

# FIGHTING KNIFE CRIME



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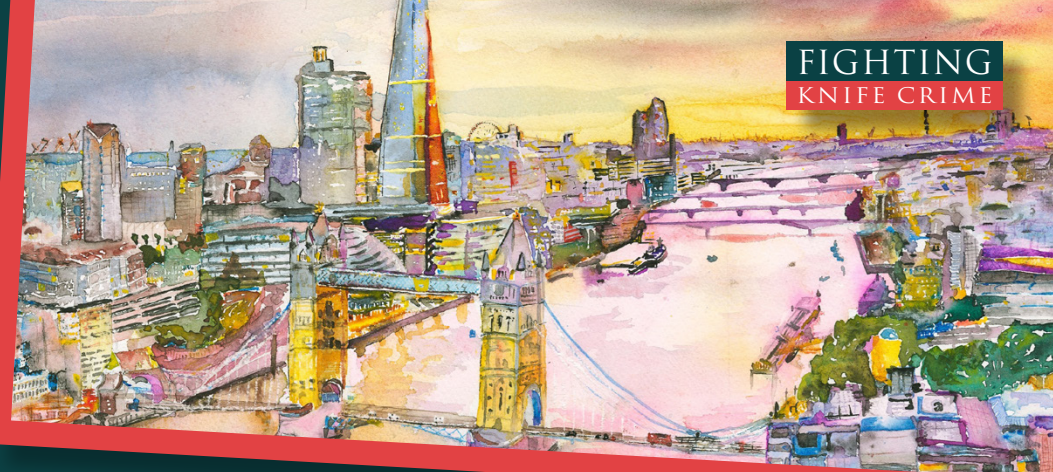
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## FKCL's First Year

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

Our fourth quarterly magazine celebrates our first year since launching in June last year. And what a year it has been. The aim we set for our website was to inform and provide access to a huge range of resources to all those who wish to help young people, and to young people looking for inspiration and change in their lives. From all that people tell us, we are making that difference. We have grown so successfully because we have forged strong partnerships of the willing, promoting the work that others do, and provided an ever-growing resource of information for all young people in London, and those who stand up for them. It has been a brilliant year for FKCL, supported as ever by our amazing and committed design team

Craig Kelly, Alex, Eren, and Lauren at Iconic Media Solutions. Sadly, the need for a website such as ours has not lessened. After a record year for fatal attacks in London last year, the last few weeks have once more seen an up-tick in knife attacks across London. This magazine addresses some of the issues that this presents for all of us, as well as some new solutions.

- Our **Resource** section is proving a valuable tool of research, packed with up-to-date reports, statistics, and information for those interested in seeing how change could work, and how to find new and developing programmes. We host those too emanating from local and central government, so that all

who are interested can measure ambition against what happens. If you are looking for a relevant report this is your first port of call. To see how useful this can be look [here](#).

- Our informative **video platform** [here](#) offers a range of extraordinary visions of change in action and illustrates the passion of those who fight for that change.
- Our regular magazines host the widest range of practical and academic articles from those in the best position to know at first-hand how to solve the problems that young people face in Greater London and elsewhere. See our back numbers [here](#).
- Our directory [here](#) shows how our reach is now expanding into areas which lie beyond the immediate problems of young people, and the means to change their lives through inspiration, sports, arts, mentoring, training, and employment. We now also host groups that help to deal with the issues that lie at the root of the problems that these young people experience – at home, at school and elsewhere – bullying, domestic violence, and seek to address the devastation caused to families by substance and alcohol abuse, and to resist the temptations that our most vulnerable are faced with. Never more relevant than today, we host those groups who can help those who simply do not have enough money for basic day to day living.

- Our **News section** [here](#) offers all those we include in our directory, as well as public bodies and other partners, the opportunity to post news and events at short notice to advertise something of interest to our ever widening readership. The Met Police Chief Superintendent Jeff Boothe, Head of the Met's Outreach programme shows us how that can work, and made the video for us that you will find on our website. We still hope that MOPAC and the VRU with whom we partner, will do the same.
- Our social Media outlets on **Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn** are constantly topical, and full of links to new information and resources.
- Finally we should thank the Press and broadcast media for giving us such a big welcome [here](#).

### Collaboration

Encouraging collaboration between groups with the similar aims, and close working with our **main effective partners**, is something we regard as key to any successful change. Some partners deserve special mention. **Catch22** from the outset has worked with us, advised us when necessary and offered us valuable administrative support. **Sheffield Hallam University**, who already do much work on social justice, towards better policing and improved probation services, has offered regular insights and assistance, as well as some financial support. Our partner **Local Village Network**, who through its founder **Rachael Box** has been supportive since the start, have

started to explore with FKCL the means to improve, and the means to multiply and share the individual offers we make to young people in London. We recognise the enormous contribution they have long made, and which we are now able to supplement through our other resources. Through the power of partners like **Catch22**, the **Positive Transformation Group** and the Barts trauma surgeon, and **National Clinical Director for Violence Reduction**, **Martin Griffiths** we can reach into areas of influence that public bodies sometimes miss. Finally, none of our success could have been possible without the invaluable support of those corporate, academic, and individual funders who have supported this far and are helping us through the first three years.

### Our May Magazine

This edition is a wonderful example of the diversity of informed opinion each edition of our magazine has so far offered. You will find pieces here from the academic **Dr Brendan King**, whose recently published book *'Young Black Street Masculinities: Vulnerability, Knife-Carrying and Survival on a Disadvantaged Housing Estate'* we recommend. We have a piece from the highly experienced **Maria Arpa MBE Founder of the Centre for Peaceful Solutions** on Understanding Gang Culture. You will find an extraordinary story of how change is possible from **Andrew Pritchard**, **Executive founder of the AP Foundation** whose own road and effective mission to bring about change started with a life of crime. We have a piece from **Tyler Campbell**, a highly motivated and dynamic 21-year-old whose youth Project **Fridays Coventry** set up with a grant of just

£5,000 has already won the national CrimeBeat Awards 2022 and a Titan Gold Award for 2022. I recommend Tyler's recent book *"Fridays 7 Step Programme: How to Make the Right Decisions in your Teens"*. We have a piece from the **NHS Violence Reduction Team** under the leadership of **Martin Griffiths**, the **National clinical Director for Violence Reduction**. We have experienced contributions from **Nathan Singleton**, of **Lifeline Projects**, an East London based project focused on working to empower and enhance the lives of vulnerable groups and communities and from **Anoushka Dunic** an inspiring police officer who is empowering parents and carers in the fight against knife crime. Finally, we have a rap poem about the death of Stephen Lawrence sent to us by the "Bucks Bard" **Rich Pierce**.

**Bruce Houlder**  
Founder of Fighting Knife  
Crime London (FKCL)

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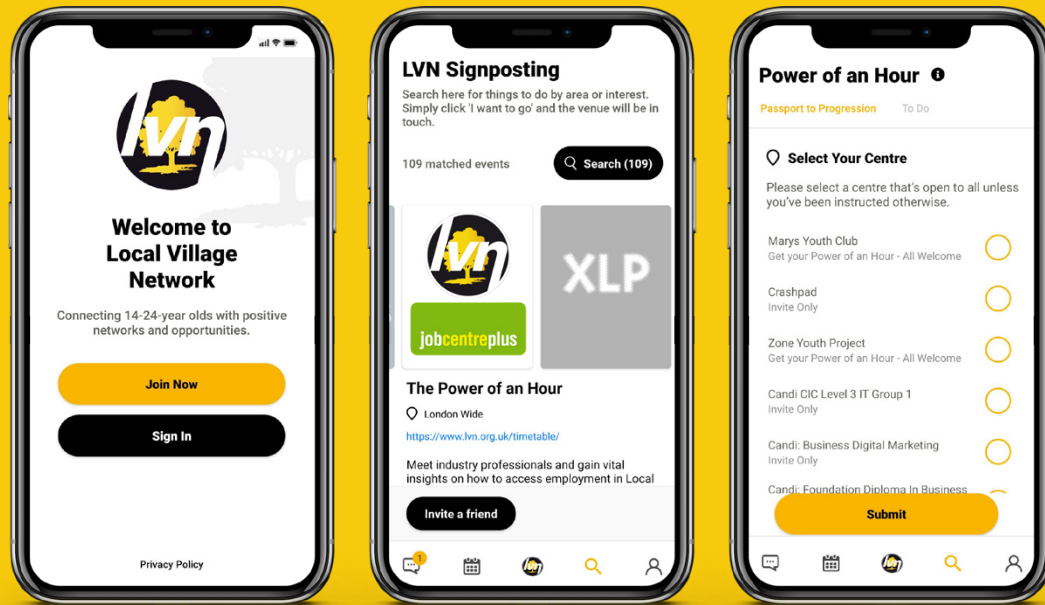


**Bruce Houlder**



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## Street codes, vulnerability and knife-carrying - a way forward for youth work

Dr Brendan King, Impact Measurement and Evaluation Specialist, Westminster Foundation

**P**araphrasing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: violence recoils upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit he digs for another. Putting aside the enormous economic costs of violence (over £11bn since 2008),<sup>1</sup> knife-carrying is infectious: the more people believe that those around them are 'tooled up', the more likely they are themselves to carry a weapon - just in case.

### Knife carrying: an age-old phenomenon

One may wrongly believe that knife crime is a contemporary problem. However, widespread knife violence arose from Victorian inner-city spaces characterised by poverty and ill-health. In Victorian London, for example, young men regularly gathered in deprived areas to fight with knives for territory or status. The status of one such gang known for this behaviour, 'the Hooligans' of south London,

popularised the current labelling of unruly youth.

There is, nevertheless, a feature from Victorian London that provides insight into modern-day knife crime thinking. These disorderly young men were similar to those in modern gangs research; groups were generally patriarchal, hierarchical and disrespectful towards females. Moreover, how Victorian society dealt with its knife-carrying youth is relevant. In today's language, many successful interventions were youth clubs that stopped the recruitment of young men into crime using sports and creative activities. These clubs were so successful that the inner-city disorder had largely disappeared by the 1900s. There are thus parallels with knife-carrying among inner-city spaces in 2022, particularly in light of the devastating cuts to community

spaces where young people can gather and feel safe.<sup>2</sup>

In the fieldwork within my recent book 'Young Black Street Masculinities',<sup>3</sup> I met youth workers undertaking street-based projects. These professionals face many challenges, from interrupting cycles of violence to repairing and engaging young peoples' support networks. Walking beside them through the troubled spaces of a southeast London estate, 'Maxwell', I met young Black men for whom knife-carrying was part of their daily routine.

### **A backdrop of vulnerability for young Black men**

Maxwell is vibrant and multicultural. The estate is also home to a symbolic way of living for inner-city communities: street life. I (and others<sup>4</sup>) found that street life offered some young Black men the opportunity to create an otherwise absent masculine identity (e.g., the 'provider') but simultaneously trapped others in a culture that stunted personal growth and generated an expectancy of danger.

My research examining street life found that such spaces were often violent and regulated by a street code or expected behaviour that manufactured and shaped the contours of young men's identities. Among the code's expectations were aggression, criminality and a disregard for one's safety in the face of protecting street credibility. Those living strictly by the street code gained respect: a sacred resource for those unable to access traditional sources of status (e.g., educational or professional achievement). Those caught turning

their backs on the street code risked becoming victims of violence; if you did not act 'street', your street-oriented peers saw you as an easy target. This sense of vulnerability grew as many young Black men felt that the police were '*not for [Black] people them*' but the protected White middle-classes elsewhere. Therefore, knife-carrying was an act of responsibility given the odds stacked against Maxwell's young Black male inhabitants.

Maxwell's violence occurred not only on the physical street. Online spaces created a 'digital street', which also followed the street code, and where threats of violence and retaliation had little or no policing. As young men in my research told me, it did not take much to attract the anger of someone online, be they from a neighbouring estate, rival school or college or someone looking to make a name for themselves. The street code's pressures created a set of idealised characteristics and performances among young men. The most prized masculine traits included promiscuity, disrespecting females, and an inclination towards violence, including knife-carrying to face those who dared challenge others' status.

By carrying knives, young Black men were thus embodying the idealised masculinity form - Maxwell's way of being a man. Many young men fought a losing battle with few things to distract or pull them in more positive directions. In general, the sole positive influence in their daily lives came from street-based youth workers, particularly those who appeared to be 'authentic' or credible in the eyes of Maxwell's young Black men.



### **The authentic youth worker**

Given the negative effect of Maxwell's street life on those lacking positive masculine influences (many young men had absent fathers, for instance), male youth workers became role models for less violent and more caring masculinities. These blueprints, featuring affectionate qualities that Maxwell otherwise saw as feminine or 'weak', swam against the tide of Maxwell's prized masculinity (which, in my book, I dub it's street masculinity). Subsequently, youth workers needed to tread a fine line, and appear credible and 'manly' to the estate's young men while also praising the virtues of, for example, emotional sensitivity, empathy and vulnerability. Darius, one seasoned youth worker I met during my research, was particularly adept at modelling this caring masculine performance.

Darius was a Black man of significant standing on the estate. He was a graduate of the same inner-city spaces as Maxwell's young men; therefore,

he was mindful of how and why they went to great lengths to emphasise the qualities (e.g., violence and knife-carrying) that catapulted them towards the estate's idealised masculinity. Darius dressed well, drove a nice car and spoke in a manner that gave him high regard among the estate's hierarchy. He knew the 'faces' on the estate. He occupied their spaces while sympathising with those pursuing criminality for more 'human' reasons, including paying rent for elderly relatives or putting food in the mouths of family members.

Darius also moved through the digital street with the same natural ability. He held multiple accounts across the same platforms as Maxwell's young men, often posting on thoughtful issues of Black male identity, subjects aligning with the emerging caring masculine form. He had a finger on Maxwell's pulse - growing and maintaining his credibility to become increasingly relevant among the more negative influences in young men's lives.



### A way forward?

My research identified the resources that individuals (e.g., youth workers, community leaders and young Black men) require to challenge the negative forces of street life that lead to the adoption of knife-carrying identities. In Darius, young Black men had a blueprint for more caring characteristics commonly called 'weak' and policed by the estate's street code. Darius was thus a champion of a caring masculinity - an identity gaining traction due to his lived experience and status on Maxwell.

Many tools are available for those seeking to make a change in young Black men's inner-city spaces. As my research shows, social media can facilitate violence; therefore, academics, policymakers and youth work organisations may use online platforms to support and normalise positive or caring masculine identities like the one embodied by Darius. Indeed, Darius' employers knew of his criminal past, including his previous gang affiliation and lawlessness. They also recognised that he had authenticity and lived experience of the issues faced by Maxwell's young men and so supported his influence on those who needed him the most.

Finally, my work offers insight into the diverse range of masculinities experienced by a particularly vulnerable population of young Black men. While knife-carrying is not an issue exclusively for and among young Black men, data shows that they are the group at the highest risk of knife crime in the UK. Understanding the pressures young Black men face to carry knives allows organisations working with them to

undertake more intelligent and targeted work.

The book *'Young Black Street Masculinities: Vulnerability, Knife-Carrying and Survival on a Disadvantaged Housing Estate'* is available online at Amazon and WH Smith. Interested readers can contact the author via LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com/in/drbrendanking](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drbrendanking)) for a 40% discount on the full price of £109.00.

#### References:

- <sup>1</sup> Report reveals the total cost of failure to tackle youth violence effectively (Warwick.ac.UK)
- <sup>2</sup> Securing a brighter future the role of youth services in tackling knife crime v.2.pdf (preventknife-crime.co.uk)
- <sup>3</sup> Young Black Street Masculinities | SpringerLink
- <sup>4</sup> See, for example: Reid, E. (2017). 'On road' culture in context: Masculinities, religion, and 'trapping' in inner-city London. Brunel University



**Dr Brendan King**, Impact Measurement and Evaluation Specialist, Westminster Foundation



## Understanding Gang Culture

Maria Arpa, MBE, Founder, Centre for Peaceful Solutions

**U**nravelling the label 'Gang'.

What do we mean when we use labels to sum up humans?

In my experience, using a label to define a person usually involves a stereotype in which the labelled experiences a loss of voice in society because the label gives rise to assumptions.

In urban areas the word 'gang' is connected to crime and violence and, unfortunately, mostly attached to Black and Asian youth.

So, before we start bandying a word like 'gang' around, it's important to define what we mean. One thing I learned was how the meaning

attributed by the police and the meaning attributed by young people are different.

For many young people, being part of a gang is a necessity that affords them protection from other gangs and provides a place of belonging.

According to Victim Support, 'The police define gangs as a group of people who may commit crimes or hurt people'.

Of course, at the heart of some gangs there is organised crime which runs like a business and strives to protect its turf and its trade even if that means using weapons and inflicting violence. The stock in trade is usually drugs and weapons. And, there is



**Student promoting  
Peer Mediation, London**

a devastating impact on society. I completely understand and support the need for government to find ways to neutralise actions that harm society. I find it harder to understand that punitive measures are taken against the young people without also providing a rehabilitative culture that can address the core issues.

Where I want to focus attention in this article is on the young people that become foot soldiers. In 2018 a young man was sentenced to 12 months detention for becoming a 'county lines' foot soldier. In passing sentence the judge said, "I sentence you on the basis that you were not forced into this and you were expecting to be paid."

The judge clearly had no real knowledge because if you really understand how this works 'on the road' you would know that the young man was most likely groomed and then controlled (similar to coercive control) and therefore not in control of his choices.

I understand this because I was Chair of a Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit and one of our students went to prison as 'Britain's youngest contract killer'. Behind the tabloid headline he was not in control of his choices. He was threatened and under pressure. He sincerely believed he had no choice because of the threat of reprisals to his family but this was never part of the narrative.

That young people choose this route to meet needs for safety and belonging, is the real problem. It is important feedback that tells us that society and government have failed this particular group of young people because there are few healthy alternatives that are as attractive as joining a crew, earning some money and having protection. And where those alternatives do exist, they are less available to Black and Asian young people living in areas of deprivation.

In my experience already overstretched schools, police and social services have given up on these young people leaving heavily under resourced charities to try and pick up the pieces.

It requires people who are influential, to help a young person understand that the down side of their choice to join a gang is that in the lifespan of being a foot soldier most will, on average, earn less than the minimum wage and face a high risk being shot or jailed and, not unlike a pyramid selling scheme will have only a minimal chance of making it to the dizzy heights of power and control. This is especially so when those when those grooming and recruiting are not likely to explain the disadvantages while extolling the up side of belonging while getting money

to help mum pay the bills. (Yes, many of the boys I met use their earnings to help the family).

And that is also at the root of the problem. Many of these young men have been exposed to hard living and find themselves taking on responsibilities that they do not have the wisdom, skills or maturity to handle, with no ideas of the consequences of their actions and no one to show them in a way they can relate to.

My real access to this world was after 2003 when a 7 year old girl was fatally shot by a drug dealer near where I live. By 2004 and 2005 the area was experiencing drive-by shootings on an almost daily basis because there was a turf war under way.

Believing that my toolkit of nonviolent communication and restorative justice could be useful in some way, I found myself meeting a formidable man who ran a nightclub and spent 18 months chasing me off his turf until my naive persistence transformed our ability to communicate with each other. My offer to train him to be a mediator using the Dialogue Road Map was met with a counter invitation to shadow him and learn about life 'on the road'. It was a life changing experience for us both. I discovered an 'underclass' of people who truly believed that had nothing to lose and no hope for any other life. From that place, anything is possible and once involved in the shady world of organised crime, even at the periphery, it is not as easy as handing in one's resignation.

And, once trust was established, this same group expressed their yearning for another way. They liked the **Dialogue Road Map** and were keen

to dialogue their way out of conflict instead of using violence. Our project ended in 2010 when all funding was pulled during 'austerity' measures. Though I used my savings to continue throughout 2010 and 11, it became clear by 2012 that we would not have the resources to continue. Despite our providing a recognised alternative to violence, no statutory agency was interested in funding this vital work because it requires the system to trust that the people who cause harm actually know what medicine they need for their situation.

Since then, we have focussed our attention on prisons and **Life After Prison**. We work to reduce re-offending by working with the unhealed trauma that results in actions that create injury, loss and harm to self, other and society.

**Maria Arpa MBE**  
is the Founder of the Centre for  
Peaceful Solutions

[www.centreforpeacefulsolutions.org](http://www.centreforpeacefulsolutions.org)



**Maria Arpa MBE**





Lifelines Project

## The importance of engaging parents and carers in understanding and tackling knife crime

Nathan Singleton, CEO, LifeLine Projects

The Champion Support Network (CSN) is a peer support programme for parents and carers of children at risk of serious youth violence. The programme is funded through the VRU and operates in Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Havering. We recognise that whilst parents have the potential to know their children best some are very isolated. They don't need professional help but peer support networks. Other parents can be a great support and provide expert advice.

"Before my son's death I was blindsided by the gang issue, I learnt the hard way. I wanted to share my awareness with every family on the project. Parents and

carers need to be more involved in what's happening in their children's lives. I wanted them to know that they weren't alone and I wasn't there to judge. I wanted to listen, be a friendly face and offer guidance. I believe that we are all good parents and sometimes we just need someone else to be patient, supportive and point us in right direction"

**Peguy Kato, Champion Support Coordinator.**



LifeLine Projects was founded in 2000 by a group of volunteers who saw a need in their local community. Realising that they could be part of the solution, they began working with isolated and marginalised parents. Since then, we've grown from a small organisation with just two part-time members of staff to now employ 70 members of staff supporting over 300 parents and over 400 young people a year across 32 schools throughout East London.

I only mention our history to highlight the fact that LifeLine was founded on helping parents and carers to nurture and support their young people to become valued members of their community. Our vision is that all young people should leave school with renewed hope, developed confidence and improved skills: with a sense of vision, identity and purpose for their future.

30 teenagers were killed in London in 2021, and 27 of them lost their lives to knife crime. Most of the victims were

killed by other teenagers. Many of these teenagers were excluded from school, came from families that had engaged with social services and were involved with crime at quite an early age.

As we mentored young people at risk of serious youth violence in secondary schools, we found their parents were desperate for support. This need was accentuated in the Covid lockdowns. We responded to the need by providing 1-2-1 support to parents and setting up peer support groups. Through this approach we could provide more holistic support for the families.

Through the CSN programme we coach local parents and carers to become peer mentors in their neighbourhoods. They are trained to offer support to other parents and carers, as well as help them access education, legal, health or social care services. They are also equipped with methods for tackling behaviours in young people that may lead to serious youth violence.

For most parents and carers whose young people end up into trouble, there is often a sense of shame that they have failed at nurturing and bringing up their young person. For others, they try to bury their heads in the sand, only to end up at breaking point, unaware where or from whom to seek help. There is a communication breakdown with their community support system and zero communication happening within their own families. They end up feeling perplexed and disconnected from the lives of their young people. Our ultimate purpose was to ensure that no parent was left in isolation.

Communication was key in our approach to helping the parents and carers on the CSN programme.

We wanted them to better understand the lives that young people lead today and why some carry knives. Rather than offering disconnected silos of support, we took a more integrated approach. Our Coordinators on the Champions Support Network worked closely with our Youth Development Workers, resulting in parents taking part in activities with young people and gaining understanding from their perspective and vice-versa.

We then encouraged parents and carers to participate in weekly group conversations with other parents and carers. In these sessions they engaged deeply in collaborative dialogue around issues of concern to them. Some of the subjects discussed were, how to develop a vision, identity and a purpose for teenagers, how to make the journey out of conflict, dealing with grief, how to spot criminal and sexual exploitation and how to support other parents and carers

The most frequent problem raised by parents and carers was how to bring up difficult subjects and start conversations with young people, especially if it was around weapons, sex or drugs. Some were scared about what they were going to discover, some found that their conversations only happened with raised voices and others had completely given up and felt their young people were now complete strangers to them. In the group conversations parents and carers went through various scenarios and everyone was encouraged to voice how they would react in these situations. Tips were given on how to communicate more effectively with young people and how to not expect instant results and most importantly, to be patient.

The group conversations were successful because participants liked the fact that these conversations weren't part of the official services

system and most felt they could trust the group and not be judged. Parents and carers were encouraged to get to know their young people's friends better, meet their families and greet them in the street and make them part of their community. Many found it comforting that they weren't the only ones having these issues. The most important thing that the Champion Support Network programme does, is to make parents and carers feel that they were heard and not alone. Twenty-one years later LifeLine is still here doing what it does best, helping isolated and marginalised young people and parents support each other.

*'It takes a village to raise a child, understanding and learning from one another. I never knew other people were going through the same stuff'* **Champion Support Network Parent**

**Nathan Singleton**  
CEO, LifeLine Projects



[lifelineprojects.co.uk](http://lifelineprojects.co.uk)



**Nathan Singleton**



## Fighting Knife Crime - A new approach engaging parents and Carers

**Anoushka Dunic, Police officer, Metropolitan Police**

**T**hirty young people tragically lost their lives to knife-crime in London in 2021, the highest number of deaths in the capital since knife-related records began in 2003. Having been a police officer with the Metropolitan Police for over twenty years, I have been exposed to the violence and trauma that haunts our capital and devastates the lives of many. In the last few years, I was proud to undertake the role as an engagement officer with an East London Gangs Unit

that deepened my understanding of the anguish parents, carers and families endure after losing a child to violence.

My interaction with parents and carers revealed they feel unheard, stigmatised and undervalued by the services designed to safeguard them. As such, my work focused on empowering them and creating a platform for their voices to be heard.

Having identified this gap, I piloted a project that was recognised within a Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice



Programme paper on 'Exploitation, county lines, threats and weapons' (2020) as promising practice. This project took a universal approach to parent and carer inclusion and education on the subjects that matter to them the most, to ensure they were provided with an understanding of the risks to their children, the factors that may lead to enhanced vulnerabilities, and provided tools and signposting to mitigate these vulnerabilities.

Much of my work has led me to have interactions with mothers who have tragically lost their children and grandchildren to knife-crime. Hearing their painful experiences and the messages of isolation they convey has compelled me to advocate for seldom-heard parents and carers, to help give them a voice, and a seat at the table. It is also my personal experiences as a mother of a teenage boy that leads me to be outraged as a parent, that I could be discounted from the discussions that could protect my own child from such violence.

The pandemic brought new challenges and so the programme was developed into an interactive online format run over three weeks in two-hour sessions, that enabled parents and carers to attend anonymously and be as involved as they felt comfortable with.

Within this safe space we explored difficult subjects sensitively, such as drugs, knives, abuse, neuroscience and trauma. This course was not just about discussing the signs that our children may be getting exploited into that world, but also the vulnerabilities that may make this more likely and how we can develop resilience as parents and as a community. It brought us together

as parents, stripped away the stigma attached to the subjects and offered signposting to sustainable support services. The parents and carers were important influences in the course content, with anonymous surveys enabling them to provide input and feedback that in turn enabled me to create a programme that the attendees wanted, their voices included to ensure this was an authentic participatory experience. Between October 2020 and October 2021, over 1200 parents and carers joined, providing testimonies such as,

*'Very different to Gang training I have done before.. this was far more in depth and delivered in a style which kept me interested'*

*'Every parent or carer should take this course.. Parents should get together with the police we can definitely change the community and make our children feel special and safe'*

*'Great, great course. Very informative. Well delivered.. and I was privileged to have attended. Should be made available all over London as I feel so many other families can benefit from it'*

*'Really excellent training. Very helpful to understand how everything is linked. The video clips and Anoushka's examples as a parent herself really help you understand and recognise it's something that is part of all our experiences. Thank you!'*

*'Really valuable training - very well presented. All parents should do this!'*

Whilst running this programme and face to face workshops, I also undertook an undergraduate degree and used this opportunity to explore the role that parents and carers have in tackling knife-



crime. It is widely accepted that strong attachments with parents and carers are a protective factor in preventing violence and harm in young people's lives, yet my research identified a significant gap in the existing literature on knife-crime in reference to parent and carer inclusion. This gap in literature is related to both public policy and academic discourse.

The exclusion of parents' and carers' voices' in the academic landscape of knife-crime is evident and it is imperative to consider why this shortfall exists. It is also clear that on the occasions whereby parents and carers are included in policy, their role is tokenistic. My research identified that there are no collaborative and meaningful frameworks written into policy that include parents and carers in a participatory and sustainable manner. Instead, work appears to be done to the parents. Parents and carers hold a wealth of information and experience, and as such should be included in research and policy responses to knife-crime to better inform the responses and outcomes.

It is through this work which has led me to consider why the voices of parents and carers are excluded from knife-crime and violence strategies. Policy makers must focus on these significantly neglected community members in this phenomenon and summons transformation in how parents and carers are viewed and are

involved in its' solution. We must look at new ways in which to tackle a challenging societal issue by engaging and empowering a distinct community – parents and carers - to understand the vital role they play in preventing knife crime.

'It takes a village to raise a child' is a commonly known proverb demonstrating the benefits of community, yet parents and carers are being excluded from the process by the very policies that are designed to safeguard their children. Parents and carers are a valuable and significant factor in tackling knife-crime therefore action is required now to include them in its solution.

**Anoushka Dunic**  
Anoushka Dunic, Police officer,  
Metropolitan Police



**Anoushka Dunic**

## The Clinical Director for the London Violence Reduction Programme and Clinical Director for Violence Reduction NHSE gives an insight into the cause and effect of serious violence amongst young people

Martin Griffiths is a consultant Trauma Surgeon at Bart's Health NHS Trust

**M**artin Griffiths CBE, Consultant Trauma and Vascular Surgeon at Barts Health NHS Trust, and Clinical Director for the London Violence Reduction Programme and Clinical Director for Violence Reduction NHSE, gives us an insight into the cause and effect of serious violence amongst young people.

A child arrives on a hospital ward with traumatic injuries inflicted during a knife fight with someone of his own age. He may be brought in on a stretcher, still wearing his school uniform. This is not a fanciful scenario in London, where I grew up and have spent most of my working life. Grouped by age, the greatest number of victims of knife wounds are 16-year olds. The second biggest cohort is 15-year olds.

What responsibility does the NHS have towards this injured child? First of all, of course his injuries must be treated so that he is restored to physical health, which the NHS does brilliantly. The traditional view of the NHS's responsibilities was to say we are a recovery service for the injured and the ill, and that is it. We patch them up and send them home: the rest is up to the police and social care services.

But a curious person asks what will happen to the boy who is discharged from hospital and sent straight back into the environment where he sustained his injuries? We start at the wrong end, in the wrong place, after the child has been injured. We need to know, and more

importantly understand the story that preceded that injury.

No one reading this will be surprised to know that the victims of knife wounds are almost all from poor families, and from groups often denied access to the mechanics of authority. We know many of these people face inequalities and challenges, such as drug addiction, obesity, mental health issues, poor school results and poor employment prospects.

We could talk about the small amount of organised crime, which dominates the headlines, which is a separate issue. Most of what is termed 'gang culture' is simply groups of disadvantaged youths banding together to assert themselves. For a young person growing up in an environment with high levels of violence, carrying a knife is a way of saying "I handle my own business. I'm not docile I will not be a victim. Nobody crosses me. If they do, I'm going to deal with it myself." It's a way of asserting significance, of taking power.

As a consultant trauma surgeon at the Royal London Hospital, I came to the conclusion years ago that the NHS is brilliant at treating a person's injuries but terrible at treating the injured person.

It's an attitude that fails young patients and their families. It's not socially responsible. It's not even a money saver. The child who has been in one knife fight, who is sent straight back into the same environment, with nothing having changed in his life except that he has a

# DO YOU WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE?

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new scar, is probably going to get involved in another fight. Next time, he may be the perpetrator rather than the victim. It's very rarely an older person who has injured a teenager, and where that happens, there is usually some other driver involved, such as the drug trade. These injuries, in almost all cases, are inflicted by teenagers on teenagers. Treat one and send him home, and there will be another along soon.

To try to stop this churn, I set up the first wards-based violence reduction service in the Royal London Hospital in 2015 in which we recognise that a person's injury is a marker of their life story. It's not about criminality, it's about understanding that person's life. To start with, the patient is addressed by name and treated as a person with a back story. We've brought community police officers onto the ward, not to investigate a crime, but to make human contact with a teenager who is likely to think that the police are the enemy.

With funding from the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction unit and charities, we introduced the patients to violence reduction specialists, people without medical background but with training as social workers or in related fields. They have the gifts of lived experience, relatability and emotional intelligence that make them perfect for helping the victims of injury navigate this unfamiliar and scary landscape.

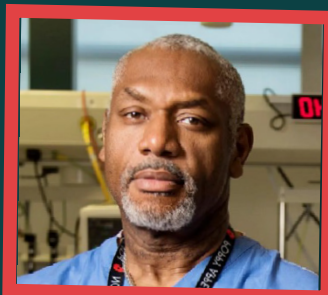
I believe Health and Care Services have a unique role in improving wellbeing and tackling inequalities for people impacted by serious violence. To make this a reality, the NHS London Violence Reduction Programme was set up in 2019 to support clinical teams and to work with experts and those with lived experience to co-create health and care approaches that work for communities.

And, in 2019, I had an email from Simon Stevens' office, then the Chief Executive of the NHS, asking if I would take the programme nationwide. I was hugely uncertain. I'm a trauma surgeon: I am not professionally qualified as a public health expert, and questioned my credibility in this deeply emotive field. But in Leeds, Manchester, Middlesbrough and in rural areas in the south west, many of the drivers are the same as they are in London, although the outputs of that societal failure appear different. More importantly, some of the solutions are applicable to the UK as a whole. So, I agreed, and was appointed the NHS's first Clinical Director for Violence Reduction.

People question whether violence reduction is part of the business of the NHS. But the NHS is where the victims of that violence are treated. The NHS is the umbrella, not the rain. The question is how do we affect climate change?

*Martin P Griffiths CBE*

**VIOLENCE  
REDUCTION  
PROGRAMME  
LONDON**



**Martin Griffiths CBE**

**THE THINGS I  
WISH MY  
PARENTS  
HAD KNOWN**

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVICE  
ON TALKING TO YOUR  
CHILD ABOUT ONLINE  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

## Summary of top tips

- 1 Start speaking to your children about these issues before you first give them a phone or set up a social media account. This might feel very early, but you can do it in an age-appropriate way. It is better to be proactive than reactive.  
**Don't wait for the crisis.**
- 2 Keep the conversation going. Adapt to your child so you can support them.  
**Don't mention it once and think that's enough.**
- 3 Keep it casual, find everyday opportunities to speak about these issues with your child – like when you're walking or driving somewhere.  
**Don't scare them with 'the big talk'.**
- 4 Focus on your child's emotions first and work out what they may have seen online. By listening to your child and understanding if they accessed harmful content, you can help to support them.  
**Don't punish them before listening and understanding.**
- 5 Keep curious about the technology your child is using and stay up to date with platforms, apps and trends.  
**Don't pretend these issues don't exist**
- 6 Set boundaries. Use filtering tools to limit your child's exposure to harmful content. Decide on rules and boundaries with your child, allowing them to input. Explain which monitoring and filtering tools you are using, and why.  
**Don't leave your child unsupervised online without using monitoring and filter tools. You wouldn't leave them alone in the park or the street, apply the same level of protection online.**



## You're never too late to start You just have to start to be great

Tyler Campbell, Founder, Fridays Coventry

**F**ridays Coventry is a youth initiative I set up to prevent knife crime and gang violence in Coventry. Our aim is to tackle anti-social behaviour, and provide opportunities to better young people's future. Our ambitions do not end there. You will definitely be seeing a Fridays London for the future. It's our dream to have Fridays buildings in the other major cities like Liverpool and

Manchester, and elsewhere as time goes on. Our work has started to be recognised nationally. Massive news is that we recently won the National CrimeBeat Award 2022. We are so grateful for this recognition, and can't wait for the future to come. This is our story.

I started Fridays when I was in college studying media. Knife crime was increasing significantly in 2019.

I knew people who were grieving for people they had lost to knife crime, and I knew people too who had lost their lives also. At the beginning, Fridays was a night club for young people but with educational purposes. Upstairs was entertainment with barbers giving free haircuts to young people. We also provided make up artists/hair dressers and DJs, open mic, virtual reality etc. Downstairs we provided educational opportunities, cv writing, job interview techniques. We encouraged other businesses would come to our clubs to promote what they do.

We ran this from 2019 to the end of the year with over 200 young people

attending throughout the year. We ran projects such as 'Rapperthon' which was a world record-breaking 11 hrs of continuous rapping. We raised £350. We also did a prayer march at the end of the year when 300 plus people marched to draw attention to different knife related, or gang attacks in Coventry, which was amazing.

After 2019 we needed the club to become more mobile. We started to run our Fridays nights in places such as schools and community centres. This proved to be a real success where we could engage with young people who did not always like to go to different areas which meant more engagement and activities. Unfortunately, lockdown





came soon enough, which meant we we started running our projects online. We still found we were able engage and make connections with other cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, and overseas in such places as India and Uganda. Check out our projects such as 'Fridays 4 in 1' on YouTube. For example [here](#).

Our reach continued to grow. We planned and increased the range of our projects. Examples are Fridays business leadership programmes, electric go karts, book publishing houses, movies, radio. There is more to come. We grow by just asking young people what want to do.

We have 50 staff working for Fridays now. All are voluntarily. We are so grateful for the amazing support and help they all provide, just through their desire to keep young people safe and entertained.

We have many success stories at Fridays. One example was a young

volunteer I met on the street when I was out walking. He offered me drugs. My suggestion was that he join Fridays. What we do together now is amazing – he is presenting for us. BBC News has now made contact and want to work with him. He was 17 years old. It just shows you're never too late to start. You just have to start to be great.

Another example is a young female who visited Fridays. She lacked a lot of confidence, so we took her down to our free Fridays studio and recorded many sessions with her, recorded a music video and she has been heard on all radio stations in the UK. It's amazing to see success in young people, and the opportunities and achievements they can create for themselves. This is the reason we do what we do, and why we are going to be franchising for the future.

I want to say a massive thank you to all the Fridays team for the support

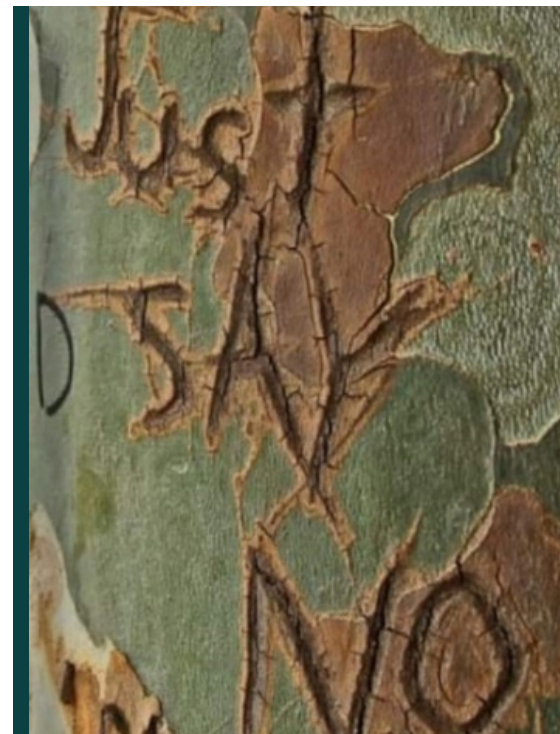


they give, the supporters we have, and to all the connections we will build. Please help us on our journey.

*Tyler Campbell,*  
Founder, Fridays Coventry



**Tyler Campbell**



**To Stephen (from Mum)**  
Thirteenth September nineteen seventy four  
when my child was born  
Twenty second April nineteen ninety three  
taken away from me  
In a moment that day "Christ" we say  
Carried on across till your own life lost  
On the street you were tried on the street's  
where you died  
Was this just hate or was it really fate  
Although days are long we'll carry on  
We take to the fight that the world may be right  
Tell us Stephen would you want to get even  
Jesus did he win to take away sin  
Twenty Nine years on we miss you dear son  
And with patience we'll wait at heavens gate.

A poem by Rich Pierce in memory of  
Stephen Lawrence

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# From Cat A Prisoner to a life spent Changing Lives

Andrew Pritchard, Founder, AP Foundation

**Y**oung people have always fought each other, and violence amongst peers is by no means a new phenomenon. Football hooligans of the late seventies, and frontline hustlers of the eighties were all renowned for their vicious and bloody battles, often carried out in front of the public.

Stanley blades and Ratchet knives were often their weapons of choice. The difference is that today's knife crime epidemic seems to be of a much more frequent, and sometimes indiscriminate nature. Everybody can be a potential victim, regardless of their age, ethnicity, or class. Carrying a knife seems to be accepted by some, with the same necessity as carrying your door keys.

I'm not a politician, a legal professional, or even an academic. In fact, I exited school at the age of fifteen with absolutely no qualifications whatsoever and decided to make entrepreneurship and organised crime my profession. So, my contribution to this magazine may not be the type of article you would be expecting to read, but it will allow you to look through the eyes of someone that has lived alongside many of the individuals who have committed these crimes, and who feels partly responsible for this madness, which has been labelled knife crime.

My first encounter with the criminal justice system was almost 36 years ago when I was sentenced to eighteen

months in youth custody. I grew up in the borough of Hackney and Stoke Newington, which today are among the top five most dangerous boroughs in London. Going back between 2012-2019, it had the highest knife crime rate of all the London boroughs. Figures showed that between that time knife-related incidents occurred at a rate of 150 per 100,000 people. Hackney saw 350 stabbings across that time.

During this period I was a category A prisoner serving a 15-year sentence at HMP Belmarsh, which is where my rehabilitation and commitment to make a change began.

Every day young men would arrive at the prison either on remand, freshly sentenced or returning from the high-security prison dispersal system to receive their accumulated visits (a temporary transfer to a prison nearer your family to receive their visits).

From my dismal cell, I soon noticed that there were numerous acts of violence happening among the younger inmates, that often resulted in serious injuries among those involved, and to the prison officers as they tried to restore order. This led to all the inmates being denied privileges and finding ourselves regularly locked up in cells for up to 23 hours a day.

I began to realise that many of these young prisoners were gang members, having been members of postcode



gangs out in the community before their incarceration. And while their numbers were smaller in prison, they still engineered relationships and allegiances that were territorial, and this created tension and hostility. While conflict between these groups was not always down to gang issues, it was sometimes about their need to establish status, dominance, and respect, however, in a prison environment, such rivalries and needs can escalate very quickly into seriously heavy and bloody violence.

After observing this for a number of months, a fellow category A prisoner called Clifford Hobbs and I realised something needed to be done.

We began discussing the problem with a number of younger influential gang related prisoners, many of whom I'd known either their relatives or elders from the streets. Slowly a plan of action began to emerge. We approached the Governor of Safer Custody at HMP Belmarsh with our plan during one of the monthly "Safer Custody Meetings".

After several months of developing a rehabilitation programme, selecting eight prominent inmates to become 'Peer Mentors' and creating a bespoke mediation and mentoring course, we were ready to launch "One Postcode".

### **Its success was immediate and far-reaching.**

Within the first six months of its launch, our One Postcode mentors had facilitated over 30 successful non-violent gang conflict resolutions, also violence, including assaults on staff had dropped to a minimum.

Pressure on officer numbers was reduced as it was no longer necessary



**Clifford Hobbs**

to 'escort' prisoners around the prison. A safer environment was achieved for those working, living, and visiting the prison and most importantly, there was increased interest from a large number of other prisoners wanting to become involved.

Through getting to know a lot of these young men it became apparent to me that the majority did not really want to kill anyone, be stabbed, or murdered themselves and definitely did not want to be sitting in prison serving a mandatory life sentence for murder.

### **So why do they do what they do?**

Every day young people are groomed into gangs under the false pretence that by joining they become part of a family. In many cases, parents or single-parent families who are busy working around the clock for minimum wage or struggling on benefits do not have the privilege of being able to buy their youngsters a decent

pair of trainers or even an occasional top-up to their school lunch money. This is where in too many cases, elder gang members see the opportunity to recruit youngsters for the price of a pair of Nike's or even a couple of fried chicken meal deals. In return they're asked to drop off a package of drugs, hold onto a gun, run a phone line and eventually, they will be expected to represent the Ends by pushing a deadly Zombie knife into a rival. What they don't know, is that the gang members that started these beefs years ago are all now sitting in dispersal prisons up and down the country talking, eating, and living amongst each other.

For me, there's an obvious correlation between poverty and knife crime. We don't have the 'Eton Gang', the 'Windsor Mandem' or the 'Knightsbridge Massive'. British knife crime is predominantly committed by those from poorer and disadvantaged backgrounds. Those who lack the same educational and societal opportunities as their wealthier counterparts. Also, knife crime appears to be more commonly committed by males from fractured homes. This lack of strong, healthy relationships within a family unit, must play a huge role in leaving young people susceptible to the allure of 'street culture'. With that culture comes a sense of belonging, and an acceptance and adherence to its rules, however skewed or deadly those rules may be.

Celebratory videos, public mocking, filming the gruesome injuries they've inflicted, dancing on graves and keeping a sick point-scoring tally of their victims, have become increasingly popular.

Drill Music glorifies and celebrates extreme violence and killing. A lot of

killers have been convicted largely on the contents of music videos they've made, detailing how they've stabbed someone to death, where, the date, and why.

The devastation to loved ones is incalculable. Nobody is unaffected. The perpetrators throw their own lives away and rob their loved ones of their presence. The victim is either deeply traumatised, or dead, leaving families utterly devastated.

I believe the solution is to make the most of those with serious lived experience. Utilise them as mentors, who can go out in the community and interact with the hard to reach. Open more youth clubs across the country, targeted and intensive support and intervention, real job and career pathways, and decent housing.

**Andrew Pritchard**  
Founder, AP Foundation



[www.apfoundation.co.uk](http://www.apfoundation.co.uk)



**Andrew Pritchard**

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