



All-Party Parliamentary Group on
Knife Crime & Violence Reduction

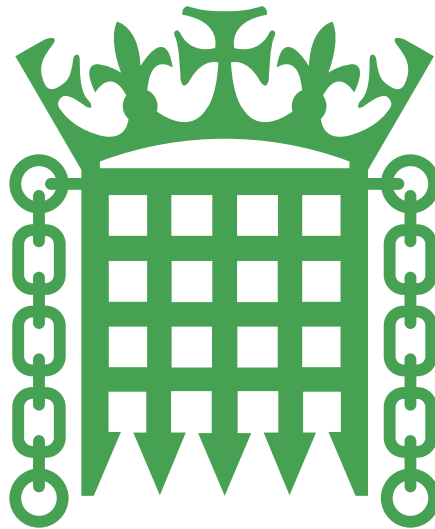
SECURING A BRIGHTER FUTURE:
The role of youth services in
tackling knife crime



Redthread



Believe in
children
Barnardo's



About the APPG on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction is a group of over 70 MPs and Peers, set up in response to the alarming rise in knife crime across the country. The APPG seeks to evaluate policies and programmes aimed at reducing knife crime, gain better understanding of its root causes and the wider context of serious violence. The group aims to develop recommendations for new measures at both acute and preventative stages with a view to reducing levels of knife crime, and work with the cross-party Youth Violence Commission. The secretariat is jointly provided by Barnardo's and Redthread.

About Barnardo's

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. Last year we supported around 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers through more than 1,000 services – including counselling for children who have been exploited, support for children in and leaving care and specialist mental health services. Barnardo's goal is to achieve better outcomes for more children, by creating stronger families, safer childhoods, and positive futures.

About Redthread

Redthread is a youth work charity whose vision is a society in which all young people lead healthy, safe, and happy lives. Redthread's mission is to empower young people to thrive as they navigate the challenging transition to adulthood by integrating trauma-informed youth work into the health sector. Redthread supports the holistic wellbeing of young people by delivering innovative interventions, personal support, and bridging of services – through their Youth Violence Intervention Programme in A&E departments across London and the Midlands. The aim is to help young people to meet their full potential and move away from cycles of violence and re-offending.

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FOREWORD

Serious violence has doubled, and too many young people are dying on our streets. While enforcement will always be a key part of our response to this epidemic, there is clear evidence that Government investment can achieve better outcomes if it prioritises preventing violence at its roots – such as investment in youth services – than dealing with its consequences.

We need to shift our mind-set to early intervention, and recognising the power of youth work is an important step. Youth services cannot be a ‘nice to have’ – something done solely by volunteers and charities. As this report makes clear, we need to elevate youth work, setting it on a par with teaching and recognising it as a profession by developing and supporting the workforce.

It is easy to take for granted the number of places we, as adults, can go to socialise, to spend time with friends and get support. But what about spaces for children and young people, places where they aren’t judged or restricted from spending time in a group?

Youth services offer children and young people a unique, safe space that is theirs, and youth workers bring those spaces to life as trusted role models. Together, they give young people the chance to build relationships, engage in activities, access new skills, employment or educational opportunities, and receive support for their problems – large or small.

These services can play a vital role in supporting and diverting young people from serious youth violence and knife crime. This document makes

four recommendations on how we can improve access to these vital services and develop the workforce to support young people, especially those at risk of serious violence. Given proper investment and Government backing, youth services and youth workers have the power to stop children and young people ending up in A&E or in a prison cell.

A unique feature of youth services is that young people choose to engage with them, rather than being required to as they are with school or other services. They actively choose to spend time and build trusted relationships with youth workers, whether that’s in a youth centre, sports pitch or the street. This means youth work can support children and young people on their own terms – where and when they need it.

However, over recent years our communities and the children and young people living in them have seen many of these services reduced or stripped away entirely. Too many areas have lost the vital support, local knowledge and connections which can help identify tensions and prevent violence before it occurs.

Hundreds of young people engaged with our APPG over the process of this investigation. They were clear about what they wanted: more positive activities, safe spaces to spend time with friends and programmes to help them grow and develop. With knife crime at record levels, we must do all we can to give them that.

Thank you to all the young people and professionals who shared their experience and expertise, and to the councils who responded to our request for information.



Sarah Jones MP
Founder and Chair



Huw Merriman MP
Vice-Chair



Vicky Foxcroft MP
Vice-Chair



Kate Osamor MP
Vice-Chair



Lord Paddick
Vice-Chair

BACKGROUND

Knife crime has reached a record high. Offences involving a knife or sharp instrument rose by 7 per cent in the year to September 2019 to 44,771.¹ This latest rise means that the number of incidents recorded by police has increased by almost half in the eight years since comparable records began. Particularly concerning is the rise in the number of young people who are carrying knives. More than 17,500 boys aged 14 reported ever having carried a knife or weapon in England and Wales; a third of those arming themselves have had weapons used against them.²

There has been much debate in the last few years on how to combat the rising levels of serious youth violence. Many, including the APPG on Knife Crime, have called for the Government to tackle the problem through a multi-agency approach bringing together local agencies – health, education, local authorities, police, youth justice and the voluntary sector – with a focus on early intervention.

Since the APPG's earliest meetings, the testimony of young people with lived experience of knife crime has emphasised the power of high-quality youth services and youth workers.

Youth services play a vital role in supporting young people and making the transition to adulthood. In tackling serious violence, youth services should be seen as central in supporting young people who are at risk of or involved in serious youth violence and knife crime.

Estimates suggest that approximately 85% of a young person's waking hours are spent outside of school.³ Therefore, thinking about where young people spend this time and with who is critical in understanding the risks facing young people today.

However, over the last decade there have been significant cuts to local authority spending on youth services. Analysis by the YMCA of 84 local authorities across England found the average spending on youth services reduced from £7.79million in 2010 to £2.45million in 2019/20 – a 69 percent decline. This reflects the findings of the APPG in our own evidence gathering. In the absence of local authority run youth services, charities and faith groups have been left to fund what services they can. Many of these services are high quality and extremely valued within communities. However, without a commitment for sustained Government funding in this area there will remain large differences in provision provided across England. Inevitably some areas will have very few services at all to support their youth population.

In 2019, the APPG on Youth Affairs conducted a major inquiry into the state of youth work which made a number of recommendations which together would significantly improve the youth work infrastructure in England.⁴



- 1 ONS, 2019. Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2019 Available online at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2019#knife-or-sharp-instrument-offences>
- 2 Home Office, July 2019. An analysis of indicators of serious violence. Available online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819840/analysis-of-indicators-of-serious-violence-horr110.pdf
- 3 House of Commons Education Committee, 2011. Services for Young People: Third Report of the Session 2010-12. Available online at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/744/744i.pdf>
- 4 National Youth Agency, 2019. APPG Inquiry into Youth Work – Final Report. Available online at: <https://nya.org.uk/appg-inquiry-final-report/>



Central Government has been responsive to some of the pressures on local authorities to provide youth services. In September 2019, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a new £500million ‘Youth Investment Fund’ which was re-confirmed in the 2019 Conservative Party Manifesto. This new fund is expected to be spent over a 5-year parliamentary term and is intended to:

“Help build 60 new youth centres, refurbish around 360 existing youth facilities, and provide over 100 mobile facilities”.⁵

In November 2019, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) also launched a consultation on the guidance given to local authorities on what services they should provide for their youth population.⁶

This new Youth Investment Fund will provide much needed investment, particularly in the infrastructure necessary to deliver effective services to young people. However, alongside this capital investment, youth services also require investment in programmes and specialist youth workers. This day-to-day spending – through local authorities – is essential for youth provision to function.



During 2019 the APPG on Knife Crime conducted a short inquiry into youth services and the role youth work has in tackling serious youth violence. The inquiry included:

- A joint public meeting with the APPG on Youth Affairs to hear from young people, youth workers, academics and other stakeholders;
- A visit to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, to talk with youth workers who are delivering a front-line service to young people impacted by knife crime in a health setting.
- A Freedom of Information (FOI) request to all local authorities to establish funding levels and the extent of youth services available in their area.

Our aim was to answer three main questions:

1 What do young people want from youth services?

2 What does effective youth work look like for children and young people today?

3 What role do youth services have in helping to tackle knife crime and serious youth violence?

This paper provides a summary of our findings and four recommendations for the Government to improve the quality and availability of youth services. Together these should ensure youth workers are able to have an effective role in the multi-agency response needed to keep vulnerable children and young people safe from knife crime.

5 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2020. Children and Young People: Written Question – 3229. Available online at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-14/3229>

6 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2019. Statutory guidance review for local youth services: have your say. Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/statutory-guidance-review-for-local-youth-services-have-your-say>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What young people told us

The resounding message from our inquiry was that young people value youth services – and youth workers – very highly.

Many young people spoke of having very few social activities for them to engage with in their local area and felt increasingly marginalised. This echoes research by Barnardo's which spoke of a "poverty of hope" experienced by young people in some disadvantaged communities⁷:

"I'm trying to think what's in our area. All we have is one park. That's it, there's nothing but one run down park in our area. No clubs, no things, it's just nothing."

Young people commented that in some areas gangs and their leaders have been able to "step in" and exploit this feeling of needing somewhere to belong, to feel valued and gain a sense of identity. For those from disadvantaged communities with few employment opportunities gangs were said to lure young people with the offer to make money. One young person told the APPG about the young people they know who have been the victims of exploitation by criminal gangs:

"When they turn to life in a gang it ends their loneliness, gives them a sense of pride, they're getting money as well and when it gets to that point they are getting that money and actually earning something."

Young people emphasised that good youth work projects had the potential to fill this void. They could provide young people with positive activities and a safe space to spend time with their friends. They could also provide young people with valuable signposting and support them to navigate local services such as housing or benefits. One young man spoke specifically about the important role that his youth worker played in helping him to move forward in his life:

"He [youth worker] uplifted my spirits and gave me confidence. He also got me involved in a work programme which involved boxing and me teaching boxing, that helped because at that time I was also unemployed and I was at my Mum's house so there was basically nothing that I was doing."

Young people particularly emphasised how youth workers could be valuable in helping them access employment and training opportunities. Understanding what was available locally such as college courses or apprenticeships was really important. Another young person spoke about the role of youth services in making them aware of such opportunities:

"I think youth work can teach us about, you know apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships – there is so much out there but we don't know that. They just need to make sure that we can see our futures, yeah, they just need to make us more aware of our options."

What professionals told us

The APPG consulted a range of youth workers from across England who explained to us what they thought the role of youth workers was in communities. They also highlighted the role the profession could play in helping to combat rising levels of knife crime.

Youth workers emphasised how youth work provided a different relationship from other professionals who work with young people, such as teachers or social workers, because young people choose to engage with them voluntarily. One youth worker described the unique nature of the role as follows:

"[It is] one of the only professional discipline that it's the young person's choice to engage. You have no choice to go to school, you have to go and see a police officer if you need to, you have to see a social worker if they want you to, whereas actually youth work is your choice largely to engage with them. Because it's young people's choice to engage, the effectiveness, the level of relationship that is built is so much more powerful and so much stronger."

7 Barnardo's, 2019. Overcoming Poverty of Hope. Available online at: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Barnardo%27s%20new%20report%20-%20Overcoming%20poverty%20of%20hope.pdf>



Youth workers have the flexibility to work with young people on their terms. They are able to visit young people at times and in places where other professionals do not usually go. This flexibility means they are often the only professionals who are available to young people when and where they need support. Another youth worker who spoke to the APPG specifically emphasised the importance of this flexibility in how the service is delivered:

“I think we are mavericks to some extent, we are the guys and girls who stand in the place where nobody else wants to stand or can stand.”

However, many youth workers commented that cuts to services in recent years were restricting what the profession could do. Good youth work is about being available – often out of hours – and having the time to build trusting relationships with young people:

“[Youth workers need to be] present, they are there when it matters and with the cuts that’s often not the case but they need to be there to form trusting relationships with young people at all times.”

Research by the APPG on Knife Crime

The APPG conducted an FOI request to all local authorities in England to establish the extent to which spending on youth services has been reduced in the last 3, 5 and 10 years.

We asked local authorities to provide information about their spending on youth services over time. 106 local authorities responded, and we were able to compare their spending on youth services between 2014/15 and 2017/18. This showed evidence of significant reductions in spending on youth services:

- 86 percent of those who could provide data had reduced spending on their youth services between 2014/15 and 2017/18.
- In total, reductions to spending on youth services, by the 106 local authorities, amounted to a 40 percent reduction during this period.
- 12 local authorities in the sample (11 percent) reduced spending by 70 percent or more.

We also asked local authorities to tell us about the impact that reductions in spending was having on the level of their youth service provision. We asked local authorities for information on the number of youth centres they funded, the number of full-time equivalent youth service staff, and the number of places for young people.

71 local authorities responded to the question on the number of youth centres closed since 2010/11. Of those who responded we found that:

- There has been a 51 percent reduction in the number of youth centres between 2010/11 and 2017/18.
- 87 percent of local authorities had seen one or more youth centres shut since 2011.

In addition we also looked at how local authority cuts to youth services may be correlated to increased levels of knife crime. By comparing police areas to local authorities, we were able to establish an approximate relationship between cuts to youth services and rises in knife crime on a geographical basis. This showed that there is a strongly negative association between a decline in the number of youth centres and an increase in knife crime in the same area – the reported correlation coefficient was -0.7. For further information see the annex.

What should be done?

Youth services are a key partner in the multi-agency response required to tackle knife crime. In order to be effective, youth services and youth workers require long term investment to support children and young people who are at risk of or involved in serious youth violence. To achieve this Government should:

1 Conduct a national audit of youth services in England. Establish the current extent of youth services in England and their capacity to deliver services particularly in deprived communities.

Assess what provision is currently available and whether it is meeting the needs of local children and young people, particularly in deprived communities.

2 Fund local authorities to invest in sustainable long-term youth work.

The Government should commit to investing a minimum of £1.57 billion in children and youth services in the budget and upcoming Spending Review to plug the current gap between funding and spending. Government should also encourage local authorities to prioritise investing in early intervention, such as youth services. The voluntary sector should be seen as a key partner in delivering these services.

3 Introduce a clear statutory requirement to local authorities for a minimum level of professional youth services provision.

DCMS has recently consulted on reviewing guidance to local authorities on their responsibilities to deliver activities for young people.⁸ DCMS should strengthen the statutory duty to, at a minimum, provide a definition of what a sufficient and minimum level of youth service provision is.

4 Invest in a professional youth workforce. Youth services are more than buildings.

The Government should commit to introducing a workforce strategy for youth work including clear plans to develop the youth workforce. Youth workers must be properly paid for the important work they do. All professionals providing youth support should be trained in trauma responsive practice and safeguarding to ensure they are well equipped to support young people who are at risk of or involved in serious youth violence.

⁸ Department for Education, 2012. Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's well-being. Available online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836238/Statutory_Guidance_for_Local_Authorities_on_Services_and_Activities_to_Improve_Young_People_s_Well-being.pdf



WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT FROM YOUTH SERVICES?

The APPG wanted to establish what young people themselves want from youth services. We heard from ambassadors from the British Youth Council (BYC), OnSide Youth Zone, and a range of young people accessing youth services across England.

A key message was the valuable role young people felt youth services played in supporting them. Since 2015 there has been a focus by Government on equipping schools to provide emotional and mental health support for young people, outlined in the Government's 2017 Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision Green Paper.⁹ However, while young people recognised the importance schools play in their lives, they also commented on their limitations – not all young people are in mainstream education or have good relationships with their teachers.

Our previous research has shown there is a link between those who permanently excluded and those who become involved in knife crime.¹⁰ Testimony from young people makes clear that there is a role for youth workers in the community to provide young people with access to a trusted adult outside of an educational setting. One young person emphasised how youth workers could provide a vital 'listening ear', particularly for young people facing difficult and challenging situations such as exploitation from criminal gangs:

“When you're facing these sorts of issues you can't go to the police, sometimes you can't tell your own family and you certainly can't tell a teacher because they are a teacher so having a youth worker there is really valuable.”

In addition to a trusted adult, young people also observed that youth services provide a safe space to spend time with their friends. Research by Barnardo's highlighted how many vulnerable young people feel increasingly unwelcome in public spaces, such as parks.¹¹ Young people spoke of concerns about the use of dispersal technologies such as mosquito devices, which emit a high pitched frequency sound to which young people are sensitive, discouraging them from congregating in public spaces. Youth projects can provide an alternative option away from home to meet up and engage in social activities and the local community. One young person explained to the APPG the variety of activities they had benefited from at their local youth club:

“Youth services are very very important –there is one across the road from my house, and I could go there all the time to play football, netball, get involved in things like drama – it's somewhere to channel energy and exercise your talents.”

Young people spoke positively about the range of activities they could access through youth projects including sports, drama and music. Previous work by the APPG has highlighted how, for some young people, involvement in a gang gives them a sense of belonging and identity.¹² Through our inquiry it was clear young people believed that youth projects could play a vital role in re-creating a sense of belonging in a more positive setting. Another young person who spoke explained how sports teams can provide a sense of belonging:

“Yeah the camaraderie that a lot of young people say that they get from the gangs you can get from team sport or even a boxing club. If that's what they are getting from the gang then you need to replicate that elsewhere.”

- 9 Department for Health and Department for Education, 2017. Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper. Available online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664855/Transforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_provision.pdf
- 10 APPG on Knife Crime, 2019. Back to School? Breaking the link between school exclusions and knife crime. Available online at: <http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/APPG-on-Knife-Crime-Back-to-School-exclusions-report-FINAL.pdf>
- 11 Barnardo's, 2019. Overcoming Poverty of Hope.
- 12 APPG on Knife Crime, 2019. “There is no protection on the streets, none”: Young people's perspectives on knife crime. Available online at: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/APPG%20on%20Knife%20crime%20-%20Young%20people%27s%20perspective%20August%202019.pdf>

As well as activities to help build a sense of community, youth projects can also have a key role in signposting young people to services they need such as housing support or help getting a job. Young people highlighted the role of youth work in providing careers advice or qualifications – enabling them to plan for the future. One young person commented on how important this was as getting a job could help young people trying to move away from involvement in serious youth violence.

“Youth services offer qualifications because most kids caught up in knife crime might not be in school and they might just be out on the streets doing like gang violence and stuff like that but youth services offer them a qualification so that they can try to apply for a job to try to get out of that lifestyle.”

Despite the clear evidence that young people value youth services, figures gathered by numerous organisations, including the APPG, shows that funding for these services has been consistently cut.

The APPG’s FOI requests found that in the last three years there has been a 40 percent cut in youth services spending by local authorities. As outlined in this report, these cuts must be placed in the context of significant 50 percent cuts in central government funding for councils and a lack of clear statutory requirements for youth provision.

The impact on youth provision among those councils who were able to provide responses to our FOI requests was clear: nine in ten councils who responded had been forced to close youth centres; the number of youth centres supported since 2011 had halved; and in the last 3 years alone councils had cut one in five full-time youth services staff.

However, not all councils were able to provide information. If councils do not hold this information, neither does government.

It is clear, therefore, that there is a significant lack of knowledge about the provision and quality of youth services available nationally. The Government should seek to fill this by commissioning a national audit of youth services. Such an audit should have the full involvement of children and young people who are accessing local youth services, to understand what kind of support is most needed.

1 Conduct a national audit of youth services in England. Establish the current extent of youth services in England and their capacity to deliver services particularly in deprived communities.

Assess what provision is currently available and whether it is meeting the needs of local children and young people, particularly in deprived communities.



WHAT DOES EFFECTIVE YOUTH WORK LOOK LIKE?

A key part of the APPG's inquiry was to establish what effective youth work looks like. To do so we heard from a range of youth workers, academics and young people. This revealed some guiding principles which are central to delivering effective youth services.

An experienced and trained workforce

A clear message from sector representatives was that a good youth worker has the potential to play a unique role in a young person's life. Youth workers are effective in building trusting relationships with young people who often have little confidence in the adults around them.

One youth worker highlighted how being from the same local community as the young person can help youth workers better connect with those they are supporting:

"Youth workers who are accessible, they are local, you can easily get at them, they are in the streets on our estates wherever young people need them to be and they are there for the long term."

The 2020 Youth Select Committee report into knife crime specifically raised this issue of relatable role models, including developing peer mentors.¹³ The Select Committee commented how developing role models who could talk to young people should go beyond "light touch advice" and should include role models who "can help mentor and support them consistently". Youth work provides an opportunity to take forward this important recommendation.

The nature of youth work, and in particular the importance of building trusting relationships with young people, means that it requires highly skilled individuals. Therefore, investment in training the youth workforce is vital. Youth workers must have the skills to be able to understand, engage and support young people, especially those who are vulnerable.

The need for high quality and continuous training was highlighted by one youth worker:

"There needs to be a professionally trained workforce and whether that's level 3 up to level 7 and whether that is part time Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or up to degree level they need to be professionally trained and that includes not just the theoretical but experience out in the field."

Services developed and staffed by those from the community

Youth work is generally seen as being most effective when it is a key part of the local community. One professional commented on the central role youth services can play in helping young people connect with their community and discover a sense of belonging:

"Youth workers who have been in it for a long time can build a relationship within the communities [and can] educate young people about what opportunities they have in their local environment. Loads of big corporations say they want to invest in young people, work experience, all those kinds of things and I think a key part of this is bringing those opportunities to the young person."

Effective youth work can therefore rarely be something that is imposed on the community from the outside. Local areas need to be involved in the decision-making process to ensure it meets local needs. One youth worker commented how previous experiences of developing services had not always appeared to have the involvement of the local community:

"Some of the stuff that local authorities have done notwithstanding money or otherwise is not very good and kind of imposed on people. You need to invite people you know will be the members of the thing and therefore respect it and look after it."

13 British Youth Council Youth Select Committee, 2019. Our Generation's Epidemic: Knife Crime. Available online at: <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Youth-Select-Committee-Our-Generations-Epidemic-Knife-Crime.pdf>



A great advantage in youth work is the ability for young people to have access to a service provided by people who are from the local community, and understand the issues they face on a day to day basis. Young people from across different communities and from different backgrounds can become involved in knife crime, as victims or perpetrators – sometimes both. However statistics show that Black, Asian, and minority ethnic young people feel unfairly targeted in relation to the criminal justice response to serious violence. Evidence shows those from the black community are more likely to be stopped and searched than those from other racial groups. Additionally, this group is over represented in the youth prison population with the proportion of black young people in custody in particularly increasing substantially in recent years – doubling from 12.5% to 25.3% between 2005/06 and 2017/18.¹⁴ Racial stereotyping of young people can result in feelings of marginalisation in society. In research by the Coalition of Race Equality Organisations with young BAME people in London one young person commented:

“There is still an underlying prejudice towards young black males in particular and I feel throughout school many are stigmatised and carry that belief for the rest of their lives that they are badly behaved and aggressive. Something needs to be done lower down in order to help in the future.”¹⁵

However, youth work can be an effective way of reaching out to communities who feel alienated and provide support where other agencies have failed.

Offering young people a range of opportunities

Effective youth work should seek to offer a range of opportunities to young people. Identifying careers opportunities, providing support with getting a job or finding a training course were reported as important, alongside recreational activities. These could work well to help young people relax and build trust with each other and the workers. One youth worker involved in delivering a project in the North East commented:

“We spend half an hour in the gym with them then we spend half an hour with the group talking about knife crime, general behaviour and substance misuse. We find the group works great because they are relaxed, when they are in the gym interactions are great, rather than being in our office where you’ve got to sit down on the chair with blank four walls – (the gym) works really well.”



14 Gov.uk, 2019. Ethnicity facts and figure. Available online at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/courts-sentencing-and-tribunals/young-people-in-custody/latest>

15 CORE, All London Voices. Available online at: <http://www.rota.org.uk/sites/default/files/core/All%20London%20Voices%20final%20report.pdf>

A key message was the need for a range of activities for young people to participate in, such as sports, art, music and enterprise, enabling youth workers to reach out and engage young people across the local community. Youth workers from onsite – a national charity involved in developing a network of youth zones around the country commented:

“In a traditional youth centre there was one thing you could basically do, but with onsite there are 20 things that you can do each day – being creative, not just arts or sports or media, there is an enterprise room, there is mentoring, there is inclusion for kids with special needs.”

The range of activities that an effective youth service can offer and how they can engage young people in their communities and wider society is demonstrated by the service offered by Barnardo’s youth service “The BASE”.

BARNARDO’S THE BASE NORTH EAST, NEWCASTLE

The BASE is a holistic youth service working with children and young people aged 11-25.

It offers a range of group work and individual programmes informed by the needs and interests of the young people, such as health and education groups, or emotional well-being, sexual health and relationships.

The service works to engage young people in local opportunities such as:

- Running a float at their local carnival.
- Participating in the local youth council.
- Attend meetings with local decision-makers such as the local council.
- Presenting the work of the youth club in school assemblies.

A flexible approach to service delivery

Effective youth work should aim to be flexible and available when and where it is needed. One youth worker involved in delivering out of hours youth work commented:

“You have got to be flexible in your service. And flexibility isn’t being available from 6 to 8 or 4 to 10. It is 1am in the morning.”

A high level of commitment is needed to deliver this kind of high-quality youth work. A key point made by the APPG was the need to treat youth work as a high-skilled, high-value occupation – not just something done part-time or by generous volunteers.

Sufficient and sustainable funding for the service

Funding for local authority’s youth services is from their children and young people’s budget. This budget is available to cover a range of support, from parenting programmes in children’s centres to local safeguarding teams who step in and protect children from harm. Given a lack of ring fencing it is not possible to know the impact of funding cuts specifically on children’s and young people’s services. However methodology developed through a joint analysis by Barnardo’s, Action for Children, The Children’s Society and National Children’s Bureau has estimated that the funding available to local authorities to provide children and young people’s services has fallen by 29 percent since 2010 – from £10.3 billion to £7.3 billion.¹⁶

This has placed significant pressure on many local authorities to provide the level of service needed. Many local authorities have found themselves having to divert increasingly scarce resources away from early intervention like youth services, and into services for children at immediate risk of harm. While local authority spending on late intervention services such as child protection and youth justice has risen since 2010 – from £5.9 billion to £6.7 billion,¹⁷ spending on early intervention services over the same period has fallen from £3.7 billion to £1.9 billion. This is a 49 per cent decrease.

16 Barnardo’s, Action for Children, NCB, NSPCC, The Children’s Society, 2019. Children and young people’s services: Funding and spending 2010/11 to 2017/18. Available online at: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/childrens-services-funding-report.pdf>

17 Barnardo’s, Action for Children, NCB, NSPCC, The Children’s Society, 2019. Children and young people’s services: Funding and spending 2010/11 to 2017/18.



This discrepancy between funding and demand means some local authorities were forced to overspend on children's services by an estimated £807million in 2017/2018.¹⁸ To fund this deficit, local authorities either have had to dip into reserves or borrow money from other parts of their budget. However, neither of these options are sustainable in the long term. The Government has made some investment to help local authorities address the crises in children's services funding. However, this investment has not been enough to enable local authorities to plug the gap between spending needed and the funding available. Research by the Local Government Association suggests this means that with current levels of funding this gap is likely to grow to £1.57billion by 2024/25.¹⁹

The Conservative Party Manifesto committed to spending £1billion for social care every year of the current Parliament. However, it is unclear how much of this money will be spent on children's social care in reality given the funding will not be ring fenced; nor how much of the funding allocated to children's services will fund early intervention such as youth services.²⁰

The Government has separately committed £500million of new funding over 5 years for youth services through the Youth Investment Fund.²¹ This new funding has the potential to provide a welcome improvement in facilities available in local communities, however it will not by itself address the long-term challenge of providing effective youth services. It was emphasised to us a number of times during the course of our inquiry that effective youth work went far beyond the facilities available. A youth centre without well trained staff and well thought out programmes could in fact act as a safety risk, rather than a protective factor, as it could become known as a place where young people spend time and serve as a flashpoint for local rivalries or violence. As one youth worker commented:

“Violence isn't going to just stop overnight, violence isn't going to stop because you have given them a new building, but that doesn't make no odds and it's not just about people in the building if you want to change something about violence you have got to deal with families' problems.”

18 Guardian, 2019. Rise in children taken into care pushes 88% of councils over budget. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jan/08/rise-in-children-taken-into-care>

19 Local Government Association, 2020. Local services face almost £6.5 billion funding gap by 2025: New LGA analysis. Available online at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-services-face-almost-ps65-billion-funding-gap-2025-new-lga-analysis>

20 Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019. Get Brexit Done Unleash Britain's potential: The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019. Available online at: https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf

21 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2020. Children and Young People: Written Question – 3229

Therefore, it is essential that local authorities can access resource not only for one-off investments in facilities for young people, but also guaranteed ongoing funding to support day-to-day running of those facilities. They must be able deliver the services in communities that have the potential to make a sustainable long-term difference to the lives of young people. To do this the Government must use the upcoming budget and Spending Review to address the funding gap in local authorities' children's and young people's services. These services must be able to have the money to do more than just protect children from immediate harm. A suitable, long-term youth service programme should be seen as a central part of all local authorities' spending plans.

2 Fund local authorities to invest in sustainable long-term youth work.

The Government should commit to investing a minimum of £1.57 billion in children and youth services in the budget and upcoming Spending Review to plug the current gap between funding and spending. Government should also encourage local authorities to prioritise investing in early intervention, such as youth services. The voluntary sector should be seen as a key partner in delivering these services.

In addition to providing local authorities with sufficient funds to ensure effective services in their community, the APPG recommends stronger statutory guidance to local authorities on what a minimum level of youth services should be.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that local authorities make sure, as far as possible, that there is sufficient '*educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people*.'²² However, the regulations and guidance accompanying this duty are minimal, leaving each local authority free to adopt their own approach to what is required.²³

From our inquiry it is clear that there is a developing picture of what an effective youth service would look like, particularly in the context of supporting youth people at risk of or involved in serious violence. Youth services should include workers and programmes specialised in supporting vulnerable young people, and have adequate capital investment in facilities accompanied by a programme that is able to fully engage and support young people in their community. The aim of youth services should be to improve outcomes for all aspects of a young person's well-being and develop and boost their aspirations, personal skills and life chances.

The DCMS consultation on the review of statutory guidance for local youth services which closed in October 2019 was a welcome development.²⁴ Given the important role that young people put on having youth services available in their communities, the Government should consider the evidence provided by the APPG as to what constitutes "effective youth services." The Government should strengthen the guidance by introducing a new definition to clarify the minimum and protected level of youth services. This would remove ambiguity and range of interpretation around what is a "sufficient" and "reasonably practical" youth service, and sends a clear message about the important role youth services have in supporting vulnerable young people and tackling knife crime.

3 Introduce a clear statutory requirement on local authorities to ensure there is a minimum level of professional youth services provision.

DCMS has recently consulted on reviewing guidance to local authorities on their responsibilities to deliver activities for young people.²⁵ DCMS should strengthen the statutory duty to, at a minimum, provide a definition of what a sufficient and minimum level of youth service provision is.

22 Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Available online at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/6>

23 Department for Education, 2012. Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's well-being.

24 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2019. Statutory guidance review for local youth services: have your say.

25 Department for Education, 2012. Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's well-being. Available online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836238/Statutory_Guidance_for_Local_Authorities_on_Services_and_Activities_to_Improve_Young_People_s_Well-being.pdf



WHAT ROLE DO YOUTH SERVICES HAVE IN HELPING TO TACKLE KNIFE CRIME AND SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE?

A key focus of our inquiry was the role youth services could have in tackling the rise in serious violence and knife crime. Our inquiry looked at the ways in which local youth services were working with young people who had been involved in knife crime and what needed to be done to support successful initiatives.

Many youth workers and young people gave examples of how youth services should be seen as the forefront of the fight against serious violence. Youth workers can play a unique role in reaching out to vulnerable young people in society including those who are at risk of or are being exploited. They can effectively bridge the gap between young people and adults in society. As a youth worker who spoke to the APPG commented:

“Society today is separating childhood, there are two different worlds. If you have a child who is involved in gang culture or county lines they can be talking the language right in front of their mother and that parent is not going to understand. What I do as a youth worker is work with these parents and give them more knowledge.”

When it comes to preventing violence, youth workers are often uniquely placed to build trusting relationships with vulnerable young people where other professionals have failed.

At the heart of this approach is a key principle – we need to think differently about how we safeguard our children and young people. Traditional safeguarding frameworks used to keep children and young people safe have centered on the family and the home.

However, the threat that exploitation can pose to young people means that it is often in public spaces where young people are at significant risk. Research by Safer London found that one in four (23 percent) young people they spoke to reported they had felt uncomfortable, intimidated or scared while in shopping centres.²⁶ To keep young people safe across their communities we must consider how to best support a “contextual safeguarding approach.”²⁷

Many commenters have remarked on the important role that detached youth work can have in delivering effective contextual safeguarding and to help keep young people safe on the streets.²⁸ Young people and youth workers highlighted that youth workers should be put at the very centre of a contextual safeguarding approach. One youth worker described the project that they had been involved in to support young people on the street:

“One of our current projects which is street based involves a team of us going out in our community and just young people signposting them to activities... we see a change in a lot of young people in their reception of us the more they see us the more they need, they see you as part of this community, we know what is going on [and they are] more likely they to respond to us.”

Charities and voluntary organisations can be particularly well placed to deliver this work, as they are often well placed to build relationships with young people who are distrustful of statutory services. This can be particularly true in relation to young people from BAME backgrounds.

While youth work still most commonly happens through detached or centre based work, there are a growing number of innovations whereby youth work teams are embedded within existing anchor institutions within communities. One example is Redthread’s Youth Violence Intervention Programme (YVIP).

26 Safer London, 2017. Safeguarding in public spaces pilot. Available online at: https://saferlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Final-research-report_271017-low-res.pdf

27 Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2019 What is contextual safeguarding? Available online at: <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/en/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>

28 Fritz, D., 2016. Practitioner Briefing #5: The role of detached youth work in creating safety for young people in public spaces. Available online at: <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/assets/documents/Briefing-5-detached-youth-work.pdf>

YOUTH WORK IN HEALTH SETTINGS: REDTHREAD'S YOUTH VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

Redthread's YVIP embeds youth work teams in hospital emergency departments across London and the Midlands. The teams take referrals from doctors and nurses to work with young victims of violence. Their unique positioning in A&E means that youth work support is available to the young person at the point of crisis.

Redthread's experience shows that the time after an incident of violence is a 'Teachable Moment', where the young person can question what behaviour and circumstances have led them to this hospital bed and, with specialist trauma-informed youth worker support, pursue change they haven't felt able to before. Redthread work with the young person while they're in the hospital, and in the community to support with safety planning, housing problems or issues with education and training.

Weaving youth work into existing health provision not only provides unique access to those most in need of support, but also frees up doctors and nurses to focus on immediate medical needs; as youth workers are able to pick up any broader safeguarding and wellbeing concerns.

However, a key finding of the APPG was that it was impossible to deliver this type of specialised work unless there is investment in and development of the workforce. This work is high risk, requires knowledge of how to effectively work with often vulnerable young people, and an understanding of how to support those who have suffered trauma.

As a result of cuts to youth services across England, many youth workers who talked to the APPG reported a de-professionalisation of the workforce. Youth work in many areas had become very unstable with low pay and a tendency to be employed on zero hours contracts. This impacts the level of experience in the profession as a whole and its capacity to deliver work that has a high level of safeguarding risk.

"10 years ago [most], people who have worked with young people we would call youth work had professional training. They had an A level or GCSE equivalent youth work or degree youth work. [Today many] working with those young people are not qualified, not necessarily in basic safeguarding. Stuff like that really worries us."

Professionals also reported problems with retention in the youth workforce. Those with experience often left after a few years as there were few professional development opportunities. At the APPG's public meeting on youth services, there was unanimous agreement from sector professionals, MPs and young people that youth workers should be paid at a level commensurate to the high importance of their roles.

"People who go into youth work, they don't stay around, they don't get paid enough to want to stay there...and I think that is one of the major problems you need people who are trained and have the experience and who are willing to stay and learn."

A clear message from our inquiry is that if youth workers are to be able to deliver high end interventions with young people at risk of involvement knife crime, then we must invest in the youth workforce. The APPG recommends that the Government develop a workforce strategy for the youth work sector. This would set out clear pathways for entry and qualification, as well as highlighting options for careers development and progression.

4 Invest in a professional youth workforce. Youth services are more than buildings.

The Government should commit to introducing a workforce strategy for youth work including clear plans to develop the youth workforce. Youth workers must be properly paid for the important work they do. All professionals providing youth support should be trained in trauma responsive practice and safeguarding to ensure they are well equipped to support young people who are at risk of or involved in serious youth violence.

ANNEX

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – METHODOLOGY

A freedom of information request was sent to all local authorities in England asking the following questions:

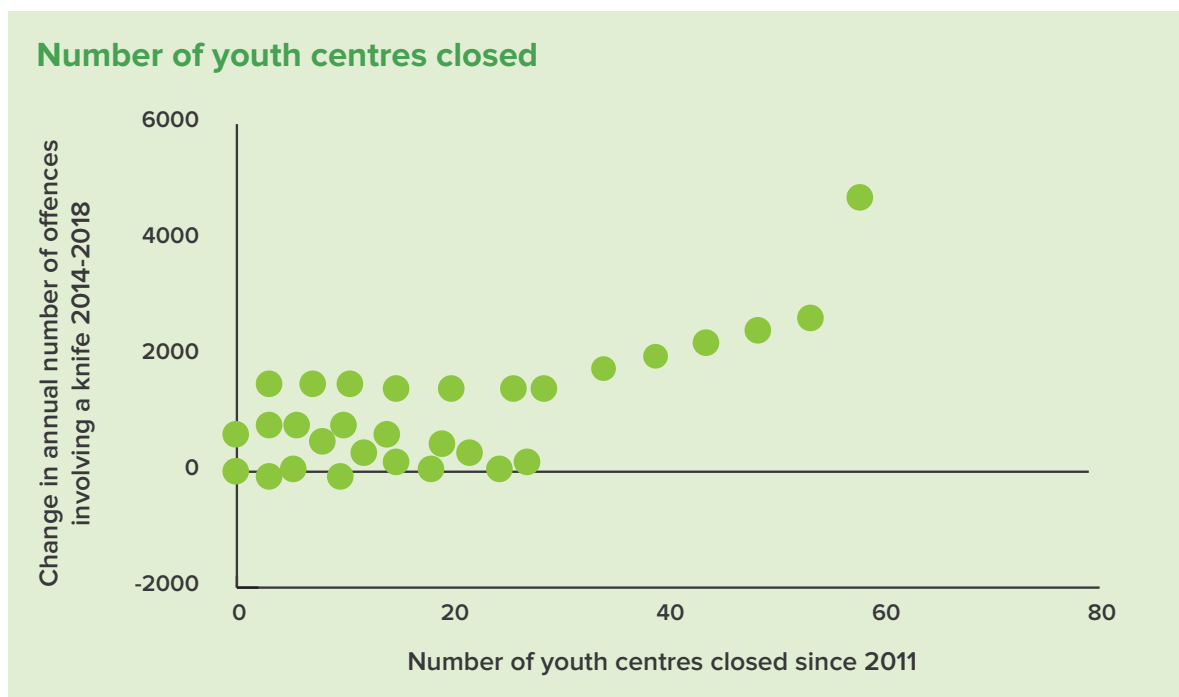
- The local authority's youth service budget in every year from 2011/12 to 2018/19
- The number of youth centers supported by the local authority in every year from 2011/12 to 2018/19
- The number of full term equivalent youth service staff in every year from 2011/12 to 2018/19
- The number of places for young people in every year from 2011/12 to 2018/19

From this we were able to establish how youth service provision in responding local authorities had varied over time.

We then compared results against police force data on the number of offences involving a knife in the years between 2014 and 2018. Analysis was done to establish whether there was any correlation between changes in knife crime within a police area and changes in youth service provision in the corresponding local authorities.

Correlations are represented by the 'correlation coefficient' (specifically in this report, the Pearson r correlation coefficient) which ranges between 1 and -1. A coefficient value that is positive (greater than zero) means that there is positive correlation: when one variable changes, the other variable changes in the same direction. As the correlation coefficient value moves closer to one, the stronger the positive relationship are between the variables.

In the case of measuring the relationship between changes to youth centre closures and changes to knife crime, the reported correlation coefficient is -0.7. This suggests that there is a strongly negative association between closures to youth centres and increasing knife crime (every decline in the number of youth centres is associated with an increase in knife crime). This is represented in the scatterplot below which has a steep sloped trend line that outlines how closures in youth centre are strongly associated with increases in knife crime.







All-Party Parliamentary Group on
Knife Crime & Violence Reduction

The Secretariat to the APPG on
Knife Crime & Violence Reduction is jointly
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The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Knife Crime & Violence Reduction
thanks the young people who told us about their experiences.

Website: www.preventknifecrime.co.uk