

FIGHTING KNIFE CRIME

**‘Being Greater
than Ourselves’**

Issue 11 - May 2024



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Issue 11

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NOTE: All references and footnotes have live links to enable greater research. Our signposting poster on page 2 gives immediate access to our own resources as well as those of Local Village Network. Please download it [here](#) and print at home.

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A New Future for Fighting Knife Crime London

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

On March 24 this year, after 3 years of operation, FKCL became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Charity number: 1207588). FKCL welcomes our four other new trustees, **Joe Raby** (assistant director of justice at Catch22), **Sammy Odoi** (MD at Wipers Youth), **Dan Brocklebank**, and **Rachel Duncan** (Coroner's Officer with the Met). Rachel knows family tragedy and understands the effects of knife crime in a highly personal sense. Each bring individual skills and valuable advice to guide us and grow this resource that FKCL has become.

We are hugely grateful to Catch22 for providing us with advice and administrative support through our fledgling years. But as this magazine shows, we have never been alone. We have the combined power of multiple organisations whose contributions we continue to share through our website, our magazine, our directory, videos and podcasts, social media and via FKCL's

online library of resources, statistics, and research. Working too across on social media, our aim is to make the work we all do more powerful, and better informed.

This **11th Edition** focuses on a theme that has assumed ever increasing importance. Over a span of years that have seen young people actively deprived of wide range of resources they deserve. So it is that everyone who writes in this edition has from their own perspective approached the question of how we can become "greater than ourselves". All of those who write here are exemplars who deserve to be listened too, not just for illustrating how they get it right, but also how decision makers with public money can still sometimes get it wrong. Those who write here inspire us, as much as teach us by example.

Sure, the Government has recently announced an intention to inject £4 million into new technology and other investments¹. Amongst Home Office proposals is mention of new non-intrusive wands that I can be deployed at a distance

to detect weapons. My own view is that this could be a game changer for all of us, and render stop and search unnecessary in its present form. We should not be nervous of our civil rights as the benefits in a democratic society will far outweigh any concerns about personal rights to privacy. Indeed, intrusion where innocent young people are unfairly searched will be markedly reduced, and those who carry knives will have much greater reason to fear detection. I have discussed this with one of the major developers of this emergent technology, and this could be a simple change that could return any investment many times over, save lives, protect police, and prevent the carrying of knives. A positive by-product could be the removal the present stigma around 'stop and search'.

As one of the most experienced in our field, **Chris Wright, the former Chief Executive of the Social Business Catch22** writes that "...things that work tend to do so despite the system". Surely what matters is how you and I, and our neighbour, all work together in constructive partnership with others that has the best chance of making a difference in this poorly resourced field. It's a well-used line, I know, but no organisation should let a sense of pride in what they do isolate talent or resources, but seek ways to augment it.

Read too the observations of the **CEO of Voyage Youth, Paul Anderson MBE** who points up some serious institutional failings which, if addressed, could make a huge difference to the way smaller schemes can augment and enhance the work of larger and more traditionally well-funded organisations. Surely, working effectively with others should be a pre-condition for the grant of any public funds.

This edition also looks at how the **West Midlands Community Initiative**

to **Reduce Violence** (CIRV) is making a difference, again reaping the benefit of new investment. **Shazelle Punjabi - Communications Officer for the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership** tells us how this works.

For one specific example, read about **Steel Warriors** and their incredible and empowering work. **Christian d'Ippolito, their Head of Development** illustrates that their "... spaces and services provide a safe haven for people to connect in real terms with a common purpose". You can read here that "the harsh reality is that many people's idea of 'community' has been whittled down to an online experience". He also reminds how working directly with communities can make a real difference to the young lives they inspire.

Louise McNestrie, Senior Programme Manager, of Rise Up for London Youth writes about how we have "...a collective need to continue to push boundaries to create waves of change for all young people. They are our future, and they are worth it." See how they do it too. We have all so much to learn.

Marian Adejokun founder of ReachOut2All illustrates their own approach to greater and successful collaboration by outlining the multi-pronged mechanisms they use. As a useful mnemonic you might use to describe this is "PEACE OP". The name of Marian's organisation also says it all.

The team from the Social Switch Project also help us all with their well-recognised methods of collaborative working, illustrating how the Social Switch Project has equipped over 2,500 professionals with the tools to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital world when working with young people. They remind us that saving lives by reducing violence

can bring huge incremental benefits in other ways as well.

Finally, does your organisation have a protocol on cross-sector working? Do you do your own research to see how improvements could be made? If any organisation in our directory, and those who run projects in London or elsewhere, have more ideas about how we can work better together, do tell us how you do it, and we will happily consider publishing these good ideas in our future magazines. Don't keep it to yourself. We all have much to learn from the wonderful organisations and subscribers it is our mission to support.

Bruce Houlder

Founder of Fighting Knife
Crime London (FKCL)

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Bruce Houlder

Further Reading

[1] <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7196531608646991874>

Our new Charity Needs your **HELP**

What we do we do for all of you

Fighting Knife Crime London has an urgent request. The service we provide to every organisation in Greater London helping young people, depends on us being able to fund the company that design and maintain our website, our fantastic magazine, and our social media. They are brilliant at it and very dedicated.

FKCL has always existed to support and applaud the work that all of you do for young people, and to make what you all do accessible to every young person who need help and support to change their lives. FKCL has no paid staff, so our needs are not that great.

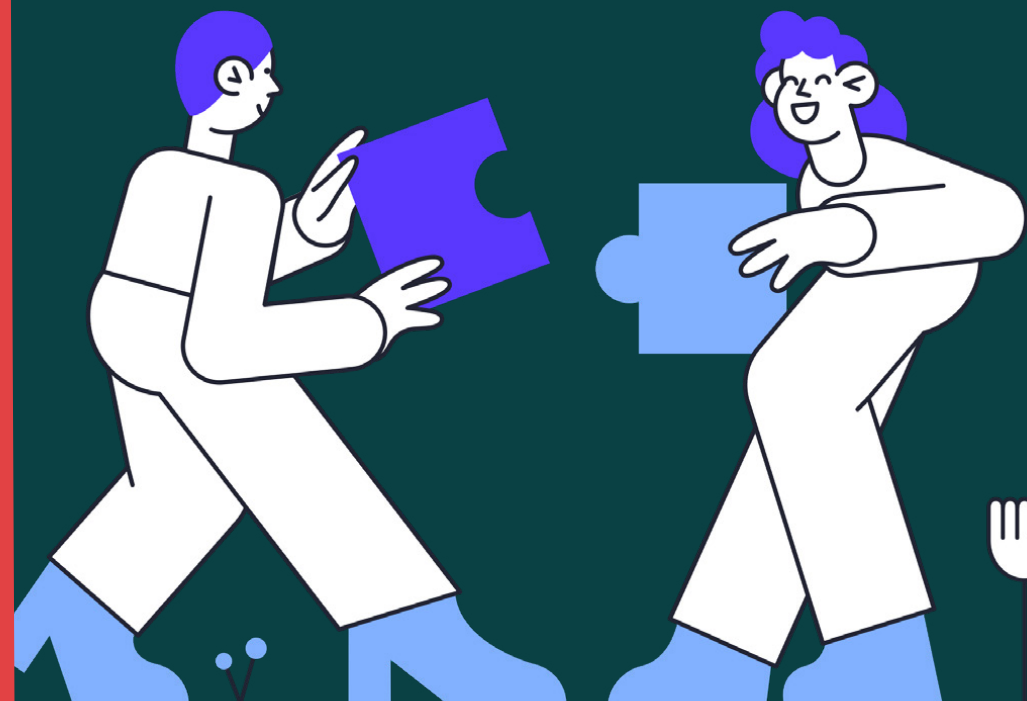
Can you afford a few pounds, and encourage others to help as well? As we don't work directly with young, we find ourselves often excluded by the criteria that most funders impose. We desperately want to continue the work we do. Can you help us?

If you doubt the need for what we do in London, read what Chris Wright, former CEO of Catch22 says in this magazine.

He analyses how best to make a collective impression, applauding what we are doing at Fighting Knife Crime London. He adds that what we do is *"...for me a significant part of the answer"*. He then explains why.

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If it is tougher today, then we need to buck the system

By Chris Wright

Chris was formerly a senior leader and practitioner in the social justice environment and now works as an adviser, a non-executive director, trustee, and mentor.

I am getting old (er). In 2022 I stepped down as the Chief Executive of the Social Business Catch22 and embarked on

a so-called portfolio career working in non-executive director roles in organisations with adjacent interests to Catch22 and indeed my earlier career. Much of that earlier career I spent in both the criminal justice system and children's social care as well as a stint working in policy at the then relatively newly established Youth Justice Board. One of my observations over this 40-

year journey is that if you're young today its tougher than in my day and the approach to those who seemingly transgress is now more punitive than when I started out on my career.

The common theme throughout this lengthy 40-year journey has been "initiatives", novel approaches to addressing entrenched problems and "wicked issues". Of course, public policy is both dynamic and iterative as new governments come and go and new thinking emerges, the evidence strengthens, or particular voices come to the fore or access is gained, and influence achieved resulting in the latest "solution" to the stubborn and seemingly forever resilient policy challenge. And, again I've reached a further conclusion, things that work tend to do so despite the system.

So, I come to write this piece thinking what I can add to the debate about knife crime and how we can reduce its prevalence and fundamentally save lives, both victims and perpetrators. I write this the day after the heinous knife attack in Hainault which resulted in the death of a 14-year-old boy and serious injuries to those who came to help or simply were in the wrong place in what appears to have been a random and deluded act.

In January, the Ben Kinsella Trust highlighted that knife crime had "surged" by 5% in 2023 with 48,716 incidents reported by the police. The Metropolitan Police recorded a 22% increase with 13,957 incidents reported.

In 2002 I was working at the Youth Justice Board when the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, launched his street crime initiative, an earlier effort to address, manage and reduce street

crime in all its forms. Indeed, the Youth Justice Board itself emerged out of the Audit Commission's seminal report on "Misspent Youth" which influenced the emergence of Youth Offending Teams following the implementation of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act – the concept of the Youth Offending Team was seen as a radical solution to join-up local agencies to work in consort to both prevent and reduce youth crime. And, of course throughout the 20th century criminologists and policy makers have constantly presented original approaches. I was also reminded last week that it is 10 years since Catch22's Dawes Unit published its highly acclaimed research, focusing on the impact of gangs and violence in prisons.



I appreciate that I might be accused of conflating a number of issues – I started off mentioning knife crime, I've moved on to youth offending and gangs and prisons but there is a common thread. Of course, knife crime isn't limited to young people and nor is gang involvement, but the common thread is that it involves people, people whose lives are debilitated by crime and lack of hope.

But, why does the problem persist? Indeed, it could be argued that the situation in many parts of the country is worsening. From my current perspective at the back end of a 40-year career it certainly feels that growing up today is tough. For much of my generation we grew up within a more certain environment – you went to school, you left school, you got a job or went into higher education, you got on the property market, you retired and received a pension.

Of course, it was not necessarily a linear journey, and for many life was difficult. There were significant inequalities and injustices, indeed many structural determinants of how your life progressed. So, I don't want to present some revisionist nostalgic picture of the past, but contemporary life for a lot of people is increasingly difficult.

Growing up my generation were not subject to the pernicious influence of social media, nor the increasingly difficult challenge of securing tenure, or repaying student debt or achieving security of quality employment. Additionally, the geo-political environment is again worsening with much of the gains achieved following the second world war and the later fall of the iron curtain being increasingly destabilised.

I am in danger of going off at a tangent. Essentially, I think that growing up today for many young people is full of jeopardy, including being subject to increasing levels of violence and fear. Policy initiatives come and go from situational measures (why are we still waiting for Zombie knives to be banned?) to preventative programmes, albeit the austerity era has wiped out too much of the infrastructure required to do this well – despite all the evidence of prevention being better than cure. What a hackneyed sound bite that has become. Enforcement has assumed a more prominent place in the lexicon of interventions resulting in a prison population double that of only 30 something years ago – yet recidivism remains at very high levels and the prisoner experience is a blight on our politicians and policy makers, indeed on us all – as Winston Churchill reportedly said *"show me your prisons and I shall say in which society you live"*. It is probably fair to say that over the last 10 years we have become increasingly punitive in our policy responses to issues such as violence and knife crime.

So, is this a counsel of despair or do I think there are workable, sustainable solutions? I have now reached a point where I think that the answers and approaches, we need to adopt will be achieved in spite of the system. And I am hopeful that the conditions for change are present albeit in need of some further nurturing.

The reason you might be reading this piece is because a few years ago I met Bruce Houlder – a man who has vast experience of our criminal justice system. He wanted to do something about knife crime in London. He had seen the impact of it through his work

in the criminal courts of London. I think it is fair to say that he found trying to make sense of the plethora of initiative across London somewhat bewildering and so went about trying to create a platform of sorts to bring the respective interests and parties together to forge common ground. And, for me this is a significant part of the answer. Over the last 20 years I have become interested in the notion of collective impact, a methodology or approach to addressing societal problems that emerged in the United States. The principles of collective impact are:

- It starts with a common agenda.
- It establishes shared measurement.
- It fosters mutually reinforcing activities.
- It encourages continuous communications.
- It has a strong backbone.

*For more information check out www.collectiveimpactforum.org

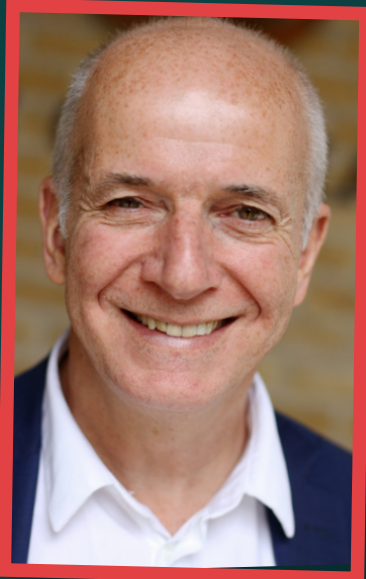
This is not some simple gimmicky type of solution. It requires hard work, it requires focus, and it requires us all to park our egos in support of a common good. It requires people who are driven to find solutions to find a way of working together, to stop competing for space and resources but to collaborate, to curate and collate resources in a common interest. And it can work. There are numerous examples of collective impact programmes and projects delivering sustainable results that can be found on the above website. I'm personally involved in a collective impact programme delivered through

the West London Zone where I'm a trustee www.westlondonzone.org.

This is not a simple panacea, it requires humble leadership, it requires the ceding of power, it requires orthodox delivery structures to be brave, it requires funders to fund what the evidence tells us works. It requires us to stop doing things we have always done or thinking that the next proprietorial policy initiative will be the answer.

Chris Wright

Freelance. Former Social Justice Leader, Formerly a senior leader and practitioner in the social justice environment and now works as an adviser, a non-executive director, trustee, and mentor.



Chris Wright



United Against Knife Crime: Empowering Collaboration in Hackney's Fight for Change

By Paul Anderson MBE, CEO of Voyage Youth

In 2015, Voyage embarked on a transformative journey to Hackney from our original base in Brixton, driven by an unyielding resolve to combat the knife crime and mend strained police relations in our communities. However, this relocation coincided with a concerning trend: a decline in investment for preventative programmes, exacerbated by stringent funding requirements that disproportionately hinder smaller, community-led organisations like ours.

Consequently, essential preventative initiatives aimed at dissuading young people from carrying knives were severely compromised, leaving vulnerable individuals without the support, healing, and access to services they so desperately need.

The impact of this shortfall in investment is both visible and palpable to us. Since moving to Hackney, we have witnessed a systematic reduction of youth investment in youth clubs, community provisions marking the

start of greater Police involvement in criminal justice institutions and surviving youth organisations. These factors have coalesced to create a hostile environment fostering a narrative that paints young people as problematic, exacerbating existing challenges and stifling opportunities for positive change.

These factors have now become the new normal and has served to further disadvantage vulnerable at-risk young people who are more often seen as perpetrators and not victims. We believe this has been amplified by smaller, culturally relevant, asset-based black and diverse-led youth organisations becoming more concerned with evidence-based theory of change and safeguarding documentation, rather than being supported to work more closely with the young people and families that they understand and empathise with.

The impact of this is deep and long-lasting, serving to tear families and communities apart by the devastating loss of loved ones to knife crime, leaving very few options for our young people to get the support they desperately need. Yet, amidst this turmoil, we remain resolute in our commitment to advocating for change and keeping our



doors open to young people at our base in New City College and at the Museum of the Home in Shoreditch.

We implore the Mayor of London, now in his third term, and our local authority leaders to recognise the invaluable and distinctive role of black and diverse-led organisations in tackling knife crime through accreditation leadership projects and voice-oriented programmes. Organisations like ours possess a profound ability to forge authentic connections with young people from challenging backgrounds, drawing upon lived experiences to deliver potent messages of desistance and resistance. However, systemic barriers, including funding requirements favouring larger, less inclusive charities, threaten the very existence of organisations like ours. We simply seek to redress this imbalance and persuade the mayor and others to reassess their funding priorities and provide accessible funding and support for smaller organisations to access sustainable investment, helping them to keep their doors open. Whilst we believe it is important to invest in initiatives supporting knife crime victims, it is often too late to intervene sustainably; thus, much more needs to be done before they become victims. Let's bear in mind that the most effective lessons are imparted when young people are inspired, rather than feeling conditioned, pressured, or influenced by incentives.

Since our arrival in Hackney, we have borne witness first-hand to the devastating impact of knife crime on our young people and communities. We have stood alongside grieving families (Levy 2004, Addai 2015, and Bawuah 2024), offering support and solace in their darkest hours. Yet, despite the pressing urgency of the situation, the

voices of those affected often go unheard by political leaders, their pain unrecognised, and their losses completely unacknowledged. We simply demand that this changes.

One potential solution lies in honouring the memories of those we have lost to knife crime, ensuring that their names and lives are not consigned to oblivion but instead woven into the fabric of our community's transformation. Just as landmarks are renamed (the Geoffrye Museum is now the Museum of the Home, and there are plans to rename Hoxton Station to Windrush) to reflect our evolving society, we propose the inclusion of the names of young knife crime victims in the renaming of streets in Hackney. By immortalising their legacies in this manner, we not only pay homage to their memory, help grieving families but also reaffirm our commitment to constructing a safer, more inclusive community for all.

As we confront the impact of knife crime in our communities, let us heed the clarion call of organisations like Voyage in Hackney. Let us summon the courage to challenge the prevailing norms, to repose our trust in the expertise of those who intimately grasp the intricacies of our communities, and to invest wholeheartedly in preventative measures that proffer hope and opportunity to those in need. The time for action is now.

Additionally, in addressing the pressing issue of funding distribution, we call upon MOPAC and the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to adopt a more collaborative approach, one that encourages larger organisations to work across the sector and extend support to smaller, grassroots

initiatives in their locality. By making collaboration a necessary criterion for knife crime funding, we can harness the collective strength of organisations, bolstering each other's efforts and forging a united front against knife crime. Together, we can effect lasting change and create a safer, more resilient community for generations to come.

Paul Anderson MBE

Paul is the CEO of Voyage in Hackney, pioneering innovative youth leadership programmes in community safety, sustainability, and another in digital technology. He's dedicated to guiding young people into underrepresented industries, amplifying their voices whilst nurturing future leaders who return to inspire the next generation.



www.voyageyouth.com



Paul Anderson MBE



Photo credit: David Clerihew

The Transformative Power of Sports: How Calisthenics Shapes Young Lives

By Christian d'Ippolito, Head of Development @ Steel Warriors

In a world where young people face numerous challenges and temptations that can often lead them astray, calisthenics in particular offers a beacon of hope and opportunity. The term 'calisthenics'

actually derives from the ancient Greek words *kállos*, which means "beauty", and *thenos* which means "strength"; it is ultimately the art of using one's body weight as resistance to develop mastery of the self.

In part due to the restrictive nature of the Covid 19 pandemic, calisthenics has somewhat exploded in popularity in recent years, not only as a physical discipline but also as a vehicle for personal growth, resilience, and positive change, especially for those at risk of taking the wrong path in life. Factors such as socio-economic disadvantages, peer pressure, substance abuse, and a genuine lack of positive role models mean that for many young people there are few paths that can allow for true self-development [without a hefty price tag].

Without creative outlets and supportive environments, these individuals may find themselves slipping into perpetual cycles of socially disruptive behaviour.

Enter Calisthenics: A Transformative Approach

Calisthenics, unlike conventional sports, offers a unique blend of physical training, mental discipline, and individual empowerment. The training is centred around the achievement of specific goals in a progression based way, to unlock impressive skills. Practising requires minimal equipment and can be done freely by all age groups, making it accessible to people

regardless of their ability level and/or circumstances. This accessibility is crucial for engaging those who might otherwise struggle to participate in organised sports due to financial constraints or a lack of facilities. And this is precisely what we enable at Steel Warriors, an anti knife crime charity that melts confiscated knives and turns them into outdoor calisthenics gyms for the benefit of young people and their respective communities. The ability to remain fit and healthy should be accessible to all; healthy citizens after all are the greatest asset any country can have.

Fostering Delayed Gratification

Calisthenics demands discipline and focus, and success in this discipline requires consistency and serious dedication to training. By setting goals and tracking progress, participants learn the value of perseverance and effort. This newfound sense of discipline usually extends beyond the gym into other areas of their lives, such as entrepreneurship and personal relationships.

For many young people, visiting a Steel Warriors gym is their literally first entry point into fitness. Subsequent



Photo credit: David Clerihew



exposure to the diverse and supportive community is a very positive experience as many practitioners gather to train together, share techniques, provide encouragement, and celebrate achievements. For some who may feel isolated or disconnected, this sense of camaraderie can be absolutely life-changing. They become part of a supportive network that values hard work, respect, and mutual support, which can counterbalance negative peer influences. Above all skills can't be learned overnight; they require patience, consistency and a progression based approach to unlock them; delayed gratification is a wonderful teacher to a restless mind.

Mental Health & Redirecting Energy

In addition to positively affecting one's physicality, calisthenics also has well-documented benefits for mental health. Regular exercise naturally releases endorphins, which alleviate stress and improve mood. For young people facing emotional challenges or turbulent home environments, the opportunity to release tension through physical exertion can be a healthy coping mechanism. For others, the ability to notice and respond to

visible progress is a very positive and reassuring experience, which invariably helps boost confidence. Calisthenics also promotes mindfulness and self-awareness, encouraging all participants to be in the moment and attuned to their bodies is a must, for many this is a first step into understanding the holistic benefits of various breathing techniques.

Mentoring and the Power of Community

Integral to the success of initiatives like Steel Warriors is the role of the team who provide guidance and support to young participants. Mentors like myself share personal experiences and insights, offering valuable life lessons alongside physical training. By cultivating meaningful relationships, young individuals can access positive role models and develop essential life skills such as teamwork, confidence and communication. The broader calisthenics community is also a huge source of inspiration and motivation, many participants have their own personal stories of overcoming tremendous hardship and challenges, understanding how others have redirected energy can be pivotal in steering young lives towards healthier trajectories. We have



a multitude of compelling real-life stories of individuals who have turned their lives around thanks to Steel Warriors. A strong family has emerged with international ties, take a look at our instagram account @steelwarriors to see and learn more.

Conclusion: Embracing the Potential of Calisthenics

In conclusion calisthenics holds immense promise for those veering off track or attempting to make meaningful connections. The harsh reality is that many people's idea of 'community' has been whittled down to an online experience, our spaces and services provide a safe haven for people to connect in real terms with a common purpose. This year – and thanks to funding from the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) – we've launched our collaboration with Haringey Learning Partnership, an incredible alternative provision in North London where staff are working creatively to find ways to better support, motivate and inspire young people to overcome complex challenges. By combining physical fitness with mental discipline, community support, and mentorship, calisthenics offers a comprehensive approach to personal development

and empowerment. A brighter future is possible: **PUT DOWN, PULL UP.**

To learn more about the work we do, please don't hesitate to get in touch: christian@steelwarriors.co.uk

Christian D'Ippolito
Steel Warriors,
Head of Development



www.steelwarriors.co.uk



Christian D'Ippolito

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Collaboration in Practice and the CIRV Programme Tackling Violence in the West Midlands

By Shazelle Punjabi - Communications Officer for the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

The bell rings and the silence breaks. Books are thrown into bags, the sound of chairs scraping across the floor fills the room and footsteps begin to hurry towards the door. Somewhere between the

classroom and the gate, the feeling of safety begins to fade. With each step, the weight gets heavier; school doesn't feel the same anymore.

The harsh truth is some of our young people don't get to experience

childhood or their teen years like their peers. Their days are not spent wondering if they'll pass their mock exam, or trying to remember their PE kit. Their worries are far more frightening.

Violence casts a wrecking ball through our communities. It leaves lasting damage on those affected and at times can create a cycle of harm that is incredibly difficult to get out of, though not impossible. When a young person is involved in violence, whether as a victim or a perpetrator, it is important we do not forget that amongst the deafening sirens of police cars and cold metal handcuffs, there is a child that does not understand what's happening. They're trying not to cry, they're worried what they'll say to mum and they're worried if they'll survive this.

Violence is preventable not inevitable. This sits at the very core of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, a body responsible for reducing serious youth violence across the region. The partnership brings together experts, organisations and communities to tackle the root causes and the cycles of violence and exploitation our young people are facing. It recognises that simply making more arrests will not solve the problem, our young people need more support to be guided away from violence.

The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) has been running in Coventry and Wolverhampton in the West Midlands for a year. The £2 million project aims to tackle violent crime by identifying young people who are suspected of or are already impacted by gangs or county lines drug dealing. The programme makes sure the young people identified have 24/7



CIRV staff preparing Christmas hampers for families

access to a team of professionals who help them understand why they are committing crimes and support them to stop.

Research shows inequalities such as poverty, violence in the household and parents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol are more likely to draw a young person into a violent lifestyle. CIRV looks to help young people overcome these issues by providing them with intensive bespoke support including help with housing issues, access to education, ill health, debt or addiction, to create positive routes away from a life of violence. Millions of pounds worth of extra police time has also been invested in both areas.

"This initiative builds on the strength, solidarity and support of our West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership. The programme has been designed to divert young people out of county lines, gangs and violence; to enable our young people to access positive opportunities for the benefit of themselves, their families and society as a whole; and to prevent and tackle violence, protect people and save lives."

Simon Foster, the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

The programme has identified hundreds of young people who are already involved in or are at risk of falling into violence and are currently supporting dozens across the two areas. We have already seen knife and other bladed crimes in Coventry fall by almost half compared to last year, likely due to the efforts of CIRV and the other brilliant initiatives across the city.

CIRV will operate from May 2023 to August 2025 after receiving a £2 million investment from the Home Office and the **Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)**

CIRV is part of a wider £7m investment by the Home Office and YEF into focused deterrence approaches and that there are programmes also being delivered in Nottingham, Leicester, and Manchester.



Sara Roach, Director, West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

Case Study - St Giles Mentor

"X is originally from Cameroon and had no identification, this was a priority for me to help X get ID to enable him to work, secure housing, allow more structure in his day and restrict any potential criminal activity. X was at high risk of becoming desperate for money or be a victim of exploitation.

The work that I have carried out with X, supported by Connections was to get him a Citizenship card and NI number. I also supported X to get a bank account and make an application for rent support. We then worked with "Wolves at Work" who are employability coaches and X was supported completing a CV.

With relationships that St Giles have built up with Tesco, we were able to support X with food, and supported him in securing housing.

Sessions that have also been delivered by St Giles to X include cleaning, cooking lessons, where X did the shopping and cooked a meal. X has a partner. St Giles Mentor completed sexual awareness and a consent session."



Rise Up: Youth Workers Joining Forces to Support Young Londoners Affected by Violence

By Louise McNestrie, Senior Programme Manager, Rise Up, London Youth

For 136 years, London Youth has been supporting youth organisations and young people across London. Together with our incredible network of 600 member organisations, we share one vision: one where all young Londoners grow up healthy, able to express themselves, navigate a fulfilling career and make a positive contribution to their communities.

In 2023, as part of our work to build youth practitioners' skills, confidence

and experience to better support vulnerable young Londoners, we worked with partners to deliver the third year of the Rise Up leadership programme. We equipped 114 youth professionals who work directly with those affected by violence with tools to manage conflict, provided access to networks, and helped them develop confidence in their leadership abilities. I asked two of these professionals, Lisa Pearson and Jade Newton-Gardener, to reflect on their experience with Rise Up, and

how their relationship to themselves, their community, and their approach to reducing violence changed. Here's what they said:



JADE

"If more youth workers could share their experiences, it could rehumanise decision makers' perspectives on young people who turn to violence. We could take away the fear, allowing them to see them first as young people who have experienced trauma and who need the extra support."

Jade:¹ "I heard about London Youth's Rise Up programme a few years ago when I was working at the Amy Winehouse Foundation². It kept coming up, but I didn't have the confidence to apply. Eventually in 2022, while working

at Fully Focused Productions³, I applied and was successful. I guess I finally decided I was worth it.

I've worked in play and youth work for over 24 years, always on the frontline working directly with young people. I've worked for statutory organisations, local authorities and charities, but my preference is always with grassroots organisations.

Fully Focused Productions, where I work now as youth development and wellbeing coordinator, is a youth-led media production company.

Throughout my career I've always had a passion for play theory. Play is vital not just for children but for all young people's development, wellbeing and growth. Professionals who work with young people often aren't aware of just how important play is in supporting them holistically. I was worried when I joined Rise Up that the people I'd meet would hold this misunderstanding about what I do. In fact, Rise Up was a really affirming, inspiring experience.

Through the incredible facilitation, I quickly felt comfortable sharing my thoughts, ideas and opinions with the group. My play-focused lens was affirmed and acknowledged as a new and valid approach. I am one of those people who often thinks about others and not myself, and the Leap Confronting Conflict⁴ sessions really allowed me to reverse this. They cemented the importance of my own personal development.

Thinking back on the cohort of people I met during Rise Up, I think we were destined to share a space. We're still in touch on WhatsApp and continue to share information and grow together. I was a bit of a lone soldier in this profession and now I

have a community. Rise Up empowered me to stand in my truth. It fed my fire the oxygen it needed and gave me the drive to relaunch my organisation IMAP (I am a Person).

Through Rise Up I also joined the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Youth Practitioner Advisory Board⁵, which has broadened my understanding of what the VRU is and how youth worker voices can impact its work. Through London Youth I also gave evidence to the Police and Crime Committee. It was nerve wracking in the lead-up, but I felt comfortable sitting with my peers and sharing our truth and was pleased when MPs approached me personally to continue the conversation. Opportunities like this are a giant step towards youth workers' voices being heard.

If more youth workers could share their experiences, it could rehumanise decision makers' perspectives on young people who turn to violence. We could take away the fear, allowing them to see them first as young people who have experienced trauma and who need the extra support. Youth workers who do the heartwork (that's what I call it!) with these young people should be given the acknowledgment, pay, resources, and the respect they deserve.

I'll never forget what one of my youth work lecturers once said: "It's our job as youth workers to make ourselves redundant." This is what "greater than ourselves" means to me. It means that no one person can bring about the change that's needed for our young people to thrive. It means that we as a collective need to continue to push boundaries to create waves of change for all young people. They are our future, and they are worth it."



LISA

"When I think of the future, I feel determined and positive we will make change. Time is ticking, young people are losing their lives, parents are living in fear. We need intervention now, and that's what drives me."

Lisa: "I personally know lots of parents who have lost their children to knife crime. It's heartbreaking. As a mum, a nan, and an active member of my community, I see clearly that there are no community safety measures in place and young people are up against it. They need help now. A public health approach to the issue of violence is great in 10 years if it has worked, but what about today? I'm interested in immediate solutions, that's what motivates me. That's why I set up Let The Youth Live CIC. I was also proud to become the London bleed kit ambassador for the Daniel Baird Foundation. In 2020 I installed London's first publicly accessible bleed control cabinet in London. I've since rolled out hundreds more. These kits are a lifesaving piece of equipment designed to prevent catastrophic blood loss following trauma or violence. They should be on every street by law.

As a full-time carer, director, activist, and DJ, when I first came across London

Youth's Rise Up programme, I saw it as a way to get professional training and to meet likeminded people working at street level with young people. The fact the commitment was one day a week immediately made me think, "OK, that's something I can work with."

Reflecting on it now, I got all this and so much more. The network I gained is invaluable, and they're people I now call friends. I received leadership training and workshops on confronting conflict, mental health first aid, and using data to influence what I'm doing. Rise Up really boosted my confidence: having to speak in front of a larger group when I'm so used to being one-on-one was initially hard because I suffer with anxiety, but everyone was so supportive of my work. The trainers made sure I concentrated on my wellbeing too, which I hadn't been doing. Since Rise Up I've actually started back on Tae Kwon Do, after many years.

One of the highlights during the programme was meeting Craig Pinkney (Chief Executive of SOLVE: The Centre for Youth Violence and Conflict), who ran a session. I've been supporting his work for years and to meet him in the flesh, and be in the same room, was incredible.

While I was on Rise Up, I was forever thinking about distributing kits to all the other practitioners. I think I was manifesting because there was an opportunity to apply to some funding while on the programme, so I applied, and I got £2,000. With the money I organised a training for young leaders and purchased 20 bleed control kits. I distributed them to 20 other Rise Up participants and they took them to their youth organisations. It worked out that overall, they went out to nine different boroughs.

London is lagging behind in terms of bleed kits because there are so many

boroughs to cover, so I was proud of this collaboration. Joining Rise Up also led to further collaboration with London Youth; they consulted me when they were collating evidence for the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, and I've now joined their Policy Advisory Group. When I think of the future, I feel determined and positive we will make change. Time is ticking, young people are losing their lives, parents are living in fear. We need intervention now, and that's what drives me."

Find out more about the Rise Up programme at londonyouth.org/what-we-do/rise-up/

Louise McNestrie

Senior Programme Manager, Rise Up,
London Youth



www.londonyouth.org



Louise McNestrie

Further Reading

- [1] www.imapcommunity.org
- [2] <https://amywinehousefoundation.org>
- [3] <https://www.fullyfocusedproductions.com>
- [4] <https://leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk>
- [5] <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/communities-and-social-justice/londons-violence-reduction-unit/our-programmes/youth-practitioners-advisory-board>

RISE UP



Empowering youth workers to support young Londoners affected by violence

The Rise Up leadership programme strengthens London's youth sector by investing directly in frontline youth work professionals and their organisations, developing youth practitioners' skills and confidence, and enabling them to better support young Londoners affected by violence.

Over the last three years, Rise Up has demonstrably succeeded in deepening youth practitioners' skills, networks, and practice. Hundreds of alumni continue to put their knowledge into practice and support young people more effectively.

Now entering its fourth year, the Rise Up programme is now open for applications.

Scan the QR code to register



Rise Up free training offer

The training strengthens participants' expertise through the experiences of fellow youth practitioners in the group and insights from organisations specialising in youth work, trauma, conflict, contextual safeguarding, and leadership.

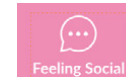
Available in two formats:

Lite, a concise basic cohort or **Full**, a comprehensive 6-month training.

Find out more and register at londonyouth.org/rise-up



Rise Up is funded by London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and delivered by London Youth in partnership with LEAP Confronting Conflict, Feeling Social, Clore Social Leadership, Mary's Youth Club, and Power The Fight.





As Our Name Tells You, We Are All In This Together

By Marian Adejokun, Founder of ReachOut2All

ReachOut2All¹ was born in 2013, hosting events for young people and running youth initiatives. In 2019 we registered as a Community Interest Company. At ReachOut2All CIC, we are all about giving young people, aged 13-30, a voice through their talents. Today I am writing about how we achieve all we do. We cannot do it without others. First though, before the inspiration, here are the basics.

We are a service provider focusing on

- Enrichment trips
- Workshops
- Mentoring
- Providing volunteering opportunities

Our aim is to continue to invest in our youth-focused ideas, and advocate for system changes that meet young people's needs. We have a board of young directors because young people inspire us, act as role models

and ensure that we reflect their lived experiences. We can only reach young people through the support of others. In order to make progress, and achieve a sustainable impact, we seek to liaise with schools, charities & other youth organisations aligned with our ethos for young people.

As part of our outreach, we have recently conducted visits to the HQ of YouTube Space London², The Nelson Mandela Exhibition in London³, the V & A Museum, Sky Academy Studios⁴ and Tiffany & Co London Exhibition.

We have also been acknowledged for our work by The National Diversity Awards, UCL⁵

Providing, **E**mpowering, **A**dvocating, **C**reating, **E**valuating
Offering, and **P**artnering

Now, this is how we have been able to become greater than ourselves.

1 Providing meaningful opportunities for youth participation and leadership within the organization. This could consist of youth organizations working together to meet the needs of young people through their various services which could be delivered in partnership with another organisation. By doing this you are supporting each other's work and dedication towards youth work and development. As the founder of ReachOut2All I would definitely say this is one of the key strategic approaches we currently use in order to deliver our services as well as collaborating effectively with others that their values align with ours.

2 Offering skill-building workshops, mentorship programs, and resources to develop youth capacities. This is a very important aspect for young people as they continue to grow develop and constantly learning. Our youth led services include mentoring, workshops, training programmes and enrichment trips. We have particularly found these enrichment trips to be of great value and benefit to our young people.

Our work in this area, enables us to observe first-hand how this effects young people with additional needs or support. We believe a tailored

and inclusive approach to our workshops, to meet their needs. Every young person learns differently and

processes information in their own way. One example of this is the way we involve our youth advisor volunteers to give us feed-back on our workshops. This enabled is to change all of our workshops by using icons, videos and images to ensure it was accessible for all learners e.g. those with autism and learning needs.

3 Creating safe spaces for dialogue, expression, and collective action on issues relevant to young people. Such safe spaces are vital. We know this well, and our young people constantly tell us this too. We would like to continue offering these safe spaces for open discussion and hosting events.

Funding is vital to provide this, and we need others to consider what support they might give to ensure our success. Too often we find we

can only fund our work out of our personal pockets. This is why we want everyone to get involved to help to deliver a funding stream with is effective and will be sustainable in the long term. More widely, greater support is needed for the whole youth sector to continue offering these services.

4 Partnering with other stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and businesses, to amplify their impact and reach.

We can only reach young people through the support of others. I order to progress, and make a sustainable impact, we seek to liaise with schools, charities & other youth organisations aligned with our ethos for young people.

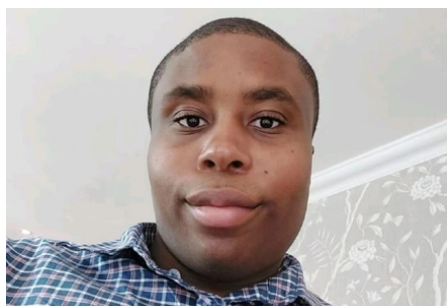
5 Conducting regular evaluations and incorporating feedback from youth to ensure programs are responsive to their needs and interests.

We will continue to work with young people to amplify their voices and take the necessary steps, so they are involved in decision making and change, by co-creating with them in our discussions (planning, organising and leading).

6 Advocating for policies and initiatives that promote youth rights, participation, and empowerment at local, national, and international levels.

We have been acknowledged for our work by The National Diversity Awards, UCL⁶

So this is what we do and how we do it. Now hear two of our young volunteers ,as they tell me how they see it.



Troy Njenje Mbanga (ReachOut2All Volunteer) writes:

"There can be no really good project ideas if people don't work together to improve the work others are doing. We are all working in the same space, but the work we do loses power and value if we don't just share our resources, but also our expertise. The way we work together improves our ability to raise finance, and bring together the financial engines if the community, such as local businesses, in support. Those who give such assistance will be applauded and recognised for their contributions, so increasing their own public profile for the contribution they make. Together we can make the work we do so much more powerful"



Elishia Alleyne (ReachOut2All Volunteer) writes:

"Since working with ReachOut2All, I have had optimal opportunities to attend critical meetings in the youth

empowerment space, adding value to ReachOut2All's strategy and workshop materials. I feel empowered as a young person to share my ideas, and I have developed an understanding of the importance of sharing my viewpoints and reasonings - I have been able to clearly see how ideas are developed into reality.

The youth empowerment space is developing, but unfortunately the message hasn't reached a level of success that is adequate globally. ReachOut2All's organisational ethos is about making sure that all that is done, championed, and created is "For Youth by Youth". It holds inclusivity and accessibility at the heart. Such an emotive approach makes me feel proud, as a young person, to work alongside ReachOut2All. Embarking on adulthood, one of my strong passions is to make sure that foundations are in place for the next generation to thrive, feel empowered, be seen and be heard within society. The work I am part of as a youth advisor and research assistant enables this vision become a reality".

FKCL's Editor writes:

Marian Adejokun is also an international inspirational speaker, Early Years teacher (SEN, EAL & other year groups), the published author of two books, a youth advocate, multi-award winner and entrepreneur. It has always been Marian's passion to educate and speak at schools primary, secondary, and higher education as she likes to use that platform to empower young children, youths, and adults about her life changing story. Marian has fared and lived by the rules of life and death far greater than most people of her age. An allergic reaction to medication

led to a near-death experience that changed her life forever. The details of her struggles and the highlights of her life - both good and bad - are shared in her soul-expanding memoir, "My Life Is Not My Own?" and in other books that you will find here⁸.

Marian Adejokun

Founder of ReachOut2All CIC



www.reachout2all.co.uk



Marian Adejokun

Further Reading

- [1] <https://reachout2all.co.uk>
- [2] <https://blog.youtube/news-and-events/the-youtube-space-london-our-new-home/>
- [3] <https://mandelaexhibition.com>
- [4] <https://www.skyup.sky/academy-studios>
- [5] <https://www.nationaldiversityawards.co.uk>
- [6] <https://www.nationaldiversityawards.co.uk>
- [7] <https://www.amazon.co.uk/My-Life-Not-Own/dp/1496978560>
- [8] <https://mariansbookstore.bigcartel.com/product/reachout2all>



Online Harms in the Offline World

By Kayleigh Milner, Senior Marketing & Events Officer for The Social Switch Project

The Dual Nature of the Digital Age

In the digital age, the internet has become an integral part of our daily lives, offering countless benefits in communication, education, and entertainment. However, alongside its advantages, the online world also harbors a darker side, where harmful content and behaviors can manifest and seep into offline violent realities. One of the most concerning manifestations of this phenomenon is the connection between online content and offline violence, particularly Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

Individual Responsibility and Collective Action

"Becoming greater than ourselves" involves recognising this interconnectedness and taking responsibility to foster a safer, more inclusive digital society.

While individuals must take steps to protect themselves online, such as securing their profiles and being aware of the signs of online harms, we must think "greater than ourselves." This means implementing protective measures for the most vulnerable, such as stronger legislation and comprehensive support systems.

The Social Switch Project aims to explore the intricate relationship between online harms and offline consequences, focusing on the specific challenges and dangers posed by digital content and their real-world consequences.

Empowering Professionals and Youth

The Social Switch Project has equipped over 2,500 professionals with the tools to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital world when working with young people, courtesy of their Online Harms Training. The results speak volumes: 91% of participants have seen a marked increase in their understanding of young people's social media usage, while 88% have heightened their awareness of the safeguarding risks inherent in social media.

Additionally, the project has provided training to over 1,500 young Londoners in social media management. Of these, 79% have successfully transitioned into employment, apprenticeships, or further training, while 20% have completed valuable work experience or internships. The Mayor of London and its Violence Reduction Unit has supported the innovative work of The Social Switch Project since 2019, delivered by Catch22 and Redthread.

"The Social Switch Project has re-focused the traditional online safety training to think more about the experience of young people than the content put before them. It is vital that trusted adults are aware of how young people are being influenced online, and how online behavior feeds into offline society so they can safeguard and support young people now and in the future" says Richard Smith, Operations

Manager at The Social Switch Project.

Addressing VAWG

By empowering professionals and trusted adults with the knowledge and skills to identify and address online harms, the project aims to mitigate the risk of such behaviors translating into real-world violence, particularly concerning VAWG. The current proliferation of social media platforms, online forums, and digital communication channels has exponentially increased the dissemination of information and the exchange of ideas. Unfortunately, this interconnectedness has also facilitated the spread of harmful content, including hate speech, violent imagery, misinformation, cyberbullying, and digital misogyny.

The Internet's Dark Corners

Certain corners of the internet have become breeding grounds for misogynistic ideologies, objectification of women, and glorification of violence against them. From explicit pornography to misogynistic memes and revenge porn, the internet hosts a plethora of content that normalizes and trivializes VAWG, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and attitudes.

The Pervasiveness of VAWG

VAWG is a pervasive global issue that encompasses various forms of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence directed at women and girls simply because of their gender. It is rooted in unequal power dynamics and entrenched social norms that perpetuate discrimination and gender-based violence. Despite significant efforts to address VAWG, it remains

prevalent in all societies, with the digital realm amplifying its reach and impact. According to Amnesty International, 23% of women surveyed across eight countries said they had experienced online abuse or harassment at least once, including 21% of women polled in the UK (Amnesty International, 2017).

Building a Positive Digital Environment

To create a more positive online world, we need to spread awareness and build skills. Initiatives like The Social Switch Project, which emphasizes peer-to-peer education and digital literacy, play a crucial role in this effort. By fostering a culture of collective responsibility, we can work towards a digital environment where the benefits outweigh the harms.

The internet has revolutionised the way we communicate, connect, and access information, but it also presents new challenges and dangers, particularly concerning online harms and their offline consequences. The nexus between online content and offline violence, especially VAWG, underscores the urgent need for

collective action to promote a safer and more inclusive digital environment. By addressing the root causes of online harms, fostering digital literacy, and providing support for victims, we can work towards a future where everyone can fully enjoy the benefits of the digital age without fear of violence or harm.

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www.thesocialswitchproject.org.uk



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