

The Street Weapons Commission Report

The impact of knife and gun crime on victims, families and whole communities is devastating. Following a series of fatal stabbings and shootings in major cities across the UK in early 2008 Channel 4 established the Street Weapons Commission – with the task of finding out the truth about gun and knife violence on our streets.

The Commission visited five cities, which suffer from some of the worst levels of gun and knife attacks: Liverpool, London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester. They heard evidence from the local people most affected, police officers, politicians, local authorities, community groups and campaigners. They commissioned

independent research. They visited projects which are trying to help our most vulnerable young people.

The Street Weapons Commission report is the culmination of their investigation. It represents a call to action for our government, our police forces, local councils, our schools and hospitals and our communities. The ages of both victims and perpetrators of weaponised street violence are getting younger and the number of children and young people carrying knives is increasing. If this problem is not tackled head on – now – then the implications are serious for our future individual safety, community wellbeing and our society.

The Street Weapons Commission was chaired by Cherie Booth QC, and its members were Liam Black, social entrepreneur and former Director of the Fifteen Foundation, Lord Geoffrey Dear, a distinguished former Chief Constable, Professor Gus John, a fellow of the Institute of Education, Mark Johnson, an ex-offender who is now a special adviser to both the National Probation Service and the Prince's Trust, Ian Levy, founder of The Robert Levy Foundation which was set up following the fatal stabbing of his son, Fay Selvan, Chief Executive of The Big Life Group and Howard Williamson who is Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of Glamorgan.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The impact of knife and gun crime on victims, families and whole communities is devastating. Following a series of fatal stabbings and shootings in major cities across the UK in early 2008 Channel 4 established the Street Weapons Commission – with the task of finding out the truth about gun and knife violence on our streets.

When Channel 4 asked me to chair the Commission I was immediately interested. As a mother, I am deeply concerned that guns and knives are becoming a part of everyday life for some young people in Britain. As a barrister and part-time judge, I have to sentence offenders who have committed crimes with such weapons and have seen for myself the misery that they cause not only to the victims but to themselves and their families.


In the final week of the Commission's work this was brought home to me again with the tragic and senseless death of Ben Kinsella. Ben was stabbed after a night out to celebrate completing his GCSEs in a part of London I know well, and near where I brought up my own family for many years.

The Street Weapons Commission brought together a small group of people with a range of perspectives. I would like to thank all my fellow Commission members for their insights, their hard work and their commitment to tackling this serious issue.

I would also like to thank the many witnesses who gave evidence to us at hearings across the country by whom I was both inspired and alarmed. Inspired by the relatives and families of those who have lost children to gun and knife violence and have dedicated themselves to saving other families from the same heartbreak, by the dedicated professionals and volunteers working on the ground to help turn round the lives of our most vulnerable young people and by the police officers who put their own lives at risk to protect ours.

I was alarmed by the reports from doctors and surgeons who deal, day in and day out, with the injuries that inevitably result from street weapons, by the fear and need for protection felt by some young people and by the inequality and poverty of aspiration blighting whole communities.

Finally I would like to thank the many young people we visited, outside of our formal hearings, who were full of energy and idealism and shared with us their stories, worries and hopes. They were a salutary reminder that the overwhelming majority of our young people today are leading happy, constructive and often exceptional lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cherie Booth". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cherie" and the last name "Booth" written in a single, connected line.

Cherie Booth QC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence is not inevitable and is therefore preventable. But there are no quick fixes to solve the problems of gun and knife violence in Britain. No single policy that would reverse the trend of young people carrying weapons. An effective response will need action from a wide range of organisations; from central government, the police, local authorities, schools, communities and individuals.

Success in eliminating street weapons will involve a thousand small victories.

The Street Weapons Commission visited five cities, which suffer from some of the worst levels of gun and knife attacks: Liverpool, London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester. It heard evidence from the local people most affected, police officers, politicians, local authorities, community groups and campaigners. It commissioned independent research and visited projects which are trying to help our most vulnerable young people.

The Commission heard reliable evidence from a range of different sources, that victims and perpetrators of weaponised street violence are getting younger and that the number of children and young people carrying knives is increasing. Both these trends are deeply troubling and if not addressed now will guarantee ever more tragedy in the future and an escalating social problem.

This report represents a call to action. If we don't act – now – then the implications are serious for our future individual safety, community wellbeing and our society.

Therefore we believe tackling gun and knife crime should be an urgent national priority for everyone from the Government downwards. It needs coordinated and strategic leadership from the centre, effective enforcement to help reduce the attraction of knife and gang culture and effective intervention and youth services on the ground to divert those young people most at risk.

The Commission calls for the establishment of a Violence Reduction Unit, at the heart of government, as a centre of excellence to reduce violent crime and behaviour and by working with partner agencies to achieve long-term social and attitudinal change

There is no a sharp distinction between prevention and enforcement. Enforcement has a crucial preventative role in itself that needs to be acknowledged. The Commission recognise the importance of all ways of dealing with weaponised crime and that there is more to do through *all* means of tackling the problem - diversion, support and sanction.

Therefore the Violence Reduction Unit, whilst focusing on enforcement, to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who are involved in violent behaviour should explore best practices and develop sustainable, innovative solutions to this deep rooted problem.

The Commission recommends that:

- The UK Government to establish a Violence Reduction Unit as an urgent priority. It should be based in the Home Office and co-ordinate action across government departments to implement violence reduction strategies. It should adopt a public health approach to the problem and bring together professionals and experts from relevant disciplines including the police, education, child protection, probation, social and youth services, youth justice, health and local government
- The new Violence Reduction Unit should conduct an audit of prevention provision in national hotspots for gun and knife crime with a view to identifying gaps in provision and strategically allocating resources to fill them. It should have a role with community groups engaged in prevention and diversion activities as well as community empowerment organisations and help them with reducing their administrative burdens, transferring best practice and up-scaling successful projects tackling gun and knife crime
- The value of the Youth Service needs to be recognised within local authorities and the provision of meaningful activities and relationships for young people prioritised, at the right times (evenings and weekends) and in the areas of greatest need.

- Flexibility and a greater willingness to take risks is needed on the part of local authorities and public funding bodies if they are to enable the most innovative projects with the most hard to reach and vulnerable young people. Projects that want to reach the most vulnerable young people must have 'Stickability' and commitment to a long term successful outcome for the young people they are aiming to help.

All violence from bullying to murder is abhorrent. Interpersonal violence, involving young men carrying knives and other weapons, increases the likelihood of either death or serious injury. The impact on victims of knife and gun crime is incalculable, not only in relation to the initial offence but also in relation to longer term effects, and the impact goes much wider, affecting the families of the victim, the whole community and the country. The Commission believes that the recommendations contained in this report will help tackle this problem and make our streets safer for our young people, and for us all.

THE TRUTH ABOUT STREET WEAPONS

Before recommending how to respond to the issue of street weapons, the Commission wanted to establish as far as possible empirical data on the extent of the problem. The information in this section is based upon a report commissioned by the Street Weapons Commission from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies¹. That report is published in full on the Street Weapons Commission website www.channel4.com/streetweapons.

The National Picture

There are two main sources of official data about violent crime, both with limitations when it comes to getting a clear picture of the extent and nature of street weapons in the UK. The first is Police Recorded Crime which reflects those suspected offences that the police document during the course of their activities. Much of this data comes about as a result of members of the public reporting incidents.

The second is the British Crime Survey (BCS) in England and Wales and the Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey (SCVS). These were developed in part because of the recognition that police recorded crime data can only provide a partial and unreliable picture of crime levels and trends. They are based on large samples and individuals are asked about their experience of being a victim of certain types of crimes over the course of the previous 12 months. Most commentators agree that such surveys provide a more reliable estimate of the offences they cover than that given by police recorded data.

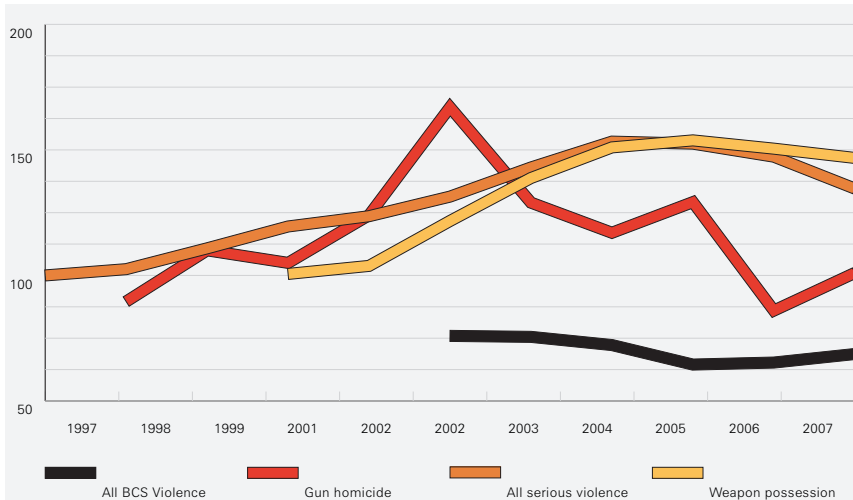
However, the two sources do not paint a consistent picture when it comes to violent offences.

Overall, levels of violent crime in England and Wales have fallen by 31% between 1997 and 2006/7, according to the British Crime Survey (BCS). Incidents of wounding (more serious injury) have fallen by 28% since 1998, while assaults resulting in minor injury fell by 52%.²

The Police Recorded Crime figures for violent crime, on the other hand, show an overall rise since 1997, which can be attributed, in part, to changes in crime recording practices and increases in reporting levels. However, for the most serious violent offences, which include homicide³ and grievous bodily harm, police recorded figures become much more reliable because they tend to be reported and recorded more consistently. Following year on year increases since 1997, we have seen decreases

in these offences in each of the last three years, including a 9% fall between 2005/6 and 2006/7 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: National Violence Index: trends in police recorded violence and BCS reports of violent offences (With the exception of weapon possession, which is indexed to 1999, all the other trends are indexed to 1997)



Alongside the official data are the incidents which receive wide coverage in the national media of serious street attacks and fatalities involving knives. In the first six months of 2008 17 teenagers were killed in London alone. This has led to the description of the country as facing a knife crime 'epidemic, being plunged into a knife crime 'crisis' or being in the grip of a knife crime 'culture' that is out of control. The public and media's perception of the problem of street weapons is at variance with the official figures which suggest that although violent crime has increased in the last decade, it is now in decline.

An explanation, in part, for the difference is that the BCS no longer adequately represents the most heavily victimised sections of the community which are bearing a disproportionate share of the crime recorded by the police. The British Crime Survey has never included under-16s, the social group – especially young males – experiencing one of the highest rates of violence victimisation. In an effort to address these important gaps in the survey the Home Office has recently announced that under-16s will, in future, be included within the BCS.⁴

A second factor in the way the British Crime Survey captures rates of violence concerns the redistribution of violence over the past two to three decades. Recent research describes how violence and homicide have been concentrated in the poorest sections of society⁵ and the most deprived communities.⁶ Taken together this evidence suggests that rates of violence amongst young people in poor areas will be quite disproportionate compared to any notional 'average' rate of violence. Measuring the 'average', as the British Crime Survey has done successfully for many years, is now likely to mislead us. It is important, therefore, to develop more contextualised understandings of localised violence rates and patterns. This is one of the merits of the city-by-city approach adopted by the Commission.

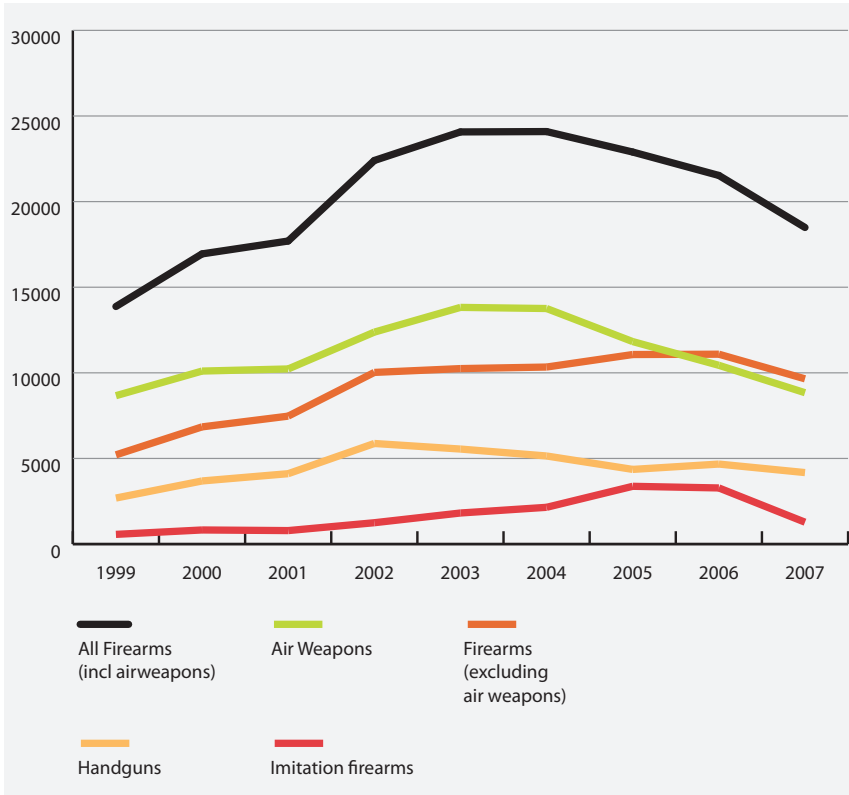
Guns

Gun crime represents a serious threat to the neighbourhoods in which it occurs, sending worrying signals about the breakdown of law and order and the loss of civilised community. It is still a highly concentrated phenomenon, although this will be of little consolation to those communities blighted by the problem.

Overall, less than 0.5% of recorded crime involves guns. Furthermore around half of all gun crime involves air weapons, and about half of what remains involves replica guns. Guns are mostly used to threaten, rather than to shoot (handguns were fired in only 12% of the times they were used in crimes). Finally, guns caused serious or fatal injuries on only 3% of the occasions they were used.

In 1998, following the horror of the Dunblane school shootings, handguns were banned, in England, Wales and Scotland. The continuing increase in gun crime after 1998 suggests a displacement of weapon choice by offenders onto air guns, replica weapons, convertible weapons, re-activated weapons and, more recently, knives. The Violent Crime Reduction Act (2006) sought to tighten up controls on a number of 'firearm' types whilst parallel legislation in the European Parliament⁷ aims to limit the potential for trafficking of many of these weapon types within the EU. Control of illegal gun supply is only part of the story, and it can take a while for such legislation to have an impact. Even so, the long-term trend on gun crime in England and Wales is now – at least at face value – rather more positive. As Figure 2⁸ shows, all types of firearm misuse (while higher than a decade ago) show a downward trend since 2005.

Figure 2: Crime recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used by principal weapon, England and Wales, 1999-07



An important caveat to enter about the adequacy of these recorded crime figures is the fact that all the available research on gun crime (and not just that in the UK) reveals that suspected perpetrators of gun crime typically share many attributes with their victims. Many shooters have themselves been shot at in the past and a high proportion of victims are known to the police. There is often a strong 'no grassing' presumption: the communities in which gun crime is most common tend to have the lowest levels of trust and confidence in the police and, invariably, the worst experiences of policing. In some cases, amongst the newest resident migrant communities, these attitudes may also reflect the experiences of policing they have brought with them to the UK. Either way, whether through fear, previous experiences or street culture, under-reporting is likely.

Knives

Knives and sharp instruments are the most common method of killing, accounting for around a third of homicides. Unlike guns, an added concern is the ease with which knives can be accessed. Furthermore, in the case of knife crime even more difficulties manifest themselves in obtaining a clear statistical picture in that the police have historically only been required to record violence injuries by the scale and type of the injury (GBH, wounding etc.) and not by the weapon that has inflicted it. Therefore, the National Audit Office Report, *Reducing the Risk of Violent Crime* (2008) has criticised the availability of police data regarding weapon use in crime and, from 2007-08 onwards, figures for attempted murder, serious wounding and robbery involving knives and other sharp instruments will be presented in police crime data.

Despite the increased media attention, levels of knife crime reflected in the British Crime Survey have remained fairly stable at around 6-7% of all violent crime. However, problems with the construction of the BCS survey sample referred to already may be responsible for obscuring the relevant trends.

In the absence of national police records of knife-enabled crime prior to 2007, we have to rely upon a range of other sources (although the Metropolitan Police has been collecting knife crime data since 2003 and contrary to public perception, this appears to suggest a falling number of incidents, see Figure 11).

Data from three further sources point to an increase in knife carrying.

- First, surveys with young people suggest increasing numbers of young people carrying knives; the rates of knife carrying increase markedly for young people excluded from mainstream education.
- Second, police data regarding offenders charged with carrying a pointed or bladed weapon in a public place show increases in weapon carrying (although such figures could entirely reflect targeted policing activity).
- Third, data from hospital accident and emergency departments indicate an increase in people injured as a result of stabbings.

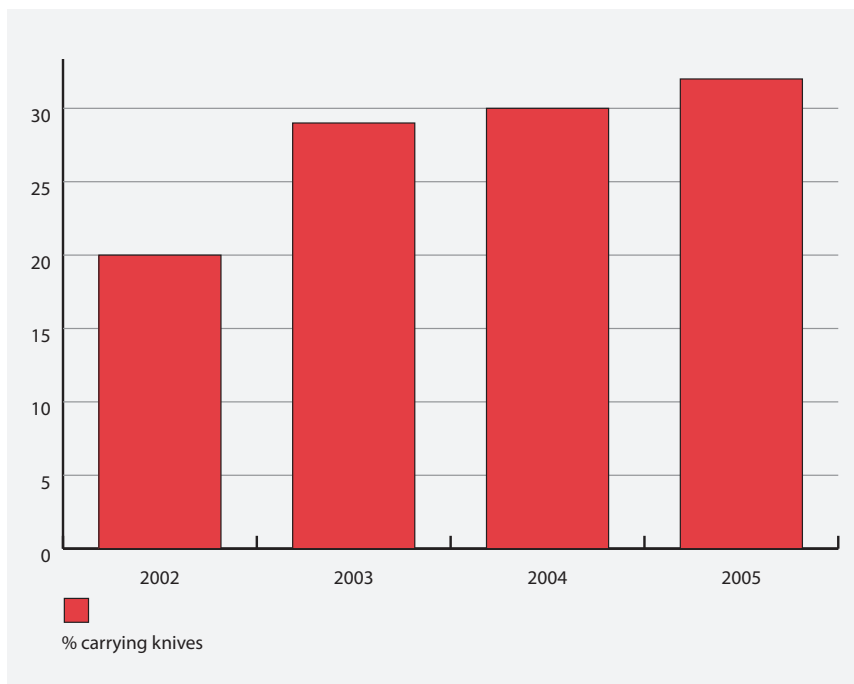
Surveys with young people

A survey conducted on behalf of the National Youth Agency⁹ found:

- One in five 16 year old boys admitted attacking someone intending to hurt them seriously.
- 25% of young people at school admitted that they had carried a penknife.
- Nearly half of excluded pupils (47%) admit to having carried a weapon but say they have never used it. A further 21% have threatened somebody with a knife.
- Of those carrying weapons, 30% have carried a flick knife and 16% a kitchen knife.
- Girls are considerably less likely to carry a knife than boys (15% of girls compared to 40% of boys).

A survey by MORI for the Youth Justice Board and the Home Office Offending Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) also asked young people about their carrying of knives (see Figure 3).^{10a}

Figure 3: Percentage of school children who say they have carried a knife in the last 12 months, 2002–05



When asking young people why they carried a knife, it was found that:

- More than eight out of ten (85%) of those who had carried a knife said the main reason for doing so was for protection.
- Less than one in ten (7%) of those who had carried a knife had used it to threaten someone and 2% had used the knife to injure someone.¹¹

However, as more specific and reliable evidence can be gained from the Home Office's OCJS, which focused exclusively on young people, in 2004 and 2005. Around 5,000 people aged between 10 and 25 living in private households

were interviewed about their involvement in various criminal and potentially disruptive activities. It asked respondents whether they had carried a knife or gun in the last 12 months either 'for protection, for use in crimes or in case they got into a fight'. The 2004 OCJS survey found that:

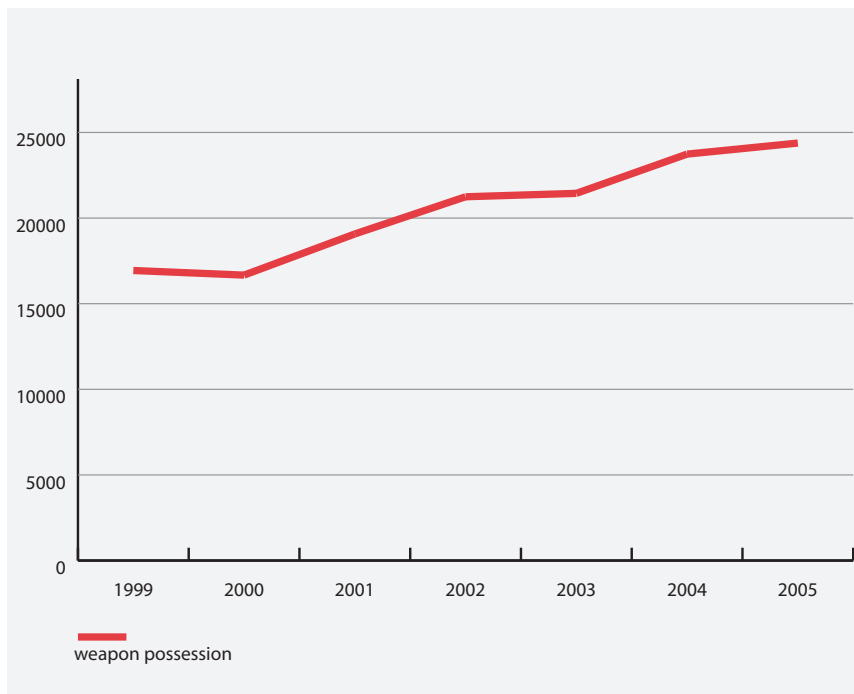
- 4% of respondents had carried a knife in the previous 12 months.
- Carrying of knives was most common amongst 16 to 17 year olds (7%).
- Of the 4% who carried a knife, four in ten (41%) had carried a penknife, 29% had carried a flick knife and one in ten (10%) had carried a kitchen knife
- In terms of frequency of knife carrying, the majority of those who said they had carried a knife stated that that they did so only rarely.
- More than eight out of ten (85%) of those who had carried a knife said the main reason for doing so was for protection.

Police data

Figure 4 below incorporates offenders of all ages and contains data from three sets of weapon possession offences:¹²

- having an article with blade or point in public place, which increased by 66% during the time period represented by the graph;
- possession of offensive weapons without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, which increased by 30% during the same years;
- and having an article with blade or point on school premises, increased by over 500% (albeit from a considerably lower base).

Figure 4: Weapon possession offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, 1999-05. (Source: Coaker, 2007)



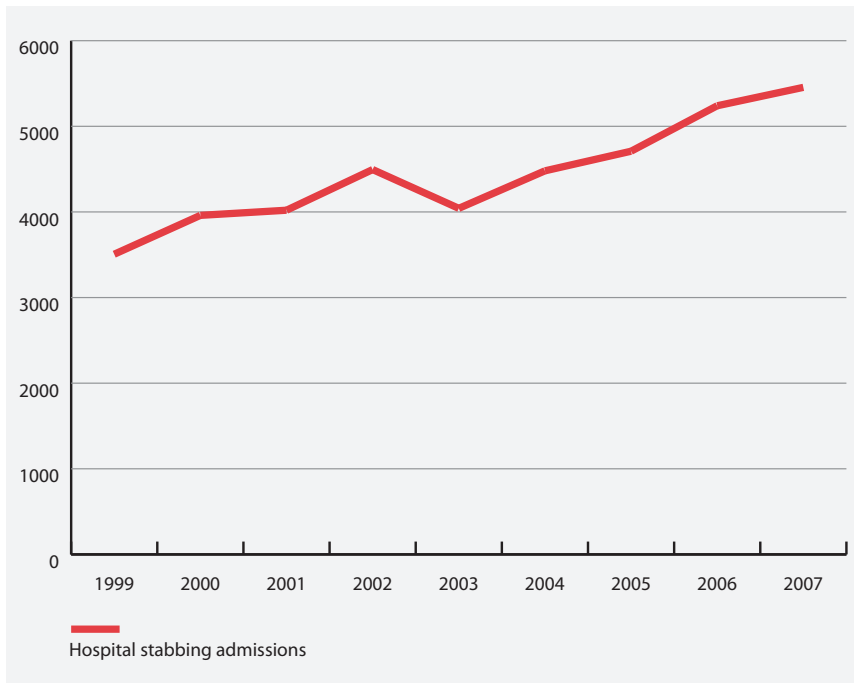
While such evidence suggests a greater frequency of weapon carrying the data could also reflect the impact of police specifically targeting weapon carrying. This issue of increased police action, and consequent detection of knife carrying, leading to an upward trend in recorded data, which may not reflect an actual increase in people carrying knives, has been acknowledged by the police themselves. A spokesman for Lothian and Borders Police stated that “Scottish police have prioritised searching the general public for knives, above just about everything else. The 50% rise [in knife possession offences in Scotland] is the result of the police being more proactive”.¹³

Hospital accident and emergency (A&E) departments

Admission to A&E departments also suggest a growing trend of knife violence.¹⁴

Another hospital A&E study published in 2007 confirmed that, during the period 1997-05, the number of people admitted as a result of stab or sharp object injuries rose by 30%.¹⁵ A&E consultants in London have also argued that, unlike police data on knife-enabled crime, hospital admissions evidence broadly supports public perceptions of increasing rates of knife crime.¹⁶

Figure 5: Hospital A&E admissions episodes where external cause is 'assault by a sharp object', 1997-98 to 2006-07



The latest figures, released in a Parliamentary answer in June, reveal that while hospital admissions for knife wounds overall have increased by 20% between 2003 and 2007, they have increased by more than 62% for children under 16, from 110 to 179.¹⁷

Gangs

Young gangs have existed throughout recorded history and, as far as we know, everywhere in the world.¹⁸ 'Gangs' and 'gang-related' criminal activities have recently been at the forefront of media attention and political debates. However, it is important to bear in mind that 'gang activities' are but a small part of what drives gun and knife crime.

Moreover, it is not clear that there is a shared and consistent understanding or interpretation of what constitutes a 'gang' and what makes certain types of behaviour 'gang-related'. For example, some police forces have used a very broad definition of gang activities, which ranges from congregating in a group, smoking cannabis, drinking, to anti-social behaviour and criminal activities.

It is therefore difficult to pinpoint exactly who falls within the official definitions of 'gang member'. Gang membership can be taken to include a wide range of people, along an increasing scale of involvement and association, topped by a minority of older (usually taken to mean over 18 years old) individuals who take part in serious and organised crime to very young 'hangers-on' and school children running 'errands' for older offenders with various degrees of regularity. More recent work has also identified other young people who may be rather more 'reluctant' gang members, bullied or coerced into illegal activity.¹⁹

It is important to bear this fluidity and breadth of definitions in mind when considering official estimates in relation to gang membership and activities. For example, conflating groups of young people who just hang out together in a neighbourhood under the term 'gang' is likely to have an inflationary and alarmist effect on popular and political debate. Various commentators have cautioned against the 'over-definition' of youth peer groups as 'gangs' and the 'street socialisation' activities of young people as 'gang activities'.²⁰

In 2007 the Home Office set up a police led, multi-disciplinary team, from across government, to drive forward the Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) in Birmingham, Liverpool, London and Manchester. It recognised that "gangs pose a problem in some neighbourhoods within a few UK cities, but the scale of the problem is far removed from the experience in some other countries, such as the United States."²¹

Research has shown that the children and young people most at risk of gang involvement and gang victimisation are those who live in multiply disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The effects of structural unemployment and family poverty, exacerbated by negative experiences in school and confrontations with the police on the street, can foster alternative forms of social and cultural sub-structures.²² Norms and rules of behaviour (e.g. respect, territoriality, honour) develop, in which violence can be seen as acceptable.

According to a recent Home Office survey of arrestees, gang members are far more likely to possess weapons and guns than those who are not: 59% of current

gang members admit to having possessed a gun, compared to 21% of non-gang members.²³

BOX 1: HACKNEY'S CURB OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT

In response to the Metropolitan Police's London-wide Operation Curb, Hackney set up its own Curb Offender Management Unit (COMU).

The Unit aims to tackle violence among young people by proactively targeting known offenders. It works in partnership with the local council, Youth Support Teams, the Mobile Gang Intervention Team (MIT), Safer Schools Partnerships, the Learning Trust and others. At any one time they will have 30 named individuals, broken down into three tiers:

- High: regular offenders who are unwilling to engage in intervention or diversion – they are subject to all available enforcement tactics including stop and search by the police, ASBO's, revocation of tenancy's and arrest
- Medium: those who are coming to the attention of the police but can actively be engaged – the aim is to move prevent and deter and this move them down a tier using the Mobile Intervention Team
- Early Intervention: those at risk of gang involvement or becoming victims of violence who come to their attention through bullying, being bullied or as victims. Helped using Youth Support Teams.

The highest tier in the programme are seen by police officers on a regular basis and surveillance is intensive. COMU and MIT work together to reinforce the message that violent and gang related behaviour will not be tolerated and where enforcement of statutory court orders is needed these will be taken. When behaviour improves they are returned to medium tier risk and rewards such as access to activities are given.

After the first six months COMU saw an 18% reduction in serious youth violence and by June 2008 recorded a 28.3% decrease. This has contributed to the 2007/08 MPS Public Attitude survey which shows that 73 per cent of Hackney residents feel safe walking alone in the area after dark. This figure rises to 96 per cent for walking alone during the day.

Summary

- Rates of homicide and serious violence in England and Wales fall midway down a range of similarly developed societies but, as the Home Office makes clear, homicide figures have been increasing over the past decade.²⁴
- Whilst there has been declining rates of recorded and reported crime,²⁵ serious violence seems to be falling least. Public concerns about violence are, in any event, undermining the message about falling rates of crime.
- There are problems with the available data on weapon-related crime. It seems likely that a significant proportion of this offending is not reported.

- The British Crime Survey has not adequately surveyed younger people, the section of society experiencing one of the highest rates of weapon-related violence.
- Other sources of data (self-report surveys and hospital accident and emergency figures) paint a different picture of violent trends.
- Violent and weapon related crime are highly localised and concentrated in the poorest and most deprived areas.
- Gun crime is relatively rare in the UK and concentrated in a number of particular areas which are already well-known for their deeper social and economic problems, social conflicts and accumulated disadvantage.
- The levels of recorded gun crime rose quickly for four years after 1998, then stabilised, and the last two years have seen a slight decline.
- Much of recorded gun crime is committed with a motley collection of real, converted, reactivated, replica and lower-powered air weapons.
- Guns are generally used far more to intimidate than to injure, even when they are fired.
- There are, overall, many similarities between the groups most likely to carry and use illegal firearms and the groups they are most likely to be used against.
- The 2006 Violent Crime Reduction Act, plus a ban on reactivated firearms, may impact upon the availability of many types of 'firearms' currently misused, but it will take time to ascertain the impact of the new legislation.
- The distribution of knife crime in the UK closely follows the pattern of gun crime.
- A considerable flurry of media interest has centred upon the issue of a knife crime problem, but the criminal justice evidence base contains a number of ambiguities because, until very recently, police forces have not systematically recorded the type of cutting weapons used to cause stab or cut wounds.

- There is, however, a growing body of other evidence, including hospital data, circumstantial and anecdotal evidence²⁶ and some self-report survey evidence, that some groups of young people are carrying knives. There is little reliable evidence about rates of knife carrying in the past to compare this new evidence with.
- The overwhelming reason given by knife carriers for carrying knives concerns self-protection.
- Only a minority of those who carry knives admit to having used them in an aggressive fashion.
- Different definitions are employed to describe 'gangs', 'gang members' and 'gang-related' illegal activity. Use of different definitions can result in much greater or smaller constructions of the problem. There is evidence of the 'over-definition' of youth peer groups as gangs.
- Gang membership appears to escalate levels of criminal activity and a willingness to use weapons. The Tackling Gangs Action Plan (TGAP) gang member profile suggested that gang members typically had around 11 previous convictions.
- The average age of gang members in the TGAP profile was around 19 to 22 years, but there is evidence of an increasing number of younger people being drawn into gang activity – both willingly and reluctantly.

A majority of street violence in some areas was gang related.

- Gang criminality is often underpinned by illegal drug markets.
- There does appear some evidence of a 'weaponisation' of violence in some areas of the UK, especially large conurbations, and amongst some social groups (younger males).

Liverpool²⁷

Between 2004 and 2006 feuds between criminal groups in the Croxteth and Norris Green areas brought gang violence and guns in Liverpool to national attention. Liverpool again gained widespread exposure following the fatal shooting of 11 year old Rhys Jones in August 2007.

KEY FACTS: LIVERPOOL (2006-07)	
Population	439,500
Violence against the person per 100,000 ²⁸	2,509
Recorded gun offences per 100,000 ²⁹	30
Homicides (and attempted homicides)	5 (48)
TGAP identified gang members (% white)	96 (96%)
Gun crime victims (% white)	410 (85%)
Gun injuries	98
Knife-enabled crimes	Data not available

Liverpool is England's most deprived district according to the government's 2007 Index of Deprivation. This index ranks all 354 local authorities in terms of a range of factors including crime, the availability of education, residents' income, health and skills levels and the standard of the housing they live in.³⁰

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show some recent improvements. For example, long-term unemployment in Liverpool decreased by 15.1% between February 2007 and February 2008 and youth unemployment decreased by 18.8%. Furthermore, average education funding per pupil increased by 3.7% between 2004 and 2006.³¹

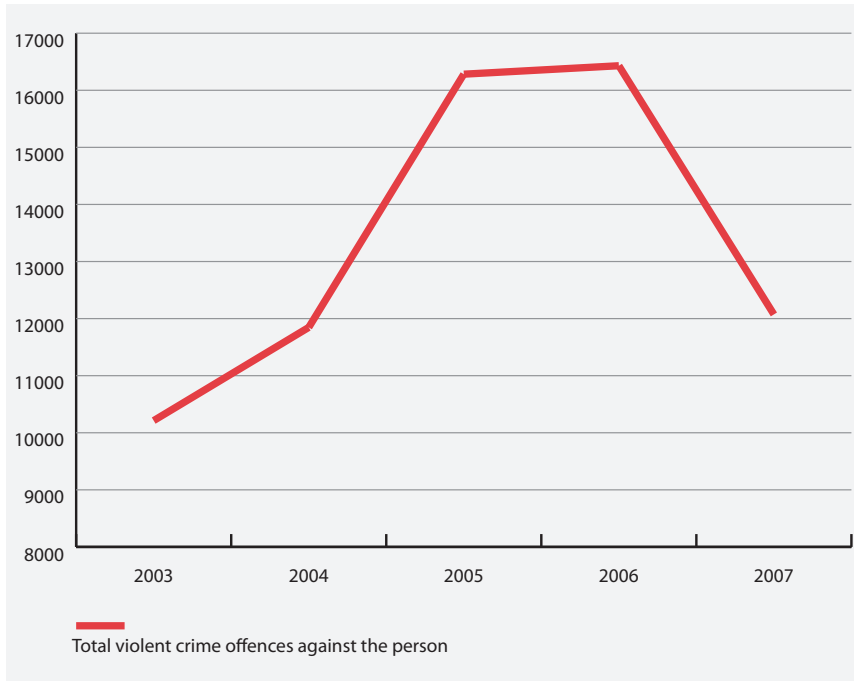
Violence

According to Merseyside Police recorded data, overall violent crime in Liverpool rose sharply in the first part of the decade before a decline in recent years.

Between 2001 and 2004 violent offences categorised by the Home Office as 'more serious' more than doubled in Merseyside before reducing by 18% in 2006-07 with overall violent crime reducing by 24% in the same year.

Police recorded data shows a similar picture for offences against the person. These increased by two-thirds between 2001 and 2004 followed by a notable fall in 2006-07 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Overall violent crime/offences against the person recorded in Liverpool, years ending 2003-07



In addition to an actual rise in the number of violent offences, there are a number of additional explanations that may explain sharp increases in recorded overall violent crimes.

Violent crime is affected by changes in recording standards. According to the CitySafe Audit 2004, a “more comprehensive police counting and recording of crime led to a steep rise following the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard” also “there are a record number of police officers to register crimes, and an increasing willingness by the public to report crime.”³³

Accident and emergency departments (A&E) often treat the victims of assault. These incidents do not always get reported to the police and therefore may not necessarily appear in recorded crime statistics. According to figures provided by Liverpool A&E for the period between 2001 and 2004, nearly half of those assaulted were *not* intending to report the incident to the police even though, by definition, the assault was serious enough for them to attend hospital.

A&E data also records that 60% of attacks were *not* with a weapon (i.e. hitting or kicking) and that nearly 65% of all assaults occurred in the street. In contrast to the police information, A&E sources show a 26% reduction in assault victims between 2001 and 2004.

Violent crime is not spread evenly across Liverpool. The city centre has the highest concentrations of violence, with particular hotspots between the Central and Riverside wards which have a concentrated number of outlets selling alcohol.

Figures from the Merseyside Regional Ambulance Service for 2003-04 also show that the peak time for violent incidents was between 2am and 3am and the peak day of the week for callouts relating to crime and disorder was Saturday, coinciding with club closing times, and consolidating the link between street violence and the night-time economy in Liverpool.

Victims and perpetrators of violence

Of all victims of violence in Liverpool in 2003-04:

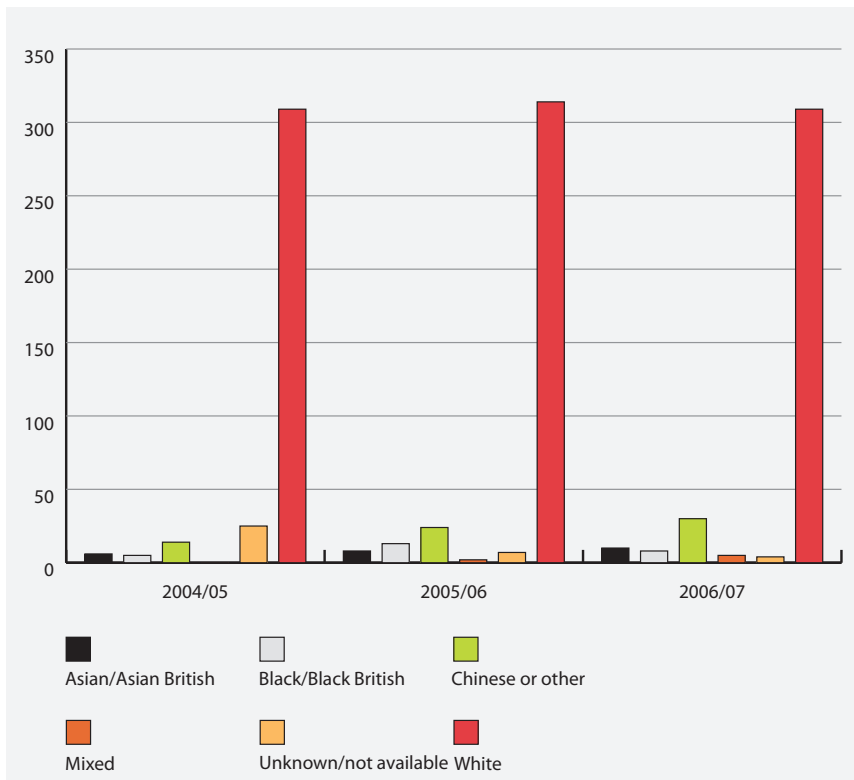
- 59% were male and 41% female
- 91% were white European
- the peak age was 19.³⁴

Of the perpetrators in 2006-07

- 85.7% of all offenders were male
- the biggest age group was 17
- The most common crime committed by young offenders (both male and female) was violence against the person.³⁵

The profile for victims of specifically firearm offences is similar to that for all violence: predominately male (60%) and overwhelmingly white (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Number of victims of recorded firearms offences, by ethnicity, in Merseyside Police Area, 2004-05 to 2006-07



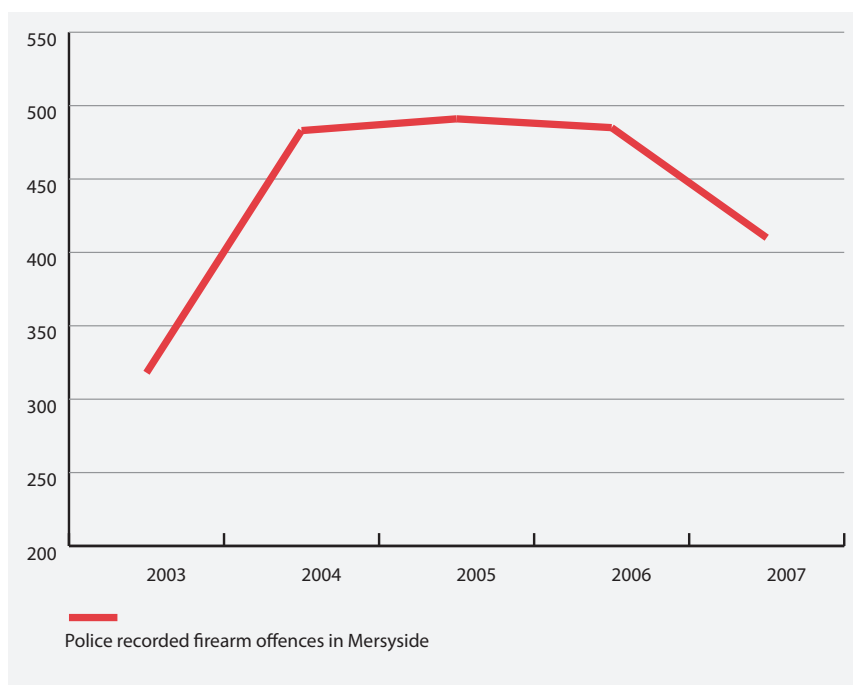
A project undertaken in Toxteth in Liverpool, called *'Include Young Voices'*, examined young people's perceptions of the levels of weapon-related violence in their community. The study showed mixed reactions on the part of young residents in the area. For some, 'the main concern was fear, fear of guns, gun culture and gangs. The majority of the young people we engaged with had a personal story involving guns, whether it concerned someone close or someone they knew'. Other young participants to the project thought that gun culture was 'cool' as though they were living in a 'ghetto' and weapon carrying was 'normal', whereas others simply said they were 'scared'.³⁶

Guns

Firearm offences³⁷ recorded by Merseyside Police show a similar pattern to overall violence in that incidents rose sharply in the early part of the decade, peaking in 2005 followed by a reduction in subsequent years.

Total offences (excluding air weapons) went up from 318 in 2002 to a peak of 491 in 2005 before falling to 410 in 2007 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Police recorded firearm offences (excluding air weapons) in Merseyside, 2002-03 to 2006-07



The 'life threatening and gun crime' rate per 1,000 of the population in 2006-07 was 1.4, against a target reduction rate of 0.97.³⁹ Police performance in 'reducing crime' for the 'life threatening and gun crime rate' is described as 'poor' and its direction 'stable'⁴⁰ in a performance assessment by the local Police Authority.

Looked at against the total number of offences recorded in the Merseyside Police area, firearm offences constitute a small proportion: just under 0.3% of all offences, a percentage which has remained largely constant in recent years.⁴¹ Firearms were used in only 1.6% of all instances of violence against the person recorded in Merseyside in 2007.⁴²

Gangs

Organised crime activities in the areas of Croxteth and Norris Green came to the attention of the authorities in the early 2000s. 'Criminal families' had established themselves in control of illegal drugs and were involved in "criminality at all levels, from burglary to drug dealing".⁴³ In early 2004, an individual linked to one of the families was shot and killed. The investigation into this incident revealed that two distinct criminal groups had formed in the area, the 'Croxteth Crew' and the 'Strand Gang'. The two groups were known to exercise violence, including using knives and guns, over dealing rights and debt enforcement. After the 2004 fatality, a number of 'tit for tat' shootings and attacks against property and people took place. By 2005, police identified that the two groups had grown in size and had each about 20 known criminals associated with them. In August 2006, a member of the Norris Green faction was shot and killed. The victim was described in the local and national press as a "gang leader" with graffiti and floral tributes left at the spot also referring to his gang status.⁴⁴

In an analysis of local intelligence carried out by Merseyside Police as part of the government's Tackling Gangs Action Programme, 96 individuals were identified as 'key gang members' in Liverpool. Of those, 96% were white; their mean age was 21. They often had extensive criminal histories: the mean number of convictions was 16, and 94% of the identified gang members had received criminal convictions when under the age of 18. Seventy-six per cent had been convicted of a drug offence, 55% of a violent offence and 58% of theft. Gang members tended to be 'predominantly male'.⁴⁵

The ethnic make-up of 'key gang members' in Liverpool contrasts with the three other TGAP areas (London, Birmingham and Manchester), where gang members identified by the police were predominantly Black Caribbean.⁴⁶

BOX 2: TOTAL POLICING.

According to Merseyside Police Liverpool "has suffered from unfair stereotypes in the past. But we can put those to rest once and for all. We've seen the biggest drop in crime in the country."

Chief Constable Hogan Howe told the Commission that he attributes their success to a Total Policing Strategy. Total Policing is about "first of all total war on criminals, which means doing everything that's legal and ethical to put them on the back foot ...secondly we're trying to provide total care for victims ... and finally we're trying to be totally professional." The force is doing this through the introduction of new tactics as well as maximising the potential of new technology in fighting crime.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne, also giving evidence to the Commission said "we are prepared to use every tool available to us, within the law, to full effect, to tackle crime. Our aim is not only to catch criminals but also to make it impossible for them to operate".

The Matrix Firearms Team is a specialist unit dealing with gun and gang crime. The team uses covert operations, uniformed disruption activity and reactive investigations. It combines prevention and diversion strategies with "aggressive tactics to clear gang members from small, priority areas ... complemented by the strategic use of partnership powers".

Targeting 'impact players', defined as individuals 'with the potential to cause the most harm' in crime hotspots is a key part of the strategy. 'Impact players' include family members of people involved in gun crime as well as 'non-cooperative' victims (intervention on the latter is meant to prevent retaliatory violence). Impact players are served with a written notice warning them that, unless they cease 'their involvement in gun-enabled crime', they are to be subjected a range of 'enforcement and disruption' measures. Tactics of Total Policing include:

- The use of named Section 60 orders to allow gang members to be searched for weapons at any time.
- The seeking of ASBOs to prevent gang members from frequenting geographical locations or contacting named individuals from part of their network.
- For two days in every 28 'locking down' certain areas by blanket use of Automatic Number Plate recognition technology.
- Working with Housing Trusts to enforce tenancy agreements.
- Implementing child protection measures if children within their families are at risk of harm.
- Diversion schemes, both with partners, and through police programmes – Merseyside is the only force licensed by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.
- Enforcement of the law for all offences, however minor.
- The seeking of tight bail conditions for any offences dealt with and robust policing of those conditions.

Summary

- Recorded violent crime fell in Liverpool by almost a quarter between 2005 and 2007. However, before then, it had increased substantially between 2001-02 and 2005.
- Violent incidents are concentrated spatially and temporally – mainly in the city centre, occurring especially at weekends in the early hours of the morning, usually around pubs' and clubs' closing times.
- The majority of victims of assaults are young, white European males.
- The available evidence seems to indicate that many incidents go unreported.
- Firearms are used in a small percentage (under 0.3%) of all recorded crimes in Merseyside.
- Gang membership as identified by police intelligence show key members to be predominantly young white men with extensive criminal careers.

London

London is by far the UK's largest city and also has the highest number of shootings and stabbings, including tragedies which gained national prominence such as the deaths of Stephen Lawrence and Damilola Taylor. The first half of 2008 has seen growing concern about murder in the capital, especially knife-enabled fatalities involving young people. By the end of June 2008, 17 teenagers had already been murdered in London.⁴⁷

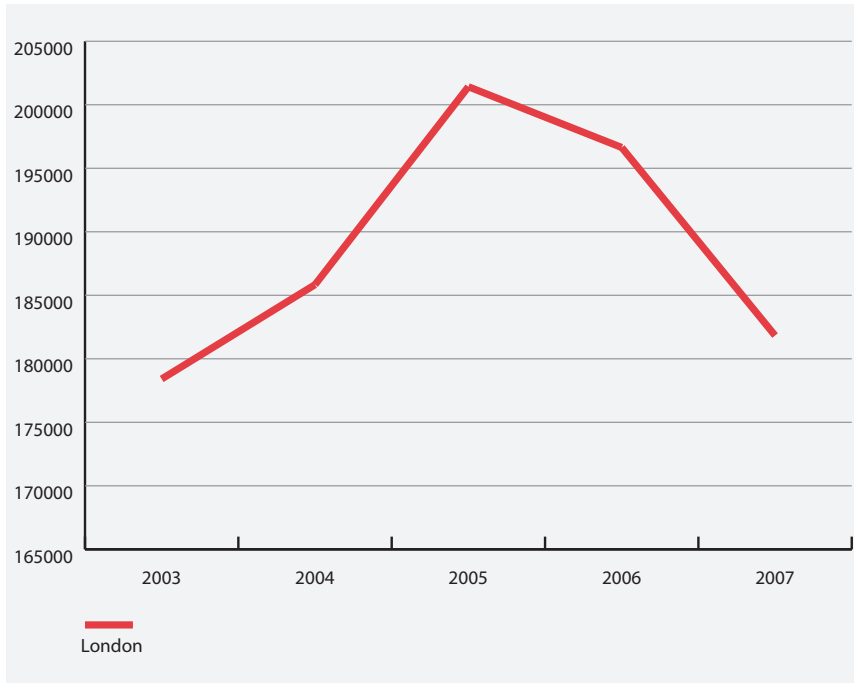
KEY FACTS: LONDON (2006-07)	
Population	7,500,000
Violence against the person per 100,000 ⁴⁸	2,692
Recorded gun offences per 100,000 ⁴⁹	52
Homicides (and attempted homicides)	28 (286)
TGAP identified gang members (% white)	356 (2.5%)
Gun crime victims (% white)	3,327 (61%)
Gun injuries	1,189
Knife-enabled crimes	10,699

Violence

Since 2003 violent crime in London peaked at just over 200,000 offences in 2005, falling by approximately 9.5% overall during the next two years⁵⁰ (see Figure 9).

The pattern of murder is not evenly spread across the city, either socially or geographically. Murders are predominantly clustered in the poorer and more deprived London boroughs, which is consistent with wider research on the prevalence of fatal violence and a wider range of interpersonal and property crimes.⁵¹ Temporal patterns also affect the data. Violent crime, especially gang-related violent crime frequently occurs in sequences and patterns of retaliatory violence. While a number of inner London boroughs (for example, Lambeth, Newham, Camden, Brent) regularly top the list for murders, the actual numbers and locations can vary significantly from year to year.

Figure 9: Total violent crime recorded in London, years ending 2003-07



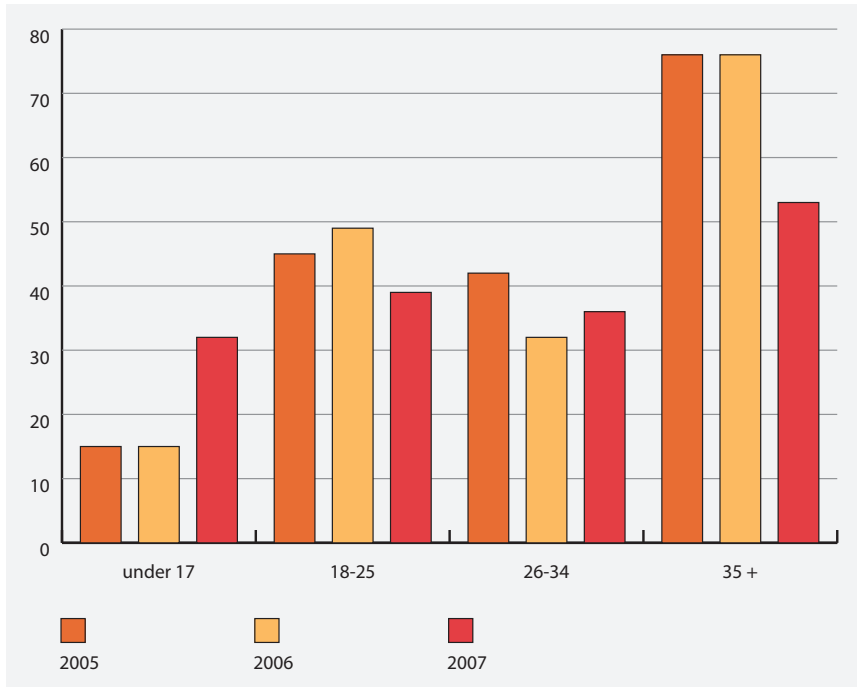
The number of murders in London also peaked in 2005 before declining in recent years.

Lethal violence is also disproportionately concentrated against younger males and minority ethnic groups. Of the 160 London murder victims in London in 2007, more than half (82) were from black or minority ethnic communities. Weapon-involved lethal violence has had a particularly severe impact on the black community in London and of the remainder, the category of 'white victims' in London includes a significant proportion of victims from white European immigrant communities.

Concern has always focused upon the murder of young people, such as the tragic deaths of Stephen Lawrence and Damilola Taylor. More recently, however, attention has been drawn to the apparently greater involvement of even younger people in violence. Figure 10 details the ages of murder victims in London over the past few years and bears out some of these concerns. The doubling of the number of victims aged under 17 in 2007 is undoubtedly a serious cause for concern – albeit over a single year.

In the 32 cases involving victims aged under 17 years old, weapons were used in 91% of the incidents, significantly higher than for any other age groups. In 17 cases (53%) the murder weapon was a knife; in 12 cases (38%) the murder weapon was a firearm.

Figure 10: Ages of murder victims in London, 2005-07



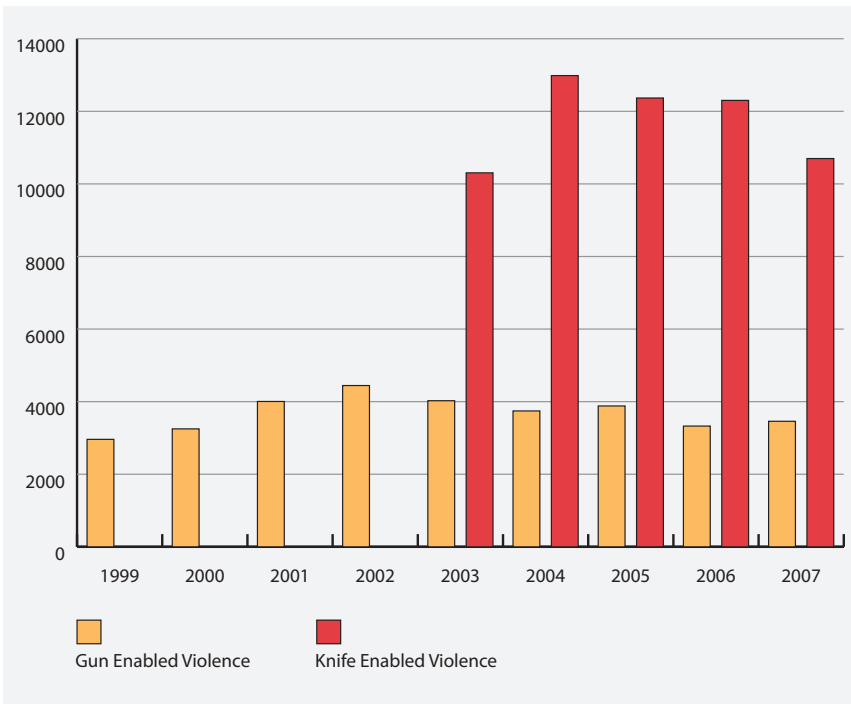
It has been argued that murder is becoming increasingly 'weaponised' (knives and firearms) especially amongst younger people.⁵²

Guns and Knives

The number of gun-enabled crimes in London fell from 3,375 in 2006/7 to 3,328 the following year (a fall of 1.4%). Knife-enabled crimes fell from 12,124 to 10,220 (a fall of 15.7%) during the same period. However, there was an 8.8% increase in 'Trident Gun Crime Incidents' ('black on black' gun crime), rising from 226 to 246 in that time.

Figure 11⁵³ based on police recorded incidents, charts the annual gun crime trend for London since 1999 and the trend for knife crime from 2003, the first year that such data was collected. Police records suggest that knife-enabled crime is approximately three to four times more frequent than gun crime, yet there appears to be a downward trend for both offence types. These incidents do not necessarily involve injuries but can also include, for example, robberies, where a weapon may have been used to threaten a victim.

Figure 11: Gun- and knife-enabled crime in London



In a poll for BBC London⁵⁴, 500 teenagers aged 13 to 18 living in Croydon, Brent, Hackney, Southwark and Lambeth were questioned over the telephone in 2007.

One-third of the respondents said they knew someone who had been the victim of a knife assault and 17% knew a victim of gun crime.

The main factor identified by the young respondents as motivating teenagers to carry a weapon is 'wanting respect' (44%). Around a quarter identified fear of crime (26%) or pressure from friends (22%), and only 8% thought that the intention of committing a crime was the motivation behind carrying a knife or gun.

The BBC survey conveys some mixed reactions in terms of perceptions of safety and risk among young Londoners living in these five boroughs. Whilst the great majority of respondents (84%) disagreed that they would need to carry a weapon sometimes in order to feel safe, 62% of them were worried that other teenagers may carry a knife or a gun, and 58% thought that the police would be unable to protect them from violent crime. This seems to imply that the respondents are aware that carrying a knife or gun would not make them safer.

Finally, and perhaps reassuringly for the respondents, 59% thought that adults were aware of the dangers they faced in their areas.

Gangs

A Metropolitan Police survey in 2007 found 171 'youth gangs' in London. This figure was based upon a fairly loose and all-inclusive conception of gangs which stretched: 'from organised and armed crime syndicates to low-level groups of youths'. This lack of definition has left the survey open to the charge of 'over-defining' the problem of gangs in London.

London's gangs are typically located in the poorest neighbourhoods and many of their identified members were said to have access to and to use firearms. Gangs were alleged to be responsible for over 40 murders and 20% of London's youth crime. Young people said they became involved with gangs for a variety of motives including fun and companionship, respect, fear and coercion.

According to a senior practitioner working within the London Guns, Gangs and Weapons (GGW) Practitioners' Forum⁵⁵: "Gang, gun and weapon violence, is not a new phenomenon. Indeed the current levels of violence and in particular knife violence has been a building for many decades. The current levels of serious gun, gang and weapon violence can, in my opinion, be attributed to two key issues - drug markets and respect/retribution."

Furthermore, according to this practitioner both suspects and victims are becoming younger. A significant proportion of gang and weapon violence is directly connected to the organised criminal business of drug supply and drugs markets. The main play-

ers who head up a gang rarely get involved in serious violence, but instead use other younger members and ‘wannabees’ to prove their worth by couriering drugs.⁵⁶

Gangs can often be formed, or indeed strengthened, by the associations that they build in schools or on estates, however they can equally be formed by family or ethnic connections. Gang structures can be fluid and are often chaotic. Some individuals retain an allegiance to more than one gang and gangs in London regularly splinter, fighting with others to dominate a drugs or other illegal market.

At present according to the Head of Community Safety “the gang structure in London is not as organised as those in America, however there is a risk that they will become so within time.”⁵⁷

A recent Home Office publication: *Tackling Gangs: A Practical Guide for Local Authorities, CDRPs and Other Local Partners*⁵⁸ stated in relation to London’s gang problem that:

- The numbers of those involved in serious violent offending as part of gangs remains small in comparison with the overall offending population.
- A small number of street gangs who have pursued criminal activity for a number of years have progressed into organised criminal networks.
- Street gangs tend to comprise young people. In some cases, these young people support organised criminal networks by committing offences and concealing drugs and weapons.
- Serious, gang-related violence is concentrated in a limited number of areas and venues where gang members gather.
- The degree of organisation, name and membership of each gang is variable and subject to frequent change.
- Those involved in gang activities tend to be prolific offenders – responsible for a high volume and wide range of violent offending.
- Street-level gangs typically comprise a small number of highly active, violent criminals intent on a criminal career, together with a wider group of vulnerable young people who are attracted to or coerced into active involvement.

- Gangs are characterised by frequent internal and external disputes typically involving issues of 'respect'. A limited number of career criminals seek to enhance their status through criminal offences and serious violence directed towards rival gangs.
- Evidence of seizure and intelligence indicates that weaponry for street gangs is dominated by knives and imitation firearms.
- The internet is used by some street gangs as a means of enhancing their status.

Summary

- Although London appears to lead the city violence 'league table', levels of violence across London as a whole, recorded by the Police, appear to be falling – this seems to be the case for 'all violence' and homicides (which peaked in 2005 but have fallen, year on year, since then).
- The latest figures on gun and knife enabled crime also suggest a falling trend, although whilst the latter has declined by almost a third since 2006, gun crime has fallen by less.
- However, other sources of data - social surveys, weapon possession figures and hospital stabbings admissions - suggest that knife-enabled crime and stabbing injuries are increasing.
- Gun and knife violence appear to be concentrated very unevenly in certain areas and in patterns which cluster geographically, temporally and (according to other evidence⁵⁹) sequentially in patterns of 'tit-for-tat' retaliation.
- Black communities, especially their younger members, appear disproportionately victimised by weapon-involved crime. Over half of the murders in London had a victim from a black or minority ethnic group, and black males account for nearly two-thirds of all murders of 10 to 17 year olds.
- Fights and violence amongst acquaintances, between gangs and 'black on black' violent crime account for over two-thirds of the homicides involving victims aged under 17 in London.

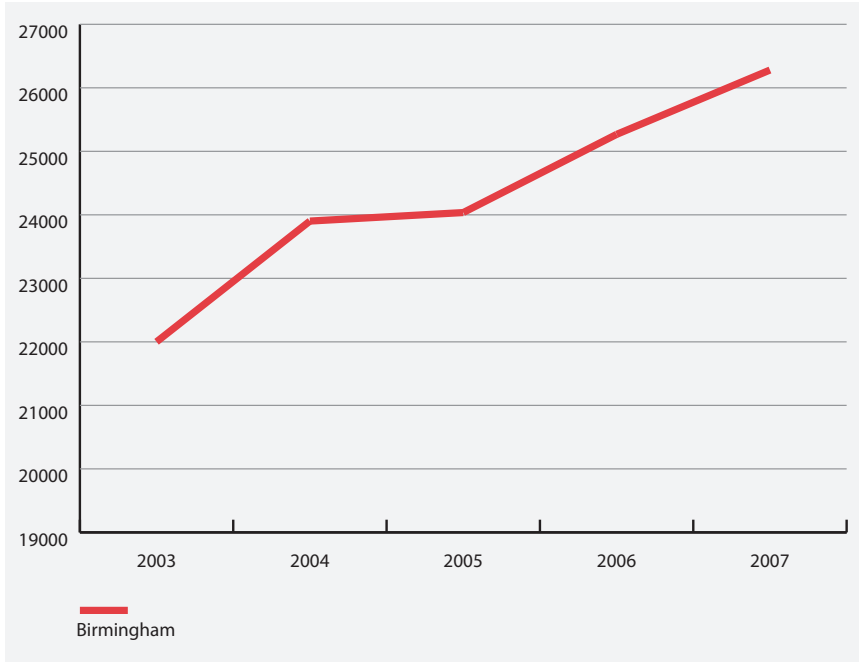
Birmingham

Gun crime in Birmingham gained national exposure following the New Year’s Eve 2004 shooting of Charlene Ellis and Letisha Shakespeare. This incident drew attention to the pattern of gang-related violent crime developing in parts of the city.

KEY FACTS: BIRMINGHAM (2006-07)	
Population	971,000
Violence against the person per 100,000 ⁶⁰	2,156
Recorded gun offences per 100,000 ⁶¹	38
Homicides (and attempted homicides)	3 (90)
TGAP identified gang members (% white)	127 (3%)
Gun crime victims (% white)	979 (52%)
Gun injuries	120
Knife-enabled crimes	Data not available

In Birmingham, unlike the two cities previously visited and the national picture, overall violent crime in the city has risen fairly continuously since 2003⁶² (see Figure 12).

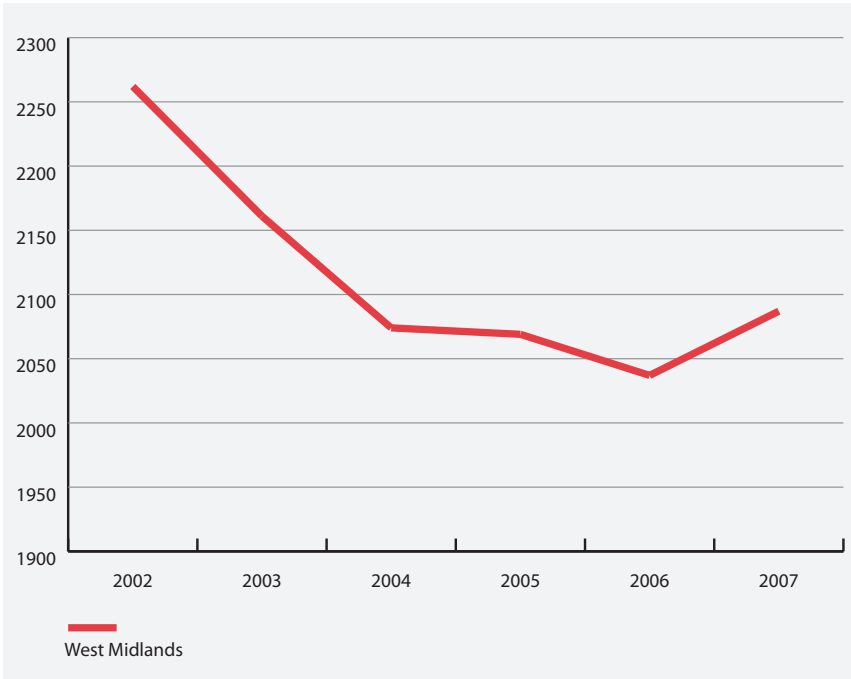
Figure 12: Overall violent crime recorded in Birmingham, years ending 2003-07



Paradoxically, Figure 13 indicates a falling pattern of gun crime in the West Midlands over the same period until 2006, with the figures rising again in 2007.⁶³

Figure 14 presents data from Birmingham city hospitals' accident and emergency departments regarding casualties arriving with gunshot wounds. The years 2003 and 2004 show a marked increase in gun crime victims, although in each year for which the data has been made available, the majority of injuries were not serious or life-threatening.

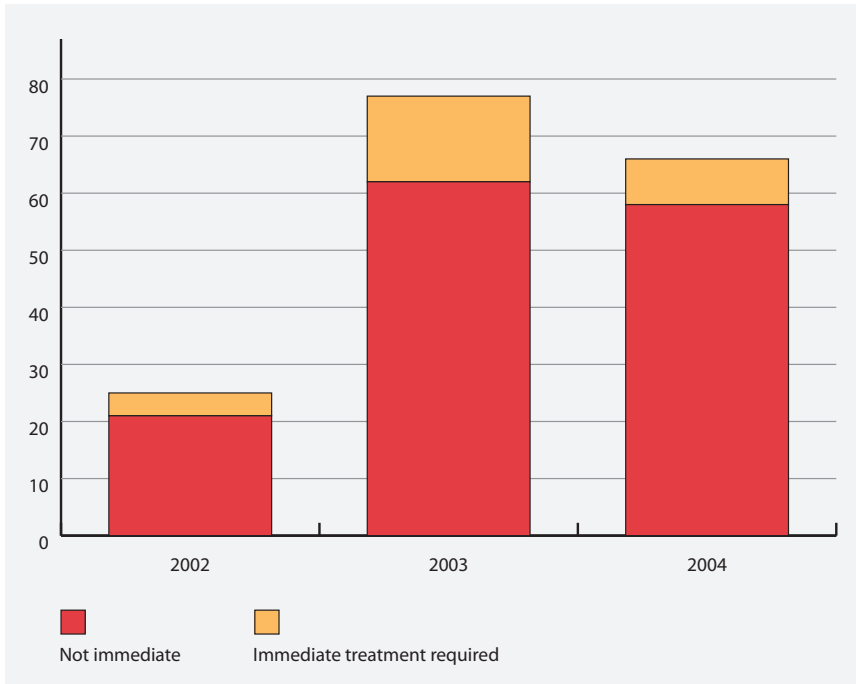
Figure 13: Firearms offences recorded in the West Midlands, years ending 2002-07



The extreme nature of the crime and its impact upon Birmingham's reputation as a 'safe city', not least concerning the stigma of 'gang violence', have led to these issues being prioritised by Crime and Disorder Partnerships in Birmingham and the West Midlands. Local evaluations for the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership⁶⁴ have drawn a link between local drug markets – specifically crack cocaine – and weapon-related violence in parts of the city.

Superintendent Peter O'Neill of the West Midlands police borrowed techniques used in Northern Ireland to tackle violence between gangs. He sums up the main reasons for conflict as the "three Rs": revenue, respect and revenge. Revenue from drugs or other crime; respect - a huge issue, particularly for young black males, where deadly wars can break out over the most trivial slight; and revenge, tit-for-tat attacks stretching so far back it is impossible to establish the original cause. The two main Birmingham gangs - the Burger Bar Boys and the Johnson Crew - are nowhere near as entrenched or territorial as their US counterparts, but the mythology around them, and the kudos of membership, claimed by many with only the loosest affiliations, is difficult to dispel.⁶⁵

Figure 14: Birmingham city hospital presentations with firearm injuries, 2002-04



Summary

- Recorded violent crime in the West Midlands has risen fairly continuously from 2003 to 2007.
- The West Midlands area experienced the most significant increase in firearm offending of the four TGAP cities examined.
- Firearms offences recorded in the West Midlands seem to show a falling pattern until 2006, the figures rising again in 2007.
- Wounding offences recorded in the West Midlands show a significant increase from 2002 to 2007 (some of the increase may be due to changes in recording practices).
- Local evaluations show a possible link between drug markets and weapon-related violence in parts of Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Glasgow⁶⁶

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Glasgow has the highest rate of murder of any city in Europe per head of population⁶⁷. The homicide rate in Scotland for males aged between 10-29 is 5.3 per 100,000 population. The homicide rate in England and Wales for the same age group is 1.0. The overall rate in Scotland is 3.1 per 100,000 population, which is similar to Argentina, Costa Rica and Lithuania.

KEY FACTS: GLASGOW (2006-07)	
Population	580,680
murder rate per 100,000	4.3
Serious violence rate per 100,000	697
Homicides	25
'Gang' involvement in Strathclyde	1,760
Recorded gun offences in Strathclyde	691
Gun injuries (Scotland as a whole)	98 (approx 70% in Strathclyde)
Proportion of serious violence inflicted by knives (murder and attempted murder)	55%

Glasgow is the largest of Scotland's cities and 41 of the city's 79 wards are among the most deprived in the country. This equates to 292,599 people in the city living in an areas of deprivation and 60% of the population living in areas of multiple deprivation, facing, for example, homelessness, poverty, ill health, unemployment and low education and skill levels.⁶⁸

- Around 42% of Glasgow's children under 16 are living in families dependent on Income Support. This rises to 60% in some areas, compared to a Scottish average of approximately 25%.
- Glasgow has the highest percentage in Scotland of pupils entitled to free meals (42.3%). The Scottish average is less than half at 20.3%.
- In the mid 2000s there were almost 2,500 children and young people in Glasgow 'looked after' by social services, after causing 'a range of concerns'. Approximately 500 of them had been the subject of referrals on grounds of an offence.

- The 2001 Census shows that in Great Britain on average 25% of families with children were lone parent families. In Glasgow the average is 46.4% and in ten of the city's postcodes it is almost 70%.
- Almost 25% of Glasgow's adult population experience some form of mental health problem that negatively impacts on their capacity to manage their lives. 'When compared to people living in affluent areas, people in the most deprived areas of Glasgow are: 2.7 times more likely to be admitted to hospital for depression; ten times more likely to be admitted to hospital for an alcohol related problem; 33 times more likely to be admitted to hospital for a drug misuse problem.'⁶⁹

Violence

In recent years, Glasgow has seen a steady decrease in the overall rate of recorded crime, including a significant fall in housebreaking, theft and shoplifting. However, there has been a rise in violent crime, and public concerns around crime and anti-social behaviour feature strongly among the issues that trouble Glasgow residents.⁷⁰

Glasgow has the highest rate of murder (irrespective of weapon used, if any) in Europe.⁷¹ In 2007 there were 25 murders in Glasgow: this amounts to a rate of 4.3 per 100,000 people (the second highest was London with 2.3). The average murder rate per year in the period 2003-05 in Glasgow was 6.17 per 100,000 population.⁷²

42% of the prison population in Scotland are incarcerated for non-sexual violent crimes.⁷³

Research conducted in three Glasgow hospitals in March 2004⁷⁴ suggests that violence is significantly under-reported. It is estimated from this study that the police under-record serious assaults 'by at least 50% and possibly nearer 70%'.⁷⁵

Knives

Although some of the information in this section relates to recorded crimes in Strathclyde (an area which spans from Ayrshire and Argyll and Bute in the west to South Lanarkshire in the east), the overwhelming majority of the Strathclyde knife crime relates to the Glasgow area.⁷⁶

BOX 3: USE OF CIVIL POWER AGAINST GUNS AND GANGS

By using the Civil Justice System to control alleged perpetrators whose activity endangers Birmingham's citizens, the Community Safety Partnership has been able to tackle serious offending in situations where the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have been unable to prosecute. By applying to the courts for a civil injunction or other civil order, the City Council has been able to prevent continued offending, and assist the management of offenders involved with gangs and guns, street prostitution, aggressive begging, domestic violence, environmental crime, illegal money lending and hate crime.

However, on all too many occasions offenders cannot be brought before the criminal courts either because the available evidence is insufficient having regard to the high standard of proof required (guilt to be proven "beyond all reasonable doubt" or because victims or witnesses will not come forward. It is against this background that the Community Safety Partnership in Birmingham is seeking to use of the Civil Justice System, obtaining orders that seek to control the behaviour of those who threaten the well-being of communities.

From 2006 the Partnership developed the use of civil injunctions to protect the people of Birmingham through the tackling of violent armed gangs. Gangs and guns have become a problem in many inner city areas and it had become clear that this was also becoming a problem in Birmingham in a number of isolated neighbourhoods. It was vital that the problem was tackled early on to prevent it getting worse, but the CPS lacked the evidence it needed to prosecute individuals for criminal offences.

Some 50 Civil Orders and Injunctions have now been successfully obtained, firstly to control gang membership through measures such as preventing contact between known gang members and, secondly, to require gang members to choose between continuing their current lifestyle or exit with new and developing support systems.

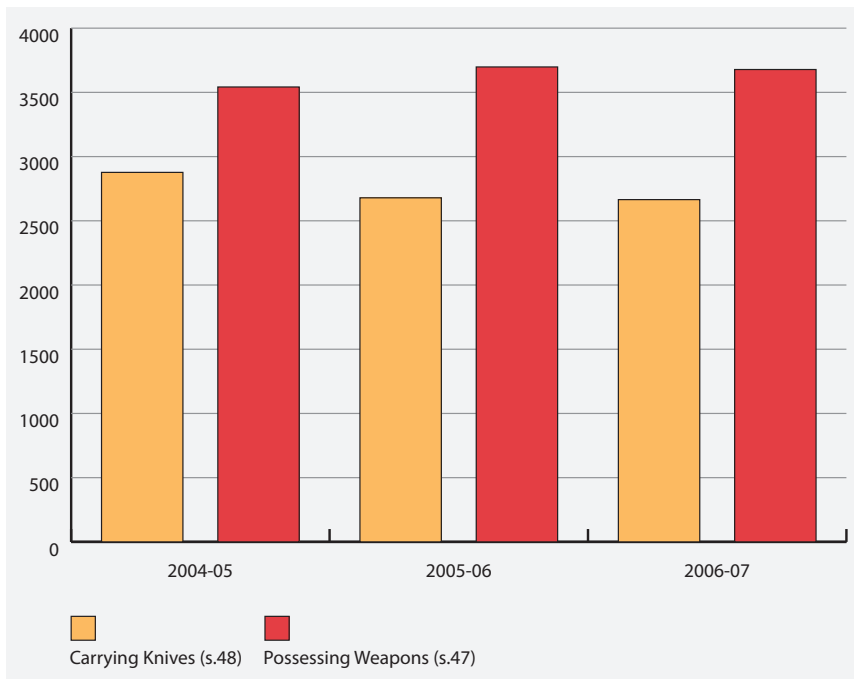
Together with the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to tackle serious anti-social behaviour, civil injunctions are a major tool in delivering protection to people in the city. This work also makes a positive contribution to the success of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership.

However use of the Civil Justice System has now been judicially criticised by the County Court in Birmingham. Birmingham City Council is appealing the decision to the Court of Appeal and have been given an hearing date in June. At the time of going to press this hearing had taken place and the Council were awaiting the court's decision. The County Court decision now (after granting the Council some 50 Orders) finds the application for civil orders unlawful in that appropriate remedial action is to be found within the Criminal Courts; however Birmingham argues that it is not seeking to criminalise perpetrators, which is rightly within the proper jurisdiction of the Criminal Justice System but rather attempting to find new ways to protect communities and to manage – not punish – those who 'on the balance of probabilities' destabilise and harm communities within the city.

Police records show a fairly stable picture with regards to knife carrying in Strathclyde over the last three years. The police collect figures in relation to the offence of having an article with a blade or point in a public place. The number of such crimes fell from 2,877 in 2004/5 to 2,665 in 2006/7.

Knife carrying can also be recorded as an offence under section 47 of the Criminal Law Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1995, which prohibits the carrying of an offensive weapon. However, it is important to bear in mind that not all offensive weapons will be knives. The number of such offences rose from 3,542 in 2004/5 to 3,678 in 2006/7 (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Carrying of knives/bladed/pointed instruments in a public place (s.49 Criminal Law Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1995) and possession of offensive weapons (s.47)



From 2006, people found in possession of a knife in the Strathclyde Police area are 'arrested, fingerprinted and DNA'd and detained in custody or released on an undertaking'. If an individual has been caught for the second time with a knife, bail is opposed. This change in process has resulted in a 100% increase per month on the number in individuals on remand for knife possession, many of whom are prolific violent offenders.⁷⁷ The police recognise that "this is a burden on the prison service", but "are seeing some reductions in knife crime as a result, although it will require some further evidence over the next 6 months".⁷⁸

4,050 serious assaults were reported in Strathclyde between April 2006 and March 2007; 1,260 (31%) of these involved a knife.⁷⁹

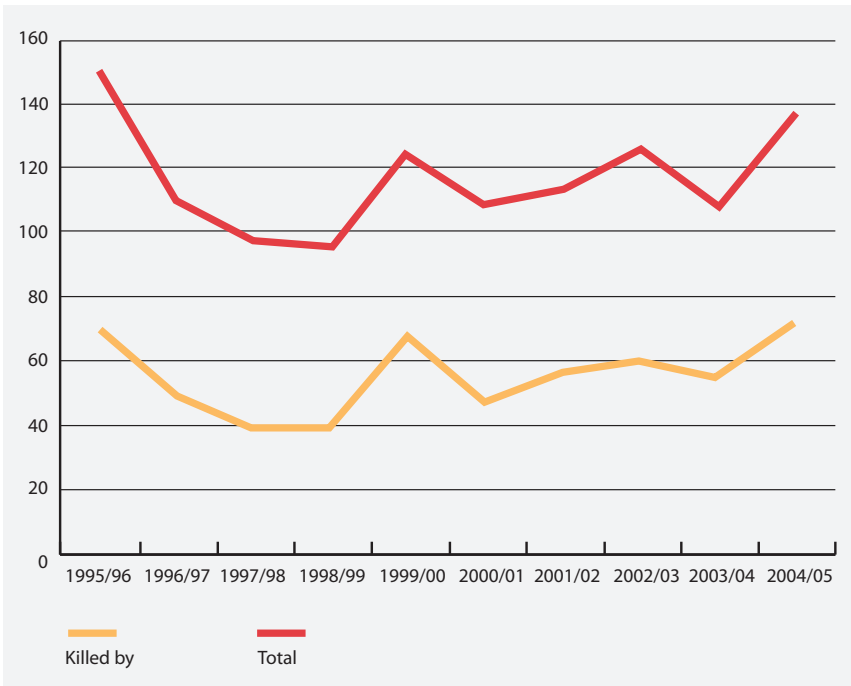
Apart from police data, useful information about knife-related injuries comes from hospitals. Around 1,000 patients attend Glasgow Dental Hospital each year with knife-related facial injuries. Hospitals in Glasgow treat a serious facial injury every six hours. Over 83% of patients with facial injuries were drinking at the time of injury. Typically, over 25% of those treated will be treated again for a similar injury within a year, indicating a pattern of repeat victimisation.⁸⁰

The rate of murder committed with a knife in Scotland is 3.5 times higher than that in England and Wales.

Of the 73 murders in Strathclyde between April 2006 and March 2007, 40 of them (55%) involved a knife. Of the 380 attempted murders that were reported in Strathclyde in the same period, 208 of them involved a knife (also 55%). Alcohol is a contributory factor in almost half of all murders in Strathclyde (where the drink/drugs status of the accused is known).⁸¹

For homicides recorded in Scotland between 1995/6 and 2004/5 (see Figure 16), sharp instruments accounted for 48% of all victims.⁸² Following a very similar pattern as for homicides as a whole, the number of people killed by a knife or other bladed weapon in this decade fell from a peak of around 70 in 1995-96 to fewer than 40 in 1997-98 before rising again to over 70 in 2004/5.⁸³

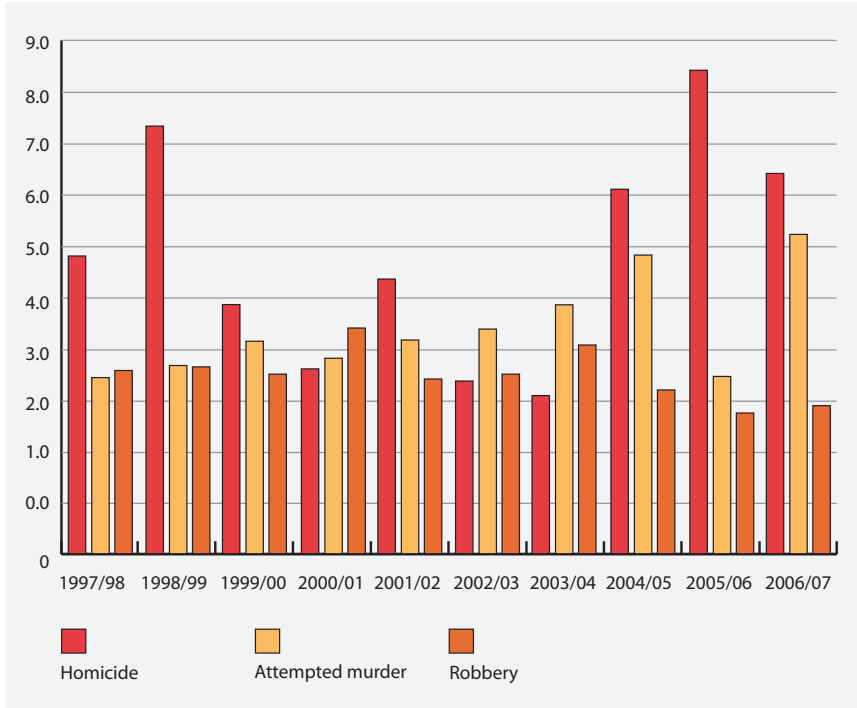
Figure 16: Homicide victims in Scotland and proportion killed by a knife or bladed weapon 1995-1996 to 2004-2005



Guns⁸⁴

The use of firearms in criminal activities constitutes a small proportion of the offences recorded by the police in Scotland. 7% of recorded homicides in 2006/7 (8 murders) involved the use of a firearm (see Figure 17). This contrasts with knives being involved in 55% of all homicides in the same year.

Figure 17: Crimes and offences recorded by the police in which a firearm was alleged to have been used as a percentage of all crimes and offences recorded for selected crimes, Scotland, 1997-98 to 2006-07.



In 2006/7 there were 1,245 recorded offences in Scotland in which a firearm⁸⁵ was alleged to have been used, an increase of 17% from 2005/6, and the highest number in the last ten years.⁸⁶

Despite this, the relatively low use of firearms in Scotland is illustrated by the recorded crime figures for the 1997-2007 decade. The peak for firearms use in homicides was in 2005/6, when it accounted for fewer than 9% of all homicides. This proportion corresponds fairly closely to the firearm-related proportion of homicides in England and Wales as a whole. The clear-up rate for homicide offences with firearms was 100% in 2006/7.⁸⁷ The clear-up rate for all offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used in 2006-07 was 57%, the highest recorded in a ten-year period.

Violent recorded offences in which a firearm is alleged to have been used are concentrated in the Strathclyde Police Area. This area, which contains 43% of the entire population in Scotland accounted for 56% (691) of all offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used in 2006/7.

75% of homicides, 81% (35) of attempted murders, 79% (15) of serious assaults, 76% (62) of recorded robberies, and 57% (114) of minor assaults in which a firearm was alleged to have been used in Scotland in 2006/7 took place in Strathclyde.

Although gun crime is not generally perceived as being a major problem, at least in comparison with knife crime, the number of firearms incidents in Strathclyde increased by 28% from 2005/6 to 2006/7. According to the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), this can be “partly accounted for because the force now includes some offences that were previously excluded, following a clarification in the counting rules”.

The number of firearms incidents attended by armed response vehicles equally had a steep rise over the same period, increasing from 377 in 2005/6 to 689 in 2006/7⁸⁸.

Victims and perpetrators

In the majority of gun and knife crimes, both victims and perpetrators tend to be white Scottish males, aged 14 to 18.

Victims of violent attacks know their attackers in the majority of cases (see Box 4).⁸⁹

The proportion of victims of violence subject to repeated attacks, as gleaned from Glasgow Dental Hospital data relating to knife injuries, seems to be confirmed by police recorded data for Strathclyde. Of those individuals who had experienced a violent offence (assault or robbery) in 2002 in Strathclyde, 30% had been victimised more than once.⁹⁰

BOX 4: A TYPICAL GLASGOW MURDER

The 'typical' murder on the street in Glasgow will be committed by a young man between 15 and 21; the weapon used will be a lock knife, which he carries because he feels he has to for his own protection - it is his perception that the majority of his peers carry knives as well. When he leaves home he is sober and makes the conscious decision to carry the knife.

He will have left school without any formal qualifications and he is likely to be unemployed. He will meet with friends, and, with them, will consume a small amount of alcohol - usually a shared bottle of high alcohol, high-sugar drink. As his blood alcohol level rises, he becomes disinhibited. Research shows that blood alcohol concentration when ascending has a stimulating effect on the nervous system; its depressive effects only start when the blood alcohol level begins to descend. During the ascending phase he has an increased propensity for violence and is more likely to respond disproportionately to a minor incident. At this point, he will come into contact with another young male of a similar background: he will know him, but not well: he will live in the same area, be a near neighbour or have attended the same school. There will be some disagreement, a perceived insult or breach of territorial boundary or an association with an area that will instigate a response, usually physical.

A fight takes place, which, but for the weapon, would amount to little more than fisticuffs. However, these young men carry knives for protection and defence. Knives are not defensive weapons. It is now that possession of the knife takes on fatal significance.

Fate plays a significant role in the outcomes for the combatants. Fate will decide who will become the victim and who becomes the offender. Fate will decide the speed and effectiveness of medical intervention. Fate will decide if the victim is to die.

Most deaths result from a penetrating injury to the trunk that causes damage to a vital structure, aorta or heart.

The offender will receive a mandatory life sentence.

When these young men left home that night, neither had the intention to murder or the expectation of being murdered. However, in the context of the fight, when that fatal blow was struck, murder is precisely what was intended. Neither's ambition, when at school, was to become a murderer or a murder victim.

Taken from Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit

Gangs

According to Strathclyde Police, there are around 166 gangs across the Strathclyde force area, the majority of which are in Glasgow. Numbers of members will vary, as will their levels of activity – not all are active or ‘high risk’. Demographically, gang members are white Scottish males aged 14 to 18, many of whom will be victims as well as offenders.

Strathclyde Police ‘have no definitive description for gangs’ and their database on gangs operates on a rather loose definition of gang membership: it is based on known facts, criminal convictions but also softer intelligence and simply associations. Therefore, a number of the people on the database are likely not be strictly involved in gangs themselves, but may be associated with a gang member i.e. relation or partner.

The VRU acknowledges the ambiguity implicit in the definition of a gang. “For some individuals a gang is a small group of four or five adolescents loitering on street corners, while for others the word conjures up an intrinsic connection to criminality, violence and drugs.”

A profiling exercise into local gangs was conducted by the Glasgow City Council’s Youth Justice Research Department in 2005.⁹¹ It looked at trends in social work involvement with gang members, using intelligence data from Strathclyde Police and Social Work data.

Intelligence from Strathclyde Police’s database on gangs suggested that there were approximately 1,760 people involved, or alleged to be involved, with gangs in Glasgow. A sample of almost one in four (462) of these was profiled.

The study found that:

- Approximately 90% of gang members were male.
- The average age was 18 years, with a range between 11 and 47. Almost one-third were aged 17 or 18.
- Only 135 (29%) of the sample were involved with social work (e.g. in care or community care) at the time of the study.
- Fifty per cent of those people who were known to social work had been involved with the criminal justice system at some point.
- Of the 74 gang members/associates who were currently, or had previously been, looked after by social services, the most common reasons for intervention was 'offending behaviour' (22) or 'non-attendance at school' (15) followed by 'out-with parental control' (12) and 'lack of parental care' (8).

Summary

- According to the WHO, Glasgow has the highest rate of murder of any city in Europe per head of population. In 2007 there were 25 murders in Glasgow: this amounts to a rate of 4.3 per 100,000 people.
- The average murder rate in Glasgow per year in the period 2003-05 was 6.17 per 100,000 population.
- Although overall levels of crime have fallen in the west of Scotland, levels of violent crime, in particular knife crime, have remained relatively constant for the last 40 years.
- Victims and offenders share very similar demographic characteristics: they tend to be very young (mostly in the 14 to 18 age group), male, white and come from under-privileged backgrounds.
- Victimisation tends to be repeated; in non-fatal instances, the same people will be victims of crime more than once.

- In the majority of violent attacks (over 70% for 2004-05 in Strathclyde) the victim knows their attacker.⁹²
- Most violent crime is related to the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Unlike knives, guns are not such an issue in Scotland and Glasgow as in other parts of the country: the use of firearms in criminal activity constitutes a small proportion of offences recorded by the police. However, there was a noticeable increase in firearms offences in 2006-07 recorded by Strathclyde Police, and in Scotland generally, compared to the previous year.
- Young people who carry knives do so because they feel the need to protect themselves.

Manchester

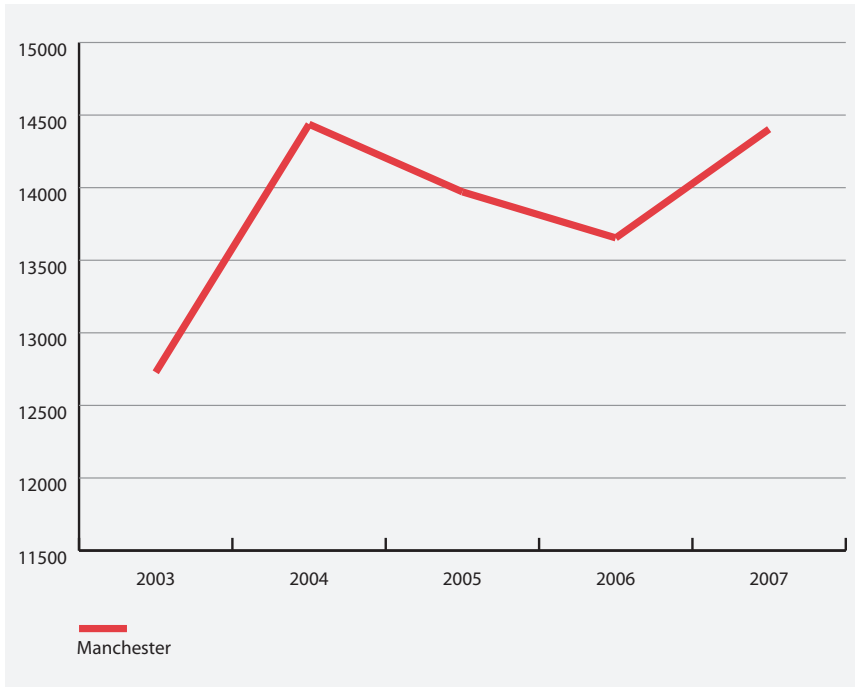
Six people died in Manchester as a result of gun crime in one year alone (2002/3). The city came second only to London that year for recorded firearms offences with a total of 1,240. Overall, 12% of all gun crimes committed in England and Wales took place in Manchester. Despite a growing reputation for gang- and gun-related crime from the late 1990s – reflected in the title ‘Gunchester’,⁹³ firearms offences still account for less than 0.5% of all crime in Manchester.

KEY FACTS: MANCHESTER (2006-07)	
Population	393,000
Violence against the person per 100,000 ⁹⁴	1,353
Recorded gun offences per 100,000 ⁹⁵	39
Homicides (and attempted homicides)	4 (82)
TGAP identified gang members (% white)	76 (8%)
Gun crime victims (% white)	1,268 (61%)
Gun injuries	324
Knife-enabled crimes	Data not available

Violence

Against the national trend, Figure 18 suggests an increase in overall violent crime recorded within the city of Manchester.

Figure 18: Overall violent crime recorded in Manchester, years ending 2003-07



However, more specific categories of crime involving weapons indicate different trends.⁹⁷

Figure 19: Possession of unlawful weapons and firearm-related offending in the Greater Manchester Area

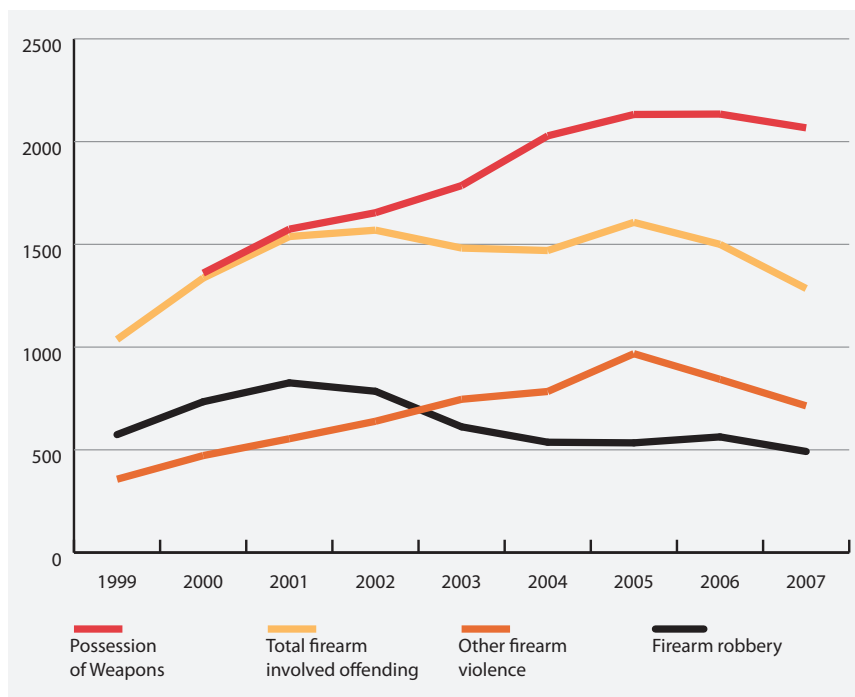


Figure 19, covering the entire Greater Manchester police area, details the trends in a range of weapon-possession and weapon-involved offences. With the exception of armed robberies which peaked in 2001 and have since stabilised at around 500 per year, weapons offences all appear to have peaked in 2005, declining slightly in the two subsequent years. Again, with the exception of armed robberies, weapon-related offending was still higher in 2007 than it had been in 1999.

Despite the reductions in gun and weapon-related offending after 2005, the Greater Manchester Police intelligence-led anti-gun crime initiative, Operation Xcalibre, suggests that gun discharges (not necessarily reported in its crimes database) show seasonal variations but overall a relatively stable profile from year to year.

Guns and Gangs

The Home Office published a study in 2002 entitled *Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a Crime Reduction Strategy*,⁹⁸ by Karen Bullock and Nick Tilley.

The main findings of the research study echo many of those arrived at in London:

Guns and violence

Violence in general, gun violence in particular and fatal shootings are mostly concentrated in specific small areas – mainly south of the city.

- Victims of gun violence are mainly young, black or mixed race males, who have criminal records.
- Suspected perpetrators of serious gun violence tend to have similar attributes to victims.
- Those who have been victims of shootings are at increased risk of repeat incidents.
- About 60 per cent of shootings are thought to be gang related.

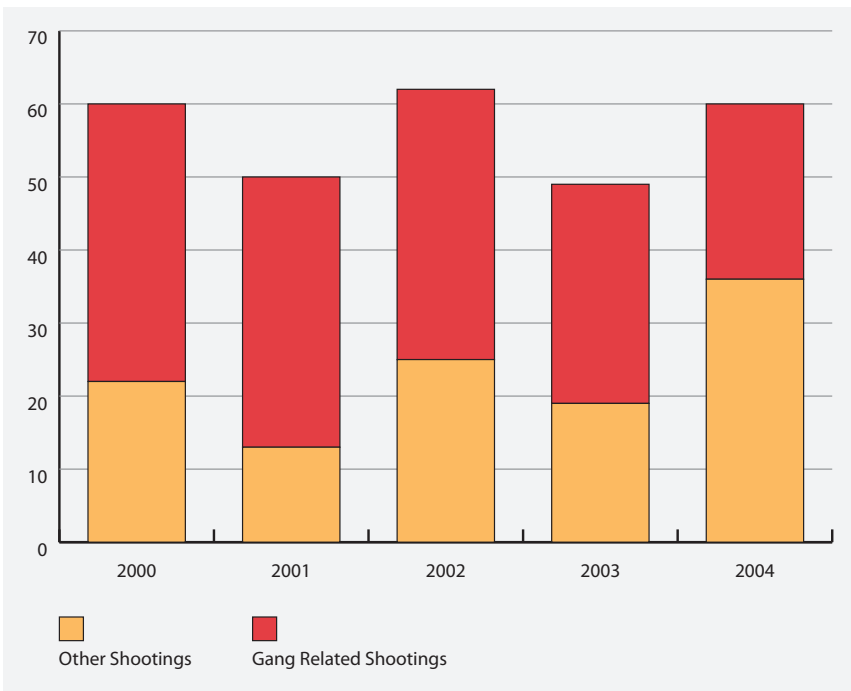
Gangs

- There are differences in the make-up, origins, activities, and organisation of the gangs studied, though members of all are involved in a wide range of criminal behaviour.
- Gang-members are a mix of same-age local friendship groups, blood relatives and recruits.
- Gang-related criminal behaviour includes drug-related offences, but only as one element of a patchwork of violent and non-violent crime.
- Rates of arrest for gang-members tend to fall as they age.
- Alliances are sometimes formed between gangs, but conflict is endemic and easily triggered.
- Firearms carrying by gang-members is at least partly protective and police intelligence records suggest that it may also be part symbolic and part instrumental for the commission of violent crime.
- There are strong norms of non-co-operation in police enquiries into gang-related shootings, in particular in giving evidence, which undermine successful prosecution of offenders.
- Only 1 in 140 people who were victims/witnesses of gun crime were willing to give evidence in court

Launched in 2001-02, the Manchester Multi-Agency Gangs Strategy (MMAGS) operates in south Manchester areas such as Moss Side, Hulme and Longsight, home to the city's most notorious gangs (see Box 5).

However, as Figure 20 suggests,⁹⁹ not all shootings are understood as directly 'gang related'. Overall, about 60% of shootings in Manchester were defined as 'gang-related' and people in certain areas of the south of the city were 140 times more likely than other Manchester residents to be shot, according to the Bullock and Tilley report.

Figure 20: 'Gang-related' and 'other' shootings in Manchester, 1999-00 to 2003-04.



BOX 5: MMAGS

The objectives of the Manchester Multi-Agency Gangs Strategy (MMAGS) project are to:

- Present young people with opportunities in education
- Provide support to victims, witnesses, young people and families who are most vulnerable
- Rehabilitate those convicted of gun crime and gang-involved offending
- Present young people with opportunities in education and employment as positive alternatives to gun and gang crime
- Enforce the law through multi-agency targeted action, to secure convictions and deter people from gang and gun crime
- Reduce the impact of gun crime and gang-related activities on the community
- Create an environment for commercial investment in the rehabilitation process.

Although firearms offences in Manchester remain high, gang-related shootings in the city fell by a third in the three years since MMAGS came into operation.

The MMAGS team claim to have worked with around 200 'targets' and scored some notable successes in turning gang members' lives around. Some have gone on to higher education or employment away from Manchester.

The gang membership and composition analysis they carried out (Table 1) shows the relative youth of the overwhelming majority of the gang members, including the fact that the younger members appear to have the higher arrest rates. Only the Dodding-ton (Dd) gang had an entirely black membership, but the other gangs all had at least a three-quarters black membership.

Table 1: Manchester gang membership analysis ¹⁰⁰

GANG	GO	DD	LSC	PBC	TOTAL
Number of known members aged under 25	64	30	67	26	187
Proportion of members under 17	8%	3%	12%	19%	10%
Proportion of members 17 to 20	35%	13%	42%	46%	35%
Proportion of members 21 to 24	58%	83%	45%	35%	54%
Percentage of known gang members who are black	86%	100%	75%	73%	79%

When the researchers compared the use of guns by the gang members they found some striking similarities between the perpetrator and victim groups.

Table 2: Manchester gang activity characteristics¹⁰¹

CHARACTERISTIC	SHOOTER	VICTIM
Average age	20	21
Afro-Caribbean	76%	69%
White	17%	25%
Male	98%	100%
Average number of arrests	11	14
Average number of convictions	5.3	3.4

Summary

- On most criteria Manchester comes second in our violence 'league table': the trend for violent crime in the city of Manchester and firearm offences in the Greater Manchester police area is upwards, though more recently weapon-related crime began falling slightly after 2005 (see Figure 19).
- Weapon-related violence appears to be concentrated very unevenly in certain areas and in patterns similar to those reported for London.
- Gun violence and fatal shootings in particular are concentrated in specific small areas in south Manchester.¹⁰²
- Gangs are responsible for the majority (60%) of gun crime in the city.
- Black, mixed race and minority ethnic groups are disproportionately represented as *both* perpetrators and victims.
- The carrying of weapons is motivated by similar reasons to those cited in London – mostly fear and protection.
- Some research¹⁰³ established in Manchester suggests both 'instrumental' and 'expressive' motivations for gun carrying, relating to different criminal activity profiles.

CONTEXT

All violence from bullying to murder is abhorrent. Interpersonal violence, involving young men carrying knives and other weapons, increases the likelihood of either death or serious injury. The impact on victims of knife and gun crime is incalculable, not only in relation to the initial offence but also in relation to longer term effects. Scott Breslin was the victim of an unprovoked attack which left him paralysed from the neck down and confined to a wheelchair. He told the Commission in Glasgow that “my total independence has been taken away from me, I totally rely on everybody to do simple tasks like give me a drink or itch my nose or basically just get me up in the morning”.

Furthermore, the impact goes much wider, affecting the families of the victim, the whole community and the country. The Home Office estimates that homicide and wounding cost society around £13 billion annually, £4bn of which is borne by the NHS and Criminal Justice system.¹⁰⁴

Violence can infect the well-being and health of whole communities where the daily stress and fear experienced by individuals and families inhibits their lives and aspirations. As Lesley Pulman, a campaigner who tackled anti-social behaviour in her neighbourhood in Manchester told the Commission “People were too frightened to walk down the street “. A deprived urban male may suffer 60 years of incapacity as a result of injury and subsequent further reductions in quality of life and self esteem.¹⁰⁵ In the worst affected areas, interpersonal violence is almost accepted as legitimate, a community norm, something that cannot be changed.

Although national figures suggest that violent offences are stable or declining, despite the wealth of data available, it is not possible to get a wholly robust and accurate picture of the extent and trends in knife and gun crime for the reasons outlined in the first part of this report – including lack of a systematic methodology and underreporting. So, for example, it is difficult to judge whether the 17 teenage murders in London for first six months of 2008, compared with 27 in the whole of 2007 represents a peak on a continuing downward trend or an alarming upward escalation of violence.

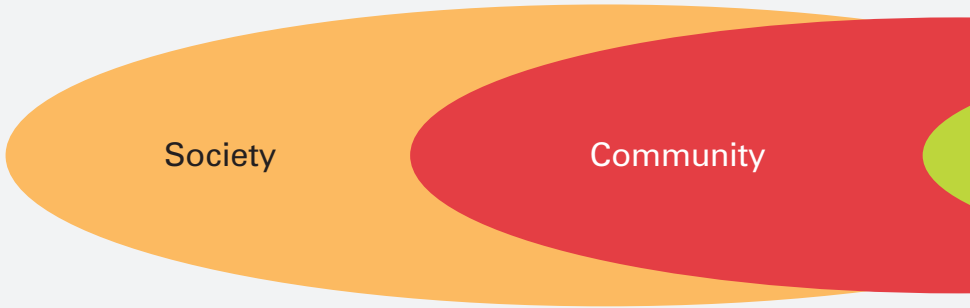
However, we heard reliable evidence from a range of different sources, that victims and perpetrators may be getting younger and that the number of children and young people carrying knives is increasing. As David Normington, Permanent Secretary at the Home Office told Parliament “It is a fact, I think, that more young people are carrying knives.”¹⁰⁶ Chief Constable Ken Jones, President of ACPO has also stated that “recently a worrying trend has emerged in relation to knife crime. We are seeing both an intensification in the severity of offending and a worrying change in the age profile of offenders and victims which has decreased from mid-late teens and early twenties down to early-to-mid teens.”¹⁰⁷

Both these trends are deeply troubling and if not addressed now will guarantee ever more tragedy in the future and an escalating social problem. Therefore we believe tackling gun and knife crime should be an urgent national priority for everyone from the Government downwards.

In travelling the country the Commission heard from people, and saw projects, that are making a difference. It is the view of the Commission that this issue requires a coordinated, committed and targeted approach involving a wide range of partners and tailored to the local demographic and socioeconomic situation on the ground.

Any attempt to address issues of violence must take into account key factors that influence an individual’s decision to become involved in gun or knife crime. The Commission identified a range of factors that may motivate violent behaviour or make someone more likely to fall victim to violence. These broadly fit into four spheres: individual; relationships; community and society as described by a number of practitioners including the VRU and Home Office¹⁰⁸ (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Risk factors for gun and knife crime.



- Lack of appropriate change programs
- Inequality - economic and social
- Lack of punishment for precursor offences/lack of visible swift justice
- Representations of violence in the media & entertainment
- Lack of victim awareness

- Cultural norms
- (acceptance of violence and weapons)
- Legitimisation of violence as a means to resolve conflicts
- Territorialism
- Lack of aspiration
- Dependency culture
- Gang culture
- Availability of weapons
- Poverty/social exclusion
- Lack of social cohesion
- No sense of belonging



Relationships

- Prevalence of gang culture
- Poor parenting skills
- Friends that engage in violence
- Violent families - siblings/parents
- Lack of significant adults/positive role model

Individual

- Lack of communication skills
- Poor behavioural control
- Impulsiveness
- Early aggressive behaviour
- Lack of skills to deal with conflict -including identifying threatening situations.
- Inability to team work
- Exclusion from services/schools
- Nutrition, diet, health
- Alcohol and drugs
- Lack of employment opportunities (because of lack of skills)
- Exposure to violence at an early age
- Mental ill health
- Lack of resilience

Individual

Individual risk factors are those traits and experiences that are personal and which impact on an individual's behaviour in a negative way. The young people most at risk from involvement in street violence lack key social skills such as team working, oral communication, problem solving and conflict resolution. These non-cognitive skills allow people to rationalise, negotiate and compromise without the need to resort to violence.¹⁰⁹ Many victims of knife or gun crime are young people targeted because they don't identify with the gang culture or show 'respect' and deference to toughs who set out to teach them a lesson. They could be well adjusted, focussed, hard-working students or young workers who are not disengaged and have nothing to do with conflict or peer group rivalries.

Experiencing these risk factors, or a combination of them, does not automatically lead to criminal behaviour. Many individuals who suffer these set-backs early in life go on to live happy, law abiding lives. However, evidence suggests that the greater the number of these risk factors in a person's life, the greater the chances of them becoming an offender.¹¹⁰

Abuse of alcohol is a particularly strong risk factor for both violent offending and victimisation. As Merseyside Chief Constable Hogan Howe told the Commission "the aggravated effect of alcohol and, I honestly think, the relative price drop, is an area I would target most, it's not a generic supply of alcohol, that's not in itself bad, it's the off licence ... the volume of off licence outlets has increased to a point where both [the police and] the companies who run them can't monitor them in the way they would like to ... I think they're called grog shops on some of the estates."

Latest figures show that offenders were thought to be under the influence of alcohol in more than half of incidents of violence between strangers (58%)¹¹¹ in England and Wales.

Drugs on the other hand are more of a factor in acquisitive crime. The 2006/07 BCS estimates that more than one third of 16–59 year olds have used one or more illicit drugs in their lifetime, 10 per cent in the last year and 6 per cent in the past month.¹¹² Some groups of young people are particularly vulnerable to drug use: looked-after children, homeless children, those who truant and are excluded from school and those who are serious and frequent offenders are particularly at risk. For example, 5% of non-vulnerable young people in a 2003 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) used drugs frequently in the 12 months prior to interview, while 24% of vulnerable young people were frequent users of drugs in the same time period.¹¹³ How-

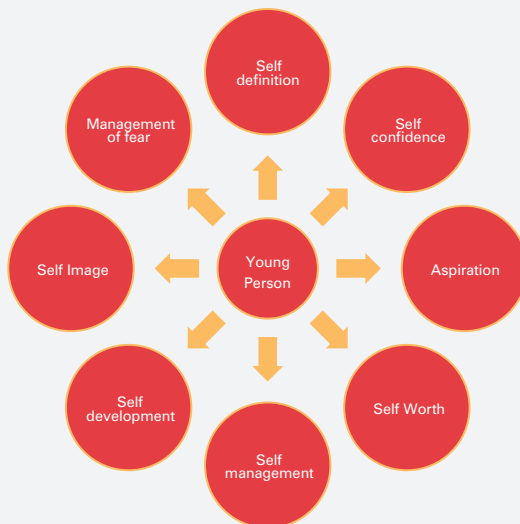
ever, in terms of violent crime, victims believed their attacker to be under the influence of drugs in only 17% of incidents.¹¹⁴

Exposure to violence at a young age may also increase the likelihood of violent behaviour later in life. Figures show that 40% of boys and young men and 25% of girls and young women in custody have experienced violence at home.¹¹⁵

Involvement in violent crime, either as a perpetrator or a victim is predominantly a problem of boys and young men. However, concern has been growing about the involvement of girls and young women in anti-social behaviour. According to newspaper reports, all offences committed by girls aged between 10 and 17 have risen by 25% over the last three years.¹¹⁶ As Geoff Thompson, former world karate champion and now executive chair of the Manchester-based Youth Charter, told the Commission in Manchester: “Mothers have lost their sons and don’t think it’s down to just the boys, the girls are now involved. And I was warned ten years ago what the girls would be up to. Now we really have got a problem.”

Preventative factors are those that help a young person reject violence and include: a sense of self worth, empathy, the ability to self manage, self discipline, self development, a positive self image, the ability to manage fear and a sense of positive aspiration (see Figure 22).¹¹⁷

Figure 22: Preventative Factors.



Relationships

The breakdown or instability of inter-personal relationships can be a contributory factor in a significant proportion of violent offenders. A recent study of 80 convicted and imprisoned illegal firearm offenders found that 59 reported a disrupted family life.¹¹⁸ Furthermore 63% of boys with convicted fathers go on to be convicted themselves.¹¹⁹

Poor or abusive parenting can prompt violent behaviour in children and young people which can continue into adulthood. Randomised trials in the US have shown that intensive health-led home visiting during pregnancy and the first two years of life led to a 47% reduction in child abuse and neglect and a 59% reduction in arrests at age 15.¹²⁰

Witnesses in the cities we visited pointed out that it is not necessarily family structure or type that is important – the vast majority of families do a good job bringing up their children, often in the most difficult and hard pressed circumstances. Whilst the kids involved with street weapons are predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds, they are not exclusively so.

A trusted adult and positive role model is important for all children. Karen McCluskey, Principal Intelligence Analyst with Strathclyde Police told the commission that good male role models were vital and that she doesn't necessarily "think it needs to be within the family. It can be a janitor, a teacher, it can be somebody in sports, it can be a whole range of people. We visited a violent offenders' programme with young men who had gone through a very in depth six month programme. One of the young men stood up to a prison officer and said 'you've been like a father to me,' He'd never had a father. He didn't know what it was like to have a good male role model."

Relationships with peers are also strongly linked to involvement in criminality and violence. Criminality and delinquency increase on joining a gang and reduce when individuals leave. Research shows that young people who belong to a delinquent youth group are significantly more likely to offend and gang membership increases the propensity to possess and use weapons, particularly firearms. Analysis of arrestee data shows that gang members are five times more likely than non-gang members to report owning a gun.¹²¹

The reasons why young people join or affiliate to gangs are many and varied, and whilst gangs are a serious problem in some areas, it is important not to 'over-define' groups of young people, as outlined in the first part of this report, as US style street gangs. Some are reluctant or coerced, or join out of fear and for the protection they believe gang membership will afford them.¹²² Others are attracted by the 'glamour' and status that can come with gang membership amongst their peers, though a sense of territoriality or a need to belong.

There are also the financial rewards associated with illegal activities such as selling drugs. Gang members may share the same values as mainstream society in terms of aspiring to the status and trappings of wealth such as fast cars and consumer goods. However, either because criminality is seen a short cut to the rewards and glamour without the hard work, or because they are denied the legitimate means of acquiring them through lack of skills and employment prospects or a previous criminal record, gang membership is seen as attractive by some.

Community

What is happening in a young person's community and locality can be an influencing factor on their likely involvement in violence. A strong sense of territoriality can both narrow a young person horizons and lead to an affiliation with local gangs, some of which are postcode based.

Jules Pipe, directly elected Mayor of Hackney told the Commission in London: "It's extraordinary the narrowness of vision that some of these young people have. People living in Hackney who have never been to the West End, let alone further afield. So actually a trip to Shoreditch for a night out actually is something really quite exotic. And that probably is a huge issue behind what is driving it actually is poverty of aspiration. That's actually far more a factor in this than alcohol or drugs.

Alex Richardson, from the Gladiator programme in Glasgow echoed the same theme: "We took [kids] into the town. They'd never seen the town centre. They were 14. They were only living three or four miles away. But they were too terrified to go on a bus themselves in case they're attacked by rivals."

Over the last two decades there has been a redistribution of violence into the country's poorest areas.¹²³ Consequently, the most common reason, given by the young people involved, for carrying a weapon is for self protection reflecting the lack of safety and security they feel in their own neighbourhoods.

Social deprivation and poverty are consistent factors. Those areas of the country with the highest incidence of gun and knife crime are amongst the most socially excluded and deprived communities. Higher unemployment and lack of job prospects feeds a poverty of aspiration and a hopelessness that increases the attraction of gangs and criminality. The people who are most disadvantaged in our society are more than twice as likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence as the most wealthy.¹²⁴

Society

The nature of our society, and the culture in which we operate, can impact upon an individual's exposure and propensity to violence. There are a number of structural, social, economic and cultural factors influencing levels of gun and knife crime, where it occurs and who it involves, which must be meaningfully addressed.

Issues of inequality are particularly important: factors such as gender, race or social exclusion can increase vulnerability to and involvement in, violence either as a perpetrator or a victim.

In some of the cities the Commission visited, notably parts of London, Birmingham and Manchester, race and ethnicity were prominent factors in the profile of perpetrators, victims and gang members. However, in Liverpool and Glasgow this was not the case. Where black and minority ethnic communities are part of affected neighbourhoods, responses will need explicitly to involve and engage these communities. Furthermore additional issues, such as discrimination and inter-community tensions may also need to be addressed.

According to a report by the Home Affairs Select Committee dealing with race and crime across the country as a whole:¹²⁵

‘Statistics indicate that black people are no more likely than white people to fall victim to crime... [but] evidence does point strongly to a much greater likelihood of young black people falling victim to violent and weapon-enabled crime, including homicide. Overall, black people are 5.5 times more likely than white people to be a victim of homicide... but the greatest disproportionality is at younger ages, where black males account for nearly two thirds of all murders of 10 to 17 year olds.’¹²⁶

Finally, the broader cultural context in which young people live – the music they listen to, the films they watch, the video games and sports they play – are important in articulating values, defining what is ‘cool’ and fashionable and legitimising social norms. Nevertheless, the impact that these cultural factors have on encouraging violence, desensitizing empathy and legitimising anti-social behaviour is contested. Among the questions communities feel the need to address is why these factors impact with such dire consequences on some young people while others from the same background and subject to these same cultural influences have different aspirations and choose a lifestyle that does not reinforce their social exclusion. During the Commission’s investigation *Grand Theft Auto IV*, a violent video game that glorifies anti-social behaviour, was released causing controversy in the national media and was criticised by a number of witnesses to the Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Violence is not inevitable and is therefore preventable. Positive alliances, effective information sharing and commitment to innovative prevention and intervention polices will reduce violence.¹²⁷

There are no quick fixes to solve the problems of gun and knife violence in Britain. No single policy that would reverse the trend of young people carrying weapons. An effective response will need action from a wide range of organisations; from central government, the police, local authorities, schools, communities and individuals.

Just as the risk factors are numerous, complex and interrelated, so too are the solutions. Success will involve a thousand small victories that will incrementally deliver to our communities improved confidence, an enhanced quality of life, better health and greater aspirations.¹²⁸ Underpinning this will be a greater hope and belief in these communities about what society has to offer them.

Reducing gun and knife crime is, and should be, an urgent priority for the UK government, but for decades the Government's immediate response to public concern about rising violence has focussed around the criminal justice system. While there have been welcome reductions in many areas of criminality, violence, and gun and knife violence in particular, have remained persistent.

The Commission believes that enforcement, through intelligence-led practices, including those that target the suppliers of guns and the manipulation of young people involved with the drugs trade, and addressing the behaviour of those who perpetrate violence in our communities is crucial to reducing violent crime in the short term, whilst recognising that prevention measures are central to delivering a longer term reduction.

The evidence from some witnesses suggested a sharp distinction between prevention and enforcement. The Commission, however, does not share this view; enforcement has a crucial preventative role in itself that needs to be acknowledged. The Commission recognise the importance of all ways of dealing with weaponised crime and that there is more to do through *all* means of tackling the problem - diversion, support and sanction.

Enforcement

Responsibility for tackling street weapons straddles a number of UK government departments: the Home Office, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Ministry of Justice and Department for Communities and Local Government. Other ministries also have a role to play including the Cabinet Office, Department of Health and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Cabinet Members from across the Government have been drawn together into a Ministerial Action Group to drive forward the action plan for tackling violence: 'Saving Lives, Reducing Harm, Protecting the Public'¹²⁹ and later this year the Government will publish a new Youth Crime Action Plan.

In Scotland responsibility lies with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice supported by a Violence Reduction Team which aims to deliver the Executive's priorities in partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and to engage with other Scottish government directorates with particular emphasis on Health, Education and Transport.

In Wales, the Home Office, in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government, is responsible for the delivery of the National Crime Reduction Strategy with the 22 Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) in Wales, one in each local authority area. Three local CSPs in South Wales (Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Swansea) are taking particular steps to crack down on alcohol-related violence and disorder, underage drinking and domestic violence.

There needs to be greater co-ordination at a UK level and clearer leadership. The current structures in central government have diffused responsibility and hampered attempts to attain a clear picture of what is happening at a local level. The Government seems unable to deliver strategic and targeted support through the non-statutory sector to those areas we know are most blighted by weaponised violence.

The Commission were impressed by the work, analysis and leadership of the VRU (see Box 6). Their public health approach to violence in Scotland is innovative, multi-disciplinary and facilitates a broad holistic approach to the problem.

BOX 6: THE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was established by Strathclyde Police in 2005 to work closely together with partner agencies in education, health and social work. The aim of the unit, which has since 2006 become Scotland-wide in its remit, is to target all forms of violent behaviour.

The VRU approaches violence in terms of public health. Today, Scotland is the only country in the world which has adopted such an approach and the VRU are the only police members of the World Health Organization's Violence Prevention Alliance.

To achieve long-term violence reduction the VRU believes it is necessary to address societal and attitudinal aspects, and that closer links with health, education and parenting are needed to change behaviour.

The VRU targets 'violence in all its forms – from violence on the streets and domestic abuse to bullying in schools and the workplace'. A key part of its work is developing early years' initiatives that support parents and those involved in teaching young children.

The following are examples of initiatives undertaken by the VRU.

- In order to increase reporting of violent incidents, the VRU has installed freephones in the A&E departments of Glasgow hospitals. They have also set up surveillance schemes, whereby when a patient attends A&E with a violence-related injury hospital staff fill in an electronic form giving details of when and where the incident occurred. Although this is done as part of the patient registration process, no personal details are included in the data the unit receive, thus protecting patient confidentiality – 'it is purely the when and where of the incident, thus enabling us to build a stronger profile of violence and therefore use resources to respond more effectively'. The scheme is currently (2008) being piloted in Glasgow Royal Infirmary A&E and is to be subsequently trialed across an entire health board. If successful, it will be rolled out across Scotland.
- Given that 25% of those treated for a serious facial injury by Glasgow Dental Hospital return for treatment for a second injury within a year, the VRU has also set up a project in two maxillofacial units, whereby nurses offer counselling to patients to help them understand how they got the injury in the first place and to help prevent them coming back.
- To assist parents to limit the threat of violence in their children's lives the VRU sent leaflets to every Primary One pupil in Scotland (around 400,000) as well as to doctors'

Gathering reliable, robust and trusted data on the situation is essential to both developing the correct strategic and tactical responses and to giving the public confidence when things improve. As the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police said in a recent lecture: "In London, there is almost no public faith in the crime figures".¹³⁰

New regulations came into force last year making data sharing mandatory amongst various agencies in order to reduce crime and disorder, including the police, Primary Care Trusts and local authorities. As demonstrated in our review of the evidence in part one of this report, police recorded crime is the only set of data that is routinely available. The National Audit Office also found that although some other data sets were increasingly being shared, notably information on violence-related wounding recorded in Accident and Emergency departments; this was not done on a routine or universal basis. Furthermore, Primary Care trusts and schools representatives in local authorities were perceived to be the most difficult to engage in crime prevention work.¹³¹

The police are central to dealing with and preventing gun and knife crime. In all the cities we visited the local forces were at the forefront of confronting street weapons, often working in partnership with other agencies (see Box 1 and Box 2). By using intelligence led targeting of 'impact players', focussing on weapon crime 'hotspots', and preventing criminal gangs from operating, the police can help remove the glamour and financial rewards of criminality.

However, the fundamental role of the police is enforcement, maintaining law and order and preventing crime. Diversion of offenders and potential offenders and social intervention should properly remain the role of other agencies, often in cooperation with police. These other agencies and groups require sufficient funding to enable them to carry out their work effectively so that the police are not required to provide these services where they are absent.

As CS John Carnochan, Head of Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit told the Commission: "It's about understanding what we are meant to do. Our new chief constable has a great expression he said 'I don't mind police officers organising football matches for young people. I don't mind them being there to make sure everything goes ok, but I don't want them refereeing them and I don't want them playing because that's not your job to be doing that. That's somebody else's job to be doing that'. And we've ended up doing it because well we're there and we see it needs to be done and we've just got to do it and that's happened lots of times."

Furthermore the Home Office advises that "although the police should be a major participant in any dedicated multi-agency team, placing them within a police setting, or having a visible police lead to the project, may make it difficult to engage young people on the fringes of criminality".¹³²

It is also the job of central government to ensure that the necessary laws exist on a national level to enable the police, local authorities and other agencies to meet the challenge presented by gun and knife crime. The Commission were not presented with evidence of the need for any new police powers or criminal law (except in relation to witnesses as outlined below). The necessary framework is already in place. The proper use of intelligence led 'stop and search' powers and the use of scanning arches and wands in trouble spots and transport hubs can greatly increase public confidence and perceptions of safety. During two weeks in May this year alone the Metropolitan Police seized 200 knives using such tactics and the British Transport Police say scanners have helped to half the number of robberies on the underground and at railway stations.¹³³

Some authorities, notably Birmingham City Council (see Box 3) have been making innovative use of the civil law to both protect communities from violence and control the most dangerous perpetrators. The legal basis of these initiatives has been brought into question and so the government should legislate to clarify and enable their continued use.

When it comes to sentencing there have been several measures to increase the severity of punishments for possession and use of weapons. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 established mandatory, five-year minimum sentences for the illegal possession of a prohibited firearm. Prior to the Act, those convicted of carrying an illegal firearm were given an average custodial sentence of eighteen months.¹³⁴ Home Office figures for 2005 show that after the Act 40% of people convicted received the five year minimum jail term.¹³⁵

The maximum sentence for carrying a blade was recently doubled from two to four years and the on June 5th the Prime Minister announced an end to cautions for 16 and 17 year olds caught in possession of a knife. The latest Ministry of Justice figures available, which cover 2006, show that then 17% of the 6323 people convicted of carrying a blade were jailed, and of those 26 received more than a 12 month sentence.¹³⁶

Through these measures the Government, supported by the police, hope to send a clear signal about the unacceptability of street weapons: people carrying a knife are now three times more likely to go to prison as ten years ago (up from 6% in 1996 to 17% in 2006) and the average sentence has increased by a third over the same period.¹³⁷

However, despite this the public think sentencing is still too lenient.¹³⁸ The lack of information available on the workings of the criminal justice system contributes to this perception gap and leads to public pressure for restricting judicial discretion and flexibility in sentencing.

The final part of the enforcement jigsaw is witnesses. Without the support of the community and the willingness of witnesses to come forward it is much more difficult for the police to enforce the law and for courts to convict the guilty. However, particularly in cases involving gangs and weapons, potential witnesses can often be intimidated by the prospect of giving evidence. This can be because of the fear of being labelled a 'grass' or the perceived threat of actual harassment or violence.

Just before the commission concluded its deliberations the Law Lords ruled that a man convicted in 2004 of two murders had not received a fair trial because it was based on evidence from anonymous witnesses.

As a result Police have warned that up to 40 trials may be affected by the this ruling. The Justice Secretary and the Metropolitan Police have said they are "very concerned" by the Law Lords' ruling and its potential impact on gang crime cases, in which the use of anonymous witnesses has resulted in high-profile convictions. As a result the Justice Secretary is planning to rush emergency legislation on this issue before Parliament very shortly.

Currently the law allows for ‘special measures’ for child and adult ‘vulnerable’ witnesses. These measures have been used in some cases involving “murder, blackmail, violent disorder and terrorism”.¹³⁹ The system of criminal procedure in Scotland is distinct from that in England and Wales. It currently allows for measures to be taken to protect the identity of witnesses, including the use of pseudonyms, in specific cases.

The Commission heard testimony that witness intimidation and fear of reprisals were very real concerns in cases involving guns, knives, gangs and drugs. The Commission believes that this area of law needs urgent clarification and the government should bring forward proposals to allow the use of proportionate special measures in limited circumstances, that allow the use of anonymity for victims and witnesses who are in fear of intimidation or reprisal in cases of gang, gun and knife crime. Such measures, however, must be consistent with the fundamental right to a fair trial.

In addition, this ruling has highlighted the need for adequate witness protection and support, not just in the courtroom itself, but also leading up to, and following on from an appearance at court. A recent Cabinet Office review, ‘Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime’,¹⁴⁰ included measures to support witnesses such as funding projects that support victims and witnesses, providing separate seating for victims families attending court and the appointment of a dedicated commissioner.

1. The UK Government should establish a Violence Reduction Unit as an urgent priority. It should be based in the Home Office and modelled on the Scottish VRU and build on the success of TGAP. The VRU should co-ordinate across government departments to implement violence reduction strategies.
2. The new national Violence Reduction Unit should bring together professionals and experts from relevant disciplines including the police, education, child protection, probation, social and youth services, youth justice, health and local government.
3. The new VRU should adopt the public health model as pioneered by its Scottish counterpart as this delivers an holistic and interdisciplinary approach to the problem.

4. The Commission supports calls for the Statistics Authority or other independent body to be given full responsibility for producing crime statistics and trends as part of restoring public trust in crime figures.¹⁴¹
5. All police forces should collect clear and unambiguous data on knife crimes in their areas and the Home Office should follow through on its commitment to extend the British Crime Survey to under 16s to give a more accurate picture of the experiences of one of the sections of the population most victimised by gun and knife crime.
6. In order to get a full picture of gun and knife crime police data on its own is not sufficient. Primary Care Trusts and local authorities now have a statutory obligation to share anonymised data, but this is still not happening with the consistency needed. Furthermore, for the raw data to become useful intelligence it needs to be analysed. It should be the job of the new national VRU to ensure all relevant data, particularly from Accident and Emergency departments and about school exclusions, is collected and to provide the necessary research and intelligence expertise to make use of it.
7. All data related to violent crime should be more readily available and accessible to the public. This should include information on sentencing for gun and knife crimes to help build public confidence in both the police and criminal justice system.
8. The Government should bring forward legislation to clarify and enable the use of civil injunctions and other civil orders to prevent continued violent offending, to assist in the management of offenders involved with gangs, knives and guns so as to protect communities from the perpetrators of weaponised street violence.
9. The Government should urgently bring forward measures, which are consistent with the fundamental right to a fair trial, to allow eligibility for special measures around anonymity for victims and witnesses who are in fear of intimidation or reprisal in cases of gang, gun and knife crime.¹⁴²

10. Victims and Witness are a vital part of the criminal justice system. The Government should implement its 2004 commitment to appoint a Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses to act as a champion across government.
11. Furthermore, the recent Law Lords' ruling on the use of special measures highlights the need to devote more resources for witness protection and support.
12. The Commission supports proposals in the Byron Review¹⁴³ to reform the classification system for video and computer games and work with the games industry, retailers, advertisers, console manufacturers and online gaming providers to raise awareness of the content of games and enable better enforcement.

Prevention

Education, in all its forms, must be central to any long-term strategy to tackle street weapons.

Evidence presented to the commission suggests that many of the young people most at risk from involvement in street violence lack key social skills such as team working, oral communication, problem solving and conflict resolution. These non-cognitive skills allow people to rationalise, negotiate and compromise without the need to resort to violence.¹⁴⁴ The Commission believes that one of the most successful way of tackling gun and knife violence is by equipping individuals with the social skills required to interact with society without resorting to or accepting violence.

Education as its most effective can change attitudes and transform lives. Born to be Great, a charter on promoting the achievement of black Caribbean boys states that “Education is a fundamental human right. It enables young people to make sense of society and to contribute to it. As a special right, education promotes other rights and responsibilities. It is crucial therefore to aspire to equality of access and entitlement to education for all young people.”¹⁴⁵

Therefore schools need to address the issues around violence and dispute resolution, tailored to the needs of their local community, through the curriculum. This could include lessons about the realities of gun and knife violence, equipping children with the skills to avoid conflict and teaching them about the importance of treating each other with respect. Peer-to-peer mentoring can contribute to building self confidence amongst children and making such lessons effective.

The Safer Schools Partnership in England and Wales and the VRU in Scotland encourage schools and the police to work closely together, including placing dedicated police officers within schools themselves. The presence of an officer on campus can offer important reassurance to some pupils about going to school, which makes a positive contribution to all students achieving their full educational potential. Experience north and south of the border shows that the police value the opportunity to build relationships based on real trust and to improve intelligence available to them about the surrounding area – for example who’s selling drugs or gang fighting. The schools feel the officers bring real benefits to the behaviour of young people and to the general atmosphere in corridors and classrooms.¹⁴⁶

BOX 7: RIGHT ON TRACK

Right on Track is a partnership between Joint Openshaw Group (JOG), Commitment in Communities (CiC) - both affiliated to the Methodist Church - and Karting 2000 (K2000).

The aim of the project is to provide a series of accredited training courses in motor maintenance leading to formal qualifications, and a wide variety of semi-structured courses. Right on Track is a recognised Pupil Referral Unit and the students, aged between 12 and 18, have all been excluded from school. Around ninety per cent of them will have been involved in crime, and most will have had direct or indirect involvement in gangs.

It is based at a corporate go-kart track, revenues from which subsidise the project - and the tactic, as Founder Jim Rush put it to the Commission, is to “get them there with the karting, then sneak up on them with the education.” In the mornings, the students take conventional academic lessons, four GCSEs in core subjects, in class sizes of around 12-15. The lessons are taken by full-time teachers seconded from other schools. But in the afternoons, the students do vocational work on the kart track – towards GNVQ equivalent qualifications in motor mechanics and maintenance, which are recognised by the Open College of Manchester. The students refurbish public service vehicles such as ambulances which are then either reassigned to charities in this country or exported to the third world.

Once a week, the students get to have fun driving the karts on the track – but this is a treat which is withdrawn for poor conduct.

Jim funded Right On Track to put something back into the community after a successful business career. He told the Commission that getting young people away from gangs and violence “is not rocket science...but more money is wasted talking about it than it would cost to cure it”. What works is giving something meaningful to do, and learn about, to young people for whom school isn’t suitable - and providing it consistently – day in, day out, with the same staff, and the same boundaries and rules.

Right On Track also teaches its students about the downside of gangs and guns. They introduce them to employment through marshalling jobs at the kart track, and signpost them towards careers – the army being an example.

Jim Rush said success is best measured through attendance. Getting them out of bed and in the building is the main achievement – and attendance at Right On Track is 94%.

It is currently estimated that only 450 of the 3,600 secondary schools in England and Wales are a safer school partnership. Despite their perceived success, the NAO recently criticised the Home Office for not promoting Safer School Partnerships effectively.¹⁴⁷ They found that police officers felt that there was a strong disincentive for head teachers to admit having a problem with bullying or violence.

The Commission debated the practice of having police officers in schools as a deterrent to would be offenders and in order to make pupils feel safe. Whilst many believed this would be overwhelmingly positive, questions were raised, some about the law enforcement functions of the police in an environment where parents commit their children into the care of schools and expect their unacceptable behaviours to be dealt with through an effective partnership between school and home, rather than through direct police involvement except in cases of violent criminal activity.

Young people who are excluded from mainstream education are particularly at risk of involvement with gangs and weapons and therefore need adequate and appropriate provision. More than 2,200 children in England are excluded every single school day. Home tutoring delivers neither an adequate curriculum nor the structured learning environment which excluded children need.

Innovative models of training that can deliver skills based programmes are necessary for those children who are not suited to academic approaches. The Commission were particularly impressed with some of the social enterprises they heard from, for example the Right on Track project in Manchester (see Box 7). The social enterprise model combines market efficiency with social justice objectives and can give young people the experience and self discipline of a genuine working environment.

However, education is not something for teachers and schools alone – everyone has a part to play, including parents, siblings, peers, significant adults and role models in public life.¹⁴⁸ The education process should not end with schools or colleges, and should encompass additional training post-school as well as forms of social and community education which are particularly beneficial in teaching positive shared values. We need to develop with young people an understanding of values, the values that make us social beings and make us fit for living in civil society.¹⁴⁹

Good parenting is vital in influencing children's life chances, acting as a protection against social exclusion and poor educational attainment, as well as preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. Parents are not a homogenous group and while some parents manage the upbringing of their children with the confidence and competence that enables them to meet whatever challenges come their way, others would benefit from support, especially with teenagers presenting challenging behaviour. The Commission heard from witnesses who suggested that more emphasis should be placed on peer support for parents and on extended parenting, i.e. encouraging a

network of support, from relatives and others, including the parents of children's friends, rather than focusing solely on the nuclear family unit.

The Government's Children's Plan published in 2007 announced new funding for parenting programmes, including £34 million for local authorities to employ parenting experts and, for the most challenging families, £13 million for a Family Pathfinders project. Family intervention projects are now operating in 50 areas, with key workers balancing support and enforcement action to ensure that families engage.

The non-statutory sector has been a pioneer in this area. NCH, The Children's Charity, for example, has developed intensive family support designed to help families break free from patterns of nuisance behaviour and eviction. NCH's Dundee Families Project is based on an outreach service, a residential facility and aftercare provision. It benefits from the independent nature of the charity managing the project and providing the services and has been praised by the Government as 'the most comprehensive project tackling rehabilitation'.¹⁵⁰ Lydia Sorensen a Senior project worker with NCH told the Commission in London: "It's about true commitment and that's about going back time and time and time and time again and showing your face and saying you're not going anywhere. I think families are so used to professionals coming, knocking on the door, the families give some abuse, the professional walks away and says, "I can't work with that family anymore." You know and I think the family test Project Workers like myself. So what we do is we're consistent. So we go back. And we may take the verbal but we'll come back and we'll explain our position. The thing with the family project is that we provide on a voluntary basis ... and we explain to them in very simple terms that, "We're here to support you. However, if you don't want that support then that's your choice. But the consequence for you not taking this support and the way that you're going, it's going to lead you in a place that you may not want to be for your children and for yourself."

However, the process by which parents get help remains too dependent on parents asking for help in the right place at the right time, or on young people committing several acts of anti-social behaviour.¹⁵¹ Information about parenting support needs to be made more widely available and to include provision for expecting and potential parents at the earliest opportunity.

Any strategy to combat the dangers of knife and gun crime must be firmly rooted in the locality it is targeting. The socio-economic and demographic character of the community suffering from such violence will dictate the specific interventions that

BOX 8: THE BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD FOUNDATION

The From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation in the London Borough of Southwark was founded in 1996 by Decima Francis and Uanu Seshmi, following concern within the community about the number of young black boys being excluded from school and becoming involved with gangs, drugs and violence. Behind their tough street image, disaffected boys like these suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. All too often they do not have positive role models or stable adults in their lives to guide them through the transition from boyhood to manhood.

"They don't want to have role models who are footballers, they want role models who they know personally... people who are close at home who they can emulate properly." Decima Francis

Excluded from school, free falling through the criminal justice system, they are on course for short and violent lives. The FBMF believes that boys in trouble deserve a chance to turn their lives around before it becomes too late. It helps teachers deal with disruptive pupils to prevent exclusions. But for those who are excluded from school, it offers an alternative to dropping out of the system and hanging out on the streets. Boys are referred to the FBMF by local education authorities, special needs departments, youth-offending teams and social services departments. The FBMF helps them to get back on track through its day-programme of education and self-development.

Since it began in 1996, FBMF has helped over 11,000 young people: some have returned to school or college, many have gained academic qualifications, all have re-assessed their attitudes, behaviour and direction in life.

"It is no use keep telling a young person that they are bad and they have low self-esteem, we must instead empower them to change their negative behaviour from within, by teaching them how to deal with adversity and the challenges of life." Uanu Seshmi

The FBMF accepts boys onto its day-programme, aged 11-19, from all cultural backgrounds who have been excluded from school. A typical day starts at 8am when the boys go for a jog round the local park or practice breathing techniques with their youth workers. The boys have breakfast together and clear up before starting their lessons. They receive a minimum of four hours teaching each day, working towards GCSEs or A levels in core curriculum subjects.

The FBMF also runs evening sessions, summer programmes and residential courses offering life-skills and work placements for young people, male and female, from schools in and around Southwark, Lewisham and Lambeth. The summer programme offers work experience to school leavers to give them a taste of working in the fields of media and the performing arts. The ten-day course takes place after they have completed their final exams.

As well as helping the boys to gain academic qualifications, the FBMF also places great emphasis on well being and self-healing. It does this through the power of self-knowledge, relationships and community participation. FBMF believe that acquiring the skills of well being, the power to forgive; and knowing love through experiential life challenges, prepares young people with the functional skills to deal with life and its challenges.

will be most effective. Where initiatives have been successful they have involved a wide range of local partners, with a clear analysis and understanding of their local situation and co-ordinated plan of action, for example MMAGS (see Box 5).

The problems are not the same everywhere. Our analysis in part one shows how the situation varies across the country. In Glasgow, knives, territorial gangs and alcohol are prominent concerns, in Manchester it was guns and drug money. Violence needs to be understood in context and local solutions have to be worked out on the ground. A top-down one size fits all solution is unlikely to be effective. The connections between the lack of opportunities, social exclusion, disadvantage and, in three of the five cities the Commission visited, a marked racialisation of inequality as well as illegal drug based economies are significant and need to be addressed.

The voluntary and third sectors are best placed to make appropriate interventions with young people at risk and to provide them with sustained support. These interventions are most effective when voluntary groups are rooted in the communities they serve and committed to the long term. There are many ways to seek to engage marginalised young people, for example through sports, arts, music and skills training, and all can be used to promote the preventative factors outlined above, including self discipline, self management and self respect. Example of projects which impressed the Commission include the Boyhood to Manhood Foundation in London (see Box 8), the United Estates of Wythenshawe in Manchester, the Glacier project in Liverpool

By their very nature such groups are highly local, small scale and precariously funded. In visiting the various cities the Commission was struck not only by some excellent projects, but also the variability in the quantity and range of activities available. There is a particular lack of successful capacity building programmes to empower tenants and community groups. There seems to be a failure to identify and provide preventative activities – and youth services in particular – on a strategic, evidence led and cost effective basis.

The receipt of public funds can place burdens on the third sector for accountability, measurability and insecurity of funding. These bureaucratic demands can be onerous. The proposed new Violence Reduction Unit should have a role in helping small community based organisations in violent crime hotspots with securing funding, financial management and other administrative process. In addition it should be concerned with spotting opportunities for up-scaling and transferability of

BOX 9: COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR MERSEYSIDE

Community Foundation for Merseyside (CFM) connects donors to community projects. Since 1998 the Foundation, which is supported by the Desmond Tutu Foundation, has been responsible for distributing over £30 million of small grants across Merseyside and Lancashire, making awards to over 8,000 voluntary and community projects on behalf of over 50 organisations.

In November last year, the CFM launched the Merseyside Young Transformers (MYT) programme, specifically targeted at funding community groups' diversionary activities for young people at risk of involvement in gun, knife and gang crime. Its focus has been on Knowsley and North Liverpool, in response to the shooting of Rhys Jones and the perception of a growing armed gang problem – and also on neighbourhoods of particular social or economic deprivation.

The foundation is conscious of a link between child poverty and the development of gang culture. The creation of MYT followed a two-year pilot in partnership with Merseyside police: a study of police data afterwards indicated a significant fall in the number of anti-social incidents in the parks of neighbourhoods where diversionary projects had been funded. One park had the lowest number of incidents for fifteen years.

The strategy behind Merseyside Young Transformers has been to bring together a partnership of interested parties – and has involved Merseyside police, Knowsley and Liverpool councils, the Liverpool Echo, charitable donors, and community groups, working together methodically and coherently to achieve progress. The partners supply funding, local knowledge, and expertise.

MYT aims to divert at-risk youths before they get involved in anti-social behaviour and crime. The local community groups it funds engage youths, and parents in some cases, in activities such as first-aid courses, sailing and diving, motorcycle mechanics, healthy-eating, angling, arts, music, sport and website design. It's hoped that these activities will promote self-confidence and esteem, a sense of belonging to a team, and dilute the appeal of joining a gang. MYT provides grants of £500-£2,000, and continuing support while the projects are being executed.

In a sense, the short term aims are simple diversionary activities to give at risk youths something more worthwhile to do, especially if they come from a background of poverty or deprivation. The longer term aims for the future are tackling the issues which cause them to be at risk – and will take the form of training courses and continuing to build their self-esteem.

successful projects. The Community Foundation for Merseyside which gave evidence to the Commission (see Box 9) is an example of what can be achieved with targeted funding and support.

Those working within the youth service told the Commission that they were underfunded and therefore felt unable to deliver their particular contribution. Witnesses to the Commission, including young people themselves, wanted youth facilities appropriate for the 21st century. This has been recognised by the DCSF's "myplace" programme. Announced in April this year it will invest £190 million over the next three years, through the Big Lottery Fund into "ambitious projects driven by the active participation of young people."¹⁵²

The Government is already committed to investing £800 million over the next three years in positive activities and places to go for young people through its "Aiming high for Young people" strategy and have placed a new statutory duty upon local authorities to secure access for young people in their area to sufficient positive leisure-time activities. Furthermore, the Youth Taskforce in DCSF will be investing an £22.5 million extra in the 50 most deprived areas to improve facilities.

In order to ensure that this money is spent in a 'strategic, evidence-led and cost effective' way the proposed new Violence Reduction Unit should start with an audit of the provision of preventative activities in gun and knife crime hotspots. Resources can then be allocated where they are most needed and to provide the activities that are most lacking.

Finally, in evidence to the Commission, alcohol cropped up again and again as an aggravating factor, with underage drinking making children more likely to be perpetrators or victims of gun and knife crime. Areas of particular concern were: the city centre locations which are the centre of the night time economy and which have large numbers of young people at the weekends often consuming large amounts of alcohol; and the proliferation of off-licences which don't have security staff and are often the places where underage drinkers get their alcohol. The Licensing Act of 2003, as well as bringing in flexible licensing hours, also gave local authorities the power to place conditions on licensed establishments in order to reduce crime and disorder. The National Audit Office found in 2008 that the extent to which these powers were being used across the country was variable and that these powers could be used much more effectively to reduce crime and disorder.¹⁵³

13. The new Violence Reduction Unit should conduct an audit of prevention provision in national hotspots for gun and knife crime with a view to identifying gaps in provision and strategically allocating resources to fill them.
14. The VRU should have a role with community groups engaged in prevention and diversion activities as well as community empowerment organisations. The VRU should help with reducing the administrative burdens on voluntary groups, transferring best practice and up-scaling successful projects in gun and knife crime hotspots.
15. Funding for voluntary groups and partnerships should be on a three year cycle to give greater flexibility and security and reduce the cost of fundraising.
16. This VRU should recognise that social enterprises provide a particularly successful model for positively engaging with young people and providing meaningful pathways into the world of work. Support and information should be provided for community organisations that wish to follow this route.
17. Lesson plans and materials should be made available for all schools, and organisations working with young people, that can be tailored locally, to tackle issues around violence.
18. Information on support for families and with parenting should be made widely available and a fundamental part of pre and perinatal services – and not just for those families most at risk.
19. The value of the Youth Service needs to be better recognised within local authorities and the provision of meaningful activities and relationships for young people prioritised, at the right times (evenings and weekends) and in the areas of greatest need.
20. More effective use should be made of the Licensing Act to place tight conditions on premises and consideration should be given to the restricting the optimum number of off licences in any one area. Greater enforcement of the law on underage drinking is needed with the use of test purchasing and stiff penalties on guilty licensees.

Rehabilitation

When diversion has been unsuccessful and prevention has failed young people who are actively involved with gangs, guns and knives will need specific and targeted intervention.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced a number of reforms to the youth justice system, including the introduction of a network of Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales to work with young offenders. These teams receive part of their funding from the Youth Justice Board, with the majority of their resources coming through statutory partnerships including the social services and education departments of local authorities, the police, health and the probation service.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales was established in 1998 as a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Home Office. Its principal aim is the prevention of offending and re-offending.

Rehabilitation is a function of prisons, but all the evidence suggests that their existing efforts are insufficient and often fail to ensure that offenders turn away from crime after their release. There are many causes for this including prison overcrowding and trainees being regularly moved from jail to jail, which disrupts rehabilitation work and educational programmes and weakens the links between offenders, probation staff, social workers and others who are meant to help them reintegrate into society upon their release.¹⁵⁴

According to research by the YJB, on a given day, only between 35% and 45% of young people in the youth justice system are receiving full-time education, training or employment and the level of engagement may in fact be even lower than that.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the Social Exclusion Unit found that “as few as six percent of prisoners have an education or training place to go to on release” and “without very clear and well supported routes into learning, any progress made in prison will end on release”.¹⁵⁶

Inconsistent links between YOTs, broader youth support services, training providers and local education authorities were also identified by the YJB as a barrier. In England, more than half of YOTs had no protocol agreed with their local learning and skills councils.¹⁵⁷

Therefore, education and training should be integral to the resettlement of offenders and opportunities for education and training should be made available to all prisoners.

Another problem identified by the YJB was the lack of support and specialist help for young people with identified special educational needs and lack of willingness on the part of educationalists to tackle the causes of behavioural problems. So, in addition to education, use should be made of violence awareness, drug intervention and emotional development programmes to help offenders deal with the reasons for their violent behaviour.

As with other public services, the users represent an indispensable source of first hand information and engagement with them can deliver both better outcomes and greater efficiency. "Time to Learn" by the Prison Reform Trust, for example, explored the prisoners' experience of their education in order to identify and remove barriers to their rehabilitation.

Recent proposals from a DCSF expert panel to set up a network of "academies" for young offenders deserves serious consideration. The academies would be based on the example of the network of 131 "foyers" which provide accommodation and support for homeless young people around the UK.¹⁵⁸

Chair of the panel, Lord Ramsbotham, called for government support to set up a pilot scheme in east London. The new academies could provide continuity for offenders aged 10 to 18 before, during and after periods in custody. A single centre could provide secure accommodation for offenders with custodial sentences, housing for homeless offenders, education, health and social care facilities and supervision for young people on community sentences and anti-social behaviour orders.

Pioneering methods, such as restorative justice are generally used outside, but can also be used inside, prisons to make offenders confront the consequences of their crime. Sometimes involving face-to-face meetings between offenders and their victims, restorative justice takes many different forms, but all systems have some aspects in common. In criminal cases, victims have an opportunity to express the full impact of the crime upon their lives, to receive answers to any lingering questions about the incident, and to participate in holding the offender accountable for his or her actions. Offenders can tell their story of why the crime occurred and how it has affected their lives. They are given an opportunity to make-good - to the degree possible - through some form of compensation and/or reparation to the victim. It is important that such processes are victim led, as not all victims will want to continue an association with the offender.

Interventions which aim to help people who are involved with gangs and weapons or who have been convicted for violent offences are difficult and require a long term commitment. 'Stickability' is absolutely essential, in the sense of having a long term commitment to the young person involved. The Commission were impressed by the work of Includem (see Box 10), a Glasgow based charity that works with young people who have been in serious conflict with the law and often involved in violence. The staff are always there for their young people, whenever they need them - 24/7, at weekends or the middle of the night and via a 24 hour helpline – providing critical support at critical moments.

The social workers, youth workers and professionals who work on projects like Includem, need not only a level of dedication, but also the autonomy and licence to work the hours and the ways demanded in order to reach out to, and ultimately engage with, these young people. People giving evidence to the Commission felt public funds given to support such projects brought with them a risk-averse and form-filling culture that made it difficult to use their profession discretion and judgement to work in the ways needed.

One example is the use of former gang members and offenders by intervention projects designed to persuade young people to leave gangs or dissuade them from joining in the first place. This requires flexibility on the part of local authorities and statutory funding bodies as such work involves, by definition, employing convicted offenders to work with vulnerable young people.

BOX 10: INCLUDem

Gary Westwater, co founder of Includem:

“People generally don’t feel safe in Glasgow – for example, they feel vulnerable when on public transport. The city has a huge anti-social behaviour problem; it’s a divided society, between the haves, and have-nots. Drugs, alcohol and sectarianism also contribute massively, as does grinding poverty. There is employment available in Glasgow – but too many young people simply exclude themselves from it, or mainstream ways of living. That’s why they end up fighting, with knives, and even swords.”

Includem works with 800 young people – typically those who have no stake in society, and don’t give a damn. The kind of people for whom orthodox community work is a waste of time. Their clients have all initially been subject of children’s panel or court orders, and almost all have been referred to Includem through social services – the others having been contacted through outreach work. Typically, they have been in serious conflict with the law, and very often have been involved in violence. Some have come from the care system.

Includem’s distinctive tactic is its ‘stickability’ with the young people they work with. They simply refuse to give up on a client. The tactic is to get alongside those young people, via specially trained youth workers, recruited for their passion for the job, and who won’t be seen as social workers, but as something more profound. The staff work to engage their clients one-to-one – to kindle trust and build a relationship based on the fact they will always be there for them. Unlike statutory social workers, the staff are always there for their young people, whenever they need them - 24/7, at weekends or the middle of the night, and via a 24 hour helpline. The approach is intense and, says, Gary, can be risky – it’s the kind of work which can affect your life.

With their clients, Includem try to get them to face up to the reality of their lives – the violence and chaos they cause or suffer – and steer them away from peer groups who’ve damaged them. “To an extent, it’s also about simple damage limitation – getting them to drink beer, at least, rather than Buckfast [fortified wine], for example. When progress has been made, the next stage is to direct them towards social inclusion – activities, training, and jobs.”

As one of the young people Includem has helped, Liam McEmerson, told the commission, his Includem worker was “like the big sister I never had and it was brilliant because she wasn’t there to tell me ‘oh you’re doing this wrong. You’re doing that wrong.’ She was telling me what to do right. And that meant a lot to me ...I liked her a lot but I also hated her a lot. It’s 50/50 all the way.”

Includem’s work helps to improve young people’s confidence, self-esteem, life-coping skills, employment /education opportunities and re-integration into society.

Independent evaluation findings confirm that re-offending rates for their clients are as low as 17%, which for the challenging group official statistics would suggest a 54% re-offending rate.

The VRU in Scotland has pioneered initiatives to make maximum use of the ‘teachable moment’ within an individual’s life, with the aim of reducing violent behaviour, recidivism and victimisation. A teachable moment is a time at which a person is likely to be particularly disposed to learn something or particularly responsive to being taught or made aware of something. In the case of gun and knife violence this could include arrest or conviction for a violent offence, presenting at Accident and Emergency to have a wound treated or release from prison. By making the right interventions at these times the lessons can be most effective. VRU initiatives have included brief interventions and motivational interviews for victims of violence in hospitals and therapy within prisons.

Education and training should be integral to the resettlement of prisoners and opportunities for education and training should be an entitlement that all prisoners have, especially given the high percentage (74%) of prisoners have no formal qualifications.

21. Consultation with offenders and former offenders about what rehabilitation worked, or would work, for them and what are the barriers to their rehabilitation can help in increasing effectiveness and reducing recidivism. The ‘user voice’ in the prison service can be used in this way to produce better outcomes for offenders and the public.
22. Proposals to set up a pilot Academy for young offenders should be pursued.
23. Projects that want to reach the most vulnerable young people must have ‘Stickability’ and commitment to a long term successful outcome for the young people they are aiming to help.
24. Professionals engaged in these interventions need not only the resources, but also the professional autonomy, financial management and administrative support, as well as an appreciation from funders of the financial risks involved.
25. Flexibility and a greater willingness to take risks is need, on the part of local authorities and public funding bodies if they are to enable the most innovative projects with the most hard to reach and vulnerable young people.

26. Initiatives that use 'teachable moments' whether in prison, hospitals, police stations or schools – such as motivational interviews – should be evaluated and good practice examples disseminated widely.
27. Restorative justice practices are a promising approach to reducing recidivism and increasing public confidence in the Criminal Justice System. They should be used more widely and the potential for extending their application to situations involving offences of varying severity should be investigated.

APPENDICES

Members of the Commission

The Chair

Cherie Booth QC

Cherie Booth is a leading barrister in the field of discrimination and human rights and a committed campaigner for women's equality. She regularly argues cases up to the House of Lords and is a founder member of Matrix Chambers.

She is also an active campaigner for prison reform and is currently Chair of the Commission on English Prisons Today, under the auspices of The Howard League for Penal Reform, for which she is an ambassador. She visits prisons on behalf of the Prison Reform Trust, and is a Patron of Victim Support.

Born in Bury in 1954, Cherie grew up and went to school on Merseyside. The first member of her family to go to university, she won a place at the London School of Economics to study law.

Having come first in the country in her Bar Finals in 1975, Cherie the following year joined Lincoln's Inn where she is still based. She has forged a successful career in employment, public and human rights law. In 1995 she was appointed a QC.

Cherie continues to work as a barrister both in Britain and internationally. She has appeared in the European Court of Justice, in Commonwealth countries and is an international arbitrator. She is also a Recorder, or part-time judge, in the County Court.

Among the well-known and important cases in which she has been involved are the Begum case on whether a decision by a school to exclude a pupil for wearing a jilbab infringed their religious rights, and the campaign for equal treatment by Gurkha soldiers who had served in the British Army.

Members

Liam Black

Liam Black is the former Director of the Fifteen Foundation. Created by Jamie Oliver in 2002, Fifteen exists to inspire disadvantaged young people to believe that they can create great careers for themselves in the restaurant business.

He has held several high profile social enterprise leadership positions including CEO at Liverpool's FRC Group, widely seen as one of the UK's pioneering social businesses. He led in the founding of social businesses such as Bulky Bob's & CREATE, which have provided livelihoods for hundreds of formerly unemployed people.

Liam is an adviser to the Government on its business and entrepreneur strategies and a founding member of the Social Enterprise Coalition.

Lord Dear

Lord Geoffrey Dear is a distinguished former police officer & holder of the Queen's Commendation for Bravery. Lord Dear began his career in Peterborough. After service in Cambridgeshire, he held the positions of Assistant Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire (1972-80), Deputy Assistant Commissioner, then Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (1980-85), Chief Constable of West Midlands (1985-90), and HM Inspector of Constabulary (1990-97). In the latter post, he was responsible for the twelve Forces in the NW quarter of England & Wales, and nationally for the police interface with the Criminal Justice System, drugs, crime prevention & detection; Crime Squads and criminal intelligence.

He led a number of high profile investigations & reviews, including the Brixton Riots 1981; the shooting of Stephen Waldorf 1983; the Hillsborough Stadium disaster 1989. He was a member of the Glidewell Review of the Crown Prosecution Service (1997-98); advised the Auld Review of the Criminal Courts system (2000) & was a member of the Viridi Enquiry team (2000-01). He was a member of the Strategy group advising the newly formed Security Industry Authority. He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 1989; was Knighted in 1997, and created a Peer in 2006. He plays an active part in the work of the House of Lords from the Cross Benches, especially in the fields of Home Affairs, criminal justice and rural affairs.

Prof. Gus John

Professor Gus John is a fellow of the Institute of Education, University of London & visiting faculty professor of education at the University of Strathclyde. He is chair of Parents & Students Empowerment (PaSE), a body working with parents & with excluded students and those at risk of exclusion from school. He works with young people associated with gangs & with relatives of victims of gun violence in Manchester. He is a patron of Origin, a rites of passage programme for young black boys in South London. Professor John gave verbal & written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on Young Black People & Crime.

Mark Johnson

Mark Johnson was born in 1970 to a family which combined violence, heavy drinking and religious extremism. Before he had left primary school he had become a drunk, drug abuser & vandal. He served his first jail term, for violent crime, aged 17.

In his 20s raves and the accompanying drugs became his life. At 28 he was homeless & lived for a year on the streets of London's West End, addicted to crack & heroin. Faced with a choice between death & rehabilitation he opted for the harder of the two.

Within a few years, with some help from The Prince's Trust, he set up a tree surgery business & employed other recovering addicts. He received, among other accolades, a Pride of Britain award for his work. In the summer of 2007 the publication of Mark's honest autobiography, 'Wasted', shook both the reading public & policymakers.

He is now employed as a special adviser to both the board of the National Probation Service & the Prince's Trust where he helps initiate new ideas, in particular a project called 1-2-1 which uses ex-offenders as supporters for young offenders. He enjoys the special patronage of Prince Charles & both the media & government ministers take a strong interest in his ideas.

Mark works tirelessly to increase understanding of the reasons young people become offenders & drug abusers & hopes to initiate more new schemes to help them find another way. He has not used drugs or drink for seven years.

Ian Levy

Ian Levy is a college lecturer in auto engineering. He is the founder of The Robert Levy Foundation and the director of Through Unity. The Robert Levy foundation was set up after Ian's son Robert was stabbed to death in Hackney in 2004 when he tried to protect a younger boy from an attack by another youth. The foundation primarily operates in Hackney to mentor young people and offer alternatives to a life of crime and violence. This is followed up with training which helps to prepare young people to enter into work and or training where possible. Through Unity is an organisation set up to provide support to families in the event a loved one is lost through violent crime. They also provide support to small charities operated by those families affected and are able to find the strength to try to make changes in their communities.

Fay Selvan

Fay Selvan is the Chief Executive of The Big Life group which she established in 2002. It is the first group of social businesses & charities in the country and brings together well-known brands such as The Big Issue in the North and nationally innovative initiatives such as the Kath Locke Centre in Hulme, the first primary care centre run by a non-NHS agency.

Fay has extensive experience in the field of regeneration working as a local tenant and subsequently for the public and charitable sectors through the regeneration of Hulme in Manchester. In 1999 she was appointed Executive Sponsor for the Manchester, Salford and Trafford Health Action Zone & for three years she led the community programme. In February 2001, she took up appointment as Chair of Trafford North Primary Care Trust (TNPCT) & led the Trust until taking up the Chair of Trafford Healthcare Trust (THT) in January 2006.

TNPCT covers a diverse area with pockets of inner city deprivation. It has very poor estates, a large number of single-handed GPs & marked health inequalities. Despite these challenges the PCT achieved financial balance, made investment into primary care & has a reputation for quality & innovation. In her new role as Chair of THT, Fay is working to ensure quality services are offered in local hospitals.

Prof. Howard Williamson

Howard Williamson is Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of Glamorgan. He is involved in youth policy development in Europe, having been part of the European Union White Paper on youth policy process & a contributor to the Council of Europe's international reviews of national youth policies in Western & Eastern Europe.

In the UK & in Wales, he has contributed to youth policy development in vocational training, curriculum development, combating substance misuse, youth work & criminal justice. He chairs the Prevention and Inclusion Committee of the YJB & the Consultative Committee for Wales.

Remit

Guns and knives are becoming a part of everyday life for some young people in Britain. The public wants to know how we can get these weapons out of the hands of young people and off our streets.

The Street Weapons Commission will produce recommendations on tackling violent youth crime in Britain.

It is Chaired by Cherie Booth QC who will be supported by eight Commissioners.

The Commission will investigate the scale of the problem, review current strategies to deal with it and explore new approaches. The aim is to bring forward recommendations for consideration by the general public, policy makers and legislators.

The Commission will take evidence from interested parties, including members of the public, at hearings held in cities across Britain. Their findings will be published in a report on the 6th of July, which will contain practical ideas to tackle the problem of weapons on our streets.

In coming to its conclusions on how to tackle youth gun and knife crime, the Commission will take into account the impact any recommendations will have on:

- Victims of gun and knife crime;
- Policing strategies to tackle gun and knife crime;
- The responsibilities of the community and the family;
- The role of the voluntary sector;
- The criminal justice system;
- The role of central and local government.

WITNESSES

Liverpool

Alison Stathers-Tracey & Stuart Smith

Alison Stathers-Tracey is Assistant Executive Director for Community Safety, Liverpool City Council plus Chair of Liverpool gun & gang crime strategy for the Citysafe partnership. Stuart Smith is Director of Children's Services, Liverpool City Council.

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan-Howe & Simon Byrne

Bernard Hogan-Howe & Simon Byrne are Chief constable and assistant chief constable respectively of Merseyside police.

Andrew Edwards

Andrew Edwards is assistant editor of the Liverpool Echo, which runs the 'Liverpool Unites' anti-gun crime campaign.

Cathy Elliot & Dave Murray

Cathy Elliot is assistant Chief Executive of the Community Foundation for Merseyside, who fund the Merseyside Young Transformers programme to provide diversionary activities for at-risk young people. Dave Murray is the founder of the Glaciere Project which offers sailing, diving and first-aid courses for youths from criminal backgrounds.

Darren Hulse

Darren Hulse is Outreach & Development Worker for Fairbridge, an organisation which works with referred young people, often those who've been involved in violence, to provide them with skills and self-development.

Sue Younger

Sue Younger is director of the Young Witness Service at Victim Support Nottinghamshire.

Bob Croxton

Bob Croxton is a former long-term serious professional criminal, who now runs an outreach programme educating young offenders in the realities of conviction, prison and gun/knife use.

London

Iain Duncan Smith MP

Founder of the Centre for Social Justice, former leader of the Conservative party, and MP for Chingford and Woodford Green.

Chris Huhne MP

Liberal Democrat Shadow Home Secretary, and MP for Eastleigh.

DCC Jon Murphy

Deputy Chief Constable Merseyside Police, currently working with the Home Office as Head of the National Tackling Gangs Action Programme.

Keith Vaz MP

Chair of the House of Commons Home Affairs select committee, and MP for Leicester East.

Mike Walsh

Consultant trauma surgeon and lead trauma clinician at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, the capital's centre for trauma incidents including gun and serious knife wounds.

Ray Lewis & Ian Joseph

Ray Lewis has recently been appointed London Deputy Mayor for Young People, with a remit to tackle youth crime. He is founder of the Eastside Young Leaders Academy, who provide supplementary education and personal development for young Afro-Caribbean boys in the London borough of Newham who are at risk of social exclusion. Ian Joseph is the academy's lead officer.

CS Steve Dann & Jules Pipe

Chief Superintendent Steve Dann is Hackney Borough Police Commander. Jules Pipe is the elected mayor of Hackney.

Claudia Webbe & Naomi Hutchison-Smith

Claudia Webbe is Vice-Chair of the Trident Advisory Group. Naomi Hutchison-Smith is a women's prison visitor who was brought up in close quarters to youth gun and gang culture in east London.

Commander Mark Simmons

Head of Youth Violence, Metropolitan Police.

Mike Gervis & Junior Smart

Mike Gervis is the former co-ordinator of tackling gangs and youth violence at Waltham Forest local authority, and now chief executive of the Damilola Taylor Trust. Junior Smart spent five years in prison for drug offences, now a project worker with the Southwark Gangs Project at the St Giles Trust which mentors gang offenders before and after prison release to support them through rehabilitation.

Simon Hallsworth

Professor of Social Research at London Metropolitan University.

Lydia Sorensen

Lydia Sorensen is a senior project worker at Newham Intensive Family Support which is run by leading children's charity, NCH. The project offers intensive support to local families in which there has been a problem with anti-social behaviour.

Birmingham

Barbara Sawyers

Barbara's son Daniel was shot dead, aged 19, by a Birmingham gang in 2003 after he was mistakenly identified as a rival. Since then, Barbara founded the Mothers In Pain group with the aim of saving other parents from experiencing, as she did, the loss of a child to violent youth crime.

CC Keith Bristow

National lead on violent crime for the Association of Chief Police Officers, and chief constable of Warwickshire police.

ACC Suzette Davenport

Assistant chief constable of West Midlands police.

Kirk Dawes QPM & CS Tom Coughlan

Kirk is a former detective and now director of the West Midlands Mediation and Transformation Service, which seeks to resolve retaliatory gang violence through mediation. He works in partnership with Chief Superintendent Tom Coughlan, commander of WM police's Queens Road unit, who leads the Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence group.

Ann Oakes-Odger

Ann's son Westley was stabbed to death in Colchester in 2005. She now runs the campaigning website KnifeCrimes.org and an anti-knife educational roadshow for schools.

Marc Edwards

Marc Edwards was brought up in gun and gang culture in Birmingham, and now runs the Young Disciples programme, which provides activities and personal development for young people at risk of involvement in violent crime.

Chris Lue & Mike Royal

Chris Lue is a former gangster who now mediates to resolve gang conflict. Mike Royal is Birmingham co-ordinator of Street Pastors, a Christian organisation who provide a physical street presence aimed at deterring young people from gun and knife use.

Glasgow

PC Geoff Smith

Campus officer, St Mungo's academy. Geoff Smith is a full time school police officer, based at St Mungo's secondary school in Calton, Glasgow, and its eight feeder primary schools and nurseries.

Rosemary Dickson

Project manager, FARE (Family Action in Rogerfield and Easterhouse). FARE is a community organisation which caters for the needs of one of Glasgow's most challenged neighbourhoods – and works with children and young people to steer them away from gang conflict and knife use.

CS John Carnochan & Karyn McCluskey

Head and deputy head, Violence Reduction Unit. The VRU, established by Strathclyde police, targets violent behaviour and knife crime in Glasgow, and across Scotland.

Ian Bell, Gary Wilson & Liam McEmerson

Ian Bell is a senior manager with Includem – a Glasgow organisation who mentor and re-engage youth offenders and other vulnerable young people. Gary and Liam, who are both aged 20, faced serious challenges during their teens, including serious offending and violence – and were both referred to Includem for help.

Scott Breslin

Scott, 23, was left paralysed from the neck down for life after he was stabbed in the neck during an unprovoked attack when he was 16.

Alex Richardson & Andrew Gilbert

The Gladiator Programme, Glasgow. Gladiator provides play activities and sport for children and young people in Easterhouse, with the aim of shielding them from drugs, territorialism and violence, and boosting their personal development.

David Shaw

David is a counsellor with the Glasgow Council on Alcohol, and runs a programme for offenders with alcohol problems.

Site Visits

- The Alt Valley Skills Centre, Liverpool
- United Estates of Wythenshawe, Manchester
- Lozells Road Traders Association, Birmingham
- From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation, London
- COVAID Project, Glasgow Royal Infirmary and the Glasgow Dental Hospital, Glasgow

Written submissions.

- Professor Becky Francis, Professor of Education at Roehampton University
- Birmingham City Council
- Professor Nicholas Fyfe, Professor of Human Geography at the University of Dundee
- BPP Streetlaw

ENDNOTES

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9. National Youth Agency (2006), 'Knives, guns and gangs', *Spotlight* Issue 37, September 2006.
10. Source: MORI (2004), *MORI Youth Survey 2004*, London: Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, p.73; MORI (2006), *MORI Five-Year Report: An Analysis of Youth Survey Data*, London: Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, p.13.
11. Eades et al. (2007), 'Knife Crime': A Review of Evidence and Policy, CCJS p.13
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