

# Preventing serious youth violence - what works?



Insights and examples from the community and voluntary sector

This paper has been prepared by the Big Lottery Fund to summarise learning from the voluntary and community sector on what works in preventing serious youth violence.

We highlight examples of both proven and promising practices from charities across the country and share our experiences as a funder about the principles that have worked for us in planning, designing and implementing funding programmes in this field.

The paper starts with key messages but is followed by a full overview. This includes case studies and evidence from evaluations, academic reviews and international research.

Keyword reference: serious violence, early action, prevention, youth violence, knife crime, gangs, partnerships

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## Executive summary

### Prevention - what works?

- Acting early to prevent problems later on. This includes **shifting culture and spending towards early action to prevent** and respond to adversity, and reducing the risk of young people getting involved in violent lifestyles:
  - Help families and communities to give **children the best start in life**, i.e. through supportive, integrated early years services and cross-sector, non-judgemental, public health approaches to violence prevention.
  - **Plan for the long-term and focus on achieving sustainable changes** rather than quick-fixes that won't last. Don't under-estimate the level of **trauma and chaos in many young people's lives** and the time and services required to support them.
- Raising **aspirations** and providing **positive role models** and **alternatives** through early, **universal approaches** in education, care and youth settings. **Build the resilience** of young people to cope with and bounce back from adversity. Address structural and personal barriers to employment and training.
- **Working together to identify** and support at-risk children and young people in a **timely manner**, before problems escalate:
  - Joint working between statutory agencies and voluntary and community (VCS) groups needs to extend from collecting data, to sharing and using it to **identify and support at-risk youth at the earliest possibility**.
  - **Train professionals and the wider community to recognise risk factors** and look beyond 'challenging' behaviour to understand and work more constructively with young people. Such training needs to **extend from teachers to other adults in the community** (e.g. police, youth workers, coaches) and recognise the role of young people themselves in identifying those at risk.

Read more [here](#), including a **HeadStart case study** on the 'whole-community' approach to training staff and volunteers in trauma-informed approaches

### Early intervention - what works?

- Building young people's **skills and confidence to manage conflict, cope with peer pressure and make the right choices**:
  - Help them understand the causes and consequences of conflict; unpack myths and **'de-glamorise' the lifestyle** related to crime, prisons, gangs and weapons.
  - Give children and young people opportunities to **practice techniques to avoid and resolve conflict**, manage anger and communicate.
  - Empower young people to make **the right choices** on the basis of knowledge and support rather than 'scare tactics'. Use **social media proactively** to your advantage and work together to address its use to incite violence.
  - Where possible, consider working with **friendship groups or whole gangs** rather than just individual offenders - and take into consideration the specific circumstances, needs and wishes of **girls and boys**.

Read more [here](#), including a **case study on LEAP Confronting Conflict** - a charity which helps young people with a history of violence to manage conflict

- Recognising the **value of supportive, trusting relationships** and understanding that it takes time to build these:
  - Good mentors can have a **life-changing effect** on at-risk youth. They come from all different backgrounds - and we should value lived experience. Recruiting and training carefully selected individuals who come from similar backgrounds as the young people they are supporting can help with the reach and relationship building in a way other services struggle to do.
  - We shouldn't rush relationship building - **setting artificial deadlines or limits on support doesn't work**. Enable mentors/key workers to give **intensive, longitudinal support** for those who need it.
  - Ensure the mentoring relationship is based on honesty - and that mentors are able to work **flexibly but professionally**, giving young people the power to shape when and how they work with mentors.
  - Relationship building needs to start with the **strengths**, wishes and interests of young people - it should support and challenge young people to explore their **own ideas**, and set realistic goals.
- Ensuring **support extends into the community** and builds on **what is already working well locally**:
  - This includes **providing support in places young people regularly go to** and where they feel comfortable, including music projects, youth clubs, streets, gyms, and shopping centres.
  - In the context of 'postcode gangs' and out-of-centre estates which some kids rarely, or never, leave it is particularly important to offer access to opportunities.
- Making sure interventions for young people involved in violent lifestyles **incorporate, or link with, specialist mental health support services**:
  - The level of need for mental health support among young people involved in serious violence is high. **Gang-affiliated youth face additional barriers to support** (including fear of a criminal past being exposed, losing position within the gang and entering rival territories).
  - Trying out new approaches (i.e. whole family approaches and 'walk and talk' counselling), or providing support in different environments (youth centres, on the streets, cafes) may **help to tackle stigma** and barriers.
  - Make it easier for young people to come forward to talk about mental health and gang pressure (e.g. by running young people / role model-led awareness campaigns and training people with lived experience of gangs to do preventive work in primary and secondary schools and other youth settings).

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on **St Giles Trust** who employ and train reformed ex-offenders and gang members to support and mentor gang-affiliated youth

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on **Fight for Peace** - a charity which uses gyms (boxing and martial arts) to steer young people away from violence, gangs and crime

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on **MAC-UK** - a mental health charity which has moved clinical and key worker support to gang affiliated youth out onto the streets

- Using **sport and arts to engage and promote positive values**. They can be an effective element of wider diversionary or rehabilitative approaches through the development of positive values, activities and relationships.

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on the **Battersea Arts Centre** and [case study](#) on **London Football Journeys** which seek to improve resilience to negative peer pressure and gang culture

- **Finding the right time** to intervene and offer **ways out of violence** - a ‘teachable moment’ when young people may be most receptive to making changes in their lives.

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on **Redthread**, a charity that employs youth workers in hospitals to support young people involved in violent crime

- **Trusting young people as experts in their own lives** - use their expertise and experience to **inform and improve the design, delivery and evaluation** of services. This has the potential to improve reach and ensure that services respond to the needs and wishes of young people. Create a range of levels of engagement so that young people can commit their time and inputs at a level that works for them.

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on **Talent Match** which is a youth employability programme initiated and then designed, delivered and evaluation with young people

### Partnership based approaches - what works?

- Investing in **generous leaders** and creating a **shared vision**:
  - Support leaders who are willing to share responsibility and influence to achieve the common good, and have the drive to **build strong alliances** with individuals, groups and communities who can achieve shared objectives together.
  - Partners should be driven by a **shared set of goals and values**. These should **start with the mission** rather than each partner’s individual priorities.
  - **Bring together** smaller organisations, to produce ideas that are rooted in the experience of communities, with the reach and scope of larger organisations. This has the potential to create the shared system needed to **deliver change at scale**.
  - Don’t only consider what different partners can bring to the table, but also consider the consequences of leaving them out.
- **Building a whole system approach**, where statutory services and the VCS work together to develop a **long-term response** that addresses the root causes of violence:
  - Create a **movement** to recognise serious youth violence as a public health issue that requires a whole community response and a non-judgemental approach. Every member of the society should be involved.
  - Trust the relationships, expertise and experience of VCS groups in supporting young people involved in serious violence, including their commitment to co-production and valuing lived experience. Work also with employers and faith leaders.
  - The lack of long-term funding hinders the ability of those on the frontline to plan ahead - a climate of short-term, project-based funding can **create competition rather than collaboration**.

Read more [here](#), including a [case study](#) on a whole system approach to diverting young people from serious organised crime in Glasgow - led by **Action for Children**

*“What would have taken me on a different path from violence and crime?  
If I’d had the love that I needed.  
If I’d had the care that I needed.  
If I’d had the attention I needed.”*

Young man attending a homeless support centre in Deptford (Skae, 2017)<sup>1</sup>

Voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups across the country hear life stories like this on a daily basis. They work with children and young people who have experienced trauma or conflict from a very young age and their work makes a significant contribution to efforts to prevent young people from getting involved in violent lifestyles. Many work with parents and communities to give them the skills and understanding they need to manage risks. Others provide early interventions for young people, ensuring that they have good mental wellbeing, resilience, and a healthy, stable, and supportive framework, which enable them to make positive choices and divert them from criminal activities. Others help ex-offenders and gang members to leave their past behind by providing support and finding positive alternatives.

**Their work is vital**, because serious youth violence has potentially **devastating consequences** not only for young people themselves, but also for their families, victims and wider communities<sup>2</sup>. Statistically, violence *“remains one of the greatest threats to life of young people”*<sup>3</sup>. Yet we see younger and younger children, including primary school children under the age of ten, **involved in risky behaviours and gangs**. These young people are extremely vulnerable and many have experienced adversity from a very young age<sup>4</sup>.

The Big Lottery Fund is one of the distributors of National Lottery funding and the largest community funder in the UK. Last year we awarded £713m of good cause money raised by National Lottery players to more than 13,000 community projects. This includes funding for VCS organisations to support their work with children, young people and families across the country to find ways out of crime and violence. The VCS can play a unique role here through the trust, connections, relationships and knowledge of what works in preventing and supporting young people involved in violence.

This paper summarises **key learning from the sector on what works in addressing youth violence**. We highlight examples of both proven and promising practice from charities across the UK and share our experiences as a funder about the principles that have worked for us in planning, designing and implementing funding programmes in this field. The paper isn’t exhaustive, but gives a flavour of the key messages and some examples to illustrate these messages.

The paper includes case studies as well as evidence from evaluations, academic reviews and international research. We have covered projects and services that have been funded by us and other funders. We have not covered initiatives led by, or focussed on, law enforcement.



## Prevention - what works?

1. Working together to prevent childhood adversity

2. Improving outcomes for all children through universal services

3. Taking a long-term view

4. Identifying and supporting at-risk children and young people in a timely manner

Early experiences can have a lasting impact on a young person's life. This is why we believe in the power of early action to address youth violence. If we don't act quickly, problems become more complex and difficult to resolve.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which include, for example, trauma, abuse, or bereavement, can have a devastating impact on the lives of children and young people<sup>5</sup>. People who experience four or more ACEs are eight times more likely to end up in prison<sup>6</sup>. Addressing disadvantage at a young age is therefore not just the right thing to do, but also has the potential to reduce the risk of children and young people getting involved in criminal lifestyles<sup>7</sup>.

In our experience, the following actions help to prevent or respond to childhood adversity and ensure support is provided at the earliest possible opportunity.

*"...risks during infancy increase the chances of anti-social behaviour during childhood, which in turn amplifies the likelihood of convictions during adolescence..."*  
Annual report of the Chief Medical Officer, 2012

### 1. Working together to prevent childhood adversity

Local public services and the VCS can improve the way they work together to improve outcomes for children, e.g. by:

- Shifting **culture and spending towards prevention-focused support** and services.
- Taking a [Public Health](#) approach to violence prevention, including working together to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors.
- Ensuring effective partnership-working so that support and services are less bureaucratic and more joined-up<sup>8</sup> (see Section on [Partnership based approaches - what works](#) for more insights and examples).

### 2. Improving outcomes for all children

A good start in life can help to improve outcomes in the long-term. We can take steps to help families and communities to give children the best start in life. For example:

- Supporting children to develop social and emotional skills so they can develop positive relationships and cope with difficult situations<sup>9</sup>. This includes helping children with language and communication, so that they can engage with the world around them<sup>10</sup> - and later on, prevent and manage conflict.

- Investing in **universal services**, such as more supportive, responsive and integrated early years, education and youth services. For example:
  - Building young people’s **resilience and confidence to cope with and bounce back from adversity** through preventative approaches which start at pre- and **primary school levels**. Give young people different avenues to express themselves (e.g. arts, sports, writing, music), help them to take one step at a time to resolve problems, put mistakes in perspective, and give confidence to ask for help and express opinions.
  - Raising the low aspirations and **self-confidence** of some young people - while introducing some realism into the aspirations of others<sup>11</sup>.
  - Providing **positive role models and alternatives** - and encouraging young people to stay engaged in education and positive activities
  - Addressing structural and personal barriers that young people face in accessing employment and training.
- Providing **early, targeted services** for schools and groups at particular risk. Young people are very focused on the opinions of peers and near-peers, so successful attitudinal-change work with young people at risk may be able to positively influence others around them<sup>12</sup>.
- Giving parents and communities the skills and understanding they need to prevent and manage risk factors (e.g. in relation to use of social media / internet, behaviour change, confidence building).

A Better Start is one of the largest and longest running strategic investments in this area.

It’s a ten year, £215 million National Lottery funded programme managed by five VCS-led, multi-stakeholder partnerships across England who are working to change, for the better, the way that local health, other public services and the voluntary and community sector work together to improve outcomes for children.

The programme is three years into delivery has already started adapt and improve existing services to take a more ‘whole family’ approach to ante natal and early years support. Several thousand babies, very young children, parents and carers have also been supported.

### 3. Taking a long-term view

We cannot rely on ‘quick fixes’ to address the issue of violence, so we need to plan for the long-term. This includes:

- **Recognising the level of chaos, trauma and disenfranchisement in many young people’s lives.** Because of this, many require a whole range of specialist support and resources to progress to a place of stability and engagement. This also includes understanding the economic factors behind involvement in organised crime - e.g. some young people do it to provide for their families.
- **Giving charities and front-line staff the time and space they need to support their beneficiaries.** It can take a year or more to start to achieve tangible results. Many of our grantholders work with young people **without setting time limits** - they place the emphasis on **achieving sustainable changes**.
- Being ‘patient’ with new programmes and projects; giving them the **time and space to adapt and change** as they learn from delivery. For example, some ‘gang’



projects have changed their name after learning from young people that they find the term ‘gang’ **stigmatising** and instead prefer talking about friendship groups (which may involve group offending).

#### 4. Identifying and supporting at-risk children and young people in a timely manner

If we are going to support young people at risk of getting involved in violence, we need to know who they are. This means identifying at-risk young people in a timely manner, before problems escalate. We then need to take action on what the data tells us, and train adults who work with young people to identify risk factors and related behaviours.

- Joint working between statutory agencies and voluntary and community (VCS) groups needs to **extend from collecting data, to sharing and making use of it** to identify and support at-risk youth at the earliest opportunity.

For example, at [HeadStart Wolverhampton](#), schools and charities sit on partnership meetings attended by a range of local statutory partners, including the police. The purpose of the meetings is to identify young people who need positive alternatives to crime or youth violence, and to signpost these young people to [HeadStart](#) for early, preventative support.

The [St Giles Trust](#) trains reformed ex-offenders and gang members to run [programmes](#) in educational settings (including primary schools) to talk about the realities and consequences of a life of crime. Their first-hand understanding of the lives and challenges at-risk youth face on a daily basis enables them to reach out to those who are under the radar but already involved in serious violence.

- **Training professionals and the wider community to recognise and understand risk factors** and behaviours through trauma-informed approaches. These approaches enable staff and volunteers to understand that ‘challenging’ behaviour can be an indicator of underlying need, and to work more constructively with young people. This can include conversational tools to help staff and volunteers to hold structured conversations with young people.

Traditionally, such training has been aimed at professionals such as teachers but our experience suggests that **training needs to extend to other adults in the community**, from the police, school nurses and youth workers, to sports coaches and dinner ladies.

- Taking into consideration that **young people at risk are particularly good at identifying other young people at risk**; agencies and professionals look at the risks through their own lens, which may not be as effective or up-to-date as **young people’s instincts and senses around emerging risks**<sup>13</sup>. This is one of the many reasons why it’s important to value the voice of young people and those with lived experience of youth violence in the design, delivery and evaluation of policies, programmes and services in this field (see the section on [We can learn from young people](#))
- Ensuring additional support is available for **young people going through transitions** (e.g. from primary to secondary school, going in to care, moving between youth and adult prison, etc.)<sup>14</sup> They are particularly at risk of being groomed into gang

activity. Other young people at greater risk are those excluded from mainstream education and those in care homes.

### Example - A 'whole-community' approach to training staff and volunteers in trauma-informed approaches, [HeadStart Cornwall](#)

[HeadStart](#) is a National Lottery funded programme that explores and tests ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10-16 in six communities across England between 2016 and 2021.

The partnership in [Cornwall](#) works with experts from [Trauma Informed Schools UK](#) and the [Centre for Child Mental Health](#) to deliver training to schools, statutory agencies and community organisations so that their staff can recognise and respond to the early signs of mental health problems. The training covers developmental deficits and ACEs and is designed to help staff identify the needs that might lie behind behaviours which interrupt a child's learning and development.

The training also provides all school staff - including sports coaches, catering staff, and teachers - with the conversational and relational tools that help practitioners to hold structured conversations with a young person. This training has been extended to adults in local community groups, to create a 'whole-system approach', designed to give all local children access to an 'emotionally available adult' in order to boost their resilience.

Since January 2016, in-depth training has been delivered in over 100 schools with more than 250 people, including governors, teachers and support staff, taking part alongside community-based workers. Staff say that this has given them the skills and confidence to be effective in an area where they have often felt inexperienced and anxious.

## Early intervention - what works?



### 1. Give young people the competences and confidence to manage conflict and cope with peer pressure

Anger and disagreements are part of life. However many young people who are involved in violent lifestyles face high, sustained levels of conflict every day<sup>15</sup>. This may result from chaotic family life, involvement in gangs or bullying. Conflict can have devastating effects, but when managed well it can, *“build grit and resilience, develop emotional intelligence and bring about positive change”*<sup>16</sup>.

We have learned that the following can work in building young people's skills to manage conflict and negative peer pressure.

- Giving young people an opportunity to **practice techniques** to:
  - **Avoid and resolve** conflicts,
  - **Manage** anger,
  - **Communicate** more effectively, and
  - Show empathy<sup>19</sup>.

This includes training professionals and volunteers in conflict prevention and management - and delivering such training by trained peer mentors, trainers and role models, using **fun, engaging interactive techniques** like drama, role play and games.

- Helping young people to **understand the causes and consequences of conflict**, including changing the way young people think about violence and reinforcing reasons for being non-violent<sup>20</sup>. For example, the [Ben Kinsella Trust](#) runs workshops to educate young people about the consequences of knife crime, how to make safe decisions and good friends, and the realities of prison life. This kind of intervention needs to **start at primary school age** and extend to all schools affected by gangs and knife crime (currently some schools are reluctant to ask for or accept help for reputational reasons)<sup>21</sup>.
- Where possible, **working with friendship groups and young people involved in group offending (or gang activity)** rather than just individuals. This approach acknowledges the need for social networks and placing value on peer group relationships to change thinking.
- Empowering young people to make the right choices on the basis of knowledge and support rather than 'scare tactics'<sup>22</sup>. Train people who have been part of a gang or have a history of offending to **expose the realities of gang life and weapons** - *"de-bunking myths and stereotypes around crime, weapons and gangs, and de-glamourising the lifestyle"*<sup>23</sup>.
- Ensuring that services take into consideration the specific circumstances, needs and wishes of young men and women who are - directly or indirectly - involved in violent lifestyles. This may involve addressing particular issues around self-esteem for **girls and young women** and healthy masculinity and relationships with girls and women for **boys and young men**<sup>24</sup>.
- **Addressing the use of social media platforms** to glamorise, display and incite violence. This can be done, for example, through training, awareness raising and campaigning, and effective, proactive use of social media by frontline services and workers (e.g. youth workers using social media to pick up signs of increased tension between high-risk individuals and gangs and then acting on this information by attempting to reduce such tension whenever conflict appears imminent)<sup>25</sup>.

#### Insights from National Lottery funded research

Recent research shows that 'fights and arguments with peers' is one of the greatest sources of worry for school children and young people aged 9-13. This was indicated by seven out of ten (70%) young people who spoke to [HeadStart](#) evaluators<sup>17</sup>.

Four out of ten (40%) spoke about experiencing extreme feelings of anger that is *"explosive, difficult to control or deal with"*<sup>18</sup>.

### Example: LEAP - helping young people with a history of violence to develop skills and confidence to manage conflict

Leap Confronting Conflict is a national youth charity that provides conflict management training and support to young people. They support children and young people who face high, sustained levels of conflict, such as violence<sup>26</sup>. Half have a history of offending (50%) and/or have been involved in violent behaviours (53%)<sup>27</sup>.

They give young people an insight into the causes and consequences of conflict, develop their skills and confidence to manage such situations and teach them to take responsibility for their actions<sup>28</sup>. Their interventions address topics such as danger, space and territory, status and reputation, enemies and revenge. Social media, sexual abuse and violence are also discussed.

The approach was developed in collaboration with young people with lived experience of violence and is delivered as a five-day training course using interactive methods including role play, drama, games and discussions - designed to be fun and educational<sup>29</sup>.

Independent researchers interviewed 35 former Inspiring Impact participants who had taken part in the charity's activities 20 months earlier. They concluded [note the small sample]<sup>30</sup>:

- The approach is helping to reduce arrest, offending and violence (86% of participants who had a history of offending had not offended since and 58% of participants with a history of violence had decreased or stopped their involvement in violent behaviour),
- Three-quarters have been involved in less conflict (74%) and/or helped others involved in conflict (71%), and
- Nine out of ten were continuing to use the techniques and approaches they had learned (91%).

*"The course gave me other alternatives when I come to certain situations, like not just always fight people and follow that first instinct", Male 20 years<sup>31</sup>*

See <http://www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk/> for further information

## 2. "It's all about relationships" - building trusting, supportive relationships underpins the work of most charities

One thing missing from the lives of many young people who are involved in gang activity and serious violence is supportive, caring relationships. Helping young people to build **relationships based on respect, trust and kindness is fundamental** to the work of charities that we support.

Good mentors or key workers can help to do just that. Young people tell us that having an opportunity to spend time with someone who has time to listen and who 'cares' can be **life-changing**. Good mentors come from many different backgrounds. They can be volunteers, professionals or peers. Our research with young people from Talent Match tells us that an effective mentor<sup>32</sup>:

- Has time to listen, cares, and is honest and non-judgmental,
- Works flexibly but professionally, giving young people the power to shape when and how they work with their mentor,
- Gives intensive, longitudinal support and confidence to deal with challenges,
- Gives the feeling that young people are understood and respected as individuals,

- Doesn't allow external pressures or targets to affect the mentoring relationship (e.g. by setting artificial time, frequency or 'location' boundaries),
- Has scope to refer to or use resources flexibly to address practical barriers (e.g. clothes for job interviews), and
- Supports and challenges the young person to explore his / her own **ideas and strengths**, and set realistic goals, and motivates them to achieve goals that they have set for themselves.

Many young people in this target group have a **deep mistrust of statutory agencies** and therefore voluntary groups which have access to and the trust of the community are in an ideal position to provide mentoring and build bridges and trust.

But **relationship-building shouldn't be rushed and it should start with young people's interests, wishes and strengths**. Our grantholders tell us that the value of mentoring and peer support lies in the quality of the relationships formed - therefore time and care needs to be taken to find the right fit. [St Giles Trust](#), a charity that supports over 24,000 people a year, uses carefully selected, professionally trained individuals who come from similar backgrounds as the young people they are supporting. This includes reformed former gang members and ex-offenders, who offer real understanding of the situations their beneficiaries face and can relate to the experiences they are going through. The majority - 90% - of their team, from frontline staff to management, are ex-offenders. This plays an important part in the Trust's ability to reach out to and build relationships with young people in a way other services struggle to do.

An international, systematic (academic) evidence review<sup>33</sup> of mentoring in the context of violence reduction among young people found that mentoring can be cost-effective if it succeeds in averting high-risk behaviours in 1.3% of participants.

Mentoring may be effective in violence reduction but the evidence is mixed on the impact of mentoring on arrests and reconvictions.

#### Example: St Giles Trust - employing and training reformed ex-offenders and gang members to support and mentor gang-affiliated youth<sup>34</sup>

[St Giles Trust](#) is a charity that provides intensive, specialist help for young people affected by gang-related violence. They also prevent at-risk young people from becoming involved in violence. The Trust supported 24,000 people in 2016/2017 - this includes hundreds of young people involved in violent lifestyles.

The key feature underpinning the St Giles approach is the belief that people with first-hand experience of successfully overcoming issues, such as gang involvement and serious violence, hold the key to positive change in others.

For this reason the charity employs and trains reformed ex-offenders and gang members as mentors, who provide practical and psychological support to young people leaving custody to help them to avoid offending, to exit gangs and find training or employment. This is delivered through the [SOS project](#) which has been running for over 11 years and was developed by an ex-offender who wanted to find a way of breaking the cycle of offending by providing intensive support for newly released offenders.

The SOS project mentors<sup>35</sup>:

- Don't treat clients as 'offenders' - and they avoid a 'clinical' approach to the relationship building.
- Don't set artificial time boundaries for support - this may include being contactable 24/7 or accompanying clients to appointments for an entire day.



- Challenge young people’s assumptions about the legitimacy and necessity of their offending (e.g. by getting them to think about the consequences of their violent actions on their own lives, immediate families and victims).
- Challenge to consider the influence of associates/friends, and offer positive activities (job clubs, apprenticeships) as an alternative.

The SOS case worker approach was evaluated in 2012/2013. The majority - 73% - of offenders and gang members interviewed felt that it was important that their caseworkers were ex-offenders themselves, as *“they could relate to them and felt inspired that they too could turn their lives around”*<sup>36</sup> [note small sample size]. Nearly nine out of ten clients (87%) interviewed said that engaging with the project had changed their attitude to offending.

*“If it wasn't for [the SOS case-worker], I'd have been in jail“*

*“I had a stupid, ignorant attitude but they taught me that you don't need to think like that.”*<sup>37</sup>

See <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk> for further information

### 3. Extending support to places and spaces where young people feel comfortable

For all young people, we need to provide support in places where they feel comfortable and where they go regularly. Our **support needs to extend from schools and statutory services into the community - and build on what is already working well locally.**

This includes music projects and studios, youth clubs and centres, gyms and sport venues, cafes, shopping centres, public transport and on the street. For example, [OnSide Youth Zones](#) are designed to give young people aged 8-19 (up to 25 for those with a disability) somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to in their leisure time. They are built in deprived areas, where there aren’t many alternatives to streets or homes. They are often used as a hub for other youth services, such as mental health services and alternative education.

A **flexible location** is particularly important in the context of postcode gangs, as it may be dangerous for some young people to leave their neighbourhoods. Many young people involved in antisocial behaviour in out-of-centre estates affected by poverty rarely, or never, **leave their estate to access opportunities.**

*“When we opened Wigan Youth Zone we expected it would be a few months before we had solid enough relationships with young people to disclose personal issues. However within the first few weeks we had 23 referrals to social care. There were many more who we were able to support and signpost such as; young people displaying low level mental health issues, high level alcohol use, young people struggling with their own identity... We only reached these young people because of the universal offer in the Youth Zone, a warm and safe environment where young people feel they can reach out to staff and volunteers for support.”*

Phil Marsh, the Wigan Youth Zone

[Fight for Peace](#) is an example of an evidence based, National Lottery funded initiative, which starts the engagement process at a gym, using boxing and martial arts to steer young people away from violence, gangs and crime. These sports were chosen on the basis of young people’s interest in them. They can also help instil discipline and respect, and enable participants to channel their aggression and build self-confidence.

**Example: Fight for Peace - an evidence based intervention that uses boxing and martial arts to steer young people away from violence, gangs and crime**



Fight for Peace (FFP) is an approach that has been tested through direct work in communities affected by violence in 25 countries and has been evaluated nationally and internationally<sup>38</sup>. Fight for Peace has been running in Northern Ireland and England for many years and is in the process of being introduced in Wales and Scotland too with support from the National Lottery.

The project delivers primary-, secondary- and tertiary- level interventions to reduce youth violence. The project uses boxing and martial arts because combat sports can attract young people for whom risk is normalised.

Across the 800 participants taking part in 2011, it is estimated that Fight for Peace has resulted in 165 crimes being avoided<sup>39</sup>. With the cost of the project running at £580,000, evaluators believe that this model has delivered a benefit to cost ratio of £4.42 for every £1 invested<sup>40</sup>.

More than two-thirds (71%) of participants say that they are less likely to commit a crime and be a gang member as a result of their time on the project. Most feel calmer (71%) and more feel confident and ambitious (94%).

Key success factors (in addition to the choice of sports):

- Long-term support: participants are involved for an average of 22 months. Around 70% of participants wouldn't have found a similar activity in the area.
- Voluntary participation: Nothing is compulsory and young people are supported to build motivation and determination.
- Diverse engagement methods: Young people are engaged through workshops delivered in schools, they are referred by peers and youth services, and are identified by outreach workers in collaboration with police in 'hot spot' areas of high crime<sup>41</sup>.

*"Fight for Peace is more than a gym, it's a family"*, Dexter, London

See <http://fightforpeace.net/> for further information

## 4. Incorporating, or linking with, specialist mental health support

It has been estimated that up to one in three young people who offend have an **unmet mental health need** at the time of the offence<sup>43</sup>. At the same time, a range of barriers can hamper young people's access to the support they need, including *"stigma associated with mental health issues, a lack of awareness, preference for self-reliance and access difficulties"*<sup>44</sup>.

In our experience, interventions targeting young people involved in violent lifestyles should incorporate, or link with, specialist psycho-social approaches and improve their mental health and wellbeing.

- It is important to **tackle stigma** and make it easier for young people to come forward to talk about mental health. The charities that we work with do this for example through role model or young people led mental health **awareness raising** campaigns in schools and by **simplifying the language** (e.g. by moving away from medicalised or academic language such as using the term 'conversation' rather than 'screening').

### Insights from research

Gang-affiliated youth experience additional barriers to mental health services, including:

- Fear: of criminal behaviours being exposed, losing position within the gang, and entering rival territories.
- Reluctance to recognise mental health problems in a culture where 'toughness' is the norm.
- A lack of trust in statutory services.
- A lack of engagement with other services that might signpost young people into support.<sup>42</sup>

- In turn, mental health services should be **non-stigmatizing<sup>45</sup> and relevant**. For example, our HeadStart partnership in [Blackpool](#) has learned that traditional counselling formats 'turn off' young people<sup>46</sup> who find it hard to talk about difficult issues within a formal environment. Instead, they use 'walk and talk' counselling, which means counsellors work with young people whilst they are doing an activity of their choice. This could be baking, sewing, playing golf or walking to school.
- Quick fixes for mental health problems don't work - some charities have committed to up to four years of support for gang-affiliated youth.
- Professionals and volunteers should be trained to be sensitive to potential mental health issues. Beneficiaries of the [Black Country Talent Match](#) programme advocated for the introduction of Mental Health First Aid training for all staff to increase their awareness and understanding.
- A **whole family approach** may be needed, especially if the whole family has been through significant adversity and there are wider family issues behind a young person's involvement in violence.
- Finally, **mental health services should be provided in a variety of different settings**. [MAC-UK](#) in Camden has moved clinical and key worker support to gang affiliated youths' own environment, including streets and cafes<sup>47</sup>.

**Example: [MAC-UK](#) - 'taking what works in the clinic out onto the streets'<sup>48</sup>**

[MAC-UK](#), a mental health charity for excluded young people, was established by a Clinical Psychologist Dr. Charlie Howard, to make mental health accessible to excluded young people involved in gangs and violence in Camden.

Together with young people, the charity has developed the [Integrate Model](#), which is a psychologically-informed approach that takes psychologists, social workers and youth workers out of traditional service settings and into the community to engage with young people on their own territory. The service focuses on those with high levels of offending and social exclusion.

Therapists work to build up young people's trust and deliver 'street therapy' in places where young people feel comfortable, such as streets, cafes and public transport. Street therapy uses recognised psychological theories such as attachment theory and lifespan development theory in an adaptable way.<sup>49</sup>

The Integrate approach involves young people for two to four years by providing them with the opportunity to work towards their own goal or a project (e.g. music, sport, theatre and business creation). As well as support with areas such as training, employment and access to health and social services, young people benefit from therapeutic interventions and motivational work.

[MAC-UK](#) has worked with 900 young people intensively and in the long-term since the charity was established in 2008<sup>50</sup>. They estimate that the cost per hour per young person in contact with the service is around £156, with an annual cost of £3,000 (based on 2014/2015 prices).<sup>51</sup>

See <https://www.mac-uk.org/> for further information

## 5. Sport and the arts promote positive values and are a great hook for engagement

Sport and art projects are used by both small and larger charities across the country either as a **diversionary or rehabilitative approach to tackling crime**. The appeal of

sport and the arts can act as a ‘hook’ for engagement and generate a sense of excitement, “*similar to feelings experienced as part of a gang.*”<sup>52</sup> They provide meaningful activities for those young people who are alone after school due to their parent(s) working full time - and who are at risk of getting involved in crime. They can also provide the right environment and influences to **promote positive values**, including taking on responsibility and **learning how to resolve conflicts constructively**<sup>53</sup>.

Research shows that the following conditions have to be met to maximise the effect of sports and arts on youth violence<sup>54</sup>:

- Sport and art projects need to be long-term in nature if, “*they are to build trust and change attitudes*” - and when possible, included within a **wider developmental programme of education and support**.
- **The role and skills of the coaches and trainers are critical for**, “*engendering a positive ‘socio-moral’ environment*”<sup>55</sup> - therefore staff in arts and sports projects need to be trained and supported.
- Sport and art projects need to be well targeted in terms of both their location and the engagement of young people<sup>56</sup>.

#### **Example: Battersea Arts Centre, The Agency**

The [Agency](#) provides an opportunity for 15-25 year old young people in London and Manchester to turn their project, business and event idea into reality. The approach is modelled on the highly successful Brazilian project, *Agencia Redes Para Juventude*, led by Marcus Faustini.

The young participants, the ‘Agents’, take part in creative workshops, and are supported by a mentor to develop their research skills and build professional networks. They explore the needs of their local area, go out onto the streets to research and invite the local community to give feedback. They also meet with professionals in their chosen field to gain expert advice.

These have been set up to support them with the development of an ‘idea’ that they are passionate about. At the end of the 12 week process the Agents have a chance to pitch their idea to a panel and receive up to £2,000 to implement it. Examples of funded ideas include:

- ‘Vendors Mechanics - Wheel come to you’. This is an idea developed by Leon Douglas, aged 21, to provide bicycle mechanic training for ex-offenders.
- Rupa Roshni Yoga is an idea developed by Rupa Monk, aged 18, who used her time at the Agency to develop yoga and mindfulness classes for children who suffer, or are at risk of suffering, from mental ill health. She works with social services and local schools.

#### **Example: London Football Journeys - Improving resilience to negative peer pressure and gang culture through community and youth work and sports**

[Football Journeys](#) to bring together young people from diverse areas of London to play football, socialise, break down barriers and share stories and experience. Their work is based on five distinctive steps:

- The former beneficiaries visit schools and youth clubs to raise awareness.
- Beneficiaries are grouped into teams and taught how to produce (script, direct, interview and shoot) a short video that introduces their lives and the area they live in.

- The teams watch and discuss the videos to get an idea of the different personalities, areas and lifestyles.
- ‘Home’ and ‘away’ football exchanges take place in each team’s postcode with professional football clubs facilitating each session. Activities include teambuilding and communication games, mixed football matches, a tour of the youth club or school, sharing food and youth-led awards.
- Opportunity to continue as a project ambassador and co-produce future activities

A small scale evaluation of their work<sup>57</sup> found that 71% of participants demonstrated improved resilience to negative peer pressure and gang culture. Eight out of ten (85%) demonstrated improved confidence in themselves and 90% demonstrated improved communication skills.

*“...London Football Journeys expand your mind... Many are stuck to one culture - gang culture. Meeting new people and going to new places shows more opportunities what I could do in life except for being in a gang. I’m more open minded to what life could be like”,* young person

*“Young people are given the opportunity... networking, socialising, and exploring different parts of London, something young people don’t due to postcode gangs”,* Youth Coach

See <http://londonfootballjourneys.org/> for further information

## 6. Timing matters for engagement and support

Successful engagement isn’t just linked to a place but also to the timing of the intervention. Support needs to be given at the right time in the young person’s life.

[Redthread](#) is a national charity dedicated to integrating trauma-informed youth work into the health sector. It places youth workers in Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments in areas where the numbers attending due to youth violence are high. This approach is based on their experience that **a moment of vulnerability has the potential to be a time of change** - they call it the “teachable moment.”<sup>58</sup> This is a brief window when a young person who has just been shot or stabbed might be **most receptive to making changes in their life**.

### Example - Disrupting the cycle of violence through interventions at A&E departments, Redthread<sup>59</sup>

[Redthread](#) runs a Youth Violence Intervention Programme in hospital emergency departments in partnership with the major trauma network. The aim is to reduce serious youth violence by changing the support available to young victims of violence.

Hospital-based youth workers are embedded in the emergency departments of three hospitals in London (Kings College, St Mary’s and St George’s). They work alongside clinical staff to engage young victims of serious violence. They have been trained to work in a hospital environment and have access to their clients’ records.

The youth workers focus on the “teachable moment” - when young people are out of their comfort zone, alienated from their peers, and coming to terms with their injuries. In this moment many question the choices that have led them to the situation and specialist youth workers try to use this moment to encourage the young person to pursue a change in behaviour and lifestyle.

Not everyone wants to engage - about 80% want to have a conversation but 40% want to continue the conversation and support after leaving the hospital<sup>60</sup>.

*“Often they will start off with the most urgent needs. Food. Drink. I always feel it’s a test. They want you to do something practical for them. They might want a Lucozade. One guy wanted me to ring probation because he was worrying about a breach. I did that. Then he called probation to check that I’d done it. Once he realised I could deliver, he was cool.” Lucy, Redthread (a quote from the Guardian)<sup>61</sup>*

See <http://www.redthread.org.uk/> for further information

This idea works for both boys and girls. Research has identified specific, time-limited windows of opportunity when **gang-associated girls also become easier to identify and more likely to accept support**. These windows include: expulsion from school, the imprisonment of gang member boyfriends, the birth of a child, a visit to a sexual health clinic, and admission to A&E.<sup>62</sup>

Other charities do **similar work in prisons**. [Catch22](#) has been providing ‘gangs workers’ to prisons since 2013. They help inmates to talk about feelings and fears and to explore with them what other lifestyle choices they could make. They do one-to-one work and run mediation, conflict management and group sessions (e.g. weekly ‘circles’ where painful emotional issues can be aired and discussed)<sup>63</sup> to identify teachable moments, in which gang-involved prisoners may be questioning their involvement and recognise that they need to exit gang life to avoid going back to prison. This may also include a realisation that friends and associates from the gang may not be as loyal or dependable as once imagined<sup>64</sup>. The work of gang workers has **contributed to a significant reduction in the number of violent incidents in the prisons** where they work.

## 7. We can learn from young people's expertise and experience

The Big Lottery Fund follows a ‘People in the Lead’ approach which puts communities and users of the services we fund at the heart of social change. We believe that **people with first-hand experience of an issue are well-placed to identify and shape potential solutions**.

**Young people who have been involved in gangs and crime help to drive the work of many charities** that are successfully diverting young people away from violent lifestyles. They co-produce - are involved as equal partners in every aspect from the design and commissioning of services and recruitment of staff and trustees, through the delivery and promotion of the activities, to their evaluation. Charities tend to create a **range of levels of engagement for young people, so that they can commit their time and inputs at a level that works for them**.

We have identified three key benefits from co-producing our programmes with service users. Co-production can: 1) broaden the reach of services, 2) ensure services respond to the needs and wishes of target audiences, and 3) have a positive effect on the transferable skills of participating young people (particularly leadership, teamwork, decision-making and communication skills).

### Insights

Co-production with communities is recommended in [NICE \(2016\) guidelines for community engagement in public health interventions](#).

This type of service-user involvement is also recommended by research guidelines for the development of complex interventions<sup>65</sup>.



Our learning on how to involve young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of services<sup>66</sup> meaningfully includes the following:

- This is a simple concept but can be tokenistic - **genuine co-production takes time and resource to set up and run**. Start by making sure **all staff and partners understand both the benefits and the subtle, but important, differences in ‘consultation’** (young people asked what they think but have limited influence) and **‘participation’** (young people can make suggestions and influence outcomes) vs. **‘co-production’** (young people working as equal partners, sharing decision-making).
- Involve young people **at a level that they feel is appropriate to them at the time** and build in ‘progression’ opportunities for involvement (e.g. they may want to start by contributing with ideas, or volunteering at events and slowly build their confidence and skills to take part in decision-making roles).
- Make young people feel welcome, encourage them to challenge existing ways of working; **respect their contributions**. Ensure participation is voluntary and they need to be able to change their mind.
- If young people take part in board or partnership meetings, ensure the meetings are run and written information is provided in jargon-free, Plain English and in an age-friendly format that is easily understandable
- Make sure the **young people understand how they can benefit from getting involved**. For example, highlight the opportunities to influence the services they and their friends could make use of, new skills and experiences, and opportunity to meet new people and get involved in fun group activities
- Make sure you celebrate their work and ensure staff, partner organisations and young people know what has changed as a result of their contributions.
- Think how to gather the views of people from different backgrounds and with different experiences. If they are expected to represent a wider ‘constituency’ of young people, then this needs to be factored in.

**Example - Using the expertise and experience of young people to inform and improve the design and delivery of services, Talent Match<sup>67</sup>**

Talent Match is an £108 million National Lottery funded youth employability programme initiated by and designed with young people. It works with young people who are furthest away from the labour market. The participants are heavily involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. They:

- Take part in partnership, management and commissioning boards of the local partnerships as equal partners - in this way they are able to monitor, scrutinise and provide feedback on new plans and are involved in key decision-making regarding commissioning, service design and delivery, and quality assurance
- Research and evaluate existing services
- Run campaigns and promote services among peers and employers
- Train staff in partner agencies and interview candidates (staff and providers)
- Speak at conferences and events and promote the programme and young people’s voice in the youth employment policy arena



Talent Match is fairly unique in its ability to involve and draw on experiences of young people from diverse backgrounds when many other youth-led bodies tend to bring together young people from comparatively privileged backgrounds. For this reason commissioners, Local Enterprise Partnerships, councils, job centres and private employers have started to invite and even commission Talent Match youth panels to give feedback on their strategies and services.

See <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/england/talent-match> for further information

## Partnership based approaches - what works?

1. Involving the VCS isn't just desirable but essential

2. Generous leaders and shared vision are key ingredients of successful partnerships

3. Build a whole system approach

Organisations working around serious youth violence frequently come together to tackle the problem. These partnerships take different forms:

- Cross-sector partnerships - bringing together key players from different sectors,
- Local place-based collaboration, and
- Local and national organisations working together around a particular theme (i.e. knife crime or social media)

In our experience, to tackle the increase in serious youth violence we need an approach that places **young people and/or those with lived experience of serious youth violence and the VCS** at the heart of such partnerships in order to understand, acknowledge and address the root causes of violent behaviours. This also includes **working across sectors** in a seamless partnership to **develop a long-term response**.

### 1. Involving the VCS isn't just desirable but essential

Voluntary and community groups can add significant value to the work of statutory services in the field of youth violence. This is because they are able to represent and support young people who are 'hidden' or disengaged from other services. They do this by **building on their local connections, trusted relationships, and the long and comprehensive track record** in engaging and supporting at-risk youth.

Their services add to the depth and breadth of emotional, practical and health support that young people involved in violence need. This spans from prevention and early action, to emergency and crisis point interventions, to rehabilitation. They also have the flexibility to innovate and try out new approaches<sup>68</sup>.

In our experience, when working with the voluntary sector, where possible:

- Make a long-term commitment - the lack of long-term funding hinders their ability to plan ahead and commit to the support young people need and deserve:

- Providing core funding enables them to plan and deliver more effectively, and
- Building in paid time for pre- and post- project planning and evaluation can yield further benefits in terms of better evidence and impact<sup>69</sup>.
- Partnerships should bring together smaller organisations, including grassroots groups, to produce ideas that are rooted in the experience of communities, with the reach and size of larger organisations. This has the potential to create a **shared system needed to deliver change at scale**.

Smaller groups may find it difficult to collaborate in a **climate of competition for short-term, project-based funding opportunities**. Joint projects and bids may be helpful here.

- Understand the challenges faced by small grassroots organisations which focus on frontline delivery - their capacity to get involved at a strategic level is limited and **should be supported**.

They are often asked for input at a programme design stage, but are sometimes **excluded from the wider strategy development**<sup>70</sup>, delivery or funding.

- Value their expertise - many groups have cutting-edge expertise and years/decades of experience in supporting young people involved in gangs and crime, including lived experience of the challenges faced by those who they are supporting.

## 2. Generous leaders and shared vision are some of the ‘key ingredients’ of successful partnerships

Partnership working isn’t easy. In our experience, key ingredients to successful partnerships include the following:

### Generous leadership

A willingness to share responsibility and influence to **achieve the common good** is important, coupled with a drive to **build strong alliances** with individuals, groups and communities who can achieve shared objectives together.

Generous leaders are those who are aware of their place in the wider ecosystem and how sharing their contribution, knowledge and skills can complement those of others for the good of civil society. They **achieve their mission by starting with the bigger picture** rather than just what their organisation can do on its own.

### Shared vision and goal

Partners should be driven by a shared set of goals and values. These should start with the wider ecosystem, rather than each partner’s individual

### Generous leaders

- Are open to ideas, curious and patient
- Have a shared sense of community
- Are concerned about nurturing shared values and how different roles and skills can complement each other for the common good
- Support communities to define their own aspirations
- Don’t blame, have gratitude and care about inspiring others
- Celebrate!
- Listen...deeply
- Have humility
- Trust colleagues, give and receive feedback
- Are rooted in place, part of an ecosystem, part of a wider movement

priorities. In other words, the focus should be on overall systems, not just on individual projects or organisations.

This can include creating a **movement** to recognise serious youth violence as a non-judgemental public health issue (as opposed to only as a law enforcement matter) that addresses the root causes and requires a whole community response. Every member of the society should be involved - from professionals such as GPs, nurses, dentists, police, teachers and social workers, to sports coaches, youth workers, dinner ladies and night time bus drivers who may support, treat, witness or counsel young people involved in violence through their work.

#### Example: A public health approach to violence, Scotland

In 2005, the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was established in Scotland and in 2011, Scotland became the first country in the world to adopt a public health approach to violence and knife crime, *“treating it like a disease to be cured with education, health and social work interventions”* (The Scotsman, 2018). It’s directly funded by the Scottish government and the police work with those in the health, education and social work sectors to address the problem.

The approach has called in all members of the society, including nurses, dentists and even vets and hairdressers, to look out for the signs of violence. A significant amount of mapping is done to identify gang members who are called in to listen to the police, victims of violence, former offenders and paramedics and learn about the new approach to tackling the problem of serious violence. This includes help in finding positive alternatives to gangs and violence (e.g. housing, relocation, employment, education) and a zero tolerance approach on the streets.

The VRU team is a mixture of researchers, police officers, civilian staff and former offenders who have turned their lives around and are now seeking to help others do the same.

The results have been dramatic. Glasgow’s murder rate halved in a decade and significant reductions have also been seen in other areas (e.g. serious assault and possession of an offensive weapon).

See <http://actiononviolence.org/> for further information

At local level, ensure that staff, partners, community and other stakeholders are engaged, motivated and committed to the vision. This includes a shared commitment to co-production.

#### Composition and relationships

- Don't only consider what different partners can bring to the table, but also **consider** the consequences of leaving them out. It may be helpful to look at the issue from the perspective of 'a life of a young person involved in serious violence' and all the organisations that may, or should, be involved.
- Building strong relationships with partners who can make things happen is important, as well as relationships with peers you can learn from, and the community.

#### Example: Benefits of information sharing

By working with partners including the police, health and schools, [HeadStart Kent](#) has developed an initiative to support young people affected by domestic violence. Participating schools receive daily reports of domestic abuse incidents so that staff can identify vulnerable young people early on who may need additional support to help them cope at difficult times.

- Find ways to work with faith leaders and employers, including big companies and their supply chains as well as SMEs; they can provide placements and employment opportunities, which is particularly important for those who have dependents.

### Setting boundaries

- Defining accountability is important, for example through defined and specialised roles and monitoring/reporting responsibilities.
- Ongoing information sharing is essential - and systems for sharing learning within the partnership and externally.
- Targets should be realistic - jointly defined and take into consideration the time required to build up a partnership.
- Regular communication and visible senior commitment are important.

## 3. Building a whole system approach

A whole system approach brings together statutory services with local and community groups building on the other key ingredients identified above. Working together in this way:

- Allows for holistic provision, which goes beyond standard models of support; and
- Issues can be tackled collectively in order to avoid duplication.

Partnership-working shouldn't just take place at strategic level but should extend to joint working, communication and practice sharing between frontline workers.

Potential methodologies for building whole system approaches include Collective Impact and Systems Change frameworks. [Collective Impact](#) is a framework to tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems. It is an innovative and structured approach to making collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organisations and citizens to achieve significant and lasting social change.

Systems change is about altering a current system to create a new 'normal' that works better for everyone involved. Systems change can often be achieved by reducing siloed working and enabling partnerships and collaborations so that actors in the system work better together. Systems change involves focusing on the root causes of social issues and working to create systems that act early to prevent problems. This is taking place in Glasgow for example, where a national children's charity, Action for Children, is working with all key sectors to support communities in which organised crime are a way of life for many children and young people.

**Example: Action for Children, Scotland - A whole system approach to diverting young people from serious organised crime**

[Side Step](#) is a three year early intervention and diversion service delivered by [Action for Children](#), a national children's charity, together with Police Scotland, Glasgow City Council's social work department and the Scottish Government.

Side Step works with 12-18 year olds in Glasgow who are at risk of, or already involved in, serious organised crime. They may be involved in selling and distributing drugs, distributing counterfeit

money and goods, violence and anti-social behaviour. Around 95% are misusing drugs and four out of ten have been in secure care/custody.

Side Step is a product of partnership-working between charities, community groups and all leading players in the field of community and youth justice. Led by Action for Children, key strategic partners have helped to shape the delivery and project content, ensuring there is no duplication of services and fit with intended outcomes. Members include One Glasgow, Reducing Offending Strand, Glasgow City Council, Police Scotland, Scottish Government, Community Justice Glasgow, the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice and the Wheatley Group. Action for Children also works with other charities and groups, including football clubs and Spotted Scotland. In 2014, the project won a Centre of Excellence for Children in Care Award for Most Innovative Partnership.

Support is provided in a variety of formats: one-to-one, peer mentoring and group work and the level of intensity varies depending on the needs of the individual. Peer mentoring is a key component of the activity - peer mentors have relevant lived experience, knowledge of the local area/issues and are now living a crime-free life. They therefore have a unique perspective of the young person's life. Their work is mainly carried out during evenings and weekends, with a member of staff always on call. Support is also available for the whole family. The project activities take place in non-threatening environments, such as community halls.

A small, independent evaluation of earlier interventions found that after six months on the programme<sup>71</sup>:

- 75% of young people are considered to be living a more stable life and haven't re-offended, and
- 62% are engaged in social activities/training and employability.

The evaluation also suggested that engagement can lead to a 'ripple effect' meaning that as one young person moves away from organised crime, others such as friends and siblings may follow. Glasgow City Council Social Work have estimated that the activity has directly contributed to savings of £1m as a result of preventing young people entering custody or care.

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<sup>17</sup> Stapley, E., Deighton, J. (2018) *Evidence Briefing #2: 14 May 2018. HeadStart Year 1: National qualitative evaluation findings - young people's perspectives*. Big Lottery Fund, Evidence Based Practice Unit, University College London, Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. Please note that the research is based on a small sample.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Based on experience of LEAP Confronting Conflict.

<sup>20</sup> Based on experience of LEAP Confronting Conflict.

<sup>21</sup> XLP youth charity (2018) *Girls and gangs*. The Centre for Social Justice.

<sup>22</sup> Based on learning from the [SOS+](#) project run by St Giles Trust.



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- <sup>23</sup> Based on learning from the [SOS+](#) project run by St Giles Trust.
- <sup>24</sup> Insights shared by frontline workers from LEAP Confronting Conflict.
- <sup>25</sup> Irwin-Rogers, K. Pinkney, C. (2017) *Social Media as a Catalyst and Trigger for Youth Violence*. Catch22.
- <sup>26</sup> Leap Confronting Conflict (2018) *Improving Prospects 2016/2017. Evaluating the long-term impact of Leap's flagship community-based programme*.
- <sup>27</sup> Lee, J., Batten, R., Harris, F. (2018) *Measuring the longer-term outcomes for graduates of Leap Improving Prospects programme, 2016/2017*. Brathay Trust Research Hub.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Lee, J., Batten, R., Harris, F. (2018) *Measuring the longer-term outcomes for graduates of Leap Improving Prospects programme, 2016/2017*. Brathay Trust Research Hub.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Leap Confronting Conflict (2018) *Improving Prospects 2016/2017. Evaluating the long-term impact of Leap's flagship community-based programme*.
- <sup>32</sup> The Centre for Youth Impact (2018) *Can you bottle a good relationship? Learning about mentoring in the Talent Match programme*. Big Lottery Fund; Big Lottery Fund (2018) *Talent Match, Achievements and lessons for policy and programme design*.
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- <sup>34</sup> Information in this case study is based on the website of the [St Giles Trust](#) and their research reports, including: Hopkins, B. et al. (2016) *Evaluation of the SOS+ intervention. SOS project*, St Giles Trust. Coventry University; The Social Innovation Partnership (2014) *An Evaluation of St Giles Trust's SOS Project*; St Giles Trust (2018) *2017 Annual review. Developing the power of peer advisors*.
- <sup>35</sup> The Social Innovation Partnership (2014) *An Evaluation of St Giles Trust's SOS Project*.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> The Social Innovation Partnership (2014) *An Evaluation of St Giles Trust's SOS Project*
- <sup>38</sup> See for example, Ecorys (2012) *Sport Scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction*. Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. It draws on validated research methodologies from outside of the sport sector, including from economic impact assessment, health research and the literature on youth crime. The methodology builds on the Laureus research project, Teenage Kicks (2011). This study deepens the knowledge base provided by the Teenage Kicks report, through conducting new primary research across four sport for good projects in the UK, Italy and Germany, using an innovative mixed methods approach.
- <sup>39</sup> Ecorys (2012) *Sport Scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction*. Laureus Sport for Good Foundation.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Goldman, E. (2013) *UK's Lottery funding to give young people a sporting chance with Fight For Peace*. ADCC.
- <sup>42</sup> Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K., Perkins, C. (2015) *The mental health needs of gang affiliated young people; A briefing produced as part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme*. Public Health England.
- <sup>43</sup> Based on the work of MAC-UK.
- <sup>44</sup> Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K., Perkins, C. (2015) *The mental health needs of gang affiliated young people; A briefing produced as part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme*. Public Health England.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>46</sup> Note, this service is not targeted to young people involved in violence
- <sup>47</sup> Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K., Perkins, C. (2015) *The mental health needs of gang affiliated young people; A briefing produced as part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme*. Public Health England.
- <sup>48</sup> This has been prepared on the basis of information from the MAC-UK website and findings from Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K., Perkins, C. (2015) *The mental health needs of gang affiliated young people*. Public Health England; MAC-UK (2017) *Transforming mental health services for excluded young people. Annual report, 2016/2017*; Hutchison, E. (2016) *Exploring the Economic Impact of MAC-UK's Music & Change Project in Camden*. A Pro Bono Economics Report.
- <sup>49</sup> Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K., Perkins, C. (2015) *The mental health needs of gang affiliated young people; A briefing produced as part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme*. Public Health England.
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- <sup>51</sup> Hutchison, E. (2016) *Exploring the Economic Impact of MAC-UK's Music & Change Project in Camden*. A Pro Bono Economics Report.
- <sup>52</sup> Ecorys (2012) *Sport Scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction*. Laureus Sport for Good Foundation
- Cohen, M. (2015) *A qualitative evaluation of London football journeys*.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> Ecorys (2012) *Sport Scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction*. Laureus Sport for Good Foundation
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- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Ecorys (2012) *Sport Scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction*. Laureus Sport for Good Foundation
- <sup>57</sup> Cohen, M. (2015) *A qualitative evaluation of London football journeys*.
- <sup>58</sup> Information from the Redthread website and publications
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- <sup>61</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>62</sup> XLP youth charity (2018) *Girls and gangs*. The Centre for Social Justice.
- <sup>63</sup> Neustatter, A. (2014) *The jail that has reduced violence by helping inmates escape from the gang*. The Guardian.
- <sup>64</sup> Setty, E. et al. (2014) *Gangs in Prison: The nature and impact of gang involvement among prisoners*. Catch22.
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- <sup>66</sup> Big Lottery Fund (2018) *Talent Match: Achievements and lessons for policy and programme design*.
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- <sup>68</sup> Skae, T. (2017) *The violence virus. A community response to reducing youth violence in London*. The London Community Foundation.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> Redthread website and publications

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