

FIGHTING KNIFE CRIME

WHAT'S UP
SNAKE?



THIS IS WHAT
THEY USED
TO STAB ME, I
TOOK IT FROM
THE HOSPITAL.



Connect With Us

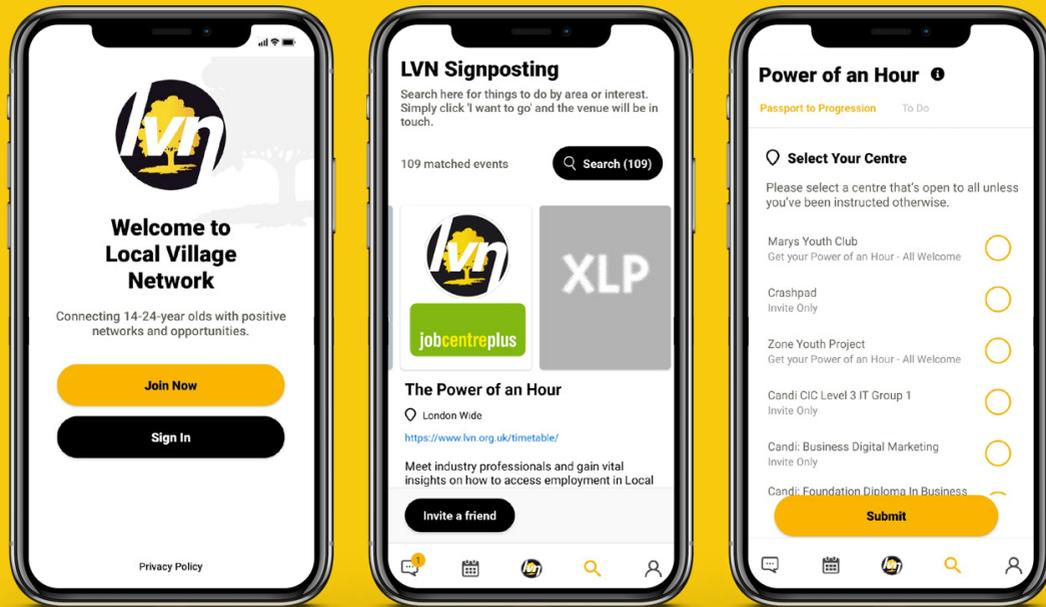
Issue 2 - September 2021



www.fightingknifecrime.london

LOCAL VILLAGE NETWORK

BRINGING NETWORKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE



FREE SIGNPOSTING APP

Share support and employment opportunities

Put your opportunities directly into the hands of the young people who need them

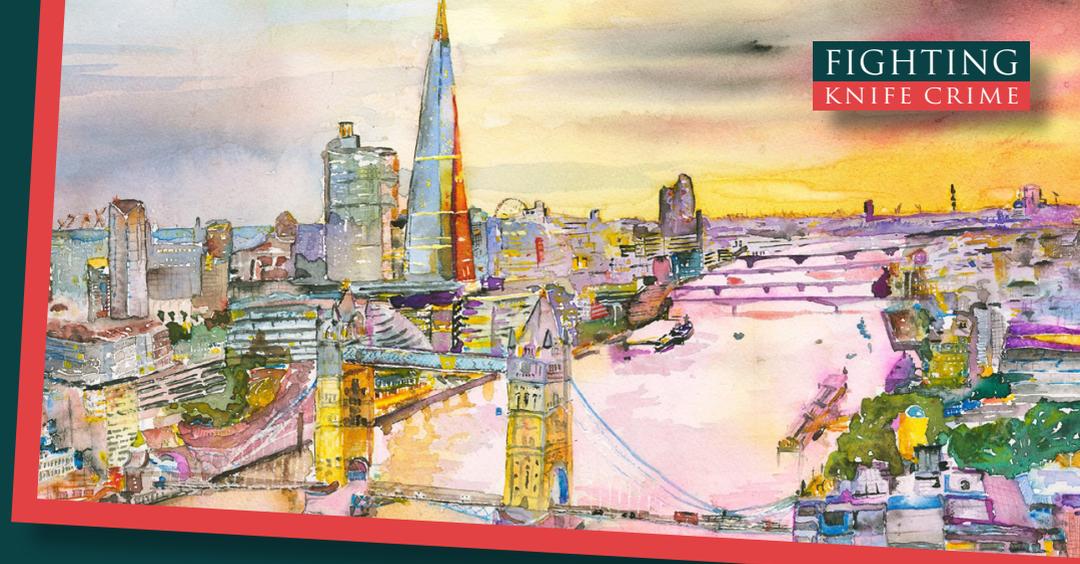
THE POWER OF AN HOUR

Everyone has a story to tell and skills to share

Volunteer an hour to share insights and career advice with unemployed young people in online sessions.

Sign up now to get started!

www.lvn.org.uk



FIGHTING
KNIFE CRIME



Issue 2

www.fightingknifecrime.london

Contents

- 4 Welcome to our second issue of Fighting Knife Crime London
- 6 As the world find its new normal, we can't go back to business as usual when tackling youth violence.
- 8 Streetbase, Youth Engagement best practice, a peer-led approach
- 11 Educating young people about knife crime through peer led Learning
- 14 Realising the potential of arts as a youth intervention
- 17 The pen is mightier than the sword
- 20 We can't stop and search our way out of Knife Crime

Fighting Knife Crime London Magazine is published by Iconic Media Solutions Ltd. Whilst every care has been taken in compiling this publication, and the statements contained herein are believed to be correct, the publishers do not accept any liability or responsibility for inaccuracies or omissions. Reproduction of any part of this publication is strictly forbidden.

Welcome to our second issue of Fighting Knife Crime London's online magazine

Dr. Nadia Habashi FRSA , Researcher, Fighting Knife Crime London

It has been a very busy 4 months since we launched Fighting Knife Crime London on the 1st June 2021. We continue to add to our extensive directory of organisations and ensure that we provide the latest research, reports and statistics on Knife Crime and Social Justice.

When we developed Fighting Knife Crime London, we thought that it would be a resource of interest for people in the UK. We are pleased, that we have regular readership from the USA, Australia, China, Europe and Malaysia.

We are fortunate that we have sustained a positive media presence at both local and national level, due in part to the determination and drive of our founder Bruce Houlder and the skills of our energetic and innovative team at Iconic Media Solutions- Craig, Alex, Eren and Lauren. So much so, that on the 2nd June 2021, Bruce was invited to meet officials at No 10 Downing Street, who have been impressed with what we have achieved and our ambitions for the future. He has been invited to speak at the Public Policy Exchange Conference – Combatting Knife Crime: Making Communities Safer & Working in Partnership to Tackle Serious Youth Violence, on the 5th October 2021. We are delighted that Bruce has been nominated for a Criminal Justice Alliance Award.

In this issue, we have a range of articles from individuals and organisations who are making positive contributions to

understanding and tackling knife crime at the political, research, and community level.

We are especially impressed with the innovative and creative work of Anthony Aina and Steven Okeya of Penificent. Anthony and Steven have developed a comic series to tackle the issue of knife crime and mental health. They write about their incredible journey and why they feel the creative arts, is an important vehicle to connect with young people between the ages of 8-14 about Knife Crime and Mental Health.

At Fighting Knife Crime London, we value the importance of research to better understand and address knife crime. So we were delighted to read an innovative report from Community Links, 'Arts as a Youth Intervention'. It is a thoughtful and considered report which looks at the role that the Arts play in promoting well-being. Chi Kavindele, Director of Community Links writes about the importance of the research within the context of how we 'Build Back Better' and shares exciting news about their recording studio which was generously funded by the Rolling Stones.

Working together and involving communities is critical, if we are to successfully tackle knife crime. We are therefore greatly encouraged by the innovative work of BTEG, led by its Chief Executive, Jeremy Crook OBE and Black Men 4 Change (BM4C) in the creation of the Alliance for Police

Accountability (APA). The aim of the APA is to develop charters on community policing and public health, focussed on developing solutions from within Black communities and policing bodies to build trust and develop new frameworks for accountability. We wish Jeremy and the APA success in their innovative project and will keep you updated on its progress.

Involving young people in initiatives which affect them, is crucial if we are to turn the tide on knife crime and serious violence. Jane Bruseke, Youth Engagement and Participation Manager, Waltham Forest Council provides us with an overview of Streetbase, a ground-breaking project which involved young people from conception (including bid writing) to delivery. Streetbase, is an entirely youth-based project with trained young people engaging their peers, building relationships, signposting to activities and support and being positive role models. Jane has always been a trailblazer in innovative youth engagement and participation and her Young Advisors, Jess and Katy, are truly inspirational. Our experience with Jane Bruseke and her team at Waltham Forest Council is that where they lead, people follow. We feel that this innovative project will be one to watch!

Educating young people about knife crime is key to empowering them to make the right choices and decisions. The impressive work undertaken by our partner, the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, Sheffield Hallam University, in educating young people in Sheffield is underpinned by the principles of peer led learning. The project involves law and criminology students developing interactive and challenging materials, resources and classes which they

deliver to schools in Sheffield to engage young people in discussions about knife crime and joint enterprise. This is a commendable approach which connects two groups of young people through learning and empowerment and situates Universities as an important conduit for social justice.

We are especially delighted that the Joint Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime and Serious Violence, Florence Eshalomi MP, has provided us with a powerful overview of the 3 key actions needed to tackle knife crime.

1. Creation of a statutory definition of child criminal exploitation
2. All professionals and agencies, such as local authorities, police, health bodies, and others, work together.
3. Youth Services to be a statutory provision so that all young people can access free, high quality youth services to help them develop in their formative years.

We are committed to working with the APPG on Knife Crime and Serious Violence, our partners and others to push for these 3 key actions. We hope that you will support us in this critical push for change.

We hope you enjoy the second edition of our newsletter. We would welcome your thoughts for future content, innovative practice and ideas for collaborative working.

With best wishes

Dr. Nadia Habashi FRSA
Researcher, Fighting Knife Crime London

As the world find its new normal, we can't go back to business as usual when tackling youth violence.

Florence Eshalomi MP, Co-Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime and Serious Violence

As the MP for Vauxhall and Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction, I see the devastating impact knife crime is having on families and communities of those affected. We see life-changing injuries that victims have to live with for the rest of their lives. Most tragic is the avoidable loss of life—mostly among young, Black males. Only last month just a short walk away from my constituency office near the Oval cricket ground, a 16-year-old was stabbed.

We know the journey towards committing knife crime starts from a young age. More than a fifth of offences involving knife crime were committed by children under 18, some as young as nine years old. It is impossible for me to imagine a scenario where a nine-year-old child could be involved in something like this- but that's the reality of what services are seeing. There are children behind every single one of the statistics. It's important to remember too that a 17-year-old is also still a child. They may look and sound more mature, but they are still a child, both in the eyes of the law and according to our values as a society. But the criminal justice system doesn't always see this. Many young people involved in youth violence have been exploited and groomed - they aren't simply 'perpetrators' who have committed a criminal act. They are also

victims of exploitation and these children need our help and our protection.

The National Youth Agency report "Hidden in Plain Sight" highlighted that gangs have been running recruitment drives of vulnerable children, especially girls, because they are less likely to be stopped by the police. And we know that young people were coerced into dressing as key workers during lockdown so that they could move around freely with a supply of drugs. The threat to young people is ever changing and we all need to remain vigilant to keep children and young people safe.

At the APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction, we have heard from frontline workers and experts about measures that the UK Government can take to help tackle this epidemic. And we must acknowledge that it is an epidemic—children are dying and many more feel unsafe and traumatised in their everyday lives. We cannot continue to put this in the "too difficult" box to solve, as unfortunately we have done for many years.

One relatively simple step that the APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction is calling for, and believes would go some way to protecting young people, is to create a statutory definition of child criminal exploitation. There is currently no overarching statutory definition which has meant that there is no one consistent agency response to safeguarding children

and the consequence is that this risks some children falling through the cracks. The UK Government should take the opportunity it now has to amend the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to make this change right now - we cannot wait because children's lives and futures are at risk.

Secondly, key to tackling the root causes of knife crime is ensuring that all professionals and agencies, such as local authorities, police, health bodies, and others, work together. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill introduces Serious Violence Partnerships, which will for the first time see a statutory duty placed on agencies to work together to tackle serious violence. However, those duties do not specifically include putting plans in place to prevent, reduce and tackle **child** criminal exploitation and serious **youth** violence. This is a missed opportunity to put the safeguarding of children front and centre of our approach.

Finally, if we view social care as the fourth emergency service, then youth services are the fifth. Often young people are labelled 'hard to reach' or blamed for not engaging with services. However, we know local youth services and activities are a vital tool to reach and engage young people. During the pandemic 'See, Hear, Respond', a Government funded programme delivered by Barnardo's in a partnership with 87 other charities reached 27,000 young people at risk of criminal exploitation. Youth workers are in a truly unique position to build trusting relationships young people, and they hold vital information that could support other agencies like the police, schools, and social services to better protect and safeguard children at risk of harm.

The APPG I Co-Chair has campaigned for youth services to be a statutory



Florence Eshalomi is the Labour MP for Vauxhall and was previously a London Assembly Member.

provision so that all young people can access free, high-quality youth services to help them develop in their formative years. Youth services must be part of the holistic approach, linking up with public health, children's social care and housing. I pay tribute to the youth workers, voluntary groups and community groups across Vauxhall and right across the country, who are working flat out to support our young people day in, day out. When most of us are at home with our families or on vacation, they are working—some of them on a shoestring budget, and some of them chasing funding application after application to support our young people.

Over the last decade, we have seen reductions and in some cases closures of vital youth services which is a false economy. If we are to tackle knife crime, serious violence, and criminal exploitation of children we must do a better job of preventing it in the first place. As we begin our recovery from the pandemic and find a new normal, we can't go back to business as usual in terms of tackling youth violence.

Florence Eshalomi MP is Co-Chair of the APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction alongside **Taiwo Owatemi MP**.

Find out more about the group at preventknifecrime.co.uk



Katy & the Streetbase team in Walthamstow Central

Streetbase, Youth Engagement best practice, a peer-led approach

Jane Brueseke, Youth Engagement & Participation Manager, Waltham Forest Council

We launched Streetbase in Waltham Forest in May half term 2019. It's a groundbreaking concept; a programme set up by the Southwark Young Advisors and trademarked to and run by existing Young Advisors (<https://youngadvisors.org.uk/>) an entirely youth-led initiative with trained young people engaging their peers on the streets, building relationships, signposting to activities and support, and most importantly, being positive role models.

By the end of that first year, only 7 months in, our team of specially trained Young Advisors and YIAG (Youth Independent Advisory Group) members, all aged 16-25 had surpassed targets and engaged over 700 young people.

We had applied to the Mayor's

Young Londoners Fund, set up to address youth violence in the capital, and from the start the programme was co-produced, two of our young people co-wrote the bid with me, the only application with written input from young people affected by the issues young Londoners face.

And now as then, I want most of this article to come from the words of the young people direct, so will be reproducing what they have written for a variety of articles about the programme they have worked on now for almost 3 years.

23-year-old Katy was recruited from the existing Young Advisors team to coordinate the programme in Waltham Forest. Katy is a dynamic young lady, a natural leader who is destined for great things (watch this space, she has

recently been selected to stand as a councillor!)

In an article from November 2019, Katy explained what Streetbase did:

"We work alongside our partners including the local youth engagement police officers and the borough's Anti-Social Behaviour team ...Being young people born and educated in the borough, we tend to know most of the places where young people tend to meet...it is my job as the Coordinator to devise a rota and send our Streetbase 'patrollers' out to...engage with...young people. Our patrols go out...for 3 hours per patrol. We have four Streetbase members on each patrol, each with a lead who is at least 18, is DBS checked and has safeguarding training.

During our engagement we find out... key things from young people: their age, postcode, interests, suggestions for the borough...[and if they have] special educational needs, attend a pupil referral unit, are not in education, employment or training, are in care or a care leaver, or a young carer.

They just need to be...approached in the right way, by young people who often have similar life experiences. Not all young people have access to the council or know how to go about creating change in their community. Streetbase has given often underrepresented voices the chance to shape the future and a sense of ownership over their borough.

Building relationships...Streetbase patrollers all have their own background stories and journeys, which any young person on the street may be able to relate to. Therefore, all Streetbase patrollers are encouraged to build

connections and maintain relationships with the young people they encounter. This way, most of the young people we engage with can feel supported and listened to by someone who's been in their shoes.

Imagine young boys speaking to a Streetbase patroller who has been a part of a gang or been through the criminal justice system. Think of the impact their experiences can have on their lives, in just a matter of minutes. This is exactly how Streetbase can help tackle youth violence. We link in with the young people on the streets and can direct them to a positive path that may secure their future."

Jess, 18, is a Streetbase lead who recently wrote an article about it's impact from her view: "Streetbase Waltham Forest could provide you with endless anecdotes about young people engaging with issues affecting their community."

About who the team engages she says: 'These are young people who've come through the criminal justice system, who've struggled with poor mental health, who've been through the care system. These are the voices that are really valuable, but they aren't always put to the forefront enough.'

"Young people like this, with direct experience of some of today's most pressing...issues can give us incredibly valuable insight on how policies are impacting people. To encourage them to speak up about the things that concern them, we need to make sure these conversations are accessible.

A key factor in the success of Streetbase is that it approaches young people, rather than waiting for young

people to come to it. Conversations can be had anywhere, and only take a few minutes. Additionally, the similarity in age creates an environment where young people feel able to express their views without fear of judgement.

To attract a youth voice, that youth voice needs to feel valued, and to feel valued it needs to be listened to.

Responses gathered from young people on Streetbase patrols are always fed back. Information on their interests is added to a database that connects young people to opportunities being offered in their area. Their opinions on issues, such as stop and search or community safety, are quoted in council scrutiny meetings, meaning that the conversations had with young people on the streets help make decisions and shape policy.

I've been a member of the Waltham Forest Streetbase team since its formation. Every patrol I've been on has resulted in interesting conversations with young people who are far more engaged...than many give them credit for. The skills and confidence I have developed have been invaluable to me and I know that in saying this, I also speak for the other members of my team.

The approach to youth engagement and empowerment adopted by Streetbase shows how communities can influence local...decision making. Waltham Forest council has invested time, training and money into a team of young people passionate about promoting change in their community. In doing this, they have managed to reach hundreds of other young people who might otherwise never get the chance to



The team doing a socially distanced patrol in 2020

be involved in these discussions.

To truly empower a community, it is necessary to engage with all of its members. The youth voice is there, we just need to make sure we are listening.”

You can follow Streetbase on Instagram at: [Streetbase_wf](#) or contact them at:

streetbase@walthamforest.gov.uk

If you are interested in setting up a Young Advisors scheme and running Streetbase, please contact:

info@youngadvisors.org.uk

Links:

¹ Katy's Medium blog on Streetbase: <https://medium.com/reducing-violence-in-waltham-forest/streetbase-young-people-listening-to-and-learning-from-each-other-6e7947394141>

² Katy's article for the Youth Justice Board on Streetbase work in COVID: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/peer-to-peer-engagement-in-youth-justice-a-frontline-view>

³ Jess's article: <https://www.newlocal.org.uk/articles/young-people-streetbase/>

⁴ The Independent article: <https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/long-reads/citizen-patrol-groups-streets-london-knife-crime-streetbase-waltham-forest-a9314446.html>



Image © Sheffield Hallam University

Educating young people about knife crime through peer led Learning

Sue Bulley, Deputy Head of Department & Human Rights,
Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Hallam University is the home for the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice – a vibrant and innovative, leading centre for social justice and human rights. The main activities run by the centre include research, global engagement, impact on policy, professional training, and advocacy. Its values are those of widening access to justice and education, the promotion of human rights, ethics in legal practice, equality, and respect for human dignity in overcoming social injustice. The Helena Kennedy Centre's scope of expertise covers human rights, criminology, law, policing, and probation and work on high-profile projects in a variety of human rights and social justice areas.

The Helena Kennedy Centre is also dedicated to joining the fight against knife crime. One of the centre's projects aims to tackle knife crime by educating young people in Sheffield. Students who are studying on both law and criminology courses at Sheffield Hallam University develop interactive and challenging materials, resources and classes that they then deliver to schools in Sheffield to engage young people in discussion about knife crime and joint enterprise. Pupils learn about the law, their rights, where to go for help and support, and practice scenarios. This supports a peer-led approach to learning as the majority of our undergraduates are young adults. A high proportion of our students are from widening

participation backgrounds, and large numbers of students live in South Yorkshire. This means that some of our students will also have lived experience relating to this issue. By working on the schools projects, this means that undergraduates themselves are gaining more knowledge about knife crime and joint enterprise, and are able to engage in honest dialogue with the school pupils about the experiences they may be having, and to find out more about what happens to them.

Thanks to partnerships with external organisations, students have a chance to find out more about the knife crime situation outside of Sheffield and learn from the experience of on-the-ground workers, as well as ex-offenders and victims themselves. One of the special seminars was led by Blair Adderley, a former knife crime victim who currently works on the Ubuntu Police-Youth Roundtable project London, which aims to improve relations between young people and the police. In his work, Blair draws from his own experience of negative encounters with local police officers.

As a result of student exposure to the issue, a number of our criminology students have gone on to successfully complete placements with local charities who work with young people who are vulnerable to becoming involved in knife crime. Placements are also hosted by South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit, a multi-agency initiative adopting public health approaches to violence reduction. The teaching team and our students have adapted really well to working remotely throughout COVID-19. We are therefore currently seeking

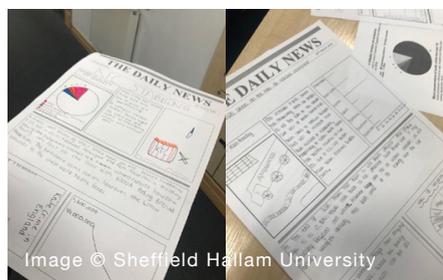


Image © Sheffield Hallam University

organisations to work with who may have a current issue that they would like student support with. Students work in small teams to respond to a brief which has been provided to them by an external organisation. Students engage with academic and policy research to provide an evidence-based solution to a real workplace issue. They produce a poster to summarise their research and take part in a group presentation to explain and justify their chosen approach. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact **Nichola Cadet**.

As our work continues, we are honoured to be able to join forces with Bruce Houlder QC, launch a Sheffield arm of the Fighting Knife Crime London and continue to educate and raise awareness on the issue of knife crime. We will continue to support our students to work on the initiative, which means that students are able to develop their civic responsibilities, employability skills and make a difference to society.

www.shu.ac.uk

Sheffield Hallam University | Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 90th Birthday

Join Us

Tutu Foundation UK is hugely excited to join our friends around the world to celebrate Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 90th birthday! To join us, please use the RSVP link below (SPACES ARE LIMITED):

RSVP

OCTOBER 7TH, SOUTH AFRICA HOUSE LONDON, FROM 5.15PM

FULL DETAILS CAN BE FOUND AT:

EVENT DETAILS



Take a chance...

LEARN HOW TO MARKET YOURSELF & **BUILD A BUSINESS THAT'S TRENDING**

FREE ONLINE BUSINESS EVENTS THROUGHOUT 2021

www.vcpb.org





Image © Tony Boyle

Realising the potential of arts as a youth intervention

Chi Kavindele, Director, Community Links

At Community Links, we have recently published an important piece of research, 'Arts as a Youth Intervention' in which we push the case for why activity within 'the place', namely arts, can be critical not only for tackling youth violence, but also when it comes to helping young people and communities to thrive. Whilst we recognise that the role of arts as a youth intervention falls outside traditional metrics. We believe that it adds value to society through strengthening community relationships, improving social mobility, educational performances and health and well-being.

The arts have played an important role in promoting health and well-being across communities. Research by the Arts Council England has evidenced that a higher frequency of engagement with arts and culture is generally associated with a higher level of subjective well-being¹. Access to the arts helps us to live well in our communities² and is a reason for investment. With 1 in 4 people experiencing a mental health problem of some form each year,³ and an increased need for support around anxiety and depression for young people during the pandemic,⁴ arts engagement can lessen these health challenges. Investigating

the direct and indirect impacts of arts and cultural experiences on secondary children, the University of Nottingham found that 45% of students sampled said that engagement in the arts helps them relax and reduces stress⁵. The study brings to light the profound impacts that sustained engagement with arts and culture can have on mental health and how to support the health and well-being of young people.⁶

As the country's focus turns to how we 'Build Back Better', we believe that now is the time for a renewed focus on how communities can reposition themselves to support young people's mental and physical health, wellbeing, and job prospects. Young people are being **left behind in our uneven recovery** in the job market, and the link between **lack of employment and poor health is clearly documented**. Our research argues that arts as a youth intervention has a central role to play as part of a meaningful recovery.

Through community-based arts programs, young people can develop soft skills and an enhanced sense of personal agency, contributing to workplace success. In communities with pockets of deprivation, such as ours in East London, arts initiatives provide young people with a channel to develop soft skills like communication and teamwork which can be translated to the working world. Studies have found that structured art activities **lead to increases in transferable skills by up to 17%**.

Our research presents the case for an inclusive cultural policy that genuinely reaches grassroots levels and calls for greater investment in this area. As local authority spending on crucial services **has almost halved over**

the last decade, more young people are reaching crisis point. Over time local networks that acted as a safety net for young people living in the poorest parts of the country have disappeared and the role of the arts in community settings has faded. The key to progress



Image © Dave Hogan

will be coming together to address inequalities in arts engagements and promote inclusive arts interventions for young people.

At Community Links, we are putting arts as a youth intervention at the centre of what we do. We are proud to **unveil our new recording studio** - Links Studios - generously funded by the Rolling Stones and others. Links Studios will host a range of programmes that combine music participation and enrichment activities



Image © Tony Boyle

to build tangible skills for the creative economy, alongside soft skills and more traditional core qualifications in English and Maths.

Moreover, our state-of-the-art recording studio and formal study programme will be invaluable in a diverse borough like ours as a vehicle to help tackle inequality in the arts sector. Presently there are significant inequalities when it comes to those working in the arts. 18.2% of people working in music, performing and visual arts grew up in working-class households. When it comes to ethnicity, only 4.8% of employees in music, performing and visual arts come from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Arts as a youth intervention has a role in reversing long-standing inequalities and creating a supportive environment for young people to grow professionally and personally. However, for this potential to be realised, policymakers need to focus on 5 key areas:

1. Ensuring that art intervention reaches everyone
2. Developing a cross-governmental strategy for engaging young people in the arts
3. Bridging the digital divide
4. Ensuring that art as a youth intervention is a strategic aim to promote growth and social cohesion in communities.

5. Enabling young people to take the lead on arts intervention programmes

The Arts as a Youth Intervention research paper was written by my colleagues, Murshad Habib (Policy and Learning Manager) and Rachael Smith (Policy and Communications Officer). We are grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund for supporting our work.

Community Links is proudly part of social business Catch22.



Chi Kavindele
Director, Community Links

www.community-links.org



¹ https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Value_arts_culture_evidence_review.pdf
² https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf
³ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/#References>
⁴ <https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/digital-mental-health-services/#headline1>
⁵ <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/tracking-arts-learning-engagement>
⁶ Community Links (2021) Art as a Youth Intervention p9.
⁷ <https://www.community-links.org/advice/help-through-crisis/>



Anthony Aina (left) and **Steven Okeya** (right)

The pen is mightier than the sword

Anthony Aina and Steven Okeya, Penificent

After we met on a college course, we wanted to combine our life experiences growing up in a poorly funded South London Borough, and use the skills we developed from our creative digital media course to develop a comic series.

Our inspiration was Marvel comics. In particular, the ability to design relatable characters, create captivating stories with important social messages. We were conscious that the X Men Marvel characters, were used to address the civil rights movement in America and were influenced by iconic

civil rights leaders, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. For instance, the character of Magento, wanted to force equality between mutants and humans as he was angry that humans had outcast mutants as they were gifted. Whilst, Professor X wanted to create peace through non-violence by using his high IQ in the hope that there would come a day when there would be no discrimination between humans and mutants.

Like the creators of Marvel comics, we also wanted to develop exciting stories with social messages in a



creative and entertaining way. So we created a social enterprise, which we hope becomes a voice for the young generation and enables us to better connect with young people between the ages of 8-14.

We have developed a range of diverse characters of various ethnic backgrounds - who are not exclusively minorities. This was because, whilst we were growing up the superheroes we saw, were mainly white and it was difficult for us to connect to them and their goals. Which is why we have deliberately created more relatable

characters and characters of colour, as relatability is important to us and to our diverse client group.

One of our core objectives is tackling the issues of Knife Crime and mental health through our comic series. As a social enterprise, we have developed a young, vibrant organisation, which encourages young people to aspire for more and help them communicate/channel their emotions and problems while creatively addressing current issues through comics and creative workshops.

We believe that it's important for entrepreneurialism and the creative

arts especially aimed at young people to be properly supported.

Like many people, we are concerned that young people are sometimes portrayed as a present and future problem. We believe, passionately, that young people can play a crucial part in changing this negative narrative and provide solutions to the lack of opportunity in our communities. This is because we recognise, that many young people have become extremely successful and influential as they have used new technologies and mediums; YouTube, TikTok, blogs, social enterprises

and businesses, to deliver content or products that relate to young people as they understand what young people want. However, when there is no support for young people, their dreams are quickly shattered and they are pushed into jobs not careers. Without supporting and encouraging young creatives, we will fail to discover people who can bring new art and ideas into the world. There is so much talented art out there which isn't being displayed enough. Let's work to change this!

For us, collaboration is the key to making real change.

We are conscious that some organisations believe that they can solve all Knife Crime and social issues. However, it's important that organisations are realistic and state what they can and can't do. Otherwise, this can give false hope to people who are marginalised and vulnerable.

At Penificent, we specialise in the prevention of Knife Crime by changing the mindset of young people. We know that our work isn't the best fit, for young people in gangs, or those involved in criminal activity. This is why we strongly believe that organisations should collaborate. As it is only by working collaboratively that we can better understand and address Knife Crime.

Anthony Aina and Steven Okeya
Penificent

info@penificent.com
www.penificent.com



We can't stop and search our way out of Knife Crime

Jeremy Crook OBE, Chief Executive, Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG)

As each week passes, we hear another horror story of a young Black male's life cut short due to knife crime, and sadly the government response seems to always be a punitive one - i.e. more stop and search and tougher sentencing. But we cannot 'stop and search our way out of this problem. It is not something that should just be left to the police to solve. They are part of the solution, but only a part.

The failure of policy makers at all levels to deal with systemic racism contributes to the negative pipeline that for some young people leads to their departure from mainstream education, a lowering of their aspirations and then entry to the youth justice system. And for too many Black boys and young men, premature deaths from knife crime.

The Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) is a London based national charity which works collaboratively to improve education and employment success rates for Black, Asian and Mixed heritage young people.

We are involved in activities to remove the barriers that prevent these young people from realising their potential and we use our connections to help remove racism from the criminal justice system.

Racism, ethnic bias and poverty are significant factors in the ethnicity opportunity gap. BTEG focuses on the

talents of young people. Enabling them to become confident and equipped to succeed in a competitive world of work where merit can often lose out to familiarity.

BTEG established and supports the Equal initiative. The EQUAL initiative brings together a range of organisations from the voluntary sector and academia committed to building an equitable criminal justice system. Transforming the criminal justice system, is a long, painful, yet necessary road which we must take. Whilst we have in theory, moved from a police **force** to a police **service**. Many young Black males still experience the **force** and not the **service**. They experience over-policing and racial profiling and too many police services are not representative of diverse communities they serve.

Whilst the police do not cause poverty, they do contribute to a climate which says to young Black males '*you are not part of society, and we can treat you differently and unfairly*'. Evidence shows us that both the police and prison service use disproportionate force against young Black men. Which is why the policing of Black communities and specifically young Black people matters greatly. Everyone wants to live in communities where there is trust, confidence and respect between Black people and the police. However, it is not something that can just be left solely the police to solve. We can

only **undermine and stop** knife crime when individuals, families, schools and youth/community organisations, local councils, employers and the police and probation **work together**.

BTEG works within the system and formally participates in government, mayoral and police advisory boards. We serve as critical friends - we are independent and not paid by the police. We also advocate for greater investment in our neighbourhoods and community organisations. The prevalence of drugs, the lack of good employment opportunities and the negative stereotypes applied to young Black males make social mobility feel out of reach.

In response to youth violence in Black communities the CEO of Hackney Council for Voluntary Services, hosted a range of intergenerational Black male conversations. These were insightful, emotional, empowering and led to the birth of **Black Men for Change (BM4C)** movement.

Within a short period of time BM4C had attracted funding from the Greater London Authority, (GLA) Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to test out a new approach involving a handful of Black community hub organisations and BTEG's role model and mentoring volunteers. The programme allows local community hubs to support young Black men at risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence.

BM4C does not put labels or categories on our young people. Not all young Black men at risk of being drawn into youth violence are from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds -but many will be. The BM4C programme is known as **Change 21** and each community partner delivers a unique package

of activities to engage and stimulate the young men. For instance, **Code 7** in Brixton provides opportunities to nurture and encourage young men with an interest in music and music engineering and provides a platform for young men to be creative and entrepreneurial. BM4C is underpinned by valuing our African heritage and the importance of mutual respect.

In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, BM4C and many other organisations engaged in very difficult conversations with the Mayor of London, GLA VRU, Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Metropolitan Police.



Lee Jasper
(Alliance for Police Accountability)

BM4C includes prominent Black men who have campaigned for change in the relationship between the Police and Black communities over many years. One of these is Lee Jasper (one of the founders of BlakSox and former Deputy Mayor for Policing in London)

who developed a concept proposal called **Alliance for Police Accountability (APA)** which has been adopted by BM4C and is supported by a high-level steering group.

The APA is a UK project that will produce two new charters on community policing and public health. The public health approach will focus on developing solutions from within Black communities to tackle serious violence. The project will engage with African and Caribbean individuals, organisations, communities (and especially young people), national policing bodies and police services to develop and test new models for Black communities and the police to interact, build trust and new frameworks for accountability. The APA will also look at best practice internally.

Jeremy Crook OBE

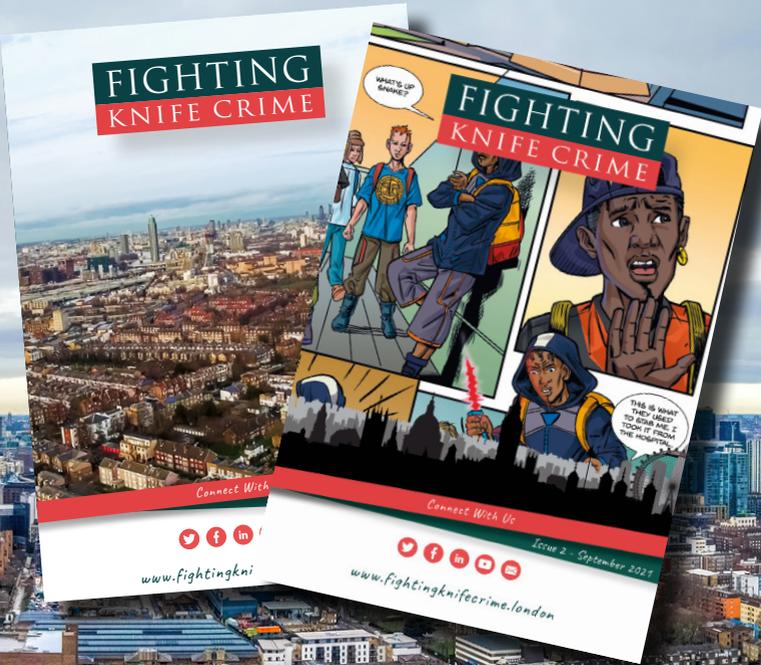
Chief Executive
Black Training and Enterprise Group
(BTEG)

If you are interested in the Alliance for Police Accountability please email Jeremy Crook, Chief Executive, BTEG: jeremy@bteg.co.uk



Jeremy Crook OBE

*Subscribe
free to our
magazine*



supporting the fight against Knife Crime!

www.fightingknife.com/london/magazine-subscription



FIGHTING
KNIFE CRIME

Connect With Us



www.fightingknifecrime.london

Published By
ICONIC
MEDIA SOLUTIONS