



Knife Crime Review

Education and children's services
scrutiny sub-committee 2017/18

Draft summary report

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Foreword: Councillor Jasmine Ali

The Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee asked children and young people in Southwark what they would like us to scrutinise. They told us they were deeply troubled by the high instances of knife crime in London.

Knife crime is a very sad and grave issue and something that I know is an urgent concern to our communities in Southwark and across London.

It is a phenomenon that is growing, that drags young people into a cycle of tragedy that is heart-breaking for everyone directly involved.

Last year in Southwark alone we witnessed an 11% increase in Violence Against the Person offences. For the period June to May 2018 Southwark saw a 0.35% decrease in knife crime offences compared to the same period the previous year. Overall the Metropolitan Police reported an increase of 16.7% during this period. Yet even with this decrease, Southwark remains one of the boroughs with the highest incidence in knife crime in the capital.

Both the Council and Southwark's diverse communities are rallying together to address the problem of knife crime and the wider issue of youth violence. In the course of this review an event at All Saints Church, Peckham, was held to combat knife crime, which has influenced the report. We are grateful to Community TV Trust, community organisations and Cavendish School pupils who created the short films showcased at the event, referred to in the review.

The Education and Children's Scrutiny sub-committee held a one-day scrutiny event to look into this terrible problem. We packed out one of the pods in the Peckham Library with standing room only. A diverse section of the community attended the sessions which heard evidence from the deputy mayor dealing with Knife Crime at the GLA, the Southwark Cabinet member for Community Safety, people from the Youth Council, young people with experience of gangs and officers from the council dealing with related issues of youth violence, safeguarding and sexual exploitation.

I would like to thank Julie Timbrell our Scrutiny manager, all of the speakers and every one of the participants from the local community who actively joined in on this deep dive into knife crime. For everyone that took part, the 'scrutiny in a day' was not just about holding local politicians and officers to account but about developing policy initiatives ourselves, working together to strengthen our community's response.

The hurt we all feel brought our communities together and the results are documented in the attached paper which, if implemented, will help us forge safer, stronger communities in the future.

- We urgently want to identify real causes
- We urgently want to look for those reactions that we know can help reduce the threat and the incidence of knife crime.
- And we urgently want to find ways to mend the hurt to our communities.



Recommendations

1 The council continues to support and invest 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.

2 There needs to be a plan so young people can help solve problems and find solutions: as volunteers and paid consultants, mentors, advisers, youth panel members

It is recommended that Southwark's Safeguarding Board facilitate a forum for young people active in this area to come together and make links to the Safeguarding Board's role in delivering the Knife Crime and Action Plan (KCAP). The forum ought to include the diversity of young people concerned: Change Makers, Southwark Youth Council, Speaker Box, Peer Navigators, young people active in voluntary and church groups etc.

3 There is a need for the Council and other agencies to support the community to continue to focus on 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 way for people to make supported and safe choices about when they can genuinely report something they see that they are worried in their community and share information without fear of being a "snitch" or a "rat" or a "grass"

A consultation exercise ought to be held with young people that looks at existing arrangements and community provision (e.g. Fearless, Safe haven, HUNCH, Out of Hours social care and youth provision) . This ought to lead to a communication strategy to ensure young people are clear how to report concerns and get help.

4 There is a need for a better 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 help 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.

A list of all services available to young people, depending on need, ought to be put online so these are coordinated, accessible and visible.

7 Develop a plan for enabling skilled facilitation of workshops on knife crime and related issues (violence reduction, criminal exploitation, and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), sex and relationship education) and promoting healthy relationships to take place with children, young people, parents, family members and the wider community.

Teachers and youth and church leaders at the event said they want to work with their children, young people, parents, grandparents etc. about knife crime and related issues, such as CSE. They would welcome expert help and support to do this well.

The workshop discussions ought to be honest, informed, age appropriate and focused on outcomes; such as enabling parents/ carers and family members to create to right kind of relationships with young people, provide guidance on tricky issues such as social media, and help them address concerns and seek support if needed

Peer support is recognised as effective and ought to be part of this: young people assisting young people and parent/ carers assisting each other.

8 Promote healthy relationships by adopting ‘being kind to each other ‘as a Council Fairer Future promise. The underlying challenge is that knife crime and violence are symptoms of unhealthy relationships. Borough wide work is needed to promote healthy relationships: being kind to each other, tackling bullying in school and the workplace, resolving conflict constructively, communicating effectively and promoting values such as kindness and empathy.

9 Take a Public Health approach to knife and violent crime learning from Scotland and considering how this could be adopted in Southwark.

10 When the council update the Domestic Abuse strategy they ought to keep in mind how early experience of violence and domestic abuse can play out later in unhealthy relationships and peer violence.

11 Funding for Safer London to come back. The higher risk funding was cut and there was plea for this to be reinstated.

12 Focus services that enable young people to make the most of their talents in a difficult economic climate on those most at risk; these needs to be broader than just conventional career routes.

Some disadvantaged young people do not see legitimate routes out of poverty, and consistently ask for a range of support and options to develop their potential. They want imaginative work experience opportunities (music, business, design, social care, politics etc.), mentoring, and quality apprentices.

13 Protecting children from adverse experiences, addressing Mental Health needs, providing Victim Support and recognising the role of trauma, all have an important role in tackling knife crime.

Young people who have experienced trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) are much more at risk of being involved either as victims or perpetrators of knife crime. These ought to be prevented as much as possible. Information sharing agreement must be in place so that children at risk are identified early and get the additional support they need.

There are other protective factors for young people; children who have at least one stable and positive relationship with a close adult appears to protect them from the worst affects of ACEs. Agencies need to be aware of this importance and facilitate this through Family Early Help and the Trusted Adult programme.

14 There are many parts of the council and agencies leading on knife crime; one lead person would help coordinate the work and provide additional accountability.

