and Irish crews. These crews are not necessarily affiliated to each other, but use the name 'Johnson' to lend credibility, and notoriety, to their outfits.

Assistant Chief Constable Davenport, West Midlands Police, told the Working Group that they have identified around 400 gang members. She confirmed the two main gangs as the Johnsons Crew and Burger Bar gang – with the A34 as the dividing line between the two – but noted that there are also 'lots and lots of splinter groups'. ACC Davenport also told the Group that gang culture was 'starting to be played out in different communities', noting that whilst historically gang members had been predominantly young black males, Asian gangs are now increasingly common. A recent Home Office publication cites growing concerns about 'possible emerging younger gangs which unify around a Muslim identity' in the Birmingham area.[58]

Spreading past the core cities

The cities above are a selection of those hardest-hit by gangs, but Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Bristol also have significant problems. However, gangs are

58 *Tackling Gangs: A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners* , p.17

not isolated to Britain's core cities. A South London YOT worker told the Working Group:

> 'If I look at any town or borough in England – I've travelled extensively over England – and I've seen these groups that people call gangs in every part of England… it's not just a London thing.'

On a visit to Leicester, PC Faye Mansfield told the Working Group that gang culture was spreading past the main cities. She noted that Leicester, due to its close proximity to Birmingham and Nottingham, was seeing the development of gangs, with one major gang but around 20 'crews'. These 'crews' are unlikely to fit our definition of a gang, but their presence is indicative of a wider trend in which young people are forming delinquent youth groups and engaging in anti-social behaviour and violence.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of *gangs* are found in our major urban cities, and in the poorest neighbourhoods within them.

2.2 Criminal Identity

> 'From the earliest to the most recent investigations, criminologists have consistently found that, when compared with youth who do not belong to gangs, gang members are more involved in delinquency, especially serious and violent delinquency.'
>
> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice[59]

As our definition (Section 1.4) highlights, wide ranging criminal activity is a defining characteristic of gangs. This does not mean that a desire to be involved in crime and violence is the motivation for membership, but that membership leads to, even requires in the case of violence, involvement. It is the search for respect, status and money that are the most common drivers of gang formation and membership, but in the communities in which gangs are found, attainment of these often appears to necessitate involvement in crime and violence.[60] Hence Pitts states of the motivation for violent street crime:

> 'Respect matters because to be disrespected is to be "fair game" for anyone who wants to make a name for themselves and…this is virtually everybody involved with gangs.'[61]

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59 S. R. Battin-Pearson et al., *Gang membership, delinquent peers, and delinquent behavior*, Juvenile Justice Bulletin (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, October 1998)

60 This must be seen within the typology structures presented in Section 1.2. Within these, the motivation for specialist gangs will be more overtly income driven with crime as their raison d'etre

61 Pitts, "Reluctant Gangsters"

2.2.1 WIDE RANGING CRIMINALITY

A Home Office report on the findings of the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey found that 63 per cent of 10-19 year olds who were members of a 'delinquent youth group' had committed at least one 'core offence' in the past 12 months. This is more than double the proportion of non-members, 26 per cent of whom had committed an offence.[62] The results for serious and frequent offending are equally instructive: 34 per cent of members had committed a serious offence compared to just 13 per cent of non-members; for frequent offenders this was 28 per cent compared to 7 per cent.[63]

Putting the level of offending into perspective, the report states:

> '…the six per cent of individuals who were members of delinquent youth groups were responsible for around a fifth (21%) of all core offences committed by this age group.'[64]

Notably, the six per cent of members were responsible for 40 per cent of burglaries, 22 per cent of drug selling and 21 per cent of assaults with injury.[65] In short, young people involved in gangs commit more crime.

Analysis of the Safer London Youth Survey 2004 showed that young people reporting membership of a gang with a name and territory:

> '…were significantly more likely to report engaging in criminal behaviour in the previous year, especially vandalism, assault, carrying a knife or other weapon, and to a lesser extent, carrying a gun…[and to] have ever used or sold drugs (predominantly cannabis) and to have been arrested at some point'.[66]

Mares' analysis of Manchester gangs highlights the sheer range of criminal activities that gangs are involved in. He notes that:

> 'Apart from involvement in the drug trade Moss Side gang members commit a wide range of other offences; car thefts, protection rackets and cash-point robberies to name but a few.'[67]

These versatile offending habits can likewise be found amongst Salford and Wythenshawe gangs.[68]

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62 'The 'core' criminal offences covered by the survey include robbery (commercial and personal), assault (with and without injury), burglary (domestic and non-domestic), criminal damage (to vehicles and other), thefts of and from vehicles, other miscellaneous thefts (from shop, person, school/college, work) and selling drugs (Class A and other)'; Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.7, footnote 13

63 Ibid., p.7

64 Ibid., p.12

65 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*

66 *Findings from the Safer London Youth Survey 2004*, p.11

67 Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester, Dennis Mares, p.155, in M.W. Klein et al., *The Eurogang Paradox: Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the U.S. and Europe*, 1st ed. (Springer, 2000), p.155

68 Ibid., p.160

This is supported by Bullock and Tilley's report on South Manchester gangs. They found that known gang members were prolific offenders, averaging 12 arrests per gang member, and had been involved in:

> 'murder, rape, indecent assault, robbery, burglary, drugs offences, theft, handling stolen goods, fraud, criminal damage, perversion of the course of justice, and traffic violations of various sorts etc, as well as firearms-related offences.'[69]

Street crime is particularly prevalent amongst gang members, serving two purposes: it is both a source of income and a way of building status and respect. Pitts argues that the desire to gain status explains why much of the street crime is perpetrated against other gang members and their relatives.[70]

The seriousness of the crime committed will vary from gang to gang. Pitts captures this diversity using the Metropolitan Police Service's Harm Assessment Scoring Scale. He scored six of the borough's gangs as causing a high level of harm – having committed serious assaults, rape, kidnapping, attempted murder and murder – but scores varied from the maximum 198 to an estimated 25+.[71]

2.2.2 THE ROLE OF VIOLENCE AND THE USE OF WEAPONS

Violence as street currency

As noted above, street crime is common amongst gangs, and in order to gain the reputation sought through its perpetration it is often violent. In his report on Waltham Forest gangs, Pitts notes that gang members sometimes video their offences to post on websites – thereby demonstrating their own fearlessness and instilling fear in others.[72]

> "Everyone's got a knife"
>
> Male youth, Lewisham, speaking to the Working Group

Violence breeds fear, and to be feared is to be respected. But the bigger the reputation, the further to fall: if fear and respect are street currency, then the bigger the player you take out, the larger the pay off. Hence the cycle never stops. Speaking to a group of male teenagers in Lewisham, the Working Group was told by one of the young people: 'there's so much hype around their name, so they need to keep it up'. Another said, 'once you're in a gang you have to walk with people'. If you've built a reputation then you're a target, you are continuously watching your back.

The role of respect and power is crucial in explaining gang violence in its present form. Whereas historically gang violence would have been more directly linked to drug turf, now violence is commonly triggered in one of two ways:

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69 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.26
70 Pitts, "Reluctant Gangsters"
71 Ibid., see Figs. 4.1 and 4.2
72 Ibid.

1. A single, often minor, act of disrespect: for example someone looking at a gang member in the 'wrong' way. To maintain his reputation the gang member must retaliate, normally through violence. The 2007 murder of 14 year old Martin Dinnegan was apparently due to a 'dirty look', as was the stabbing of 16 year old Nassirudeen Osawe in Islington the same year.[73]

2. Territorial conflict: for example someone from a rival postcode entering a gang's territory. There are many examples of killings which have been attributed to 'postcode wars', including the shooting dead of 16 year old Jonathan Matondo in Sheffield in 2007, the stabbing of Paul Erhahon in Leytonstone the same year, and the stabbing of Henry Bolombi in Edmonton at the start of 2008.[74]

The **Safer London Youth Survey**[75] of 11-15 year olds found that, in the previous 12 months:

- 10% had carried a knife
- 6% had carried a gun
- 7% had carried a weapon other than a knife or a gun
- 13% knew someone who had brought a 'real or real-looking' gun into school – this increased to almost a quarter of year 10s
- Nearly 1 in 5 could easily get hold of a replica gun, 15% an airgun and 8% a handgun

Knives, guns and weapons

It is hard to document the exact relationship between gun and knife crime and gangs. As noted above, group involvement in a crime is not necessarily recorded (see introduction to Section 2). Even where group involvement is recorded, there is nothing to say that it was a gang related offence. In addition, the YJB also note that 'Where such a weapon has been used in the commission of an offence…this will not routinely be recorded – only the substantive offence.'[76]

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies' report for Channel 4's Street Weapons Commission made a similar observation in their criticism of available statistics:

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73 See for example, *Mark Dinnegan, 14, murdered over 'dirty look'*, The Telegraph, 30th May 2008; *Boy 'stabbed to death over a dirty look'*, The Mail, 30th May 2008; and *Teenager stabbed for 'dirty look' at gang member*, The Times, 29th December 2007

74 See for example, *Boy,16, shot dead in gun battle*, The Guardian, 19th October 2008; Postcode *gang killed brave Paul*, Stratford and Newham Express, 16th April 2008; and *London's gang wars claim the first teenage victim of 2008*, Evening Standard, 2nd January 2008

75 *Findings from the Safer London Youth Survey 2004*

76 *Groups, Gangs and Weapons*, p.51

'English and Welsh police forces were not required by the Home Office to collect knife crime data until 2007...police have historically been required to record violence injuries by the scale and type of injury (GBH, wounding etc.), not by the weapon that has inflicted it.'[77]

F.A.R.E, a youth project working in Glasgow, uses small-scale models of the area to challenge territorialism. Violence connected to territorialism and involving knives is common in Glasgow's East End

Nevertheless, available data does point to significant use of weapons amongst gangs. The 2004 Offending Crime Justice Survey (OCJS) of 10-19 year olds found that 13 per cent of gang (Delinquent Youth Groups) members had carried a knife in the previous 12 months. This is over three times the proportion of non-gang young people (4 per cent). Just one per cent of gang members had carried a gun compared to less than one per cent for non-gang young people.

This is supported by both Bullock's and Tilley's research in Manchester and results from the NEW-ADAM programme. Bullock and Tilley interviewed 15 gang members in custody in Manchester and found that carrying a gun or knife was routine and injuries were common.[78] Indeed, about 60 per cent of shootings in South Manchester were believed to be gang-related.[79] The NEW-ADAM programme, conducted between 1999 to 2002, found that:

'Gang members were…more heavily involved in the possession of weapons and guns. All comparisons between gang members and non-gang members were highly significant.'[80]

The NEW-ADAM findings are shown in Fig. 1.5 For each indicator, current gang members were between two and three times more likely to have been involved with weapons in general, and guns in particular, than non-members.

Figure 1.4: Use of weapons amongst gang and non-gang member offenders aged 17 and above, %

	current members	past members	all members	non-members
Ever possessed a weapon during an offence	63	44	49	20
Ever possessed a gun	59	47	50	21
Ever mix with people who carry a gun	78	75	76	34
Ever possessed a gun during an offence	33	31	32	14
Ever fired a gun	67	71	70	44

Source: Bennett and Holloway, Gang Membership, Drugs and Crime in the UK, 2004

77 Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, p.4 and 15
78 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.31
79 Ibid., p.iv
80 Bennett and Holloway, "Gang Membership, Drugs and Crime in the UK," p.317

John Pitts' report on Lambeth gangs highlights the London boroughs most affected by gun crime. Although there is no estimate of the proportion of gun crime attributable to gang activity, it is unsurprising that, as in Manchester, the areas most affected are those with a high prevalence of gangs. Thus Lambeth, Hackney, Lewisham and Southwark all have high rates of gun-enabled crime.[81] In addition, we know that at least half of the 27 murders of young people perpetrated by young people in 2007 were gang-related.[82]

Superintendent Paul Richardson (Operation Matrix, Merseyside Police) estimated that, of the 52 firearms discharges in Merseyside to date in the 2008 financial year, around 60 per cent have been gang-related.[83] This matches the figure for South Manchester cited above and is similar to the London 2007 murder figure. This clearly demonstrates that gangs are disproportionately responsible for violent crime.

The availability of guns

On a visit to Birmingham, the Working Group asked gangs expert Dr. Campbell how frequently shootings occured in Britain's second city. His response was stark:

> 'Honestly? I'll give you an example. In April [2008], in the space of a weekend, we had 11 different shootings. That was Friday to Sunday – one was a fatality, others were serious injuries. All young people, all gang-related – and one guy literally shot himself in the foot.'

The Chair of the National Independent Advisory Group (appointed by the Association of Chief Police Officers) went on to inform the Group that:

> '… guns are too readily available on the streets…We would have had a lot more deaths on our streets if it wasn't for the fact that the youngsters firing the guns are such poor shots – people are shot in the leg, in the back, wherever. And there are a lot of injuries that are just not reported.'

The accessibility of guns was highlighted by another Birmingham community worker who told the Group that 'a gun is easier to get now than a mobile phone'. This is an exaggeration – a number of senior police officers have noted that real, as opposed to replica, guns are not easily available – but this does not negate the *perception* that guns are readily obtainable in the city.

43% of young people polled by the BBC said they could buy a gun in their area

The poll surveyed 500 teenagers aged 13-18 living in Croydon, Brent, Hackney, Southwark and Lambeth (2007)[84]

81 Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*
82 *MPA Youth Scrutiny* (Metropolitan Police Authority, May 29, 2008), pp.54-5
83 Given in evidence to the working group on 23rd October 2008
84 Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, p.39

Interestingly, according to Dr. Campbell it is the ammunition that can prove most problematic to acquire: 'Guns are easy to get, but the problem is ammunition which is hard to get.' He told the group that for this reason, guns involved in shootings are often passed around the country after use.' This was confirmed by MPS officers speaking to the Working Group.

The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NBIS) was set up in 2008 to track the life of a gun, and has the capability to link crimes within 48 hours. It is shocking that the NBIS will provide the first national database for recovered firearms and ballistic material. The aim, according to the Home Office, is 'to proactively prevent and detect the importation and manufacture of illegal firearms and ammunition into and within the UK.'[85] Time will reveal the effectiveness of this.

Knives and fear

The OCJS and Mori Youth Survey data above demonstrates that the key weapon on the streets is a knife. This can be seen in the number of young people killed by knives compared to guns: 23 young people were stabbed to death in London alone in the 12 months up to January 2009.[86]

> "The new stuff, it's about protection. It's fear."
>
> Nathan Dennis, Founder and Director, First Class Youth Network, Birmingham

However this masks an even starker, mostly unreported, reality. In the past five years there has been an 89 per cent increase in the number of under-16s admitted to hospital with serious stab wounds, and a 75 per cent increase amongst older teenagers.[87] At the Royal London Hospital alone, 30 per cent of their trauma workload involved penetrative wounds in April 2008 – almost a third higher than the previous year.[88]

Knives are carried by a significant minority of young people, and it is important to note that many of these young people will not be gang-affiliated. The need to feel protected appears to be a key driver for this. Out of a group of eight young males aged 14-17 at a project in Lewisham, five admitted to the Working Group that, at some point, they have carried a knife. When asked why they did so, the most popular answer was 'for protection, not to use'. Other responses were 'to show off', 'to fit in' and 'out of fear'. In addition, seven out of the eight young men knew someone who owned a gun, though none admitted to personally carrying one.

> 63% of young people responding to an NCH survey stated that the main reason young people got involved in gun and knife crime was for protection.[89]

Data from a number of surveys supports the notion of fear as a motivator for carrying a knife. A 2004 report, *Fear and Fashion*, states that 'fear and victimisation play the most significant role in a young person's decision to

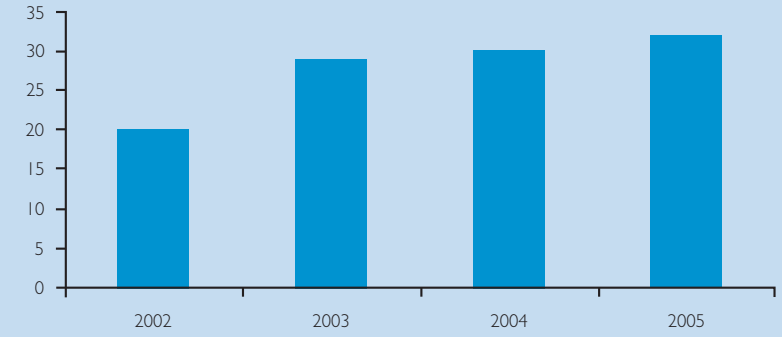
85 *New weapon in the fight against gun crime*, Home Office Press Release, Monday 10 March 2008
86 BBC One, *Panorama: Jailed for a Knife*, aired 12th January 2008
87 *Cherie Blair: 'I fear for my children'*, The Independent, 2nd July 2008
88 *It's like a war zone…one in three of my patients has been knifed*, Evening Standard, 30th May 2008
89 *'Step inside our shoes': Young people's views on gun and knife crime* (NCH, 2007), p.2

carry a knife or weapon',[90] and the YJB's Mori Youth Survey 2004 highlights the fact that 'the majority [of young people] say that they have never used a weapon, even if they have carried one.'[91] Witness, a musician, commented to the Working Group:

> 'If you [adults] don't feel safe, how are you going to expect the underprivileged young people to feel safe? They're going to pick up whatever they can!'

The fact that young people do not feel safe is crucial, as is the link to the presence of gangs. A National Children's Home (NCH, now Action for Children) consultation with young people found that 36 per cent of respondents were worried about gangs in their area, and 29 per cent had been personally affected by gun and knife crime (41 per cent knew someone who had been affected). One 17 year old quoted in the report said:

Figure 1.5: Percentage of school children who say they have carried a knife in the last 12 months, 2002-2005



Source: Street Weapons Commission, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, 2008

> 'I don't like it. It scares me to go out after a certain time. There are always gangs around and you never know if they are gonna knife or shoot you or if they have got any knives or guns on them.'[92]

A Crimestoppers survey highlighted the same issue: 46 per cent of under 16s were frightened of 'teenage gangs'.[93] There is a clear correlation between fear of gangs (whether perception or reality) and carrying a weapon.

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90 Gerard Lemos, *Fear and Fashion: the use of knives and other weapons by young people* (Lemos&Crane, 2004), p.vii
91 *Mori Youth Survey 2004* (Youth Justice Board, July 2004)
92 *'Step inside our shoes': Young people's views on gun and knife crime*, p.3
93 As cited in Lemos, *Fear and Fashion: the use of knives and other weapons by young people*, p.9

2.2.3 DRUGS

The drugs market is intricately linked to gangs (see Part I, Sections 4.2 and 4.3 for further discussion of the role of drugs). Pitts writes in detail about the involvement of Waltham Forest gangs in the drugs trade[94], just as Mares noted that Manchester gangs became involved in dealing drugs in the 1980s (Moss Side gangs ran the trade in hashish, heroine, cocaine and crack, whilst Salford gangs specialised in 'party' drugs such as ecstasy).[95]

> "I cannot overstate how seductive street culture is to young people – and I know that myself because it's what I wanted at the age of 18 – in terms of the material gain and lifestyle. The reality is often not what these young people are seeing, they're seeing the glamour of it: the money, the Elders driving fast cars, earning in excess of £1000 a day."
>
> Ruth Lapage, Learning Support Unit Manager at an inner city London school

The key driver of this is income – and the pay off can be huge. Pitts estimates an *Elder*'s drug dealing income in Waltham Forest to be in the region of £130,000 per year – and so the foot soldier on £26,000 naturally aspires to be the Elder.[96] One Lewisham teenager told the Working Group, 'Some people are just broke every day, so they deal drugs', whilst another said 'It's easy, it's easy! It's not hard to hold weed in your bag.'

Gang members and drug and alcohol misuse

There is also a link between gang membership and drug use. The 2004 OCJS found that 45 per cent of gang members had used drugs in the previous 12 months – three times the proportion of non-members – and 11 per cent had used a Class A substance, almost four times that for non-members. This is likely to act as a further trigger for violent behaviour. One male teenager from Lewisham highlighted drugs as a key cause of 'the agro.'

In addition, a number of witnesses have commented on the role of alcohol in contributing to gang-related violence. This was of particular note in Glasgow where police and youth workers told the Working Group that the majority of violence was perpetrated after the young people had consumed a considerable quantity of alcohol, though it was gang-affiliation and territory that fuelled it.

2.3 What impact does gang membership have on individual offending?

> 'The criminal behaviour committed by gang members is extensive and significantly exceeds that committed by comparably at-risk but nongang [sic] youths.'[97]

94 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 4

95 Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester, Dennis Mares, in Klein et al., *The Eurogang Paradox*

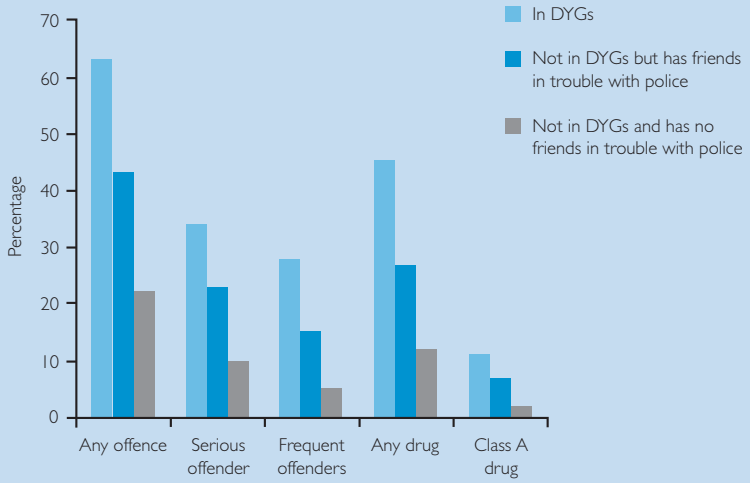
96 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 4

97 C. R. Huff, *Comparing the Criminal Behavior of Youth Gangs and At-Risk Youths. Research in Brief.*, Research in Brief (U.S Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, October 1998), p.2

Research conducted in America has demonstrated a clear and strong correlation between gang membership and offending. A Denver study showed that gang members committed around three times the number of serious and violent offences of non-gang members; in Seattle gang-involved young people reported more than five times as many violent offences; and in Rochester this rose even further to seven times as many serious and violent offences. These studies also demonstrated that the influence of gang membership on violent offending was much stronger than that of delinquent peers, and that violent offences were committed more often during gang membership than before or after (though frequency remained higher after).[98]

This is supported by data from the 2004 OCJS. Whilst 63 per cent of gang members reported committing an offence in the 12 months prior to the survey, only 43 per cent of non-members with delinquent friends (friends who have been in trouble with the police) reported doing so. This pattern is also seen with serious and frequent offenders (see Fig. 1.7).[99]

Figure 1.6: Offending and drug use by gang (Delinquent Youth Group) membership, 10-19 year olds



Source: Delinquent Youth Groups and Offending Behaviour: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey, Home Office

2.4 Is the situation getting worse?

2.4.1 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA – SPREADING MORAL PANIC

Sensationalist headlines – irresponsible reporting?

National newspapers regularly carry headlines about stab victims, gangs and youth violence. Television news features and documentaries on violent street

98 Howell, *Youth Gangs*
99 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*

gangs have become staple viewing and few news bulletins are gang- or youth violence-free. London's Evening Standard has carried front page images of (bloodied) knives[100] and news media keeps a 'counter' of teenage deaths in the Capital. If we were to judge the scale of gang violence by the number of media reports on it we would perceive an epidemic.

Witnesses told the Working Group that media coverage of youth violence and gangs is often unhelpful – adding to the public perception of a an epidemic

Many of the witnesses to this review have highlighted the irresponsible nature of what they see as sensationalist coverage. It was argued that the coverage is (a) fuelling hysteria amongst the general population, (b) adding to young people's fear and therefore their willingness to carry a weapon, and (c) encouraging gangs to behave violently to get in the papers.

Fuelling hysteria, creating fear and encouraging weapon carrying

A number of people commented to the Working Group that the constant coverage of gang and knife violence created fear and a sense of inevitability amongst young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Melvyn Davis, Director of The Male Development Service (BoyztoMEN), told the Working Group:

> '…the reporting of the press, that's very irresponsible…I would say, to a certain extent, it creates and fuels and gives a sense of "everybody's doing it"…[and] the counter, you know – "15 young people, 16 young people, 20 young people" – it's just so impersonal. It becomes meaningless. And I think that's the danger of this reporting. Young people are talking about things which should be shocking in a very matter of fact way…for the young people there's an inevitability- "I might not live to see 25"."

For many young people, the fear of gangs and street violence does not come from personal experience (though for some it invariably does), and therefore must be learnt elsewhere. The media, in an age of 24 hour news, may in part be responsible. An American report on youth, race and crime in the media notes that three quarters of the public form their opinions about crime from news coverage. The report also cites a Los Angeles Times poll which revealed that 80 per cent of respondents stated that their fear of victimisation had increased due to media coverage of violent crime.[101] The authors analysed US studies 'that directly assessed the content of crime, race and/or youth in the news' and concluded that:

> 'depictions of crime in the news are not reflective of the rate of crime generally, the proportion of crime which is violent, the proportion of

100 See for example, Evening Standard, Wednesday 14th May 2008 and Friday 30th May 2008

101 Lori Dorfman and Vincent Schiraldi, *Off Balance: Youth, Race & Crime in the News*, Executive Summary (Building Blocks for Youth, April 2001), p.3

> crime committed by people of color [sic], or the proportion of crime committed by youth.'[102]

Hence whilst youth crime and homicide was falling, coverage was increasing, thus skewing the public's perception of the problem.

Susan Batchelor looked at the disparity between newspaper coverage and violence perpetrated by girls in Scotland and concluded that media coverage was often inaccurate, misrepresentative and misleading. The tendency to sensationalise what are usually atypical occurrences has contributed to 'unrealistic public attitudes, which in turn can create misdirected public policy…As young women are demonised in the media, their genuine problems can be marginalised and ignored.'[103] News coverage is vital, but so too is the nature and emphasis of the reporting.

Fifteen minutes of fame – coverage as status

The number of 'gang' photos in news articles and features indicates a readiness amongst young people to appear in the media brandishing weaponry. As we have already noted, status and reputation is paramount in street culture: a photo of you pointing a gun in a national newspaper, defying authority, is likely to help with that. We must therefore ask if the news coverage is in fact helping to perpetuate the very thing it is condemning?

One former Boston Youth Services Providers Network (YSPN) worker and current London YOT manager told the Working Group:

> 'I don't think it's escalating as badly as we think it is. But one of the things that is different in Boston, where we have [daily shootings], is that we only have one tabloid. We're not surrounded, the headlines aren't that outrageous. We don't have an evening paper, and the headlines aren't separate and put out by shops. A really interesting piece of research in Chicago said there was a gang that the police began to call the 'Whatever Boys', that got in the media, and from then on all the gang did was work to get back into the paper.'

2.4.2 UNRELIABLE CRIME STATISTICS

As with the prevalence of gangs, reliable statistics on the level of gang-related crime are hard to establish. In addition to the issues around knife crime and group involvement already highlighted, there is concern around the usefulness of both the British Crime Survey (BCS) and police reported crime statistics.

According to the BCS, violent crime has declined over the past decade. In contrast, police recorded violent crime has increased, particularly serious violent crime.

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102 Ibid., p.5

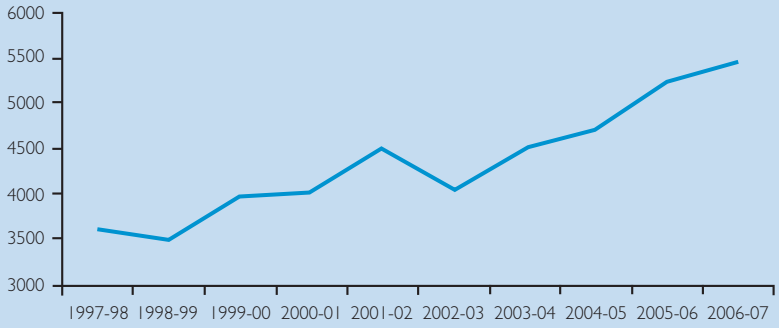
103 S. Batchelor, "'The Myth of Girl Gangs'," *Criminal Justice Matters*, no. 43 (2001): 26-27

Although this disparity will in part be the result of changes to recording practices and increased levels of reporting, police statistics are also likely to be underestimates of the true level of crime. In Glasgow for example, research conducted in hospitals estimated serious assaults to be between 50 and 70 per cent higher than police records show.[104] The Street Weapons Commission report states, 'it is likely that a significant proportion of [weapon-related] offending is not reported.'[105] The report goes on to say – about guns in particular, though the premise is more widely applicable – that:

> 'There is often a strong 'no grassing' presumption: the communities in which gun crime is most common tend to have the lowest levels of trust and confidence in the police and, invariably, the worst experiences of policing.'[106]

Other data sources, including hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) statistics, support the notion of underreporting – though it is vital to note that these admissions are not necessarily gang-related. Fig. 1.7 from the Street Weapons Report clearly shows this increase:

Figure 1.7: Hospital A&E admissions episodes where external cause is 'assault by a sharp object', 1997-98 to 2006-07



Source: *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (2008)

The key problem with the BCS is the absence of data for under-16s (although in May 2008 the Home Office announced that under-16s will be surveyed in future). The current BCS data is therefore inadequate. As the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies points out 'under-16s…especially young males – [experience] the highest rates of violent victimisation.'[107]

They also highlight the inadequacy of national average crime rates, which 'mislead us'[108] by hiding the high rates of violence amongst young people living in areas of high disadvantage:

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104 Squires et al., *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*, p.74
105 Ibid., p.13
106 Ibid., p.15
107 Ibid., p.10-11
108 Ibid., p.11

> 'Violent and weapon-related crime are highly localised and concentrated in the poorest and most deprived areas in which violence is often a symptom of deeper problems.'[109]

2.4.3 GANG AND WEAPON VIOLENCE ON THE UP

As discussed above, we can confidently say that there has been an increase in the number of young people carrying knives, but we cannot say this is the result of increased gang membership. Nevertheless, young people's perception of the streets as too dangerous to go out without a weapon does indicate an increased problem with gangs.

Peter Walsh's book on the Manchester gang scene clearly shows the intensification of gang activity and violence in the city and its outlying areas. He concludes that:

> 'To draw a criminal map of Britain in 2003, with the gangs and firms and allegiances and feuds in every region, and match it to one from 1973 would be like comparing two different countries, so great has the change been.'[110]

Evidence collected by the Working Group indicates that the perception on the streets – both young people's and practitioners' – is that the gang problem is worsening. One YOT manager told the Working Group that whereas 4 or 5 years ago, gang violence was inter-borough, it is now intra-borough, and this reflects the increase in the number of gangs: from borough wars to postcode wars. This was confirmed by Patrick Regan, CEO of XLP (a youth charity working across some of London's most gang-impacted boroughs) who said:

> 'Expanding young people's horizons is a task becoming ever harder in the urban context as postcode wars become more prevalent and estates more territorial. In London, rivalries which have historically been inter-borough are becoming intra-borough. The space people feel safe in is constricting...'

Nevertheless, gang membership and violence is still a minority activity – though the impact is far more wide-ranging – and it is vital to keep this in mind. Incessant sensational headlines are creating an image of a country plagued by gang warfare. This is not the case.

Gang prevalence is, by most accounts, on the up, but this must be kept in perspective. Whereas police in Boston and LA told the Working Group that the gang problem in America has gone too far to stop – their focus is harm minimisation – *in Britain we can still reverse the culture if we act now* (see Part III for short-, medium- and long-term policy recommendations).

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109 Ibid.
110 Walsh, *Gang War*, p.316

THREE
Profiling gang members

3.1 Age

The 2004 OCJS found gang members throughout the survey age range of 10-19. The greatest prevalence was amongst 14-15 year olds, with the fewest gang members found in the age ranges 10-11 and 18-19.[111] This data should, however, be used with caution: those most likely to be heavily involved in gangs are perhaps less likely to confirm their involvement in a Home Office survey. As with the prevalence of weapons and violence, the majority of gang involvement is likely to go unreported.

> "We see Year 8s, 12-13 year olds that are wearing green and talking about how they're the Youngers in the gangs. And even for me, who's experienced this and knows about it, it's shocking to see them so young and so eager to be a part of these gangs. And it's because quite often they need a sense of family and having people to look out for them, which they don't get."
>
> Ruth Lapage, Learning Support Unit Manager in an inner city London school

The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) found the age range of youth gang members to be 12-24,[112] and MPS research has shown a similar age range (12-25) for London gangs. The MPS Pan-London Gang Profile (2006) stated that most young people joined gangs between the ages of 12 and 14 and that the majority of members were under 18.[113]

Researchers into gangs in other UK regions have presented similar findings. Mares found that the age range for Manchester's Gooch and Doddington gangs was 10-30 and 10-25 for Salford gangs. Wythenshawe gangs had a narrower age range of 14-18, but, he notes, they sometimes included older and/or younger members – this may be linked to the less organised and criminally-involved nature of these gangs.[114]

Pitts notes that in Waltham Forest gang members range from 10-40 or even 50, with some seven and eight year olds claiming affiliation – as demonstrated by the occurrence of gang-related conflict in some primary schools.[115] In his Lambeth report Pitts presents a hierarchical structure of *Elders*, *Youngers* (or *Soldiers*) and *Tinys*, with the age of the gang member reducing as you go further down the structure. Hence Elders may be late teens/early twenties, Youngers mid-teens, and Tinys 10 or 11.

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111 Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, *Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour*, p.4
112 Howell, *Youth Gangs*
113 As cited in Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 5
114 Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester, Dennis Mares, p. 160, in *The Eurogang Paradox, Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*, edited by Malcolm w. Klein, Hans-Jurgen Kerner, Cheryl L. Maxson and Elmar G. M. Weitekamp, 2001
115 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 5.

This is useful in understanding why mid-teens appear to be the age at which gang membership is most prevalent – *Youngers* are the foot soldiers or the *Run-arounds*, whereas the *Elders* are the ones calling the shots.

The concept of foot soldiers was supported by Dr. Campbell. Talking with the Working Group about the age of the gang members in Birmingham he said:

> 'These are 13, 14, 15 – up to 22 – years olds, the Shooters, people who have shot people. They're so mixed up that they get a signal and they're off.'

The younger members being the ones committing the gun crime is slightly different to the official picture. Victim Support London (2006) found the peak age of gun crime offenders to be 18-24, but does note that over the past two years there has been a significant increase in the number of offenders aged between 10 and 17. In 2003/4 17-24 year olds accounted for a huge 43 per cent of all *reported* gun incidents in England and Wales.[116] Bullock and Tilley's 2002 report noted that Greater Manchester Police intelligence data found 21 to be the average age of gun crime offenders in Manchester (the average age of the victim was 20), but as suggested, this average is likely to have come down.[117]

Early intervention is vital and mentoring can play a central role in this. Chance UK, an early intervention charity, provides positive adult mentors for children with behavioural problems

3.2 Gender

Gang membership is most commonly seen as a male preserve – and by and large it is. However, as a 2008 University of Manchester report noted:

> 'Regardless of whether they are seen as gang members or not, young women are associated with gang members and this association has important implications for their lives.'[118]

The 2004 OCJS put male and female gang membership as equal at six per cent each. However, breaking this down by age band, the survey showed that female membership was more prevalent than male membership at an early age (10-11, 12-13, 14-15), but male membership exceeded female membership from 15 onwards, with three times the number of male members at ages 18 to19 than female members.

These figures are surprising: anecdotal evidence points towards gang membership being predominantly male. The OCJS data may be misleading due to definition. It may be that female respondents claiming membership

116 *The experience of gun crime in London* (Victim Support, 2006)
117 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.20
118 Judith Aldridge, Juanjo Medina, and Robert Ralphs, *Youth Gangs in an English City*, Research Report (University of Manchester), p.6

should actually be classed as affiliates. For example Ivora Ferreira-Bean, who runs a Connexions project for girls in Alton, identified three main roles played by the gang-affiliated girls she works with:

- As a *foot soldier*, particularly dressing up as boys to set up rival gangs
- As a *carrier*, holding and hiding weapons and drugs
- As a *mother figure*, doing things like cooking and laundry

John Pitts identifies a fourth ancillary role played by females:

- As a *girlfriend*, a predominantly sexual role

Pitts states that the girls are 'often sexually exploited', and that 'rape by gang members, as a form of reprisal or just because they can, is said to occur fairly frequently and reports to the police are rare.'[119] Sonia Ramanah, Project Director at StreetVibes Youth, made the same point, explaining that girls and young women are seen as 'sexual accessories' and that the young men are 'pimping' them.

In a 2008 Guardian article, Blood Sisters, one ex-gang member said:[120]

> 'When you are as desperate as most of us are in that situation, you do anything to get what feels like love…The boys would treat us as their bitches, phone whoever they felt like fucking, order them to come over, and most girls would drop everything and do whatever was wanted.'

She explains her involvement in gang culture and extreme violence through her experience in childhood: she was beaten and raped by her stepfather from the age of four. Also quoted is Dinah Senior who worked with gang members through the charity InVolve and has now set up her own project, Little Miss Raw. Highlighting the sexual exploitation of vulnerable females in gang areas she said:

> 'There are the girlie-girls who dress very provocatively, wear lots of bling and makeup and are expected to sleep with any and every gang member, although their ambition is to be chosen by the leaders of the pack. This way they are protected from gang rape, and they get free weed and trainers. But once the gang is bored of them sexually, they are labelled whores and kicked out. Most end up addicted to crack, selling sex on the streets.'

A number of community leaders and young people highlighted the role played by girls in sparking inter-gang violence. Marc Edwards told the group it was

119 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 5
120 *Blood Sisters*, The Guardian, Friday 4th July 2008

females that had 'facilitated most shootings and deaths' in Birmingham, but that it is only one out of hundreds that ever gets convicted. A group of male teenagers attending StreetVibes Youth talked of girls going to their gang-involved brothers when they feel they have been 'dissed' [disrespected], and this triggering gang violence. This would appear to be confirmed by the murder of Shakilus Townsend: Detectives investigating the murder believe that he was lured to his death by the girlfriend of one of the gang members who attacked the 16 year old – he had been exchanging calls and text messages with the girl.[121]

Female street violence

Over the past few years there has been an increase in media coverage of female gang members and violence.[122]

An Observer article in 2001 noted the rise of female involvement in gang violence, citing work by criminologist Dr Jody Miller. Miller looked at female involvement in gangs in both the US and Britain and found that girls often sought to be the only female member in a male gang, wanting to be one of the guys and willing to equal the level of violence perpetrated by them. The newspaper article lists a string of highly violent gang attacks in Britain involving a single female gang member with her male counterparts.[123]

An article in the Daily Mail noted that the MPS's most recent gangs estimate cited three *all girl* gangs operating in London. The article names the Shower Gyals (Tottenham), PYG (Peckham) and OCS (Brixton). In addition, the article names an all girl gang in Nottingham, the NG2 Crew (named after their postcode).[124]

However, little analysis has been undertaken of the true level of female gang membership (much like gang involvement as a whole). Batchelor, Burman and Brown conducted an exploratory study into female teenage violence (views and experiences) in Scotland in 2001[125] and none of the girls reported gang membership. Of the total sample, just five per cent of respondents reported being routinely physically violent and self-identifyed as violent.[126] Although none of the girls considered themselves gang members, they did demonstrate a number of our identifying factors:[127]

1. Fighting was discussed as an integral part of their sense of identity
2. Standing up for themselves and their family and friends to ensure 'respect' was of key importance

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121 *Shakilus Townsend told parents of gang threats before murder*, The Telegraph, 6th July 2008

122 See for example, *Why are girls fighting like boys?*, BBC news Magazine, 05.05.08; *The Feral Sex: The terrifying rise of violent girl gangs*, The Mail, 16.05.08; *Are our girls getting more violent?*, BBC News, 15th May 2008

123 *Girls lead the pack in new gangland violence*, The Observer, 15th April 2001

124 *The Feral Sex: The terrifying rise of violent girl gangs*, The Mail, 16th May 2008

125 S. Batchelor, M. Burman, and J. Brown, "Discussing violence: let's hear it for the girls," *Probation Journal* 48, no. 2 (2001): 125-134

126 Routinely physically violent was defined as having committed 7 or more different *types* of violent acts – for a full list see Ibid, p.130

127 Ibid., pp.130-131

3. They understood their social worlds in terms of territory and young people were generally categorised according to their neighbourhood

In addition, most of the girls spoke of 'occupying a social world where the use of violence and intimidation were acceptable ways to deal with conflict', and reported higher levels of verbal and, in particular, physically violent victimisation than the other respondents.[128]

This does not make them gang members – the report says nothing of the nature of their criminal involvement, only that they were more likely to have had police contact; and self-identification is an important part of our definition – but it does show that a significant minority of Scotland's young females are involved in serious violence.

3.3 Ethnicity

Territory over ethnicity

Gang culture is often referred to as a 'Black' problem. Evidence shows this is not the case. Overall, the ethnicity of gang members tends to reflect the ethnicity of the population living in that area. Hence the gangs of Easterhouse estate in Glasgow are White, whereas the gangs of Brixton are predominantly Black. The higher proportion of Black gang members reflects the disproportionate presence of Black communities in deprived inner city neighbourhoods.

> "When people think of guns and gangs, they always think of black Afro-Caribbeans. It's much more complicated than that."
>
> Marc Edwards, Director, Young Disciples, Birmingham

Pitts found that in Waltham Forest, '…there are few single ethnicity gangs. Gangs are estate-based and their ethnic make-up reflects the ethnic make-up of their estates.'[129] African-Caribbean and Mixed Heritage young people were predominant in the gangs because of their disproportionate concentration in social housing in the borough.

Mares, in his study of Manchester gangs, also determined that there are no ethnically 'pure' gangs.[130] Around 80 per cent of Gooch and Doddington members are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, predominantly Afro-Caribbean, but this is likely simply to reflect Moss Side's ethnic composition. This is supported by the presence of White and Mixed Heritage members, and strong territoriality.[131] In Salford gang members are predominantly White, but again the main identifying factor appears to be territory, not ethnicity.[132]

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128 Ibid., p.130
129 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 5
130 Gangstas or Lager Louts? Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester, Dennis Mares, p.161, in Klein et al., *The Eurogang Paradox*
131 Ibid., p.155
132 Ibid., p.157

In Sheffield, the S3 and S4 gangs, named after their postcodes, are comprised of Black, Asian and White members.[133]

Nevertheless, a recent Joseph Roundtree Foundation study found that:

> 'In some places, tensions between areas or within areas arising from place attachment were heavily overlain or paralleled by other divisions between groups. By far the most important division was ethnic origin and this was prevalent to some degree in all of the English case study locations.'[134]

This was particularly the case in areas which had seen the arrival of a new ethnic group.[135] This appears to fit with comments made by witnesses to the inquiry, particularly in relation to the arrival of Somali groups in London. Though keen to stress that it did not reflect the general Somali community – as is the case with all gangs – a number of people talked about the recent phenomenon of Somali gangs, who were often feared by other existing gangs for the severity of the violence they perpetrate. A number of senior police officers commented to the Working Group that the level of violence experienced in Somalia, coupled with the level of alienation Somali communities experience in Britain has led to this development.[136] Unfortunately this remains a generally unspoken problem, demonstrated by the desire of witnesses to remain anonymous on this point due to political sensitivity: it is very difficult to tackle an unspoken problem.

Identification by ethnicity

Nonetheless, it is likely that ethnicity does play a role in some gangs. As noted above, Dr. Campbell identified different Johnson gangs in Birmingham by their ethnicity. John Pitts in his Lambeth report talks about the South Muslim Soldiers who engage in forced conversions, and gangs such as the London-based Paki Panthers, Asian Virus and African Nations Crew wear their ethnicity in their name.

Victim and victimiser: disproportionately Black

As noted above, gangs and gang violence is not the preserve of Black communities. However it does appear to have a disproportionate impact on young Black males. Of the 27 young people murdered in London in 2007, 87 per cent were from BME communities.[137] Recent Scotland Yard data revealed that 124 of the 225 under-18s legally proceeded against for knife offences in the

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133 *Street Corner that is front line in a gang war about postcodes*, The Times, 17.07.08

134 Keith Kintrea et al., *Young people and territoriality in British cities* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, October 2008), p.31

135 Ibid., p.32

136 One practitioner talked about existing communities ostracising a newly arrived Somali community in their area; and one witness gave the example of a London mosque increasing their fees so as to exclude Somali members

137 *MPA Youth Scrutiny*, p.56

three months up to 21st July 2008 were from the Black community.[138] At the time of the 2001 Census, just one in ten of London's population was from the Black community.

However young black males also appear to be a key target for police stop and searches. A 2008 Ministry of Justice report on race and the criminal justice system found that 'members of our Black communities are seven times more likely than their White counterparts to be stopped and searched' and they are 'three and a half times more likely to be arrested'.[139] It is therefore difficult to ascertain the true level of gang involvement, weapon carrying and violence amongst young people of different ethnicities – police data merely reflects who is caught and if certain communities are more likely to be stopped and searched and arrested then this will skew the data. Nevertheless, in the past few years the majority of young people who have died on the streets, as well as the majority of young people perpetrating the violence, have been from Black communities, and this cannot be ignored.[140]

> "From a student's point of view, if you're Black or wearing a hoodie you're going to get stopped and searched."
>
> Ruth Lapage, Learning Support Unit Manager at an inner city London school

3.4 Education

Evidence indicates that the majority of gang-involved young people are failing in, and have been failed by, the education system. It is likely that the majority of gang members have few, if any, qualifications, and if they were not officially excluded from school then they played truant.

StreetVibes Youth, a London-based youth charity, offers educational and diversionary opportunities to disadvantaged young people, many of whom come from gang-impacted neighbourhoods

For example, none of the gang members interviewed by Bullock and Tilley during their Manchester research had completed full-time education.[141] A 2006 study by Pitts found that almost two thirds of the active gang members interviewed in Waltham Forest had been permanently excluded from school.[142] Pitts' Lambeth report notes that 70 per cent of X-it participants, a youth project providing an exit route for gang members, were formally excluded from school and had been either poor or non-attendees.[143]

Marc Edwards, Young Disciples, told us that some of the gang-involved young people that he works with have not been to school for 'three of four years, for whatever scenario' and can't read or write, and Dr Derrick Campbell described how 'back door exclusions' are pushing young people onto the streets:

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138 *Most young knife suspects are black, says the Yard*, Daily Mail, 21st July 2008

139 Alex Jones and Lawrence Singer, *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System - 2006/7*, A Ministry of Justice Publication under Section 95 (Ministry of Justice, July 2008), p.viii

140 87% of suspects in the 27 murders of young people in London in 2007 were Black Minority Ethnic; *MPA Youth Scrutiny*, p.56

141 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," p.26

142 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 5

143 Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*, Chapter 2

> 'Hundreds of young people, even thousands across the city and neighbouring boroughs, who are just idly walking the streets because they've been excluded or suspended from school and no-one seems to be making an effort to help these kids…These young people, what chance have they got?'

Officially or unofficially excluded from school, these young people have few prospects for employment. Education and employment are the cornerstones of social mobility, neither of which are currently viable access points for disadvantaged young people – selling drugs and being part of a gang offers an alternative version of mainstream social climbing.

Case Study 1: Warren

Warren, 20, grew up in a single parent family. His mother worked long hours and he would go for days without seeing her due to the shifts she worked.

He attended a 'failing' school and in Year 9, when a new headteacher arrived to improve it, he was excluded along with 'about 20 other kids' in his year. It took three months before he was placed in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), during which he hung around on the streets. Attendance at the PRU was just half a day for three days a week, so he continued spending large amounts of time on the streets.

By Year 10 he had been moved again to a special school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). He describes the school as 'just housing kids'. He was given Year 7 / 8 level worksheets – 'they just assume you're not clever' – and the focus was on controlling the pupils rather than teaching them.

He was not even entered for GCSEs.

He returned to the streets and, arrested for possession with intent to supply, ended up in a Young Offenders Institution: 'This is normal life for us. You sell drugs…everyone has to survive'.

It was during his time in prison that he 'just realised that I was better than this'. On his release he trained to become an electrician, and has volunteered at a youth project to help other young people on his estate.

Despite his best efforts he has been unable to secure a job.

FOUR
The emergence of the 'modern gang'

'What is clear is that gangs today organise in response not just to industrialisation and urbanization [sic] but primarily to social exclusion and the changing spaces of globalizing cities…'[144]

> "They had money and drove around in cars. I did stuff for them – delivered stuff, drugs I suppose. Some school mates have joined gangs. They were attracted to the cars and the money. You can get girls. You see the older guys and they're living it up. It's one way of living that seems good – money and respect…"
>
> South Manchester gang member, 16 [146]

As is frequently argued, gangs are not a new phenomenon in Britain. Shakespeare, Dickens and Elizabethan scholars[145] all wrote about gangs. In more recent times, the Mods clashed with the Rockers – nearly always with violent results – and the Krays controlled significant parts of East London. However these examples do not reflect the gang situation today. The gang we are concerned with is distinct from organised crime (see Pitts' typology in Section 1.3), it is not a sub-culture based on fashion or musical preference (though these may coincide), it does not (usually) reach across class boundaries, nor is it likely to pass like a fashion fad.

Marc Edwards, who works with young people in gangs in Birmingham through his organisation Young Disciples, told the Working Group:

'This phenomenon has just come out of nowhere. Twenty years ago nothing like this – in two decades we've got the culture of guns and gangs parachuted into the UK, and its growing and its going to grow, and it's going to get worse. These guys are more hardcore than probably most other regions around the world…'

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144 John M. Hagedorn, "Introduction: Globalization, Gangs, and Traditional Crimonology", p.6, in John M. Hagedorn, ed., *GANGS IN THE GLOBAL CITY: Alternatives to Traditional Criminology*, 1st ed. (University of Illinois Press, 2007)

145 K. Bullock and N. Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a Crime Reduction Strategy," *Home Office Crime Reduction Series Paper* 13 (2002): p.4

146 Ibid., p.28

As the following analysis shows, the gang we are faced with now is semi-organised, violent, criminal and born out of acute deprivation. It is the result of a widening economic and social divide, of a housing policy that throws together the victim and the victimiser, and of marginalisation. Excluded from mainstream society, but with mainstream hopes and desires for material possessions and status, an alternative societal structure is established.

This vital distinction from 'gangs' of the past helps us to understand their potential future. Referring to American gangs in particular, but with pressing relevance to the development of UK gang culture, Hagedorn argues that:

> '…as gangs persist over decades, their symbols, colors [sic] traditions and rivals all become an expected and "normal" part of the life of the neighborhood [sic], although many residents condemn gang activities. A gang culture orders the world…'[147]

With an ever increasing socio-economic divide between the haves and the have nots (see below Part III Section 4.1), it is imperative that we act before these gangs become institutionalised in our most deprived communities.

4.1 The widening socio-economic divide

> 'Income inequality has risen for a second successive year, and is now equal to its highest-ever level (at least since comparable records began in 1961)'
>
> Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2008[148]

The 1980s

Most commentators on the evolution of the modern gang trace its origins to the 1980s. The 1980s witnessed massive economic and social change. Whilst many people prospered, not everyone could enjoy the rewards of economic boom. Those in our most deprived communities became actually poorer compared to the rest of society. As is demonstrated in the following sections, street gangs are the products of deprivation and marginalisation. As John Heale notes in his book on Britain's gangs: 'Teenagers do not start murdering each other out of the blue….'[149]

> "Periphalization [sic] means that in developed nations, large segments of both new immigrants and the old working class increasingly function outside of the main economic life of cities. Ladders of mobility are virtually inaccessible. The gap between the rich and the poor increases. Long-term unemployment is not much alleviated by the creation of low-paid, dead-end jobs. An informal economy flourishes, with strong illicit components."
>
> Joan Moore, in Gangs in the Global City

147 Gangs, Institutions, Race, and Space: The Chicago School Revisited, John M. Hagedorn, p.23, in Ibid.

148 M. Brewer et al., "Poverty and Inequality in the UK: 2007," *Institute for Fiscal Studies* (2007): p.1

149 Heale, *One Blood*, p.42

4.1.1 THE GLOBAL CITY

The divide between rich and poor continues to increase. There are more people living in severe poverty today than a decade ago.[150] Simultaneously we have witnessed the rise of multi-million pound bonuses. Importantly, the global city houses both worlds. Here the polar economic extremes sit cheek-by-jowl.

It is within this urban context that the growth of the modern – 'post-industrial' – gang has occurred. As Saskia Sassen argues, globalisation has led to

> '…an increasingly sharp tendency towards social and spatial polarization [sic], partly because power and disadvantage assume some of their strongest forms in global cities'

And crucially:

> 'Wealth and power in global cities today are not the discreet wealth and power of older elites…In the global city, wealth is very visible, especially through…the highly public aspects of individual consumption…'[151]

The divide doesn't just exist, it exists very visibly: those living in acute deprivation have a daily reminder, sometimes just by walking to the end of their street, of what they don't, and can't, have. As one Youth Offending Team (YOT) worker told the Working Group:

Gangs are most commonly found in Britain's most deprived communities

> '…showing your wealth is a way of promoting who you are. People show their wealth in a variety of ways. Some people go to polo matches and show their wealth that way. There are people that do it by music. And if you have footballers earning £90,000 a week and driving nice cars, a young person doesn't want to be on £250 a week from the local store – they want real, live cash, and they'll do whatever they have to do to obtain that. As a society via the media we've created this feeling amongst young people where they can get it now.'

In this environment of intense and overt consumerism – coupled with profound social breakdown – those excluded from mainstream access often seek alternative routes. It is no coincidence that in Britain the highest

150 See Brewer et al., "Poverty and Inequality in the UK."

151 "The Global City: One Setting for New Types of Gang Work and Political Culture", Saskia Sassen, p.113, in Hagedorn, *GANGS IN THE GLOBAL CITY*

prevalence of gangs is found in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Glasgow – our great global cities.

4.1.2 THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Deindustrialisation in the late 1970s gave rise firstly to high unemployment and secondly a new type of labour market. This ensured that a significant proportion of the working class became, instead, the workless class, and the first to be hit were second and third generation non-white migrants. This employment gap remains. In the fourth quarter of 2006 12 per cent of ethnic minority people were unemployed – more than double the number of white people (5 per cent).[152]

Especially hard hit were young people, and in particular males. Between 1984 and 1997 employment amongst 16-24 year olds decreased by almost 40 per cent.[153] By winter 2007 youth unemployment was even higher, up 70,000 on its 1998 level.[154]

Work is one of the key activities of mainstream society. Work provides a structured and inclusive experience and has been proven to aid mental and physical health.[155] Without work, people look for alternative modes of living. Gangs provide the alternative: accessible income, inclusion, status and identity. It is unsurprising that the areas with the highest prevalence of gangs are the areas with some of the highest (youth) unemployment and worklessness rates. For examples of this see Pitts' studies of Waltham Forest and Lambeth,[156] and Walsh's book on Manchester's gangs.[157]

In addition, with deindustrialisation came a shift in the type of jobs available to young people with few qualifications. Whereas in the past trade apprenticeships would have provided skilled employment with a decent wage and future prospects, the rise of the knowledge economy has shifted away from this to low skill, low pay, low prospect jobs. In this scenario, gang culture, and the possible wealth available from associated activities such as drug dealing and acquisitive crime, can appear the most attractive option: gangs, after all, do not have glass ceilings.[158]

In short, as Saskia Sassen argues:

> 'With the world of employment increasingly unreliable and unrewarding for a growing number of young people, other social spheres begin to replace employment as sources for rewards and

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152 Refers to ILO unemployment, Labour Force Survey, 4th quarter, 2006

153 John Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*, The Deliberations of Lambeth Executive Commission on Children, Young People and Violent Crime, November 2007, Unpublished, p.27

154 Frank Field and Patrick White, *Welfare Isn't Working: The New Deal for Young People* (Reform, May 2007).

155 See Gordon Wadell and A Kim Burton, *Is Work Good for your Health and Well-Being?* (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006)

156 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters* John Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*, 2007

157 Walsh, *Gang War*

158 For further information on possible incomes from gang activities see, Pritchard, *Street Boys*, and John Pitts, "Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest" (February 2007)

> "…gun crime is concentrated in communities that are disproportionately affected by poverty, deprivation and exclusion…"
>
> Victim Support London, 2006[160]

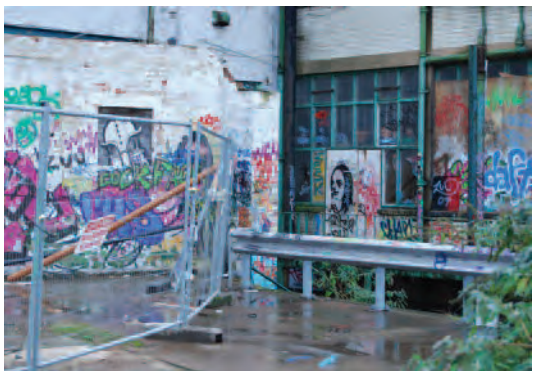
identity. The world of peers and of the imaginary are critical in producing such alternatives to mainstream cultures of "adulthood"."[159]

This is further compounded by the stigmatisation by 'respectable' society of a workless, criminal 'underclass'. Those living in poverty are increasingly alienated and aspirations of betterment are seen as inaccessible. This is particularly so when, as is the case in many of these communities, worklessness is intergenerational (along with family breakdown, teenage pregnancy, addiction and educational failure[161]).

4.1.3 SOCIAL HOUSING – INCUBATING SOCIAL BREAKDOWN[162]

At the same time as the nature of the labour market changed, so too did the nature of social housing. No longer were council estates home to the working classes, to stable families and long-term residents. Instead, the 1980s saw a shift in the composition of social housing which has helped create the current climate. During this period, those families who could afford to benefited from the *right-to-buy*. This, coupled with a major reduction in new building, meant that social housing became the preserve of the most vulnerable and needy individuals and families.

From the 1990s onwards three quarters of new households in social housing were headed by a 16-29 year old, with a heavy concentration of lone parents. The proportion of heads of households not in work in social housing has increased from 52 per cent in 1982 to 67 per cent in 2007. In other households the proportion has remained static at just 33 per cent – demonstrating the increasing polarisation between those living in social housing and the rest of society. The disparity is even starker for heads of households aged between 25 and 54: in social rented housing half are not in paid work compared to just one in twenty of those in owner-occupation.[163]



Gang-involved young people often feel marginalised from mainstream society, and their environment can contribute to this

Correspondingly, the average income of social housing tenants plummeted – from 73 per cent of the national average to just 48 per cent, taking them below the current poverty line.[164] In short, allocations policy

159 "The Global City: One Setting for New Types of Gang Work and Political Culture", Saskia Sassen, p.113, in Hagedorn, *GANGS IN THE GLOBAL CITY*

160 *The experience of gun crime in London* (Victim Support London, 2006), p.5

161 The Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakthrough Britain: Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown* (The Centre for Social Justice, 2007)

162 For a detailed analysis of social housing in Britain see *Housing Poverty: from social breakdown to social mobility* (The Centre for Social Justice, December 2008)

163 Polarisation by Housing Tenure, http://www.poverty.org.uk/76/index.shtml

164 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 2

meant that social housing became the placing ground for the most disadvantaged people in society and has now become an incubator of deprivation, hopelessness and crime: a 'social apartheid' has developed.[165]

Current allocations policy has also had a psychological impact on some social housing residents. On a visit to the Aston Estate in South West London, two young males told the Working Group that councils 'dump' single families, drug addicts and people with mental health disorders in estates, and that they were deliberately cut off from the rest of society. Twenty year old Warren concluded: 'what do you expect us to grow up to be?'

4.2 The London context – the arrival of the 'Yardies'

It is within the context of deepening social division and alienation that the 'Yardies' (Jamaican gangsters) arrived and helped to develop the gang culture we see today. Due to various suppression operations, the Yardies exported their violent trade in crack cocaine from the Jamaican garrison communities to the Jamaican settlements in the U.S and subsequently to areas of Caribbean settlement in London in the 1980s, establishing themselves in areas like Hackney, Harlesden, Southwark, Lambeth and Tottenham. Graeme McLagan's book *Guns and Gangs* makes clear that their arrival was not welcomed by the Black-British communities, but the level of violence engaged in by the Yardies ensured that few would speak out.[166]

The first known Yardie killings occurred in 1986 and by the 1987 inception of Scotland Yard's *Operation Lucy*, police had compiled a database of more than 3,000 records of drug-related crimes involving Jamaicans.[167] By 1991, shootings in South London had reached around six per month.[168] Robbery and the (largely crack cocaine) drugs trade went hand in hand with extreme violence. In his 1993 report on Jamaican gangs, Detective Chief Superintendent Roy Clark highlighted the shift in the levels of gang violence:

> 'Whilst many [ordinary] criminals will resort to violence as a last resort, a member of a Jamaican gang will use violence as a first step and without hesitation. To be seen in expensive clothes and jewellery, driving an expensive car and with the most powerful gun possible at his disposal will add to his status and afford him considerable kudos.'[169]

165 Iain Duncan Smith, speech to Chartered Institute of Housing, 18th June 2008

166 For an account of Yardie activities see Graeme McLagan, *Guns and Gangs, The inside story of the war on our streets* (Allison & Busby, 2005), pp.21-37

167 Ibid., p.28 and p.35

168 Ibid., p.37

169 Ibid., p.41

Persisting influence

D.C.S. Clark also noted that:

> 'Young British boys are being lured into crime and possible imprisonment or death by the sight and word of the rich trappings with which Yardies surround themselves.'[170]

> "If you turn the TV on, how many adverts do you see for black people? Any time a black person is portrayed in the media, it always seems linked to something negative…So we've been systematically fed these images, that if you're black there must be something wrong with you."
>
> Dr. Derrick Campbell, Community leader and gangs expert, Birmingham

In short the Yardies had become 'role models for young and impressionable black youths.'[171] Living in poverty, unable to gain employment and feeling discredited and excluded by mainstream society, young black boys began to aspire to be the only 'successful' black men they saw – gangsters.

The Yardies modelled extremely violent gang culture and, although the primary focus of some gangs today has shifted from drugs to status through territory, their influence can still be seen. John Pitts highlights the use of the term Soldier for gang members in current British gangs (the name given to the combatants in the battles between Jamaican garrisons) and the presence of the Shower Posse and Shower Chicks in Peckham (one of the main Jamaican gangs, and whose senior gunman came to the UK in the late 1970s). Indeed he notes that several of his key informants during his research for Reluctant Gangsters 'suggest that their influence, in terms of gang culture, has been pervasive'.[172]

4.3 Territorialism: from drugs to postcodes

> '…in the 21st century, as the gangs expanded, links with the drug business became more tenuous and gang territory came to be defined by neighbourhood and, eventually postcode. The territorial violence and aggression at this level appears to serve little purpose, providing instead an arena in which individuals and groups can demonstrate their fighting prowess and gain 'respect'."[173]

Pitts argues that to understand the formation of violent street gangs we must understand the development of the drugs trade: the socio-economic

170 Ibid., p.42
171 Ibid., p.42
172 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 7
173 Pitts, *Young & Safe in Lambeth*, p.43
174 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 4
175 For a breakdown of possible earnings see, Ibid.

developments of the 1980s set the stage, but the international drugs market organised the actors.[174] Drugs are a lucrative business,[175] but to make money you have to 'own' the drugs trade in a particular area, or 'turf'. This requires defending it. Hence one of the key responsibilities of a Younger (young, low level gang member) or Soldier is to protect the gang's drug market, often resulting in inter-gang violence. As Pitts states, 'violence, or the threat of violence, becomes the primary means whereby these markets are regulated.'

> "Gangs think they own everything. They think "this is my end, no-one can come down my end [area]"."
>
> Male teenager, Lewisham

This situation exists today, but as gangs have become more common over the past decade, with the 'gangsta' lifestyle being modelled to disenfranchised and disaffected young people, 'respect' has become the key motivator. Defending territory, often a postcode, through violence is a way of earning respect. There is still a high chance of those involved in gangs also being involved in the drugs trade, but street violence is now much more likely to occur due to personal 'beefs'; individual incidents of disrespect. For more on the role of violence see Part I, Section 2.2.2.

Marc Edwards, founder of *Young Disciples* in Birmingham, told the Working Group that 'there is a serious issue around territorialism'. Describing the development of postcode wars in Birmingham he highlighted the impact of that the shooting dead of Letitia Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis at a New Year party in 2003 had on deepening territorial lines:

> 'After the girls got shot, because at that time young people were still able to go into other postcodes freely, even though they might have issues – after the girls got shot, the young people decided that the days of allowing other people to come into our areas was done. Because if that structure was in place, the girls wouldn't have got shot…so they set up these territorial structures…'

Gangs are increasingly based on geographical territory, and often postcodes

'Rep'ing' (representing/defending) a turf has become increasingly common and a significant proportion of reported killings have been linked to 'postcode wars' (for examples, see Section 2.2.2). Gary Hewett, of Community Action Team in East London, told the Working Group that 'so many young people are afraid of travelling across the borough because there's so many different territories', and this has been echoed throughout the Working Group's hearings. For some inner city young people gang-impacted areas are becoming no-go areas. One 17 year old male from London said:

> 'There's certain places in South London where 100 per cent you can say if you're not from there you'll get stabbed.'

4.4 Values – self-worth and the street code

> 'Inner city urban youth culture – the gangs side of it – its spreading…a sub-culture, if left, can become a main culture.'
>
> Dez Brown, Youth Pastor, London

> 'We [black young people] have lost our identity…we want to be part of something.'
>
> Male, 17, South London

Alienated and discredited – establishing an alternative lifestyle

As noted above, socio-economic changes over the past few decades have led to the marginalisation of our most deprived communities. Young people living in these communities see that they are excluded from mainstream society and have created an alternative space – complete with alternative value system – for themselves. Elijah Anderson's book, *Code of the Street*, provides insight into the development of street life and the integral role violence plays within it. Although an ethnographic study of Philadelphia's ghettoes, it is nevertheless invaluable in understanding this alternative society:

> 'The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor – the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, limited basic public services (police response in emergencies, building maintenance, trash pick-up, lighting, and other services that middle-class neighbourhoods take for granted), the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and absence of hope for the future. Simply living in such an environment places young people at special risk of falling victim to aggressive behaviour…street culture has evolved a "code of the street"….Everybody knows that if the rules are violated, there are penalties.'[176]

> "Often they've had very negative experiences at school, plus lack of fathers, so the figures that they're seeing – rather than company directors or whatever – are those who look out for them day to day. The Olders with their beautiful girlfriends, cars and money."
>
> Ruth Lapage, Learning Support Unit Manager at an inner city London school

This exclusion and alienation from school and employment, and as a discredited group, has impacted young people's view of themselves and the world they live in. Witness (his artist name), an artist who works with disadvantaged young people through the medium of music, told the Working Group that 'they don't feel they have any worth'. He described the 'recipe' that has led to young people joining gangs and picking up guns:

176 Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*, 1st ed. (W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), pp.32-33

> 'If you have no education, you come from an underachieving school and you've got more issues at home than when you go to school…Your parents have to work harder, or parent has to work harder, more than most, so that the family structure is kind of eroded…Now [the young person is] on the streets. How does he fund himself? He can't get a job, but he's been introduced to this media that says you can have this today, the credit card media...Every person strives for significance. We're fortunate, we get a job…A gun gives that young person a sense of significance, a sense of power. It gets respect.'

Marc Edwards explained that for gang members 'their socialisation' and 'their deprived education' has led to an absence of 'morality'. He told the Working Group that:

> 'They've formed their own values, their own rules and regulations…there's a street code…and that street code is like the Commandments – walls of silence, don't talk to the police, have to be like this, have to dress like this – and that's what they function on now. That's what we have to challenge.'

The street gang in Britain today lives by a street code centered around respect and violence. To gain respect and notoriety, gang members behave in an increasingly volatile manner. As one London teenager told the group: 'you do crazy things to get noticed by the older guys in gangs.'

4.5 The rise of the young soldiers

The drive for status and respect through violence may go some way in helping to explain the more *random* nature of violence perpetrated by current gangs. On a Working Group visit to Birmingham, Dr. Derrick Campbell highlighted the changing nature of gangs:

> 'There is a situation now where the youngsters aren't listening to the older heads of the gangs. So where the older heads were in a sense at least able to bring some kind of control and civility, that's now completely disappeared. The cohesion of the gang has broken down. You've got these young guys who [have], in my opinion – they've got their heads mixed up by smoking weed (skunk), and compounding that problem is the glamourisation of the negative lyrics contained in rap – bling, the Snoop Dog- type image, is what they believe it's all about..'

Peter Walsh dedicates a chapter in his book on Manchester gangs to what he refers to as the 'Young guns':

> 'The next wave of south Manchester gangbangers [gang members] was even more dangerous than the twenty-five-year-old 'veterans' of the streets. Seduced by the glamour, money and status of the gangsta life, they were the first generation to move into existing gang structures.'[177]

He goes on to record the comments of a senior Greater Manchester Police officer on the new generation of gang members. Detective Superintendent David Brennan stated:

> 'Quarrels can begin over women, over cars or territory, in that these gangs tend to dominate an area for no other reason that it is theirs. They have no fear of anything: arrest, prison, injury, even death. They actually enjoy the buzz that comes from the fear of being shot at, or the sense of power when carrying a gun.'[178]

Superintendent John Sutherland of Islington Borough Police made a similar observation when speaking to the Working Group. He noted that the speed at which young gang members go from '0 to 60, seemingly over trivial things', and the severity of the violence they engage in, is 'different and distinct' from the situation a few years ago. This was confirmed by Steve Tyler of the Specialist Crime Directorate, Trident / Trafalgar at the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), who said that violence now was increasingly 'chaotic'.

An observation heard frequently by the Working Group is the lowering of the age of gang-involved young people (see Part I, Section 3.1 for further analysis on age). This raises an important point – we now have a generation of young people who have grown up in what John Heale terms 'Gangland'.[179] One informant in Lewisham told Heale:

> 'This is the first generation of kids who've not only lived it – they were born in to it.'[180]

Gang culture is becoming intergenerational. Action is required now if we are to break this cycle before it becomes the norm.

Instant communication

The increasingly volatile nature of gang violence is also linked to the mainstreaming of mobile phones, texting and the internet, in particular YouTube and social networking sites such as Bebo, Facebook and MySpace.

Whilst in the past organising a gang fight would have taken advance co-ordination, the normalisation of mobile telephone ownership and texting over the past decade has facilitated immediate reaction. A gang member gets 'dissed'

177 Walsh, *Gang War*, p.114
178 Ibid., p.114
179 Heale, *One Blood*
180 Ibid., p.55

and he can now contact and mobilise his 'crew' within minutes. Superintendent Sutherland commented that 'the advent of text messaging alone means in literally a couple of minutes a situation can go from peaceful to absolute uproar.' Martin, a participant at Second Wave, a youth project in South East London, told the Working Group that 'people used to rob mobile phones so that they [the victims] can't call for back-up.'

YouTube has numerous film clips produced by gangs: from videos of members rapping about what they will do to their enemies, to videos of gang fights, to R.I.P. dedications to fallen 'soldiers.'[181] A Home Office guide to tackling gangs notes that some gangs have their own websites and advises local authorities to 'consider regularly monitoring gang websites to collect information.'[182]

4.6 Glamourising the gangster life

> 'Hip Hop and its gangsta rap variant are cultural answers to the permanence of racism and oppression, a "resistance identity"…'
>
> John Hagedorn, A World of Gangs[183]

As John Hagedorn highlights in *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*, understanding the gang means understanding its culture and hip hop – in particular Gangsta Rap – is central to this. It is in listening to such music that we begin to understand the mindset of the gangster: life is viewed through an almost Hobbesian prism of being 'nasty, brutish and short.' Whereas some hip hop artists have used their (conscious) lyrics to express political messages about race, poverty, and deep inequality, the message of the gangsta rapper is typified by the album title of one of its key artists, 50 Cent: *Get Rich or Die Trying*. It is perhaps instructive that 50 Cent was himself a crack dealer – who has made much of being shot multiple times – before becoming a global superstar.

Figure 1.8: Examples of Gangsta Rap lyrics from the 1980s to present day

Ice-T

'6'n the mornin'

…Six punks hit two punks died
All casualities appiled to their side
Human lives has to pass just for talking much trash
We didn't know who they were - No one had
the time to ask…

N.W.A

'Straight Outta Compton'

Straight outta Compton…
From the gang called Niggaz With Attitudes
When I'm called off, I got a sawed off
Squeeze the trigger, and bodies are hauled off…

50 Cent:

'In My Hood'

…I cock that, aim that shit out the window
Spray, there ain't a shell that bend my heat
Ya'll niggas better lay down, yeah I mean stay down
Get hit with a K round, ya ass ain't gon' make it…
I'm from Southside…

G Unit

'Gangsta Shit'

…Man, matter of fact
Hand me my strap
Show me where they at…
I'll stop 'em from talking like that

181 There are numerous examples of gang lyrics, for example 'Penge Block' (April 2007) and Younger Woolwich Boys (November 2006) rapping about the violence they commit against rivals. R.I.P tributes include 'R.I.P. Ben AKA Swipe' (June 2007) which concludes R.I.P. 'true soldier' and includes a photo of Ben Hitchock making the Penge Block hand sign

182 *Tackling Gangs: A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners* (Home Office, May 2008), p.28

183 John M. Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture* (University Of Minnesota Press, 2008), p.xxix.

However the importance of Gangsta Rap, and the newer hip hop sub-genre, Grime, is not just in what it reveals about the artist and those they represent, but also the impact it has on our most disadvantaged young people.

The role of Gangsta Rap and Grime has been cited repeatedly by people giving evidence to the Working Group. Of particular note for witnesses was the genre's glamourisation of gang violence and its accompanying style and 'bling'. Mainstreamed in the 1990s and 2000s, Gangsta Rap[184] has created a lucrative market from rapping about drugs, killing, crime, 'bling' and womanising. Grime has not gained the same commercial success – though its profile is growing – but the lyrics cover similar ground.

4.6.1 DISADVANTAGED, DISENFRANCHISED AND IMPRESSIONABLE

Kurt Browne, Co-Founder of Spheres of Influence and a former teacher at Inner City London schools talked to the Working Group about the attractiveness of the 'gangsta' life as portrayed by music:

> 'Look at the impact of the media…the music. You see what they look at on MTV. The bling, the cribs [houses]…these kids are looking and saying "wow, I want that"…50 Cent, he was shot nine times and he glorified that, right…kids are so impressionable.'

One London teenager from Lewisham confirmed this susceptibility:

> 'Music is the biggest influence…If you think about it, you listen to rap and you think you're bad – you want to get aggressive.'

It is not the content per se: indeed, there is little evidence to directly correlate Gangsta Rap or hip hop with violent behaviour, but the alternative lifestyle it offers to disillusioned and disenfranchised young people is a powerful one. Hence a young middle class male may enjoy listening to 50 Cent's *In My Hood*, but he is unlikely to replicate the activities described, whereas a young disenfranchised male – excluded from school and living on an acutely deprived estate – may hear his route to notoriety and prosperity in the lyrics: his life appears reflected in the rap.[185] Melvyn Davis (TMDS, BoyztoMEN) expressed the difference succinctly:

> 'The evidence across the board is that more white people buy hardcore rap, but you don't see them going off shooting and stabbing and killing each other. Because it's translated differently. It's internalised differently… the ones who it impacts most on, and it has the most influence on, are the ones coming from that demographic

184 Including East Coast Hardcore, the Eastside counterpart to Westside's Gangsta Rap

185 This point was made repeatedly by witnesses to the Inquiry who noted that it was a young person's personal experiences that determined the impact of the music

where there's an absent father, they don't have very much going on for themselves, school's not working. And they have very limited life experiences which means for them, what they see on the TV, that's real. What they experience via the music becomes their reality. Because they don't have a wider experience or a deeper experience, they can't displace that and say "That's just music". No, Jay-Z is telling his life story and that's how we have to be.'

Youth projects can use music in a positive way to engage and transform the mindset of gang-involved and at risk young people. StreetVibes Youth is doing just that in South London

In short, the young person experiencing multiple risk factors has a very different response to the music than the young person experiencing multiple protective factors – a stable family with regular supervision, a comfortable home in a safe neighbourhood, attending a good school and receiving positive feedback.[186] As one 16 year old male from East London told the Working Group: 'they see MTV, the music, as a way of life…and it's because they don't have a family, or a school that supports them.'

The frustration, anger and alienation felt by the disadvantaged young person is articulated in, and *reinforced* by, the music. Indeed Heale's book on current British gangs contains one gangster's account of listening to Grime (along with smoking a large amount of skunk) as preparation for killing – indicating the level of aggression contained in the music.[187]

Music cannot account for the gang life chosen by some young people any more than violent video games[188] can account for the violence perpetrated by them. However, the absence of positive aspirations and positive role models and the daily struggle of their lives, leaves young people in deprived communities vulnerable to hip hop's gangster life. Few Gangsta Rap stars dwell on the daily fear, the constant looking over your shoulder, the geographical restrictions or the pain of burying loved one after loved one: the picture painted is glorified and glamourised, and the message is live fast, die young.

In the early 1990s, after the release of Ice-T's Cop Killer, global record labels started removing 'incendiary' lyrics from rap albums.[189] Despite freedom of speech arguments, songs talking about killing police officers were viewed as unacceptable. Today, as Fig. 1.8 demonstrates (and these are some of the more tame examples), Gangsta Rap remains highly controversial.

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186 For more on protective factors see, David P. Farrington and Brandon C. Welsh, *Saving Children from a Life of Crime: Early Risk Factors and Effective Interventions* (Oxford University Press Inc, USA, 2007)

187 Heale, *One Blood*, p.52

188 A number of witnesses to the review noted the violent and highly realistic *Grand Theft Auto* video game as contributing to the desensitisation of young people to violence

189 *Putting the cuffs on 'gangsta' rap songs*, Los Angeles Times, 10th December 1992

FIVE
The alternative family and the 'alpha' male

> 'At the heart and soul of it is the breakdown of the family…It is not fashionable to say, but absolutely, unequivocally, any attempt to address these issues without addressing the breakdown of the family will only have limited impact.'
>
> Superintendent John Sutherland, Islington Borough Police

5.1 The new family

> 'You can go out and be in that crew and have a family.'
>
> Andre, 17, formerly gang involved, now part-time worker, Studio 3 Arts

Family breakdown, and in particular fatherlessness, appears to be a key driver of gang culture. The Working Group has repeatedly heard that gangs provide the belonging, loyalty and 'unconditional love' that many young people are not finding at home. Leon (Connexions Advisor, Alton) told the Working Group, 'I think a lot of young people are looking for love. They're not finding that at home, so they look on the streets'.

Experience of family breakdown and fatherlessness is a well documented risk factor for offending and we know that risk factors for gang-involvement are similar to those for offending. The Newcastle Thousand Family Study showed that a boy's likelihood of conviction up to age 32 was doubled if he had experienced divorce or separation before age five.[190] The correlation is confirmed by results from the UK National Survey of Health and Development which revealed that 27 per cent of boys who had experienced separation or divorce had been cautioned or convicted by age 21 compared to 14 per cent who had not experienced family breakdown, with the correlation strongest when breakdown is experienced in early childhood.[191]

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190 Israel Kolvin et al., "Social and Parenting Factors Affecting Criminal-Offense Rates: Findings from the Newcastle Thousand Family Study (1947-1980)," *British Journal of Pyschiatry* 152 (1988): 80-90

191 Michael Wadsworth, *Roots of Delinquency: Infancy, Adolescence and Crime* (Barnes & Noble, 1979)

In a recent speech at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Barbara Wilding, Chief Constable of South Wales, highlighted the same issue, arguing:

> 'Many have experienced family breakdown, and in place of parental and family role models, the gang culture is now established. Tribal loyalty has replaced family loyalty and gang culture based on violence and drugs is a way of life.'

It is in our global cities that we find the highest rates of lone parent families and fatherlessness. According to the last census (2001), over 40 per cent of households with dependent children were headed by a lone parent in London, Manchester and Glasgow – three of the cities with the highest prevalence of gangs. The prevalence of family breakdown alongside gang membership can be seen in London boroughs. Four of the five most gang-impacted boroughs (see Section 4.1.2, *London*) have 50 per cent or more lone parent headed households, the fifth has over 40 per cent – this compares to an already high national average of 28.5 per cent.[192]

There are many other factors such as high unemployment, poor schools, drug and alcohol use and poverty that impact on a young person's decision to get involved in gangs, but family breakdown appears to be a particularly strong factor. When asked what would help prevent gang involvement, a group of teenage males in Lewisham were unanimous in their conviction that 'access to counselling and support' was crucial. In their words, parental break-up 'messes children up', and this makes them more likely to behave violently and join gangs.

5.1.1 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – FEAR AND VIOLENCE AS LEARNT BEHAVIOUR

It is not just literal family breakdown such as separation, divorce, or never knowing a parent, but also the level of family dysfunction that impacts on a young person's future life chances.

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) reports *Breakdown Britain* (2006) and *Breakthrough Britain* (2007) revealed the dire impact that family dysfunction has on a child's development and, therefore, their future achievement. The CSJ's recent report, *The Next Generation*, looked at the extent of the damage which can be done by age three. For an in-depth discussion of the impact of adverse early life experiences on a child's development, and in particular the physical damage caused to the brain, see Chapter One of this Early Years Commission report.[193]

Leon and Warren talked about the impact of family breakdown in their involvement in offending and gangs

192 Based on 2001 Census data; households with dependent children headed by a lone parent; ONS
193 Samantha Callan, *The Next Generation* (Centre for Social Justice, September 2008)

Both academic research[194] and anecdotal evidence point to the majority of gang-involved young people having experienced significant – and often extreme – family breakdown and/or dysfunction. A 2000 Office of National Statistics report found that 42 per cent of female young offenders had experienced violence at home, nearly a quarter of males sentenced and remand young offenders had experienced violence at home and nearly one in three female young offenders had been sexually abused.[195] Although these statistics are not gang-specific, they do demonstrate a clear relationship between childhood abuse and future offending.

Mark Johnson, author of *Wasted*, spoke to the Working Group about the childhood abuse suffered by many of the gang members he has interviewed. He said that the anger and violence within many of the young people is the result of traumatic experiences such as rape and physical abuse.

Superintendent John Sutherland also talked about the prevalence of domestic violence in the homes of gang-involved young people:

> 'Much has been done [about domestic violence], but we still have an awful long way to go, and a huge proportion of our most troubled young people will have been victims or witnesses of abuse.'

As one ex-young offender told the Working Group:

> 'Once you get used to living in that environment, of expecting violence, you recreate it when it's not there – because that's what you're used to.'

5.2 LIVING IN THE JUNGLE

It is important to note that although a high proportion of single parents are not in employment, many are. These lone parents are desperately trying to make ends meet, often with multiple jobs, and are therefore unable to be around at the end of the school day, or able to supervise their child's weekend activities. This was an issue frequently highlighted in the Working Group's hearings. One YOT worker commented:

> 'If you come from a single parent home and your mum or dad is working all hours to provide for you, then your family will become whoever's in your area.'

In his Waltham Forest report, Pitts quotes one informant's insightful comment on the difficulty of bringing a child up in a gang-impacted neighbourhood:

> "The fallacy of autonomy, the idea that we can separate parenting ability from the circumstances in which parenting is undertaken, is the cruelest misconception about gangs there is."
>
> John Heale, One Blood

194 For a discussion of the impact of childhood abuse and neglect see for example, Farrington and Welsh, *Saving Children from a Life of Crime*, Chapter 4

195 Deborah Lader, Nicola Singleton, and Howard Meltzer, *Psychiatric Morbidity among Young Offenders in England and Wales* (Office for National Statistics, 2000)

> 'Telling these families to take responsibility for their kids behaviour is like telling them to take their kids into the jungle and take responsibility for them not getting eaten by lions and tigers.'

Family breakdown is helping to drive gang culture, but the prevalence of gangs in the most deprived neighbourhoods is making parenting very difficult, particularly for a working lone parent. Parents in our most disadvantaged communities face some of the biggest challenges in bringing up their children and yet, often having experienced poor parenting themselves, they are often the least well equipped to do so.

5.3 'Decent' versus 'Street'[196]

An additional dimension is provided by Elijah Anderson in his depiction of street life. He notes the continuous battle being fought by 'decent' families trying to keep their children from becoming 'street'. On the one hand 'decent' parents are trying to bring their children up with mainstream morals and a firm work ethic, on the other they have little choice but to 'reluctantly encourage their children's familiarity with [the code of the street] in order to enable them to negotiate the inner-city environment'.[197] In short their child's daily safety relies on them being 'street' (understanding the code).

> "... the elders will say to the 'young guns', as they call them, "Come here, I want you to do something for me." And those young people don't have a choice. They don't have a choice because they know what the consequence of saying "no" to that elder is."
>
> Melvyn Davis, founder and Director, TMDS BoyztoMEN

Further, as children grow up and their parent's control declines:

> 'they go through a social shuffling process that can affirm – or test or undermine – much of the socialization [sic] they have received at home…For children from decent homes, the immediate and present reality of the street situation can overcome the compunctions against tough behaviour…as children learn to deal with their social environment, they may thus quickly put aside the lessons of the home.'[198]

And given the dominance of violence and being 'street' as a source of status and respect, low self-esteem may encourage 'decent' children to become 'street' in order to be popular.[199]

Hence not only is it near impossible for many lone (usually) mothers to supervise their children to the level necessary in gang-impacted neighbourhoods, it is also a huge challenge for the children to stay out of gangs

196 Anderson, *Code of the Street*
197 Ibid., p.33
198 Ibid., p.67
199 Ibid., p.99

– whether because of the attractiveness of gang life, or because they feel they simply have no choice in order to be safe.[200]

5.4 The 'Alpha' male – fatherlessness and masculinity

The absence of a positive male role model in the home has frequently been noted as a driver for male gang membership. As one London YOT worker put it 'there's a big issue with fathers being at home, and the relationship that a father needs to have with his son'. He explained:

> 'If that father's not at home to have that relationship with the son, then the son's only going to learn from the next role model available. If the male role model is a karate teacher, then great – he can become the next winner of the Olympics. More often than not, it's the local guy: you're a sponge at that age, so you're just going to go for what looks cool.'

Melvyn Davis runs a charity which provides support and practical guidance for boys making the transition into adulthood. He noted two key consequences for boys growing up with – physically or emotionally – absent fathers:

1. The rejection and inadequacy they feel as a result of growing up in a fatherless household, which is often internalised, creating huge resentment and anger
2. The absence of positive masculinity being modeled to them, forcing them to 'learn' their masculinity from traditional 'alpha' male imagery, readily available through popular media

Martin Glynn, a criminologist specialising in masculinity and young black men, made the same observation. He told the Working Group that gang-involved young black men are experiencing extreme anger as a result of the loss felt through 'father deficit'.

Talking about the boys that The Male Development Service (BoyztoMEN) has worked with, Melvyn told the Working Group:

> '…much of their behaviour was linked to their need to prove themselves as young men. Which in some ways is common to a lot of boys' development but in their case it was far more punctuated by the fact that there wasn't a father figure. So they needed to prove themselves and that made them a lot more vulnerable. So there was a lot more risk-taking behaviour, there was a lot of standing up to people and not being able to back down and feeling "This is what I'm supposed to do". They had a very narrow definition of what it means to be a man and

200 For more on the role of choice see Section 1.2

> masculinity, because again, they had not been growing up with men in their lives in a personal way and so they were absorbing the images from the media that they were seeing…If you look at the underlying reasons for a lot of the violence, a lot of the crime…it stems back to his understanding of himself as a man. "It's what I'm supposed to do. I can't let it buoy me up. I've got to represent being a man.'

Superintendent John Sutherland (Islington Borough Police) has observed the repercussions of fatherless households and the absence of positive male role models. He asked the Working Group:

> 'Is it any surprise that some of these rootless, restless young men turn to their peer group for affirmation, for identity?'

Superintendent Sutherland noted that a recent evaluation of one particular London gang murder had found that of the 13 young people initially suspected of involvement in the killing, 12 were from lone parent homes and one was living with step parents. He told the Working Group 'family is absolutely at the heart of it.'

In addition, witnesses have also noted the potentially negative impact of 'guesting' fathers – where the mother has a series of boyfriends who temporarily take on the role of father – which can be as, if not more, damaging than a child growing up without any father figure.

As Melvyn Davis points out, 'we're still talking about "young people"…when by and large its young men': violent gang membership remains a predominantly male preserve and until we address these warped notions of masculinity we cannot tackle gang culture.

Case Study 2: Leon

Leon, 20, grew up on the Aston Estate, Roehampton. It is a huge sprawling estate in South West London lined with tower blocks and, according to Leon and his friends, is rife with drugs.

At age nine Leon's father died and this was when his 'whole life changed'. He internalised his feelings and they came out as anger. This was further compounded by his learning difficulties. He explains of his dyslexia: 'I couldn't express myself so [I] got angry with the teacher.' Other than a few extra minutes to complete tests, no additional support was provided.

In his GCSE year he was excluded from school. Although allowed to sit his GCSEs, he struggled to complete coursework and says that this meant that he didn't achieve the grades he could have.

He describes his family life as 'hard', and was kicked out of home aged 16. He moved in with a friend, and got involved in street life. His 'close' group of friends developed into a gang – S.U.K. The gang 'provided the family' he didn't have at home. They fought other areas, 'wanting to get their name out there', and committed street robberies and sold drugs for money. They wanted 'respect'.

He has been stabbed twice, once in the face when being robbed whilst selling drugs and once when a fight broke out because he and friends were in another gang's territory. The second stabbing was in the leg, narrowly

missing an artery. His friends left him bleeding on the street, and this started him questioning the value of their 'friendship'.

Aged 17 he was arrested for his involvement in a fight during which a stabbing occurred, and spent three months in a Young Offenders Institution before spending 10 months tagged on an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP).

Knowing he wanted to get out of the gang life he took advantage of the opportunities afforded him on the ISSP and is now in paid work and volunteers to help at a local youth project.

His ambition is to become a youth worker – he wants to go into primary schools and run workshops for children facing similar challenges to those he faced. His criminal record is proving a problem.

He, with a number of others from the estate, has designed a social enterprise – LIFE – which would enable him to fulfil this ambition and help other young people to see that there is an alternative. Unfortunately they have not secured funding. Another example to him that living on an estate means opportunities are closed. He told the Working Group:

> 'No-one wants to be in a gang, it's the only choice they've got. You don't see no progress. It's not how we feel, it's how it is.'

SIX
Conclusion

The true nature and scale of gang membership in Britain is largely unknown. A general failure to recognise the problem and the continuing absence of a standardised definition makes analysis highly problematic. Without an accurate analysis of the problem we cannot hope to find the solution. Our definition in section 1.4 offers a nationally applicable tool for measurement.

What is clear from the limited and disparate data available is that Britain does have a gang problem (something which has, in the near past, been refuted). The proportion of young people involved in gangs is likely to be relatively small, but that minority are having a profoundly damaging impact on a much wider community of young people and adults alike.

Gang members, in general, appear to be male, in their early to late teens, and have experienced some form of family breakdown and educational failure. They are from acutely deprived, high-crime, high-violence neighbourhoods. However, evidence shows that members are increasingly younger (*Tinys* can be as young as 8 years old), and that female involvement, whether as a member or playing an ancillary role, is far from rare.

The general consensus amongst witnesses to the review – young people, practitioners and experts – was that gangs and gang membership are on the increase. This is particularly evident with the transition from intra- to inter-borough gang violence in London, and the rise of the 'postcode wars' nationally. In addition, territorialism appears to be pulling young people who would otherwise steer clear of involvement into gang life: the 'reluctant gangsters'.

However despite the general acceptance of a growing problem, it was repeatedly noted that the media image of a gang- and violence-*riddled* society was inaccurate. Sensationalist headlines and the death 'counter' is fuelling the populace's fear and may be a contributing factor to the increase in knife carrying amongst young people – the vast majority of young people citing fear as their reason for carrying a weapon.

Nevertheless, gangs and gang violence are having a profound impact on our most deprived inner city communities and increasing numbers of young people are dying or being seriously injured on our streets. British gangs are certainly not the gangs of Chicago or Los Angeles – highly organised criminal networks with strict hierarchies and (often written) rules – but they do reflect

the gangs of Boston – loose, semi-organised and relatively small. It is precisely because our gangs are not yet institutionalised that we have the potential to reverse this trend of increasing gang violence. However, if we do not act *now*, or we act ineffectively, our gangs could develop into something more akin to Los Angeles' infamous Bloods and Crips, or Chicago's Almighty Latin Kings, both of which have institutionalised in these cities.

PART II: THE MYTH OF THE QUICK FIX

ONE
Introduction

> 'With a consistent approach to tackling poverty and prejudice as a whole we can see things change'
>
> Jessie Joe Jacobs, CEO, A Way Out, written submission to the Working Group

> '[Policy-makers] don't have clarity on the problem [they're] trying to solve before putting solutions in place.'
>
> A senior police officer

This section is not a critique of individual gang intervention programmes: an in-depth analysis of the numerous local, and handful of national, initiatives is a paper in itself and due to the recent inception of many of the initiatives, little is available by way of evaluation. Instead, this section looks at some of the current thinking behind policy formation, the *approach*, and some of the key barriers to progress.

The Working Group stresses that there are a number of examples of excellent practice in Britain – particularly police-led initiatives – and these are detailed in Part III. The Working Group is also aware of a number of promising forthcoming initiatives, such as the Metropolitan Police Service's Operation Pathways and their establishment of a mediation service.

In addition, the Working Group has noted considerable willingness amongst senior police officers and statutory and third sector practitioners to work innovatively to tackle gangs in their area. Unfortunately, many have noted several barriers to doing so. These have included a lack of funding, 'short-termism' and an unwillingness on the part of local authorities to take the lead.

Tentative steps in the right direction

It has taken community and media outcry for the Government to produce a strategy for tackling gangs. Despite an obviously increasing problem with gang activity and violence over the past decade, the Government was defining its approach to the issue as recently as May 2008.

Nevertheless, the Government's report *Tackling Gangs: A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPs and other local partners* does represent promising steps towards the formulation of a national gang intervention framework and the Working Group concurs with much of the *generalised* advice contained within it.

Barriers to progress

Although the *Tackling Gangs* framework is promising, the test will be in its implementation and it is, of course, too early to assess this. Indeed, we do not even know if local authorities will implement it. In addition, witnesses speaking with the Working Group and recent research have noted several significant problems with the Government's general approach to gangs and youth violence. These include:

- Too great a focus on 'penal populism'[1] at the expense of addressing the drivers of gangs and violence
- A failure to take a long-term approach to the problem with the implementation of temporary, short-term programmes
- A failure to communicate with gang-impacted communities over a sustained period of time
- A focus on physical regeneration of infrastructure without transforming the lives inside the buildings
- Poor resourcing and support of grassroots charities tackling the *drivers* and symptoms of gang culture

Furthermore, witnesses have repeatedly cited concerns regarding the behaviour of some police officers and local authorities.

The following section examines these problems.

1 Nicola Marfleet, *Why carry a weapon?* (The Howard League for Penal Reform, October 2008)

TWO
Penal populism – focusing on deeds over needs

> 'Punitive sentences are likely to be irrelevant at best and counter-productive at worst, randomly gathering a few young children into an over-stretched prison system. Government announcements of harsh sentences are penal populism, not serious attempts to deal with a serious issue.'[2]

Despite increased Government attention on risk and protective factors and the importance of early intervention, the problem of gangs is still most commonly seen through a criminal justice – enforcement – lens. This is unhelpful because:

1. It ignores the drivers of gang formation and membership, thereby profoundly skewing the policy response; and
2. It assumes that the criminal justice system, and primarily the police, are responsible for tackling the problem

As we have seen in Part 1, there are a number of common characteristics shared by most gang members. Fatherlessness and family dysfunction, school exclusion, poverty and marginalisation are all themes commonly cited both by witnesses to the inquiry and in research papers. It is clear that a singularly, or even predominantly, criminal justice response can have only limited and short-term success in addressing the problem: we must address the needs of young people rather than simply their deeds.

Instead, politicians have repeatedly called for increased deterrence through a more punitive response and implemented widely publicised but often short-term policies.

2.1 Missing the point with knife crime

Symptomatic of this is the Government's response to the increasing knife violence amongst young people:

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2 Ibid., Foreword, p.15

- A commitment to prosecute and imprison anyone aged 16 or above caught *carrying* a knife
- A £3 million, three year, Home Office advertising campaign[3]
- The *temporary* Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) which places particular emphasis on increased enforcement and has provided *some* additional funding for Friday and Saturday night activities and knife education programmes[4]

Failing to address the drivers

The language of Government ministers has been consistently tough[5] and, although care has been taken to note the need for positive interventions, Government policy has not addressed the reasons *why* young people are increasingly feeling the need to carry a weapon. Little mention has been made of the fact that 85 per cent of young people who report having carried a knife claim to have done so for protection and that just four per cent have used it to threaten someone, one per cent to injure someone.[6] Indeed the line between *gang* weapon *use* and weapon carrying is often blurred: knife crime – both carrying and use – and gangs are not synonymous and policy-makers would be advised to take this into account.

The Government has heralded a 27 per cent increase in the number of people imprisoned for weapons *possession* as a success,[7] yet a study by Pentonville Prison Governor Nicola Marfleet found that the threat of a prison sentence for carrying a knife was ineffectual. 'OJ', one young male interviewed by Marfleet, said:

> 'He wouldn't be thinking about six years [in prison], he's [sic] probably be thinking he's going to be six foot deep if he don't carry one.'[8]

Marfleet argues that prison sentences for possession are not effective:[9]

> 'We are particularly concerned that sending children to prison for carrying knives will only exacerbate their problems and expose them to more hardened criminal behaviour. We need to understand why children are carrying knives and tackle the causes directly.'[10]

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3 *Hard hitting anti-knife ads begin*, Home Office website (29 May 2008); for an example of one of the graphic videos see http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/video/2008/may/29/knifecrime

4 *Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Fact Sheet* (Home Office, December 2008)

5 See for example *A strong approach to knife crimes*, Home Office website (5th June 2008)

6 Stephen Roe and Jane Ashe, *Young People and Crime: findings from the 2006 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin (Home Office, July 2008), p.14

7 *Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Fact Sheet*

8 Marfleet, *Why carry a weapon?*, p.78

9 The Working Group notes that the research was conducted with a very small sample size, but also notes that the young people interviewed are those usually missed in surveys (imprisoned or outside of mainstream education); Marfleet, *Why carry a weapon?*

10 *Book on teenage knife crime questions effectiveness of current government policies*, News release (The Howard League for Penal Reform, October 16, 2008)

It is the *motivational behaviour* behind knife carrying which needs addressing. Policy makers need to understand why some young people believe carrying a weapon makes them safer, and why, unlike other young people, they do not perceive adults as able to protect them. In Marfleet's study, all 18 participants believed that neither police nor parents could protect them.[11]

Understanding the relationship between knife crime and victimisation

We should not be surprised that young people living in deprived communities – those most likely to have gangs – do not feel safe:

- Knife carrying is significantly higher amongst victims of crime[12] and young people are far more likely to be the victims of violent crime than adults – the risk of victimisation for males aged 16-24 is four times that for a British adult[13]
- People living in low income, high physical disorder areas are more likely to be victims of violent crime – people living in high physical disorder neighbourhoods are almost twice as likely to experience violent victimisation than those in low level neighbourhoods[14]
- The high concentration of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in deprived areas puts members of these communities at higher risk of violent victimisation and Black murder victims killed by a 'sharp instrument' are around five times over-represented against population estimates[15]

Policies seeking to address knife crime should be focusing on addressing this fundamental point: neither the threat of a prison sentence, nor an educational workshop or video on the dangers of carrying a knife, tackle *why* young people carry knives and do not therefore prevent them from doing so.

2.2 THE REAL IMPACT OF THE TACKLING KNIVES ACTION PROGRAMME (TKAP)

The Government has made much of the impact of TKAP, heralding its early successes in tackling knife crime. TKAP, launched in June 2008, is operating in ten areas[216] and combines enforcement with education. TKAP is a temporary initiative and will only run until March 2009.

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11 Chris Eades et al., *'Knife Crime', A review of evidence and policy, Second Edition*, Whose Justice? (The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, December 2007), p.61

12 Ibid., p.21

13 Ibid., p.23

14 Physical disorder refers to physical neighbourhood appearance (for example presence of broken windows); Ibid., p.24

15 Ibid. pp.24-5

16 The ten areas are London, Essex, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, Merseyside, the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Nottinghamshire, South Wales and Thames Valley; *Tackling knives, saving lives - increased action to tackle knife crime*, Press Release (Home Office, August 18, 2008)

Since its inception, 10,000 more stop and searches are conducted every month in TKAP areas and 700 extra search arches and wands have been provided.[17] Imprisonment for weapons possession has increased by almost a third and custodial sentences are now 53 days longer.[18] In addition, 7,000 extra places have been funded for young people to attend Friday and Saturday night activities.[19]

Statistics released by the Home Office claim that:[20]

- For July to September 2008 there was a 27 per cent decrease in hospital admissions for assault by a sharp object in the nine TKAP areas in England
- There were 17 per cent fewer serious knife crimes against young people in October 2008 compared to June 2008

However, these statistics (released mid-December 2008) have been discredited by the UK Statistics Authority who has accused the Government of making 'unsubstantiated claims' and drawing 'inappropriate conclusions'.[21] Sir Michael Scholar, head of the UK Statistics Authority, stated that the Home Office figures were 'premature, irregular and selective.'[22] Indeed statistics released slightly later show that between July and September 2008 murders and other homicides involving knives *increased* by 10 per cent and knife robberies *increased* by almost 20 per cent. Given that TKAP was launched in June 2008 this data clearly raises questions about the programmes effectiveness.[23]

In short, we do not know the true impact of TKAP. In addition, the Working Group is concerned with two of the Government's key measures of success:

1. An increase in the number of people imprisoned for knife *possession* does not warrant celebration, particularly when we know that the majority of young people carry knives out of fear and, as Marfleet points out, custody exposes young people to more hardened criminals
2. An increase in stop and searches does not in itself represent success, particularly given the alienating impact that such tactics can have on the very communities police need to engage with. Success rests in the follow-up and as one senior police officer told the working group, little is being done to tackle the *drivers* of gang culture

In addition, the temporary nature of TKAP is concerning and symptomatic of the tendency to provide short-term responses that generate headlines, rather than a long-term approach that generates real social change. One

17 *Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Fact Sheet*
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 *Spin on knife data criticised*, Financial Times, 7th January 2009
22 *Home Office accused of releasing selective knife crime figures*, The Guardian, 13th December 2008
23 *Knife-point robberies, murders with knives and burglaries increase, crime figures show* (The Telegraph, 22nd January 2008)

senior police officer commented to the Working Group: 'what is going to happen when the funding runs out?'

The concerns raised above are equally applicable to the London Blunt Operations (also primarily enforcement focused). Although the Working Group supports the use of targeted stop and searches – and both TKAP and Blunt operations have undoubtedly made the streets safer *during the period of the initiatives* – the long-term impact is questionable. One senior London police officer told the Working Group that gang members in his area were resorting to carrying everyday tools such as screwdrivers and craft knives in order to avoid being caught: the individuals have not been transformed in any way, they have simply adapted to the latest focus of enforcement.

THREE

Misunderstanding the problem and neglecting the solution

Any sustainable, long-term solution to gang culture must be community-driven and must involve community ownership and action: it must be bottom-up, not top-down. This means giving communities a say in how the problem is approached and empowering them to act as a collective. Unfortunately community engagement by politicians and policy-makers is too often tokenistic. This has two important consequences:

1. Failing to engage with the communities blighted by gang culture means that policy-makers have a distorted view of the problem
2. Solutions imposed on communities are likely to have limited impact

If people do not believe that their views and experiences are being listened to and acted upon – that engagement with police, local government and politicians is meaningful – then they are unlikely to believe in the possibility of change and work for it.

In addition, those who do believe in the possibility of change and are working to be the agents of it are often not receiving the support they need. Community organisations working daily to transform lives in our most hard-pressed neighbourhoods are substantially under-resourced.

3.1 Sitting in ivory towers

A common observation made by young people and practitioners was the lack of engagement between politicians (both local and national), and communities. Politicians were seen as isolated, as existing for other people in other areas, and therefore lacking an understanding of the circumstances and needs of disadvantaged communities.

John Pitts in his recent book *Reluctant Gangsters: the changing shape of youth crime*, notes:

> 'Many residents…feel that their voices are unheard in the places where key decisions about their plight are made. This would suggest that the, high profile, involvement of local politicians acting as advocates for people in gang-affected neighbourhoods, would be central to the success of any such initiative.[24]

When asked if they felt politicians understood what life was like for them living on Roehampton estate (South West London), Warren and Leon (both aged 20) simply laughed, 'no way'. A similar response was received from young people on a visit to Merseyside. The consensus among young people on a Prince's Trust Team programme was that policy makers were 'not interested' and that the communities they were from were 'not understood.' The Working Group found the same consensus amongst students in two PSHE classes in a secondary school in Knowsley. Failing to engage with young people not only perpetuates the generational divide, but also costs policy-makers valuable insight and potential solutions to gang culture.

It is vital that young people are consulted by politicians and policy-makers. Youth projects such as Second Wave, pictured above, offer an excellent opportunity for this (photo by Sarah Ainslie)

The notion that the political system is not interested in the views of people living in deprived communities was also shared by practitioners, with many expressing frustration that their expertise and knowledge was often either unsolicited or ignored.

Engagement between communities and politicians and public agencies must be *meaningful and sustained*. One off consultations are not sufficient and indeed can serve to further alienate communities who believe that they are only consulted when things get too bad to ignore, such as after a high profile stabbing.

The intensity of feeling expressed by witnesses shows that a lot of work needs to be done to ensure that communities feel listened to and included in the decision-making processes and to mobilise a collective stand against gang culture.

3.2 Forgetting the lives inside

A number of individuals consulted over the course of this inquiry have criticised current regeneration policy. They have highlighted the billions of pounds being spent on redesigning city centres and rebuilding houses whilst the lives of those living in deprived neighbourhoods remain unchanged.[25] This is symptomatic of the top-down approach described above.

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24 John Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Shape of Youth Crime* (Willan Publishing, 2008), Chapter 9

25 For example £13.2 billion over 10 years has been allocated for regeneration projects in Birmingham. See *Breakthrough Birmingham* for further details (The Centre for Social Justice, 2007)

Heale describes the situation succinctly in his discussion of London 'Gangland':

> 'In another part of the city it would be positively luxurious. But this is what you notice about Gangland the more time you spend there. These days, the estates are rarely dilapidated. Money has been invested in regeneration: with a few exceptions it is brand new, or in the process of being built. It's the same all over London – ambitious schemes to rebuild the homes of the poor, in the hope that doing so will rebuild their lives…in the midst of all this newness, the same problems remain.'[26]

This is by no means unique to London. For example on a Working Group visit to Liverpool, one Merseyside Police officer commented that housing estates were being rebuilt and relocated further away from the city centre – without adequate infrastructure and services – and that this is exacerbating their isolation.

Regeneration policy is, unfortunately, outside of the remit of this inquiry, but the Working Group wishes to highlight it as an issue that needs redress.

3.3 Restricting the third sector

Voluntary agencies, including faith groups, are central to empowering communities. Whether providing support to struggling families and alternative education for excluded children, delivering mentoring and diversionary activities for at risk young people, or running rehabilitation centres for drug and alcohol addicts, the third sector is vital.

The Working Group has been privileged to visit and speak with numerous staff at third sector projects tackling gangs and the wider social issues contributing to the development of gang culture. Yet despite the huge transformative impact these groups are having on the lives of young people, all have stressed the lack of funding and resources hampering their endeavours. Steve McGoldrich of Innerzone, a youth project in Glasgow's deprived East End, explained:

> 'Eighty per cent of my job is at my desk trying to find funding. It *should* be out there developing things.'

At a community summit held by the Working Group in Greater Easterhouse, Glasgow, representatives from the youth projects attending all talked about the negative impact that current funding structures have on their work. The short-term nature of statutory funding was highlighted as one of the biggest

26 Heale, *One Blood*, pp.18-19.

challenges, affecting everything from staffing to planning to the organisation's relationship with young people and the community. Tracy Rooney who helps run the Pavillion Youth Project in East Glasgow argued:

> 'A 20 week programme, it's great, but it's not enough. By the end of it the boys are back to doing what they did before. These young people are socially excluded, suffer from substance abuse and are heavily involved in gang violence. There is no quick fix solution – what is a 20 week programme going to do?

The general consensus amongst people working with disadvantaged young people – and particularly those hardest to reach such as gang members – was the need for long-term, consistent engagement; sometimes over several years.

The same issue was raised by third sector organisations across the country. Marc Edwards told the Working Group that his charity, Young Disciples, has had to cut effective programmes and make staff redundant due to the lack of funding, despite working in partnership with agencies such as the local authority and police. One staff member at Young Disciples reflected:

> 'The system's supposed to want to save lives, so do we. The system wants to get young people back into education, so do we. Why can't we get the system to work with us?...We just get pimped [used].'

The Centre for Social Justice's report on the third sector in *Breakthrough Britain* detailed the short-term, bureaucratic and prescriptive nature of current third sector funding and the detrimental impact it is having on the capacity of communities to tackle social breakdown. If we do not rectify this situation, the possibility of reversing gang culture for the long-term is vastly reduced.

Funding the right projects

The Working Group stresses that it is not just the provision of funding which is crucial, but what is being funded. Concerns voiced by witnesses included:

- A tendency amongst politicians and funding bodies to concentrate on a handful of well-known, but not necessarily effective, charities
- A lack of support for *small, grassroots* charities, particularly those tackling less 'sexy' issues such as alcohol and drug addiction and family breakdown – both of which are key drivers and indicators of gang involvement
- A lack of differentiation between charities working with young people and charities *transforming* young people. It was suggested that this linked to the general lack of understanding amongst decision-makers of the challenges facing gang-involved young people

Hence, although the Working Group supports the Government's recent provision of additional funds for third sector organisations working with 'disengaged young people' – and its specific allocation of funding for youth organisations with turnovers of less than £1 million – the impact of that money remains to be seen: funds are still being allocated and hence we do not yet know how effectively they are being targeted.[27]

27 *Tackling Knives Action Plan - six months on*, Press Notice 231/2008 (Home Office, December 11, 2008)

FOUR
Failing to protect communities

One of the biggest barriers to tackling gangs is the unwillingness of many communities to speak out against them. Whether in reference to specific cases of violence, or as a general rule, people living in gang-impacted areas are unlikely to provide evidence to the police and even less likely to act as witnesses. There are a number of factors contributing to this 'wall of silence':

1. *Fear of reprisals* – in many gang-impacted communities it is not the police but the gangs who appear to be enforcing the 'law', and any breach of this 'law' (such as being an informant) will result in serious repercussions for individuals and their families: people fear the gang more than a potential prison sentence
2. *The 'code of the street'* – for some people, and perhaps originating from point 3, the code of the street demands silence, no 'snitching'
3. *Trust in the police is low* – whether due to historical or current experiences, the relationship between the police and the community in our most deprived areas is often poor (though there are notable exceptions, as shown in Part III)

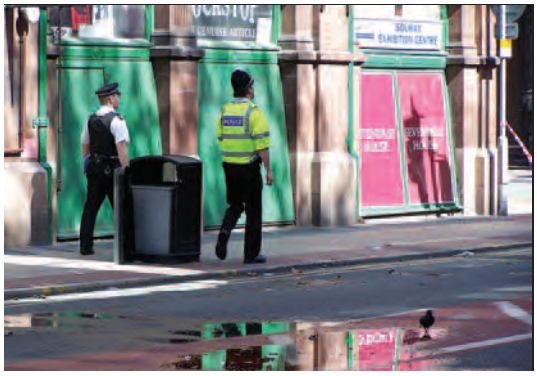
4.1 Communities in fear

> 'In the end, to stay alive, everyone in the community had to keep their mouths shut.'
>
> Tim Pritchard, Street Boys[28]

One barrier to engagement with the police is fear. For many individuals and families living in gang-impacted areas the danger of liaising with the police is perceived as far greater than not doing so. An account in John Pitts' Waltham Forest report is instructive. He cites an incident where a young man's refusal to

28 Pritchard, *Street Boys*, p.267

commit a robbery for a local gang resulted in his sister being raped and him being beaten as punishment.[29] Although not directly linked to engagement with the police, the anecdote clearly reveals the severity of potential repercussions resulting from standing up to gangs.



In gang-impacted communities people are often unwilling to work with police due to a fear of reprisals

Peter Walsh's history of Manchester gangs gives numerous examples of gang members walking free due to witness intimidation and community fear.[30] Indeed, a report on South Manchester gangs found that for 150 separate shootings between 1997 and 2000 just one witness testified.[31] John Heale notes in *One Blood* that fear of reprisals combines with the fact that people in gang-impacted neighbourhoods 'do not trust the authorities to keep them safe, to act responsibly with information they might give them.'[32]

On a visit to Liverpool, police and social services told the Working Group that fear of reprisal was a strong deterrent to witnesses. During the week before the Working Group's visit a 16 year old male, well known to police and social services, had tried to kill another man. Fortunately the gun did not fire. The police know details about the incident, but no-one will testify. It therefore becomes hearsay and not prosecutable.

> "If you want to be safe in your borough, who do you go to? You don't go to the police."
>
> London Youth Offending Team worker

Witness protection is not necessarily a solution and certainly not a sustainable one. It is not only (sometimes prohibitively) expensive, but also unappealing. As James Clarke, responsible for Liverpool City Council's role in Operation Staysafe, pointed out: why would witnesses choose to leave their area, friends and family and start over again in a new community potentially half way across the country?

4.2 Policing without consent

Over the course of this inquiry the Working Group has visited a number of police forces around the country. Part III documents some of the most innovative and effective work being undertaken by officers in areas such as Strathclyde, Liverpool and London. The dedication of many officers to supporting young people and to making hard-pressed communities safer is clear (though a number noted an unwillingness amongst some senior police officers to think innovatively or take risks).

However, despite these examples, numerous witnesses speaking to the Working Group have cited negative, discriminatory and aggressive police

29 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 8
30 Walsh, *Gang War*
31 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester.", p.18
32 Heale, *One Blood*, p.118

behaviour as, if not perpetuating gang culture, then actively hindering attempts to tackle it.

In addition, many of the young people and a number of the community workers consulted by the Working Group highlighted police stereotyping of young males, in particular young Black males, and problems with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representation within the police. This was believed to add to the distrust and therefore lack of engagement between deprived BME communities and the police, making efforts to tackle gang culture even more difficult.

Police misconduct

The importance of good relations between the police and the community cannot be underestimated and the Working Group has received some positive feedback from witnesses regarding community policing initiatives such as Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and Community Support Officers (CSOs). However this positivity is not universal and a number of consultees have commented on the negative behaviour of police.

Andy Smith, founder and Chief Executive of youth project Regenerate in South West London, provided an example of inappropriate police behaviour:

> 'Local community police on the whole are excellent, they seek to engage with young people on the estates, build positive relationships and are working hard to build bridges. These bridges get quickly burnt down though by the police on patrol in their vans that often act in a harsh, unfriendly and in sometimes violent ways towards young people in our urban communities. This hard line approach that they take does no good for anyone and in my experience, doesn't reduce gang activity. If anything I think it provokes young people to see the police as an enemy. Many people in our estates view these police as bullies and as enemies because of the way they use unnecessary force and language. I don't think that the majority of the population in the UK sees it but it is certainly seen on our inner city estates. I have heard stories of police beating people once in the vans and have seen the police provoke young people by calling them names and searching them inappropriately in public etc. I personally have experienced this harsh side to the police, where I've been grabbed, kicked and thrown to the floor by police officers, for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.'

Ruth Lapage, a Learning Support Unit Manager at an inner city London school, told the Working Group that the Territorial Support Group (TSG) in her area were referred to as 'the bully van' by her students. She stated that

> 'The level of force I hear about them using against young people is unnecessary, brutal and worrying…They are notorious for heavy-

> handed bully tactics. I know of two current court cases including a complaint from a headteacher…'

Teenagers speaking to the Working Group in the London Borough of Lewisham referred to Greenwich police's 'rough squad', and all eight of them could (allegedly) name someone who had being physically assaulted by police. All had personally had a negative experience with police, including inappropriate and 'sly' comments, failure to provide any documents after a stop and search and not turning up when a crime was reported. Similar observations were made by young people in Roehampton.

Nearly all young people interviewed also noted the frequency of stop and searches. In Lewisham they felt that, as young Black men, police unfairly stereotyped them as gang-involved / criminal, and as such they were stopped far more often than others. The stop and search statistics cited in Part I, Section 3.3 would appear to support this notion. In Roehampton, one male estimated that he averaged one stop and search a day at the age of 16 /17. He told the Working Group:

> 'The police say [they stop you because] you're in a known drug area. I live in a drug area! What am I supposed to do?'

Crucially, in both examples it was not the principle of stop and search that the young men objected to – indeed both understood the need for it – it was the manner in which it was undertaken. As one young man put it, 'if they talked to you and told you why you were being searched, then I don't mind.' The way police approach and interact with young people is vital. One London YOT worker argued that the police 'need to keep in mind they're dealing with kids.'

Young people taking part in a Prince's Trust TEAM project in Liverpool told the Working Group that a lot of police 'talked down' to young people, and suggested that some police feel threatened by them, particularly when in groups. This is an interesting suggestion, and supports the argument that police training should include greater exposure to young people. A significant proportion of policing is, after all, focused on this group.

Intergenerational tensions

Individuals giving evidence to the Working Group also noted the historical nature of some of the tensions. One youth worker stated:

> 'There are young people who are informed by their parents, or brothers and sisters, about the negative experiences they had with the police in maybe the 70s, 80s and 90s. That's across all cultures, not just the Black, White or Asian community, that's across all communities. There's always someone in your family who will say "Ah you can't trust the police".'

A Youth Offending Team Manager also highlighted the intergenerational transmission of tensions when commenting on the lack of (specifically) Black officers, particularly in the higher ranks:

> '…when I was doing gang research I noticed [the absence of Black officers] and would interview people about it. And what Black people told me again and again was that if they'd grown up in that community and said they wanted to be a police officer, they would never have been accepted by the community.'

Lieutenant Mora, Los Angeles Police Department, told the Working Group that a representative police force was crucial in engaging communities with high BME populations

Graeme McLagan's account of police activities in London in the 1980s and 1990s – and the profoundly alienating affect it had on Black communities – is instructive in helping us to understand the intensity of these feelings.[33] Although Black communities have subsequently worked closely with the police through the MPS's Operation Trident and, in particularly, it's Independent Advisory Group, other incidents have brought further negative press. The Macpherson report's conclusions[34] and this year's internal MPS racism claims and the Black Police Association's (BPA) call for Black and Minority Ethnic candidates to boycott MPS recruitment,[35] are likely to have aggravated tensions between police and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. This is profoundly unhelpful given the very practical need for increased Black and Minority Ethnic representation in the police.

Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, stated in January 2009 that the term 'institutionally racist' was unhelpful and argued that the Stephen Lawrence campaign had brought a 'sea-change in public attitudes to racial injustice.'[36] It has to be hoped that this view – that positive progress has been made – is shared more widely. Nonetheless, it is clear that relationship building between the police and these communities is needed in order to break down the stereotypes held by *both* groups. The success of Operation Trident in engaging the Black Caribbean communities in London shows the impact that meaningful collaboration can have.

Black and Minority Ethnic representation

As police officers in both Boston Police Department (BPD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) informed the Working Group, the police must reflect the communities they are policing. This is not simply a matter of race,

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33 McLagan, *Guns and Gangs, The inside story of the war on our streets*, Chapter 2.

34 The Macpherson Report resulted from claims of incompetence and racism following the murder of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence

35 *Black police call for recruitment boycott at Met* (The Times, 5th October 2008); *Black officers to begin recruitment boycott at Met*, The Guardian Unlimited (5th October 2008)

36 *Trevor Philips warns that Britain could return to racism as recession bites* (The Telegraph, 19th January 2009)

but of cultural awareness and understanding. Deputy Superintendent Daley (D.S.) of BPD argued that the force 'just wouldn't be effective unless we represented the population…You can't police without the consent of the people being policed'.

As D.S. Daley pointed out, if we are to have true community engagement – the only way by which gang prevention will be truly sustainable – then the community must trust the police and be willing to work with them to reclaim the streets. It is a vicious circle: people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities do not want to join the police because of negative personal experiences or negative inherited views and the lack of Black and Minority Ethnic officers reinforces these views.

FIVE

Failing to intervene early – the disconnect between statutory agencies

> 'Particular sectors such as schools, the health service and the prison service seemed grossly unprepared to collaborate or respond adequately to the problems brought about by gangs.'[37]

Although the Government's *Tackling Gangs* report clearly expresses a need to combine enforcement, prevention and intervention tactics and to work across agencies – a statutory requirement enshrined in the Children Act 2004, Education Act 2002 and Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (see below for further details) – the approach to tackling gangs remains disjointed. Of particular concern is the reluctance of different public bodies to collaborate fully and the failure of some local authorities to recognise that in order to fulfill their safeguarding duties they must tackle gangs.

5.1 Slipping through the net

The Working Group has heard numerous examples of children and young people 'falling through the net' of statutory agencies despite an obvious escalation in behavioural problems and offending. One senior police officer told the Working Group that gang-involved young people have 'slalomed through the system'. Another senior police officer described the life history of a young gang member who had committed murder aged 15:

- During pregnancy his mother had an alcohol problem
- His mother was workless and dependent on Income Support
- By the time he committed murder the family had been re-housed around 10 times due to domestic violence and local authority regeneration projects – all residencies were in some of the most deprived and gang-impacted areas of the country

37 Aldridge, Medina, and Ralphs, *Youth Gangs in an English City*, p.22

- By age 12 he was involved in gang rivalry and was truanting from school
- At age 13 he had left school
- At age 14 he was picked up for shoplifting, assault and breach of the peace
- By age 14 he was regularly drinking alcohol
- At age 15 he was picked up for vehicle theft
- At age 15 he committed murder, attempted murder and assault

A feature in the Observer highlights a similar example of the failure of statutory agencies to intervene early to prevent a child from becoming a serious violent offender. The number of occasions on which one of the boys (Boy C) convicted of murdering Kodjo Yenga came into contact with statutory agencies is shocking. 'Boy C' had repeatedly been in trouble at school, had been allocated a social worker, been through a 'rapid escalation in misbehaviour', been caught by the police twice (for theft and attempted theft and assault) and been excluded from school. Tragically his mother had tried to get additional support from the local authority. Having requested that her son be placed in an 'educational home' she was informed by the local authority that this was too expensive and her son's behaviour did not warrant the expenditure.[38]

In both of these examples the young person's behaviour and that of their families should have triggered swift and serious intervention by statutory agencies. Agencies should have been collaborating, including sharing information, to ensure that support was provided. These two cases are illustrative of a general – very serious – problem: according to an analysis of 161 Serious Case Reviews, poor communication between agencies regarding the welfare and safety of children is 'common'.[39]

This may be due to a lack of understanding about gangs or even a lack of awareness of the problem. One senior councillor in a city well-known for its gang problem in general and a recent high profile gang-related murder stated 'we don't have any West Side Story type gangs here', saying that the only 'gangs' in the city were those supporting the two rival football teams.

Local authorities should be intervening long before a young person becomes deeply involved in gang culture and, as the following section shows, not to intervene shows significant neglect of statutory responsibility.

The statutory requirement for action

The failure of agencies to act together reveals a neglect of their statutory responsibilities. The Children Act 2004 (section 11) requires that LAs and relevant agencies carry out their responsibility to protect children and young people:[40]

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38 *The Killing of Kodjo*, The Observer (16 November 2008)

39 Serious Case Reviews from 2003-2005 were reviewed; Marian Brandon et al., *Analysing child deaths and serious injury through abuse and neglect: what can we learn? A biennial analysis of serious case reviews 2003-2005* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008), p.10

40 The Act classes as children anyone aged under 18

> 'Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.'[41]

The statutory framework for 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' is found in the Children Act 1989. In this, welfare refers to a child's health and development: health includes 'physical and mental health' and development includes 'physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development'.[42]

In the Government's statutory guidance on section 11, the responsibilities of agencies covered by the legislation include:[43]

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully

Children and young people involved in or exposed to gang culture are at *significant* risk: their welfare is not being 'safeguarded and promoted'. The failure, therefore, to tackle gangs can only be seen as a failure to meet the above safeguarding requirements.

Key people and bodies covered by this statutory duty include:[44]

- Local authorities, including district councils (which incorporates Housing Departments)
- Police
- Probation service
- NHS bodies
- Organisations (currently Connexions) providing services under section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000
- Youth Offending Teams
- Governors / Directors of Prisons and Young Offender Institutions
- Directors of Secure Training Centres
- British Transport Police

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places the same responsibilities on Local Education Authorities and governing bodies.[45] This means that all those

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41 *Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004* (HM Government, 2007), p.10
42 Ibid., p.11
43 As stated in Ibid.
44 Ibid., p.10
45 Ibid., p.11

agencies listed as part of the multi-agency model in Part III, Section 1.3.3.2 have a duty to engage in a gang prevention strategy.

Data sharing

In addition, legislation clearly requires agencies to share information in order to carry out their safeguarding duties. The Children Act 2004 states:

> "I respect confidentiality, but I think it's been used as an excuse not to work more closely together."
>
> Superintendent Paul Joyce, Boston Police Department

'Effective arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children should include having in place agreed systems, standards and protocols for sharing information about a child and their family within each agency and between agencies.'[46]

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities to work with criminal justice agencies to prevent crime and disorder. Section 17 states:[47]

(1) Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.
(2) This section applies to a local authority, a joint authority, a police authority, a National Park authority and the Broads Authority.

Section 115 of the Act stipulates that:[48]

(1) Any person who, apart from this subsection, would not have power to disclose information –
(a) to a relevant authority; or
(b) to a person acting on behalf of such an authority,
shall have power to do so in any case where the disclosure is necessary or expedient for the purposes of any provision of this Act.

The two Acts noted above provide a clear framework for collaboration and communication. There is no excuse, therefore, for the failure of local authorities and other public bodies to act to tackle gangs.

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46 Ibid., p.16
47 "Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37)," http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980037_en_3#pt1-ch1-pb4-l1g17
48 Ibid.

SIX
Conclusion

Despite the existence of some effective local initiatives and the recent publication of the Government's strategy *Tackling Gangs*, considerable structural and cultural barriers to progress remain.

A step change is required in the way that government and agencies view gangs and it is imperative that policy tackles the *drivers* as well as the symptoms of gang culture. The top down approach to social policy can miss the true nature of the problem and serves to further isolate communities which already feel marginalised from mainstream society. A long-term approach to gangs will require the empowerment of affected communities: we must work *with* them rather than continuing to do things to them.

PART III: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Over the course of this inquiry, witnesses have repeatedly stressed that although Britain may have had 'gangs' for centuries, *the scale and nature of the problem is new*. Gang culture – and in particular gang-related street violence – is rising and the average age of those involved is decreasing. If society – from national and local government to communities and individuals – does not act now, in some communities generations of young people may be lost.

The Working Group believes that immediate action implementing short-, medium- and long-term strategies *can* reverse this worrying trend. National and international models show that with political will, sustained commitment and a targeted, truly multi-agency approach, we can successfully tackle gangs: all children and young people can be engaged in mainstream society and access mainstream opportunities.

Part III sets out a blueprint for tackling Britain's growing gang problem. As gangs are highly localised the exact details of the policies detailed below should be worked out at a local level. Section I outlines the immediate response, Section II provides medium-term proposals for building trust and positive relations between the police and young people and Section III details the long-term approach to prevent future generations of young people from becoming gang-involved.

The Working Group stresses that *success rests on the implementation of the full range of policies* outlined below: this is not a pick and mix. Implementing the short-term recommendations without the long-term proposals, or the enforcement tactics without the intervention and prevention models will lead, at best, to limited success.

ONE
Immediate action – enough is enough

> 'Enforcement alone is not enough…we will aggressively enforce the law, but we must be equally aggressive in providing our kids with opportunities and alternatives and hope for the future.'
>
> Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor of Los Angeles[1]

1.1 Objectives

It is imperative that gang-affected areas act now to prevent further deaths and serious injuries on our streets. An immediate response delivering near-term results is needed to:

- Prevent violence
- Break up gangs and therefore gang activity
- Identify young people on the fringes of involvement and intervene

There are three key components to the immediate response, and these must be seen as parts of a jigsaw: implementing anything other than the full complement will produce an incomplete, and therefore significantly less effective, strategy.

1. ***Setting the tone: language,*** leadership and prioritisation (see Part III, Section 1.3.1)
2. ***Defining and understanding the problem:*** in-depth research and analysis (see Part III, Section 1.3.2)
3. ***The model:*** multi-agency and multi-pronged (see Part III, Section 1.3.3 – 1.3.5)

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1 Speaking at a conference with Police Chief Bratton, 8 February 2007; http://uk.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUKN0849227120070209

Furthermore, the immediate response must be seen as *one component* of a much wider strategy for tackling gangs. The immediate response alone cannot provide long-term, sustained results – its principle aim is to prevent violence – but it should play a major role in a comprehensive package of intervention and prevention.

1.2 Learning from existing models

The Working Group has spoken to a wide range of people leading gang prevention initiatives in Britain and the U.S. These initiatives have included Birmingham's Reducing Gang Violence (BRGV), Merseyside's Matrix Gun Crime Team, Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit, various specialist Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) units and a selection of programmes in Boston (Massachusetts) and Los Angeles (California).

All represent significant progress in the development of effective gang prevention models and hold key lessons for devising a universal model for Britain.

Models of particular note are detailed below.

1. BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

The Boston Gun Project and Operation Ceasefire[2]

Operation Ceasefire, the Boston response to an escalating youth gang violence problem, has been well documented. Born out of the Boston Gun Project, *Ceasefire* achieved impressive results (see below). The Working Group recommends that the general model, and principles behind it, should be used as the basis for a UK strategy.

Operation Ceasefire's principal aim was to stop and prevent gang violence in order to make communities safer. It did not aim to tackle gang culture *per se*, or to prevent all gang offending. It focused on 'impact players' whose removal – whether literal through enforcement or metaphorical through positive engagement – would vastly reduce levels of violence. A by-product of this type of strategy should be the break-up of gangs, but other strategies and initiatives will be needed in order to secure this for the long-term (see Part III, Section 2 and 3).

It is important to note that firearms were the key weapon of gang violence in Boston and thus *Ceasefire* was heavily focused on tackling this. Firearms must also be a priority in Britain – and indeed a number of operations are focused on this – but an additional prioritisation of knife crime will be needed in British cities.

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2 Unless otherwise stated, information on the BGP and Operation Ceasefire is from *Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire* (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, September 2001)

The problem

Boston experienced an epidemic of youth homicides in the late 1980s/early 1990s: homicide amongst individuals aged 24 and under increased 230 per cent in the three years between 1987 (22 victims) and 1990 (73 victims). It was the crack cocaine epidemic of the late 1980s that triggered this chronic street violence and between 1991 and 1995 homicides remained high at around 44 deaths a year.

The model

Preparation

The Boston Gun Project (BGP), sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and directed by members of Harvard's JFK School of Government, was established to devise a strategy for tackling Boston's increasing (gang-related) youth homicides. The BGP involved:

- Establishing a multi-agency working group, composed mainly of front-line criminal justice staff and youth workers, to identify, analyse and devise solutions to the youth homicide/gang problem
- Applying quantitative and qualitative research techniques to assess the nature of, and dynamics driving, youth violence in the city. This included mapping gangs, gang rivalries, youth homicides and individuals associated with the homicides
- Developing a suppression and intervention strategy designed to have a significant near-term impact on youth homicides (see below for details)
- Implementing the strategy, and evaluating and adapting it in real time to ensure the most effective model

The BGP working group included representatives from:

- Boston Police Department's Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF)
- Probation officers
- Department of Youth Services (DYS)
- School police
- Streetworkers (coalition of Boston social service workers/detached youth workers)
- U.S. Attorney's Office
- Office of the Suffolk County District Attorney
- Boston Regional Office of ATF (Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms)

The working group met at the YVSF HQ around twice a week to share information and intelligence, discuss and critique ideas and devise a strategy.

The strategy: Operation Ceasefire

The model had two main elements:

1. Direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying guns to young people
2. Generating a strong deterrent to gang violence

The deterrence strategy delivered a clear message that the violence must stop and combined sustained, targeted enforcement with the genuine offer – and provision – of support services to facilitate an individual's exit from gang life.

Police and Street Workers (detached youth workers) delivered a unified message that violence would not be tolerated, and that if gang members desisted then support was available, but if the violence continued then every force of law would be brought to bear on the perpetrators.

To deliver the message, face-to-face meetings between police and gang members were arranged via the Street Workers (who also advised the police on how to work with young people and gangs). This was described to the Working Group by police officers in Boston as the 'honest' or 'fair' approach: the gangs were explicitly warned about what would happen if they persisted in their violence.

Lieutenant Mike Conley (YVSF Commander) and Sergeant Mike Talbot (Schools Police Unit Commander) told the Working Group about the Boston Police Department's approach to gangs

The enforcement strand included the use of '*pulling levers*': working with all enforcement agencies to pull every lever legally available when violence occurred. This included concentrated attention on drug selling and use, public drinking and minor disorder offences; the confiscation of cars where gang members were without a license; and intense enforcement of probation terms. Effectively, police and other enforcement agencies monitored targeted gang members on a daily basis and any wrong step resulted in significant repercussions.

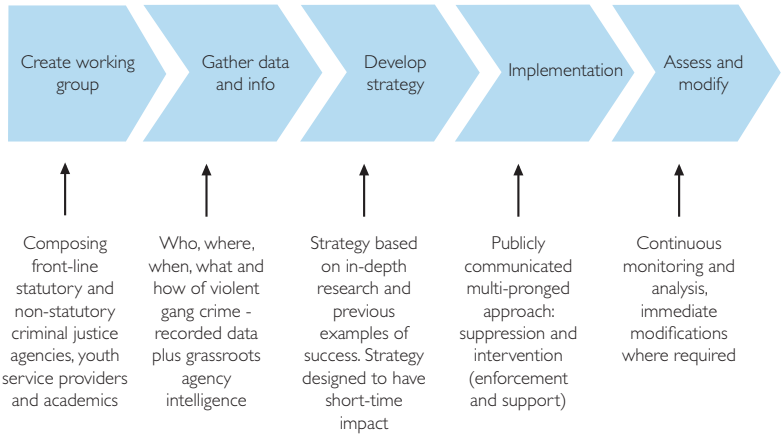
Alongside this ran *positive intervention*: police working closely with Street Workers, probation officers, parole officers, the Youth Service Providers Network (YSPN)[3], churches and community groups to offer services and assistance to gang members seeking or considering an alternative to gang life. This included help to re-enter education, job training and emotional support.

3 The Youth Service Providers Network (YSPN) is part of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston (a voluntary agency). The YSPN is made up of licensed, clinical social workers, and works in partnership with the Boston Police Department. YSPN social workers work out of Boston police stations and police refer at risk youth and youth engaged in delinquent activities to YSPN workers. YSPN workers work closely with the families of the young people as well as the young people themselves, and provide a 'comprehensive safety net of services'; *Youth Service Providers Network,* Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, briefing provided by Claudia Dunne, Clinical Director, YSPN

Superintendent Paul Joyce, who played a leading role in devising and implementing Ceasefire, emphasised the importance of working with other agencies, including the third sector. He told the Working Group:

'It was too big for us alone…you can't arrest your way out of it.'[4]

Figure 3.1: Summary of the BGP and Ceasefire process



Source: amended from *Reducing Gun Violence* (US Department of Justice, 2001)

Timeline

Crucially, the research and planning phase of BGP took just a year and ensured that *Ceasefire* was up and running quickly.

January 1995	BGP Working Group starts meeting
Autumn 1995	Basic assessment of problem completed and central elements of Operation Ceasefire intervention mapped out
Early 1996	Implementation of enforcement and deterrent tactics of Operation Ceasefire begin, with concurrent implementation of intervention services and assistance for gang members
March 1996	First comprehensive gang crackdown
May 1996	First meeting ('forum') between gang members and BGPWG
August 1996	Second major crackdown plus other core *Ceasefire* activities
1996-1997	Intensive *Ceasefire* activities

4 The Working Group visited Boston in May 2007

Results

Following the first gang forum in May 1996, youth homicides dropped dramatically, and remained low throughout the operation. Analysis by the Harvard Team showed that Operation Ceasefire was associated with a:

- 63% decrease in youth homicides per month
- 32% decrease in shots-fired calls for service per month
- 25% decrease in gun assaults per month
- 44% decrease in number of youth gun assaults per month in highest risk district (Roxbury)

These results remained accurate when controlled for other factors and in comparison to national trends.

Key Principles of BGP and Operation Ceasefire

- **Leadership and prioritisation by senior officials**
- **Identifying, analysing and understanding the problem/evidence-based**
- **Collaboration/multi-agency**
- **Multi-pronged: suppression, intervention, prevention**
- **Focused and sustained attention**
- **An honest approach**
- **Community engagement**

Youth Violence Strike Force, Boston Police Department

The Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF) offers further learnings for a UK strategy. As a lead agency in the *Ceasefire* model, the key principles developed for the Operation are embedded in the YVSF. Lieutenant Conley, YVSF Commander, gave the Working Group a slide presentation detailing the work of the unit. The presentation stated the YVSF 'keys to success' as:[5]

- Sharing information/Resources
- Committed Individuals/Agencies
- Buy in at the Top
- Community Support
- No Egos – No Turf [agencies must collaborate not compete]
- Aggressive Monitoring of Impact Players/Repeat Offenders
- Shared Credit [across agencies]

5 Slide from Boston *Police Department Youth Violence Strike Force*, slide presentation given to Working Group by Lieutenant Conley, YVSF Commander

The keys to success provided by Lieutenant Mike Conley place great emphasis on the multi-agency approach, stressing the need for prioritisation and commitment from all agencies. Equally important, and a point stressed by Superintendent Paul Joyce during the Working Group visit to Boston Police Department, is the need for *real* and *equal* collaboration by all relevant agencies. Superintendent Joyce summarised this in regard to implementing *Ceasefire*: 'Leave your ego at the door and we can work collaboratively to make this happen.'

Tokenistic or symbolic partnerships will not work: collaboration must be full and genuine, including information sharing and resource input, whether money or manpower.

Both Superintendent Joyce and Lieutenant Conley stressed that true collaboration takes time, and requires investment in relationship building. The fragility of depending on relationships between *individuals* within agencies shows how vital commitment at the most senior level is: if an individual leaves their position, their replacement must be expected to continue their work.

2. MATRIX GUN CRIME TEAM, MERSEYSIDE POLICE[6]

Merseyside's Matrix Gun Crime Team closely reflects the Boston model and although the initiative is in its early stages evaluative data points towards significant success. As such the Working Group recommends that other UK areas tackling gang activity learn from the Matrix model.

Matrix, as with *Ceasefire*, focuses on gun crime. However, as Superintendent Richardson of the Matrix Team informed the Working Group, around 60 per cent of firearms discharges are gang-related.[7] *Matrix* is, therefore, tackling gang activity.

There are four key components to *Matrix*:

- ***Covert Unit:*** targeting geographical areas and gathering intelligence
- ***Disruption Team:*** aggressively targeting nominals (individuals identified as being involved with firearms) and responding to potential or occurring firearms incidents
- ***Co-ordination Team, including Joint Agency Group (JAG):*** multi-agency response, sharing intelligence and identifying appropriate intervention
- ***Reactive Investigation Team:*** responding to reported firearms incidents

The nominals list

A nominal is an individual identified either as involved with, or associating with people who are involved with, firearms and who has been placed on a formal list of 'nominals' to be targeted by the *Matrix* Disruption Team.

Three Basic Command Unit (BCU) areas are responsible for 95 per cent of Merseyside's gun crime and it is therefore these BCUs that identify the impact

6 Unless otherwise stated, information on operation Matrix was provided by Superintendent Richardson on a visit to Merseyside Police

7 As noted above, the proportion of gang-related shootings is comparable to that in Manchester, and Greater Manchester Police's Xcalibre initiative also focuses on gun crime rather than gangs *per se*

players to be targeted under *Matrix*. The Matrix Gun Crime Team is currently focusing on around 40 nominals.

The decision to make an individual a gun crime nominal is subjective and made by senior Matrix officers. The decision must be compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights[8] and is based on one or more of the following criteria:

- High grade intelligence that the individual is involved in gun crime
- An arrest for a firearms-related offence
- Being a victim of gun crime but refusing to cooperate with the police
- Affiliating with individuals known to be involved in gun crime, including having a family member involved in gun crime
- Having been served with an Osman warning[9] or criminality notice concerning gun crime

Once the decision to make an individual a nominal is taken, the individual is served with a written notice and receives a home visit informing them of their status and the repercussions of this if they do not desist from firearms activity. They are also made aware of the opportunities and services available to them – for example training and employment support – if they choose to desist.

The level of response is dependent on a grading system – Gold, Silver, Bronze – but all receive the initial home visit and are encouraged to desist and access support services (provided by partner agencies). Those in the Gold band receive the most intense response including daily home visits, pressure on the family to encourage desistance and sustained surveillance resulting in enforcement of the law for *any* offences, however minor. Silver nominals get three home visits a week, and Bronze just one. Those graded Bronze are considered most likely to respond to offers of support facilitating an exit from gun/gang involvement. Individuals can remain on the Bronze list for some months until the Matrix team is confident that they are fully engaged with support services and are no longer a danger to themselves or the wider community.

Risk management plans are put in place for all nominals, including the issuing of ASBOs. The relevant BCU is then part of the enforcement effort, with daily briefings provided to BCU officers to inform them of the status of each nominal. As Superintendent Richardson informed the Working Group:

> 'Whilst we control the process, we don't own the problem, the BCUs do.'

Without the buy in of BCU officers, tracking and enforcing risk management plans (for example ASBO prohibitions) would divert specialist officers from other activities and therefore require considerable additional manpower.

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8 This is ensured by the inclusion of a dedicated Crown Prosecution Service lawyer on the Joint Agency Group

9 An Osman warning is issued to individuals who are identified through intelligence as being at serious risk of being killed by someone with the resources to do so

The nominals list is reviewed and updated at the weekly Joint Agency Group meeting to ensure a fluid and accurate picture of gun (and gang) involvement.

Key principles

Superintendent Richardson stressed the key principles of:

- Fairness
- Prevention
- Long-term engagement

As in Boston, the message communicated to nominals is:

> 'If you use a gun we'll catch you, if you use a gun to enforce your drug turf we'll be over you like a rash, but if you want out, we'll help with that too.'
>
> Superintendent Richardson

Superintendent Richardson told the Working Group that the aim is to 'get in front of the gun crime issues', sharing intelligence through the Joint Agency Group to 'stop the gun being fired.'

Crucially, *Matrix* is highly proactive as well as reactive. It includes identifying potential future nominals and intervening, targeting children living with a nominal (including seeking care orders to remove children aged 10 or under as part of safeguarding measures), carrying out community communication drives and utilising the media to advertise the operation's work.

Operation Noble is the Matrix Gun Crime Team's enforcement strategy and the various strands clearly illustrate this multi-pronged approach, see Fig. 3.2.

Results[10]

Early data shows Matrix to be having significant success. Originally aiming for a 25 per cent decline in firearms discharges, the team has already exceeded this, seeing a 32 per cent decline in discharges in the past seven months. This is directly comparable to the above *Ceasefire* results.

In addition, the 'focused attention' model has resulted in three nominals seeking support and adopting an alternative lifestyle – exiting gun/gang life – with two others in the process of doing so (having been downgraded from Gold to Bronze). This has been achieved in just 11 months. These are promising results and shows that the Boston suppression plus intervention model can work in Britain.

In addition, Merseyside Police have seen a reduction in chaotic gun crime (for example shooting at a window) as a result of the *Matrix* presence.

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10 A full audit of Matrix is expected at the end of the financial year (2008/09)

Figure 3.2: Matrix Gun Crime Team, Operation Noble

	Neon	Xenon	Argon	Radon	Krypton
Target	Firearms incident or good grade intelligence regarding likely incident / presence of firearms	Targeting of specific area - either as follow on from Neon or after a series of incidents where good grade intelligence is not present	Public incident e.g. firearms discharge	Nominals	'Up and coming' - identified by BCU
Intervention	Reactive / Disruption Team tactics	Resources from across force - strong community message that there to help and further violence not tolerated	Reactive and Disruption team tactics	Gold, Silver and Bronze bands - intensity of intervention dependent on band. Enforcement and opportunities	Monitor activities - proactive interventions such as ASBOs, parental orders plus offer of support / opportunities
Delivery	Commanded at Superintendent level, Xeon plus firearms team	Inspector, 3 Sergeants, 21 Constables plus support from dogs unit	Inspector, 2 Sergeants, 12 Constables	Disruption Team, full resources of force and JAG	Disruption Team, full resources of force and JAG

3. OPERATION STAYSAFE, MERSEYSIDE POLICE AND LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL[11]

Operation Staysafe is operated by Merseyside Police and Liverpool City Council's Children's Services. It is a preventative tool aimed at intervening early to support children at risk. Although difficult to quantify the exact impact of the Operation, the number of interventions completed, parental responses and witness evidence points to significant success.

The Working Group recommends that all gang-impacted areas utilise child protection legislation by adopting a similar model.

The legislation

It utilises Section 46 ('Protection of Children') of the Children Act 1989. Section 46 legislates for the 'Removal and accommodation of children by police in cases of emergency', 'where a constable has reasonable cause to believe that a child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm'.[12]

In practice the legislation enables officers on patrol to pick up children and young people they deem 'at risk' – for example in possession of or having consumed alcohol, associating with known criminals/nominals, engaging in anti-social behaviour – and take them to a designated 'place of safety' (which cannot be a police station). The local authority must then be informed that the child or young person has been taken into 'police protection'.

11 Unless otherwise stated, the information on Operation Staysafe was provided by James Clarke on a working group visit to Liverpool

12 Office of Public Sector Information, "Children Act 1989," Text, Part V, Section 46, http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts1989/ukpga_19890041_en_1#Legislation-Preamble

The model

Merseyside Police developed a highly effective partnership with Children's Services in order to successfully implement Operation Staysafe. Officers patrol a particular area on an agreed day and remove any children and young people that they deem at risk on the streets to the designated 'safe place'. Social workers based at the safe place then talk with the young people to determine why they are out and what they are doing, and contact their parents to come and pick them up. The social workers then engage with the parents to ascertain why the children are out, offer support and advice, and investigate whether further intervention is required.

Children and young people need positive, structured activities which develop their skills and raise self-esteem. The Metropolitan Police Service's Voluntary Police Cadets programme is working with disadvantaged young people to do just that

Operation Staysafe is conducted around once every two months on irregular days, plus on targeted days such as Halloween, bonfire night and during school holidays.

The first *Staysafe* night was conducted in Norris Green with a church hall acting as the safe place. James Clarke – Principal Officer of Corporate Parenting for Liverpool City Council Children's Services– explained that this was an effective location due to its 'positive association' for the community and the presence of a 'community-conscious vicar' who was keen to help. Leafleting had been done in advance to communicate and explain the operation to the community (though not the date) and presentations were

Merseyside Police's Officer Briefing on Operation Staysafe cites its operational aims as:[13]

- To protect children left to wander the streets at night without responsible adult supervision
- To protect vulnerable children and young people consuming alcohol or other intoxicants
- To tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in identified hotspot locations
- To work with parents and guardians to improve responsible parental care
- To work with Partner Agencies to educate children and young people away from a Gang Culture
- To gather evidence that will support criminal prosecutions and ASBO applications
- To reassure the local communities that our activities are focused on the right individuals and that Merseyside Police can and will deal effectively with gang related violence and intimidation
- To protect our staff and maintain our professional reputation

13 "Operation Staysafe Officer Briefing" (Merseyside Police); given to to the Working Group by Merseyside Police Youth Engagement Unit

given in schools. Information packs were also produced, one for young people and one for parents, to provide information and guidance, and to signpost sources of additional support.

Around 20 children were picked up on the first night and the Working Group was told that every parent collecting their child left saying 'thank you'. Many parents did not know what their children were up to, or had thought they were at a friend's house/doing something else. James Clarke noted the 'general lack of real, basic tracking of where your kid is', and explained that social workers provided basic advice on monitoring a child's whereabouts such as telephoning the friend's house to confirm their arrival and liaising with other parents.

Key principles

- Top level buy-in – the most senior council officer and police officer responsible for *Staysafe* attended the evenings
- Multi-agency – joint planning, joint investment, joint delivery
- Focus on safety of children and young people – welfare rather than criminal intervention
- Family focused – parental engagement and support
- Community engagement

Results

Over 600 young people and their parents/guardians have been engaged so far and James Clarke estimated that around 10 per cent have received Social Services assessments triggering a specific response. He also noted that a significant number have been *Wannabes*, 10 were the siblings of nominals, and 2-3 per cent were known gang members.

In addition, police data shows a 25 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour as a result of *Staysafe*. Superintendent McWilliams who oversees Merseyside Police's involvement in the initiative told the Working Group:

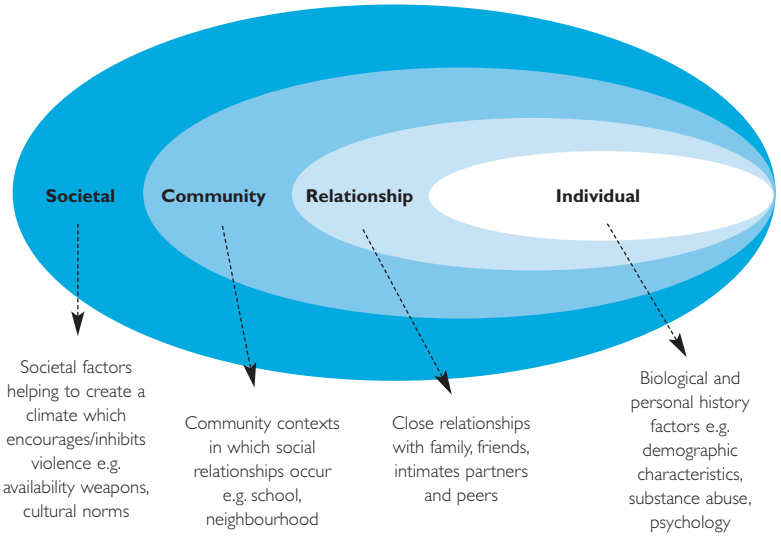
> 'It has been very effective in tackling gun culture and improving parental responsibility. To date 614 young people have been removed from streets and park as having been deemed "at risk".'

4. VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT, STRATHCLYDE POLICE

The Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) approach to gangs and violence should also inform anti-violence strategies elsewhere. The VRU has adopted a *public health* – rather than singularly criminal – response to violence, informed by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) work on the issue.[14]

14 *World report on violence and health*, Summary (World Health Organization, 2002)

Figure 3.3: Understanding Violence, an ecological model



Source: adapted from *World Report on Violence and Health* (WHO, 2002)

Violence as a public health issue

The WHO's report on violence states:

> 'Generally speaking, the response of the health sector to violence is largely reactive and therapeutic...[and yet] The fundamental goals of public health are to preserve, promote and improve health. Public health places emphasis on preventing disease or injury from occurring or reoccurring, rather than on treating the health consequences…violent behaviour and its consequences can be prevented.'[15]

This view has been adopted by the Strathclyde's VRU. Detective Chief Superintendent (DCS) Carnochan, head of the VRU, explained to the Working Group that 'as long as you keep talking about crime it's a police issue', but tackling violence ultimately means prevention, and this requires a much wider response than a criminal justice one. Fig. 3.3 shows the complexity of understanding violence and the factors that drive it, and why a multi-agency response is so crucial.

Collaboration between police and the health service (and other agencies) has therefore been placed at the centre of the VRU's strategic plan, right from understanding the problem through to delivering the solutions.

15 Ibid., pp.3-4

The model

There are two key areas of collaboration that the Working Group recommends are adopted universally (which are pertinent to tackling crime in general as well as gang violence).

1. Injury surveillance (data sharing)

DCS Carnochan stressed that any strategy to tackle violence must be both evidence-based and evidence-led, a belief generally agreed by police but sometimes overlooked by government. Injury surveillance was therefore undertaken in Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments to help police to ascertain the true extent and nature of the problem. The data collected revealed that 72 per cent of people injured through gang fighting did not report the incident to the police, exposing a scale of problem previously not recognised.[16]

The A&E surveillance data provided the date, time and location of the violence, enabling the VRU to map a more accurate picture of violence hot spots. This in turn enabled a more effective police response, both in relation to prevention and enforcement.

Much of the work undertaken in Strathclyde was modeled on Cardiff's pioneering work in the area. Due to data sharing and subsequent adjustments to policing, Cardiff saw a 40 per cent decline in violence-related attendance at A&E between 2002 and 2007.[17]

Data sharing is vital: we should not be waiting until after the violence has occurred to intervene. It is not just data sharing between the health service and the police that is imperative, but data sharing across all agencies working with young people and families at risk (see below for a detailed discussion on multi-agency work).

2. Primary prevention

The VRU's strategic plan outline's six areas of priority, the fourth area is of particular note: 'Primary prevention – seeking to prevent the onset of violence, or to change behaviour so that violence is prevented from developing'.[18]

It is this priority that provides the context for DCS Carnochan's statement that he would rather see 1000 more health visitors than 1000 more police officers,[19] and why the VRU has been involved in establishing city-level parenting support with the Director of Public Health. There are risk factors associated with violence and protective factors that reduce this

16 Carol McLeod, Injury Surveillance Pilot (Violence Reduction Unit, May 2007), p.2
17 Professor Sheperd, Effective NHS Contributions to Violence Prevention - The Cardiff Model (Cardiff University, October 2007)
18 10 Year Strategic Plan (Violence Reduction Unit, December 2007)
19 The high price of Scotland's drink and blade culture, The Herald, 1st April 2007

risk. DCS Carnochan illustrated this point in discussion with the Working Group:

> '…There's two well educated people, in their late twenties, they live in a nice area, drive nice cars, good jobs, wide social network, wide and supportive family networks, and they decide to have a family. They'll still find it difficult bringing up their family. If you think of those things now as protective factors – and take them away. You're not well educated, you don't live in a nice area, you don't drive nice cars. In fact, you're on your own. You don't have a wide family network, you've no social network. And you're 16, and you live in an area of high deprivation – on your own. Drug dealer above you, prostitute in there, violent gang below you. Now bring up your baby. So the notion that we shouldn't be helping, I take issue with that.'

Hence any long-term, sustainable anti-violence strategy must employ early years intervention. The VRU has led the way on this in Scotland, and aims by 2010 to have embedded and evaluated parenting and early years support in Glasgow and to have developed violence prevention as part of the early years, primary and secondary curriculum in schools.[20]

For an in depth discussion of early years provision see the Centre for Social Justice's report on the topic, *The Next Generation*. The Working Group fully endorses the recommendations contained in this report, and believes that their implementation will play a vital role in tackling gang culture.

5. HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM STREET OUTREACH SERVICE

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham established the Street Outreach Service (SOS) following an independent investigation into the March 2007 gang-related murder of 16 year old Kodjo Yenga. Although it is still early days and SOS is yet to be formally evaluated, witnesses to the inquiry have stated that the programme is having a significant impact on the way agencies in the borough collaborate and work with young people to prevent further deaths.

It is for this reason that the Working Group highlights SOS. Implemented in November 2008 it is a *multi-agency* response to the complex problem of gangs.

The Hammersmith and Fulham SOS is Chaired by an independent consultant and overseen by a sub-committee of Hammersmith and Fulham Partnership Against Crime (HAFPAC). Its steering group has representatives from the Youth Offending Service, police, schools, Children's Services,

20 10 Year Strategic Plan (Violence Reduction Unit, December 2007)

statutory and non-statutory youth services and Community Safety. The representatives are senior enough to commit resources and share information.

- The Hammersmith and Fulham SOS has a number of roles and objectives including:
- Identifying young people to be targeted for intervention and devising and facilitating a personalised intervention plan
- Analysing and mapping the nature and scale of gang activity in the borough in order to design a borough-wide 'comprehensive' gang strategy modeled on that in Boston
- Mapping existing social networks and community and faith groups which can be developed into support services

A specialist youth worker and a seconded police officer jointly visit each targeted young person at home. The home visit presents a unified multi-agency front and delivers a message that the safety of the young person is the priority of *all* agencies involved. Support services are then offered to both the young person and the wider family.

1.3 Policy Recommendations

Gangs are highly disparate and, as such, a 'one size fits all' approach to gang intervention will not work. The following proposals are recommendations of best practice which should be viewed through a local lens and implemented according to local need and circumstances.

1.3.1. LANGUAGE, LEADERSHIP AND PRIORITISATION

No anti-gang strategy will be successful in the long-term without proactive and committed leadership. Key to the success in Boston was the political will and courage demonstrated at the highest level in the city and within the police. Gang intervention was prioritised and a commitment was given to tackling gangs that filtered down through the ranks.

The same approach has been adopted in Los Angeles. On a Working Group visit to the city the roles of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Director of Gang Reduction and Youth Development, Reverend Jeff Carr, were repeatedly cited as being instrumental in the advances made in tackling gangs: the city of Los Angeles saw a 26.5 per cent decrease in gang-related homicides in 2007.[21] (See Case Study 3 for further details.)

21 Office of the Mayor, http://www.ci.la.ca.us/Mayor/villaraigosaplan/PublicSafety/GangReduction Strategy/index.htm, accessed November 2008

Case Study 3: Leadership in Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

Mayor Villaraigosa used his 2007 State of the City speech to prioritise gang prevention and intervention, and to emphasise his expectation that others should do the same. He argued:

> '…we cannot for one single moment confine ourselves to the dim view that gang violence is primarily an issue for law enforcement…Fighting gangs is fundamentally a question of putting people on a path to a productive life…It is going to require a new toughness and a new practicality. We're going to need to co-ordinate our efforts…We're going to need to invest…'[22]

Clearly demonstrating his commitment to tackling gangs, the Mayor created the Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) in August 2007, appointing Reverend Jeff Carr to oversee it. With 17 years experience working at and running the Bresee Foundation – a community project with a heavy focus on tackling gangs whose geographical remit takes in the GRYD Zone *Rampart* – the Mayor had chosen someone with in-depth knowledge of the problem and its drivers.

The geographical areas most impacted by violent gangs were identified, mapped and needs assessments undertaken. Considerable resources were then (re-) targeted at these areas, increasing enforcement, prevention, intervention and re-entry programmes. The provision of services was hailed as just as important as increased police presence, and the urgency of acting immediately was stressed.

Mayor Villaraigosa used the language of hope and projected a vision of opportunity and transformation. Importantly, he did not attempt to hide the scale of the problem, but has emphasised the possibility of change and the need to help rather than hunt young people involved in gangs.

> 'We can't be afraid to raise expectations. We have to be willing to wade into the weeds, to take on the thorniest issues – regardless of the political cost and consequence…I believe that the State of our City has always been best described by a state of mind. By the belief that you can create anything you can achieve.'[23]

The Working Group recommends that senior officials publicly commit themselves to tackling gangs in their localities, emphasising the need for collaboration, commitment and, above all, action. This will require courage and political will and joint commitment across agencies.

This is particularly important for elected officials such as mayors and council leaders, who are uniquely positioned to effect change directly through the levers of their elected office and indirectly through their influence and platform as the elected representative of the people.

22 Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, ""The Better Angels", An Address on the State of the City of Los Angeles," 18th April 2007

23 Ibid.

Mayors and council leaders should use their position to lead the plight against gangs by:

- Setting and influencing policy and priorities
- Funding and profiling intervention and prevention projects
- Bringing agencies and organisations together to develop a multi-agency strategy
- Ensuring the development of a clear and effective data collection, collation, analysis and evaluation process
- Communicating the prioritisation of the agenda
- Demonstrating political will and courage

Crucially, if gangs are to be tackled effectively then cross-party commitment to a long-term strategy will be vital.

1.3.2 DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

1.3.2.1 Adopting a standardised definition

In order to gain a full understanding of the scale of gang culture and involvement in Britain it is vital that a standardised definition is adopted for use by all agencies.

The Working Group recommends the adoption of the definition developed in Part I:

> *A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.*

Agencies must note, however, that gangs in Britain are fluid and therefore regular analysis using the definition will be necessary. It is also important for agencies to monitor the links between, at one end of the spectrum, gangs and organised criminal networks and, at the other end of the spectrum, gangs and peer groups. See Part I, Section 1.3 for definitions of these different categories.

The proposals contained in this report will have considerable impact on the wider community in gang-impacted areas, and many of the non-enforcement based interventions can and should be applied to at risk young people in general: gangs cannot and must not be seen in isolation from the wider community.

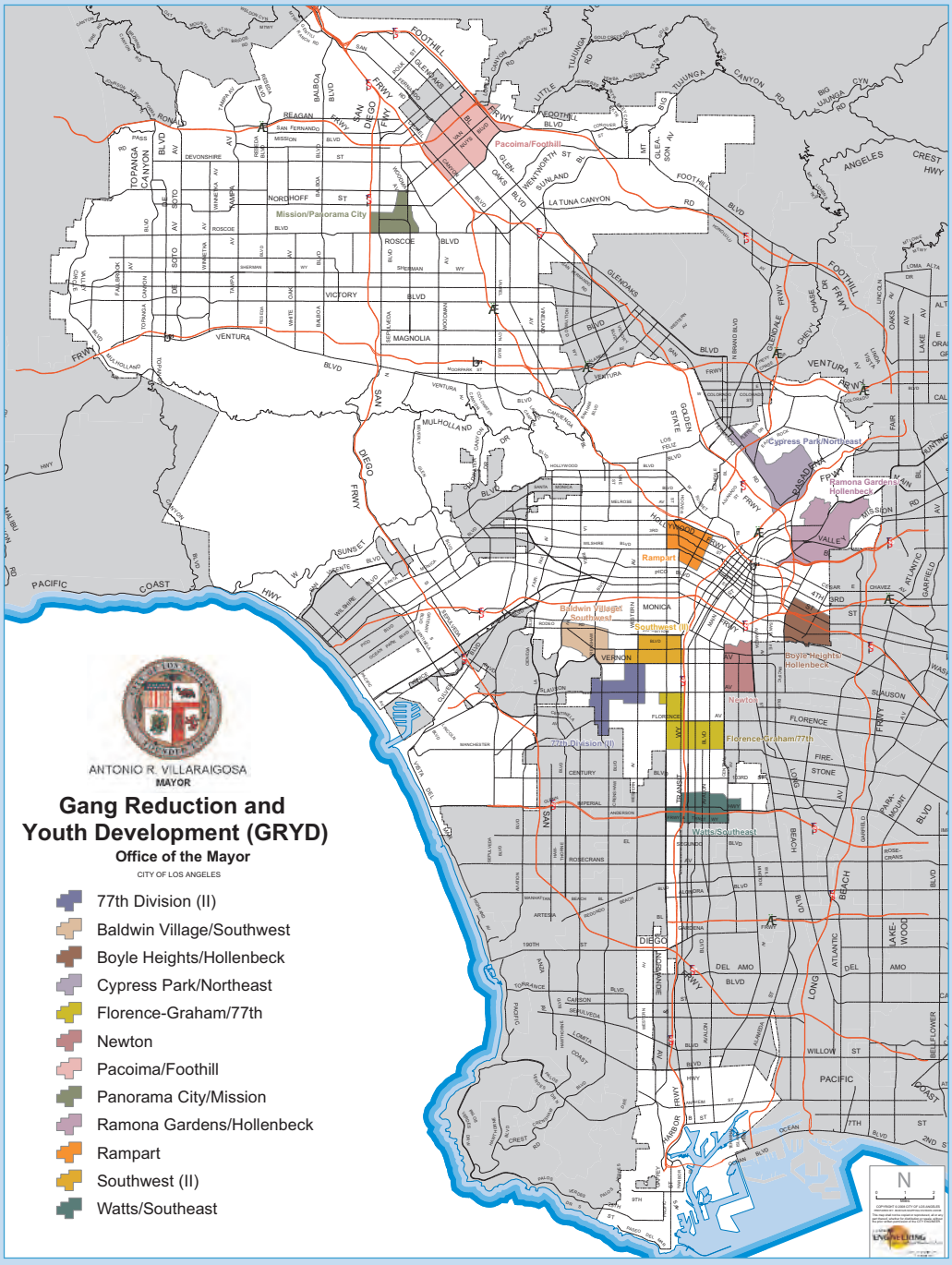
1.3.2.2 Understanding the problem – research and analysis

As highlighted in Part II, governments too often identify solutions without accurately defining, measuring or analysing the problem. Before local authorities and police forces embark on an anti-gang strategy, they must first undertake the necessary research and analysis to understand the local problem. It is from this understanding that solutions must be developed.

Case study 4: Gang Reduction and Youth Development Zones (GRYDZ), Los Angeles

Central to Mayor Villaraigosa's strategy for tackling gangs was the establishment of Gang Reduction and Youth Development Zones (GRYDZ).

There are 12 GRYDZs (see map below), identified as having the highest levels of gang violence, and each are individually mapped and needs assessed. This process includes economic (including employment and income), demographic, educational and crime data analysis, and focus group evidence. The needs assessment then determines the intervention, with increased enforcement and service provision implemented rapidly.



Public document from the City of Los Angeles, Office of Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa

A specialist gang unit (Gang Prevention Unit)

We therefore recommend that a specialist unit is established, to sit within the Cabinet Office in central government, whose focus is gangs and disenfranchised young people. The unit should be highly focused and staffed by academics and experts with specialist knowledge in this area, with a particular emphasis on gangs.

The research and policy unit – the Gang Prevention Unit – should immediately be tasked with conducting an initial analysis (audit) of which local authorities are impacted by gangs. This will require access to police and local authority data. The unit's experts will then act as independent consultants and advisors to those areas identified as being gang-impacted.

On a Working Group visit to Los Angeles, California, Sharmeen Premjee of the Mayor's Gang Reduction and Youth Development office described the city's approach to tackling gangs. She stressed the need for strong, public leadership and an in-depth knowledge of the problem being tackled

The unit will also evaluate existing and new gang intervention and prevention models. This should include the evaluation of youth projects (statutory and non-statutory) working with gang-involved young people, the results of which should inform funding decisions at a national and local level.

Independent consultants

The independent consultants should work with the local authorities to identify the nature, scale and geographical location/s of the gang problem. The level of data collection and analysis required will depend on the level of analysis already undertaken. Areas with historical gang problems, such as South Manchester and South London, are likely to need significantly less *research* support than areas with newly emerging gangs. It is therefore imperative that, whilst the consultants maintain their independence, the relationship between them and the local authority is defined locally.

The independent consultants should work closely with police forces who, in many areas, will already have mapped gangs and their activity. Police data – along with relevant data from other sectors for example children's services, education and housing – must be made available to the consultants.

The independent consultants will work with the local authority to devise a gang prevention strategy. They should remain seconded to the local authority to evaluate the model and recommend amendments as soon as a problem is flagged through the evaluation.

Gang Prevention Zones

Identifying Gang Prevention Zones will be central to tackling gang culture in Britain. In most local authorities, gang-affected areas will be highly localised – perhaps even a few streets or a single estate – although their impact is likely to be felt much more widely. It is these small geographical areas – *Gang Prevention Zones* – which will be the focus of a highly targeted gang prevention strategy (see below for further details).

In-depth research will be required to map gang territories, gang 'beefs' (hostility/rivalry between gangs), historical incidents and current tensions. To obtain this intelligence, considerable input will be needed from statutory and non-statutory youth workers and community figures as well as the police.

As in Los Angeles (see Case Study 4) and Boston, needs assessments should be undertaken for each area, looking at economic, demographic and educational data. This should include an analysis of current provision, including third sector projects, and identify any gaps. This will enable a highly targeted response tackling both the symptoms *and* causes of gang culture.

1.3.3 A SPECIALIST MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

It is absolutely imperative that any gang strategy involves all agencies working with at risk young people. As highlighted earlier, it is the clustering of risk factors which put children and young people at greatest risk of offending and gang involvement:

> 'Young people who have been exposed to the greatest risk are between five and 20 times more likely to become violent and serious offenders than those who have not.'[24]

As highlighted in Part II, Section 5, the police may be aware of the occurrence of domestic violence, the Primary Care Trust parental mental health issues, the school educational underachievement and truanting and the local authority the family's residency in a gang-impacted social housing estate. *Taken together these factors place a young person at high risk of gang involvement*, but if communication between the various agencies is lacking then this may not be picked up.

> "Our offender is the health system's patient, the school's underachiever, the community's persistent problem, the taxpayer's burden"
>
> Mike Taylor, Head of Specialist Crime Prevention and Partnership, MPS

Despite the existence of multi-agency Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) – set up to ensure that children, classed as under 18s, are safe and protected – these do not appear equipped for dealing with the new and unique challenges posed by gangs. This is despite the fact that there are known to be gangs of under-18s perpetrating serious crimes, including murder, against other children. Therefore the establishment of a new structural model should be considered. This new model must focus solely on tackling and preventing gang involvement and activity and all relevant agencies should collaborate accordingly.

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24 *Risk and Protective Factors*, Executive Summary (Youth Justice Board, 2005), p.3

1.3.3.1 Local authority responsibility – leading on the gang prevention strategy

Local authorities are best placed to take the lead in a comprehensive gang prevention strategy and should be working with other agencies to devise and deliver such a strategy. Too often it has been left to the police to take the lead in tackling gangs. Although police can have considerable immediate effect, they are an enforcement agency and therefore their impact can only ever be short-term: the police are picking up the pieces when other agencies have failed to intervene.

As illustrated in Part II, Section 5.1, intervening to protect children and young people is exactly the domain of the local authority: safeguarding and protecting children legislation requires them to act for at risk children and young people; many of the agencies delivering services to this group sit within the local authority; and the local authority has the remit and budget to commission youth provision. Rather than leaving it to the local police force, local authorities should be owning the gang problem in their area and delivering, in conjunction with other agencies, local solutions to local problems: the essence of local government.

The requirement of a serious case review and full public response

Therefore, the Working Group recommends that government makes mandatory a Serious Case Review on the occasion of a gang-related death of a child or young person and the relevant local authority along with any other agencies found to have failed in their safeguarding duties (including the sharing of data) be required to make a full and public response to the review. This should go some way in making local authorities and other agencies accountable for reducing gang activity and violence.

1.3.3.2 A new multi-agency model to tackle gangs

Given the problems and failures highlighted above and in Part II, Section 5, we recommend that local authorities identified as being gang-impacted by the Gang Prevention Unit consultants establish the following multi-agency model of Strategic, Tactical and Operations groups with an Independent Advisory Group. This model embeds the key principles for an effective local initiative to address a community need and ensures a joint response by both statutory and third sector agencies:

- Visible and publicly accountable leadership
- Multi-agency commitment and collaboration at *all* levels
- Subsidiarity (see below for further details)
- Community scrutiny

Exact details of composition and role should be decided jointly by agencies at a local level, but buy in at the *highest* level in all agencies is imperative.

The highest ranking elected official – the Mayor or Leader of the Council – has a unique public mandate and should, where necessary, use this to bring different agencies together to address a community need. It should be this individual, a powerful public figurehead, who leads the multi-agency teams devising and delivering the gang prevention strategy.

The roles of the Strategic, Tactical and Operational Groups

The role of the Strategic group is to provide leadership, priorities, impetus and funding (see below), and then to regularly review progress. A serious commitment to tackling gangs must be established at the very top and this commitment must be replicated at every stage down.

The key role of the Tactical group is to identify and manage how the priorities set by the Strategic group are to be implemented – to devise the details of the strategy – and to liaise with frontline staff and the community as to how best to do this. The role of the Operational teams is to identify young people involved in, at the fringes of, or at risk of involvement with gangs, and to devise tailored intervention plans and to implement them.

The groups should include representatives from different agencies as follows:

1. Strategic

- Council Leader/elected mayor (Senior elected member)
- LA Chief Executive
- Director of Children's Services (includes safeguarding, education)
- Director of Social Services (or equivalent)
- Chief Executive of Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Chief Constable/Commissioner (and relevant specialist unit senior officers e.g. Gangs/Firearms Unit)

2. Tactical

- BCU Commander/s
- Health/PCT/A&E representative
- Probation
- Headteachers from schools (including PRUs) in relevant areas
- Heads of relevant departments in LA, including but not limited to:
  - Education
  - Social services
  - Safeguarding children
  - Youth Offending Service (YOS)/Youth Offending Team (YOT) (with responsibility for feeding back information about returning young offenders)
  - Housing (may be independent of LA)
- Head of local Young Offender Institution/Secure Unit
- Faith/community leader/s

3. Operational – an Operational Team will be required for each 'Gang Reduction Zone'

- Behavioural/pastoral lead in local schools
- Social workers/Children's services
- Relevant police representatives
- YOS/YOT workers
- Local housing representative/s
- Voluntary groups/agencies working with young people and/or the wider community

The principle of subsidiarity – that decisions should be made as close to the citizen as possible – should be central to this model. It is therefore imperative that regular discussion occurs between each group. The details of this should be worked out at a local level, but the Working Group recommends that the Chairs of the Strategic, Tactical and Operational groups meet at designated intervals to ensure that what is happening at a grassroots level informs the decisions made at the strategic and tactical levels.

Independent Advisory Group (IAG)

The Working Group recommends that an IAG is established to act as a 'critical friend' to the Strategic Group, with the Chair of the IAG sitting on the Strategic Group. This ensures that the community has a direct voice in key decision-making .

The IAG should be made up of key community stakeholders, including young people. A number of witnesses have commented on the tendency of agencies to do things 'to' rather than 'for' young people and that this results from bypassing young people in the decision-making process. Including young people from Gang Prevention Zones in the IAG should start to address this lack of representation and help ensure that an appropriate strategy is devised which meets the needs of the young people as well as the wider community. It must not be forgotten that gangs are the result of marginalised *young* people.

Consideration should be given to how members of the IAG are identified to ensure that they are *truly* representative of the community: not the 'usual suspects', the loudest voice or self-appointed advocates.

For further information on the possible roles of the IAG see Part III, Section 3.2.5.

1.3.3.3 Training

As previously identified, gangs in their current form are a relatively new phenomenon in Britain. As such, specialist training should be provided to professionals working with young people involved in gangs or at risk of involvement. This includes all personnel sitting on the Operational Teams.

Particular emphasis should be placed on understanding and recognising the role of risk factors. Despite a general policy shift towards prevention following Lord Laming's Report on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry,[25] an analysis of serious case reviews conducted between 2003 and 2005 found that agencies were not always aware of the interconnectivity and clustering of risk factors and that the threshold for intervention was often too high (though the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework has gone some way to address this).

The Gang Prevention Unit should look into what the training should comprise of and how it would be best delivered.

1.3.3.4 Effective deployment of resources

In order to meet the resource needs of the Gang Prevention Zones, the Strategy group will need to carry out an audit of current expenditure. Investment should be intelligence-led and hence the Working Group envisages that a re-targeting of existing funds may be necessary. It should be borne in mind that the costs resulting from gang culture – including those associated with violence and crime, failed education, worklessness and drug addiction – are already considerable, and that the cost of failing to act will, in the long-term, far outweigh up-front investment.

The Working Group met with youth organisations in Glasgow's gang-impacted East End

Additional Gang Prevention funds should also be made available by central government and directly linked to the production and implementation of a local authority's gang prevention strategy. No central government funding should be made available without first requiring a full and comprehensive strategy document based on an in depth analysis of the problem. Clear measurables should be included within the strategy, covering both the symptoms and *drivers* of gang culture. These should include reductions in the following areas:

- Gang crime
- Gang violence (using police and hospital Emergency Department data)
- Family breakdown and fatherlessness
- Educational failure (with particular reference to truanting and exclusions)
- Youth unemployment/NEETs (not in education, employment or training)
- Drug and alcohol addiction

Continued funding should be linked to delivering on the outcomes identified in the strategy document. The detail of the measurables should be worked out

25 For further discussion of this see, Brandon et al., *Analysing child deaths and serious injury through abuse and neglect: what can we learn? A biennial analysis of serious case reviews 2003-2005*, Section 2.2

at a local level and therefore appropriate to the local situation, they should not be set as centralised (distorting) targets.

This sort of approach to funding has strong resonance with Local Area Agreements, but with important caveats (see below).

1.3.4 CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION

Local Area Agreements also offer a model for cross-border agreements.[26] As one senior police officer told the Working Group, 'criminals don't recognise borders'. It is therefore vital that local authorities work *together* to tackle gangs. This is particularly the case in London where witnesses to the inquiry have noted, in some boroughs, a 'mini fiefdom' mentality.

This is profoundly unhelpful. If, for example, a gang from X local authority are 'beefing' with a gang from Y local authority, then X and Y need to be working together.

Councils with mutual interests collaborate to achieve identified goals and central government provides funding to facilitate their achievement. Currently Local Area Agreements are predominantly the result of

- Financial incentive – funds are offered by central government to deliver a particular agenda
- Economic needs and goals
- The need for operational efficiencies

However, this current model does not necessarily incentivise locally identified needs-based collaboration. Rather than resulting from an intelligence-led problem solving process, collaboration is currently often the result of politically-led, centralised targets which can, in reality, distort local needs.

The Working Group therefore recommends that identification of a need – cross-borough co-ordination to tackle gangs – should be the trigger for collaboration and this should result in allocation of funding to meet the need. To ensure true collaboration the Working Group recommends central government matches local funding for delivery of a cross-border strategy.

1.3.5 THE MODEL: A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH

As previously noted, enforcement is not enough. Indeed witnesses to the inquiry have repeatedly argued that a solely criminal justice response not only ignores the drivers behind gang culture, but also has the potential to escalate the problem. With the increasing presence of volatile *Youngers* vying for status and respect, the removal of *Elders* can leave a void which the *Youngers* are keen to fill, potentially through intra-gang fighting.

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26 The Government recognises the potential for gang-impacted 'cities' to use LAAs 'to prioritise tackling gangs and serious violence'; T*ackling Gangs: A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners*, p.2

It is therefore imperative that any gang intervention strategy combines enforcement (suppression) with intervention and prevention, providing the services and opportunities to enable young people to take an alternative route to gang involvement. As the Advancement Project state in their gang-intervention strategy for Los Angeles:

> 'Suppression alone – and untargeted suppression in particular – cannot solve this problem…crime suppression efforts must be linked to competent prevention, intervention, and community – stabilizing [sic] investment strategies.'[27]

Prevention is a long-term strategy, rather than an immediate response, and as such we will cover this is in Part III, Section 3. Prevention must, however, run concurrently with enforcement and intervention.

1.3.5.1 Delivering a clear and direct message that the violence must stop and support is available

For the multi-pronged approach to work effectively, a clear and unified message should be delivered to those involved in gang activity before any further action is taken. The principle of 'fairness' is at the heart of this: direct communication with gang members explaining what will happen if the violence continues is, in Superintendent Paul Joyce's words, an 'honest approach'.

This was fundamental in the delivery of Operation Ceasefire (see Part III, Section 1.2). A clear and unequivocal message was delivered *directly* to gang members *before* implementing the 'suppression' tactics. The message was simple: the violence must stop. This message was conveyed unanimously by police and youth workers (Street Workers) and was broken down into:

1. We / the police know what you are doing and you are now the target of sustained enforcement activity
2. This intense targeted attention will only cease with the cessation of violence
3. If you stop the violence and you want out, there are support agencies waiting to help you

In short, stop and we will do everything in our power to provide the support needed for you to adopt an alternative positive lifestyle, or continue and we will do everything in our power to bring you to justice and this will involve considerable, daily attention.

As highlighted above, this approach has been adopted by Merseyside's *Matrix* team to considerable effect.

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27 *Executive Summary,* Citywide Gang Activity Reduction Strategy: Phase III Report (The Advancement Project, 2006), p.1

We therefore recommend that this approach, incorporating the principle of 'fairness', is adopted in all Gang Reduction Zones. There should be a universal and sustained delivery of the message:

- Call-ins should be conducted in Gang Prevention Zones (see below for details)
- Home visits should be undertaken jointly by police and youth workers (statutory or third sector depending on individual case) to inform the gang-involved young person and their parents of the situation
- The home visit should be followed up by written articulation of the situation, and action to be taken
- Simultaneously, youth workers/social workers should be reinforcing the message in any contact between themselves and the identified gang members
- The offer of support must remain articulated *throughout* the period of suppression: the experience of suppression should encourage desistance

1.3.5.2 Enforcement

Enforcement is integral to any gang intervention strategy, and this should be co-ordinated by a specialist police unit, with force-wide delivery support.[28]

In collaboration with the other agencies listed above, the specialist unit should identify the key gang members in their locality (most violent, most influential, connected to firearms). These will become the *targeted* '*nominals*' and subject to the highly targeted suppression strategy outlined below.

Identifying high impact players and establishing a nominals list

The nominals list should comprise of high impact players. To become a nominal, good grade intelligence would need to have tied the individual to firearms and or/serious violence. In addition, their placement on the nominals list must be European Convention on Human Rights compliant.

The Working Group recommends that the Gang Prevention Unit, in conjunction with senior police officers and legal advisers, should draw up specific criteria for inclusion of an individual on a nominals list. The criteria should be as narrowly defined as possible.

The 'call-in'

Professor David Kennedy – the principal academic involved in the development of the BGP and *Ceasefire* – has pioneered an innovative forum for communicating the message that further violence will not be tolerated: the call-in. Call-ins bring key members of different gangs together in one venue to hear the multi-agency 'fairness' message described above. Call-ins have been used in a number of US cities with considerable success, most notably in Cincinnati which experienced a 61 per cent decline in gang-related homicides

28 These specialist units already exist in most gang-impacted areas, for example Matrix in Merseyside, Xcalibre in Manchester and Trident/Trafalgar in London

following a series of call-ins (see Case Study 5).[29] This model has now been adopted and implemented in Glasgow by Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit (see Case Study 6 below) with impressive early results.[30]

The Working Group recommends the adoption of this model in Gang Prevention Zones. This should act as a key launching point of any suppression strategy, and should be used subsequently as and when necessary.

The model

A 'call-in' is a face-to-face intervention bringing key violent gang members together – from different gangs – to communicate a unified multi-agency message that the violence must stop, support is available to any young person wanting to exit gang life, and serious consequences will result if the violence continues.[31] The attendees are then told to relay the message to middle and lower level players.

In addition to known gang members, Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit involved targeted soon to be released gang affiliated young prisoners. The Working Group recommends following this model in order to:

- Maximise impact through wider dissemination of the message
- Send a strong and clear message to gang-involved young people in prison that continuing their pre-incarceration behaviour on release is not an option

The venue

The call-in is held in a court of law and opened by the presiding judge (or equivalent) as though the court is in session. This induces the appropriate sense of gravity and has the practical advantage that safety measures – such as metal detectors – are already in place.

> "It's a true partnership, and without that partnership it would be nothing – let's be clear about that"
>
> Detective Chief Inspector Andy McKay, Strathclyde Police, CIRV

In addition, a substantial police presence is deployed in the court and surrounding vicinity. In Glasgow four mounted police constables were stationed at the entrance to the courthouse, a police helicopter hovered overhead, police constables cruised up and down the river and police in riot gear escorted the gang members into the court room, remaining present. This not only sent a clear message that best behaviour was expected of the young people attending, but also allowed the young people to drop their gang bravado and listen in a safe environment.

Attendance

Attendance at the Scottish call-in (Self-Referral Session) was voluntary, with police visiting the homes of identified gang members to invite them. A letter was

29 Robin S. Engel et al., *Implementation of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): Year 1 Report* (University of Cincinnati Policing Institute, April 14, 2008), p.29

30 The MPS will be launching their version, *Operation Pathways*, in 2009

31 David Kennedy, "How to stop young men shooting each other: youth violence and gang interventions that work" (UCL, July 18, 2007), Slide 21.

then sent out reminding them of the event. This approach was highly successful, with around 75 per cent of those invited attending.[32]

By making it voluntary for those not currently engaged with the criminal justice system, greater credibility is given to the message that the primary concern of all agencies involved – including the police – is desistance, and that all agencies want to help attendees to exit gang life. This approach should be taken in Gang Prevention Zones adopting the call-in model.

A mural in one of Los Angeles' most gang-impacted neighbourhoods has the names of murdered gang members along the top. The Working Group were told that gang membership was intergenerational

The Working Group fully supports the voluntary approach. In addition we recommend making attendance compulsory for those *already* under criminal justice system supervision – for example as part of bail, licence and supervision order conditions – as per Cincinnati.

Multi-agency

In both Cincinnati and Glasgow, the call-in sessions included presentations from police, trauma surgeons, support services, community figures and ex-gang members. The Working Group fully endorses this multi-agency approach.

This not only has the potential to increase the impact of the call-in, but also provides an opportunity for collaboration, reinforces *shared ownership* of the problem and adds credibility to the message that genuine help is available.

The principle of *genuine* support is stressed by Michael Bass – Director of Law Enforcement Services, Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services. In his essay on the Cincinnati call-ins, Bass noted the profound impact that the overarching message of opportunity and faith in the possibility of transformation had on the audience.[33] He recorded that some of the attendees had tears in their eyes and that the process not only had a transformative affect on the gang members, but also the agencies in attendance.

Mothers, sisters and girlfriends – using the female voice

A number of witnesses have commented on the potential power of women – mothers, sisters, girlfriends – to encourage young men to follow the path of desistance. For example a mother talking about the devastating impact of her son's death, thereby starkly highlighting the wider consequences of gang violence, may encourage gang-involved young people to visualise the impact their death would have on their own mother.

The Working Group recommends utilising this where possible, and the call-in, with its captive audience, provides an excellent opportunity for this.

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32 Information provided by Detective Superintendent Carnochan, Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit, December 2008

33 Michael Blass, 'The CIRV "Call-In": Reflections on a Profound Experience' (August 2007) printed in, Engel et al., Implementation of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): Year 1 Report, Appendix A.

Case Study 5: Cincinnati, USA, Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)[34]

In-depth research was undertaken by Professor Kennedy and his team to identify the key violent gangs responsible for the rapid rise in Cincinnati's homicide rate and the most active violent offenders within these gangs.[35] These individuals would become the key targets of the call-in and subsequent follow-up.

Engaging the gang members and communicating the message

It was recognised that successful implementation of CIRV required clear communication of the message that 'We will help you if you will let us, but we will stop you if you make us'.[36]

This required (a) the provision of 'meaningful and predictable consequences' for those perpetrating violence, (b) communicating the consequences directly to those involved in the violence, and (c) legitimising the consequences by 'invoking the moral voice of the community to reject the violence.'[37]

CIRV used call-ins as the primary vehicle for delivering the message.

The call-in

Targeted gang members under court supervision were notified of the requirement to attend the call-in a week prior to the session, with notifications delivered, where possible, by the gang member's probation / parole office in person.

Call-ins were held at the County Courthouse and attended by members of the law enforcement, services and community strategy teams. They were opened by a court judge.

A trauma surgeon delivered a graphic presentation on gun-shot wounds; the enforcement team informed the attendees of the new enforcement strategy, emphasising that tackling gang violence was now the priority and therefore local, county, state and federal attention would be on them; members of the services team informed the attendees that if they wished to exit gang life then a full range of social services were available to them and a number was given out on cards for them call; members of the community talked about the pain, loss and fear experienced due to the violence and demanded an end to it; and finally ex-gang members challenged the belief that as a gang member you're untouchable, talking about the daily reality of prison life.

The call-in message was also expressed via a local hip hop radio station and through direct meetings with target gangs and individuals.

The results

Six call-in sessions over three days communicated the message to 173 individuals and the supplementary contact has ensured that almost 90 per cent of the identified groups have heard the message.

- Since the first call-in sessions in July 2007, 209 individuals have contacted CIRV for services and 176 have engaged in a programme
- 19% of these individuals attended a call-in, demonstrating that the message has been successfully transmitted to a wider audience

34 All information taken from, Engel et al., I*mplementation of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): Year 1 Report*

35 In around 74% of the 83 homicides recorded between June 2006 and June 2007 the victim or offender were associated with a violent street gang, Ibid., p.9

36 Ibid., p.6

37 Ibid., pp.12-13

- Of 71 individuals who have already completed job readiness training through the CIRV, 41 have obtained employment and half have sustained employment
- By the end of March 2008, homicides had declined 43% compared with the same time in 2007
- There has been a *61% decline* in the number of Group [gang] Member Involved (GMI) homicides in the 6 months after the second call-in session (October 2007-March 2008) compared to the same period a year earlier
- There has also been a sharp decline in non-fatal shootings when comparing pre- and post-call-ins

Case Study 6: Glasgow, Scotland, The Self-Referral Session (SRS), Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)[38]

The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) has been developed by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit. It is a multi-agency team responsible for delivering Scotland's strategy for tackling gang culture and violence. The initial phase of the initiative is being delivered in Glasgow's East End. The programme will then be rolled out to other parts of the city and then Scotland as required.

The SRS, delivered for the first time on 24th October 2008, is an integral component of the strategy. The venue for the SRS was the Glasgow Sheriff court. Two sessions were conducted, one in the morning for under-16s and those under 18 who are subject to supervision requirements and one in the afternoon for over-16s. Each session lasted around two hours.

The CIRV team identified 2-5 members of each of the 55 known violent gangs in the East End of Glasgow, and visited them personally to invite them to the SRS. This was followed up with a written reminder.

Of the 200 who were invited, 153 attended. In addition, six nominals from three prisons were brought, at their request, to the SRS. In American initiatives the call-in was compulsory. Consideration was given to this in the planning stages of the CIRV initiative but was rejected – all those attending do so voluntarily, a strategy that has proved successful to date.

Three messages

Three uncompromising messages were delivered at the SRS:

1. The violence must stop
2. Everyone has had enough
3. There is an alternative through CIRV – call the number

The SRS model

- The SRS was opened and closed by the Sheriff – establishing a court environment and empowering the attendees to listen in the presence of their peers
- The Chief Constable of Strathclyde police then spoke about the consequences of not desisting and informed the gang members that if the violence continued the whole gang would be held responsible and targeted accordingly

38 Information provided by Detective Superintendent Carnochan, Strathclyde Police, Violence Reduction Unit, December 2008

- Accident and Emergency doctors delivered a graphic presentation on stabbings and serious assaults
- Former gang members spoke and explained that the repercussions of gang involvement are not glamorous (prison/death)
- Support services informed the gang members of the help available and details of the 24 hour contact line were given out
- A community message was delivered by a church minister, the mother of a seriously injured young person and a motivational speaker

Voluntary Street Advocates

On referral, a needs assessment is conducted by a trained voluntary advocate and the CIRV devise and oversee the delivery of a tailored intervention programme. Street Advocates are drawn from existing agencies, including statutory and non-statutory youth workers and organisations, careers advisors and housing personnel. This has two key advantages:

- It begins to embed the initiative in mainstream service provision
- It reinforces the multi-agency approach

The gang members are then fast-tracked onto support programmes. These include employment help through Careers Scotland, Change Programmes delivered by third sector organisations and outbound weeks run by the Army.

Results

- 14 under-16s contacted the support line within half an hour of the call-in
- As of the 16th December 2008 CIRV had received 70 referrals
- Almost 50 per cent of those who attended SRS have gone on to contact CIRV
- In the period between SRS and the 17 December 2008 there were no reported incidents of serious violence

'Pulling levers'

Enforcement is predominantly the preserve of the police, but a key component of *Ceasefire* was the co-ordination of all enforcement agencies as part of the 'pulling levers' model. This plays two key roles:

1. Where police are unable to secure evidence of involvement in violence (for example due to community fear), they can work with other agencies to target gang members for other offences such as possession of an unregistered car, not having a driving licence or breaking probation terms[39]

39 Operation Night Light (implemented pre-Ceasefire) saw police officers going out with probation officers to make unannounced home, school and work place visits targeting the highest-risk youth probationers. In order to detect non-compliance with probation terms, Night Light visits were conducted between 7pm and midnight and officers wore plain clothes and drove unmarked cars. The visits were also used positively to address any continuing needs such as access to substance misuse treatment. In addition, the surprise nature of the visits gave probationers an excuse to stay away from gang activity; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence* (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, February 1999), p.39

2. Targeted and sustained attention encourages gang members to desist and seek support in exiting gang life

This approach should be employed as a central component in any anti-gang strategy.

Enforcement agencies that should be used as 'pulling levers' include (but may not be limited to):

- Police (focus on minor offences such as traffic)
- Housing Associations (or equivalent)
- TV Licensing Agency
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
- Youth Justice
- Probation
- Environmental Services
- DWP (benefits fraud)
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Trading Standards
- Educational welfare services (with particular regard to truanting)
- Children's Services /Social Services
- Public transport ticket inspectors
- Traffic wardens

In short, a targeted crackdown on *all* offences should be undertaken as part of the strategy for ensuring a cessation of violence (and more general desistance), as seen in Merseyside Police's 'focused attention'.

Stop and search, knife arches and sweeps

Preventing violence is the principal aim of the enforcement strategy. Weapon detection techniques are central to this, including stop and search, sweeps and the use of knife arches. These procedures play a two-fold role:

1. Detecting and removing weapons from the street
2. Deterring the carrying of weapons

For the latter to be achieved, the procedures need to be unannounced. It is the threat of a knife arch or stop and search which will discourage a young person from taking a weapon out with them. However within this, the *likelihood* of being checked is vital.

As noted earlier, such enforcement procedures can be viewed as antagonistic by the communities subject to them. The Working Group therefore recommends that police in conjunction with other agencies (such as youth workers and community and faith leaders) carry out advance 'raising awareness' campaigns. These could include leafleting, community

meetings, use of school PSHE lessons and door-to-door visits. These activities would:

1. Raise the expectation of being caught with a weapon
2. Increase understanding and therefore acceptance of the procedures

The procedures must also be executed with sensitivity, thereby minimising confrontation.

In addition to general operations, knife arches, sweeps and stop and searches should be used at 'high risk' events such as fairs, concerts, carnivals, club nights and court appearances. The Metropolitan Police Service are already carrying out excellent work in this area and we recommend that best practice is adopted by other forces.

Sweeps

A number of police officers and young people have commented on the fact that gang members hide weapons in public places, rather than carry them and risk being stopped and searched. Knives and guns are hidden in the vicinity – for example in nearby bushes – for easy access if and when they are 'needed'. It is therefore vital that sweeps are conducted on a regular basis in Gang Prevention Zones: these should be carried out routinely by local beat officers and Community Safety Officers with responsibility for patrolling that area.

Sweeps should also be conducted in the immediate vicinity of schools known to have gang-involved young people in attendance. Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) Officers are well placed to execute these on a routine basis, but additional support should be available where necessary. (For further information on SSPs see Part III, Section 2.)

Putting communities first – regaining control of the streets

As identified in Part II, Section 4.1, communities in gang-impacted areas often live in fear, with people feeling unable to seek the help of or give information to the police due to the threat of reprisals by gang members.

In addition, the high impact gang members often have a toxic impact on the children and young people in the community. Holding considerable sway – whether through fear or awe, or both – they may lure other young people into illicit activities or prevent their involvement in legitimate activities. Access to facilities such as a leisure centre, park or library may require gang affiliation due to the facility's location in a particular gang's territory.[40]

If we are to protect the communities and young people blighted by gang crime and violence it will be necessary for the police and the courts to exert

40 For more information see Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*

control over those who pose such a threat. This may require a fresh approach to gang enforcement.

Civil Orders as a gang disruption tool

Over the course of the inquiry, a number of witnesses have noted the potential for civil orders to be used as a gang disruption tool. Civil orders have a number of advantages:

- They require a lower standard of proof than criminal penalties and may be imposed on the basis that a person is causing alarm or distress to others
- Their terms can prohibit association with particular people and entry into certain geographical areas and, if monitored and enforced, can disrupt gang activity
- Breach of a civil order can result in serious repercussions, including a custodial sentence
- As with the civil Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), social and educational interventions can be made alongside the civil order
- Visibly enforced civil orders can provide a credible excuse for gang members to stay away from their gang associates
- Civil orders can deter others from engaging in gang activity for fear of receiving similar restrictions

ASBOs have been used in a number of areas as a way of tackling gangs. Fully enforced, this has had some success in disrupting gang activity.

West Midlands Police's Operation Malva, for example, used the ASBO to control the behaviour of gang members by restricting their movement and association. ASBOs were obtained by police working in close partnership with the local authority. Enforcement was vital and thus all City Centre Wardens and police teams were made aware of the conditions of the Order. As well as using the Orders as a disruption tool, West Midlands Police used them as an intervention tool – offering services and support to facilitate desistance. West Midlands Police Assistant Chief Constable Suzette Davenport informed the Working Group that the use of ASBOs (and injunctions[41]) had played a significant role in reducing gang violence in Birmingham.

However civil orders will only be successful if there are serious repercussions for breaching their terms. This has not always been the case with ASBOs and this has contributed to them being perceived by young people as a 'badge of honour'. One gang member breached his Interim ASBO on five occasions (receiving a number of Supervision Orders), eventually

41 The use of Injunctions against gang members was rejected by the Court of Appeals in October 2008

being arrested and charged with three serious robberies. This demonstrates that if breaching a prohibition does not have serious repercussions, people are unlikely to keep to the terms of their Order, thereby rendering them useless.

ASBOs

Much has been written about the overuse of ASBOs.[42] As the orders have become better understood and the number of authorities able to initiate proceedings has widened, the number of ASBOs issued has rocketed.[43] Guidance on the use of ASBOs has also shifted over time, for example from indicating that ASBOs should be used as a last resort (1998 guidance), to recommending their use in cases where they are the most appropriate measure (1999).[44]

In addition, there have been problems with the breadth of certain prohibitions included in ASBOs, resulting in no action being taken in some breach cases.[45] This undermines the process and may add to the perception of ASBOs as 'badges of honour' rather than punishment. A poll for the music channel MTV found that more than a third of males aged between 20 and 24 believe ASBOs give people 'street cred'.[46]

Witnesses to this inquiry have argued that the overuse of ASBOs has led to them being undermined in the eyes of magistrates and thus there is an unwillingness to impose serious penalties, including custody, in the case of a breach.

The Working Group believes that civil orders should be used as a last resort, targeted only at core gang members and used in conjunction with social and educational interventions. ASBOs too often do not meet these criteria. As the criminal defence solicitor Matt Foot highlights, the recipients of ASBOs are often the most vulnerable people in society such as the mentally ill, elderly and drug and alcohol addicts.[47] Such indiscriminate use has (rightly) discredited the ASBO and hence the Working Group believes that in their current form they are of limited use for tackling gangs.

We therefore recommend that a specialist commission looks into the possibility of creating a gang-specific civil order to tackle *high impact* players: a Gang Activity Desistance Order (GADO). The purpose of a GADO would be to address the problem of serious gang violence in communities in which fear is preventing witnesses from co-operating with police.[48]

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42 See for example, *Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (Summary)* (Youth Justice Board, 2006); and Asbo absurdities (The Guardian, 1st December 2004)

43 Between the 1st June and 31st December 2000 62 ASBOs were issued to under-18s, in 2005 1555 were issued; *Further developments in measures related to anti-social behaviour*, Youth Crime briefing (Nacro, March 2007), p.3

44 Ibid., p.3

45 Ibid., p.4

46 *Asbos treated as 'badge of honour'* (The Times Online, 30th July 2006)

47 *A triumph of hearsay and hysteria* (The Guardian, 5th April 2005)

48 Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has announced that she is looking to introduce legislation to allow police and councils to use injunctions against gang members; A*nti-gang banning orders planned* (BBC News, 13th January 2009)

The Working Group envisages that a GADO would only be applicable in a small number of cases, and that the number of people subject to a GADO would diminish fairly swiftly once the Gang Prevention Zone model and its accompanying gang prevention strategy is implemented in full.

A gang specific civil order

There are three key principles that a GADO should be built upon:

1. A GADO must be tightly targeted

Any GADO would need to be tightly targeted to ensure that its application remained focused on high impact players. The Working Group therefore recommends that GADOs are *only made available for use with already identified nominals*: those who have been identified as involved in serious violence and/or firearms by good grade intelligence and whose identification is European Convention on Human Rights compliant (for further details see Part III, Section 1.3.5.2). The Commission should give further consideration to ensuring that the remit for applying a GADO is not widened – it must remain a specialised tool to tackle the most dangerous gang members.

2. GADOs must only be used as a last resort

GADOs should only be used for those nominals refusing to desist from gang activity and refusing to engage with agencies offering support. The Working Group recommends that the Commission considers the inclusion of a condition requiring proof that support has been offered and refused before a GADO can be granted. The GADO condition could stipulate that support must have been offered on a minimum number of occasions over a minimum period of time.

3. Breach of a GADO must have serious repercussions

For a GADO to be effective as a gang disruption tool the terms of the order must be adhered to. Given the level of gang member that the GADO is targeting, we expect that a significant deterrent will be required. Consideration should therefore be given to attaching a minimum custodial sentence to the breach of a GADO. The Working Group recommends that alternatives to the current secure estate are looked into – such as intensive fostering[49] and a Young Offenders Academy[50] – and consideration should be given to the appropriateness of the residency in relation to the age of the gang member. The main focus of the sentence should be rehabilitation and include emotional, psychological and personal development alongside education and training.

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49 *Fostering Solutions for Young Offenders*, NCH Briefing (NCH, June 2008)

50 The charity East Potential has published a scoping study for the establishment of a Young Offenders Academy for East London and the Working Group believes that this concept should be further examined as a potential model for rehabilitating nominals incarcerated for breach of a GADO; *Young Offenders in East London: A New Approach* (East Potential, June 2008)

There should also be sustained post-release support including, where appropriate, resettlement.

In addition, consideration should be given to the advertising of cases in which a GADO breach has resulted in a custodial sentence. The *credible* and *real* threat of custody is important as a deterrent, and *anonymised* instances in which GADOs have been breached and resulted in a custodial sentence should be highlighted to gang-involved young people – including at call-ins.

The Working Group highlights two key concerns with regards any potential GADO:

1. Ensuring appropriate use

As highlighted in Part II, Section 4.2, relations between the community and police in deprived neighbourhoods are often antagonistic and any widening of the remit of the GADO to target lesser players has the potential to further aggravate the situation. The community must see that the police are using the GADO in a rational, appropriate manner which is in the community's best interests.

2. Ensuring an appropriate response to breach – the balance of probability

Although the breach of an ASBO can carry up to five years' imprisonment for adults and two years' detention and training order (DTO) for young people, consideration should be given as to the legal and ethical viability of attaching a mandatory minimum 'residential' sentence to the breach of a GADO. There are different burdens of proof in civil and criminal courts. Whilst in a criminal court the burden of proof is 'beyond all reasonable doubt', a lesser burden of proof is required in the civil court, 'the balance of probability'. Therefore, whilst one of the key advantages of civil orders is the permissibility of hearsay evidence – in part overcoming the issue of community fear and intimidation – and the breach of a civil order is a criminal act, attaching a residential sentence to the breach could be viewed as obtaining a custodial sentence on a lesser burden of proof. The Commission should consider whether a residential sentence for the breach of a GADO is a proportionate response. Within this, the Commission should take into account the impact on the community resulting from the breach. Current ASBO legislation requires that the judiciary considers whether the breach resulted in 'harassment, alarm or distress' to the community.[51] Given that GADOs will only be available for use with high impact gang members, breach of its terms would almost certainly cause harassment, alarm or threat and it is for this reason we recommend that the Commission considers the viability of a residential sentence.

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51 *A guide to anti-social behaviour orders* (Home Office, August 2006), p.9

Summarising the principle of a GADO

The Working Group stresses that GADOs and potential custodial sentences should be a last resort for high impact players who have refused to engage in support programmes. It is vital that at every stage up until a GADO breach, support is offered. However to ensure that they are an effective tool, the police must be able to judge where their use is appropriate (within the set terms). In addition, the Working Group emphasis that without wholesale reform of the secure estate to ensure that custodial sentences are truly rehabilitative (and forthcoming Centre for Social Justice work will make recommendations in this area) a custodial sentence may make the gang member more, not less, criminal. Custody should provide the next opportunity for positive and effective intervention in a young person's life.

1.3.5.3 Intervention

It is vital that intervention strategies are in place and working parallel with enforcement. Enforcement, although highly necessary, is not a long-term strategy: its aim must be to either take gang members off the streets and into custody (there will be a *small minority* of young people for whom this is the best option) or to apply the necessary pressure to enable longer-term intervention to work.

Witnesses to the inquiry highlighted the need to seize windows of opportunity for intervention, life points at which individuals are more susceptible to desistance, for example being stabbed or shot, a close friend or family member being stabbed or shot, having a child or entering a serious relationship. The pulling levers/sustained attention strategy described above should provide an additional window of opportunity.

A Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles) graduate tells the Working Group about the transformative impact of the programme. An ex-gang member and drug addict, he now works at the project helping others to exit gang life

Personalised intervention programmes

The nature of the intervention must be decided on an individual basis, and a personal 'action plan' developed for each young person. Equally, the agency or organisation delivering the action plan will need to be appropriate for that individual. This may be a statutory agency such as the Youth Offending Service or, more likely, a third sector organisation (see Part III, Section 3.2.2.2 below for further details).

To ensure that effective and appropriate intervention programmes are available, Gang Prevention Zones should carry out a full analysis of which organisations are working in the area, what they are delivering and whether the project meets the needs of gang-involved young people. If the Gang Prevention Zone is found to be lacking suitable projects then immediate work should be done to address this. This may mean working with existing projects to adapt their current practices, or may mean facilitating the establishment of successful models from other Gang Prevention Zones. If the latter is adopted then full

consideration should be given to *local needs and nuances* to ensure the appropriateness of that model.

The Working Group recommends that programmes with the following components are available to gang-involved young people (the development of a personal action plan will ensure that the *specific* needs of each gang member are addressed):

- Therapeutic interventions – This is *particularly* important for those who have been stabbed or shot, witnessed someone being stabbed or shot or lost someone to such violence. Gang-involved young people may well be suffering from post-traumatic shock and will therefore need significant psychological support. In addition, they are likely to need support:
  - Addressing any childhood trauma, such as abuse, or issues such as fatherlessness
  - Building self-esteem
  - Aspiration raising
- Support re-entering the education system
- Training and skills development and careers advice
- Support finding and gaining employment
- Resettlement and housing support
- Structured one-to-one mentoring
- Treatment for drug and/or alcohol addiction
- Meaningful engagement of a young person's leisure time

Case Study 7: Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles, USA[52]

Mission statement: *'Jobs not Jails: Homeboy Industries assists at-risk and formerly gang-involved youth to become positive and contributing members of society through job placement, training and education."*[53]

Homeboy Industries was founded 20 years ago in Boyle Heights by Father Greg Boyle. Having asked himself why so many young people were on the streets rather than safe in school, Father Greg established an alternative school – which still exists today and is now accredited by LA County Education. Father Greg also noted that many of the young people on the streets wanted jobs, but had no qualifications or training with which to gain employment. He therefore established a project to hire the young people.

What started as a small project has now grown into a huge social enterprise which over the years had helped thousands of formerly (often seriously) gang-involved young people and adults follow a positive and productive path in life.

Homeboy Industries' mission statement is complemented by their slogan '*Nothing stops a bullet like a job*'. The charity employs numerous ex-gang members in their social enterprises – including bakery, café, landscaping and maintenance, silk-screening and merchandise businesses – in addition to providing training and job placements.

52 Information provided by staff at Homeboy Industries on a Working Group visit to Los Angeles in May 2008

53 www.homeboy-industries.org, accessed November 2008

Importantly, the project addresses the drivers of gang culture as well as providing practical help. Case Managers work with all Homeboys and Homegirls to develop a personal action plan. Services available include:

- Addiction treatment
- Anger management and counselling
- Education and training
- Tattoo removal
- Legal advice

Homeboy Industries does not turn anyone away, and is founded on a belief in second chances. One Homeboy told the Working Group that he had been helped by Father Greg on several occasions before reaching the point at which he was ready to engage fully.

The project has helped gang members from over half of the region's 1,100 known gangs to exit gang life. Father Greg's reputation and the neutral space provided by Homeboy Industries enables rival gang members to work together and develop mutual respect for each other, often after years of learnt hatred.

Case Study 8: Young Disciples, Birmingham, UK

Young Disciples is an innovative grass roots charity working in the heart of Birmingham's most deprived communities.

Marc Edwards founded the charity eight years ago after watching his friend die as the result of a shooting. After looking at what was on offer to young people in the area he realised that the ones involved in gang culture, living at the margins of society, were not attending youth clubs or engaging in mainstream activities. Engagement would have to go to them.

Young Disciples was established to engage with disenfranchised young people who are either already involved in gangs or at the fringes. It now works with hundreds of young people through both on site and outreach work.

Young Disciples uses a variety of programmes to engage young people in Birmingham, from football to chess to music, and through schools, the community and their fully equipped music studio and IT suite.

All programmes are aimed at challenging perceptions and changing mindsets. Marc Edwards told the Working Group:

> 'If we're going to get young people in to just play, there's no benefit…My ethos is to engage young people, but to move them from the point which they're at. Change their mindset. Challenge their behaviour, their concept of life, and bring to them opportunities.'

This is achieved through a mixture of skills development and therapeutic work. By addressing issues such as territorialism, anger and educational failure, Young Disciples facilitates young people's transition from gang culture to mainstream culture, supporting them into work and education.

The charity has numerous partners including schools, Youth Offending Teams and Connexions. The programme is also part of Birmingham's Reducing Gang Violence strategy.

Hospital-based intervention

As highlighted in Part 1, Section 2.4.2, hospital A&E admissions for 'assault by a sharp object' have increased considerably over the past few years, most notably amongst young people. The Working Group therefore believes that hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) provide an excellent opportunity to engage with (potentially) gang-involved young people at a point of vulnerability: witnesses have noted that trauma often leads to a questioning of lifestyle choices.

A pioneering project running in King's College Hospital ED shows the potential of such an initiative (see Case Study 9).

The Working Group recommends that the Department of Health ring-fences funds for the employment of youth workers by hospitals with high numbers of young people admitted for assault, particularly involving a weapon. Youth workers could be seconded from effective local youth charities. This would enable the young people to be linked directly into intervention programmes.

Case Study 9: King's College Hospital Emergency Department and Redthread

Partnering with youth charity Redthread, King's Emergency Department employs a youth worker part-time to engage with young people attending as a result of an assault.

Launched in 2006, the project was originally funded by Kingfishers, the Hospital's charitable arm. However the value of the initiative was quickly recognised and funding, albeit limited, is now secured directly from the Emergency Department's annual budget.

John Poyton is seconded to King's Emergency Department for 10 hours a week. As well as meeting any young person attending the Emergency Department for an assault whilst he is on duty, he also attends a weekly multi-disciplinary team meeting in which the week's cases are discussed and repeat admissions highlighted. Where a phone number has been provided by the young person, John contacts them to offer support services. Letters are also sent to the young person at their home address to invite them to access services.

In addition, postcards with a number to text, an email address and an instant message website link are handed out to all young people attending following an assault in order for them to contact John directly.

John stressed that for many of the young people, especially those who are repeat victims, the psychological reaction was often delayed and hence a follow-up a week or two later was most effective. Often parents use the postcard details to contact John once they start seeing a change of behaviour or emotional disposition in their child. He told the Working Group: 'really we're looking at post-traumatic stress'.

The project is looking to expand and, from 2009, young people attending the Emergency Department will be offered a follow-up appointment with John. The appointments will be solution-focused one-to-ones, after which the young person will be linked into other services.

The project currently works with YOTs, Connexions, schools, local GPs and other youth organisations and is in the process of developing a partnership with the St Giles Trust's SOS project to provide mentoring.

John noted:

> 'The Emergency Department is the gateway to catch kids who are injured and vulnerable and likely to be involved with gangs…we have the chance to stop them falling through the net and link them into services.'

Mediation Plus

Gang violence is often tit for tat: to keep face, rival gangs must seek revenge for any 'wrong' done to them. Therefore to prevent an escalation of violence, work must be done with rival gangs to diffuse the situation.

However, although mediation has great potential in the short-term, alone it is not a long-term solution. Concerns include:

- Truces are often fragile, and are easily broken
- *Youngers* are increasingly disconnected from *Elders*, and are keen to make a name for themselves
- Violence is increasingly chaotic, and often the result of personal conflict rather than gang 'beefs'
- Mediation alone does not address the drivers of gang culture, or indeed the gang culture itself

Hence it is vital that any mediation includes *intervention* as well as conflict resolution. The Working Group therefore recommends the use of 'mediation plus'. Mediation combined with intervention has been used in a number of areas and with near-term success.

We recommend that a gang mediation model reflects the West Midlands Mediation and Transformation Service (see Case Study 10): mediating *and transforming*.[54]

Key principles for a mediation service:

- ***Independence***: to ensure neutrality and therefore trust, a mediation service should be independent from statutory agencies
- ***Credibility***: the Working Group recommends that consideration be given to the use of ex-gang members as facilitators. This has the potential of increasing credibility as well as ensuring cultural awareness and relevance
- ***Crisis and proactive intervention***: the mediation service should be available at any hour to provide crisis mediation, but should also be proactive in approaching rival factions
- ***Community trust***: the mediation service should be proactive in engaging the community – the majority of intelligence on feuds and, importantly, specific potential incidents, will come from the community
- ***Partnership***: the mediation service should work collaboratively with other agencies, including police, in order to respond to intelligence and to ensure all support is available to gang members wanting to desist (for example resettlement)
- ***Intervention***: at the point of mediation, and as routine follow up, the mediation service should work with gang members to help them exit gang life

54 The MPS are currently in the process of establishing a mediation service for priority boroughs in London, *Capital Conflict Management CIC*. The CIC (Community Interest Company) will provide crisis as well as proactive mediation and will work in partnership with other agencies to provide support programmes for gang members looking to exit gang life. The project is to be launched in the New Year (2009)

Case Study 10: West Midlands Mediation and Transformation Services (WMMTS)

WMMTS was established in 2004. Originally sitting within Aston Community Education, for organisational and financial reasons it is now a limited company. It is integral to Birmingham's Reducing Gang Violence strategy. It has two key objectives, to bring about a cessation in shootings and to facilitate a young person's exit from gang life. There are three key strands to the work of WMMTS:[55]

- *Proactive intervention*: to facilitate negotiation between factions
- *Post-event intervention:* to mediate and prevent retaliation and escalation
- *Facilitate delivery of support*: to encourage and enable those who wish to exit the gun and gang culture to do so

WMMTS has also worked to broker solutions to gang tensions and conflict within prison.

WMMTS was established by former police officer Kirk Dawes who saw the need for community action to stop the escalating gang violence in Birmingham. The mediators are from a range of backgrounds and include former gang members and mothers of gang members, who are all fully trained in conflict resolution.

Although it is difficult to ascertain the exact impact of the project – it operates in a dynamic environment with multiple inititatives, while gun crime data, particularly linked to gangs, is often poor – a 2006 evaluation of WMMTS demonstrated disproportionate decreases in violent gun crime in the Operational Command Units in which it is most active.[56] In addition, the evaluation provides a number of case studies demonstrating WMMTS' considerable impact.[57] Their success is also revealed in the increased demand for their services.

Resettlement

Some gang members, particularly high impact players, may need to be re-housed in a new area in order for them to desist. This may be particularly relevant for gang members returning from a period of imprisonment. As John Pitts noted in his submission to the Mayoral Seminar on Serious Youth Violence:

> 'There are particular pressures on returning gang members from their own and other gangs and, of course, there is the ever-present temptation of easy money from the drugs business.'[58]

Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should therefore make the re-settlement of ex-gang members a priority and should consider partnering with other local authorities to achieve this.

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55 For further information on these strands see, Geoff Berry Associates, *Evaluation of WMTTS Mediation Project in Birmingham* (West Midlands Mediation & Transformation Services, May 2006), Section 3.5

56 Ibid., p.14

57 Ibid., Section 4.3

58 John Pitts, *The Mayor's Academic Seminar on Serious Youth Violence: the Prequisites and Components of Effective Violence Reducation Programmes*, Unpublished, 24th September 2008

Drug and alcohol treatment

A significant number of gang-involved young people are likely to need treatment for drug and/or alcohol misuse. The Working Group supports the recommendations made by the Addictions Working Group in Breakthrough Britain and draws particular attention to the proposals for:

- Increased provision of abstinence-based treatment and in particular residential provision
- A radical assessment of adolescent substance misuse treatment with an emphasis on holistic support which tackles the issues behind addiction
- A reclassification of Cannabis from Class C to B

Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should ensure that appropriate treatment is available for young people exiting gang life. This could involve commissioning a third sector organisation with a proven track record to provide abstinence-based day and residential treatment.

Early intervention for siblings of known gang members

> '…where an older sibling is clearly involved in gang activity the right way forward is that there should be a child protection approach for any younger sibling who is clearly at risk of moving into a lifestyle which is extremely dangerous to that child.'
>
> Sir Ian Blair, former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service[59]

Family involvement in crime is a significant risk factor for a child's own future involvement in offending[60] and witnesses to the inquiry have highlighted the transmission of gang affiliation and involvement between siblings.

The Working Group therefore recommends that intervention should be automatically triggered for the siblings of known gang members and, in particular, nominals. The nature of the intervention should be decided by the multi-agency Operational Team, but *must* be non-stigmatising. It is imperative that those close to gang members, but not involved in gang culture themselves, are not tarred with the same brush.

Young Disciples works with young people in Birmingham to raise their aspirations and self-esteem, develop their skill,s and challenge their views on gang membership and territorialism

Home visits will already have been triggered by the identification of the known gang member or nominal, and this should provide an initial occasion for offering services and support to any siblings.

Schools should play a central role in monitoring the behaviour of the sibling and flagging any early indicators of gang involvement – such as increased aggression,

59 *Met Chief: put gang siblings on protection register,* The Guardian, 3rd May 2007
60 For a discussion of this see, Farrington and Welsh, *Saving Children from a Life of Crime*, pp. 57-60

disaffection, truanting, wearing of colours – at the multi-agency Operational Team meeting. This should in turn trigger further appropriate action.

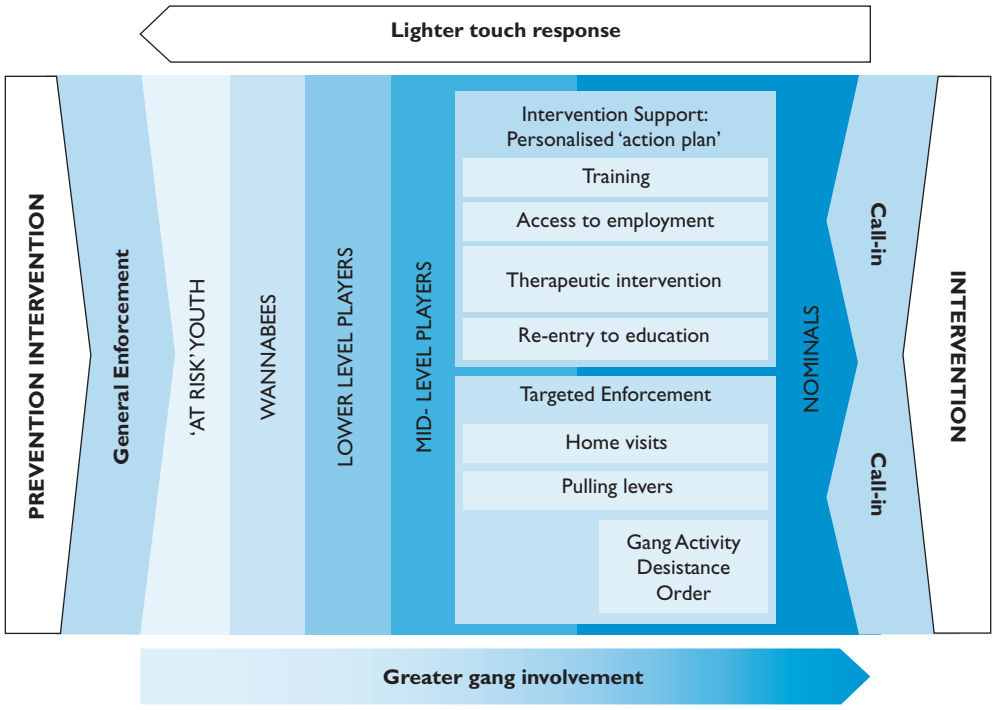
The provision of a mentor should be considered. Mentors can offer an alternative role model to the gang-involved brother or sister. Mentors must be fully trained and supported in their role, and must be matched to the young person to ensure relevancy (for further discussion on mentoring see Part III, Section 3.2.1.3).

1.3.5.4 Summarising the model

Fig. 3.4 below provides a visual summary of the enforcement and intervention model described above. Any gang prevention strategy must take account of the varying levels of involvement in gang culture and, in particular, street violence, and deliver an appropriate response.

For those young people involved at a low level, or particularly at risk of future involvement (such as the siblings of nominals), the primary focus should be intervention. Once identified by the multi-agency Operational Team, intervention by appropriate organisations must be proactive and rapid. Running concurrently in the Gang Prevention Zone should be general enforcement measures such as stop and searches and sweeps. For more serious gang-involved young people – nominals and middle tier players – the response must also be swift, but must be targeted and involve *both* serious enforcement and intervention. The call-in provides the opportunity to articulate a unified message, presenting a choice of desistance and support or continuation and suppression.

Figure 3.4: Multi-pronged anti-gang strategy schematic



1.4 Conclusion and summary of policy recommendations

Immediate action is needed to disrupt gangs and prevent violence. The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire had impressive results tackling gangs and violence in the U.S. city – a 63 per cent decrease in youth homicides per month – and this model should inform the UK's response to gangs. A number of UK initiatives – including Merseyside's Matrix Gun Crime Team and Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit – have implemented the Boston model with very promising early results.

The key elements for a successful gang prevention initiative include:

- A thorough understanding of the local problem and what is driving it
- Committed and visible leadership at the highest levels
- Full multi-agency collaboration and communication (including data sharing)
- A multi-pronged approach combining enforcement, intervention and prevention
- An honest and targeted approach
- Meaningful community engagement

It is these principles which have formed the basis of our proposals for a gang prevention model.

Policy Recommendations:

Identifying, understanding and prioritising the problem

1. Senior officials – including the Mayor or Leader of the Council and Chief Constable – should publicly commit themselves to tackling gangs as a priority – this is particularly important for elected officials
2. A standardised definition of a gang should be adopted universally
3. A specialist Gang Prevention Unit should be established within the Cabinet Office (central government), staffed by specialists and academics from the field of gangs and disenfranchised youth. The Unit should make an initial analysis of which local authorities are gang-impacted and evaluate current initiatives to tackle gangs
4. Gang Prevention Unit specialists should act as Independent Consultants to those local authorities identified as being gang-impacted and work with the local authorities to analyse the local problem and need
5. Gang Prevention Zones – small geographic areas with a significant gang problem – should be established and a full needs assessment conducted

Devising and implementing the model

1. Local authorities should publicly take the lead on gang prevention and be held accountable for doing so. In the event of a gang-related youth death a Serious Case Review should be undertaken and a full public response made by the local authority and any other relevant agencies
2. A new multi-agency model should be established composed of Strategic, Tactical and Operational Teams plus an Independent Advisory Group.

Each team should have representatives from *all* agencies working with or coming into contact with at risk young people in Gang Prevention Zones

3. Appropriate, specialist training – devised by the Gang Prevention Unit – should be provided to all personnel working in Gang Prevention Zones
4. Local authorities should conduct an audit of current expenditure to ensure that investment is needs-led. This is likely to mean a re-targeting of some funds to Gang Prevention Zones. Additional funding should be made available by central government for use in Gang Prevention Zones
5. A multi-pronged approach should be implemented combining enforcement tactics with intervention and prevention programmes and a clear message that the violence must stop should be delivered to gang members before enforcement begins
6. Enforcement tactics:
    a. High impact players should be identified and, using specified criteria, placed on a nominals list. Identification as a nominal should then trigger targeted, sustained attention
    b. 'Call-ins'- where key gang members from rival gangs are brought together to listen to a range of speakers – should be conducted before an enforcement operation is begun, and subsequently when necessary
    c. All enforcement agencies should be engaged in targeting nominals, ensuring every lever possible is being used to send the message that gang activity and violence must stop
    d. Stop and searches, knife arches and sweeps should be employed as appropriate
    e. Consideration should be given to the introduction of a gang specific civil order
7. It is absolutely imperative that young people are given support in exiting gang life: a way out. Effective intervention programmes should be running simultaneously with enforcement tactics
    a. Intervention programmes should be personalised to ensure that support is appropriate to the individual, both practical and therapeutic interventions are likely to be necessary
    b. Youth workers should be based in hospital emergency departments which experience high admissions of young people with assault wounds
    c. Gang Prevention Zones should include a mediation service in their youth provision
    d. Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should work together to ensure resettlement opportunities for gang members unable to remain in their area
    e. Intervention should automatically be triggered for siblings of known gang members and mentoring should be considered to provide an alternative, positive role model

For preventative recommendations see Part III, Section 3.

TWO
Building bridges between police and community

2.1 Objectives

Fostering positive relations and trust between police and communities is an essential component of any gang prevention and intervention strategy.

Within this, a particular focus is needed on improving the relationship between police and young people in gang-impacted areas. As noted (Part II, Section 4.2), numerous witnesses have commented on the mutual distrust between police and young people, highlighting that this leads to unnecessarily confrontational interactions between the two groups. Hence, for example, a legitimate stop and account becomes a stop and search and this ends in arrest despite nothing illegal being discovered on the individual.[61] This only serves to exacerbate the feelings of marginalisation felt by many young people in deprived communities, and their belief that the police cannot – perhaps will not – protect them.[62]

> "'Ultimately, young people are going to be a key source of intelligence…we need to break down the wall of silence. Long-term, sustained work – that isn't going to give loads of profile, or great headlines – is needed. Work that challenges the whole culture of "the old bill are the enemy."
>
> Mark Blake, Programme Director, Positive Futures

The following policy recommendations are designed to improve relations between communities and young people and the police.

If implemented, these proposals will:

- Ensure that police have a better understanding and appreciation of the challenges facing deprived communities, and in particular facing the young people living in them
- Reverse negative perceptions: 'humanising' police in the eyes of young people and challenging the demonisation and stereotyping of young people

61 Melvyn Davis (Director, The Male Development Service) sits on his local stop and search monitoring committee. He told the working group that he was shocked to find that statistics showed stop and search (SAS) to be more common that stop and account (SAA). This he puts down to SAA becoming SAS due to the confrontational nature of the interaction

62 See Part II, Section 4.1 for a discussion of this

In order to:

- Help facilitate a comprehensive response to gang culture by encouraging people to engage with the police, particularly in providing information and evidence
- Build neighbourhood capacity as communities feel greater ownership of the solutions to gang culture

2.2 Policy recommendations

2.2.1 USING THE THIRD SECTOR TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS BETWEEN POLICE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Non-statutory youth projects offer 'neutral' ground for police and young people to interact. The relationship between third sector youth workers and young people is usually one of trust, and because the project is seen as independent from enforcement agencies there is greater potential for collaboration without the young people seeing police presence as a threat.

Second Wave, a youth project in South East London, runs a joint project with the police to breakdown stereotypes and build trust between police officers and young people (photo by D. Vadher)

Any collaboration is still likely to take time to fully develop, but the Working Group believes that the use of non-statutory youth projects offers one of the best options for police engagement with young people and vice versa (see Case Studies below for examples of joint initiatives).

2.2.1.1 Police training

Greater (positive) exposure to young people during police training is needed to better equip police in their interactions with young people. This will simultaneously break down the negative perception of police held by young people.

We recommend that the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) develops a programme based on the excellent work being done by Second Wave, a third sector project in Lewisham, and Territorial Support Group 4 (TSG4).

2.2.1.2 Workshops

To ensure that current police officers also gain the insights that officers in training gain, the Working Group recommends the use of regular workshops.

The exact content of the workshops should be decided at a local level, but in order to facilitate a more meaningful engagement between the officers and young people we recommend that the events last a minimum of a day: sufficient time will be needed to get past any tensions or reluctance to engage. We also recommend using similar methods as the Second Wave project in order to break down barriers and hierarchies. The workshop should be the product of collaboration between police and one or more grassroots youth projects.

Case Study 11: Second Wave and Territorial Support Group 4 (TSG4), London

Monthly workshops are held at Second Wave with TSG4 officers and young people. All TSG4 officers, from PC to Chief Inspector, are involved in the project. Each workshop is themed, and topics such as stop and search, young people becoming future leaders and the safety and support needs of young people in Lewisham have been covered. Workshops include role reversal scenarios and approach the issues in a fun creative way, and the project's stop and search role reversal was performed at the Metropolitan Police Association's pan-London conference on stop and search.

The aim of the initiative is to:

- Establish positive dialogue between police and young people and thereby challenge mutually negative stereotypes
- Reduce confrontation between police and young people
- Provide a meaningful forum for youth consultation
- Make the TSG more accountable and accessible to the community

Chief Inspector Terry O'Connor told the Working Group that his unit's involvement with Second Wave had 'reduced barriers and demystified us' and that all of his officers have valued the experience and come away better equipped to deal with young people on the street. Phil Turner, Learning and Development Officer at Second Wave, noted that the officers had 'developed quite a high level of youth work skills' and that the young people are much more confident in their interaction with the police. He also explained that 'all participants feel safe within boundaries': Second Wave provides a safe forum for engagement.

The initiative has been so successful that Lewisham Borough Police are now also working with Second Wave, and Superintendent (Partnership) Lisa Crook told the Working Group that their participation has been invaluable in building trust between the police and young people in the borough.

Feedback on the initiative

The Working Group spoke to a number of young people attending the project, all of whom talked about the positive impact the initiative had had on their view of the police.

> 'I've had bad experiences with the police. I just thought they were a negative group that abused their power. It wasn't until I came to Second Wave that I realised there are good police.' *Sarah, 19*

> 'I'd been fed a lot of negative views from my peers…When I met them, we broke it down to "you're a human and I'm a human"…I got to learn it's actually a hard job to have.' *Aaron, 17*

2.2.1.3 Regular positive police contact with young people

In order for police to build positive relationships with young people in their local area, and for young people to build positive views of the police, regular contact between the two groups is imperative.

We therefore recommend that every Basic Command Unit (BCU) has, as part of their policing strategy, active partnerships with local youth projects working with at risk young people. The details of the relationship should be agreed at a local level, but must be articulated as a priority by senior officers.

Immediate implementation is recommended in identified gang areas, but the Working Group recommends full national roll out in due course.

Collaboration between the police and young people should include:

1. Police participation at local projects

- Type of participation must be defined by what is appropriate in a particular locality – Case Studies 12-14 below detail three examples of different, effective police engagement models

2. Provision of funding for joint initiatives

- Youth engagement is central to crime prevention and as such must be funded appropriately
- This could mean provision of resources in addition to funds (see for example Case Study 14)

3. The formation of local youth 'consultation panels'

- These should meet regularly – no less than quarterly – and provide an opportunity for young people to provide feedback to police, and for police to provide information (where appropriate) on initiatives and operations
- Borough Commanders should attend at least twice a year to demonstrate to young people, practitioners, the community and the police force that this is a priority

Case Studies 12-14: police participation at youth projects

12. The Team Programme, Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust works closely with police forces across the country to help young people move away from offending into positive activities.

The Team programme, a 12 week course for 16-25 year olds, uses police officers as Team Leaders. The officers are seconded for a minimum of four months which includes training, recruiting the young people and delivering the programme.

The Team participants are recruited from deprived areas and are usually from one of four 'at risk' categories: unemployed, in or leaving care, having problems at school, and young offenders. The programme combines personal development with team building and incorporates a community project, residential and work experience placements.

The programme provides insight into the challenges facing young people in deprived communities and develops officers' skills in working with young people. Likewise, it humanises the officers in the eyes of the young people and challenges their preconceptions.

Police feedback

> 'For us, it is about building relationships with young people and engaging in a positive way that will deliver benefits for the whole community for years to come.'
>
> Phil Gormley, Deputy Chief Constable, West Midlands Police

'In my current job, my only involvement with young people was either arresting them, seizing their alcohol or moving them from place to place. This secondment has given me the insight and the belief in young people.'

PC Chris Vaughan, Dorset Police

'I have witnessed former prolific offenders and disadvantaged individuals completely turn their lives around for the better because of their participation'

Sergeant Mike Brumskhill, Merseyside Police

13. Hackney Borough Police and Chance UK

Hackney Borough Police are working with Chance UK, an early intervention charity working in the borough. Chance UK provides adult mentors for primary school aged children with behavioural difficulties. Many of the children that Chance UK works with are on the child protection register and are living in homes impacted by family breakdown, addiction and deprivation (for more information on Chance UK see Case Study 19).

Mark Bird, Superintendent Operations at Hackney Borough Police is a former Chance UK mentor and has encouraged other officers and police staff to volunteer. Hackney police currently have 17 staff that are undergoing training or have just started with their child Mentee. Through mentoring the police officers gain direct insight into the drivers of gang culture.

Superintendent Mark Bird told the Working Group:

'My own early experience of mentoring a 10 year old boy in Hackney highlighted his intention to join a gang. He had no male adult within his family unit, had low career aspirations and he knew little of the world outside of Hackney.

Mentoring enables my own staff to realise the limitations, perceived or actual, that some of the children in the Borough face. The achievements and experiences of my staff also enable the children to see a different, more constructive path for the future – they provide positive role models.'

Through Hackney Borough Police's involvement with Chance UK police officers have gained a greater understanding of the issues facing young people in Hackney, challenged stereotypes and strengthened community / police relations.

Hackney Borough Police have also become involved in a number of high profile fundraising activities for Chance UK and another local charity.

14. Islington Borough Police and XLP, 'Pimp My Ride'

Islington Borough Police, with EMI Music, found an innovative way of supporting the work of youth charity XLP through the donation of an old riot van. The van was transformed into a state-of-the-art mobile recording studio by MTV's 'Pimp my Ride'.

This has enabled XLP to take its music project across territorial boundaries and has sent a clear message to the young people that the police want to help.

2.2.2 POLICE IN SCHOOLS

Interaction between the police and young people needs to start early and remain regular. We therefore recommend increased involvement of police with their local schools. This will help to overcome barriers between young people and police, make the school environment safer and hence a more effective

learning environment, reduce crime in the school vicinity, and facilitate and reinforce the importance of collaboration between agencies.

It is crucial to note that this involvement must not be stigmatising and should not, therefore, be seen through an enforcement lens: police involvement in schools should be seen as *preventative*.

2.2.2.1 Safer Schools Partnerships

Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs) were piloted in 2002 and mainstreamed in 2006. The original purpose of SSPSs was to tackle behavioural problems and crime in schools and their vicinities, but their positive impact has been much wider.

An analysis of the impact of SSPs in five St. Helens schools showed that within a 500m radius of each school, overall there had been a 55 per cent decrease in crime and a 64 per cent decrease in rowdy/inconsiderate behaviour incidents.[63]

A University of York evaluation of the impact of SSPs (2006) revealed much wider benefits resulting from SSPs. The analysis covered over one thousand schools and compared authorised and unauthorised absence rates and the proportion of students attaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE in 2001/02 with 2003/04. SSP schools had experienced:[64]

- A decline in unauthorised absences whilst non-SSP schools had seen an increase,
- A greater decline in authorised absences than non-SSP schools
- A significantly higher increase in the proportion of students attaining five A*-C GCSEs compared to their non-SSP counterparts

Anecdotal evidence collected by the Working Group demonstrates further benefits. A number of witnesses – including teachers, young people and police officers – have noted the considerable positive impact that the presence of SSP officers has had on the relationship between young people and the police, and between the wider community and the police. Case Study 14 clearly illustrates this.

In addition, the University of York evaluation estimated a benefit:cost ratio of between 1.65 and 3.31, without taking into account reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour (due to insufficient data).[65] Given the St. Helens results noted above, the potential savings are likely to be significantly higher. Prevention pays both socially and economically.

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63 Information supplied by Merseyside Police's Youth Engagement Unit. SSPs were established in St. Helens in September 2007; data compared the quarter before with the quarter after SSPs were established

64 Roger Bowles, Rimawan Pradiptyo, and Maria Garcia Reyes, *Estimating the Impact of the Safer School Partnerships Programme* (University of York, January 2006)

65 Ibid., p.13

Case Study 15: Safer Schools Partnership (SSP), Merseyside Police and Ruffwood School (now Kirkby Sports College)

Police Constable Brian Norton joined Ruffwood School in Knowsley as an SSP officer in February 2007. Knowsley was ranked third most deprived borough in the country in the 2004 deprivation indices and Ruffwood was one of the most challenging schools in Merseyside. The level of truancy was of particular concern, along with drug use, gangs and knife crime.

One of the main aims of the partnership was to rebuild trust between the police and the community. PC Norton stressed to the Working Group that improvements did not happen overnight, estimating that it took around 18 months to gain the trust of the students and wider community. Pupils at the school told the Working Group that fights were now a rare occurrence and PC Norton's presence made them feel much safer, demonstrating the benefits of persistence.

PC Norton emphasised that he is still viewed by the children as an active police officer, albeit full-time in the school. When out on the streets he introduces the young people to his colleagues and this further helps to build a positive police-community relationship.

PC Norton told the Working Group:

> 'There have not been any negatives. It's a win-win situation. We have a better understanding of the community and of the challenges facing the young people in Knowsley. There has been a visible increase in trust between the police and the young people and wider community, and there have been reductions in truanting, fighting in school and crime in and around the school.'

Pam Jervis, Headteacher at Ruffwood School, made similar observations:

> 'It has been extremely helpful to have a SSP officer in the school and we are delighted with the way it is working. The partnership has had a great impact on improving the relationship between young people and the police in the area. It is brilliant to be part of a pro-active, as opposed to re-active, initiative.'

SSPs in Gang Prevention Zone secondary schools and colleges

The Working Group supports the Government's mainstreaming of SSPs and recommends the roll out of SSPs to *all* secondary schools in Gang Prevention Zones – including academies, special schools and Pupil Referral Units – *and to all Further Education (FE) and sixth form colleges in the area.*[66]

The majority of secondary schools in Gang Prevention Zones are likely to already have an SSP officer. However, as Mike Taylor, Head of Specialist Crime Prevention and Partnership at the MPS, told the Working Group:

> 'FE and sixth form colleges do not currently benefit from SSP officers despite often taking pupils from different (rival) boroughs. The age range of the students also coincides with the profile of many of our serious violent offenders. The issue of including FE in SSP is currently being considered by ACPO.'

66 Excluding any Independent schools unless a particular need requires it

The exclusion of FE and Sixth Form colleges is a strategic gap in gang and violence prevention. This is confirmed in John Pitts' Waltham Forest report. Pitts notes that the Barrier Boys gang loiter near an FE college 'and "tax" and harass people who want to come by'[67], and that in general 'Non-affiliation may mean that it is dangerous to use certain services or facilities like an FE college…'. Indeed, he highlights a number of violent incidents which have occurred at FE colleges and records that professionals in the borough have suggested that gang activity is increasing in them.[68]

The model

There are currently a number of SSP models in use, ranging from officers based full-time in an individual school working closely with senior management, to the part-time involvement of a Police Community Support Officer based in the local neighbourhood policing team.

The Working Group recommends that, for schools and colleges in Gang Prevention Zones, a fully operational police officer is seconded to the school full-time, either based in the senior management team or behaviour and education support team. The details of their role should be worked out on a school by school basis according to need.

It is vital that officers are chosen carefully for SSPs and that training is provided to ensure that they are fully equipped to work effectively with young people. The Working Group concurs with the Youth Justice Board that:

> 'It is of paramount importance that a motivated and dynamic officer is selected for the role, one who can communicate well with the young people and efficiently deliver the aims and outcomes of the SSP, through close liaison with all partners.'[69]

Funding

As noted above, both quantitative and qualitative evidence shows that SSPs are having a positive impact on a number of the factors which contribute to the development and persistence of gang culture: the levels of anti-social behaviour and crime, fear, poor educational attainment and truanting. In addition, anecdotal evidence shows that the presence of a dedicated officer in schools builds bridges between young people and the police, challenging stereotypes.

Despite this considerable success, funding for SSPs is reliant on agreements at a local level. In Merseyside, for example, around 13 SSP officers are funded by the police, around 10 are funded by the education

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67 Pitts, *Reluctant Gangsters*, Chapter 8
68 Ibid. Chapter 8
69 Youth Justice Board website, http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/Prevention/SSP/, accessed October 2008

system, and the cost of the remaining SSPs are split between the police and schools.[70] In Thames Valley, by comparison, the police are able to fund all 40 SSP officers.[71]

These funding disparities are unacceptable and the Working Group recommends that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Home Office/Youth Justice Board ring fence funds for Gang Prevention Zone SSPs.

2.2.2.2 Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC)

Police officers and staff can provide positive role models for young people. Police cadet programmes offer an excellent opportunity for this, as well as providing structured, disciplined activities and further integration of the police with their communities.

The Working Group therefore recommends that all secondary schools, FE colleges and sixth form colleges in Gang Prevention Zones either have on site, or are affiliated to a nearby VPC programme.

Case Study 16: Examples of Metropolitan Police Service VPC success

Croydon:

A police officer was asked to speak with a young man in a Pupil Referral Unit after suspicions of theft and gang membership. A long conversation with the male showed that that he was seeking a sense of belonging and his gang involvement provided this. The police officer therefore suggested he get involved with the police cadets. The change in his behaviour since joining the cadets has been so significant that he has now been reintegrated into mainstream schooling.

Westminster:

As a former gang member who became a cadet, the young man was the target of gang violence. However his experiences as a cadet enabled him to engage with police rather than seek revenge for the assault. He now stays away from his former gang affiliates and has gone on to become a cadet team leader. He states that the cadets 'made me realise what I want in life.'

The Metropolitan Police Service Voluntary Police Cadet programme[72]

The MPS's programme is an excellent VPC model and clearly shows the benefits gained by both young people and police officers through their participation. The Working Group recommends that other areas learn from this London model.

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70 Information provided by Merseyside Police's Youth Engagement Unit
71 Information provided by Thames Valley Police
72 Unless otherwise stated, information provided by MPS Chief Inspector Ed Sherry

There are currently more than 1,000 cadets in the VPC in London, with around 375 staff. It is the largest VPC scheme in the UK.

The MPS state that the aims of the VPC are to promote good citizenship and facilitate the development of life skills amongst young people, reduce anti-social behaviour and offending, and provide structured training and diversionary activities. In addition, the VPC provides additional resources for the police and plays a role in encouraging young people to think about the police force as a career.

Targeting the right young people

Police cadets are from a wide variety of backgrounds and include referrals from schools, Children's Services and YOTs. Around 25 per cent of Westminster's cadets, for example, have been referred by YOTs and to date no-one has reoffended since joining the VPC. This clearly demonstrates the transformative potential of the cadets programme for disenfranchised young people (see case Study 15 for specific examples of success).

As discussed in Part II, there are historical tensions between police and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. Therefore, it is of note that, London-wide, 36 per cent of cadets are from BME communities. In a number of VPC areas in excess of 60 per cent of cadets are from BME backgrounds (Camden, Haringey, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth North, Merton-Mitcham, Tower Hamlets and Westminster North and South).[73] The potential for breaking down barriers and encouraging collaboration between police and BME communities is considerable.

In addition, as in Los Angeles[74], the cadet programme offers an opportunity to target police recruitment in areas and communities which are currently under-represented in police forces.

The MPS model

There are currently three paid positions – a Chief Inspector, Inspector and Sergeant – overseeing the MPS VPC, but this is expected to increase slightly with the planned expansion of the scheme.

All other VPC are volunteers, and these are made up of police officers, PCSOs, special constabulary and police staff. They are also looking to encourage former cadets and Prince's TrustTeam participants to help with the running of units.

The VPC units meet once a week, usually at a school. Each session includes:

- Drill/inspection
- Sport
- Guest speaker or discussion on a police-related topic

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73 October 2008 analysis of VPC hours, provided by Chief Inspector Ed Sherry

74 Los Angeles Police Department Explorers is a police cadet programme for 14 to 21 year olds. They undertake similar activities to VPCs, including non-hazardous police functions. Lieutenant Mora – who oversees the Explorer programme as part of the LAPD's Community Policing and Youth Programs – explained to the Working Group that recruitment was concentrated in deprived areas with large Latino or Black communities and that the Explorer cadets were then encouraged to consider policing as a career

Weekend and summer holiday activities are also provided – including camps and activity weeks – and units are licensed to deliver the Duke of Edinburgh Award. In addition, the cadets receive training and are celebrated at an awards ceremony at Hendon Police Training College.

Chief Inspector Ed Sherry told the Working Group that the VPC 'allows young people to enter an arena with no baggage, enabling them to redefine themselves in a social group' and that 'the cadets enjoy the drill as it allows them to work together as a team.'

The Metropolitan Police Service's Voluntary Police Cadets attend camps and activity weeks as well as supporting police in non-patrol activities

Cadets also engage in non-patrol policing activities, such as leafleting and undertaking test purchase operations (for example attempting to purchase alcohol or fireworks) and join police deployments for events ranging from Remembrance Day parades to film premiers and the London Marathon. The most recent monthly analysis showed that in November (2008) alone, VPCs in London provided 4,278 hours of police support.

Funding

Due to funding difficulties, the MPS VPC is currently looking to secure charitable status. Currently the bulk of funding is provided by the MPS (including £75 per week per unit to cover the cost of hiring a hall, often in a school), with different boroughs making their own arrangements to cover costs such as uniform and travel. In addition, Capgemini have provided £10,000 worth of consultancy to assist in the development of the operational model.

Given the positive outcomes for cadets – including prevention of re-offending, improved behaviour, the development of leadership skills and increased self-esteem and aspirations – and the thousands of hours of police support gained *per month*, the Working Group recommends that funding for VPCs in Gang Prevention Zones is provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Home Office. In addition, local authorities and schools should provide the use of halls and other facilities – such as sports fields and equipment – free of charge.

2.3 Conclusion and summary of policy recommendations

In order to tackle gangs effectively, positive relations must exist between the police and young people and the wider community: trust in the police needs to be increased and a more measured and sensitive approach to young people needs to be fostered.

There are numerous examples around the country of police and young people working together on programmes, via third sector organisations, which have challenged stereotypes, built trust and changed attitudes.

The Working Group believes that the principles employed in initiatives such as Second Wave's programme with Territorial Support Group 4, Hackney Police's work with Chance UK and the Prince's Trust's Team programme can be translated into a best practice model which can be used by all police forces.

In addition, the Working Group believes that greater involvement of police with their local schools will help to normalise positive relations between police and young people.

Policy recommendations:

Using the third sector to break down barriers between police and young people

1. The National Policing Improvement Agency should develop a police training programme based on the Second Wave / TSG4 initiative in which TSG4 officers attend monthly workshops with young people at the youth charity Second Wave
2. Refresher workshops should be established, facilitated by one or more local youth organisation/s, in which police and young people work together
3. Police forces should make working with local youth organisations part of general practice. This should include regular youth consultations, police participation and the provision of funding and resources for joint projects

Police in schools

1. Safer Schools Partnerships should be rolled out to all secondary schools and Further Education and sixth form colleges in Gang Prevention Zones. Each school or college should have a fully operational police officer seconded full-time, either as part of the senior management team or the behaviour and education support team. Funding should be provided and ring-fenced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Home Office
2. All secondary schools and colleges in Gang Prevention Zones should either have a Volunteer Police Cadet programme or be affiliated to one nearby. The programme should be based on the MPS model and funded by Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Home Office

THREE
Prevention – investing in the next generation

3.1 Objectives

If Britain is to reverse the rise of gang culture amongst our most disadvantaged youth, then a long-term approach is needed. At the heart of this must be an effective prevention strategy, and this requires significant investment in the next generation.

As previously stated, policies can only be successful if they are based on an in-depth understanding of the problem. For a preventative strategy to work it must be designed to tackle the *drivers* of gang culture:

- Family breakdown and dysfunction
- Educational failure
- A lack of positive role models
- Mental and emotional health problems
- An absence of aspiration and hope
- Unemployment and underemployment
- Discrimination and stereotyping (in society and by the media)

Tackling the above drivers means tackling poverty. YouGov polling for *Breakdown Britain* found that a child not growing up in a two-parent family is 75 per cent more likely to fail at school.[75] In an increasingly knowledge-based economy, a lack of qualifications vastly increases a young person's chance of ending up not in education, employment or training (NEET) and this can have serious long-term repercussions. A Prince's Trust report highlighted an up to 15 per cent long-term impact on wages as a result of having experienced being NEET,[76] and that is if employment is gained at all.

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75 The YouGov polling also found that children not growing up in a two-parent family are 70% more likely to become addicted to drugs, 50% more likely to experience an alcohol problem, 40% more likely to have a serious debt problem and 35% more likely to experience unemployment/welfare dependency; Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakdown Britain* (The Centre for Social Justice, December 2006)

76 Sandra McNally and Shqipinja Telhaj, *The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK* (Prince's Trust, April 2007), p.8

In turn, the negative impact that worklessness can have on mental and physical well being further reduces the chances of future employment.[77] Work is the most sustainable route out of poverty, and educational achievement is the cornerstone of social mobility. As such, the drivers highlighted above trap people in poverty, and make social mobility all but impossible.[78] The sense of hopelessness created makes gang involvement an attractive alternative.

Quarriers Family Resource Centre supports families in deprived areas of Glasgow

The policy recommendations in this section are designed to tackle this. They are aimed at ensuring that young people growing up in hard pressed areas are fully supported and encouraged in their path out of deprivation and away from gang involvement.

If implemented, these proposals will:

- Help provide healthy and supportive family environments and therefore happy and healthy children
- Ensure that young people are aspirational, and equipped with the necessary tools with which to achieve their aims
- Ensure that young people have positive role models in their lives
- Provide meaningful and productive activities for children and young people

In short, they will remove a young person's 'need' for the alternative society that gang culture provides.

3.2 Policy Recommendations

3.2.1 EARLY INTERVENTION

The only way to tackle gang culture long-term is by preventing children and young people from getting involved in the first place. Intervening early to ensure the healthy development of a child is therefore vital.

3.2.1.1 Supporting and strengthening the family

The long-term impact of having experienced family breakdown, family dysfunction and poor parenting is well documented. *Breakdown Britain* cites a number of adverse outcomes whose likelihood is significantly increased as a result of negative (early) family experiences. These include:

77 Gordon Waddell and A. Kim Burton, *Is Work Good for Your Health and Well-being?* (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006)

78 For further discussion of this see *Breakthrough London* (The Centre for Social Justice, April 2008)

- Earlier sexual experience[79]
- Increased drug and alcohol consumption[80]
- Mental health disorders, and low self-esteem and anger[81]
- Propensity to delinquency, violence and offending[82]

These are all issues that can increase a young person's chance of gang-involvement.

The Centre for Social Justice's recent early intervention report, The Next Generation, states:

> '…the brain is often referred to as a 'social organ'. Infancy is both a critical window of vulnerability and also a critical window of opportunity. In short, children's brains adapt to the environment they live in.'[83]

The report highlights certain key relational components needed in the first three years of a child's life to ensure their healthy physical, emotional and psychological development:

- Secure attachment
- Emotional responsiveness
- Physical affection and contact
- Interactive and independent play
- Support and nurture, including positive feedback and encouragement
- Appropriate boundaries

Intervening early to ensure a child's full and healthy development

The Working Group fully endorses the proposals made by the Early Years Commission in *The Next Generation* and by Graham Allen MP and Iain Duncan Smith MP in the joint Smith Institute and Centre for Social Justice report *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens*, as well as the Family Breakdown Group's proposals in *Breakthrough Britain*. As shown in Part I, the role of the family is crucial in keeping young people away from gangs, and as such policies which strengthen and support families and parents are essential to tackling gang culture.

We will not repeat the policies in detail here, but in brief they include:

- Requiring local authorities/councils to produce an Early Intervention vision for their locality, taking learnings from best practice models

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79 For further details see, Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakdown Britain*, Fractured Families, p.35

80 For details see, Ibid., Fractured Families, p.53

81 For details see, Ibid., Fractured Families, p.50; children growing up in 'broken homes' are also significantly more likely to experience serious abuse, which in turn further increases the chances of mental health disorders and the likelihood of future violence and offending, p.47. For further discussion of the impact of childhood abuse see, Farrington and Welsh, *Saving Children from a Life of Crime*, pp.65-6

82 For details see, Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakdown Britain*, pp.52-3

83 Callan, *The Next Generation*, p.15

- The establishment of Family Hubs – one stop shops in the heart of the community co-ordinating statutory and non-statutory provision, with an emphasis on providing non-stigmatising early years provision, parenting education and relationship support (using existing infrastructure where viable)
- Couple and parenting education – delivered by third sector organisations (thereby inducing greater trust and minimal stigmatisation)
- An enhanced role for health visitors in the delivery of both targeted and universal support – providing relationship as well as parenting support
- Greater access to bespoke mental health services for children
- The option to frontload Child Benefit, removing the economic constraints to parenting at home

In addition to these proposals, the Working Group recommends using third sector *youth* organisations to deliver, or facilitate the delivery of, parental provision. Parents are more likely to engage if a relationship has already been built through the shared goal of supporting their child and the potential for stigmatisation is further minimised by virtue of the project being seen as youth focused. The organisation may have their own parent worker or be based at a venue where parent workers are present – as is the case at early intervention charity Chance UK – or they may partner with organisations delivering parental support.

3.2.1.2 Recognising the signs of potential gang involvement

In order to ensure that agencies and organisations are able to intervene early, it is imperative that parents and people working with children and young people are able to recognise the signs of potential gang involvement.

Workshops for professionals and parents

Gang involvement can be a gradual progression from anti-social behaviour and petty offending, but it can also be a more sudden transition from non-affiliation to affiliation. Gang membership could, for example, be the result of joining a new group of gang-involved friends when starting secondary school, or of forced affiliation as in the case of 'reluctant gangsters'. Whilst in the former scenario an intervention strategy should already be in place – and hence the individual should not being getting as far as gang membership – for the latter it is a matter of identifying the signs and intervening urgently.

Signs of gang-involvement may include:

- Behavioural changes, for example a young person becoming more withdrawn or more aggressive
- Truanting
- Change in style/dress, for example always wearing a particular colour
- Unexplained injuries
- Weapon possession

- Spending more time with friends and staying out later
- New clothes and possessions, suggesting an increase in income
- Tagging of belongings
- Use of gang signs and changes in language (increased use of unfamiliar slang)

It is important to note that these signs do not necessarily signify gang involvement, but that for early intervention to work they must trigger further examination.[84]

The Working Group therefore recommends that workshops are run for professionals working regularly with young people – such as teachers and relevant school staff, social workers and youth workers – and for parents and other family members. Workshops for parents should be delivered at suitable venues in the community, such as a community centre, voluntary project or church or school hall, and should be well advertised in advance (using, for example, local radio stations and church and community notice boards). In addition to presenting the signs of potential gang involvement, the workshops should also cover what to do if the signs are present.

Eastside Young Leaders Academy provides supplementary education and personal development support to Black boys at risk of exclusion in the London Borough of Newham

Professionals should already be aware of the multi-agency Operational Group and it should be reiterated that any concerns about individual young people should be raised at this forum. The relevant Operational Team representative for each area should be present at the workshop so that all professionals are aware of who to approach with concerns.

At parent and family workshops representatives from different intervention agencies – statutory and non-statutory – should be present. Contact details should be handed out so that parents are able to contact someone easily if they suspect that their child is gang-involved. The focus of the workshops should be on providing support and guidance, not enforcement. The decision to include the police in workshops should be made at a local level, but the Working Group recommends that, as a minimum, details of the local community policing team are circulated, including photos and contact details.

3.2.1.3 Modelling positive behaviour

Gang members often come from the most dysfunctional families and from fatherless households. It is therefore vital that additional measures are in place to ensure that children and young people can access support and guidance outside of the home. This is particularly important for boys and young men

84 This is covered in *Gangs: You and Your Child* (Home Office, 2008)

who are without a positive male role model at home and therefore develop their understanding of masculinity from their peers and the media.

We therefore recommend that, as part of their multi-agency strategy, all Gang Prevention Zones have third sector early intervention projects. There are a number of exceptional examples, two of which are highlighted as Case Studies 17 and 18.

Case Studies 17 and 18: using the third sector to model positive behaviour

17. Eastside Young Leaders' Academy

EYLA was established by ex-prison governor Ray Lewis in 2002. Situated in the gang-impacted London Borough of Newham, EYLA works with disruptive black boys who have been excluded from school or are on the verge of exclusion. EYLA works with boys aged between 8 and 18.

Core elements of the EYLA programme include:

- Tutorial Programme: 2 hour after-school sessions to raise academic performance
- Saturday Academy: to develop the leadership skills of the boys
- Holiday Programme: activities to broaden horizons, 5 days a week in school holidays
- Community Service: 3-4 hours volunteering each week
- Mentoring Plus: mentoring from inspirational role models and visits to and from businesses
- Family Support Network: monthly parent classes on supporting the boys and home visits were appropriate

The charity supplements the national curriculum to ensure that the boys it works with reach their educational potential and two have been awarded scholarships to Rugby independent school. As well as educational support, EYLA also works with the boys to raise self-esteem, personal responsibility and aspirations. The charity aims to produce 'young leaders' for the future.

Boys at EYLA told the Working Group that the project 'broadens horizons, it makes you see there are other things' and a number of boys living with just their mum said that Ray Lewis was like a father to them.

18. The Male Development Service, BoyztoMEN

BoyztoMEN was founded by Melvyn Davis in 1998 to tackle social exclusion, underachievement, negative behaviour and low self-esteem amongst males. The charity works with males of all ages. It provides a holistic service to ensure a positive transition from boy, to man, to father. The charity now also works with girls, young women and mothers.

Services provided by BoyztoMEN include:

- Mentoring, including the provision of mentors in schools and colleges
- Parent support and education, including family crisis intervention
- Work with fathers
- Personal, Social and Health Education workshops on a variety of subjects from sexual health to parenting
- Counselling and emotional development
- Provision of Learning Support Assistants in schools

The charity works with primary and secondary schools and colleges; Connexions; Social Services; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; Youth Offending Teams, Children's Centres; and Family Support Services.

Many of the boys and young men that BoyztoMEN work with are involved in, or at significant risk of involvement in, gangs. The young men are often a without a positive male role model and BoyztoMEN mentors provide this. The mentors model an alternative *positive masculinity* to that portrayed on the streets and in popular media and work with the young men to address emotional issues, raise self-esteem and facilitate their personal development.

Mentoring

Mentoring, delivered properly, can have a profound and transformative impact on children and young people and is of particular value for those at risk due to their circumstances and/or behaviour. A well matched mentor not only provides a positive role model, but also helps the child or young person develop essential life skills, both practical and emotional. The Working Group therefore recommends that mentoring programmes are available in Gang Prevention Zones as part of a prevention strategy.

A New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) report on mentoring found that although evaluative data on mentoring is weak[86] – the potential benefits are often difficult to measure – anecdotal evidence shows that in many cases 'mentoring has had a dramatic and transformative effect on young people's lives.'[87]

> "All the major studies into mentoring have found that it is successful at reducing levels of anger and improving self-control."
>
> New Philanthropy Capital, Lean on me[85]

Mentoring can take a number of forms, including traditional, peer and e-mentoring, and should be structured, regular and goal-orientated.[88] The type of mentoring used should be appropriate for the needs of the child or young person. For those at risk of gang involvement – and therefore experiencing multiple risk factors – traditional one-to-one mentoring by an adult is likely to have the greatest impact. The NPC report states that the impact of traditional mentoring is 'most pronounced on improving attitudes and self-esteem, and outcomes related to this, such as improving school attendance.'[89] These are all key risk factors for gang involvement.

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85 John Copps, Sarah Sandford, and Clare Yeowart, *Lean on me: mentoring for young people at risk* (New Philanthropy Capital, May 2007), p.10

86 This point is also made in, Richard Meier, *Youth Mentoring: a good thing?* (Centre for Policy Studies, September 2008)

87 Copps, Sandford, and Yeowart, *Lean on me: mentoring for young people at risk*, p.1

88 Ibid., p.4

89 Julia Margo and Alex Stevens, *Make Me a Criminal: Preventing youth crime* (IPPR, February 2008), p.9

Making mentoring work

A number of analyses of mentoring, including the recent Centre for Policy Studies report *Youth Mentoring: A good thing?*[90], have highlighted the potential dangers of mentoring when not delivered effectively. The CPS report states:

Chance UK provides adult mentors for children with behavioural problems

'…high quality mentoring can be an effective tool for some specific groups of troubled youths…It can also be harmful when it is badly handled or when the mentoring relationship breaks down or is abandoned.'[91]

The Working Group concurs. However this is not a criticism of mentoring itself, but of its implementation. We therefore highlight below a number of key components for a successful mentoring programme – see Case Study 19 for an example of a mentoring project with these components – and recommend that Gang Prevention Zones resource mentoring projects with these qualities:

- ***Mentors – appropriate, trained, supervised and supported***: mentors should be carefully recruited, vetted and trained before a managed process matches them with the young person or child. They should then be supervised and supported throughout the mentoring period with regular face-to-face sessions with an allocated manager. The manager should have the training and experience to guide the mentor and to handle liaison with schools, Children Services and families
- ***Managed expectations***: before the mentoring begins, the programme administrators should make the expected outcomes of the mentoring clear. This should include conversations with the mentor, the mentee and (where appropriate) the mentee's family about what they are expecting to get out of the process. It should also be stressed to both sides that the defined mentoring period must be fully completed
- ***Consistent but time-limited***: mentoring should be for a defined period of time, during which contact is regular and consistent. Mentoring should help the young person develop and equip them with the skills to move forward, it should not induce dependency – for this reason it should be time-limited
- ***Structured and goal-orientated***: mentoring sessions should be pre-planned and work towards specific, agreed, objectives. Sessions should be relevant and engaging and should ideally introduce new experiences and opportunities to the mentee

90 Meier, Youth Mentoring: a good thing?
91 Ibid., Foreword

- ***Parental engagement***: mentoring should be one element of a prevention programme and support should simultaneously be provided to parents. It is important that, where possible, lessons learnt through mentoring are reinforced at home. This is likely to require considerable work with the parents, who may be experiencing complex issues such as addiction, domestic abuse, poverty and family breakdown. Mentoring schemes should therefore either have their own parent workers or partner with organisations delivering parental support

Case Study 19: Chance UK

Chance UK is an early intervention mentoring programme working with 5-11 year olds with behavioural difficulties. On referral the children are assessed using the Goodman Strength & Difficulties Questionnaire and Chance UK then works with those most likely to go on to criminal, offending and anti-social behaviour later in life. Chance UK matches fully trained adult volunteer mentors with the children on a one-year, solution-focused and goal-orientated programme. Chance UK mentors develop an individual programme of meetings and activities in line with their child's interests and needs.

Chance UK mentors

Prospective mentors attend three consecutive Saturday training days and are then interviewed by two Programme Managers before being selected – or declined – as mentors. Training covers everything from child protection issues and safety when in the family home to solution-focused techniques and goal-setting.

Once chosen the mentor is then carefully matched to a child. The Programme Manager acting as the case worker for the child and their family also supervises and supports the mentor. A Parent Worker also provides advice and support to the parent/s.

The model

Mentoring occurs on a weekly basis and a session lasts between two and four hours. Session activities could include sport; museum, theatre or cinema visits; reading; and playing games. During the course of the year the mentor encourages and models positive behaviour to the mentee, tackles negative self-images and supports the child in developing life skills.

The process is closely monitored with monthly meetings between mentors and their Programme Managers and mentors are required to fill out a Session Planning Form (SPF) after every mentoring session. After three months mentors and their mentees jointly devise goals for each other; for the mentee this will include a behavioural as well as practical goal.

Mentoring lasts 12 months and concludes with a graduation ceremony attended by family and friends. As well as celebrating the mentees progress the graduation provides a clear 'ending'.

The results

An evaluation by Goldsmiths University in 2008 found that 98 per cent of the children mentored finish the programme with improved behavior and 51 per cent finish with no behavioural difficulties at all.

3.2.1.4 The cost of delay

The social and human cost of delaying intervention has been highlighted throughout the report. In addition, there is considerable financial cost resulting from failing to intervene early. These include:

- The criminal justice system, from the police to courts and prisons, picks up the cost of gang crime
- Local authorities and housing associations pick up the costs of gang-related criminal damage and disturbance
- The education system picks up the costs of classroom disruption, truancy and exclusion
- The benefits system picks up the costs of worklessness
- HM Revenue and Customs picks up the cost of lost tax revenue

Early investment of just a fraction of, for example, the £164,750 it costs to keep a young person in a Secure Training Centre for a year could save huge sums in the long-term. Likewise the minimum £1.1 million incurred as a result of a murder.[92] In short, front-loading some of the costs of picking up the pieces of gang culture would save the Exchequer – and therefore the taxpayer – millions if not billions of pounds a year.

Research has shown the cost effectiveness of investing early. A study of early intervention programmes in the US conducted by the RAND Corporation found that for every $1 spent there is up to $17 net benefit, and for the most effective programmes this is likely to be an underestimate.[93] The report goes on to say:

> 'Because not all benefits from the interventions could be translated into dollar values, our benefit-cost estimates for effective programs [sic] are likely to be conservative. Moreover, such analyses do not incorporate some of the other benefits from effective early interventions. These could include improved labor [sic] market performance for the parents of participating children, as well as stronger national economic competitiveness as a result of improvements in educational attainment of the future workforce.'[94]

Furthermore, the cost benefits are highest for interventions which target the most disadvantaged families[95] and, as noted, it is in these families that we are most likely to find potential future gang members.

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92 Bullock and Tilley, "Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester," Appendix 1

93 Lynn Karoly, M. Rebecca Kilburn, and Jill S. Cannon, *Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise* (RAND Corporation, 2005), p.xxv

94 Ibid., p.xxv and xxviii

95 Ibid., p.xxviii

3.2.2 YOUTH PROVISION AND DIVERSION

The role of boredom as a driver of gang affiliation has been cited by a number of young people in discussions with the Working Group. Although this alone is unlikely to encourage young people to get involved with *gangs*, it is an aggravating factor. It is therefore vital that young people have relevant, engaging and meaningful activities available to them.

In addition, projects focusing on facilitating desistance, as highlighted above, are crucial. Gang-involved young people are likely to need considerable and sustained support in exiting gang life.

3.2.2.1 Reviewing and amending current youth provision

Gang Prevention Zones, as a matter of priority, should undertake a full review of the range, reach and scope of youth provision and services available in the area. Within this, particular attention should be paid to the hours of service – young people are more likely to access youth provision in the evening and at the weekends – and the relevancy of the provision. For example a mobile youth club may be useful in a area with territorial issues. To ensure that the make-up of provision is appropriate, Gang Prevention Zones should consult local young people.

In addition, to ensure maximum coverage, detached youth workers should be resourced: disenfranchised young people are unlikely to access support services and therefore services should go to them. The Working Group recommends that funds are given to effective grassroots youth charities to deliver outreach work. Non-statutory youth workers, particularly from already established community-based organisations, are likely to have greater success at engaging the hardest to reach young people (see below for a discussion of this).

3.2.2.2 Outsourcing the delivery of youth programmes

A number of practitioners have noted the tendency for local authorities to attempt to replicate and deliver successful voluntary sector projects themselves. There are a number of pitfalls to this practice, including issues of trust and positioning, personnel, structure and culture.

1. ***Trust and positioning:*** trust in state services is often very low in disadvantaged communities and therefore individuals and families are more likely to engage with voluntary sector organisations, in part because state agencies have the power to take things away (for example children or benefits)
2. ***Personnel***: witnesses speaking to the Working Group highlighted the disparity in the quality of youth work personnel in statutory compared to non-statutory agencies, stressing in particular the passion and commitment shown by third sector staff. There are a number of possible reasons for this:

   a. The public sector contract offers large incentives (good wage, pension, job security) for the uninterested and less competent to remain within post, as well as fewer mechanisms to remove them
   b. Many of the people in third sector agencies are unpaid volunteers or receive only minimal remuneration for their work. This arguably shows heightened individual commitment and interest, and lends increased credibility in the eyes of those receiving support
   c. The third sector's use of people who have personal experience of the issues being tackled. These are people who may have criminal records and/or no formal qualifications and therefore are unlikely to gain statutory sector employment, particularly working with young people

3. ***Structure***: there are a number of structural issues which can create barriers between statutory agencies and those they seek to assist:
   a. Working practices of state agencies are often out of step with the needs of young people. For example, diversion and intervention is needed most outside of normal office hours
   b. The hierarchical and regulated environment of state agencies can inhibit more innovative and flexible approaches to engagement. Helping gangs will often require 'out of the box' thinking. Projects will often be 'edgy' in their approach: gang culture is not a mainstream problem and is unlikely therefore to be susceptible to existing mainstream thinking and solutions
4. ***Culture***: there are a number of process and behavioural issues which can prevent statutory agencies from fully engaging with gang-involved young people:
   a. Statutory agencies are often highly risk-averse, rather than simply risk-aware. This is highly problematic when working with gang-involved young people: engaging gang members – who usually lead chaotic, violent lives – will be deemed a high risk activity in itself
   b. Statutory agencies are heavily target driven, dictating their focus and the nature of their interventions. A local authority's targets will not necessary match the needs of gang-involved young people: supporting a young person to exit gang life is likely to require long-term investment and mainstream measures of 'success' may not be appropriate for gang intervention projects

The Working Group recognises that there are some very innovative and effective statutory projects being delivered – for example Not Another Drop in the London Borough of Brent and the work being undertaken by the Youth Offending Service in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham – but believes that in general third sector organisations are better placed to help the hardest to reach communities.

We therefore recommend that rather than attempting to take a successful voluntary sector model and deliver it themselves, local authorities should commission grassroots project to set up in their Gang Prevention Zones. This should help to ensure that the essence of what made that project successful – such as an inspirational leader, exceptional staff, innovative approach, community-based nature – is maintained.

Resourcing the third sector

The third sector is best placed to deliver intervention and prevention programmes in Gang Prevention Zones, but this will require investment. As highlighted in Part II, many of the most effective grassroots charities are not supported by local authorities and are severely underfunded, limiting the reach they can have.

The Working Group therefore fully endorses the recommendations for growing and supporting the third sector contained in Volume 6 of Breakthrough Britain. These include:

Youth charity XLP uses mobile youth clubs to overcome territorial boundaries in London

- Strengthening the local authority-third sector Compact by enshrining Compact principles in law
- Increasing contract length
- Measuring outcomes not processes (less prescriptive funding)
- Creating a level playing field for faith-based projects
- Establishing Community Growth Trusts (a new legal status for social entrepreneurs and charities to deliver progressively more public services in the community)
- Reforming Gift Aid to make it easier for third sector organisations to reclaim tax
- Introducing trustmarking for grassroots charities with Enhanced Gift Aid on donations to these charities
- Looking into the possibility of lifting the burden of irrecoverable VAT

Non-financial support

In addition to direct funding, a number of charities have highlighted the need for business and PR support. Charities are often headed by inspirational social entrepreneurs whose leadership skills and vision drives the organisation, but who may not have the business or PR experience to grow it, and cannot afford to employ people who do.

As Volume 6 of Breakthrough Britain highlights, the corporate social responsibility agenda has provided considerable opportunity for employees, particularly in large firms, to volunteer. Indeed in 2006, FTSE companies spent £50.5 million in staff volunteering time.[96]

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96 The Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakthrough Britain*, p.620

Thought should therefore be given to how employee volunteering can be most effectively used to

1. Ensure that employee skills are being put to the best use, for example a management consultant's skills are perhaps not best utilised in painting a community centre
2. Support and grow grassroots charities working in Gang Prevention Zones

Raising public awareness of the work being done by grassroots charities will be key: grassroots organisations cannot afford national campaigns.

In addition, the Working Group supports the work of organisations, such as Pilotlight and the Private Equity Foundation, which link volunteers (and philanthropists) with effective charities. We do, however, recommend that the focus of these organisations is *small* grassroots charities – those often in most need of support – rather than well established medium to large enterprises.

3.2.2.3 Not just something to do – meaningful engagement of young people

Youth provision in Gang Prevention Zones must be more than just putting on activities: it must be meaningful engagement aimed at equipping young people with life and employment skills, raising aspirations and self-esteem and, where necessary, changing mindsets. As Mark Blake of Positive Futures told the Working Group:

> 'Positive activities are really important, but you have to have something long-term plugged into that to re-educate [young people].'

Marc Edwards made the same point when describing the work of Young Disciples:

> 'My ethos is to engage young people, but to move them from the point which they're at. Change their mindset. Challenge their behaviour, their concept of life, and bring to them opportunities. We have a series of programmes: social inclusion programmes, therapeutic programmes, programmes around getting them back into employment or education. We challenge the whole theory of gangs, gang culture and the concepts structure around it...[including] territorialism'

The provision of positive activities in disadvantaged areas is essential, but it must be about more than simply occupying a young person's time. Youth provision that focuses *solely* on activities will be of limited value in Gang Prevention Zones – indeed a number of formerly gang-involved young people

told the Working Group that they had attended a youth club or been part of a football team in childhood – but youth provision that transforms and develops young people will be invaluable. Local authorities should be prioritising funding for the latter.

> "The streets are exciting... You can only play playstation or pool, or table tennis so much. You've got to keep challenging them to keep them engaged, they've got to learn things."
>
> Anthony, 16, East London

The Working Group recommends that any youth programmes funded by local authorities in Gang Prevention Zones include educational and therapeutic elements and that this is built into the commissioning process. In addition, the effectiveness of the programmes should be verified through independent evaluations. These should be conducted by the independent consultants seconded to the local authorities from the proposed Gang Prevention Unit. The evaluations are not about setting particular targets but about identifying the most effective projects. As proposed above, resources should be deployed according to need, but they should also be deployed according to effectiveness.

3.2.2.4 The right person with the right skills

The role that individuals play in transforming the lives of gang involved young people cannot be underestimated. Recruiting the right staff to youth projects is essential, the wrong person can do more damage than good.

Key qualities that have been identified by practitioners and young people over the course of this inquiry include:

- Having personally experienced the challenges facing the young people attending the project
- Being approachable and friendly whilst maintaining professional boundaries
- Understanding youth culture and being able to relate to young people at their level (it has been suggested that being younger is an advantage for youth workers as young people feel more able to relate to them)
- Demonstrating complete commitment to helping the young people, often above that expected by the role (for example checking in with the young person when not 'on duty' and acting as an advocate for the young person in school or with a statutory agency)

In short, considerable attention should be paid to the quality and relevance of the staff working with young people in Gang Prevention Zones.

Using ex-gang members to engage and transform young people

Using ex-gang members to engage and work with gang-involved young people can be highly successful. The Lambeth X-it Programme has clearly demonstrated the benefits of taking this approach, employing as Youth Peer

Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles, employs ex-gang members. The Working Group spoke with Homeboy graduates as well as founder Father Greg Boyle and his assistant Norma Gillette

Workers young people who have completed the programme themselves. One of the reasons for the programmes considerable success is that it is youth-led, and the employment of former participants makes it more credible in the eyes of gang-involved young people looking for an exit. The personal experience of the Youth Peer Workers ensures a more sensitive understanding of the issues facing the participants and hence they are better placed to meet the young people's emotional and practical needs. For further details on the X-it Programme see John Pitts' 2006 evaluation of the project. Young Disciples (see case study 8) is another example of ex-gang members being used effectively.

Managing and monitoring ex-gang members

However, the use of ex-gang members as project volunteers or staff must be carefully managed. Due diligence must be done to verify that the individual is fully transformed and youth work training must be provided – emphasising the need to set boundaries and communicate concerns to managers or other staff. Training may need to be on-the-job rather than classroom-based. As we have noted, most of the young people involved in gangs had a negative school experience and were either excluded or played truant, they are therefore likely to be wary about returning to a 'school' environment. They should also be fully supported with regular meetings with their managers to discuss *their* progress as well as that of the young people they are working with.

3.2.2.2 A long-term investment

> 'A lot of people say they'll do this, do that, and they don't. We've got too much disappointment in our past.'
>
> Leon, 20, South West London

Gang-involved young people often face multiple disadvantages – emotional, psychological and practical barriers to mainstream engagement and employment – and thus will require long-term support. As witnesses to the inquiry have highlighted, a six or twelve week programme is unlikely to transform the life of a young person who dropped out of school with no qualifications, has witnessed people die, has a criminal record and has never been helped to deal with the anger he feels from never knowing his father.

Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should bear this in mind when commissioning youth provision. To engage those hardest to reach, youth projects are likely to need to work with young people over a sustained period, often intensively, and may need to offer second, third and fourth chances. Any

evaluations of projects working with gang-involved young people should also bear this in mind.

3.2.3 EDUCATION

> 'Education is not just sitting in class and learning books…Careers advice, looking at possible fields, life lessons and stuff – it's a really important thing, really important, for schools to do that. Your life revolves around school for 10 years of your life. It needs to be a positive experience.'
>
> Anthony, 16, EYLA, speaking to the Working Group

Education is the cornerstone of social mobility. Children and young people spend a significant proportion of their time in school and it is here that, especially for those living in dysfunctional family environments, they should be learning the skills for a successful future. Unfortunately, for too many young people in our most disadvantaged communities this is not the case.

Erin Gruwell talks to the Working Group about the Freedom Writers Foundation and her experience teaching in a tough inner city school in Long Beach, California

The Centre for Social Justice's volume on Educational Failure in *Breakthrough Britain* made a number of recommendations for transforming the educational experience of young people trapped in failing schools. The Working Group fully supports these recommendations and emphasises in particular the proposal for Pioneer Schools. Modeled in part on the successful U.S. charter schools, Pioneer Schools would enable parents and third sector organisations to establish innovative alternatives to long-term failing schools (for further information see *Breakthrough Britain*[97]).

3.2.3.1 Engaging young people and raising aspirations

Witnesses speaking to the Working Group noted that current classroom content and teaching techniques often do not engage disadvantaged young people: young people whose parents are likely to have had a negative experience of the education system. Witnesses told the Working Group that expectations of young people in challenging schools are often low or non-existent, there is little praise or positive feedback and *teachers* are crowd controllers rather than teachers. School can, therefore, become a negative experience: disengaged and with low or no (positive) aspirations, young people opt out, either switching off in class or truanting.

In addition, it was repeatedly noted that young people from low income and Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds rarely see themselves reflected in the material taught. It was argued that this compounded their feelings of alienation.

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97 The Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakthrough Britain*, Volume 3

Consideration should therefore be given to how best to reform teaching methods and class content in Gang Prevention Zones.

One model which might be used by inner city schools to transform traditional teaching methods is the *Freedom Writer* techniques developed by Erin Gruwell in a tough school in Long Beach, California. See Case Study 20 below for information on the Freedom Writers.

Freedom Writer Foundation teaching principles include:

- Making class content relate to the lives of the students being taught – for example selecting texts with relevant themes and drawing comparisons with the text and the students' own lives
- Engaging students by utilising their different learning styles and bringing class content to life – for example using music, drama, multi-media and journal writing
- Making the classroom a safe learning environment and breaking down cliques so that all of the students know and work with each other
- Being inclusive and encouraging, regularly providing genuine, positive feedback and showing belief in each student's potential

The Working Group recommends that local authorities consider commissioning the Freedom Writers Foundation to deliver workshops for school staff in their area.

Raising aspirations

Erin Gruwell also used a diverse selection of outside speakers to engage and inspire her students. Many of the young people in Ms. Gruwell's class, like many of the students attending inner city schools in Britain, had not come into contact with professionals such as doctors, journalists, lawyers, financiers, actors and authors. They saw such jobs as unattainable for people like themselves. Through meeting successful professionals, especially those who had come from similar backgrounds to their own, their aspirations were raised and their view of school transformed: the end product of educational achievement became apparent.

The same concept is being used to raise aspirations amongst students in Pimlico Academy, Westminster. The Academy's Raising Aspirations Speaker Programme brings highly successful professionals into the school to talk about their jobs and their route to them, emphasising that it is a young person's ability and commitment rather than their background that will dictate their future (see case study 21 for further details).

As well as demonstrating the range of career possibilities open to students, by using senior level professionals –chief executives, directors, managers – the students feel valued, impressed that someone as busy and successful as a CEO has taken the time to come and speak at their school.

The Working Group recommends that schools in Gang Prevention Zones learn from the Pimlico Academy model and introduce a similar programme in their schools.

Case Study 20: Erin Gruwell and The Freedom Writers

On a trip to Los Angeles, the Working Group heard from Erin Gruwell, the teacher upon whom the *Freedom Writers* film was based.

Ms. Gruwell's first teaching job was an 'unteachable' class in Long Beach (California). The Freedom Writers' Diary[98] records the experiences of the young people Erin taught: childhood sexual and physical abuse, gang membership, racism, family breakdown, death and prison were all common features in their lives.

Maria Reyes, who also met with the Working Group and was a member of Ms. Gruwell's class, said:

> 'I knew I was going to end up dead or behind bars, or pregnant. Because that was my family [experience]. Everyone in my area ended up dead or in prison or pregnant..Ms Gruwell taught me to think critically and the Freedom Writers became [a] surrogate family.'

The class that Ms. Gruwell faced in room 203 on her first day as a teacher had been written off by the education system – she was told that they would not graduate high school. However by uniting the young people in their common experiences and by listening, respecting, inspiring and expecting she raised their aspirations and every one of them graduated, most going on to college.

The Freedom Writers' experience is one, powerful, example of the impact that schools, and in particular inspirational teachers, can have on changing a child's life course.

Case Study 21: 'Raising Aspirations' Speakers Programme, Pimlico Academy, Westminster

Pimlico opened as an Academy in September 2008. It has nearly 1300 pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds: two thirds of Pimlico's pupils come from boroughs other than Westminster, particularly Lambeth and Southwark, where there are significant gang problems. Over half the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and around a third qualify for free school meals. As is the case at so many schools serving deprived communities, many of the pupils do not have contact with non-teacher professionals and their aspirations are often low.

To combat this, the Academy has worked with its sponsor, Future (a charity set up to help young people fulfil their potential), to develop an extensive speaker programme in which individuals from a wide range of careers visit the Academy to talk to pupils. Speakers explain what they do and how they came to do it, taking questions from pupils about the qualifications and skills required and the lessons they have learned along the way. Wherever possible, the speakers come from a similar background to the pupils at Pimlico.

In only its first term, Pimlico Academy has had more than 30 different speakers visit from fields such as law, investment banking, journalism, politics and the media, many of whom are Chief Executives or Managing Directors of their organisations.

Jerry Collins, Principal of Pimlico Academy, commented:

> 'The Raising Aspirations sessions are a very valuable reinforcement to the work staff do in the classrooms to encourage pupils to aim high and work hard, allowing pupils to see the rewards that self-belief and effort can bring in later years to people just like themselves.'

98 Erin Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them* (Broadway Books, 2007)

3.2.3.2 Tackling exclusion and truanting

Official exclusion or voluntary withdrawal from school is one of the key drivers of gang involvement. The Working Group believes that if the above proposals are implemented, pupil engagement and therefore behaviour will be significantly improved and thus exclusions and truanting will be fewer.

However, for those young people who remain on the verge of exclusion or who receive a fixed-term exclusion, the Working Group recommends that schools in Gang Prevention Zones learn from the model employed in Ruffwood School, Merseyside (the school has now merged with other local schools to become Kirkby Sports College): specialist support for pupils facing significant behavioural problems and an on-site learning unit for temporarily excluded young people.

The Calm Room at Kirkby Sports College (formerly Ruffwood School): students go to the therapeutic room to calm down after an incident

The School is situated in a very deprived, gang-impacted area of Merseyside. It is a *particularly* challenging school: despite recent improvements, in 2007 unauthorised absence was almost three times the national average, almost half of the pupils entered for their GCSEs had special educational needs and just 11 per cent of pupils achieved five A*-C (including English and Maths).[99]

To improve the educational outcomes for pupils, the school knew it first had to tackle the behavioural problems of challenging pupils, improve attendance levels and reduce the number of exclusions. The school introduced several initiatives to achieve this. These included:

- ***Restorative justice sessions*** – facilitated by the Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) police officer and supported by pastoral staff. Both the perpetrator and victim have a 'supporter' in attendance, usually a parent or carer
- ***The Alpha Centre*** – a centre for vulnerable pupils who exhibit certain behaviours that could put them at risk of exclusion. Over a half-termly period the pupils spend a number of lessons in the centre focusing on anger management and the development of their social and emotional skills. The pupils are encouraged to feel a sense of ownership for the centre and the environment promotes positive behaviour and mutual respect
- ***The Calm Room*** – a therapeutic room for pupils to go to calm down after an incident. Pastoral staff then work with the pupil, raising the young person's awareness of their actions and their consequences
- ***A Healthy Choices Clinic*** – the centre provides advice and support through a comprehensive service provision which includes substance misuse, smoking cessation and sexual health and houses the school nurse. Many pupils self-refer, although they can be referred by a member of staff

99 BBC News School League Tables, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/education/07/school_tables/secondary_schools/html/340_4006.stm, accessed December 2008

- ***Internal exclusion centre*** – excluded pupils attend the centre for 25 hours a week enabling them to continue with their class work whilst also taking part in a programme which addresses their social and emotional issues
- ***A multi-agency base*** – housing external partners including two family support workers who meet the needs of the school children and their parents or carers

Julia Gallagher, Lead Behaviour Professional at Kirkby Sports College (formerly Ruffwood School), told the Working Group that 'it's about implementing preventative, supportive strategies to prevent issues from escalating' and that the initiatives have had a 'positive impact on the school community'.

3.2.3.3 Outsourcing the provision of alternative education

For young people who have been permanently excluded from their school, the Working Group recommends that alternatives to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) are used.

As highlighted in the Government's White Paper on alternative education provision, just *one per cent* of 15 year olds in PRUs achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*- C (or equivalent) and almost 90 per cent fail to achieve five GCSEs at grades *A*- G*.[100] For the almost nine in ten PRU pupils failing to gain five GCSEs, their future life chances are significantly reduced.

The Working Group therefore welcomes the White Paper's proposal to encourage local authorities and schools to work with voluntary and private sector providers in the delivery of alternative education.[101] The work of third sector organisations such as the London Boxing Academy and the Lighthouse Group – both of which currently deliver alternative education programmes – show that in the right environment, young people with serious behavioural and emotional issues can learn and achieve.

3.2.3.4 Delivery of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons by third sector organisations

PSHE lessons provide an excellent opportunity in school to address the issue of gangs. Whilst the Working Group is sceptical about the value of generic gang or weapon information sessions, we do believe that addressing pupil concerns, encouraging them to think critically about the issues and offering a safe environment to discuss the impact that gangs have on them personally is crucial.

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100 *Back on Track: A strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people*, White Paper (Department for Children, Schools and Families, May 2008), p.4

101 Ibid.

The Working Group therefore recommends that schools in Gang Prevention Zones use voluntary sector agencies to deliver interactive sessions on gangs and violence. The staff of organisations working on the ground with gang-involved young people have a knowledge and credibility that teachers will rarely have. Youth-focused organisations should therefore be commissioned to deliver PSHE lessons for all secondary school year groups with funding provided via the local authority.

3.2.4 'NOTHING STOPS A BULLET LIKE A JOB'[102]

Both academic analysis and anecdotal evidence has invariably highlighted the role of economics, or more directly money, in explaining the existence of gangs. Two young men on the Roehampton estate in South West London talked about selling drugs to 'survive' and young people interviewed in Lewisham, Newham and Liverpool all emphasised the role of money in attracting young people to gang life.

It would perhaps be more accurate to talk about the *amount* of money available through drug dealing and street crime, seemingly through minimal effort. Selling drugs to 'survive' is more of a perception than a reality: Britain's social housing estates are a far cry from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the barrios of Mexico, or even the 'projects' or ghettos of America.[103] Nevertheless, for some young people, particularly those living with a parent suffering from addiction, there are immediate financial needs. In addition, for many seeing their more prosperous peers with the latest phone and trainers, watching artists layered in 'bling' (jewellery) and surrounded by attractive women on MTV Base (a satellite television music channel) and living in a culture of conspicuous consumption, encourages them to want *more* money than their family's limited means allow.

Nevertheless, as noted in Part I, unemployment and underemployment are key drivers of gang culture. The same young people who noted the financial attraction of becoming gang-involved also explained to the Working Group that 'stacking shelves' at the local supermarket was not an attractive alternative to 'shotting' (selling drugs). As well as being perceived, rightly or wrongly, as dull and demeaning, there was a general consensus that working in the local supermarket did not represent a career ladder: the *Shotter* believes that one day he can be the *Face* (see Fig. 1.1) and that he will find much greater financial success and social status through this than through conventional employment.

To tackle gang culture, both in the short- and the long-term, we must provide employment opportunities that offer routes for progression and we must ensure that young people are equipped with the skills and aspirations to take those opportunities. For the long-term this will require significant reform of our education system (see above Part III, Section 3.2.3 for further details).

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102 One of the mission statements of Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles; see Case Study 6 for further information on this project

103 For further discussion of the conditions in these see, Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*

3.2.4.1 Commissioning effective welfare-to-work agencies

In the short-term, Gang Prevention Zones should commission the services of welfare-to-work organisations with a proven track record in getting disadvantaged young people into sustained employment. The Centre for Social Justice's Economic Dependency report in Breakthrough Britain details the components of a successful welfare-to-work agency, which include:[104]

One of Homeboy Industries' mission statements is 'Nothing Stops a Bullet like a Job'

- Independence from statutory organisations, in particular benefits agencies
- Being situated in the heart of the community and undertaking outreach work to reach clients unlikely to access mainstream services
- Undertaking a detailed analysis of a client's barriers to work – these may include emotional and psychological barriers as well as a lack of soft skills, training and qualifications
- Providing personalised action plans for each client – devised by a personal case worker in conjunction with the client
- Provision of mentoring where appropriate
- Provision of training linked directly to employment with an emphasis on 'on the job' training where possible
- Continuing support once a client is in work, for as long as is necessary

3.2.4.2 Local authority and primary care trust provision of work experience

Many of the young people involved in gangs have few, if any, qualifications – many of them will not even have completed compulsory education. They are also unlikely to have any experience of legitimate paid employment. Work experience opportunities are therefore crucial.

The Working Group recognises that, at least in the initial stages of a gang prevention programme, private sector businesses may be unwilling to offer work experience placements to, (high risk) ex-gang members, though this should be explored. However, local authorities and local primary care trusts should offer placements. Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should therefore give consideration to establishing a work experience programme for gang-involved and at risk young people. These institutions should also look to employ a proportion of those young people.

3.2.4.3 Making funds available for entrepreneurial young people

A number of witnesses have stressed to the Working Group that a significant proportion of gang-involved young people have entrepreneurial and business talent which, channeled in a positive way, could lead to a successful business.

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104 For detailed recommendations on getting people into work see, The Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakthrough Britain*

The Working Group recommends that the Gang Prevention Unit looks into the possibility of Gang Prevention Zones making funds available for young people to start up their own enterprises, with particular focus on those young people exiting gang life. Any model should combine the giving of grants with the provision of volunteer mentors, who should be successful entrepreneurs and business people in their own right. As with any mentor there should be a formal process of recruitment, and training and support should be available for mentors as and when it is needed.

The Gang Prevention Unit should look at organisations already operating similar initiatives, for example The Prince's Trust and The Bright Ideas Trust. Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones could partner with organisations that already have effective models to deliver such a programme, or commission a third sector organisation to deliver it. The Working Group recommends that such a programme is run by a third, rather than public sector organisation due to the risk involved in giving grants to young people with limited work experience. Such a programme should be piloted first to ascertain what works most effectively.

This model not only has the potential to move ex-gang members and those at risk of gang-involvement into gainful employment that *interests them*, but with the right support is more likely to keep them there as the ownership, responsibility, creative licence and business development lies with the young people themselves. Such a model also has the potential to *genuinely* regenerate the neighbourhood from the bottom-up, re-stimulating the local economy.

3.2.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP

> 'A mobilized [sic] community is the most promising way to deal with the gang problem…Community mobilization [sic] is a process of consciousness raising that addresses the concerns and long-term interests of those most affected by the youth gang problem…the will and commitment of the community to act.'[105]

As we have identified, community alienation has had a profound impact on the development of gang culture in Britain. It has acted as a key driver of gang membership both directly as the result of marginalised young people and indirectly through the decline in collective efficiency and community mobilisation.

For any gang prevention strategy to be sustainable it must be embedded in, and owned by, the community and this is likely to require considerable community capacity building.

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105 Irving Spergel et al., *Gang Suppression and Intervention: Community Models*, Research Summary (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, October 1994), pp.4-5

3.2.5.1 Community capacity building

> 'Community building's central theme is to obliterate feelings of dependency and to replace them with attitudes of self-reliance, self-confidence, and responsibility.'[106]

The absence of collective efficiency – social cohesion and a willingness to act to uphold the law – is a key risk factor for youth offending and, by extension, gang involvement. Research by Sampson et al, based on a 1995 survey of residents in different Chicago neighbourhoods, found that:

> 'Associations of concentrated disadvantage and residential instability with violence are largely mediated by collective efficacy.'[107]

The data showed that, after controlling for other variables associated with violence, collective efficacy remained negatively related to violence, whilst the strength of the correlation with other factors was significantly reduced.[108]

This links to Professor David Kennedy's 'moral voice' argument which states that informal social control through the articulation of a unified community stand against 'deviance' is a crucial component for tackling gangs. As Kennedy notes, 'Nobody can set community standards from the outside'.[109] Without the co-operation and support of the community, enforcement agencies can have only limited and short-lived success.

> "Communities need to feel empowered to engage and supported in doing so."
>
> Mike Taylor, Head of Specialist Crime Prevention and Partnership, Metropolitan Police Service

This principle was highlighted in the BGP and has subsequently been developed further by Kennedy. One of the best examples of its use is in the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV). In this model, based on the BGP and *Ceasefire*, the 'moral voice' of the community was harnessed through the establishment of a Community Strategy Team. As defined in the Year 1 Report on the initiative, the aim of the Community Strategy Team was 'to form a partnership to work with affected communities to articulate norms and expectations.' Comprising community and religious leaders, parents of murdered children and ex-offenders, the group delivered a collective message of non-violence which rejected the 'norms and narratives of the street'.[110]

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106 G. Thomas Kingsley, Joseph B. McNeely, and James O. Gibson, *Community Building Coming of Age* (The Development Training Institute, Inc.; The Urban Institute, April 1997), p.3

107 R. J. Sampson, S. W. Raudenbush, and F. Earls, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science* 277, no. 5328 (1997): p.918

108 The factors controlled for included residential instability, social composition, immigrant concentration and concentrated disadvantage; Ibid., p.918

109 Kennedy, "How to stop young men shooting each other: youth violence and gang interventions that work.", Slide 17

110 Engel et al., *Implementation of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): Year 1 Report*, p.4

In Baltimore the actions of a community group led to a 52 per cent decline in violent crime and an 80 per cent decline in arrests for drugs in their neighbourhood. They denied dealers the space to deal drugs, set up additional lighting and boarded up disused spaces, organised direct action which communicated the community's intolerance of drugs, partnered with a drug treatment programme and established projects for young people. To achieve their goal of disrupting the drugs trade, the group collaborated with police and other agencies who supported and facilitated their work.[111]

The Working Group recommends that a community strategy group is established in Gang Prevention Zones. Details of the community body should be resolved at a local level, but the working recommends *combining this role with that of the Independent Advisory Group (IAG)* discussed in Part III, Section 1.3.3.2. It should comprise community leaders, including faith leaders, as well as notable community figures with the potential to influence young people. This could include ex-gang members and relatives of gang members in prison or who have been killed.

The Group should:

- Work with local charities, faith groups and community organisations to challenge fear and apathy, articulate expected behaviour, express belief in the potential of all young people and provide the 'moral voice'
- Organise community action projects such as community clean-ups and demonstrations/marches against gang activity
- Work closely and visibly with the police and other agencies, thereby presenting a unified front and encouraging trust in those agencies
- Take a proactive role in delivering the strategy message ('we will help you if you will let us, but we will stop you if you make us'[112]) to gang members and facilitate meetings between gang members and support agencies

3.2.5.2 Empowering and supporting community action

In order to execute their role effectively, the community group should have regular access to senior elected officials, including the area's local Member of Parliament, Leader of the Council and relevant ward councilor. The Group should act as a bridge between the community and local politicians, who often have little knowledge of the day-to-day realities of life in the most deprived communities. As John Pitts noted in his submission to the Mayor of London's Seminar on Serious Youth Violence:

> 'Many residents [in gang-impacted neighbourhoods] feel blamed for the problems of which they are in fact victims, feeling that their voices are unheard in the places where key decisions about their plight are made.'[113]

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111 Kingsley, McNeely, and Gibson, *Community Building Coming of Age*, p.4

112 Engel et al., *Implementation of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): Year 1 Report*, p.6

113 Pitts, *The Mayor's Academic Seminar on Serious Youth Violence: the Prerequisites and Components of Effective Violence Re-education Programmes*

Politicians need to be seen working side-by-side with the communities they represent and should be making decisions based on the actual needs – rather than what they perceive to be the needs – of the community. The community group should facilitate this process.

Combining the roles of the community group and the IAG ensures that the community team is represented at the most senior level, on the multi-agency Strategic Group, and can therefore input into key strategy decisions, highlighting what is and what is not working at a grassroots level.

3.3 Conclusion and summary of policy recommendations

To reverse gang culture in Britain, any strategy must include long-term preventative elements: it must tackle the *drivers* of gang culture, not just the symptoms.

Part I identified a number of key drivers including:

- Family breakdown and dysfunction
- A lack of positive role models
- Educational failure
- Mental and emotional health problems
- An absence of aspirations
- Unemployment and underemployment
- Discrimination and stereotyping
- Poverty

A sustainable solution to gangs relies on preventing young people from getting involved in the first place and this requires considerable investment in the next generation.

The policy recommendations in this section are designed to provide the environment, opportunities and hope that will make gang membership unnecessary.

Policy recommendations:

Early Intervention

1. The Working Group fully supports the recommendations made by The Centre for Social Justice's Early Years Commission and Family Breakdown Working Group and the recommendations contained in the Graham Allen MP and Iain Duncan Smith MP report *Early Intervention*. These include:
    a. The establishment of Family Hubs in the heart of disadvantaged communities
    b. The provision of non-stigmatising relationship and parenting education and support provided by effective third sector organisations

   c. An enhanced role for Health Visitors in the delivery of both targeted and universal support for families
   d. Greater access to bespoke mental health services for children and adolescents
2. Local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should look at commissioning third sector *youth* organisations which also deliver parenting support
3. Workshops on recognising the signs of potential gang involvement should be run for professionals and parents in Gang Prevention Zones. These should also cover what to do if there is a suspicion that a young person is gang-involved
4. As part of their multi-agency strategy local authorities with Gang Prevention Zones should commission third sector early intervention projects. Local authorities should ensure that amongst these projects are organisations specialising in working with disenfranchised young *males*
5. Local authorities should resource third sector mentoring programmes in Gang Prevention Zones. Special attention should be paid to the type of mentoring project resourced

Provision and Diversion

1. Local authorities should audit current youth provision in Gang Prevention Zones – reviewing appropriateness and hours of service in particular – and prioritise funding for organisations which work to *transform* the mindsets of young people
2. The delivery of youth programmes should, in the main, be outsourced to third sector organisations with appropriate funding and support
3. Gang Prevention Zones should pay particular attention the quality of staff in youth projects – encouraging organisations which use ex-gang members – and prioritise projects working with young people on a long-term basis

Education

1. The Working Group fully supports the recommendations made by The Centre for Social Justice's Educational Failure Working Group and make particular note of the proposal of Pioneer Schools
2. Local authorities and schools should consider how best to reform class content and teaching methods in order to engage and therefore raise the educational achievement of pupils in Gang Prevention Zones. The Working Group recommends that schools learn from the *Freedom Writer* model and local authorities consider commissioning the *Freedom Writers Foundation* to deliver workshops for school staff in Gang Prevention Zones
3. Schools in Gang Prevention Zones should look at how they can raise aspirations amongst their pupils and encourage successful professionals to deliver presentations and workshops in the schools

4. Local authorities and schools in Gang Prevention Zones should look at ways of tackling disruptive pupil behaviour, truanting and exclusion. This should include the provision of on-site therapeutic programmes and alternative education units and consideration should be given to implementing restorative justice sessions
5. Schools in Gang Prevention Zones should use Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons to tackle the issue of gangs and weapons. These sessions should be outsourced to third sector organisations whose staff have direct experience of dealing with gang-involved young people

Employment

1. Local authorities should commission effective welfare-to-work agencies to help young people in Gang Prevention Zones find and retain legitimate employment
2. Local authorities and Primary Care Trusts with Gang Prevention Zones should consider establishing a work experience programme for gang-involved and at risk young people
3. Gang Prevention Zones should look at making funds available for gang-involved and at risk young people with entrepreneurial talent. Local authorities should look to partner with organisations already delivering similar initiatives or commission an effective third sector youth organisation to pilot a scheme. As well as grants any initiative should provide mentoring from successful entrepreneurs and businessmen

Community mobilisation

1. A community group should be set up in Gang Prevention Zones to provide the 'moral voice' and mobilise the community to tackle gang culture. They should work closely with statutory and non-statutory agencies as well as other community and faith groups. The Working Group recommends that the role of community group is combined with the Independent Advisory Group and is therefore represented at the multi-agency Strategy team meetings
2. Politicians and policy-makers should engage with communities in Gang Prevention Zones in order to understand the problem and encourage community action. Engagement should be facilitated by the community group/Independent Advisory Group so as to provide credibility and engagement should be meaningful and long-term.

APPENDIX ONE
List of Figures

Figure	Title
1.1	Schematic of gang type and activities
1.2	The Home Office's Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP), geographical analysis of gang membership
1.3	Structure of larger Waltham Forest gangs by type of membership, Autumn 2006
1.4	Use of weapons amongst gang and non-gang members aged 17 and above
1.5	Percentage of school children who say they have carried a knife in the last 12 months, 2002-2005
1.6	Offending and drug use by gang (delinquent youth group) membership, 10-19 year olds
1.7	Hospital A&E admissions episodes where external cause is 'assault by a sharp object', 1997-98 to 2006-07
1.8	Examples of Gangsta Rap lyrics from the 1980s to present day
3.1	Summary of the BGP and Ceasefire process
3.2	Matrix Gun Crime Team, Operation Noble
3.3	Understanding Violence, an ecological model
3.4	Multi-pronged anti-gang strategy schematic

APPENDIX TWO

List of Case Studies

Case Study	Title
Case Study 1	Leon
Case Study 2	Warren
Case Study 3	Leadership in Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa
Case Study 4	Gang Reduction and Youth Development Zones (GRYDZ), Los Angeles
Case Study 5	Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)
Case Study 6	The Self-Referral Session (SRS), Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV), Scotland
Case Study 7	Homebody Industries, Los Angeles
Case Study 8	Young Disciples, Birmingham
Case Study 9	King's College Hospital Emergency Department and Redthread
Case Study 10	West Midlands Mediation and Transformation Service (WMMTS)
Case Study 11	Second Wave and TSG4, London
Case Study 12	Team Programme, Prince's Trust
Case Study 13	Hackney Borough Police and Chance UK
Case Study 14	Islington Borough Police and XLP
Case Study 15	Safer Schools Partnership, Merseyside Police and Ruffwood School (Knowsley)
Case Study 16	VPC success
Case Study 17	Eastside Young Leaders Academy (EYLA)
Case Study 18	The Male Development Service, BoyztoMEN
Case Study 19	Chance UK
Case Study 20	Erin Gruwell and The Freedom Writers
Case Study 21	'Raising Aspirations' Speakers Programme, Pimlico Academy, Westminster

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"It is imperative that as a society we act now to stem the tide of gang culture and violence. Young people should not be dying on the streets of our great cities. This report and the recommendations contained within it offer hope to those communities devastated by gang violence. The policies cannot be implemented soon enough. Now is the time to act."

Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, Preface to *Dying to Belong*

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