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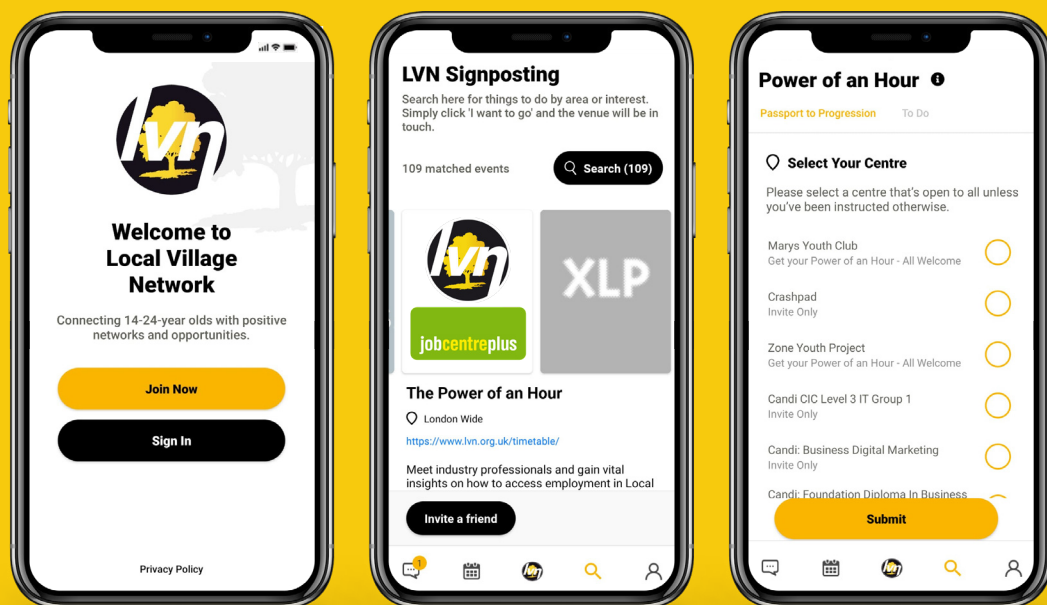
Issue 3 - January 2022



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Welcome to Issue Three of Fighting Knife Crime London Magazine

Foreword, Bruce Houlder, Founder of Fighting Knife Crime London (FKCL)

2021 ended with deaths in the capital reaching a disturbing new high, leaving lives and families devastated, and posing us all a big question for 2022. How should we respond? This 3rd edition of our online magazine offers practical solutions from real experts. I think you will find a strong consistent theme in the message they each send. We have contributions from two academics, a senior MP and Shadow Minister, contributions from the world of business, and from those in the front online of social reform. FKCL is now a powerful independent voice in concentrating the debate on what is required to effect real social change, whilst working with the grain of our partners in the voluntary sector, sports, arts, business, and in the NHS; and complementing the work of taxpayer-funded MOPAC, the London Violence Reduction Unit, and the Metropolitan Police. Without unrelenting commitment to this kind of

collaboration reducing this death rate will be a pipedream. Social deprivation and unemployment are key drivers of youth violence. It is within our power to end this.

We have an important contribution from **Chris Wright**, the Chief Executive of **Catch22**, the social business driving public service reform, and the charitable leading arm for so many proactive projects, including our own, that work in this area offering high quality public services for communities all over the UK. He writes about the **Creating Opportunities** programme, and the lifeline that employment offers. He speaks about the accountability of the whole community – from businesses, to government, and charities, and asks some serious questions about the current level of investment and cooperative violence reduction schemes being administered at national and local governmental level.

Sarah Jones MP, Shadow Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, and Member of Parliament for Croydon Central writes in this edition. She kindly agreed to meet me in Westminster in November with **Wes Streeting MP**, now the shadow Health secretary, but then shadow secretary of State for Child Poverty, and before that for Education. The discussion we had really engaged the issues we all face. **Sarah Jones MP** is so well placed to write for us. The last day of 2022 brought 2 fatal stabbings. One young person's life ended in Croydon and the other in the constituency of **Boris Johnson MP**, the **Prime Minister**. **Never was there a stronger case for cross-party cooperation.** Sarah argues here for a national mission for change. She was who founded the All-Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime. She has nothing to prove in terms of her commitment, and we are delighted that she has written for us. Editorially non-political, we are keen in the future to have contributions from the other senior party spokespersons.

Two of the country's foremost criminologists have added their own perspectives in separate articles. Professor **Peter Squires** and **Dr Elaine Williams**, respectively from Brighton and from Greenwich universities, have just published their book *"Rethinking Knife Crime"* (see within), but here offer their own perspectives. Dr Elaine Williams points to economic inequality, questions the values of labels that concentrate only on knife related offending, writes about racial stereotyping, and insists that all children and their families should be able to live healthy, happy, and safe lives, within well-resourced communities. Peter Squires while welcoming the cultural change away

from populist criminalisation strategies towards public health strategies for youth violence, here questions the level of funding and commitment to achieve sustainable reductions in violence reduction. All these important questions are asked by real experts in this field and should be heeded.

Dan Brown, the dynamic CEO and founder of the **Positive Transformation Group (PTG)** writes about his plans in conjunction with other major banks and corporates to reenergise huge areas of untapped labour opportunity, while raising millions for charitable projects along the way. He is the man to watch in the months ahead.

We also hear this time from **Annette Brown**, Head of Trust & Charitable projects at the PTG Trust. She is also an executive with Milbank LLP, and sets a personal example to all corporates, and organisations who care about community, and who are willing to step up and contribute to improve the lives of our young people.

Sue Scott-Horne is well known in the charitable sector for many things, not least her charity **Let's Get Talking**. Here she highlights a series of failings and opportunities waiting to be seized in the way we address knife crime. She speaks as one with huge hands-on experience and must always be part of the conversation.

Since the last issue of our online magazine in September, FKCL has really started to make its mark. Articles such as these are part of the reason. Measured by the interest shown to those who write to me every day, to the requests that are coming in from media, and from a wide range of individuals who want to know more and help, we are getting it right, but will need to improve what we

do. This last month has also been filled with opportunities to address groups of people, both online and in person, who are interested in finding answers to the societal and policy challenges that face us all. We at FKCL have much to learn from them all. Our purpose is to spread that learning.

Among educators, employers, community workers, the NHS, local and national government, and the press, there is a growing recognition of the value of a central resource like ours, and the intelligent contribution it tries to make to the debate on tackling youth violence and alienation. We aim to promote all that is being done across the capital by everyone who is working towards helping young people realise their potential and help them gain the respect they deserve. Collaboration lies at the heart of what we are doing. We are pleased to note that there is evidence now that the Home Office is increasingly recognising that a public health approach to drug taking, that drives so much youth violence, is an important step in the right direction. Our own article in this magazine edition from **Professor Peter Squires** is highly informative on this issue.

The combined research database we provide, administered by **Dr Nadia Habashi** alongside our team of web designers at **Iconic Media Solutions Ltd**, the information videos, the informed articles by leaders in the field, and the information we spread on social media relevant to our aims, are just part of our offer. We are always prepared to give and receive constructive criticism. We will work with anyone who has something useful to say, intends to act on that intention, and is committed to the same collaborative approach. Without

this, there is little hope of the long-term reform required. The planning of our cities for the young, the building of employment opportunities for those left behind, and the trust we place in our police force and in law enforcement agencies are vital steps.

The practical support given to those who daily strive to help young people in our communities, alongside proper resourcing, is all key to progress. Like the building of our great Cathedrals, the transformation of our cities cannot be created in months or even years. It takes time and dedication, and often more than one generation. Things like trust, hope, commitment, and of course kindness take less time, but are the sure foundations of the long-term changes that are needed.

Please read what our contributors have to say and continue to encourage others who might make a difference too.

Bruce Houlder
Founder of Fighting Knife
Crime London (FKCL)

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Bruce Houlder



Image © Ierbank

Avoiding the trap – creating the right opportunities

Chris Wright, Chief Executive, Catch22

Why do you work? Take a second to really think about it. Is it for the love of what you do? Does it bring a sense of purpose and routine to your life? Does it help maintain your mental health? Or perhaps it's just to put food on the table and keep the lights on. Whatever the reason is, imagine your life without that stability. Imagine what it might look like if you have been involved in the criminal justice system or you're looking to break out of a cycle of crime or violence, but you don't even know where to start. Imagine what it might look like if you've grown up in care without the right support or networks you need to help you get a job. What does your life look like then?

We've recently had a bit of a shift in our focus at Catch22. A shift towards

the recognition of the vital role of employment in making someone's life better, more stable and full of potential. At Catch22 we deliver public services, from what we call 'cradle to career'. This means everything from children's social care, alternative provision schools and colleges, to prison rehabilitation programmes, and everything in between – with a strong focus on developing employability programmes to support those furthest from the job market into sustainable and quality jobs. What has become clear is that we are uniquely placed to understand many of the social challenges people face, which can impact their ability to get a job, to remain in employment, or which are exacerbated through exclusion from the job market. We understand how vital it is to help

these people, without the networks, skills, digital connectivity, confidence or know-how, into work.

But just because we know what needs to change, what works to prevent young people from being side-lined from society and empowers them to contribute meaningfully to their communities and wider society, doesn't mean that it's our responsibility alone. We are but one piece of the puzzle. Anyone who knows me will have heard me speak about local accountability, collective impact and unlocking capacity in relation to how we can meaningfully reform our public services. Nowhere is this more pertinent than when considering how we work to help young people away from a life of serious violence and crime, into inspiring and sustainable jobs. It's about the accountability of the whole community – from businesses, to government, and charities. We know how powerful familial relationships can be, but the question is how we take these bonds and extend them beyond the traditional family walls, into the community, to support those who need it the most, into work.

But it's not even just about a job. Let's take another minute to reflect – would you aspire to a career in low-paid, unsustainable, and unfulfilling roles? Then why should we expect these young people to do just that. It's about the kinds of hopes and aspirations we would have for ourselves, our own children, and how we apply those to our communities. **The Social Switch Programme**, which we deliver in partnership with RedThread and is funded by the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit, is an industry-led, full-time training and work experience programme for young

people – training creative and motivated young people to develop sustainable digital careers. It focuses on harnessing the skill and creativity many young people may have previously used online in a more harmful way, and directing that to a positive future career using digital skills.

We all know that prevention is better than cure, and addressing individual need with tailored, personal and relational focused support is the key to a better life. In the case of serious youth violence, employment is, quite literally, a lifeline to divert someone to a more positive destination. Securing a sustainable job plays a major part in that – and businesses have a fundamental role to play in giving young people that first opportunity.

We've recently teamed up with The Prince's Trust and Apprentice Nation to deliver major contract to help up to 1,500 young people who are at risk of serious violence, move closer to work as part of the **Creating Opportunities** programme. The programme, funded by the Home Office, is heavily focused on individualised support and high-quality wraparound support. A recent Movement to Work survey showed that 68% of participants who receive this kind of help sustain their placements and move into work, compared to 32% who don't.

As part of the programme, we'll be providing participants with one-to-one support from a dedicated careers coach, a personalised support package, as well as help addressing barriers including health and wellbeing, independent living, housing, and developing life skills. We will also provide a further 6 months

of support once the participant has secured a new job or apprenticeship. We've found from experience of running other employability programmes that continuing to provide support in the first months of a job has a real bearing on how the employee settles in and whether they sustain employment long-term.

But, and at risk of sounding like a broken record, we are only one piece of this puzzle. The success of the programme will rely on us working closely with businesses of all sizes who are looking to recruit young people, and are open to considering those who may be facing challenges in the lives. We know that recruitment processes across the board tend to favour those who know how to write a CV, have a certain amount of exam grades to their name, and who have trusted adults around to help them navigate the often confusing, and laborious processes involved.

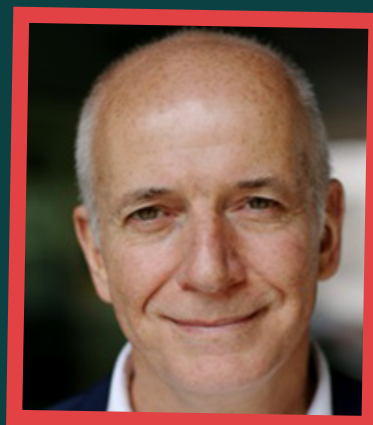
This programme looks to give space to those who can show their commitment to succeeding, enthusiasm and loyalty, but who might lack the right paperwork or people to help them. These are qualities which any good employer should prize above and beyond a 'good' CV. At Catch22 we find that many of the young people we work with who don't necessarily have the best qualifications on paper, with the right support, become quality employees.

Appointing someone to a role and seeing them flourish is clearly good for business. It is also hugely satisfying as an employer. That satisfaction is even greater when the person is someone who could have easily fallen into a life of crime and violence without that

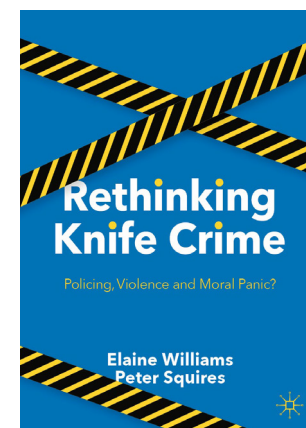
job or the support of an employability programme and a committed employer.

A job is perhaps a choice for you, or me. But for these young people it can be life-saving.

If you're interested in finding out more about the Creating Opportunities programme, you [can read more here](#) and get in touch.



Chris Wright is Chief Executive of Catch22, the social business driving public service reform. He leads the team of 1,800 staff and volunteers that supports over 100,000 people nationally



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E. Williams, P. Squires

Rethinking Knife Crime

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Public Health approaches for tackling knife-involved violence

Peter Squires, Professor [Emeritus] of Criminology & Public Policy, University of Brighton

The Strathclyde Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) is widely credited for having galvanized the search for sustainable, community-involved and health-led violence reduction strategies in the UK. In fact the CIRV is the result of a much wider rethinking of the issue of violence reduction, moving away from primarily law enforcement-led responses which can often run the risk of deepening community divisions and alienating the very people most in need to help and support. Public health approaches have their roots in World Health Organisation (WHO: *World Report on Violence and Health*, 2002) initiatives to establish evidence-led, social and epidemiological, approaches treating violence as a cyclical and social problem rather than as a simply criminal question, thereby bringing a wider range of agencies and resources into play. As we showed in our recent book, *Rethinking Knife Crime*, almost two decades of 'knife crime' crisis, agitation, politicking, police action and criminal justice strategy have merely culminated in a new high-point for knife violence, more knife murders, greater punitiveness (more people in prison and for longer sentences) but diminishing rates of cases cleared up (sanction-detections). Clearly, despite all the enforcement-led action, something isn't working.

Around the world, a range of interventions drawing on aspects of a public health strategy are said to have demonstrated the strengths and potential contributions of a public health-led violence reduction strategy, including Boston's renowned 'Ceasefire' strategy, Chicago's 'violence interrupters' project as well as the 'Smart Justice' movement (Waller, 2014). However, despite this, there is a sense in which the development of a public health strategy for knife crime has taken on some of the characteristics of the search for the 'holy grail'. As some commentators have noted, there has been much talk about public health strategies for knife crime, but rather less clarity about what this actually means and doubts about the scale of resources allocated to the task (especially taking account of the differences in size, scale and composition of the population of Glasgow, as compared with London, for instance). Members of Parliament on the 2019 *Serious Youth Violence* Select Committee concluded that there appeared 'a serious mismatch between the Government's diagnosis of the problem and its proposed solutions. This is symptomatic of wider dysfunctions within the Government's response to this issue, and its approach to crime and disorder more broadly' (HASC, 2019: 18 paras 41-42). The *Youth Violence Commission* similarly warned

of its concern that the term 'public health model' is being used without a proper understanding of 'what is actually required to affect lasting change.' (HASC, 2019: paragraph 53). In particular, doubts have been raised about British politicians 'cherry-picking' only those aspects of the Strathclyde approach that suited them rather than fully adopting the strategy which actually *worked north* of the border.

A particular issue has involved the issue of data sharing between health and police agencies. In Glasgow, data was shared so that a clear picture of patterns of violence across communities could be tracked in order to direct appropriate preventive resources to the communities and neighbourhoods deemed most at risk. In England, by contrast, data sharing has been focussed around the mandatory reporting, by A&E doctors, of knife injuries to the police, thereby allowing police to interview victims, investigate offences and pursue offenders. While Strathclyde's data sharing was motivated by the appropriate targeting of resources to communities, in London it was primarily about prosecutions, health strategy was subordinated to enforcement strategy. Public health has not been about changing an approach, but rather about net-widening, drawing hospitals into the enforcement net. One consequence may be that knife victims avoid going to A&E unless their injuries are serious.

Drawing upon WHO guidelines, four stages comprising a public health response to (knife) violence have been identified:

- Appropriately defining the problem through the systematic collection of information

about the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of violence,

- Establishing why violence occurs using research to determine the causes and correlates of violence, the factors that increase or decrease the risk for violence, and the factors that could be modified through interventions,
- finding out what works to prevent violence by designing, implementing and evaluating interventions, and
- implementing effective and promising interventions in a wide range of settings

Now that the Government has established 18 new Violence Reduction Units, in the police force areas considered to have the worst 'serious violence' problems, we have these four criteria to assess the overall impact of the strategy. This will include the new '*Serious Violence Duty*' conferred upon local partnerships by the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts* legislation requiring partnerships to complete a strategic needs assessment (SNA) in order to better understand how violence is affecting their communities and to help them develop an effective response strategy. In some ways the new requirement echoes the community safety audits established some years ago by the 1997 Crime and Disorder Act, although it is more narrowly focused upon serious violence, and that may prove a weakness.

The new partnerships are to be financed by a new Home Office 'Central Violence Fund' of £100 million, although roughly two-thirds of this (not all of

it 'new money') has been earmarked for policing enhancements and only the remainder was for 'community initiatives'. To set some perspective, by the end of the decade to 2021, some £35 million less per year was being spent on London's youth services compared with pre-austerity levels. And yet, £35 million was equal to the total community safety allocation for 18 VRUs in 18 cities across the country as a whole. Similar research by the YMCA and *Action for children* showed that some £260 million had been withdrawn from local authority children's services budgets between 2011 and 2017, with the loss of over a thousand children's centres and 760 youth centres, some major cities losing close to 90% of their youth services budgets. Although the Serious Youth Violence Reduction Strategy is meant to be informed by the Home Office compilation of research on the 'drivers' of serious violence (HM Government, 2018) a degree of scepticism has accompanied the suggestion that such under-resourced services can deliver the VRU targets sought.

Early Home Office evaluations (Research Reports 116 and 117) of the first year of working of the VRUs, have drawn some conclusions about their development thus far and activities. Evaluators have so far drawn attention to: a potentially *narrow* focus upon knife and gun violence and the under 25s (to which 20% of VRU funding is to be targeted); some *wider* issues surfacing in the needs assessments (sexual exploitation, domestic violence and modern slavery); a focus on some perceived key drivers of violence (adverse childhood experiences,

deprivation and austerity) but little in the way of strategies to address these; and some evidence of emerging partnership working even though many VRUs are led by the Police or Police & Crime Commissioners. All told it amounts to a mixed message and a missed opportunity - so far. Whether there is the funding and commitment to achieve sustainable reductions in violence reduction with existing levels of funding and whether the cultural change away from populist criminalisation strategies can be delivered remains to be seen. Perhaps this is especially so while some of the most gratuitously represented violence sits at the heart of the strategy and the public and political mood around youth violence remains so profoundly shaped by punitive discourse and the markedly racialised rhetorics of 'law and order' so recently evidenced in the misleading *Policy Exchange* Report, Knife Crime in the Capital (Kingsley, 2021).

Professor Peter Squires,
Professor [Emeritus] of Criminology &
Public Policy, University of Brighton



Professor Peter Squires

The problem with 'knife crime'; What's in a label?

Dr Elaine Williams BA MA PhD, Lecturer in Criminology, University of Greenwich

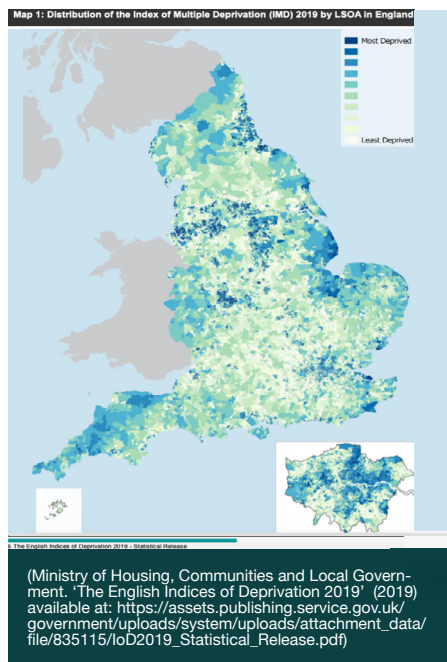
Whenver 'knife crime' is mentioned, certain assumptions are likely to be made. It will be assumed that we are talking about a type of crime that is distinctly youthful, that this is a problem located in the inner-city (particularly London), and it will likely be insinuated that this is a problem characterised by youth culture disproportionately represented by Black or Asian young people. But 'knife crime' data tells a different story. The majority of knife possession offences recorded and those admitted to hospital for assault by sharp instrument are adults (82% and 83% respectively¹). The highest rates of offence involving a sharp instrument in 2020/2021 were in the West Midlands, with the highest proportional increase in Surrey². And once economic factors are accounted for (Black and minoritized ethnicities are twice as likely to live deprived areas of the UK where individuals are more likely to experience violent crime³) there is no correlation between ethnicity and knife offending.

However, child-on-child homicide with knives is a devastating reality and each young life cut short is a tragedy that sends shockwaves of trauma and harm through communities that are impacted. For all the talk of 'tackling knife crime' we've seen very little change in rates of violence and homicide between children. So, what is the problem with calling this 'knife crime' if it draws much needed attention to the

problem? My experience and research in knife crime prevention since 2008, suggest there are several problems with how the label 'knife crime' frames violence between young people.

Firstly, talking about 'knife crime' rather than violence has led to knife-oriented approaches that obscures the underlying causes. The introduction of the 'knife enabled' police crime code in 2001 was an instrumental shift in the way offences with knives are recorded. This new 'tick box' in police crime recording systems became the statistical foundation for the crime category 'knife crime' that emerges in the early 2000s and begins a process of understanding youth violence through the weapon used for the first time in England and Wales. Along with blades, the definition of 'knife enabled' by the Home Office includes all sharp instruments such as screw drivers, broken bottles or glass and the data generated often makes no distinction between incidences of domestic violence, bar brawls, theft, sexual assault, or the age of the offender.

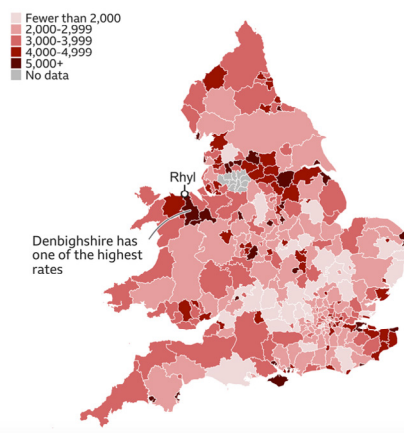
By grouping together violence in different contexts, with varying underlying motivations and causes, 'knife crime' presents a weapon focussed conceptualisation of conflict that makes the knife the problem, rather than the violence itself. Since 2008, policy and criminal justice practice have become increasingly knife-oriented and through this the cause and effect have been



flipped; we target a 'knife culture' in the belief that it causes violence, rather than understanding the violent contexts that made a 'knife culture' inevitable. Those working on the ground with young people have consistently recognised the underlying sociological shifts that have intensified violence between young people over past decades⁴, but these crucial understandings are obscured by a societal fixation with the lurid knives and blades that make 'knife crime' such a persistent label.

Secondly, the overtly racist discourse that frames 'knife crime' as culturally attached to Black or Asian children is difficult to separate from the label. I was once facilitating a knife crime prevention project that arranged for young people who had a first-time knife offence to

Violent incidents resulting in death or injury per 100,000 people April 2016-March 2021



(adapted from S. Swann & W. Stephenson 'Levelling up: The seaside town fighting violence and frustration' BBC News (3rd August 2021) Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58029524>)

meet with local police officers and ask them any questions they had. One Black teenager asked the officers "why do you always stop and search Black boys?". A white officer gestured to the group of predominantly Black and minority ethnic young people in the room and replied in a matter-of-fact tone, "well, you only have to look at the people in this room to know that knife crime is a Black issue". In fact, the representation within the room was proportional to that of school age children in that London borough – but the institutional message was clear.

This interaction during a knife crime project exemplifies the overt and 'common-sense' racialisation of 'knife crime' in official discourse and prevention practice. It is hardly surprising that such understandings have become normalised,

considering that then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, stated in 2007 that *'In respect of knife and gun gangs... we won't stop this by pretending it isn't young black kids doing it'*⁵. With more violent overtones, in 2018 the BBC broadcast a Question Time audience member calling knife perpetrators *'a particular breed of human who... should be dealt with like the cancer they are and exterminated'*⁶. The label is also used selectively in the press, with analysis of 'knife crime' reports during the year of 2017 finding that in all national press other than *The Guardian*, the label 'knife crime' was only used to describe incidents when the victim was a Black teen or child located in a city⁷. Communication on Twitter consistently demonstrates the vitriolic racism contained in the label 'knife crime' – you need only look as far as the reply comments on any image of a knife recovered and shared by police Twitter accounts for evidence of this!

The combined impact of a restrictive knife focus and the racialised notion of a 'knife culture' makes the label 'knife crime' particularly problematic. However, for many individuals and organisations committed to reducing violence between young people the label provides the only media and public attention that will make the tragedy of child-on-child homicides a policy priority. Working within this dilemma is unavoidable and we will continue to navigate the label and its assumptions in violence reduction work for the foreseeable future. What we can do, however, is be aware of the pitfalls of 'knife crime'. We can consciously move the conversation beyond the knife and youth culture at every opportunity, and instead draw attention to the brutalising living conditions that have normalised

violence in the everyday lives of many young people. We must reject racist discourse that blames culture instead of economic inequality and insist that all children and their families are able to live healthy, happy, and safe lives, within well-resourced communities.

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Dr Elaine Williams BA MA PhD,
Lecturer in Criminology at the
University of Greenwich.





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The four strands that we need to address to prevent London's rise in violence, and the building blocks of change

Sarah Jones MP, Shadow Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Member of Parliament for Croydon Central

The need to tackle violence has driven much of my work in Parliament since I became an MP in 2017.

My hometown of Croydon had experienced a rise in serious violence and knife crime from around 2014. By the time the election of 2017 came round, we had lost several young

boys, murdered whilst still teenagers. I pledged that if elected, I would set up an All Party Parliamentary Group on knife crime, to focus on prevention.

During the 2017 election campaign, I canvassed a group of young men who explained to me that they had nowhere to go, no youth clubs, no training for the kinds of jobs they wanted to do. I

promised to act, but they were cynical about whether I would. Months later, one of those men, Kelva Smith, was murdered. I had failed to help him in time and that drives me forward to this day.

This government has dropped the ball on violence and on crime more broadly over the last eleven years. There are four areas where their complacency has driven up serious violence. The first is of course the lack of policing – 21,000 lost police officers is a well-worn statistic. But less well known are the 50% cuts to PSCOs, the eyes and ears of our community. Or the loss of essential staff like forensic teams or analysts. With the nature of crime changing, fuelled

by new technology, the police have been left to do more with less. And the consequences are falling prosecution rates – with some crimes now going virtually unchecked.

Second, the UK is now Europe's largest heroin market and a target for international drug trafficking gangs. This has increased violence on our streets and steered a trend towards youth violence with increasingly younger children carrying knives and drugs. Between 1996 and 2011/12, the number of young people using class A drugs was on a downward trend. Since then, their use of class A drugs has skyrocketed. Drug deaths are at an all-time high and we have seen the emergence of increasingly violent and exploitative gangs use technology that is way ahead of the Government to groom kids and sell them drugs.

Third, violence against women and girls has reached epidemic levels – as defined by Her Majesty's Inspector Zoe Billingham in her damning report earlier this year. As she said 'the problem is known, consistent and deep-rooted in its prescience and growing in the forms it takes'. Prosecution rates for crime such as rape and sexual assault are on the floor. There is inconsistency at every level in terms of how victims are treated, what action is taken and where responsibly lies. The solutions identified in that report included an immediate and unequivocal commitment to tackling VAWG as an absolute priority.'

Fourth, all the services and forces for good that prevent violence, that support young people, that give treatment to drug addicts, that help support parents in the first 1000 days of their child's

life, that support children with special educational needs, that support women as they leave violent partners, that equip young people for the challenges they face, and that more broadly tackle inequality and poverty, have been decimated. Children need adults to support them, women need support to help them escape violence, and crucially perpetrators need punishment to give justice to victims, and prevention treatment to stop a repeating cycle of violence.

For too long, government has looked away from this problem – complacency and lack of purpose. The only way to tackle it is with leadership and grip. Remember under the last Labour government when teenage pregnancy was amongst the highest rate in Europe? Government led from the top, with the Prime Minister driving the strategy. A cross-government approach brought in health, education, the home office, DWP and other departments to tackle the underlying causes of lack of aspiration, training, education, hope. And the result was a 50% drop in teenage pregnancy rates over 10 years – a societal shift. The same approach must be taken with violence.

We can see from patterns of crime that violence is not inevitable – it can be prevented. Ask any police officer and they will say they cannot arrest their way out of the problem – even with more resources. A national mission is needed, starting with the first 1000 days, led by what we know on adverse childhood experiences and trauma, properly funded education, high quality youth provision, Wes Streeting's crucial 10 by 10 where every child experiences

playing an instrument, visiting a museum, taking part in a debate by the time they are ten years old. We also need activities outside school hours, job creation in new green technology with training and skills at its heart, a decent welfare system that gives everyone the help up they need, and a properly funded police service that uses the technology of today's criminals to stop them in their tracks. These are the building blocks of a society where violence falls. If only we had a government that cared enough to do it.

Violence, like so many of the issues facing people today, is not inevitable. But we need to start from the principle that every child, no matter their situation, deserves the absolute best support we can give them. The safety and success of our children must be our number one priority.

Sarah Jones MP,

Shadow Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Member of Parliament for Croydon Central



Sarah Jones MP



Positively Transforming Communities to create Brighter Better Futures

Dan Brown, Founder of the Positive Transformation Group

The Positive Transformation Group (PTG) is leading a locally developed, national collaboration to connect Community with Corporates. This powerful collaboration engaging communities and corporates will level up access to opportunity, delivering measurable Positive Transformation through implementation of a data rich, intelligent calculation of social value and environmental impact to form the foundations of UK wide ESG initiatives.

Don't worry, I will explain what all this means.

This initiative is led by our Founder Dan Brown, along with Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant, Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE, and an incredibly connected, motivated, likeminded, and focused senior leadership team. Our mission is to Positively Impact a minimum of 1 billion lives - Providing the right networks, connections, resources, and opportunities to create brighter better futures.

PTG Initiative is leading a locally developed, nationally delivered collaboration to connect Community with Corporates, creating measurable intelligent calculation of social value and environmental impact.

Corporate & Communities in Collaboration (CCC) will be a driving force for supporting the government's promises to level up access to opportunities across the UK, increasing diversity, inclusion, while also addressing important complex social challenges like Digital Inequality, access to digital skills, and creating access to funded skills to support pathways into employment.

To date, PTG has been creating a UK wide prototype working with Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant, Sir Ken Olisa OBE, and others of influence across business, state and third sector. A core part of this work has been to create a project looking at how, using technological advances, a clear, recognised, and auditable framework for calculating social value can be created. This can then be adapted to support corporates with community engagement, providing a means to measure the impact of this added social value alongside their respective ESG commitment. The technology we are now able to engage is new and ground-breaking.

An important foundation of this that is our partnership with a significant network of housing associations, 1800 across the UK. This has the capacity to provide huge untapped human resources. Through this partnership PTG can efficiently, and very effectively, connect corporates

to communities and facilitate access to the right people, resources, and funding to drive opportunities through powerful collaborations. This work will also create the PTG Bridge, connecting Communities and Corporates, levelling up society and creating brighter better futures through new thinking and Positive Transformation

PTG have created a middle ground that can demonstrate value to Communities, Corporates, and the Government alike through collaborative partnerships delivered locally that combine into a national movement for levelling up and Positive Transformation. This is a desperately needed catalyst for change through an evolution in creating a commercially sustainable, social value driven, ethical marketplace for business, state and third sector.

A clear and simple example of this is the work we are doing to help people in communities around the country access training, skills funding and employment opportunities by connecting them directly with employers. We are removing third party recruitment companies, and the complex biases that prevent people becoming socially mobile around the UK.

In leading a social impact evolution, PTG will support Government and Corporates with their drive towards better implementation of ESG, and help their election promises to level up communities. ESG has moved from the UN to mainstream thinking in Government and amongst corporations all over the world. This move has given added impetus by COP26, and the realisation that greater sustainability and investment in communities are necessary. This is fuelled by public demand for

those in power to do better and will be leveraged by PTG Collaborative Impact Groups. The PTG Impact Groups are made up everyday people who have a passion to move forward in life. We connect passionate people in communities, to the right connections, resources and funding to help them move forward. This is what Connecting Communities with Corporates (CCC) is building across the UK.

Regulators and others are now biting hard on the practical and measurable implementation of ESG within Corporates and asking why we are not doing more. PTG we can bridge the gap by levelling up in the kind of way that we all assume the Government wish to, but simply cannot, without collaboration with Communities and Corporates.

Working with PTG, and by using new and sophisticated IT solutions, an individual corporate ESG report can now be made to present measurable outcomes in way that could not be done before. Inevitably this is not provided for free, it will however provide a measurable and commercially sustainable value, along with a hugely desirable benefit in efficiency as organisations attempt to do business by tapping into new labour markets. The social housing sector alone represents a 20% market segment of diverse and inclusive new talent and potential customers that has been overlooked for far too long. Poverty does NOT equal stupidity, quite the opposite.

How does this all help connect to communities? When investment in communities, and in their housing and buildings start to beneficially impact the individual, there is a curve that begins to drive new potential employees from the

same demographic. From the corporate's perspective, this is a huge untapped opportunity to find new and talented employees. One way of looking at it is to say that there is a massive problem with recruitment in the UK at present. This is exacerbated by another body of potential employees, who do not want to return to work in an office environment and are keen to find new ways of working. There is sitting in the homes of social housing communities, a huge mass of untapped talent – potentially up to 20% of the working population. PTG aim not to work for them, but rather with them.

PTG is leading a project to identify the untapped talent market that also potentially represents a 20% new market segment than can be accessed by forward thinking alongside truly diverse and inclusive corporates. Now more than ever before, we have a long overdue opportunity to level up the UK, create meaningful and measurable diversity and inclusion, while showing UK PLC as leading the way in how to create commercially sustainable, access to opportunities through 'no boundaries' collaborative initiatives.

In creating this collaborative approach PTG can demonstrate a completely new and revolutionary approach to belonging at work. We will provide fully funded, and part subsidised, volume recruitment through back to work programmes, completely new thinking in recruitment and new talent attraction, as well as showing how to create meaningful purpose driven employee engagement with active involvement in social and environmental projects.

These initiatives enable employers to be more tailored in their approach

to new talent acquisition, taking an influencer-based approach and in removing to a substantial degree over-inflated recruitment fees from agencies and social media, which are all becoming dramatically less effective in our new world economy.

What nobody accounted for until the pandemic is the scale of the race to find new talent and drive for diversity and inclusion. PTG can now demonstrate that not only can an organisation be part of this national project, but PTG can open up a large percentage of the UK population living in the community to which these corporates have had scant access until now.

This is the PTG Bridge, Connecting Communities and Corporates (CCC), levelling up society and creating brighter better futures through new thinking and Positive Transformation.

Dan Brown

Founder of the Positive Transformation Group



www.positivetransformation.org



Dan Brown

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Image © Aleutie

SOS - We have an emergency – Solutions to knife crime violence! PUT DOWN THE KNIVES!

Sue Scott-Horne, Founder, Let's Get Talking Charity

I am the Founder of the registered Let's Get Talking Education Charity. We design award-winning education resources which are available at www.letsgettalking.org (LGT). I am also the

Co-Founder with my daughter Annie of @crystallmagic22 on Instagram and Sue's Spiritual Sanctuary. I have been a Freeman of the City of London for ten years, a member of the Worshipful

now. It just gets worse. The inspiration for my work increased with the deaths of both Ben Kinsella and Damilola Taylor who was just ten years old, stabbed in the leg on a damp dark stairway where he was left to die. There are so many more Damilola's now. His legacy is the Damilola Taylor Trust (DTT); to this day after twenty years, they like us at Let's Get Talking, are still working hard to stop knife crime.

Why? Well, here are just a few reasons to think about.

Violent vicious killers are on our dangerous streets. Poor mental health, an inability to express emotions, hopelessness, no respect for life, and death too, are their travelling companions. Government needs to toughen up knife crime sentences, but we also need to tackle root causes. Early Adverse Childhood Experiences can include things like physical and emotional abuse, neglect, care-giver mental illness, verbal abuse and household violence. Collaboration is essential between health services, and those who are responsible for education, in order that the child can access the right support.

Early education is key to explaining the devastation to all involved caused by stabbings and murders; LGT educates children as young as eight up to twenty years old. We stop knife crime with our programmes and help them to make the right informed choices and decisions for their futures. It is extraordinary that there are children on our streets who feel the need to wear stab vests. Parental role models whose own lives have been blighted by alcohol, drugs, or crime, create a dangerous vacuum

Company of Educators, and board member of The British Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAWE) a prestigious organisation.

We have huge and long-standing knife crime problems in the UK. We are still burying our stabbed young people; mothers and fathers are crying out for their children and will do so for the rest of their lives. In 2008 we saw a record 29 fatalities, along with many more injuries caused by stabbings. 2021 has just ended, and we all know what the tally is

ready to fill the emptied lives of such children. At LGT, we applaud such excellent projects as the Daniel Baird Foundation who have invented Bleed Kits and circulated them around the UK in many venues and places where experience shows they may be needed. See www.controlthebleed.org.uk. There are many others.

Social Media/YouTube/PlayStation and videos with the potential for causing damage to young impressionable mind need controlling. Those who immorally host these must take responsibility, and act accordingly. What they permit when they should not, can lead to people dying.

The way we are policed must surely change. More police are needed on streets although a lot of young people do not trust the police to keep them safe, so they are alone and exposed to peer pressure, gangs, and failed drug prohibition. This trust gap needs to be closed. The police too need to be helped to do this.

There is another phenomenon at play. Some young people have no fear of prison, nor of the police. Half of knife crime murders are committed by under 25's. Killings will continue as long as they remain in denial about the consequences of carrying or using a knife. Knives are still sold unpackaged and are too easy to thief.

The fact is I suspect that everyone really knows what needs to be done. Our social services, youth organisations, and our understanding of what makes young people tick need far greater attention. Ordinary healthy human interaction has been replaced by screens and dangerous videos. The

way we describe failure in the young has to be radically reappraised and addressed.

DRUGS and EDUCATION – The connection between violence, and 'County lines' drug dealing is well established. Alongside all the efforts being made to replace the financial attractions that membership of these drug gangs brings, there needs to be a top-down reappraisal of the reasons why children find this more attractive, despite its dangers; and to replace it with something more enticing. These children, who now see with lost and soulless eyes, should be the most important of issues to address with a long-term governmental plan. Solid action is required to remove the means of livelihood from these gangs and replace them with different options.

But what about the way we educate too. Education at all ages from age eight up to twenty is essential. Alternatives must be made more attractive. Any child affected by food poverty should be identified and helped. Children should be taught to see the companionship and advantage of just joining healthy activity. LGT's Youth Projects/Cadets/National Citizen Service/sport and creative activities are needed more now than ever. Over twenty years ago, I was a Tutor in Charge in Islington Youth Service when the biggest cuts to Children's Services decimated so many clubs and did so much damage. This where we find the root of such violence. I spent three years writing my adolescent topic-based award-winning card sets and bringing psychology, and talking therapy Talkshops into our programmes, back to basics, speaking to

each other. Oracy, supporting children and young people to enable them to communicate and make conversation again, is now being bought back into the National Curriculum too. They need to find their voices, tell their stories, and be listened to with respect and support.

All schools, every community centre, the police, and youth groups need to do more. Some schools will not admit to the violence or bullying going on at their school. They need to make Anti Knife Crime, Gangs and Violence a part of their Personal, Social, Health Education PSHE National curriculum work for at least two hours per week. These lessons are as important as Maths, English and Science, and must now become part of the curriculum. After all, it is well recognised now that brain development makes some young people terribly vulnerable to the attractions of a dangerous, briefly alluring alternative life. Our emergency services are stretched, injuries grow at an alarming rate, and surgeons are left to mend the pieces. We have bequeathed our children a health crisis at the stage where any life should blossom.

Yes, all this needs funding, but there is also a potentially huge return on investment for providing the funds in the first place. Police then can be more visible and equipped to deal constructively with this issue of national concern daily illustrated by our media. Schools need to be helped too. Together these measures can reduce the devastation and heartbreak of so many families and communities, and to the NHS. Our police need to be supported by laws that they remain fit for the purpose they were designed, which is to

end the violence on our streets.

In the end, despite the good work being done by MOPAC/VRU in London, there needs to be more imagination applied from the heart of national government to the long-term planning of our towns and cities, so that the temporary financial fixes applied to local problems are not the only available solution. The leaders of all our London boroughs need to plan in collaboration with each other to reduce the violence on the streets, to plan within their boroughs to guarantee the long-term health of our children and families, and to bring whatever pressure is necessary to see that this happens. We can help them too. If our young people are not our absolute priority, then we have all lost our way.

Hop over and support us at
www.letsgettalking.org
You can also read the full document to this article there.

Sue Scott-Horne
Founder, Let's Get Talking Charity



Sue Scott-Horne



Creating brighter, better futures – Practical first steps

Annette Brown, Head of Trust & Charitable projects, PTG Trust (PTI)

The Positive Transformation Group Trust (PTG)

This document will outline the direction for the PTG Trust. It is based on the information gathered through the Pilot phase of our Ending Digital Poverty (EDP) program. It demonstrates, how with just a little passion, any corporate can contribute to turning young lives around.

Following the EDP Pilot

On 21st July I met Tyrell Davis-Douglas. Tyrell works with the Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit. Tyrell was just one of the students who received a laptop as part of the PTG Ending Digital Poverty pilot.

The visit took place at Evolve housing in Thornton Heath. On that day I met with many young people who were hopeful of starting out on a career, using the laptop that had been given to help them either with their

study or to help them find permanent accommodation. I met Anthony Edwards who is the Centre's Work and Learning Coordinator. Anthony is responsible for helping the residents further their education and look for full time employment.

I will return to Anthony later.

My visit to Evolve Housing was very interesting. Tyrell, because of his work with the Mayor's office understood the importance of getting as many people as possible (especially the younger people) who reside in the facility, off the streets and into work placements. In order to do that, these young people needed help and guidance, but most of all digital skills and access to the technology that could ultimately release them from their inevitable life cycle.

Within the building of Evolve Housing was a storeroom. A relatively large room with nothing but boxes and



Tyrell Davis-Douglas

old junk. Tyrell worked with Anthony to clear this room and together they began gathering old IT equipment to hatch together some form of training

room. To say it looked a little Heath Robinson would be an understatement.

Tyrell was so enthusiastic about what they had achieved, and the fact that Anthony and himself were now able to offer CV writing sessions. They were also able to help these young people apply for jobs and housing which meant, for them, it could potentially change the lives of many.

On 2nd Oct 2021 Tyrell was featured on the BBC London news. He spoke about the unit he works for, and how he spends his time interacting with and helping knife users. His point is that the Met Police have shared more than 2000 images on social media of knives seized in the last year.

Tyrell feels this display of knives encourages knife users to "go one better" and that the Met Police should refrain from the public display of heroism with tackling knife crime. Similar knife crime charities by comparison have displayed may be one or two in the same timeframe.

So far this year over 71 people have died through knife crime alone. Tyrell is passionate about what he does and why he wants to make a difference.

Milbank's involvement

As Milbank (<https://www.milbank.com/en/offices/london.html>), where I also work as IT manager, were going through an office move, Evolve Housing were offered some of the equipment, furniture, kitchen utensils etc that could not only change the training centre at the facility, but also help when some of the young residents were offered accommodation with things like cutlery and items that

they would have to otherwise buy for themselves. This was a great initiative supported by Milbank, but ultimately led by Anthony.

Anthony's story

Anthony has spent almost half his life in care. His early years were spent in social care in a home in Thornton Heath. This facility fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished. Evolve Housing facility now stands on the exact site of Anthony's original care home. Anthony is passionate about what he does for these young (and not so young) people who have found themselves living at the home.

When I offered Anthony the opportunity to come to Milbank's offices at Gresham Street he was overwhelmed. With the equipment he took for the training room - docking stations, monitors, and other "tech" items he has been able to set up not only a training room in Thornton Heath but also another facility run by Evolve housing nearby.

Anthony's passion for all things technology, along with that same passion to share knowledge and support people in the facility to explore career avenues and apply for social housing is contagious.

I have kept in touch with Anthony throughout this journey and it has been an inspiration to listen to his journey and continued learning development for the home.

In early December Anthony contacted me to say that his role was not going to be funded going forward and that he had to start thinking about his future. He had researched the

possibility of working as an apprentice in technology which he feels would be a great place for him to start his "new career". I whole heartedly support Anthony's decision to make this change. I will explain why shortly.

I have put Anthony in touch with George Greaves, who has already managed to get Anthony on a day course promoting apprenticeship schemes, which Anthony has attended and is now actively seeking a role within an organisation to start an apprenticeship in technology.

This excerpt from the Evolve Housing information pack sums up Anthony and why I support his decision for a career change.



Anthony Edwards (left)

"I'm Anthony and I am the Work and Learning co-ordinator for anyone under 25 who needs support getting back into education or training, looking at employment opportunities and helping you move into independence. We have

built up a great set of education and employment partners and can link you in with what you need. 2020 has been a rough year for us all and unemployment is at an all-time high, leaving feelings at an all-time low however it has also dawned the age of digital interviews, remote learning, and employment opportunities. For me as someone who loves technology and enjoys new and creative ways of doing things it's an exciting time to come into the role and I'm always open to suggestions on how to improve please don't hesitate to hit me up if you have a link you think should be shared to all. I'll make a point of coming and introducing myself as soon as I can. If you need any support around education or employment, get in touch with me."

Bear in mind this was written by someone who isn't that well connected, doesn't have the luxury of corporate funding and probably doesn't get much by the way of pay and benefits for himself but is willing to give up his time freely to help anyone else that needs it.

Annette's story

Unlike Dan I have never been homeless. I grew up the youngest of 6 in a house full of love, but not much else. I didn't pick a new pair of shoes for myself until I started my Saturday job at 16..... thankfully my sisters had good taste in shoes.

The road to Milbank wasn't easy, opting to start a degree in my late 30's with two young children and the main carer for my sick mother. I worked nights at law firms in their document production departments, whilst I studied all day and fitted in the children

and nursing in between. Dan Brown, The Founder of PTG, gets up at 4 am, but I would unlikely be in bed much before then and up again at 6 to get the kids ready for school. But very much like Dan, I had the drive and passion to forge ahead. This is where I landed.

If there is anything I've learnt is that I always want to provide enough food, so no one is hungry. Laugh loud enough so everyone can hear and have enough love in my heart to forgive.

I am looking forward to forging ahead with the PTG Trust, which will focus on stories such as these.

Annette Brown
Head of Trust & Charitable projects,
PTG Trust (PTI)



Annette Brown



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