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Issue 13  
October 2024

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FIGHTING  
KNIFE CRIME



Issue 13

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## Contents

5 Welcome to Issue 13 of Fighting Knife Crime London Magazine

8 Empowering Young People:  
Addressing Knife Crime with Empathy and Support

12 Time to change our approach:  
we need community-driven solutions

17 Harnessing the power of alumni to help  
young people find their path to success

21 Restorative Justice in the context of the Youth Justice service  
Hammersmith and Fulham: the challenges and the highlights

27 Head Held High Behaviour-change Programmes

31 Empowering Change Through Virtual Reality: Addressing Knife  
Crime and Violence Against Women

32 Reducing Knife Crime in the United Kingdom

36 Knives Know No Colour But Red

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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**THE LOSS OF THESE  
YOUNG LIVES TO THIS  
SENSELESS VIOLENCE  
DEMANDS OUR  
COLLECTIVE RESOLVE.**



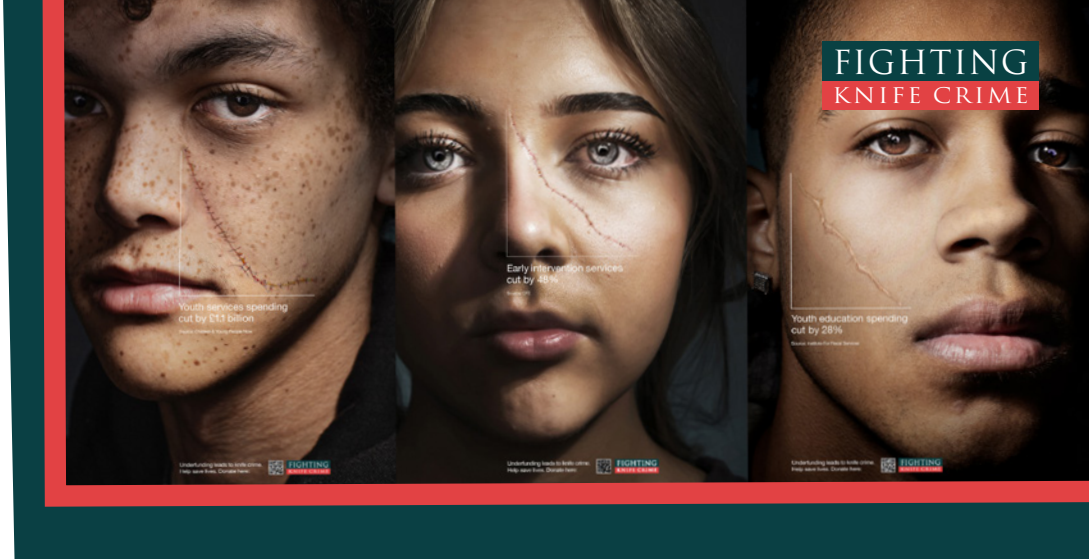
Writer and Film Producer  
**BIVAS AMBASADA**



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**'HIS STORY' ALIGNS PERFECTLY FOR SHOWCASING FILMS THAT CHALLENGE, INSPIRE, AND CREATE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. THE SHORT FILM NOT ONLY TELLS A STORY WHICH NEEDS TO BE HEARD IN THIS CURRENT CLIMATE OF GUNS, KNIVES, GANGS AND VIOLENCE, BUT ALSO INVITES VIEWERS TO LOOK BEYOND THE HEADLINES AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF SUCH INCIDENTS AND HOW WE MAY BE ABLE TO PREVENT THEM.**

Based on a true and personal story about resilience, survival and the human spirits' capacity to overcome adversity. 'His story' tells the harrowing tale of young individuals who become victims of unexpected acts of violence. Rather than the act itself, the film delves into the aftermath, exploring the physical and emotional journey of recovery. It is a story about the strength to survive and rebuild one's life after such traumatic experiences, for those who have made it out alive. Shot on location in South London, the short film features a cast of talented newcomers, and non-actors whose lived experiences shines authentic performances and depth to this compelling narrative. The team have worked tirelessly for many months to ensure every aspect of this film - from the script, cinematography, and music - honours the real life experiences of the victims and sheds some light on their often overlooked struggles.



## Foreword

By Bruce Houlder CB KC, founder and trustee of FKCL (Charity number 1207588)

**T**his is the 13th Issue of our quarterly magazine. Thank you to all who are subscribers and contributors to this free series of articles by those in the front line of change, and who have expressed an interest in sharing the work they do with others.

### An update on the 'Coalition on Knife Crime'

As you would expect FKCL has maintained close contact with the **Home Office** and have been provided with an update on progress of the Prime Minister's new '**Coalition on Knife Crime**'. The answers to the questions I have asked are not exactly informative, but perhaps this is to be expected given the current workload in Downing Street. Significantly we are given no specific timeline for the actual launch of this initiative, but I sense it will not be long delayed. Like most of you who read our magazine, we want very much to support this new initiative. I assume we

will all be told when we know the plan of action they propose, and the process we need to follow to influence change and help those who are to drive the work of the coalition forward. It should not be an exclusive group, but rather the servant of the national community working to bring effective change to the life chances of our young people.

The Home Office have written to tell me the following as at 24th October.

- The coalition has not yet formally launched. We expect to progress this in due course and will keep stakeholders updated.
- The initial meeting of this group was a Roundtable to signal the government's intent to launch a coalition to tackle knife crime.
- There are no publicly available documents pertaining to the knife crime coalition at this time.

It is important that those working in the sector know who the multi-disciplinary members of this coalition are, as well as any terms of reference under

which they will operate and convene. It is also important to know a little about the kinds of decisions they will make, how they will be carried into action in a verifiable way, and how we may all feed into this work via a central secretariat or by writing to the relevant member of the coalition. At FKCL we want to help in a small way to make this coalition the very best it can be. We hope that the process of collaboration will be as simple and inclusive as possible. The Government's present statement is [here](#).

### Our 13th Issue

Now to this issue. We have some exciting content. Our authors are all listed in our content page.

There is a contribution from the excellent **Ben Kinsella Trust** about the multi-faceted approach required to keep young people safe. We hear from The AP Foundation about their groundbreaking "Who's Next" campaign which is their imaginative response to this crisis. The central questions that are addressed are "Who's next to be stabbed? Who's next to be killed? Who's next to receive a life sentence?". The answers are as uncomfortable as the solutions are urgent.

We learn much from **Future First** about the value to students of everyone working together to change the status quo, build networks and supportive systems in schools and everywhere young people congregate. The social enterprise Head Held High teaches us the value of highly interactive workshops and programmes to help young people at risk of exclusion and/or affiliation with knife crime. It is well worth a read.

The reality of **Restorative Justice** is brought to life by an experienced practitioner from **Hammersmith and Fulham**, and how valuable that can be

as an alternative to a formal sentencing process, and all the damage that can do to a person's life chances. The alternative demonstrated by this piece shows us what life-changing and rewarding work Restorative practice can be.

Finally, we also have an important of announcements and ideas from **Make it Stop**. This is an ambitious joined-up project best explained by reading the article. **Make It Stop** is intended to be a nationwide campaign but as you will learn they are focusing initial efforts on the London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.

### Our New Poster Campaign

Many of you will by now have seen the posters around London, one of which also appears on our front cover, which draw attention to the damage done by knives and the related cuts to our youth support services in every area. They are deliberately hard-hitting, and we thought long and hard about using such images. They connect in a direct visual way with the message about government cuts of course, and after a great deal of thought, and some consultation, we decided that they were both acceptable and thought-provoking images for a campaign of this kind.

All designs and creative energy should be credited to TBWA\MCR and their committed team, who have launched this campaign at their own expense, as like us they feel so strongly about the cuts inflicted on youth services and young people.

The creative has honed-in on the insight that 'more cuts lead to more cuts'.

The Billboard campaign has three variations, each with an extreme close-up of the face of a young person depicted as a victim of knife crime plus a strapline highlighting an area of youth services funding that has been cut.

### Each poster has a call to action

In a Press release put out on behalf of TBWA\MCR, **Bruce Houlder**, the founder of **Fighting Knife Crime London**, said: "It has never been more important for communities to come together, to cut knife crime from our streets, and return hope through the power of genuine collaboration.

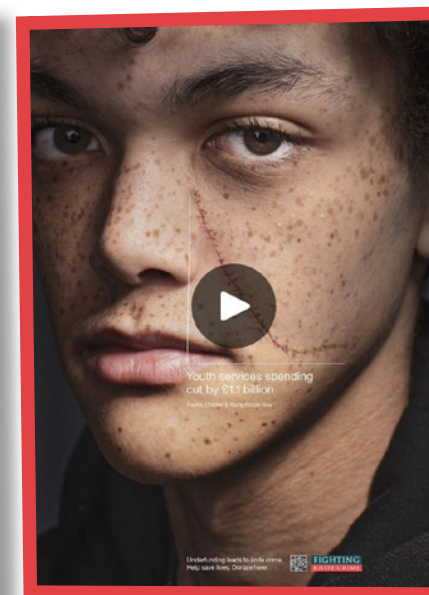
"This powerful poster campaign is the brainchild of TBWA\MCR. Fighting Knife Crime London is honoured to join with them to bring the widest range of information resources and guidance to all who want or may need help."

**Lisa Nichols**, Executive Creative Director, TBWA\MCR, said: "A shocking decline in government spending on local policing, youth services, youth clubs, after school activities, and reduced mental health support, has all impacted the rise in knife crime numbers.

"Our aim with this campaign is to show that this decline has a very real human cost. We wanted to put a face to the statistics. We are proud to have produced this work for an organisation like **Fighting Knife Crime**, who work hard to reduce knife crime in the UK to stop young people becoming a fatal statistic."

The campaign runs on 48 sites in and around London from October 23rd and will be supported on social channels.

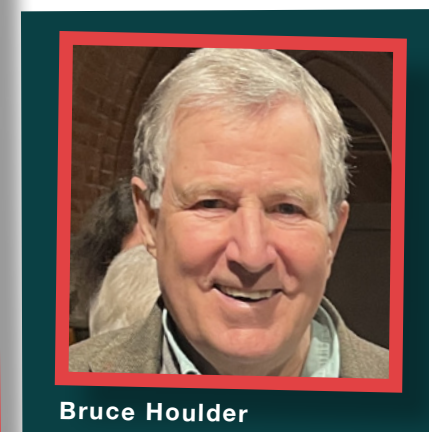
The images are by David Boni Photography and media was planned by Build Hollywood.



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

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**Bruce Houlder**



# Empowering Young People: Addressing Knife Crime with Empathy and Support

By Anoushka Dunic, Training Programmes Manager, The Ben Kinsella Trust

I have met with many families and community members bereaved by violence. It is clear the effect these tragic events have is profoundly felt by all impacted. The fear and anxiety these incidents instil in young people is a silent epidemic that must be addressed with urgency.

The Ben Kinsella Trust's recent report, **Keeping Young People Safe (2024)**, surveyed over 9,500 young Londoners and revealed some alarming statistics. A staggering 36% of young people – over a third – reported that they did not feel safe in their area. Furthermore, 64% – nearly two thirds – said they were anxious or worried about knife crime. In a separate **BBC Bitesize survey** of over 2,000 UK teenagers, 31% were concerned about knife crime in schools (2024).



**36% of young people do not feel safe in their area. 64% are anxious or worried about knife crime and 31% are concerned about knife crime in schools.**

These figures underscore the pervasive fear that knife crime has created amongst young people; but this fear is

disproportionate to the actual levels of knife crime in most areas. This disconnect between perception and reality can lead to dangerous behaviours, such as carrying a knife for perceived protection. We know that statistically, a person is more likely to be harmed if they carry a knife, but this myth of protection is held by many of the young people who we work with. Our **Keeping Young People safe report** reveals that 24% of young people believe that carrying a knife would protect them. While only 2% admitted to carrying a knife, this data highlights the vulnerability of some young people to the idea of self-defence through carrying weapons. Encouragingly, this harmful belief around knife-carrying offering protection is significantly reduced after visiting our exhibition and participating in a Ben Kinsella Trust Choices & Consequences workshop: The number of young people who thought carrying a knife would protect them dropped from 24% to 5%.

To combat the fear of knife crime and to prevent young people from making risky decisions, we must adopt a more empathetic and nuanced approach. Simply telling young people what to do or showing them frightening images is unlikely to be effective, and some research has shown these approaches to be counterproductive. Instead, we must listen to young people's concerns, acknowledge their fears, and build trust through empathy. When young people are treated as equals, respected, and listened to by the adults in their lives, they are more likely to listen to guidance around safety.

Thankfully, most young people have not personally experienced 'knife crime' or serious violence, with most young people having concerns around issues or conflict with peers instead. Although, we know that sometimes issues between peers can escalate into more serious harms online or in-person, such as bullying, abuse, violence and in the worst possible cases, even death. By reframing the conversation from 'knife crime' to 'staying safe', we can create a more positive and empathetic environment for young people to learn, problem-solve and access support. By using positive imagery and avoiding traumatising language, we can help young people think differently about their situation and the choices they make.

**By reframing the conversation from 'knife crime' to 'staying safe,' we create a more positive and empathetic environment for young people.**

Most young people know how to stay safe and have many practical strategies in how to de-escalate conflict with peers, but in the face of peer pressure or operating from the survival part of their brain it can be harder to make decisions and navigate situations safely. Often it is the understanding words, support and guidance from a trusted adult that empowers them to make the right choices in difficult circumstances.

As adults who support young people, we can help them to feel better equipped to handle challenging situations for themselves. This is not about us liberating responsibility for young people's safety. It is about helping young people to better trust their instincts, fostering a sense of autonomy and equipping them with skills whilst also helping them to understand who else can help them.

An effective strategy is focusing on the positive aspects of self-awareness and personal safety. We can help young people develop their emotional intelligence and highlight the importance of trusting their instincts, thinking ahead, and speaking to a trusted adult about their concerns.

Emotional intelligence is our ability to recognise, interpret and process emotions in ourselves and others. A key part of developing this is self-awareness, getting to know yourself, your triggers and trusting your instincts. Improved emotional intelligence can also help with building resilience, decision-making and problem-solving; all fundamental elements of staying safe in certain situations. We can help young people develop this in several ways, by modelling appropriate emotional responses, increasing emotional literacy, showing empathy and teaching healthy coping skills in the face of adversity.

Young people usually know when a situation is about to become dangerous and when to avoid it. However, when operating from a fight or flight perspective it can be harder to navigate. Young people can be encouraged to trust their gut instincts and understand how effective these instincts are in keeping them safe. Our stomachs are colloquially known as our 'second brain' and can play a powerful part in keeping us safe. The Gut-Brain Axis is a recognised communication system that allows messages to be passed from our gut to our brain and vice-versa. The messages linked to our threatened survival can feel different for everyone; like butterflies, churning or knots. However, they can all be described as a 'gut-feeling' or instinct. Our brains sometimes override and reason with these feelings, giving us thoughts such as 'you're overthinking this' or 'you're making a something out of nothing'. I say this to everyone and anyone who will listen, no

matter their age; our belly is our best friend, trust it.

**Trust your gut—it's your best friend. Our instincts are powerful tools in keeping us safe.**

Often some young people don't think about their future in the long term but can effectively consider the consequences of their choices in shorter time scales. Asking young people to take a breath and take a step back helps them to engage their 'thinking brain' if they are in a conflict situation. They can then effectively ask themselves 'where do I want to be in five minutes?'. Will they want to be in a physical fight with a peer? Or involved in an argument online with a friend? Most likely not. By taking a step back to consider the consequences it gives a young person the time and headspace to work out how to resolve the conflict and seek guidance from a trusted adult if they cannot work through it alone.

By emphasising these factors, we can equip young people with the ability to take control of their lives and make informed decisions.

**Asking young people 'Where do I want to be in five minutes?' helps them step back and avoid risky decisions.**

Who are the trusted adults in a young person's life? For some it may be their parents or carers, a youth mentor or teacher. Sadly, for some young people they might not feel there are any adults in their lives who can offer support and guidance. Sometimes, a young person might not be able to visualise all the people in their communities that can support them safely and give them someone to talk to when

they need to. We can all advocate for a young person in helping to find those adults that play a key part in enhancing the protective factors in a young person's life by exploring safe spaces in the community, local youth services and parenting support from local authorities.

In conclusion, tackling the fear and impact of knife crime on young people requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond simply telling them what to do. By fostering emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and trust in their instincts, we can empower young people to navigate conflict and stay safe. It's essential to build trusting relationships where young people feel listened to and respected, enabling them to make informed decisions. We must also ensure they have access to supportive adults and safe spaces within their communities. By focusing on positive reinforcement and empathetic engagement, we can help young people not only stay safe but also help them to build a positive future.

*Anoushka Dunic*

Training Programmes Manager  
The Ben Kinsella Trust



**The Ben Kinsella Trust**

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**Anoushka Dunic**

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# Time to Change our Approach: we Need Community-driven Solutions

By Andrew Pritchard, Executive Founder of AP Foundation

***As knife crime rates across London worsen, a change of approach is desperately needed. Andrew Pritchard, Executive Founder of the AP Foundation, discusses how the new 'Who's Next?' campaign coalition will deliver this.***

**K**nife crime has cast a long, dark shadow over London, a city that should be a haven for its youth. Instead, it has become a battleground where too many young lives are lost or destroyed. According to the Metropolitan Police, there were over 15,000 knife crime offences in London in 2023, a significant increase from the previous year.

The rate of senseless violence continues to rise, so it's time for us to fully understand its root causes, and to join forces to tackle the problem from all angles. While the media continue to print the same headlines on repeat, our coalition is calling for change.

## Knife crime's devastating impact

In London's most affected boroughs, such as Croydon, Southwark, Lambeth, Newham, and Hackney, postcode gangs have entrenched themselves deeply within the community. In these areas, knife crime isn't just an issue, it's a daily reality. These gangs, often defined by nothing more than a few streets or a housing estate, are drawing young people into their ranks at an alarming rate.

Gang leaders strategically target vulnerable youth – those from broken homes, struggling in school, and/or those living in poverty. These young people are groomed with promises of protection, money, and a sense of belonging. Once they are in, it's incredibly hard for them to get out, and they are on a fast track to violence, crime, and even, death. This isn't just a fringe issue, it's a pervasive problem that is spreading across our city, pulling more and more young lives

– from both poorer and more affluent neighbourhoods – into its grip.

The impact of knife crime is far-reaching. Survivors suffer lifelong trauma, and families who have lost loved ones are left with unimaginable grief. The perpetrators, often vulnerable youth groomed by gang leaders, face life sentences. The wider community is left with fear and anxiety, leading to a breakdown in trust and community cohesion which further exacerbates the problem.

## Community-driven solutions

The AP Foundation's 'Who's Next?' campaign will seek to change how we tackle London's youth knife crime. For the first time, it will bring together all frontline stakeholders – people impacted both personally and professionally by it – to devise a series of community-driven solutions centred around education, opportunity, cooperation and support. From addressing the forces that drive our young people into this deadly lifestyle, to empowering communities to effectively respond, the 'Who's Next?' campaign is a participatory initiative that asks the key questions concerning us all: "who's next to be stabbed or killed?", and equally, "who's next to make a positive change?", by receiving that life-changing opportunity.



## Our journey so far...

On May 1, 2024, 'May Day', I decided to call upon a group of friends who were equally distressed about the worsening outlook for our youth: from DJs and actors, to ex-offenders and criminal lawyers. This diverse group of individuals came together at the AP Foundation Hub in Hackney, London, to form a core campaign alliance. This gathering began a new chapter in our collective effort to end the relentless cycle of violence.

The first major step in our journey has been to listen and learn from one another. We are expanding our alliance and engaging with those who are most affected by knife crime: victims, ex-gang members, families, educators, youth workers, criminology academics, police gang units, and members of the criminal justice system. Their stories, insights, and experiences will form the foundation of a comprehensive research piece that will do more than just present statistics and add to the exhaustive range of academic literature.

It will tell the real story of knife crime in London and offer insight-based solutions that can be implemented at the community level. This research will serve as a critical tool for our campaign, providing clear directions for community leaders, educators, police, local councils and the government. By drawing on the lived experiences of those on the front lines, we can shift the narrative from one of despair, to one of hope and action. To better understand how this future should look, in late October, the AP Foundation called upon many of our London-based partners to discuss it.

Over the next 12-18 months, we plan to implement our partners' recommended series of solutions and initiatives via a London-based,



cooperative pilot, that will not only address the immediate issues, but also lay the foundations for long-term, sustainable change.

### Looking ahead: cooperation is key

To create real change, we need to work together and put words into action. That's why we have been working tirelessly to establish strategic partnerships across various sectors, from legal and criminal justice to education and community outreach, to devise and implement solutions. These partnerships are crucial to our campaign, providing us with the expertise, resources, and reach necessary to succeed.

On the frontline, organisations like the AP Foundation CIO, Faz Amnesty CIC, DBA Project, One Chance, Youth Unity, NYCC, and Factory East Community Project, are working directly with young people and

communities to provide the support and opportunities they need to choose a path away from violence.

Together, we will ramp up efforts to educate and empower the next generation. For example, with training in conflict resolution and street-smart skills, as well as anti-knife and gang awareness talks in schools and colleges – ensuring that young people better understand the dangers and consequences of damaging actions and the benefits of productive ones.

The TRO Agency, Urban Arts Entertainment, and Fabio D'Andrea are amplifying our message and efforts to the public, through experiential marketing and visual media assets. We will produce a powerful anti-knife crime short film and offer VR experiences, which will be displayed in schools and cinemas across London.

To help us better understand the current challenges across the criminal

justice sector and how we can integrate their experts' unique experiences and insights into the campaign, our partner insights from MK Law and Fighting Knife Crime London remain crucial. We are also working with police gang units to understand their daily interactions and how they can better serve and engage with their local communities.

Within the next two years, we aim to launch an annual music, culture, and arts festival to celebrate the vibrant diversity of our city and serve as a powerful counter-narrative to the violence that has plagued us for too long.

This is more than just a plan: it's a movement. And we need everyone – youths, families, educators, community leaders, frontline workers, emergency services, and the wider UK public – to join us.

Together, we are forming a comprehensive, cross-industry plan to make a real impact.

### It's time for change

We intend to present our proposals to local authorities and central government personnel tasked with combating knife crime across London. The ongoing efforts and future goals of the government's recently formed coalition to tackle knife crime will not be realised without frontline, local community-driven initiatives like ours focused on delivering realistic solutions.

We will soon outline our detailed plan to deliver them via a comprehensive, community-driven pilot based in a London borough, designed to tackle the root causes of knife crime and to provide young people, and their families, with the guidance, support

and opportunities they need to choose a productive path.

The time to act is now, and through the 'Who's Next?' campaign, alongside our dedicated partner network, we are committed to leading the charge against knife crime. The devastation wrought by knife violence in our communities demands immediate and decisive action. Its root causes and impact will not simply fade away – and neither will we – so please join us with your support.

**Andrew Pritchard**  
Executive Founder  
of AP Foundation



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## Harnessing the Power of Alumni to Help Young People Find Their Path to Success

By Sue Riley, CEO of Future First and social mobility advocate

At social mobility charity **Future First**, we believe that every student from every walk of life deserves to thrive.

But the UK has a deep social mobility problem. For too many young people, their start in life is limiting their future. They do not have access to relatable role models to help them understand what they can achieve, nor the networks, knowledge and tools to help them get there.

Future First is working to change that and the good news is that businesses and individuals across the UK are helping us do just that. Read on to see how you can be part of the solution.

### Social mobility in the UK

The UK has one of the poorest rates of social mobility in high income countries. This means that people born into low-income families, regardless

of their talent, or their hard work, do not have the same access to opportunities as those born into more privileged circumstances. This lack of social mobility has wide ranging consequences.

A number of reports published over the summer paint a seemingly bleak picture.

- The ONS has reported that the number of young people aged between 16 and 24 in the UK currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has risen to 872,000, with the bulk of the increase in numbers being attributed to young men<sup>1</sup>.
- A working paper co-authored by Social Mobility Professor Lee Elliott-Major suggested that teenagers who failed their English and Maths GCSEs tended to face worse life outcomes not just in education but in health and wellbeing and were more likely to be





involved in criminal behaviour compared to their higher-achieving peers<sup>2</sup>.

- Research by the Education Policy Institute found that young people suspended during secondary school were twice as likely to not achieve a level 3 qualification by age 19 and be NEET by 24<sup>3</sup>.
- Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) found that pupils who are on free school meals (FSM) are nearly five times more likely to be permanently excluded and four times more likely to be suspended than their non-FSM classmates, the report says, while children from some ethnic minority backgrounds are disproportionately being placed in alternative provision (AP) away from mainstream schools<sup>4</sup>.

This may go some way towards explaining why, in a report from the Sutton Trust published earlier this year, 57% of people aged 18-24 years old say it is harder for young people to succeed today than it was for older generations. And 71% of the public agreed that not all young people have the same opportunity to succeed<sup>5</sup>.

You'd be forgiven for thinking the issue is insurmountable but, we believe there is an easy and cost-effective way to address some of the problem. So, how can we turn this around and raise the aspirations of our younger citizens?

### **The importance of relatable role models**

It can be hard for any young person to imagine what life after school or college will be. Put simply, you can't be what you

can't see. But that is where role models come in, and the good news is that we can all play a part in helping young people find and access their path to success.

Former students of a school or college, also known as alumni, are a perfect example of the types of role models young people need. Because they have grown up in the same place and attended the same school, they are instantly relatable to current students. By sharing their education and career journeys, alumni can help youngsters envision their own path to success and motivate them to strive for their goals. Alumni can also help to challenge stereotypes and unlock access to previously gate kept sectors.

### **Building supportive alumni networks**

Future First's mission is to see every state school and college in the UK supported by a vibrant, engaged alumni and employee volunteer network so that all young people can 'see what they can be'.

Our model is simple, and we know it works. We work with schools and colleges to help them build, grow and maintain thriving alumni and employee volunteer communities. These volunteers provide young people with access to relatable role models and open the doors to careers that they might not have considered before or even heard of. In the past 15 years, we've built over 1,250 networks, supported nearly 500,000 young people and worked with over 100,000 volunteers.

State schools already understand the benefits that alumni engagement brings, but at a time where resources are scarce, we must find ways to build capacity in the system so that it is sustainable.

### **Supporting careers education**

Studies from the Education Endowment Foundation<sup>6</sup> have shown that children and young people who take part in employer engagement programmes, including work experience at school, are less likely to be NEET and an increase of up to 20% in wages can be attributed to careers interventions in schools.

Resourcing schools to build a supportive and active community of alumni and local employee volunteers is a cost-effective way of enhancing careers and the wider curriculum, ensuring students are provided with experiences of the world of work and given a way into a wider variety of sectors.

Meanwhile, many businesses already offer volunteering days to their workforce. If just a portion of those days were used to volunteer in state secondary schools, it would provide real time careers support and meaningful employer engagement would be available in the system.

This is a cost-effective way to bridge the gap between education and employment to address issues of employment readiness and sector access and give students from any background the tools and resources they need to succeed professionally and personally.

### **A collective endeavour**

We recently launched the Future First pledge<sup>7</sup>. It brings together the government, education, employers and state school and college alumni around a commitment to support social mobility and equity of opportunity, helping young people of all backgrounds 'see someone like me', and reach their potential.



Our ask of the government is to increase careers advice and guidance capacity in schools and colleges; support businesses to focus some of their staff volunteer days in schools and colleges; work with civil society to commission solutions that encourage collaboration and champion innovation.

Our ask of employers is to designate staff volunteer days to support local schools and colleges to build their careers capacity; provide meaningful experiences of the world of work for young people and engagement with relatable role models from their business.

And our ask of schools and colleges is to engage their alumni and local employers to build a volunteer network and enhance careers education; appoint an alum to their governing body to ensure there is accountability for engagement.

When state schools and colleges are supported by engaged volunteers from a variety of sectors, everybody wins. Young people have more opportunities and better outcomes, volunteers improve their skills, connections and wellbeing and employers build a more diverse talent pipeline.

We CAN create a society where every young person can see and access the path to success, we just need to harness our collective strengths to make it happen.

If you want to get involved, please sign our pledge at [www.futurefirst.org.uk/ff-pledge](http://www.futurefirst.org.uk/ff-pledge) and email us at [info@futurefirst.org.uk](mailto:info@futurefirst.org.uk) to explore how we can work together.

### Further Reading

- [1] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/unemployment/bulletins/>
- [2] <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CLS-Working-Paper-2022-6-The-forgotten-fifth.pdf>
- [3] <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Early-adult-outcomes-for-suspended-pupils-FINAL.pdf>
- [4] <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/revealed-school-exclusions-and-suspensions-rise-by-a-fifth-last-year-finds-new-report>
- [5] <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Social-mobility-and-opportunity-1.pdf>
- [6] <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk>
- [7] [www.futurefirst.org.uk/ff-pledge](http://www.futurefirst.org.uk/ff-pledge)

*Sue Riley*  
CEO of Future First  
and social mobility advocate



[www.futurefirst.org.uk](http://www.futurefirst.org.uk)



**Sue Riley**



## Restorative Justice in the Context of the Youth Justice Service Hammersmith and Fulham: the Challenges and the Highlights

By Tereza Harvey, Restorative Justice Practitioner, LBH&F

**T**he idea of restorative justice came to me in a lightbulb moment.

At a party, more than 15 years ago I was introduced to Dr Martin Wright, the former director of the Howard League and a lifelong champion for Restorative Justice. This exciting encounter led me to pursue the study of Restorative Justice and Criminology, and I also trained as a Community Panel Member in 2010 - hoping that this new initiative in the justice

system would enable me to facilitate restorative work with young people who had committed crime. My time as a panel member has been fascinating in so many ways, and wanting to be more involved, I applied for the position as a Restorative Justice Practitioner at the Youth Justice Service in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. I have been working directly with young people, their families, and the victims impacted by the youth crime now since 2018.



As a Restorative Justice practitioner working within the Youth Justice Service, and together with my colleagues, we seek to embed the principles of Restorative Justice into our work. Though it has been far from straightforward, the theory of Restorative Justice now shapes our day-to-day practice. In this short article, I will share how we make restorative approach relevant to our work, and what difference it makes to the lives of our young people, victims and the community in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

### Some Background

Advocates of restorative justice claim that the harm caused by criminality can be repaired through a process of

mediation between the victim and the perpetrator. Through this process, practitioners attempt to restore the broken relationship, reintegrate the perpetrator back into the community, and help them understand the harm they caused in order to prevent future reoffending. The Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (1999) and subsequent legislative reforms further integrated these core principles of restorative justice into law. The aim was to move “away from an exclusionary punitive justice and towards an inclusionary justice capable of recognizing the social context in which crime occurs”. The then government summarised its vision in the “3-Rs”:

1. **Restoration** through a young person who committed the offence apologising and making amends to the victim;
2. **Reintegration** of the young person as a law-abiding citizen; and
3. **Responsibility** taken by the young person for their previous behaviour.

This led to the creation of Community Panels as part of Referral Orders (ROs). Community Panels are made of trained volunteers who either live or work in the local community. Their role is to engage with the young person at the onset of the referral order, and come to an agreement as to what interventions will the young person need to complete during their order, with the aim to promote their wellbeing and prevent reoffending.

With the “3-Rs” guiding the creation of Community Panels within Referral Orders, all stakeholders – the young person, the victim and the community – would now play a part in the justice process. Since 1999, ROs have therefore been used when sentencing young people who have pleaded guilty to an imprisonable offence. They are set for a period of 3 to 12 months proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and ROs can now be applied more than once to a young person.

**So what is the reality and practice of engaging young people through young people’s community orders, which help victims and the local community in a meaningful restorative way?**

Here in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, for example, we work closely with the police, and this helps to put us in contact with the victims of youth crime – including knife offences. The aims of Restorative Justice are outlined to each victim. Victims are

then the opportunity to be involved in the process. However, the take-up rate is relatively low, with most victims opting out. This is due to host of reasons some of which are preventable. There are delays in the justice system, sometimes a lack of trust in the police or government agencies, a fear of being revictimised, or simply just a desire to move on.

The fear of revictimization (and being seen as cooperating with the police i.e. snitching) is particularly relevant to victims of knife crime, many of whom are young. Most of such attacks go unreported. As a result, it is rare for the young person who committed the offence to meet face to face with their victim, especially in knife crime offences. But this is only one method to achieve a positive result. But we can still use a range of options and useful Restorative Justice tools.

Victims who agree to be contacted by the Restorative Justice team have rights stipulated by the Victim Code<sup>1</sup> which guides our practice, e.g. to be updated, supported, and to take part in restorative justice interventions, other than a face-to-face meeting. For example:

- many victims request a letter of reflection from the young person,
- some ask us to act as ‘surrogate victim’ and voice their concerns and the impact of the crime at panels or when working directly with the young person,
- others express a specific wish as to how they consider a young offender should work during their reparation hours. For example, they may suggest that they would like the young person to help out at their local youth club, to be involved in a sporting activity, or simply help out at a community event.



Reparation is a specific element of our Restorative Justice work – as is the Referral Order programme – that we take seriously. It is an opportunity for the young person to repair the harm caused by the offence directly to the victim, or to the wider community. Reparation presents a particular invitation in terms of our work with young people. The hours that must be completed as part of Referral Orders (typically 10–40hrs) and decided with the volunteer community panel members, combine to provide a unique opportunity for young people to engage with our local community and organisations in a meaningful way. We cooperate closely with a range of projects. For example, the **Fulham Palace Gardening scheme, QPR football club, Trinity Hospice charity shops, the Nourish Hub, Refugees Welcome charity, the Macbeth bike project** to name but a few. Here, young people have the chance to volunteer, and whilst doing so, to learn new skills, engage with members of public and other volunteers of all backgrounds and generations. We tailor each programme specifically to the young person's needs and circumstances, understanding their individuality as well as their wider context, culture, and risk in the community. We link each project closely with restorative principles, so our young people understand how their work is relevant to their offending and how they are making amends.

**We hope that our reparation offer is an opportunity for our young people to achieve something positive, to be praised, and to feel useful.**

Such an experience can be very rare for our young people in their contexts, so can be powerfully transformative when they experience it! On occasion, we have also agreed that the child can



do something positive for their family as part of their reparation – make a special meal, or help elderly relative with their shopping – to begin to repair some of the broken trust at home and learn about empathy and the impact of the offence on the closest to them.

One of the most prevalent offences for the cohort of the young people is a possession of a bladed article where there might appear to be no direct victim. In such cases, the victim is the community as whole. We have to be acutely aware that the young person might have been a victim themselves previously. We believe that majority of young people do not carry knives actively to hurt somebody, but for their own protection, and through fear deeply rooted in trauma. Our job is to explore these issues, support the young person in changing their understanding of their risks and learn about the increased risk when they do carry knives. We believe that this work is generally more productive when done on 1-2-1 basis with young people and have moved away from group knife-awareness workshops. Those young people with apparent direct victim are also expected to complete reparation with the aim to further engage them in local community, and introduce them to positive interactions within the community.



### Mending Perceptions

The ongoing breakdown in the police and young people relationships and general lack of trust is widely reported. As restorative justice practitioners in our team we are for example keen to hear in more depth about our young people's experiences with the police and engage them in an ongoing Stop and Search discussions to contribute to more positive relationships with the police. Those who are willing can participate in small groups with newly trained Metropolitan police officers in a restorative meeting, share their experiences and move away

from derogatory and dehumanising perceptions of each other towards a place of understanding. We have also organised many 1-2-1 meetings with officers from the Met within our YJS Team, particularly for those young people who feel particularly victimised by the force. We were able to support them with de-escalation techniques and discuss their experiences. The outcomes developed through our survey of young voices concerning Stop and Search, are shared periodically with the wider community and the borough command, and have been used in training newly qualified officers.



### Summary

One goal of Restorative Justice is to enable the perpetrators and victims to meet face-to-face. This is not always possible within the youth justice setting and the time frames we are set. But when we understand Restorative Justice in its widest terms - and are willing to be creative - its principles can permeate everything we do, and the way we achieve results with young people. This avoids the less positive results of entering the justice system.

A Restorative approach allows young people to pause, have time to be guided, to reflect on their actions, and engage meaningfully in the community. Where we can speak with victims, even though they often decline direct communication with the young person, we as practitioners are still able to acknowledge the harm done, hear and support the victim, and make them part of the process indirectly. Though restorative practice within the Justice system is not perfectly aligned with theoretical ideals, in my experience, it does bring the community, the victims, and the young people that bit closer together. As a result, lives can be changed.

*Tereza is a Restorative Justice Practitioner in the Youth Justice Service, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. She has been working in the field of restorative justice since 2010.*

*Tereza Harvey*

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[www.lbhf.gov.uk](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk)



**Tereza Harvey**



## Head Held High Behaviour-change Programmes

By Tash Alexander, Founder and Director of Head Held High

**Head Held High** was set up in 2013. We run highly motivational and interactive workshops and programmes to help young people at risk of exclusion and/or affiliation with knife crime, and reveal the courage to take new action for new results. Our style of delivery is highly interactive so that the individuals feel the change on the inside in order to make the changes on the outside.

### The Aim of our Workshops

We lead motivational and engaging workshops for young people up to the age of 25 who are at risk of exclusion,

lacking in direction or affiliated with youth violence. Our aim is prevention and, through our nurturing and interactive intervention, we focus on breaking through negative lifestyle patterns, overcoming barriers, unlocking talent and taking new action for new results. The work is highly interactive so that our young people feel the change from day one.

### The 'Best You' programme

One of our most powerful programmes is 'The Best You' run in partnership with anti knife crime charity The Ben Kinsella Trust. It is a



6 week course broken down into 6 x 1.5 hour workshops a week led by two motivational coaches. We work with groups of up to 10 young people at risk of exclusion, experiencing multiple detentions and/or lacking in motivation. Over the programme we focus on areas which include transforming aggressive communication, implementing assertive behaviour, breaking through negative lifestyle patterns, discovering passions/vocational goals and generally becoming proactive in a positive way. In the 5th week we take the group to experience **The Ben Kinsella Tour**<sup>1</sup> who are now based in 3 locations: Islington, Barking and Nottingham. It is a wake-up call to many, and a reminder of how precious our lives are. The group will learn about the impact of knife crime on family, friends as well as the victim, the power of our choices and consequences, joint enterprise, prison life and the general message of educating young people away from violence.

After working in schools, pupil referral units and youth offending teams for the last 15 years, too many young people are resorting to violence as a first option. If we can prevent them going down a destructive path and put a mirror up to their faces and ask the question **"Can I do and feel better and what action do I need to take to make that happen?"** then we will do. Please check out [www.headheldhigh.org.uk](http://www.headheldhigh.org.uk)

### Our 'Stand up for yourself programme offers confidence through stand up comedy

Another programme which helps young people at risk reveal their true voice, transform aggression and build confidence and self worth is **'Stand up**

**for yourself'**. This is our 'confidence through stand up' comedy course which runs over 6 weeks broken down into 1 x 2 hour workshops a week. The programme includes watching and feeding back on professional stand up comedians, learning the "rule of 3" in comedy, digging deep to find the funny in life, transforming anger into comedy, receiving one to one coaching from a professional comedian and performing a live stand up comedy set. This enables young individuals to reveal their courage, build on self-esteem and motivation and have a laugh along the way! Many students have completed the course and due to the courage it took to perform live, they have gone on to make other courageous decisions in their personal and professional lives.

On completion of all of our programmes, young people will receive **a certificate of achievement and character reference** which helps with future employment opportunities.

Poverty, social, economic circumstances, repressed anger, anti-social behaviour and low self-worth are common challenges that lead to poor education, unstable relationships, and unemployment.

### Passion and Outreach

I am devastated by the number of young people who we are losing to knife crime in this country and is committed to doing everything possible to help prevent young people turning to the streets.

Head Held High's coaches are passionate about the future of our young people and during our programmes we share personal experiences and challenges, show footage of inspiring life stories and anything that will break down the often put up wall of "Us v them". We have a crisis on our hands where there are too

many young people being dominated by bravado and aggression, and yet when you are able to give them some extra attention, the truth comes out. We will take proactive action alongside our delegates so they feel supported and more hopeful. Sometimes we just need a helping hand.

### Funding Needs and Action

This has been a critical year for Head Held High due to a lack of funding and yet there is a massive need for this work in schools/PRU's, YOT teams and more. We just had our annual fundraiser at The Comedy Store where we raised just under 5k for which we are extremely grateful, do check out a snippet:



### Partnerships

Head Held High has worked with The Department for Work and Pensions, Secondary schools, youth offending teams, Mind, New Horizon homeless youth centre, Drive Forward Foundation (Care leavers), Comic Relief and more. We are proud to have helped over 1000 young people overcome obstacles and transform their lives for the better. We aim to continue to help many more in their advancement both personally and professionally.

If you are interested in knowing more or getting in touch please do at: [tash@headheldhigh.org.uk](mailto:tash@headheldhigh.org.uk) or [www.headheldhigh.org.uk](http://www.headheldhigh.org.uk) and follow us on [Insta@headheldhighldn](https://www.instagram.com/headheldhighldn).

Thank you and always keep your head held high!

### Further Reading

[1] For further information about programmes and these tours see <https://benkinsella.org.uk/workshop-faqs/>

*Tash Alexander*  
Founder and Director,  
Head Held High



[www.headheldhigh.org.uk](http://www.headheldhigh.org.uk)





FUNSO FOLUSO-HENRY

BRADLEY CONNOR

KEON MARTIAL-PHILLIP

# VIRTUALLY THERE CLEANSKIN



Sometimes **silence** is a cry for help.

SOLARIS2 PRESENTS A SOLARIS2 FILM

EDITED BY ALEX JAMES-SALEH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY WILLIAM HADLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SIMON YATES & ROBERT HART WRITTEN, DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY LEON OLDSTRONG



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KNIFE CRIME

## Empowering Change Through Virtual Reality: Addressing Knife Crime and Violence Against Women

**V**irtually There and Cleanskin are groundbreaking virtual reality films addressing the critical issues of knife crime, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and violence against women and girls (VAWG). As someone personally affected by the violence these films address, writer and director Leon Oldstrong set out to use his craft to make a difference. "Whilst I have never been stabbed nor experienced the events addressed in Cleanskin, the issues highlighted in the films affected people close to me. My younger brother was stabbed seven times in 2017, and fortunately, he survived," said Oldstrong. "This life-changing experience motivated me to create Virtually There and subsequently Cleanskin, two immersive virtual reality films tackling the urgent issues of knife crime and

violence against women and girls (VAWG). Cleanskin was written with the input of someone close to me for whom those events were a reality."

These immersive films, already licensed by Sussex Police, are being used to engage schools, youth services, and other organizations across Sussex to prevent youth violence and exploitation. By providing access to these films at no cost to local organizations, Sussex Police are helping to foster empathy, change behaviours, and raise awareness of these important social issues.

By taking a similar approach, the Met or the Mayor of London could provide these films and the necessary VR equipment to schools, youth services, and other groups across London—making a real difference in the lives of young people.

[www.FightingKnifeCrime.London](http://www.FightingKnifeCrime.London)





Image: Pastor Lorraine with the Prime Minister

## Reducing Knife Crime in the United Kingdom

By Romilla Arber, Co-Founder, Make it Stop Campaign

Anyone reading this article will agree that the state of knife crime in cities across the UK is a stain both on our society and our nation. How we got to this situation is not easy to explain but there are a number of factors which are believed to have contributed to the increase. These range from a growth in gangs, less police resources, greater and more dense deprivation in cities, the fear many young people feel when moving about away from their homes, lack of good role models, and an education system that is easy to fall out of. The list of combined probable causes is long and therefore the solution to the rise in knife crime also has to be multi-faceted. There is not a single solution to the problem. By the same measure, neither is there a short-term solution. The causes of knife crime are structural and societal and they will require long term vision if they are to be solved and the tide turned.

Pastor Lorraine Jones-Burrell and I

founded the **Make It Stop Campaign** knowing that to have a meaningful and long-lasting impact on knife violence would require a steely determination and a focus on the goal. Pastor Lorraine has been involved in this area for many years. Her son Dwayne was killed by a sword wound to his heart 10 years ago, when he was intervening to help someone in trouble. Pastor Lorraine had to watch her son die over an agonising period of two days whilst he fought to stay alive. Since then, she has been campaigning to reduce knife violence on the streets of the UK and helping to support those most in need in her community, through her boxing gym and community centre. She has also supported many victims' families and helped them deal with the loss of their loved ones. It was her powerful demeanour and words that got me involved when I saw her being interviewed on a news programme and I reached out to her.

The strategies that we have formulated through the Make It Stop campaign are easy to grasp but not so easy to implement as they require a level of involvement and cohesion from communities that have lost faith and hope in change being possible. These communities have suffered long term austerity and a breakdown in trust with authorities to which, once upon a time, they would have felt confident to turn for help. A feeling of hope needs to be recharged and that is what we at Make It Stop are endeavouring to do. The foundations for creating change exist. Despite the battering that these communities have suffered, there are individuals and groups amongst them who have stubbornly refused to be deterred by a lack of sustainable funding and help from the government. Over the last few months I have met many awe-inspiring people, who continue to work for their communities, reaching those most in need. These individuals and groups are the glue that holds communities together. They provide valuable services from counselling for mental health trauma caused by violence or the fear of violence, sports organisations whose coaches build vital relationships with young people and provide them with opportunities to prosper through sporting activity. They educate young people about making better choices, they provide musical opportunities to relieve stress and inhibitions, building confidence through self-expression and they provide careers and training guidance to those young people who have fallen out of full time education, training or employment. The list goes on, and the true value of their work is impossible to quantify. One of the aims of Make It Stop is to unite all of these voluntary groups, charities and CICs who are working to affect the causes and

consequences of knife crime, to form a working group of organisations to target those in greatest need, collaborating and sharing skill sets and energy to save resources.

That is just the start. In order to work effectively with grassroots organisations, we need to ensure they have adequate and sustainable funding. This will involve raising funds, through the private sector, the public sector and from individual donations. We are contacting all companies who have offices or outlets in London, to challenge them to get involved. Knife crime is not just a problem that affects those directly involved because of where they live or work. It affects us all. There is a terrible human cost, a societal cost and a cost to our economy from the growth in violent street crime. Speaking recently to an accident and emergency doctor who has to regularly deal with knife wounds, she said that 15 medical professionals are required in a trauma theatre when someone comes into hospital with life threatening knife wounds. That is a huge amount of resources required.

Make It Stop is intended to be a nationwide campaign but we are focusing initial efforts on the London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark in order to see what works and what doesn't and build metrics to measure success and impact. We also need to build a base of support as we cannot do this on our own.

We are also working with the education sector forming a network of head teachers from primary and secondary schools across the two boroughs. Schools are the bridge to the community, where young people at risk can be more easily identified early on.

There is much to do and it will require all of us to come together. There are 100



pieces to the Make It Stop campaign all of which need to be implemented and set in place if there is to be meaningful change. From creating a platform for the voice of all victims' families, introducing parental engagement programmes in communities to help families understand and deal with the issues that their young people are experiencing, and give them courage to ask for help if they need it. More safe places need to be created for young people to meet or study, whether these are community centres or extended hours school hubs. There also needs to be a consistent approach adopted by the police to the offence of carrying a bladed implement in a public place. A first possession offence should be met with a combined agency approach involving school, family, Youth Offending Teams and the police so that an agreed action plan with that individual can be put in place, hopefully preventing escalating behaviour.

Much of the early stages of our campaign lies in communicating the need for the building of bonds and creating the foundations for change. Make It Stop is different. It goes beyond the walls of the meeting place out into the community with action and resolve to make a

difference. Make It Stop is also about creating grounds for hope. This doesn't mean ignoring the realities of how tough change can be to foster or ignoring the grief that many families have had to suffer as they have seen loved ones affected by knife violence. Hope is about facing these realities, these challenges and saying that "yes we see them but we aren't going to let them get in our way." Make It Stop is about building a collective strength so that our hopes for a brighter and better future become the reality.

Please support our campaign by signing up to our newsletter or volunteering or indeed donating. You can contact us at [www.makeitstop.org.uk](http://www.makeitstop.org.uk)

*Romilla Arber*  
Co-Founder,  
Make it Stop Campaign



[www.makeitstop.org.uk](http://www.makeitstop.org.uk)



**Romilla Arber**



Early intervention services  
cut by 48%

Source: DFE





# Knives Know No Colour But Red

By Mervyn Weir, Poet and Creative Producer

The three Southport angels,  
now all at rest,  
But why these deaths  
keep happening  
has still not been addressed.  
No gang feuds there,  
No postcode wars,  
No teenage fear—  
Still, we wait to find the cause.  
Knives know no colour  
except for crimson red,  
as they slice through bodies  
and leave their victims dead  
or disfigured for life,  
and we're left asking,  
why are so many willing  
to carry and use a knife?  
Yet before our blinded eyes,  
the truth also dies—  
with disinformation and lies  
that cannot disguise the prize  
for evil, violent louts,  
with their racist  
chants and shouts,  
“Get the immigrants out.”  
They thrive on chaos and fear.  
Their hateful agenda is clear.  
Merseyside is mourning  
their loss beyond belief,  
and the right-wing plan  
that's forming  
will only increase our grief.  
And so our angels sleep,  
already yesterday's news,  
while the families still weep,  
they don't get to choose  
to look away and move on,  
their precious children gone,  
replaced with a legacy of pain,  
for lives that can never  
be the same.  
None but they know the cost  
of the loved ones they have lost.

Say their names out loud,  
say it to the baying crowd:  
Alice, Bebe, and Elsie—three  
that the world will never see  
what these girls would  
one day be.  
And though there's no guarantee  
that life should last for long,  
these deaths we know  
are wrong.  
These were our future stars;  
'Swifties' in the making,  
but there's no mistaking  
their loss is all of ours.  
Knives know no colour but red,  
bodies of every hue are dead.  
The blade does not discriminate;  
it thrives on fear and hate,  
in crimes of passion  
and in crimes as fashion,  
in gangland warfare  
by youth who do not care.  
But the knives don't stop there;  
for couples in dispute,  
for those who would  
never dare to shoot,  
for the stolen goods plunderers,  
and the mental health sufferers,  
for the 'just in case' carriers  
who see no barriers in defence,  
for kids lacking common sense,  
for the religious fanatics,  
and the always traumatic,  
for spurned lovers,  
for hurting mothers  
in distress,  
for fathers acting with excess,  
because they think they know best  
whom their daughters should wed.  
All these have led  
to what we all dread—  
someone we love is dead.  
Knives know no colour but red.





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