

Southwark Safer Schools Partnership Review

Report of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

September 2009



Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Facts and Figures**
- 3. What is a Safer Schools Partnership**
- 4. What is the Southwark Safer Schools Partnership**
- 5. The Safer Schools Partnerships Mainstreaming Document**
- 6. Purpose of the Review and Main Findings**
- 7. What Southwark SSP means in practice & how well does the Southwark SSP function**
- 8. Conclusion and recommendations**
- 9. Appendices**
 - A. Meeting with Head teachers**
 - B. Evidence taken at committee – Young People**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of its annual work programme the sub-committee wanted to review of the work and effectiveness of the Southwark Safer Schools Partnership and the potential for the expansion of its role, particularly in regard to tackling gun- and knife-related crime and the fear of such crime amongst young people.
- 1.2 Throughout our investigations we found that :
 - The youth service offers support, guidance and mentoring to young people in a range of settings;
 - Southwark has developed a youth forum and youth provider networks to ensure the voices of young people are heard and contribute to service developments across youth and regeneration services; and
 - The Safer Southwark Partnership and Young Southwark have worked together closely through a sub group on youth crime which coordinates a range of services aimed at preventing young people at risk of involvement in crime.

2.0 Facts and Figures

- 2.1 At the time of writing the data collated for the 2008 Pupil Voice Survey was being analysed for publication. As this was not available, we therefore used data existing from the 2007 survey. The Pupil Voice Survey was established in 2005 and has provided schools with an easy and effective way of including the views of pupils in their strategic planning framework. The outcomes of the survey also provide head teachers and chairs of governors information on their pupils' feelings about their personal development; a discussion framework for staff and school councils; and help to shape changes in curriculum delivery in areas such as Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). The Children's Services Department and the council as a whole also use Pupil Voice data to inform policy and service delivery and it is a key part of the strategy for consultation with children and young people in Southwark.
- 2.2 The Survey offers an indication of a range of issues concerning pupils attending primary and secondary schools in the borough, one of these issues being pupils' perception of crime and their fear of crime in and out of school. The results of the 2007 survey highlighted that the proportion of pupils feeling safe at school and on their journey to and from school had dropped two and one percentage points respectively, whereas the proportion feeling safe at home rose by two points. Primary pupils more often report feeling safe on their journey to and from school than at school itself. It is likely this is partly due to parents walking with children to and from school coupled with an increased awareness of bullying through work carried out in schools.
- 2.3 There are similar trends in fear of crime and being the victim of crime. This may reflect work on raising awareness as well as extensive media coverage of youth crime. Fear of crime remains at 2006 levels and lower than the original 2005 baseline. Although there has been rise in the proportion of pupils reporting they have been a victim of crime, a much greater number reported crime. The percentage of pupils reporting being a victim of crime has risen by four points, compared to a nine point rise in the proportion of pupils who reported the crime. This may demonstrate a greater trust in the authorities and at least a greater readiness to come forward.

- 2.4 The proportion of pupils who reported being bullied rose to just below the 2005 baseline by three points but the proportion who said there was an adult they could talk to when they felt worried also rose by three points. There was great variation between schools in the proportion of children reporting they had been bullied often or very often, ranging from 4% to 50%. This can be dependent on work around bullying carried out by teachers and local authority officers within the school. The changes over time and the variation between schools highlight the importance of the continuing work around positive behaviour and the introduction of sentinel, an online system for monitoring bullying, to help schools monitor and address issues around bullying.
- 2.5 Even before the successful anti-bullying week in Autumn 2007 it is clear that some of this work is already having an impact, as the proportion of pupils who say their school takes action against bullying has risen by three points to 73%. An enhanced anti-bullying week during the next academic year is expected to have even more impact in this respect.

3.0 What is the Safer Schools Partnership?

- 3.1 With origins in the United States, the Safer School Partnership (SSP) was piloted by Thames Valley Police in Banbury using restorative principles and by the Metropolitan Police in Southwark, supported by the Roehampton Institute. It was adopted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in April 2002 as a response to the Street Crime Initiative and was developed collaboratively by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), DCFS, the Home Office, the Association of Chief Education Officers and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) through the introduction of 100 police officers in 100 schools in selected Street Crime Areas.
- 3.2 The Association of Chief Police Officers has been involved in the development of Safer School Partnerships from the outset to ensure the work of police in schools remains operationally focused whilst reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and promoting better behaviour in schools and local communities. Where SSPs are most effective they are seen as an integral part of local neighbourhood policing and not merely as a police officer attached to a school.
- 3.3 The work of the SSPs is inspiring, representing a new approach to police involvement in schools. It links closely to the commitments the government has made through Every Child Matters, especially in working towards outcomes of Staying Safe and Making a Positive Contribution.
- 3.4 The focus of the SSPs is early intervention and prevention. The schemes encourage the police, children and young people to build good relationships, trust and mutual respect. Police officers working in partnership with schools under this scheme continue their operational policing approach, but do so in a way that fulfils a prevention and deterrence role, and supports victims of crime. Schools and police forces are beginning to realise the many benefits of this type of close partnership working. Together, they can identify, support and work with children and young people at risk of victimisation, offending or social exclusion.

4.0 What is the Southwark Safer Schools Partnership (SSSP)?

- 4.1 The focus of the SSSP is early intervention and prevention. The partnership encourages the police, children and young people to build good relationships, trust and mutual respect. Police officers working in partnership with schools within the

SSSP framework continue their operational policing approach, but do so in a way that fulfils a prevention and deterrence role, and supports victims of crime.

4.2 The SSSP is a partnership between Southwark Council and Young Southwark, Southwark's Children's Trust. The following bodies are represented when the SSSP meets:

- Southwark Council
- Southwark Children and Families' Alliance
- Southwark Multi Faith Forum
- Southwark Alliance Team
- Southwark Schools
- Southwark PCT
- Southwark Police

4.3 In total the police have eleven officers dedicated to work full time on the SSSP and table 1 shows the indicative coverage of Safer School Partnerships in London.

Table 1: Indicative Coverage of Safer School Partnerships in London, June 2007

Borough	All Second'y Schools	State Second'y Schools	Ministerial Priority w/o SSP¹	SSPs	No of Officers	Pop'n Year 7-11 children
Southwark	20	13	1	24	11	16,811
B & D	10	8	1	7	7	14,066
Barnet	34	20	3	6	5	23,486
Bexley	16	16	2	12	6	16,773
Brent	20	14	0	15	4	19,199
Bromley	26	18	1	21	6	21,561
Camden	15	9	0	7	7	9,843
Croydon	34	23	8	1	1	26,030
Ealing	23	13	0	15	6	21,534
Enfield	20	17	0	17	14	21,520
Greenwich	19	13	0	19	6	17,179
Hackney	17	9	0	12	7	14,640
H&F	14	7	4	0	0	8,915
Haringey	14	12	1	12	12	13,950
Harrow	17	10	0	10	5	15,155
Havering	21	18	5	0	0	17,122
Hillingdon	22	18	0	24	7	18,649
Hounslow	18	14	1	16	8	15,584
Islington	10	9	0	10	8	10,718
K & Ch	16	4	0	1	1	7,727
Kingston	14	10	0	4	4	10,214
Lambeth	13	10	0	12	9	16,538
Lewisham	17	13	4	6	5	17,248
Merton	11	6	1	6	6	13,002
Newham	15	15	1	15	7	19,597
Redbridge	20	17	0	12	7	19,126

¹ This column shows the number of schools in each borough that were identified but do not currently have an SSP.

Richmond	17	8	2	0	0	11,560
Sutton	16	14	0	23	4	13,720
T. Hamlets	20	15	1	15	14	14,624
W. Forest	19	16	5	9	7	16,853
Wandsworth	19	10	0	22	8	13,772
Westminster	19	7	0	7	6	8,495
Total	586	406	41	360	198	505211

Source: London Community Safety Partnership (Safer Street Partnership Board – 25th July 2007, Item 4.1)

4.4 The SSSP aims to be at the heart of the school community. This is achieved by:

- Regular reassurance patrols at the school gate and in the designated Safeguarding Youth Zones after school hours.
- Investigating youth crime issues involving pupils
- Supporting young victims of crime at times when they are most vulnerable
- Delivering occasional citizenship messages in the classroom or school assemblies
- Engaging with the pupils and staff, building relationships and working together to make their schools and community safer.

4.5 Parts of the initiative aim to identify causes of truancy and tackle the problem, whilst re-enforcing the message to parents that children must attend school regularly. Educational welfare officers are also able to use the intelligence gained to make sure any support or investigation required in individual cases can be offered.

4.6 The SSSP objectives are as follows:

- To reduce the prevalence of crime, anti-social behaviour and victimisation amongst young people and to reduce the number of incidents and crimes in schools and their wider communities;
- To provide a safe and secure school community which enhances the learning environment;
- To engage young people, challenge unacceptable behaviour, and help them develop a respect for themselves and their community; and
- To ensure that young people remain in education, actively learning, healthy and achieving their full potential

4.7 The objectives were set to maintain the effective working relationships between the police, schools, community and other external agencies. The partnership works to ensure that there is a quick response time by the police for pupils, parents, schools staff and the local community. The partnership seeks to ensure that pupils, parents and school staff are appraised of local concerns and risks relating to crime and anti social behaviour, reducing the fear of crime amongst pupils, parents, school staff and members of the local community; contributing to the safeguarding children within the Every Child Matters agenda.

5.0 The Mainstreaming Document²

- 5.1 In May 2006 the Home Office published the Safer School Partnership Mainstreaming Document as a guide to partners to assist with the implementation of the work. The document provided *'guidance on the mainstreaming of the Safer School Partnerships programme to enable local multi-agency partnerships to benefit from this initiative'*. It was also to *'provide a route map for multi-agency partnerships, allowing them to determine the appropriate level of response in given circumstances and to meet the needs of local partners and neighbourhoods'*.
- 5.2 The Mainstreaming document provides guidance on the mainstreaming of the Safer School Partnerships (SSPs) programme to enable local multi-agency partnerships to benefit from this initiative. The document provides a route map for multi-agency partnerships, allowing them to determine the appropriate level of response in given circumstances and to meet the needs of local partners and neighbourhoods.
- 5.3 The commitment to mainstream the SSP programme by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCFS), Home Office, Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is evidence based, building on the success and achievement of the programme; as a partnership approach to crime prevention, school safety, behaviour improvement and educational achievement. There is also recognition of the many different ways the programme integrates with the wider prevention agenda, the Children Act 2004 and other initiatives such as Every Child Matters, the proposals in the Respect Action Plan, Local Area Agreements, Prevent and Deter, Neighbourhood Policing and Extended Schools.
- 5.4 The document sets out the overarching vision that the partnership would become collaborative in their response to issues affecting the school community enabling:
- Schools to be a safe and secure environment for staff, pupils, parents and visitors;
 - Pupils feeling positive about going to school, without feeling threatened or intimidated, contributing to young people maximising their potential and learning; and
 - Building trusting relationships with young people, recognising their responsibilities and developing a respect for their peers and the wider community
- 5.5 The mainstreaming document says since 2002, SSPs have developed without a clear local strategic support framework and that the opportunity now arises to embed Safer School Partnerships into local prevention arrangements, and this forms the focus of the mainstreaming document.

6.0 Purpose of the Review and Main Findings

- 6.1 We set out to explore the effectiveness of the Southwark Safer Schools Partnership (SSSP) and the potential for the expansion of its role, particularly in regard to tackling gun and knife related crime and the fear of such crime amongst young people. At the end of our review, we wanted to produce outcomes that would identify areas where partnership working between stakeholders (schools, Council and MPS) in the Safer

² NB This guidance was renewed in May 2009, just as the committee was drawing its work to a close. We were not able to consider the new document collectively as a committee but we believe that it would not affect the conclusions we draw here about SSP work in Southwark

Schools Partnership (SSP) could be built on to improve the targeting of the resources available to the Partnership.

6.2 This review involved taking evidence from young people, teachers, Police, Council Officers and other agencies involved. Lines of enquiry we pursued were:

- Understanding of the nature of the work that the SSP undertakes.
- The extent to which incidents within schools and on the way to and from school have reduced since the introduction of the SSSP and how the SSSP contributed to this
- The experiences of young people in the borough of the SSSP
- How effectively the SSSP has worked in partnership with other stakeholders, particularly with head teachers and other school staff.
- The extent of the mainstreaming of the SSSP and whether this has proved effective.
- The work undertaken by the SSSP to tackle gun, knife and gang related crime and the fear of such crime; what further work could be undertaken and determining the need for further resources or work outside the partnership

7.0 What does SSSP mean in practice & how well does SSSP function?

7.1 Throughout the duration of our work we found the Southwark SSP to have four central strands to its work which overlap and contribute to the how well the Southwark SSP functions. The four strands are:

- Developing systems to respond to incidents in schools;
- Preventative work by Police Constables (PCs) in secondary schools;
- Improving community relations with the police through the presence of PCs in secondary schools and visits of PCs to primaries; and
- Improving working relationships between partner agencies.

8.0 Developing systems to respond to incidents in schools

8.1 From the evidence we received we felt that it was important to increase initiatives to give Southwark's young people more things to do, ensuring a reduction in the participation of gang and/or knife crime. Evidence from head teachers told us that they wanted to know, and did not know, what is currently happening with youth provision in the borough. We also heard that the SSSP is vital in primary as well as secondary schools as youth crime is also present. We were told that some children were currently on the verge of heading toward trouble, in which case early intervention could be a successful way of preventing more serious crime/s later on in life. Head teachers also told us that primary school children have been involved in criminal behaviour outside the school grounds.

8.2 Head teachers wanted to recommend that the SSSP incorporate more services than police and schools. By involving social care and other teams the partnership could have wider understanding of the family situation. The Head teachers believed there

should be more sharing of confidential information between schools and the police, for example, schools being made aware if one of their pupils is appearing in court. We propose a recommendation to this effect later in this report.

- 8.3 Despite areas for improvement, Southwark's Children's Services were successfully sharing intelligence with the police, youth offending team and community wardens. There was special provision for 30 most at risk children, where a specialist team undertake door to door visits. Our evidence told us that the police were actively ensuring a joined up approach to children and youth safety by creating stronger relationships between head teachers and borough commanders to promote the sharing of 'soft' information.
- 8.4 From the evidence we received we appreciate the Youth Offending Team react quickly to defuse difficult situations, and search wands are used by the borough's secondary schools and colleges. Young people are expecting something different to usual stop and search, which is more like airport security. We hope this will help to promote a sense of security in schools and colleges and remove the stigma the current system perpetuates. There are, however, a different set of searches carried out if there is a suspicion that someone is carrying a gun. These searches are conducted only by a specially trained team and young people can easily differentiate between the standard search and the more specialised procedure.

9.0 Preventative work by Police Constables (PCs) in secondary schools

- 9.1 Head teachers told us that every secondary school needs their own police constable (PC) rather than sharing with others as this would improve response times. Our evidence told us that PCs tended to perform consistently better than community wardens. Head teachers said that some community wardens had provided excellent support although there had been one or two problems. It seemed that PCs were better trained overall and were able to communicate more effectively with young people. For talented PCs who chose to take on the role, there were good benefits, such as being fast-tracked through their career. This meant that the posts attracted very competent and dedicated officers.
- 9.2 Head teachers said that there are still questions around the numbers of PCs required and the quality of their training. Members of Southwark Youth Council³ told us that a police presence is needed after school to protect them and their peers as well as to prevent anti social behaviour and criminal damage. The PCs who are attached to specific schools are well placed to deal with matters expediently because the PCs more likely know the children personally.

10.0 Improving community relations with the police through the presence of PCs in secondary schools and visits of PCs to primaries

- 10.1 The SSSP have also been working with the pupil referral units and are still working to ensure that hard to reach youngsters are included in programmes of education. Our evidence told us that the Young People's Executive should be the strategic lead for the partnership in this instance.

³ A transcript of the interview between Southwark Youth Council and Members of the Children's Services & Education Scrutiny Sub Committee can be found in Appendix B.

10.2 We were told the statistical measurements detailing successes and weaknesses of the partnership would not be very helpful at this stage. It was expected that results would be clearer in 5, 10 or 15 years time.

11.0 Improving working relationships between partner agencies

11.1 Using the mainstreaming document as a reference, the sub-committee set about finding out what the council's position was on the following:

- Including SSSP into teacher training days (including primary school staff);
- Developing joint working protocols between the police and fire service when working within the same geographical boundaries;
- Promoting the benefits of SSPs;
- Developing an area protocol in the absence of a Children's Trust Protocol covering information sharing;
- Developing an area protocol for incident reporting;
- Agreeing a protocol regarding SSP transitional work; and
- Ensuring representation on Strategic Steering Group.

11.2 In October 2008, we received evidence from the Assistant Director of Specialist Children's Service who informed us of the good partnership working and that all agencies were taking responsibility to identify gangs and problem individuals. However, we know that the SSSP had lost impetus regarding the strategic direction. Our evidence has told us that there were many projects taking place in schools and Children's Services were making good progress in building and strengthening relationships with all parties concerned. There are attempts to develop a more coordinated approach working with the police to identify gaps in partnership communications. This was discussed at a meeting with head teachers in October 2008, where head teachers were asked what they thought about the SSP being a part of the primary schools and if there should be engagement at this stage in the children's development. This can be seen in Appendix A.

11.3 The Assistant Director of Children's Services told us that head teachers seemed more willing than in the past to work with and be involved in the SSSP and that they were committed to continue to make this a priority. It was felt that it was important to have a planned approach but it was difficult if the strategic direction was weak.

11.4 In September 2008 the sub-committee was joined by Inspector Caroline Trevithick from the Metropolitan Police and lead officer for the Southwark SSSP. Inspector Trevithick reported that the Safer School Partnership has six Community Support Officers dedicated to working within senior schools according to the protocols set out by the Young Southwark Executive. The Young Southwark Executive meets regularly and its members comprise senior council officers from the Community Safety and Children's Services departments. Despite SSSP being in operation since 1999 a strategic steering group has not been set up to assist with the co ordination of the work. However, we were informed that a steering group was in the process of being

formed chaired by Superintendent Victor Olisa but it was unclear when the next meeting would be convened.

- 11.5 Inspector Trevithick reported that there had been a very positive response from pupils about the scheme with many saying that they felt safer since the initiative was introduced. Objections to aspects of the scheme tended to arise from staff rather than pupils. For instance members of staff are reluctant to search pupils, even though the pupils themselves felt positive about it if there was genuine concern that someone was carrying a weapon. With regard to primary schools; the Safer Neighbourhood Team has a single point of contact officer who engages with the schools; increasing communication between pupils and the police service in the borough. He or she provides a police liaison officer for school staff to access the services of the borough police and acts as a point of advice and guidance for a range of community safety issues raised by pupils, parents, school staff and governors. The single point of contact officer will participate in multi-agency initiatives and projects operating within the school community.
- 11.6 The single point of contact officer will communicate regularly with nominated members of staff and provide information such as, telephone numbers for non-emergency enquiries, advice, access to specialist advice, support and the police. It is also part of the single point of contact officer's remit to ensure that appropriate information is shared in a timely manner with the school to safeguard pupils and promote intelligence gathering from staff and pupils. It is also the role of the single point of contact officer to identify opportunities to engage with pupils to promote the Safer Neighbourhood team and act as a positive role model, attending Parent and Teacher Association meetings every term.
- 11.7 The Southwark SSP is inclusive of all key stakeholders, including the local police force, individual schools (governors, head teachers and teachers), local authority, children's trust and the Youth Offending Team. Although Southwark is very good at communication with stakeholders when a particular matter arises it was thought that Southwark could be stronger overall. The exchange of information is covered by the protocol under the Safer Southwark Schools Partnership and draws on relevant legislation including the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.

12.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 12.1 Having received a range of evidence from the Metropolitan Police; head teachers; Southwark Youth Council; young people from Southwark schools; and managers from Southwark Council's Children's Department we feel confident when recommending the following:

Strategic Direction: Working Relationships with partner agencies

- 12.2 No one was able to identify to us a statement of aims and objectives nor any forward plan for developing the Southwark SSP. It is not clear to us where the strategic direction comes from or ought to come from.

We therefore recommend:

1. The Executive urgently consider the strategic direction of the SSSP and ensure that a strategic body is formed to set the long term aims of the SSSP and

produce a plan as to how these can be achieved. The plan should consider:

- How to improve general stakeholder communication (rather than information sharing as to specific incidents)
- What steps might be taken to improve police presence on public transport
- How to promote engagement with and involvement of parents and carers

Operational Work: responding to specific incidents

12.3 All the evidence we heard suggests that this aspect of the Southwark SSP is well developed, working well and has defined information sharing protocols in place (Schools, YOT and the police have a close and effective liaison) we have no recommendations to make under this heading.

Police presence in primary and secondary schools

12.4 Head teachers told us that there is little consistency with the placements of PCs in primary schools. After building up good relationships with staff and children, allocated officers can be moved suddenly to another school with the head teacher not being made aware of whether they will come back. The officer may then reappear sometime later. This made it hard for head teachers to include them in any plans. Head teachers wanted to make a recommendation that the police and schools should work in a more collaborative way and share information across the SSSP.

12.5 Head teachers informed us that the idea of the SSSP was to improve the relationship between young people and the police. The police have generally been seen as the enemy and it was hoped trust could be restored with young people eventually starting to view the police as friendly, approachable and reliable. Our evidence told us that there should be a PC presence in primary schools as this was the best time to start to build trust. It was thought that this may also be beneficial for parents and families who may otherwise be fearful or suspicious of the police. It was important to change negative perceptions, such as the impression that PCs only become involved with young people when there is trouble.

12.6 The dedicated police officers in secondary schools work well. The PCs are welcomed by staff and pupils, although continuity is essential. Police are generally not sufficiently involved in internal school management.

We therefore recommend:

2. Efforts should be made to maximise continuity of officers in the service of schools
3. PC's should work collaboratively with form teachers or the equivalent house group representatives to ensure a better message is promoted
 - PCs are not currently brought in as 'multi-agency staff' i.e. in meetings, but maybe they should be to strengthen and broaden the partnership.
4. The SSSP should involve more services than just police and schools, which are just a part of a broader Safer Partnership for children

- For example including a family focus, social care and other ‘team around the child’ services.
5. There should be more confidential sharing of information between head teachers and the police.
- Head teachers should be informed if one of their pupils is to appear in court

Parental engagement

12.7 This is a recognised weakness and not an easy problem to address.

6. We recommend the dedicated officers should be encouraged at parents’ evenings or parent forum meetings.

Transport

12.8 Young people have told us that transport nodes can sometimes be an issue of concern for them, particularly when leaving the school premises to bus stops or tube stations. They told us that this part of their journey is the most challenging as there are no adults to monitor and stop any trouble getting out of hand.

7. We therefore recommend that Safer Neighbourhood Team Officers should be more visible in and around transport networks.

Meeting with head teachers

On the 23rd October 2008, Councillor Hargrove – the Chair of the Children’s Scrutiny sub-committee was invited to meet with Southwark head teachers and Southwark council’s senior management team. Councillor Hargrove asked:

- How are schools safer since SSSP?
- What has been the experience of young people?
- Has it involved effective team working with head teachers, stakeholders and the police?
- Has it been successfully mainstreamed?
- How far has it tackled gun, gang and knife crime?
- To what extent are further resources required outside the SSSP?

Prior to the meeting, we shared our thoughts about how the Head Teachers might view the presence of police officers within their schools’ vicinities. Generally, we were expecting to discover that schools were nervous about a police presence as it might well send a message to the community and to parents in particular that the school attracts trouble. It was felt that this could be an especial worry with regard to the admissions process. However, to some extent our concerns were already dispelled by Police Inspector Trevithick’s assurance that on the contrary there is a very trusting atmosphere in Southwark, where almost uniquely for an inner London borough, police officers can walk into any school and be welcomed. Essentially this was indeed the viewpoint from the Head Teachers’ meeting. Cllr Hargrove asked on behalf of the sub-committee what they thought the vision was for the SSSP; how they thought it was being taken forward and whether they felt the police were proactive in areas such as joint working initiatives.

Evidence taken at committee – Young People⁴

At its meeting on the March 23, the sub-committee spoke to members of Southwark's Youth Council to hear their views and experiences of the SSSP. The sub-committee had submitted questions to the Youth Council prior to their attendance and are as follows:

We know that many young people are afraid of being on the streets in Southwark because of threats from other young people. Are you and/or your friends afraid of the journey to and from school or college?

Richard: On the way home from school is usually the worst time. This is where the threat is. I have to take two buses and it's not always about the kids I go to school with. Sometimes it's about feeling threatened by adults as well as kids. One time people got off the bus because they felt threatened, which is stupid, why would you get off a bus because someone's being noisy or something?

Are young people now less afraid of crime on the streets than they were a year ago?

Erica: I don't think there's much of a difference

Richard: Clubs aren't advertised as much as they should be and I know people that get bored and do stupid things because there's nothing else to do

Are there policemen or women working in the schools you attend? Do you see them often?

All members of the Youth Council said they were aware of police officers working in their school

Stephanie & Hayley: We feel safe in our school as they're always around and have done presentations to our year at assemblies

Katharine: I normally see quite a few police officers but they're not attached to my school. When I was in primary school there was a police officer there all the time and he'd come to our assemblies to introduce himself to us. At my secondary school they don't do this at all.

Coming out of school in the afternoon seems to be a problem and a problem time for young people? Are the police teams helpful at this time of the day?

Erica: Like Richard said before, it's about other people from other schools. The Police should be around more to help make sure we get on our bus. There should be a school bus only for our school. The teachers try and make sure we get on the first bus that comes but if we had our own school bus I wouldn't feel threatened.

Richard: There's usually a police officer at the gate but the distance from the school gate to the bus stop is quite far. That's where the trouble starts as there's no-one at the bus stop to stop the trouble. You should hire people to look around the school and get rid of trouble

⁴ All names have been changed to respect the privacy of the young people giving evidence.

makers. If this was done the person making trouble wouldn't bother. You should have an adult presence and make people aware they are being watched. You need to give them (the adults) status to this job or we'll just take the mickey and the whole thing will just end up being rubbish.

Do after school activities and centres provide safe places to go in Southwark?

Richard: More people my age need to feel safe, but you need to engage with more of us. You need to advertise these activities more and people will come to them. I know people who get bored because they have nothing to do, that's why they end up mugging or stabbing people and getting up to no good.

How do we need to advertise these activities, where do you go to get your information?

Harriet: I think you should give the information to schools and let them tell us about stuff. I use Facebook* but I wouldn't go on the Council's Facebook page. You should think about MSN as well because it's free.

Richard: I wouldn't use text or answer a text message because I wouldn't want to waste my credit. The things you organise are good but nobody knows about them. We'll go to activities that you've organised and say they're sick (really good) in school and this spreads.

Katharine: You need to get directly to young people. The reason why I know so much about what's going on is because of SYC.

At school, who would you like to tell you about these activities?

Hayley: I think by Form Tutors or in a tutor group.

Erica: This is more conversational and relaxed. I'm at college now but when I was at school I was able to chat with my friends and if you know your friend is going, you're more likely to go.

Would you go to the police for help? Are you confident they will help you if you ask?

Stephanie: I don't think I would, I'd be frightened that someone would know it was me and get back at me for telling

Erica: It depends on how serious it is

Richard: Yes, I'd report it the same day

Would you text or email anonymously?

Katharine: Yes but this is long. A text message won't always give details about what's going on and where you are.

* Four members of Southwark Youth Council in attendance have Facebook pages

Are you aware that specialist officers from the Council are also involved in ensuring young people feel safe in school and in travelling to and from school?

Richard: I've never heard of them before

Erica: Neither have I and if I did I wouldn't know how to contact them anyway.

All members of the Youth Council said they were not aware of officers from the Council ensuring young people feel safe in school and in travelling to and from school

Members of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-committee:

Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)
Councillor Nick Vineall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Mitchell
Councillor Bob Skelly
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Ade Lasaki
Councillor Veronica Ward
Reverend Nicholas Elder
Colin Elliot, Parent Governor Representative
Jane Hole, Parent Governor Representative

The full minutes of the meetings held on this subject, together with a number of presentations that were made to the committee are available on the council website www.southwark.gov.uk or directly from the Scrutiny Team, Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5 8UB or by email at scrutiny@southwark.gov.uk