

Panel discussion knife crime

1. **The London Knife Crime Strategy, presented by Sophie Linden, London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.**

Sophie Linden, London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, said that hearing the views of the community has an important role in policy development.

She said that the work that the Mayor of London is doing to on knife crime and violence reduction was a response to increases in London, and this was part of a national trend.

The London Knife Crime Strategy is focused on enforce and prevention. Police will use their powers, but this is only one part of the solution. She said we need to get ahead of this and address the causes so we are not just dealing with the problems. In order to do the strategy is linking with schools and integrating resilience in safeguarding with children as part of the anti-knife crime work.

The young people involved have often have had some very traumatic past experiences and incidences of knife crime has a traumatic effect on young people and the community.

An audience member interjected and raised concerns about cuts to funding and the impact, particularly on young people in need.

Sophie acknowledged the wider cuts to services as a result of central government funding decisions, however she said that they are funding services; one of which is bringing youth workers to work with young people who are victims in trauma centers and other places. Victims often become perpetrators so this is about responding to trauma and ending cycles.

She drew attention to the social media campaign: "London needs you alive" which builds on research with young people, and feedback that young people do not see enough positive images.

She finished by emphasizing that only a small proportion of young people are doing this; many more are reaching their potential and making better choices and she said that we can learn from them. She ended by saying that we need to help young people access the means to fulfil their promise and this can be done by ensuring access to apprenticeships, education, training and other mean to reach their potential.

2. **Southwark' Knife Crime and Knife Carrying action plan – with Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Leisure**

Councillor Barrie Hargrove started by explaining that the council initiated a multi-agency knife crime plan as a result of a serious case review into child U who died of a knife wound. This case highlighted communication breakdowns between agencies. He explained that the council is building a plan with partners and this includes work with Southwark Youth Council. This is a long term plan that will take time to reap results.

He said that council budget restrictions meant that cuts have had to be made to youth services; these have been to staffing levels rather than delivery. Quality is as important; we want our youth services to be high quality and enable young people to progress.

Recent results are somewhat encouraging: Southwark has moved from being one of the boroughs with the highest levels of knife crime to being sixth.

3. Southwark Youth Council representatives, Hannah Olomola and Tobi Ayeni will speak about briefly about knife crime, voted a top concern by Southwark young people, and join the panel discussion.

Hannah and Tobi jointly presented and spoke about their role representing schools and localities and their work engaging other pupils and young people in issues such as knife crime.

Tobi said there is danger of escalation with threats and bigger weapons being invoked; this is a not a winnable scenario. It's important to work with victims - perpetration is often retaliation which is often driven by fear.

If young people were given option of £10,000 or ending committing knife crime then people would make a difference choice.

Diversion is important. Young people need to be encouraged and enabled to pursue different options other than just education.

4. Southwark Borough Commander Simon Messinger.

Borough Commander Simon Messinger said that partnership work to tackle knife crime is very important; the police will use their powers, such as stop and search, but on its own enforcement will not be able to end or significantly reduce knife crime.

Community intelligence is very important in tackling knife crime; the older generation needs to listen to young people to understand what is happening and how to tackle knife crime effectively.

Presently knife crime rates are increasing at 39% London wide, whereas in Southwark the rate of increase has dropped to 3%.

5. Quince Garcia will contribute to the panel discussion on breaking the offending and reoffending cycle.

Quince explained that he changed his life around through writing and film making. The last time he was in prison he resolved to become not just a dad but also a good father. On leaving prison he attended University.

His writing revealed to him the underlying mental health issues and enabled him to examine the changes to attitude and temperament required.

He now runs programmes to enable other young people at risk of offending to realize their talents.

6. Luton Sinfield , Community Safety officer, will contribute to the panel discussion on Southwark' Knife Crime and Knife Carrying action plan

Luton said that he held an operational role on developing the knife crime action plan.

The chair invited questions and discussion.

The first questioner said that Scotland treat knife crime and violence as a Public Health issue - rather than a crime issue. She said this is an evidence based programmed that London ought to adopt; it has had great success.

Sophie Lindon responded that the Mayor's office have been working with Scotland on their Public Health approach; people from the GLA have met and spoken in depth with colleagues in Scotland. Scotland does focus on the enforcement side a lot, as well as other measures.

An audience member introduced herself as a pediatric doctor. She said that young people who have experienced 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACEs) are significantly more at risk of violence; both as victims and perpetrators. She said that many of the children she comes across have had many adverse experiences. She raised concerns with the level of therapeutic and social support: Early Help is good but it stops after two years and then intervention may only happen if there is a significant behavioral problem - the intervention at this stage can then be exclusion from school. She said it is very important that we have joined up approach, for example with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

A police officer present assured the doctor that there is a move towards this kind of approach. There is close work with safeguarding. She agreed that the evidence is that the young people involved in knife crime will have had adverse experiences.

An audience member commented that the council and policy leaders frame the society: 'you have the power'. He said that people who hold knives do not have much power – they are slotting into a pre-existing framework. The government has the data on policy initiatives that work. He said he had looked at the data and told the audience that each murder costs

millions pounds. He said that cuts to services, such as youth work, have an impact later on and are not cost effective.

A young person commented that young people listen to, and are more receptive, to other young people so it is important that we are used as conduits.

A council officer explained that 'peer navigators' are been developed - through Family Early Help. One of the issues is getting these young people linked in to help where and when they are needed, and for that the council and wider partnership need community relationships and support.

A primary school teacher commented that preventive work with primary schools is need and her school is open.

A youth worker introduced himself and said that he conducts peer safeguarding Serious Case Reviews nationally, which look at child deaths. He questioned the legitimacy of the comparison with the rest of the nation for rates of knife crime, remarking that the London knife crime situation is much more acute. He said that we have groups of young people in London who have decided they will not be successful. They are adopting other approaches to raising revenue that unfortunately involve serious violence. He added that the messages from middle and senior officers are very positive and progressive towards policing the community. However on the ground there is something of a different approach and a disconnect.

A young person commented that he grew up locally with a single mum who worked full time but received a relatively low income. He said his mind was always on 'what's the next money making scheme' – so he could have some money and enable his mum to go out and enjoy herself occasionally.

A father who had lost his son to knife crime spoke about dedicating his life to working in communities to combat this; in football clubs, as a pastor, etc. Currently he is now working with the local hate partnership linking together people and making connections in order to hold conversations on the reasons for youth violence and to find solutions.

A young person from a church spoke about working with young people and emphasized that their work was about building relationships and fostering good values: care; humility, etc.

The Southwark Youth Council representatives, Tobi and Hannah, affirmed the values of the church and the importance of a mind set that drives poor or good choices.

Quince commented that faith and relationships are often cited as routes out of offending, but what about the relationship to yourself? That is the primary building block of relationships with god and each other. He said that addressing his mental health was crucial to breaking his offending cycle.

Cllr Hargrove commented that he agreed with the comment on the importance of values and in particular for people in power to have the humility to listen.