

# Dying to Belong

*An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Executive Summary of the Centre for Social Justice Report, *Dying to Belong: An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain*. For further information or to download the full report please visit [www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)

### 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.

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.



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

### 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<sup>1</sup>
- Police in London and Strathclyde have each identified 171 and 170 gangs respectively<sup>2</sup>

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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

- 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<sup>3</sup>
- In both Manchester and Liverpool around 60% of shootings are gang-related<sup>4</sup>
- At least half of the 27 murders of young people perpetrated by young people in London in 2007 were gang-related<sup>5</sup>
- 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<sup>6</sup>
- The percentage of school children reporting having carried a knife increased by more than 50% between 2002 and 2005<sup>7</sup>

## Confused and unreliable – a lack of knowledge and understanding

Although a number of localised studies have been conducted by police forces and academics,<sup>8</sup> 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,<sup>9</sup> 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 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:

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

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

*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<sup>10</sup>
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<sup>11</sup>
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



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

#### 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 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<sup>12</sup>

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,<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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

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)

Programmes 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.<sup>16</sup> MPS research found gang members were typically aged between 12 and 25 and this appears similar in Manchester.<sup>17</sup> 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:<sup>18</sup> the rise of the young soldiers.



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

#### *Gender (Part I, Section 3.2)*

Gang membership is largely a male preserve: 98 per cent of gang members identified by TGAP were male.<sup>19</sup> 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.

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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

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>.

***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.<sup>20</sup> 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.

**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.<sup>21</sup> They are also prolific in their offending. Gang members identified by TGAP averaged 11 convictions<sup>22</sup> and Bullock and Tilley's research found that South Manchester gang members averaged 12 arrests.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> Gang membership was also found to increase offending behaviour in a number of U.S. studies.<sup>26</sup>



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

***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

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

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

foot soldier's is around £26,000.<sup>27</sup> It is well documented that a number of gangs controlled the drugs market in Manchester.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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 paranoid culture of gangs.

### ***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:

- *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<sup>30</sup>
- *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<sup>31</sup>

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.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

## **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

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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

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

poverty and 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.<sup>34</sup> 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



Leon and Warren talked to the Working Group about growing up on a gang-impacted South West London estate.

### ***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.<sup>35</sup> 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'.<sup>36</sup>

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.

## **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.

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)

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.<sup>37</sup> 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.

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37 A nominal is an individual who has been identified as involved in, or affiliating with someone who is involved in, firearms and has been placed on a police list to receive targeted, sustained attention

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



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

##### ***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

#### 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-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

##### **Youth Provision and Diversion**

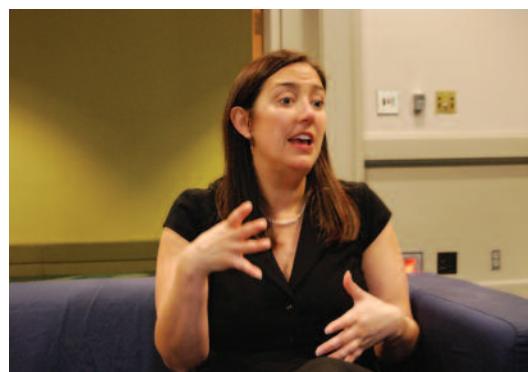
1. Local authorities should audit current youth provision in Gang Prevention Zones – reviewing appropriateness and hours of service in particular – and prioritise funding for organisations which work to *transform* the mindsets of young people
2. The delivery of youth programmes should, in the main, 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

##### **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



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

### ***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.

## Members of the Gangs Working Group

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## 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 are affected. 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 champions of the welfare society.

We are not a typical Westminster 'think-tank'. In addition to policy development, we foster 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 individuals, communities and voluntary groups to help themselves.

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

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