

# **Chair's Report**

## **Executive Commission – Gangs**

**January 2008**

### **Background**

Following the murder of 16 year old James Andre Smart-Ford at Streatham Ice Rink and 15 year old Billy Cox last year, a full Council meeting was held where an undertaking was made that the issue of young people's involvement in gangs and violent crime would be addressed. The decision was taken not to hold a Scrutiny Commission due to the length of the process, and therefore an Executive Commission was established. With the option that the findings of the Executive Commission could undergo scrutiny if desired.

It is important to emphasise the Commission's starting point was to acknowledge that the majority of young people in Lambeth are engaged in positive and productive activities. It was also recognised that the issues could not be addressed solely by the local authority but that the combined efforts of all partners would be imperative in the development and delivery of a robust action plan which would be required to steer the minority away from getting involved in gangs and criminal activity.

The Commission also agreed that the approach would be primarily from a socio-economic perspective rather than by enforcement, although it was clear that the solutions would need to have multi –faceted actions.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To develop short, medium and long-term strategies and 'Lambeth solutions' to reduce the number of young people becoming involved in criminal and violent gang activity in Lambeth and address the factors that led to their involvement.
- To identify the types of activities that exists currently within the borough to establish the levels of effectiveness.
- To listen and learn from the communities affected by gangs and youth violence and map what is being done in Lambeth and identify barriers to effective resolution.
- To produce an agreed evidence-based report setting out the Commission's recommendations which will form the basis of the Lambeth's Gangs Strategy.

- Use report findings/evidence base to support the work being undertaken by the Five Boroughs Alliance and as means of supporting applications for funding at a national and regional level.

## Methodology

The Executive Commission convened over a 5 month period between July and December 2007. Members of the Commission included council officers who worked with young people, individuals from Third Sector organisations who provided services for young people and representative from the Metropolitan Police(see Appendix III). I would like to thank those members, young people and contributors who willingly gave their time and effort to participate in the Commission's activities.

Professor John Pitts from the University of Bedfordshire a specialist in areas of criminology and prolific writer on gangs was commissioned to produce a comprehensive literature review to support the delivery of the aims and objectives of the Executive Commission. The Literature Review drew on the key lines of enquiry/topic areas which focussed on:

- The formation of gangs/gang culture and their impact
- Risk factors which contribute to young people's involvement in criminal and violent gang activities and
- Institutional responses for example best practice emerging from key agencies at local, regional and national (e.g. central government) level.

A range of local, regional and national stakeholders with related specialisms were invited to submit evidence to the Commission. Commission members also visited and interviewed young people and staff at schools and local organisations which work with young people that are either in or at risk of becoming involved with gangs and violence (see Appendix I) for list of contributors and field visits.

A series of broad recommendations were developed drawing upon the literature review, submissions and Executive Commission's deliberations. Each recommendation was reviewed and agreed. The Commission identified gaps in the following areas, capacity building and enforcement and formally requested that these be included within the report's recommendations.

The recommendations were circulated for consultation amongst all agencies and partners. This will support the development of the draft Strategic Action Plan which will deliver short-term (0-2 years); medium term (3-5 years); longer-term (6-10 years) action and be presented at the Gangs Summit on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2008.

The Summit will be a high profile event and will include speeches and presentations and involve ministers, Home Office, Government Office London, Department for Communities Local Government, leaders from the Five Borough Alliance and a range of local practitioners working within relevant areas and members of the local communities.

# Summary of key findings

## Violent Youth Gangs in Lambeth

- Violent youth gangs have emerged in the borough in the past decade
- The 2007 MPS survey found 171 youth gangs in London, 27 in Lambeth, many using firearms, and responsible for over 40 murders and 20% of London's youth crime.
- We have identified over 40 named 'gangs' or 'crews' in the borough The dominant Lambeth 'gang' is the *Poverty Driven Children* (PDC, aka the *Peel Dem Crew*), which boasts 2,500 members
- Youth gangs are characterised by *criminality, durability, territoriality structure and conflict*.
- Young people become involved with gangs for a variety of reasons including fun and companionship, fear and coercion
- Gangs are located in the poorest neighbourhoods in the borough; Acre Lane, Stockwell Gardens Estate, Myatts Field Estate, the Angell Town Estate and the Tulse Hill Estates. Recently gang crime has grown on the West Norwood Housing estates and in Crystal Palace
- Most Lambeth gang members are Black African-Caribbean or Mixed Heritage, although some are White and Asian
- Gangs tend to be composed of *Elders*, late teens/early twenties and 'crews' of *Youngers* 14-16. *Elders* make their money from drug sales and *Youngers* from street crime, more recently, we have seen the appearance of '*Tinys*' aged 10-12
- Increased police attention and CCTV has moved some gang crime '*off road*' to smaller towns and cities
- In late 2007, gang conflict in the borough was becoming more violent; the price of firearms was falling and some neighbourhoods were becoming 'no-go' areas for outsiders.

## The Socio-Economic Context of Lambeth Youth Gangs

- Between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s the average household income of social housing tenants fell from 73% to 48% of the national average
- By 1995, over 50% of families in social housing had no breadwinner and by 1997, 25% of the children in the UK lived in the poorest, high-crime, neighbourhoods
- In 2001, in the wards where gang activity is most prevalent; Coldharbour, Gipsy Hill, Knights Hill, Stockwell, Tulse Hill and Vassal, between 47.1% and 60.1% of children lived in families eligible for means tested benefits
- In 2001, the poorest ward, Coldharbour, was ranked 431<sup>st</sup> of the 8414 wards in England for child poverty, with an *Index Score* of 60.0, against 88.7 for Wirral (the highest) and 0.5 for Gerrards Cross North
- Eligibility for free school meals is 17% nationally, 38% in Lambeth and 52% in Coldharbour
- Between 1984 and 1997, the numbers of young people aged 16-24 in the labour market shrunk by almost 40%
- Black and minority ethnic young people aged 16 to 24, are more likely than their White counterparts to be unemployed (36% of Black Caribbeans v. 14% of Whites)
- Youth unemployment rates in Lambeth are higher today than in 1993
- By 1995, 40% of African-Caribbeans, 59% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and 18% of Whites in the UK were located in the poorest fifth of the population
- Family poverty and poor neighbourhoods have a deleterious effect upon academic attainment and classroom behaviour

- A recent evaluation of the Lambeth *X-It* programme revealed that over 70% of project participants had been formally excluded from school and had been either poor or non-attendeers
- Although 'Black Caribbean' students represent only 20% of the population in the age group, they constituted 44% of permanently excluded students in 2006/7
- Taken together with 'Black African' (24%) and 'Other Black & Mixed' (4%), 72% of students permanently excluded from school in Lambeth in 2006/7 were Black.

### **Youth Crime and Victimization in Lambeth**

- Most young offenders in the borough are male and the most common offences committed by them are *Robbery* (14.3%), *Theft and Handling* (17.7%) and *Violence Against the Person* (15%)
- Robberies are concentrated around Brixton Academy, Stockwell Road and Brixton Tube Station.
- Young offenders are concentrated in Coldharbour, Vassall, Knights Hill, Tulse Hill, Larkhall and Brixton Hill wards
- Youth victims are concentrated in Coldharbour, Vassall and Oval wards
- 25% of youth victims are robbed, 43% are victims of *Violence Against the Person* 44% of victims received an injury (including a fatal injury)
- Gun enabled crime in Lambeth rose sharply in 2007/8 rose sharply
- Some of this violence was associated with drug markets
- In the first half of 2007, there were 6 murders in Lambeth, 4 involving a firearm and 2 involving knives.
- In 2004-2006 Lambeth had the second highest rate of fatal and non-fatal shootings of the thirty-two London boroughs (see fig.3.3 below).
- The peak age of both victims and perpetrators of gun crime fell from 24 in 2004 to 19 in 2006,
- In Lambeth, *Black or Black British* young people represent just over 40% of 10-17 year olds and 69% adjudicated young offenders
- Schools students in many Lambeth schools are adversely affected by gangs
- 30% of permanently excluded students were involved with the YOT in 2006/7
- 70%+ of participants in the *X-it* gang-desistance programme had been excluded from school
- Initially, it appears that gang conflicts had a close connection with drug markets.
- More recently, as gang membership has grown, 'respect' and 'post-code' conflict appears to be more prevalent

### **The Neighbourhood Effect**

- In multiply disadvantaged neighbourhoods, children and young people, irrespective of individual and familial risk factors, are at heightened risk of gang involvement and gang victimisation.
- US evidence suggests that moving to a more prosperous neighbourhood significantly enhances the life chances of ghetto families
- The spatial concentration of social disadvantage is closely associated with segregation from local economies
- The quality and quantity of jobs in a neighbourhood shapes how people form households, regulate their own, and the public behaviour of others, and use public services
- As a result of poverty and stigma, residents in multiply disadvantaged neighbourhoods tend to be isolated from the socio-cultural mainstream
- Living in these neighbourhoods isolates residents from influential social and political networks that could help them to improve their situation

- The struggles of everyday life mean that residents may find it difficult to live up to their own values and they may therefore 'go along with', and in some cases benefit from, the criminality in the neighbourhood
- This compounds the stigma, and hence their isolation, and gives an ambiguous message to young people who are, or may be on the threshold of, criminal involvement
- The effects of structural youth and adult unemployment and family poverty, exacerbated by negative experiences in school and confrontations with the police on the street foster norms and narratives supportive of gang violence and the development of *alternative cognitive landscapes* in the minds of gang members.
- In these circumstances wider cultural values become unviable and these young people may develop a *soldier mentality*, characterised by a heightened sensitivity to threat and a constant preparedness for action which tends to isolate gang members still further from the social and cultural mainstream

### Current National & Regional Gang Initiatives

- In August 2007 the Prime Minister announced the *Focussed Gang Project: Serious Gang Violence, Prevention and Risk Management* involving ten pilot projects in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, overseen by a dedicated, National Gangs Unit at the Home Office
- Projects will have five strands: *Intelligence, Prevention, Enforcement, Reassurance* and *Criminal Justice/Prosecution*
- One of these projects will be the *Five Boroughs Alliance* (FBA) in Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark
- This will be 'delivered' via the MPS Serious Violence and Youth Strategies, supported by the Metropolitan Police Authority Management Board, the Mayor of London and Borough Chief Executives.
- 'Communities', Faith Groups' and 'Young People' should also be involved
- In addition to the five strands; *Intelligence, Prevention, Enforcement, Reassurance* and *Criminal Justice/Prosecution*, the FBA will establish a Boston (Operation Ceasefire) model of intervention, involving *Cross-agency Risk-Management Processes a Multi-agency Infrastructure* and *Safe Houses* for witnesses and victims. There will be a particular focus on 18 and 19 year olds
- In Sept. 2007, the Home Office announced a gang programme, to be overseen by a ministerial taskforce on guns and gangs, headed by the Home Secretary.
- The programme will comprise: *High-visibility Policing, Civil Orders* to restrict known gang members, greater *Witness Protection*, including safe houses, *Mediation Services*, a *Crackdown on Illegal Gun Imports*, enhanced local *Community Forums*, extra *Activities* to keep children and young people off the streets
- The first London *Gangs, Guns and Weapons Practitioners Forum* seminar was held in Croydon in May 2007. It aims to establish a dialogue and information exchange for 'gang practitioners' via a virtual network.
- In April 2007, the Youth Justice Board published *Groups, Gangs and Weapons* which points to the need for improved information sharing and identification of individuals and groups involved in gangs by YOTs, interventions with offending youth groups and coordinated action, initiated by local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to disrupt gangs and organised crime groups

## Current Gang-focussed Interventions in Lambeth

- The **Phoenix Programme** is a consortium of six agencies/organisations working with young people referred by criminal justice agencies because of their involvement in gun crime.
- **X-it** is a gang desistance programme utilising peer mentoring. It undertakes detached work, group work, leadership training and personal development work using workers from a range of partner agencies.
- **Your Story** is a Lambeth-based youth project providing programmes for Youth Offending Service (YOS), Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIP), Prolific and Priority Offender programmes (PPOs) and Gang-desistance programmes, for the Police and the Probation Service. *Your Story* works with children, young people and young adults aged six to 25.
- **The Rainer Lambeth Youth Inclusion Programme**, runs a five-week course entitled *Guns, Gangs & Knives* for young people aged between eight and 18 who are gang-involved or 'at risk' of involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour.
- **Lambeth Young People's Service** undertakes detached youth work which brings them into close contact with gang-involved and gang-affected children and young people in gang-affected neighbourhoods.
- **Flipside** works in schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and youth clubs with groups of children and young people, many of whom live in gang affected neighbourhoods, on issues of personal safety and the choices available to them.
- **ORIGIN** is a programme run by *New Initiatives*, a Black-led voluntary sector organisation established in 1998 to support young people of African descent in their transition to adulthood.

## Developing Gang-focussed Interventions: The Issues

- Reaching hard-to-reach young people: Different projects are able to make and sustain contact with different groups of young people and there is a need for coordination/targeting of their efforts
- Workers: There is a need for a critical mass of young '**street people**' but training and supervision resources must be developed if they are to be effective
- Routes out of programmes: There is at present a paucity of routes out of youth programmes into sustainable education, training and employment
- Street-based youth work is an effective tool but the service has been eroded and needs to be restored
- Robust through/aftercare systems are necessary to prevent young people returning to gangs
- Support for schools: There is little overt gang activity in schools but many of them are struggling to deal with their effects upon students and need support with this and in reducing levels of truancy and exclusion
- Parents: of gang involved C&YP need greater support
- Partnership working: Different agencies give different priority/commitment to initiatives
- Statutory-voluntary relationship: Can be unequal with voluntary/community/faith groups unable to shape policy
- Faith Communities: Must be involved but there is need for greater clarity about how they might be used most effectively?
- Funding regimes: Short-term funding is a precarious basis for effective work.
- Complex bidding arrangements are a disincentive to community/faith groups, waste expertise and jeopardise staffing. Much Effective gang work is currently being done on a shoestring
- Funding decisions lack transparency.

## Summary Recommendations

- **Family Support:** Gang affected families need support to deal with the effects of gang membership or gang victimisation and the effects of family poverty upon the life chances and self-perceptions of their children, young people and themselves
- **Neighbourhood Capacity Building:** There is a need for Initiatives to combat the risks posed by youth gangs to children, young people and families in certain high crime low income neighbourhoods, the stigma residence there imposes upon them, the social, economic and cultural isolation it engenders and the illicit opportunities it makes available.
- **Education:** There is a need to address the contribution of truancy, school exclusion and other educational difficulties to the development of 'deviant careers' and gang involvement, and the disproportionate representation of Black and Mixed Heritage experiencing such difficulties
- **Employment and Enterprise:** There is a need to address the high level of Black and Mixed heritage youth unemployment in the borough, its contribution to young peoples' decision to affiliate to gangs and their failure to desist from gang membership and the centrality of robust, coherent and creative employment strategies to effective gang interventions.
- **Youth & Community Provision:** There is a need to raise the quality, extend the reach, coordinate the efforts and vouchsafe the durability of youth and community services provided by statutory and voluntary agencies, community and faith groups to gang-involved and gang-affected children and young people.
- **Rehabilitation and Re-entry:** There is a need to ensure the adequacy of through- and aftercare arrangements for gang-involved young people when they return from penal institutions.
- **Shared Ownership and leadership:** There is a need for mechanisms whereby leadership of gang initiatives can be shared between service heads, service providers and children, young people and adults from gang-affected families and neighbourhoods.
- **Intelligence Assessment & Targeting:** The need for accurate, up-to-date, and continuously updated information about the individuals and groups within gang-affected neighbourhoods; an assessments of the risks to which they are subject and/or they pose to others.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** It is necessary to develop and undertake forms of monitoring and evaluation that enable projects to focus their efforts most accurately.
- **Commissioning & Funding:** There is a need to ensure the adequacy and duration of funding necessary for effective and sustained intervention and the transparency and rationality of commissioning and funding decisions.
- **Capacity Building for BME Third Sector Organisations:** A key to effective intervention with gang-involved and gang-affected children, young people and their parents in the Black community would be culturally sensitive interventions devised and delivered by the Black Voluntary Sector. Capacity Building in the Black Voluntary Sector would be central to an effective gang

strategy and that existing funding regimes and support networks should be reviewed with this objective in mind.

- **Capacity Building for BME Third Sector Organisations ( Project Infrastructure):** Community and faith groups appear to be central to effective gang strategies but most lack the capacity to bid for funding, monitor and evaluate the intervention, produce elaborate reports and accounts and handle day-to-day administrative task (employment, salaries, national insurance tax etc.) This serves as a disincentive to engagement. There is, therefore a need to develop a central resource able to handle these tasks.
- **Youth & Community Work Training:** Effective gang-work requires a critical mass of young 'road people' but for them to be effective it is necessary to create adequately resourced and academically accredited structures to handle recruitment, their training and professional supervision.
- **Enforcement:** this recommendation emerged from the discussions of the final Executive Commission. The Commission recognised that although beyond the terms of reference of the Executive Commission, it could not ignore the importance of enforcement and its role alongside preventative strategies.

## Appendix I

### Submissions

Verbal Submissions	Commission Member	Activities/Position
Flipside	Kosher Osei-Yaw	Diversions programme working with schools focuses on myth busting and facing fears.
Phoenix Programme	Lee Parker	Diversions programme working with young people referred by criminal justice agencies because of their involvement in gun crime.
University Bedfordshire/ LB Waltham Forest	Professor John Pitts	Summarised <i>Reluctant Gangsters</i> research findings.
NACRO	Neena Samota	Discussed Lambeth-based research on the risk factors that result in young people getting involved with guns and gangs.
LB Lambeth	Claudia Smith	Discussed the correlations between exclusion, truancy and gangs and violence.
Origins	Paul Reid	A programme working with young people of African descent supporting them with their transition to adulthood.
X-it Project	Julia Woolton	Gang desistance programme utilising peer mentoring, detached work, group work, leadership training and personal development work using a range of partner agencies.
Waltham Forest	Mike Jervis	Presentation outlining experiences of gang-affected youth and the politics between voluntary sector and statutory bodies
Greater London Authority	Lee Jasper	Presentation on potential funding streams and opportunities available for diversionary projects under the London Youth Offer
Centre for Economic and social Inclusion	Mike Stewart	Presentation on employment trends in Lambeth and the effectiveness of employment campaigns on young people Lambeth.
Your story	Wesley Walters Stephenson	An organisation working with young people in Lambeth aged between 6 – 25 years. Provide a range of programmes to young people which include mentoring, citizenship, career development and <i>'Prison Me No Way'</i>
Kate Quigley-Ruby	Her Majesty's Prison Service	Discussed the importance of rehabilitation in prisons to aid the transition
Gill Keaneley	PAYP – Positive Action for Young People	Discussed how domestic violence links to issues of gangs and membership among young people between age of 8-19 years

<b>Written Submissions</b>			
Chair of TRA, Lilford Estate			
Resident, Saxby Road Estate			
Resident, Tulse Hill Estate			
<b>Field Visits</b>			
New Initiatives		In-volve	Fairbridge
Archbishop Tenison	Archbishop Sumner Primary School	Fenstanton Primary School	Hillmead Primary School
Lambeth Youth Inclusion Programme		Lambeth Academy	

# Appendix II

## Executive Commission: Terms of Reference

### Aims and Objectives

***To develop short, medium and long-term strategies and 'Lambeth solutions' to reduce the number of young people becoming involved in criminal and violent gang activity in Lambeth and address the factors that led to their involvement.***

### Terms of reference

- 2.1 To collate and assess current research on the risk factors, environment and causes that lead to young people becoming involved in criminal and violent gang activity.
- 2.2 To assess work pursuant of the aim that has been undertaken by the council/Safer Lambeth Partnership in the past, resources that have been available and identify barriers to success.
- 2.3 To identify and assess the success of strategies or projects that are currently being undertaken by the council and external organisations that are pertinent to the aim.
- 2.4 To identify future trends and pressures in criminal and violent gang activity in Lambeth and how these might be factored in to future plans.
- 2.5 To identify best practice projects (national & international) pertinent to the aim and assess their appropriateness in the Lambeth context. Such projects to include those focussed on specialist, systemic and race-related issues.
- 2.6 To identify opportunities for greater cross-border and regional cooperation and intelligence-sharing.
- 2.7 To engage relevant communities, partners, academics, experts and third sector bodies in pursuit of the aim.
- 2.8 To develop a media/public information strategy to address the perceptions of criminal and violent gang activity in Lambeth and resultant fear of crime.
- 2.9 To identify recommendations that will guide future policy and service delivery in the council.
- 2.10 To identify areas of work that could merit further investigation through the council's overview and scrutiny function.
- 2.11 To communicate the findings of the commission beyond the borough's boundaries and for it to contribute to the wider work being undertaken in London on the issue.

## Appendix III:

### Executive Commission: Membership and Support Team

Chair:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organisation or Department</b>
Cllr Lorna Campbell ( <b>Chair</b> )	LB Lambeth
Ivelaw Bowman	Community Police Consultative Group
Lambert Allman	Children and Young People Service
Jean Carpenter	Flipside-Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust
John Corrigan	Metropolitan Police Service
Lee Jasper	Greater London Authority
Prof. Roger Matthews	South Bank University
Paul Reid	New Initiatives/ORIGIN/ BCA
Kevin Sheedy	Children and Young People Service
Mike Stewart	Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion
Claudia Smith	Children and Young People
Anna Tapsell	Community Police Consultative Group
Wesley Walters-Stephenson	Community Police Consultative Group/Lambeth Your Story
Michael Watson	Children and Young People
<b>Support Team</b>	
Carole Litchmore	Equalities and Diversity
Shaila Mahomed	Community Safety
Prof. John Pitts	University of Bedfordshire
Paula Williams	Equalities and Diversity
Chrysre Travis	Community Safety
Simon Harding	Community Safety