

How Will We End Knife Crime? Community Workshop for Southwark Council Scrutiny event 21st March 2018

We cannot stress enough how grateful we are to the people who generously shared their heart-felt personal experiences about how they have been affected by knife crime and also took time to listen carefully to the experiences of others. This provided a strong foundation from which to make recommendations.

The points that we have compiled are mostly from contributions from participants in our workshop, but also include a point made in the opening session by someone in our workshop that we didn't have the opportunity to discuss*:

- There was general agreement that one-off events are of great value, but must be part of a continuous coordinated approach to tackling knife crime
- The point was made about the need for continuous examination of how statutory and delivery organisations change their structures and behaviours, in addition to focusing on behaviour changes of the people most affected by knife-crime*
- There is need for greater recognition that every story is unique and no two people's reasons for becoming involved in criminal activity will be exactly the same
- Access to services and opportunities is often blocked by jargon, complicated and funder-friendly language rather than language that young people would actually use in real life
- There is a need for coordinated information about all the positive initiatives, resources and schemes that young people can get involved in. In our workshop there was a lot of information shared about existing schemes and opportunities that they didn't know about. The point was also made that the Scrutiny event had not been widely publicised enough

The following recommendations have been compiled from comments and discussions in the workshop. The group did not prioritise recommendations and they are not listed in order of priority.

1. The Council continues to support and invests in the continuation of these conversations and events which a) bring people with shared experience together and b) bring people of different age groups and experiences together. There was also a strong feeling that these meetings are promoted throughout the whole community recognising and supporting the power of the community to help to heal and also to come out and take action.

2. There needs to be a coordinated approach to offering a variety of meaningful roles to young people as experts in helping to solve problems

and find solutions: as volunteers and paid consultants, mentors, advisers, youth panel members and that these should be coordinated

Linked to this is a need for the Council and other agencies to continue to ask young people for their ideas, experience and expertise and that they have a variety of ways of continuing to check in with young people about the shaping and development of those ideas. This includes seeing the original idea from its beginning to its implementation - how it is named, how it is publicised. For example, one younger participant suggested that immediately following an attack i.e. when the young person is still at the hospital that they have access to another young person that:

- they may know
- has been trained to listen
- that has understanding of the situation and the issues
- may have been through the same experience

3. There is a need for the Council and other agencies to support the community to continue to focus on innovative ways to help young people feel safe. For example:

- a number they can call/'speak' to someone through text or the offer of safe places
- a programme to look at "snitching" or "ratting" so that people can make supported and safe choices about when they can genuinely report something they see that they are worried about that is happening in their community and sharing information without fear of being a "snitch" or a "rat" or a "grass"

4. There is a need for a service for those who are trying to leave a criminal lifestyle, including those who have come out of prison, to get both immediate emotional support and practical support and advice, such as writing CVs, access to benefits.

5. There is a need for the Council and other agencies to prioritise early interventions and recognise how a gradual involvement in a negative cycle can develop. This includes interventions in schools and in the community as early as year 4 that focus on building children's sense of identity; confidence building; feeling effective; building self esteem and empowering them to make right decisions; recognising and fostering children's individual talents

6. There is a need for staffed services and support to be offered beyond 9-5 on weekdays. This should be available in the evening, at night and during the weekend, as most of the situations in which young people are most vulnerable and when crime happens, are outside regular working hours.

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