



# The Youth Violence Commission

Interim Report - July 2018





## Forward from Vicky Foxcroft, Chair of the Youth Violence Commission and Member of Parliament for Lewisham Deptford

Youth violence has devastating consequences for individuals, families, communities and society at large. As the MP for Lewisham Deptford, I have personally witnessed the destruction of too many young lives and bright futures. London is experiencing a particularly tragic year but the issue of youth violence is not confined to the capital alone. It is a national issue. It is also a national shame because the violence, injuries and deaths are preventable.

The Youth Violence Commission was established to identify solutions. Through the work that the Commissioners and our core team have undertaken over the past two years, we are now in a position to start articulating our recommendations. The Commission will publish its final report in autumn this year. The final report will provide full analysis of the research that we have conducted as well as detailed policy suggestions. What is already clear at this interim stage is that solutions do not lie with one or two Government departments alone. Preventing youth violence will require a strategic approach involving almost every part of Whitehall and the wider government machine. Successful implementation at the local level will also need to involve deep and extensive collaboration with schools, youth workers, police officers, faith and community leaders - as well as parents and individuals - all playing a part in the creation of a safer, fairer and positive future for our young people.

This will take time to achieve. There are no quick fixes to youth violence. The root causes are complex and longstanding. Fortunately, there are examples that we can, and should, learn from, such as the work of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in Scotland. Colleagues from the VRU have been generous in sharing their experiences and expertise with the Commission and I am grateful to them for this. Their achievements show us that change is possible. And their approach is testimony to the importance of adopting and sustaining a long-term vision in order to accomplish lasting solutions.

As a Commission we have actively collaborated with

other groups and organisations who are working to tackle youth violence and related issues, including the APPG on Knife Crime<sup>1</sup> and the Science and Technology inquiry into evidence-based, early-years intervention.<sup>2</sup> Our Commissioners include Labour, Conservative, SNP and Liberal Democrat MPs (See Annex A). Most recently, we welcomed the Government's Serious Violence Strategy. We were particularly pleased to see the Government recognising: the impact on young people of childhood trauma and adverse experiences, the importance of early intervention in preventing violence later in life and the need for greater integration of services (what is often termed the "public health approach"). We would, however, like to see the Strategy going further and faster in key areas.

Although the Commission's work is not yet quite complete, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped get us to this stage. Our work has included 6 evidence sessions in Portcullis House, the design and delivery of the national "Safer Lives Survey" and a series of regional visits. In addition, numerous people have shared their expertise with us through focus groups, emails, phone calls or meetings. The Commissioners and I are immensely grateful to everyone who has volunteered their time over the past two years in order to make all these things happen. Without their insights, challenge, anger and support, we may never have crossed the starting line.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to the many young people who have contributed to our work. Over 2,200 young people completed our survey and shared information with us about the levels of violence that they experience in their day-to-day lives. We also heard very honest testimonies from young individuals who have been directly affected by violence themselves. We learnt that the key drivers of youth violence almost always include trauma, insecurity, fear and a sense of hopelessness. It takes courage to talk about these issues and I am immensely grateful to everyone who did.

Vicky

<sup>1</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmllparty/171108/knife-crime.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/evidence-based-early-years-intervention-17-19/>

## Youth Violence Commission Timeline

<b>8 February 2017</b>	Practitioner session to shape work programme
<b>15 March 2017</b>	Launch event in Parliament
<b>July 2017</b>	Survey design focus group with London Mayor Peer Outreach Team
<b>August 2017</b>	Survey design focus group with 4Front Project young people
<b>3 &amp; 4 October 2017</b>	Fact finding visit to Scotland's VRU 16 <sup>th</sup> Youth and Community Evidence Session
<b>11 December 2017</b>	Public Health and Mental Health Evidence Session
<b>15 January 2018</b>	Launch of Safer Lives Survey
<b>23 February 2018</b> <b>23 February 2018</b>	Safer Lives Survey closes Commission advisor attends "Violent Prevention Strategy Development Conference" in Glasgow
<b>26 February 2018</b>	Early Years, Education and Employability Evidence Session
<b>26 March 2018</b>	Housing, Communities, Relationships and Faith Groups Evidence Session
<b>11 April 2018</b> <b>12 April 2018</b> <b>13 April 2018</b> <b>13 April 2018</b> <b>23 April 2018</b> <b>30 April 2018</b>	Portsmouth Visit Liverpool Visit Manchester Visit Salford/Moss Side Visit Media, music and role models Evidence Session MP drop in session
<b>2 May 2018</b> <b>21 May 2018</b>	City Hall event on Solution to Youth Violence Policing and Criminal Justice Evidence Session
<b>4 July 2018</b> <b>18 July 2018</b>	Vicky Foxcroft co-chairs event in Parliament with Sarah Jones, MP: "Lessons from the USA and Scotland - public health approaches to youth violence" Interim Report Issued
<b>October TBC</b>	Final report and recommendations published

## What we know

From the outset, the Commission has focussed on identifying evidence-based, long-term solutions. Through evidence sessions, focus groups and regional visits we listened to: young people who have themselves been affected by violence, practitioners and youth workers, public servants and police officers, community leaders, family members and many other experts. We conducted the Safer Lives Survey – the first of its kind in the UK and designed in consultation with young people – to: gain a better understanding of the levels of violence that young people experience in their lives, how this makes

them feel and where, if at all, they feel safe. We also examined existing literature on issues relating to youth violence, including academic publications and government-commissioned reports.

Over summer, our academic partners will complete analysis of the survey and other evidence that we have gathered and our final report will include a comprehensive list of policy recommendations. In the meantime, emerging themes and findings have already shaped our thinking on solutions. We are confident about the following factors:

- ▶ There are no quick fixes to youth violence. The root causes of youth violence include: childhood trauma, undiagnosed and untreated mental health issues, inadequate state provision and deficient parental support, poverty and social inequality.
  - ▶ Any strategy to reduce youth violence must address these root causes and will need to involve collaboration across central and local government as well as between practitioners, service providers, charities and community leaders at the local level. This will take time. It will need to have cross-party support and not be vulnerable to shifting parliamentary priorities. It will need to have the voice of young people themselves at its core.
  - ▶ Early intervention is key and a successful youth violence reduction strategy will, over time, shift and concentrate resources on prevention activities. The cost of failure to act early and to help each child reach their full potential is immense so the economic as well as the moral case for action is pressing.
  - ▶ A difficult financial climate has undoubtedly exacerbated youth violence; we heard how children's and youth services, as well as community policing, have been particularly challenged. Other areas, such as schools and the criminal justice system, have also been affected by funding pressures.
  - ▶ There is a clear link between school exclusions and vulnerability/propensity to youth violence.
- Whilst alternative provision can provide some children with opportunities that they would otherwise struggle to access, our evidence indicates that this is not universally the case. There are significant issues which need to be addressed in this area.
- ▶ There is a damaging lack of trust between the police and some communities. This has become a serious barrier to change, including via a "wall of silence" when crimes are committed and communities do not share information with the police. Any future violence reduction strategy will have to place a premium on establishing trust and mutual respect.
  - ▶ There is a convincing body of evidence – supported by the results of our own survey – that drug markets generate violence and, in particular, create a crime hierarchy where our most vulnerable young people are being groomed to enter the lower levels of drug distribution.
  - ▶ Social media is not a root cause of youth violence but our work indicates that it can be a factor in escalating and inciting violence.
  - ▶ There are a number of persistent misconceptions in the public discourse on youth violence and these are often fuelled by sensationalist media reporting. Debates around the potential impact of drill music on youth violence, for example, are, in the main, a populist distraction from understanding and tackling the real root causes.

# What are the solutions?

In light of what we know and the evidence that we have gathered, our final report will include (but not be limited to) proposed solutions in the following areas:

## Developing a national Public Health Model

A focus on early years and early intervention

Fundamental reform of youth services

## Boosting support in schools

Increasing employment opportunities

Investment in community policing and review of drugs approach

### 1. Developing a national “Public Health Model”

Scotland’s Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is widely recognised as the UK’s most successful example of a “public health approach” to violence reduction. The public health model is based on the World Health Organisation’s principles of treating violence like a disease.<sup>3</sup> Ten years after adopting its initial 10-year plan, the VRU has produced outstanding results. The Commission is grateful to VRU colleagues for sharing their insights and expertise with us, both by hosting a fact-finding visit in Glasgow in 2017 and by giving evidence at our sessions in London. The notion of a “public health model” as the ultimate solution to violence reduction is now habitually raised in debates and policy discussions.

The Commission supports the view that a holistic and integrated system of care is the best way forward and we welcome the fact that several schemes, which include elements of a public health approach, are being trialled across the country. There is, however, an increasing risk that the term “public health model” is being used without a proper understanding of what is actually required to affect lasting change. As we learnt from Scotland’s success, a public health approach requires whole-system, cultural and organisational change supported by sustained political backing. Anything short of this will fail. The Commission would like to see the Government undertaking a systemic review of the lessons learnt from Scotland, Birmingham and other pilot schemes with a view to the production of a national plan for the implementation of a public

health approach to youth violence, a plan which can be adapted accordingly for each region and locality of the country.

### 2. Increasing the focus on early years and early intervention

We have learnt that early childhood experiences (ACEs) have a significant impact on a person’s life. These experiences might be physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, or growing up with parents who had drug addictions or severe mental health problems themselves. People who experience four or more ACEs are 10 times more likely to be involved in violence every year by the time they are 18, compared to a young person who hasn’t experienced any ACEs. In our Safer Lives Survey, when young people were provided with a list of places, 16% reported feeling **least safe** in their home. As one witness told us, “Witnessing violence normalises violence for young people. Stabbings and shootings become ordinary. Growing up like that means violence becomes easier to resort to yourself.”

The economic, as well as the emotional, cost of failure to address trauma caused by ACEs is vast. In evidence submitted in May this year to the Science and Technology Committee’s enquiry on early-years interventions, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) estimated that nearly £17 billion per year is spent by government in England and Wales on addressing the costs of late intervention. This includes costs incurred through: funding statutory services, such as children in care, meeting the most immediate

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/public\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/public_health/en/)

impacts from educational failure, through income support for young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training), and frontline pressures, such as youth crime and criminal justice. The EIF concludes that “whilst it is not possible to estimate how much of this could be saved through effective early intervention, this clearly represents a significant avoidable burden that could be better spent and even modest reductions would equate to large savings which could be deployed elsewhere.”<sup>4</sup>

The need for early intervention was probably the most recurrent theme in all of our evidence sessions, focus groups and regional visits and to address this our recommendations in autumn are likely to include:

**Implementing a trauma-informed approach** – all professionals who have a statutory responsibility for the safeguarding and wellbeing of young people should be trained in the significance of ACEs, in recognising trauma and in the proper processes for helping a child who is displaying trauma-related behaviour. This includes youth workers but also teachers and police officers who may otherwise misread and mishandle challenging behaviour. As we heard from experts in our December 2017 evidence session, anti-social or violent activities in young people were often hiding underlying factors such as anxiety and depression.

**Revitalisation of Early Childhood Centres** – according to the government definition, the core purpose of early childhood centres is to “improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in: child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances.”<sup>5</sup> Evaluations of the centres – including a longitudinal study which ran for six years between 2009 and 2015<sup>6</sup>, have identified a significant number of benefits. Given their impact and given what we have heard over the past two years about the importance of early intervention – if these centres did not already exist, there is no doubt that we would be recommending their creation. It is worrying therefore that during the course of this Commission, we heard many concerns about the way in which centres are now under pressure due to changes in funding and apparent lack of

support at central and local level. A briefing paper written for MPs in 2017 summarised changes that have occurred to Centres in recent years and noted that, in real terms, spending on such Centres in 2015/16 was 47% less than in 2010/11 with budgets for 2016/17 showing a further planned reduction in spending. This paper also reported a reduction of 208 Children’s Centres between 2015 and 2017.<sup>7</sup> In 2016, the British Medical Journal also noted that disadvantaged families were at greatest risk from a reduction in these facilities. We would like to see an urgent review and revitalisation of Childhood Centres, a greater investment in what works, with an aim of ensuring that every local authority is meeting its duty as set out in the Childcare Act of 2006<sup>8</sup> including: improving the well-being of young children in their area, reducing inequalities between them and providing services to young children and their parents in an integrated manner.

### 3. Reforming youth services

In our first evidence session in October 2017, we learnt that funding for youth services has been, and remains, on a downward trend. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of professionals employed in the sector and the closure of many youth centres and programmes. Services that do still exist are often run from hubs and can be harder for many young people to access. Overall – perhaps with the exception of the National Citizenship Service – there has been a move away from universal to targeted youth services which focus on the most acute issues. Many local authorities commission out their youth services, which has led to lack of consistency and accountability in provision across the country. In the voluntary sector, large organisations with strong brands and deep resources are far more likely to get funding than smaller, local charities, even though the latter might be doing very good work on the ground. Competition for funding has increased “silo-isation” which, in turn, is having a negative impact on young people who find it difficult to access the help they need in such a disjointed system. In its 2016 report on youth services, Unison found that based on a survey of its members working in youth services, 77% reported increased mental health issues among young people, 83% reported increased crime and anti-social behaviour and 91% said the cuts were having a particular impact on young people from poorer backgrounds.<sup>9</sup>

4 <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/evidencebased-early-years-intervention/written/85531.pdf>

5 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678913/childrens\\_centre\\_stat\\_guidance\\_april-2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678913/childrens_centre_stat_guidance_april-2013.pdf)

6 <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/fell/research/evaluation-of-children-centres-in-england-ecce/>

7 <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7257#fullreport>

8 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678913/childrens\\_centre\\_stat\\_guidance\\_april-2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678913/childrens_centre_stat_guidance_april-2013.pdf)

9 <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/08/23996.pdf>

What we heard in our sessions was supported by qualitative data gathered from our Safer Lives Survey. In answer to the question that we asked "If there was one thing you could change that you think would make young people safer, what would it be?" the most popular response was the provision of more youth centres, sports clubs and other youth activities in their local areas. Our recommendations in this area will include:

**The establishment of a National Youth Policy Framework** which makes the provision of youth work a statutory duty for both local authorities and central government. This National Youth Framework should specify and require professional standards for youth workers to give them a recognised status and to validate their organisations. It should be underpinned by an inspection regime to ensure minimum standards and consistency of provision across the country and to foster a culture of continuous improvement. Ofsted used to inspect youth services but the sector is now largely an unregulated marketplace.

**Overhaul of funding arrangements** - as mentioned above, there are too many organisations competing for limited resources which, ultimately, results in sub-optimum outcomes for young people. The Commission would obviously like to see more money overall being allocated to this sector but we would also like funding to be used to support and incentivise long term projects as these provide much needed security and consistency for vulnerable young people. In addition, we heard how there is often be a disconnect between funders and smaller, grass-roots organisations with the latter finding it difficult to secure relatively small amounts of money to cover even their basic operating costs. We would like to see funders and large, national organisations, working more collaboratively with grassroots charities. As one of our experts told us "If you want to tackle youth violence, you have to meet young people in their own communities and create spaces where they feel safe to talk. Grassroots organisations are able to do this in ways that others cannot. Many national or larger agencies would not have a real understanding, for example, of the psychological impact of a postcode on young people and many young people would not travel to a youth/social work centre outside their own neighbourhood".

**A greater role for faith groups** - we heard how faith groups are already playing a role in the prevention of youth violence but that there is potential for them to do much more. Pastors, priests and other

faith leaders are often trusted by parents as well as young people and so they can create safe spaces for individuals and communities and, in certain instances, play an important bridging role between communities and local police or other services. In addition, some churches and faith groups have resources - both in terms of physical spaces and volunteers - which could be directed to a range of beneficial activities, including provision of youth clubs, events aimed at careers advice and mentoring and so on. It was heartening to hear from so many of these groups that they wanted to do more in this area and we hope that this offer of help can be harnessed in an organised way.

#### 4. Boosting support in schools

We heard from experts, teachers, practitioners and young people about the important role that schools can play in the prevention of youth violence and our final report will contain more details of the numerous issues and suggestions that we considered. There was a general view that - if correctly resourced and managed - schools can provide excellent opportunities for young people and access to reliable sources of support that some children might not have in other areas of their lives and we are under no doubt that any public health approach to violence reduction must include schools and teachers. Any new initiatives should not, however, place additional burdens on busy teachers and schools them but rather integrate specialists to work alongside existing staff. Our proposed solutions will include:

**An aspiration of zero exclusions from mainstream education and a reallocation of funding (from PRUs to support in mainstream schools) to help achieve this** - we accept that exclusions and the provision of high quality alternative education can be effective in a small number of cases but we examined a lot of evidence which indicates that exclusions are often used incorrectly and that alternative provision is often lacking. In November 2017 the Children's Commissioner for England published a report on children who fall through the gaps in our education system<sup>10</sup>. Her key findings included: tens of thousands of children are educated outside mainstream or special schools, many are effectively 'hidden' away in settings where little is known about how well their needs are being met, many of these children are also vulnerable and in need of extra help, official exclusions are rising, but many children are also being excluded by the back door through 'hidden' or unofficial exclusions and some children, including highly vulnerable ones, are not

10 <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/briefing-falling-through-the-gaps-in-education/>

in education at all. As we learnt from the 2017 IPPR report on the link between school exclusion and social exclusion<sup>11</sup> “excluded children are the most vulnerable: twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and ten times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems. Yet our education system is profoundly ill-equipped to break a cycle of disadvantage for these young people.”

The Government’s Serious Violence Strategy recognises school exclusions as one of the identified risk factors for involvement in serious violence<sup>12</sup>. As one of our young witnesses told us in a powerful personal statement, “I didn’t get a lot of support at school. I just got moved from place to place and I didn’t have a mentor to be able to talk about my problems with. The way I was treated at schools by the teachers made me want to pursue education less. I basically grew up in prison – I went when I was 15. I think we need to be teaching kids in school that it’s good to study and get a good education, but if you’re struggling or not getting the grades, you can still succeed and go far.” To achieve this aspiration of zero exclusions, schools must be properly incentivised to keep pupils on their books with Ofsted playing a greater role to support that. Schools should also be able to access funding to help achieve a zero exclusions policy - for example, to recruit mental health and other counsellors, school nurses and speech and language therapists.

Other schools-based initiatives that we have considered and which we believe could help to create opportunities for young people include:

- ▶ **An overhaul of the way careers advice is delivered in schools**, in particular to ensure inclusion of diverse role models, a greater emphasis on raising aspirations and provision of accessible information and support to every student for university, apprenticeships, technical and other options. Private sector companies should play a bigger role here, for example by creating work placements and other opportunities, with special emphasis on helping vulnerable young people.
- ▶ **More emphasis on high-quality sex and relationship classes** and resilience building in PHSE lessons (links to need for early intervention above).
- ▶ **Better integration of support services within schools** – such as school nurses, social workers and CAMHS workers so that a young person is not bounced between different experts but can

see school as a place in which they have a single point of reliable, adult support. As one witness told us “Relationships need to be nurturing and committed for the duration. Young people are crying out for one adult to stick around long enough to make a difference in their lives but too often they get bounced back and forth between different service providers.”

- ▶ **Improving education in custody** - we heard how the recommendations in two key reports – The Charlie Taylor Report and Sally Coates’ review of education in custody – have not been delivered and pressure must be maintained on government to ensure that these are not allowed slip.

## 5. Increasing Employment Opportunities

In both our evidence sessions and regional visits we heard how a lack of employment opportunities and/or low aspirations increase the risk of young people being exploited by organised criminal gangs and, in particular, being drawn into drug-related activity. We explored a number of solutions, which could help to raise the aspirations of young people, and equip them with the skills they will need to secure employment and play an active role in the workforce over coming years. Our proposals will include:

### In schools

- ▶ Teaching children the skills they will need to help them be successful in a professional environment. These would include; “softer skills” such as personal effectiveness and teamwork, using social media positively and writing CVs as well as how to approach interviews. One witness told us, “I think back to my first internship. I didn’t know how to use a printer, how to scan, how to send and sign off emails. Often these basic working skills aren’t taught at school”.
- ▶ Raising aspirations through a variety of initiatives, including reforming the way careers advice is delivered in schools and improving work experience opportunities to ensure that these reflect the full diversity, interests and potential of young people. As one of our young witnesses told us “Allocating work placements shouldn’t be seen as a tick box exercise... the placements should benefit young people and give them an interest in a certain career.”
- ▶ A recurring theme throughout our work was the serious shortage of BAME role models involved in careers programmes in schools and youth organisations and the need to establish more programmes that specifically address this issue. We will say more about this issue in our full report.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ippr.org/publications/making-the-difference>

<sup>12</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)

### ***In custody***

- ▶ Raising aspirations of young people in custody where, too often, the only education or training they receive assumes they are only capable of low-skilled employment.
- ▶ Ensuring that young people in custody are also connected to positive role models and careers advisors with whom they can build reliable and trusting relationships.
- ▶ We heard how research conducted by Accenture shows that technology can be a game changer and has potential to supercharge people into good jobs regardless of their background. Unfortunately, many young people don't have access to the internet or technology and this is a particular problem for young people in custody which needs to be addressed.
- ▶ There are some excellent examples of private sector companies who work with ex-offenders but overall the numbers are small and much more could be done in this area to ensure young people are given a genuine second chance and offered an alternative that is more attractive than falling back into criminal activity.

### ***Apprenticeships***

- ▶ Apprenticeships can provide a channel for young people to break out of a cycle of low aspiration and family generations of unemployment and we would like to see more of these opportunities offered to young people but we recognise that for these to be successful:
  - ▷ Employers need help to tackle bias in recruitment practices and, for example, to value talents and desirable skills that are not necessarily academic ones
  - ▷ More needs to be done by government and others to remove the perception that apprenticeships are somehow a "second class option" more needs to be promoted about the importance of apprenticeships, the educational benefits they can provide and - in many cases - how lucrative some of them can be.

### **6. Investment in community policing and a look at current drugs approach**

The issue of a breakdown in trust between police and some communities is of real concern to the Commission and was a recurring theme in our work. As one witness told us "For some young people, reporting something to the police is like "signing their own death warrant". And in our Safer Lives Survey, less than half (46%) of the young people who completed the survey said that they would NOT ask police for advice if they were worried about being a victim of crime. We have doubts about the ineffectiveness of some current policing

policies aimed at reducing youth violence (stop and search and the MPS' Gangs matrix for example) and from the evidence that we heard, a reallocation of resources to prevention activities would be sensible. We can also learn from Scotland's VRU on this issue who have placed policing at the heart of their public health approach with excellent results. Our recommendations will include:

- ▶ ***Increase in community policing*** - according to official data, the total funding for the territorial police forces in England and Wales in 2017/18 is around 27% lower than in 2007/08 and we heard from many witnesses how these funding changes are having the greatest impact on Safer Neighbourhood teams and numbers of community beat officers. We know from focus groups and the responses to our survey that community based police officers are key to building trust and effective relationships and to helping people feel safe in their local communities. In our Survey, the second most popular request for a policy which would help to make young people feel safer was increased police numbers in local neighbourhoods. We believe that community officers should be protected from funding pressures as they build vital links neighbourhoods, which in turn lead to trust and intelligence sharing and which ultimately help to prevent youth violence

***There should be a police officer attached to every primary and secondary school in the country.*** The officer should be a regular feature in the school so that they become a trustworthy and positive role models for the students. We heard how in schools where this was already happening some students had chosen to pursue a career in the police force themselves. As one officer told us "we need to start somewhere so let's start with schools".

***Intelligent stop and search*** - we heard from David Lammy and others that use of stop and search increases stereotyping and harms relationships with young people. We agree with the Government's Serious Violence Strategy that there is no evidence that a reduction in stop and search leads to increases in serious violence. In the main, we believe that stop and search is an ineffective policy, however, we also recognise that there are instances where it can - and should - be deployed intelligently. Police should focus on a truly intelligence-led approach.

***Approach to illegal drugs*** - as the Government's Serious Violence Strategy states "There is strong evidence that illicit drug markets can drive sudden

shifts in serious violence". The Strategy goes on to highlight an increase in the use of cannabis amongst 11 to 15 year-olds and a 77% increase between 2012 and 2016 in the convictions of young people (10-17 year-olds) for possession and intent to supply of class A drugs. The impact of this activity is not limited to large cities but - as the Strategy also discusses - is an underlying factor in so-called "county lines", where organised drug-selling gangs who are based in urban areas use vulnerable young people to traffic drugs to smaller towns and rural areas. Our own Safer Lives Survey also shows a correlation between drugs and exposure to violence (see Annex B).

Given this evidence, the Commission would recommend a comprehensive review of the UK's current approach to drugs legislation and policing. This should include, but not be limited to, a consideration of lessons learnt from countries such as Portugal and Canada.

## Annex A: The Commissioners and Commission Team



Vicky Foxcroft



Chuka Umunna



Mark Field



Chris Stephens



Norman Lamb

### Academic and advisory core team



Abhinav Muthoo



Siobhan Benita



Kier Irwin-Rogers



Zoe Leadley-Meade



Gary Trowsdale



Leroy Logan

Secretariat

## Commissioners



### Vicky Foxcroft - MP, Lewisham Deptford and Chair of the Commission

Vicky Foxcroft was elected to represent Lewisham Deptford in 2015. Prior to her election, Vicky served as a local councillor and worked as a

trade unionist where she led campaigns against low pay, the exploitation of agency workers and the use of zero hour contracts.

Since being elected Vicky has strived to be a strong local voice for Lewisham Deptford in Parliament. Her priorities have been influenced by the issues encountered locally and by campaigns in the community. She currently serves as one of the Labour Opposition Whips. Following the deaths of five young people from Lewisham Deptford, and the rise of knife crime in the area, Vicky arranged for a debate to take place in Parliament on youth violence. That debate called for the Youth Violence Commission to be established, which Vicky now Chairs.



### Chuka Umunna - MP, Streatham

Chuka Harrison Umunna is a British Labour politician who has been Member of Parliament (MP) for Streatham since 2010 and was Shadow Business Secretary from 2011 to 2015. Born in October

1978 to a Nigerian father and English-Irish mother, Chuka grew up in Streatham and attended local schools. He studied Law at the University of Manchester and the University of Burgundy, followed by Nottingham Law School. Following his education and further training at a City law firm, he specialised as a solicitor in employment law and acted for both employees and employers for just under decade.

Chuka has been a long term advocate for increasing awareness and understanding of serious youth violence and has previously chaired the London Gang Forum.



### Mark Field - MP, Cities of London and Westminster in 2001.

Mark Field Born in 1964 in a British Military Hospital in Hannover, Germany, Mark Field was first elected to Parliament to represent the Cities of

London and Westminster in 2001.

Mark was promoted to the Conservative Party frontbench in June 2003 and in November of that year he was appointed Shadow Minister for London, also serving as an Opposition Whip until March 2004. Between May and December 2005 Mark was the Shadow Financial Secretary to the Treasury and in the 11 months to November 2006 he was the Shadow Minister for Culture and the Arts.

In September 2010 Mark was appointed by the Prime Minister to the prestigious Intelligence and Security Committee. He was the youngest MP serving on the Committee which oversees and scrutinises the work of Britain's intelligence services. He was made a Privy Counsellor in March 2015 in recognition of his service on the Committee.

At the outset this research was designed to be cross-party; Mark came to the Commission as a central London constituency MP where gang violence and knife-crime had become high-profile. Whilst he supports the vision and principle behind the work of the Commission since its inception in late 2015, Mark has been a Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since June 2017. Accordingly as a member of the government he is unable to endorse the recommendations set out in this report, but very much hopes its extensive, consensual research will provide food for thought for policy makers in this area.



### Chris Stephens - MP, Glasgow South West

Christopher Charles Stephens is a Scottish trade unionist and Scottish National Party (SNP) politician who is the current MP for the Glasgow South West constituency, elected at the 2015 general election.

Chris was born in Glasgow in 1973, is employed by Glasgow City Council, and is a Senior UNISON activist in the city, acting as a lead negotiator, and has represented trade union members on issues such as disability and racial discrimination,

## Academic and advisory team

occupational pension protection, and on equal pay matters.

Chris is a member of the party's National Executive Committee, Convener of Glasgow Pollok Constituency Association, and Secretary of the SNP Trade Union Group, assisting in building the Party's profile in the Trade Union Movement. Chris is a proud Partick Thistle supporter and regularly attends matches. Among Chris's pledges is to support people and local communities, campaign for humane welfare measures, and to provide access to advice and food security by holding welfare surgeries.



**Norman Lamb - MP, North Norfolk**

Norman Lamb has been the Liberal Democrat MP for North Norfolk since 2001. The son of Hubert Lamb, a leading climatologist, Norman Lamb studied

Law at Leicester University and built a career as a litigation solicitor, ultimately specialising in employment law. Norman was elected to Norwich City Council becoming Leader of the Liberal Democrat opposition. He first stood for Parliament in North Norfolk in 1992. He won his seat by just 483 votes in 2011 but has subsequently been re-elected four times and currently holds a majority of 3,512. Following the 2010 General Election, Norman served first as Chief Parliamentary Advisor to Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, and then as a junior minister at the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. He was promoted to Minister of State for Care and Support at the Department of Health in 2012 and served in this position until the end of the Coalition Government in May 2015. As Health Minister, Norman led the drive to integrate health and social care, with a greater focus on preventing ill health. He also challenged the NHS to ensure that mental health was treated with the same priority as physical health, including the introduction of access and waiting standards in mental health for the first time. He was the Liberal Democrat Health spokesperson between 2015 and 2017, and was elected Chair of the Science & Technology Select Committee in July 2017.



**Abhinay Muthoo** - Abhinay Muthoo is a Professor of Economics in the Department of Economics at the University of Warwick. He is also the Dean of Warwick in London and the Co-Director of the Warwick Policy Lab. Prior to

starting his current role as the Dean of Warwick in London in 2016, Abhinay was the Head of the Department of Economics at the University of Warwick for 8 years.

Abhinay was educated at the London School of Economics and the University of Cambridge. He has broad research interests and these include political economy, negotiations, and public policy. He has published papers in many top economics journals including in the Review of Economic Studies, the Journal of Economic Theory and The Economic Journal. He is the author of Bargaining Theory with Applications, described as a publication that any economist should want to have as a reference.



**Siobhan Benita** - Siobhan Benita is the Chief Strategy Officer of Warwick in London (WiL) and Co-Director of the Warwick Policy Lab at the University of Warwick. Before starting her current role of Chief Strategy Officer

in August 2016, Siobhan was the Chief Policy and Strategy Officer of the Department of Economics at the University of Warwick. Prior to that, Siobhan was a senior civil servant with over 15 years' government experience working in many major departments including Transport, Environment, Health and Local Government as well as spending several years at the heart of Government with senior roles in the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury.

Siobhan resigned in January 2012 to run as an independent candidate in the Mayor of London election, where she secured around 250,000 votes which was a remarkable achievement for a previously unknown independent with no party machine.



**Kier Irwin-Rogers** - Keir Irwin-Rogers is a Lecturer in Criminology at the Open University. Prior to this, Keir spent 10 years with The University of Sheffield studying for a BA in History, an MA in International

Criminology, an MA in Law, and a PhD in Criminal Justice. After completing his PhD, he spent two years designing, managing and conducting a range of research projects for the social business, Catch22. During this time, he became increasingly aware of the harms associated with the criminalisation of young people. His most recent research examines the harms caused by prohibitionist drug policies. Keir has also conducted research and published papers on the subjects of community sanctions, sentencing, deterrence and urban violence.



**Zoë Leadley-Meade** - Zoë is a Lecturer in Education at London South Bank University. Zoë has a BA (Hons) in English Literature from The University of Roehampton, a PGCE in Secondary English Education from Goldsmiths University

of London and an MA in Education from London South Bank University. Prior to joining LSBU in 2015, Zoë accumulated over seven years of experience as a teacher in inner city London secondary schools where she witnessed the power of education to address social inequalities and developed a passion for promoting inclusive education. Zoë has published work on inclusive education and her research interests include the potential of education as a tool for social justice.



**Gary Trowsdale** - Gary was Managing Director of the Damilola Taylor Trust from 2009 to 2013. He also founded the Spirit of London Awards during this time and then created the One Big Community project to

tackle the causes of youth violence in 2013. The project came to be known as 1bc and engaged hundreds of young people in solution workshops and debates. Gary has been actively involved in

youth work for many years but has a background in Marketing which saw him win the ITV Marketing Society Great Britain 'Marketer of the Year' Award in 1993.



**Leroy Logan** - Leroy Logan is a retired Police Superintendent who previously served for 30 years in the Metropolitan Police Service. Before retiring he was was part of the national police team that successfully

co-ordinated the safety and security of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics across the UK, and in addition to this he contributed to the post Games Legacy security report for the Government. Over the past 20 years Leroy has worked on educational and capacity building programmes for young people in response to the growing rate of knife and gun crime. This has led to him becoming Chair of the London Independent Youth Safety Advisory Board (LIYSAB) which works in partnership with the Cross Party Commission on Youth Violence.

Leroy has a BSC in Applied Biology from the University of East London. His achievements for his contributions to policing include an MBE and a Honorary PhD from the University East London.

### Secretariat

The Commissioners appointed Active Communities Network (CAN), the youth development charity, to provide a strategic advisory role and secretariat support role for their work. ACN will utilise its network of contacts when progressing this work and will also help shape the evidence base and the final report for the Commission.

## Annex B: Safer Lives Survey

Our Safer Lives Survey was conducted in January and February, 2018 and asked young people about the levels of violence that they are exposed to in their everyday lives. It is the first national survey of young people's views on these important issues. It provides an underlying evidence base for our work and also ensures that young people's views are central to our thinking and recommendations. We received over 2200 responses to the survey - full analysis of the responses will be included in our autumn report. The survey was designed by the Commission's academic partners with the input of young people and youth workers. The final questions and methodology were approved by the ethics committee at Warwick University. All surveys had to be completed on paper and under the supervision of a responsible adult.

- ▶ Conducted in Jan-Feb 2018
- ▶ Controlled conditions
- ▶ 8-24 year-olds
- ▶ Diverse sample: age, gender and geography
- ▶ Over 2,200 responses

### What did we ask?

- ▶ The types and levels of serious violence in their day-to-day lives
- ▶ Where they feel most safe
- ▶ How many people they know who are affected by serious violence
- ▶ Who they trust and where they go for advice
- ▶ The types of things they value and care about

### Initial Findings - general

- ▶ Over 70% of young people are exposed to serious violence in real life at least once a month
- ▶ 90% of young people are exposed to serious violence at least once a week (music, TV, social media)
- ▶ Younger respondents (8-19 year-olds) experience the most serious violence
- ▶ Over 16% of young people do not feel safest at home

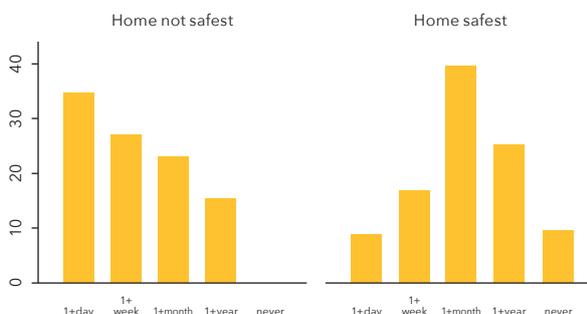
### Initial Findings - views on police

- ▶ Views on the police are split:
- ▶ 46% think police make young lives safer
- ▶ 21% do not think police make young lives safer
- ▶ 33% neither agree or disagree that police make young lives safer
- ▶ Less than half (46%) would ask police for advice if they were worried about being a victim of crime.

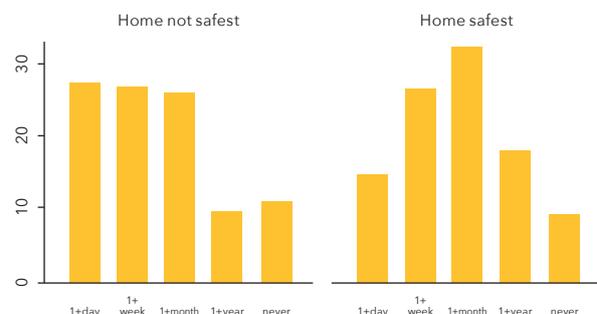
### Initial Findings - drugs

- ▶ 38% of young people know at least one person who sells drugs and almost 10% know more than 10 people who do
- ▶ 40% of young people agree that it is easy to buy illegal drugs where they live
- ▶ 33% know at least one person who carries a weapon and 7% know more than 10 people do

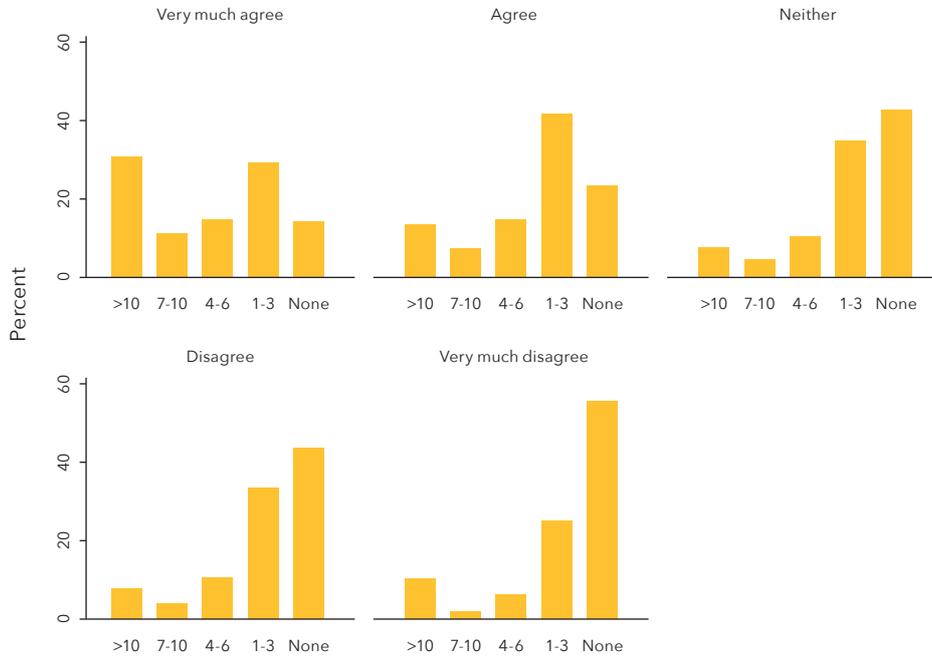
Exposure to violence by relative location safety, age 18+



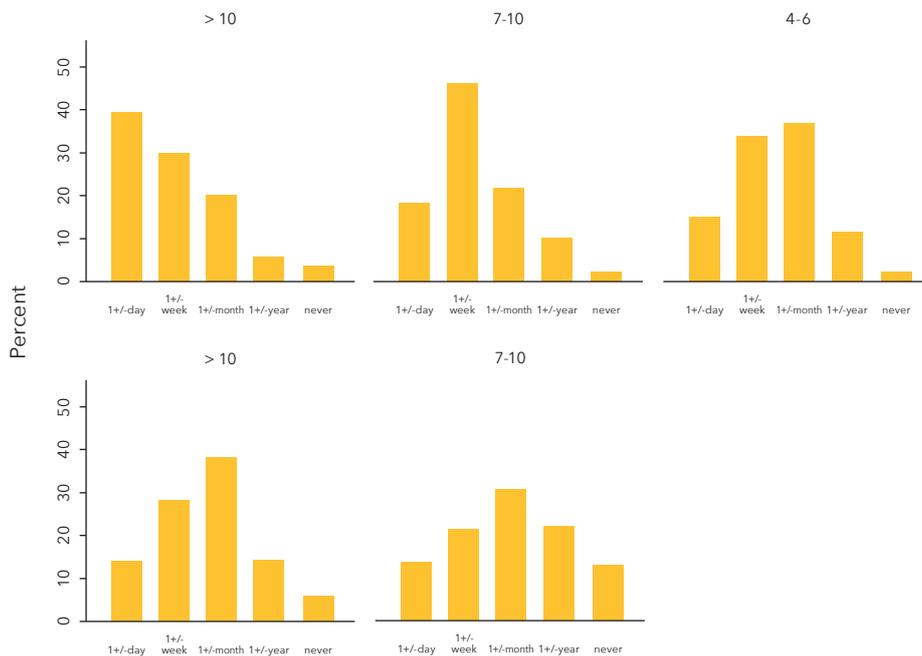
Exposure to violence by relative location safety, under 18s



## Known victims of violence by availability of drugs where live



## Exposure to violence by known people who sell drugs



## Annex C: Evidence Sessions and Regional Visits

The Commission held six evidence sessions in Portcullis House. In total we heard from more than 40 witnesses in over 15 hours of evidence.

- ▶ 16 October 2017: Youth Service and Community Work
- ▶ 11 December 2017: Mental Health and a Public Health Approach
- ▶ 26 February 2018: Early Years, Education and Employability
- ▶ 26 March 2018: Housing, Communities and Faith Groups
- ▶ 23 April 2018: Media, music and role models
- ▶ 21 May 2018: Policing and Criminal Justice System

Summaries of the sessions will be available at the Commission Website: <http://yvcommission.com/>

The Chair of the Commission attended workshops and focus groups in Portsmouth, Liverpool, Manchester and Salford, in order to identify what youth organisations, frontline workers and young people felt were the root causes of serious youth violence in their local areas. The visits involved a total of 52 young people and 44 agencies who work with young people who are either at risk or engaged in serious youth violence. The findings of the discussions will be presented in our full report under 6 broad themes:

- ▶ Youth work provision, local youth centres & role models
- ▶ Neighbourhood policing, schools & drug related violence
- ▶ Youth employment opportunities & life skills
- ▶ Early intervention family based support
- ▶ Regulating the use of social media
- ▶ Applying effective ways of local working

