Gangs and Schools

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

A report for the **NASUWT** *by*

perpetuity group

Gangs and Schools

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CONTENTS

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   Following a spate of teenage murders in the last two years, the extent of youth gang culture in the UK is a growing concern. Like many of their victims, gang members seem to be getting younger. Definite figures are hard to come by but some experts estimate the number of gang members aged under 16 years old has more than doubled in the last five years alone.[1]

1.2   The increasing prominence of gang membership amongst under-16s has raised the issue of how gangs and gang culture impact upon schools. Against this backdrop, in April 2007 the NASUWT commissioned Perpetuity Research and Consultancy International (PRCI) Ltd (a leading research and consultancy company specialising in crime reduction, community safety and security) to investigate the potential impact of gangs and gang culture on schools in the UK.

1.3   The study had four key aims to:

- review and summarise previous work on gangs, street culture and their potential impact on schools;
- review four case studies where gangs and street culture may have had an impact;
- assess if there is a significant issue that requires solutions;
- identify a typology of school interventions aimed at managing any impact.

1.4   In order to undertake the study, the team at PRCI adopted a case study approach, supported by a literature review of recently published and unpublished material covering the areas of gangs, street culture, schools and school-related interventions in the UK. Four case study schools in England were selected that had concerns with gangs and gang culture. The case studies were designed to provide some pointers to the sorts of problems that schools, teachers and others in schools face as a result of gang-related activity – this provides the basis for a more detailed investigation of the issues, including the development of a toolkit to help schools address the problem of gang-related activity in schools.

GANGS AND STREET CULTURE AND THEIR IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

1.5   Firstly, defining gangs is problematic. Throughout this study, even when a definition of a gang is provided for research purposes, the concept is too fluid and subjective for all research participants to interpret the term in the same way. For practitioners, the ability to categorise groups of young people into clearly defined groupings, such as those developed by Hallsworth and Young,[2] is expedient when trying to understand the problem and propose solutions, but for those engaged in and linked to gangs, the network of relationships does not fit neatly into compartments because the boundaries are blurred and frequently changing. Therefore, it is appropriate to question the adequacy of the definition offered by Hallsworth and Young and attempts to find a universal definition or means of categorising gangs. A better approach is for local partners to reach consensus on the local definition of what they feel constitutes a gang.

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[1] London Councils (2003) London Bulletin: Teenage warning.
[2] Hallsworth, S and Young, T (2004) 'Getting Real About Gangs'. *Criminal Justice Matters* (55) 12-13.

1.6   Not all schools are affected by gangs and for those that are, the problem is usually confined to a small minority of pupils. That said, evidence from this study indicates that the location of the school and the nature of the wider catchment area impacts on the extent to which schools are being affected by gangs and some of the case study schools felt that the problem had increased over the last few years with gangs becoming more dangerous and involving children at a younger age. This is consistent with the wider research evidence that suggests that gang members nationally are becoming younger and more violent.

1.7   Staff consulted as part of this study perceived there to be a number of reasons why gangs persist in the local community, including the absence of positive role models, poor parenting skills and a lack of diversionary activities. This combined with the attractive lifestyle, e.g. financial rewards commonly associated with gangs, was thought to contribute to their ongoing presence and influence on young people of school age. Other reasons given by staff included deprivation, family breakdown, the absence of a father figure, a lack of morals and values and a lack of positive activities for young people living in neighbourhoods associated with gangs. A lack of aspiration amongst young people growing up in socially and economically deprived areas was also considered to impact on the decisions and pathways young people chose to take. Understanding the perceived costs and benefits of belonging to a gang will certainly help schools to shape their education programmes to deglamourise the lifestyle young people commonly associate with gang membership.

1.8   The study indicates that some gang-related activities are racial. This highlights the importance of schools taking action to identify and tackle discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and community cohesion. Schools also need to recognise the potential links between gang-related activity and violent extremism, such as involvement with the British National Party (BNP) and other radical groups.

1.9   Evidence from this research makes it clear that schools alone cannot tackle the complexity of the problems related to gangs and gang culture. A partnership approach at local level can help to develop solutions to these problems. Whilst it is inappropriate for a school to act as the lead agency, schools should be key partners in local work to prevent and tackle gang-related activity.

1.10   Additionally, any interventions designed to tackle gangs and gang culture need to adopt a holistic approach that involves young people, the school, the local community and parents. Any response will require the development and implementation of a range of interventions that are relevant to the local problems and will need to be delivered by local professionals and community organisations that understand the local issues and context. Partnership working will be the key mechanism through which local solutions will need to be developed, implemented and evaluated.

1.11   School staff need the skills and support to be able to fulfil their role in the partnership approach to be able to recognise, support and divert those at risk of gang involvement. As such, school staff would benefit from training on gangs and gang culture so that they have a better understanding of the issues that young people are exposed to in the communities they are living.

1.12   Comments made by a number of staff and young people in this study suggest that absence from school places pupils at greater risk of becoming involved in gangs. Therefore, local and national strategies and guidance for tackling gang activity need to link to, and be consistent with, policies relating to attendance, behaviour, and exclusion. Systems to track pupil attendance are paramount.

1.13   The findings show that there are flashpoints where young people may be exposed to, or are at greater risk of, gang-related activity whether as perpetrators or victims. The journey to and from school, in particular, raises questions regarding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This has implications for school travel and transport policies, as well as the management of the school day. Staggered school closing times may prevent clashes between rival gangs in local communities and shorter lunch breaks have been adopted in some schools to limit 'free time' and prevent outbreaks of violence.

1.14   Some schools have problems with weapons in school. This can include young people who carry weapons and/or those who hide weapons in and around school grounds. Samples of pupils in one of the case study schools were reported to wear body armour for fear of attack. Schools can make full use of the recent powers to search pupils for weapons but need to consider carefully their response to avoid placing those who carry weapons through fear at greater risk of exclusion and therefore involvement in gangs.

IS THERE A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE THAT REQUIRES A SOLUTION?

1.15   As a rule, the problems with gangs and schools appear to emanate from established problems in the local communities they serve, rather than gangs developing in schools; it is these community issues that have the potential to infiltrate into schools, and there is evidence in this study to suggest that these issues are becoming more widespread in some schools and require a range of preventative, targeted education and enforcement-led solutions.

1.16   Whilst it would be wrong to extrapolate these findings to all schools in the UK, what we can say is that gangs and gang culture are an issue for some schools and, where they do exist, it is a significant concern and a problem that has to be managed by a range of partners adopting a holistic package of solutions.

1.17   What this study also demonstrates is that where schools do have issues regarding gangs and gang culture, there are variances in the nature, scale and seriousness of the problem. Therefore, individual schools will require different levels of support and different solutions. A one-size-fits all approach to tackling gangs in school will not suffice.

1.18   The impact that gang culture can have on schools' policies, their programmes, training and schools' capacity to tackle the problem must not go unnoticed. There are certainly issues to consider, including levels of awareness and understanding of gang and community issues amongst teachers, access to support, and ensuring that teaching staff are aware of support staff who may have been trained to respond to these issues.

TYPOLOGY OF SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT MANAGING IMPACT

1.19   In the case study schools, pupil awareness of interventions designed to address the problem of gangs and gang culture generally was low and some pupils were

sceptical about the effectiveness of school-based interventions. On the other hand, some staff offered a number of examples of interventions that they considered to be successful. Other agencies may help schools to educate young people about gangs, either by coming into school to facilitate these discussions or by providing interventions in the community.

1.20   Schools are using interventions to educate young people about gangs and the negative consequences of engagement in gang culture. Few of these interventions have been formally evaluated, leading to a lack of research evidence as to what works in tackling gangs and the dearth of information available to practitioners on independently evaluated programmes and projects.

1.21   Through this study we have sought to adopt a typology of interventions that can be used by schools, often in partnership with others. These can be divided into preventative, targeted education and enforcement-led approaches.

Prevention

1.22   Tackling the root causes of gangs and gang culture is essential to any strategy designed to tackle the problem and prevent future gang-related problems from escalating. Family breakdown, poor parenting skills, a lack of diversionary activities and opportunities for young people, often coupled with poverty and deprivation, have been described by those consulted in this study as precursors to young people's involvement in gangs. The wider research evidence supports this view. Any response to tackling gangs and gang culture will need to consider all of these issues if the impact is to be positive. More importantly, any prevention strategy will require joined-up working at the local level.

1.23   The school's policies and strategies for addressing poor behaviour, discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion can be used to full advantage in the prevention of gang activity without the need to label this activity a gang reduction tactic. Similarly, these mainstream activities can then be stepped up or reinforced if gang-related activity were to escalate.

1.24   Adopting family-based interventions to tackle some of the more entrenched gang problems that cut across family generations may be needed in areas where gang culture is more deeply embedded. Engaging with parents and carers to resist gangs in the community will also be an important component of any strategy to tackle gangs, again highlighting the importance of a partnership approach to tackling the problem.

Targeted Education

1.25   Challenging young people's attitudes at an early age and developing resources for use with children of primary school age who may be at risk of involvement in gangs is essential. Although young people in this study reported that they were most impressionable at ages 13 and 14, staff raised concerns that primary school aged children were on the fringes of involvement.

1.26   The guidance document for schools produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)[3] argues that school systems for dealing with gang issues are the same as for any other vulnerable pupil, including identification,

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assessment, team support around the child and family-monitored interventions. Following the recognition and identification process, it is important that schools are supported to tackle these issues. Key to public policy is the need to support schools to tackle emerging or embedded gangs and gang culture problems in and around schools and a one-size-fits-all approach will not be sufficient.

1.27   Findings from this research clearly demonstrate that demographic changes impact on gang activity in and around schools in the UK. Applying targeted interventions and support programmes to enable schools to respond to the challenges of rapidly/markedly changing pupil intakes/populations will also be an important component of any strategy to tackle gangs and gang-related activity.

1.28   It is essential that young people are educated about the consequences of their actions at a young age so that they can make informed decisions and have the confidence to say no. Targeting this work at those most at risk of becoming involved in gangs is also recommended. School-based police officers may also play a crucial part in communicating anti-gang and anti-weapon messages to young people.

1.29   Other promising practice examples to tackle gangs and gang culture (although not evaluated) reported by the case study schools included restorative justice models to prevent disputes escalating to gang violence, peace treaties between community leaders, peer mentoring schemes and policies such as 'Manage Move' to deal with pupils that had been excluded from school and so prevent their further involvement in undesirable activities.

1.30   There is a need for a bank of effective tools and resources that schools can draw upon in order to respond to any emerging issues and, in particular, to prevent their escalation into more serious issues. The recently published DCSF guidance for schools is a step in the right direction, although much more targeted work will be needed in schools in the areas where the gang problems are more established.

Enforcement

1.31   Enforcement measures are needed at the high end of any successful strategy to tackle gangs. Whilst many of the tactics lie outside of the remit of the school, there are approaches schools can take. For example, effective enforcement of school uniform policies and the use of dispersal policies to prevent large groups from congregating and intimidating other pupils are useful tactics for schools to adopt.

1.32   Similarly, having a police officer based on-site in school was clearly beneficial for the case study schools that had problems with gangs, with the police acting as mediators and a single point of contact for young people, staff and the local community.

1.33   Schools' policies relating to possession of weapons may lead to pupils being excluded if they are found in possession of a weapon. This places such pupils at greater risk of becoming involved in gang-related activity. It is important that schools and local authorities recognise this point and that support for pupils who have been excluded from school includes provision to divert them away from negative peer groups.

CONCLUSION

1.34   This exploratory study into the issues of gangs and gang culture in schools in the UK shows that there are gang issues in certain cities that have the potential to infiltrate into schools. Unfortunately, some schools have already experienced the impact of gang culture and there are examples where former pupils have been killed as a result of their involvement in gang-related activity.

1.35   These findings also suggest that there are signs of a developing problem of gangs in some schools that needs to be managed. The scale of the gang problem varies from school to school and, whilst most schools will not be affected, there are steps that all schools can take to minimise the risk and impact of gang-related activity. First and foremost, schools need to recognise the link between work to address gang-related activity and wider work to resolve conflicts, tackle and prevent discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

1.36   Building on the typology of interventions identified in this report, there is a need for schools to have access to a range of interventions, including preventative, targeted education interventions through to enforcement-led approaches to tackle gang activity. The current gap in research appears to relate to the lack of understanding of 'what works' in schools to tackle gangs and gang culture. This will need to be the subject of a much larger piece of work if we are to take this agenda to the next level and ensure that the problem does not get any worse.

1.37   If not addressed in a sensitive manner, there is the potential for the local gang culture to pervade the school, raising fear and concern amongst pupils, parents and staff, which could, in turn, affect the school's ability to attract pupils and retain quality staff. Clearly, gang-related problems cannot be seen in isolation of wider issues relating to behaviour and discipline in schools and it is vital, therefore, that schools adopt and enforce effective policies and practice to promote good behaviour, equality of opportunity and community cohesion whilst tackling poor behaviour and discrimination.

1.38   What has been presented in this report are findings from phase one of a wider piece of research to explore the issue of gangs and schools in the UK. The second phase of the research is intended to be two-fold. In the first instance, a mapping exercise of existing school-based and youth interventions designed to tackle gangs and gang culture in and around schools in the UK will be undertaken. This will be followed by the development of a toolkit for schools that will provide an information bank of effective practice to tackle gangs and gang culture.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

2.1   Following a spate of teenage murders in the last two years, the extent of youth gang culture in the UK is a growing concern. Like many of their victims, gang members seem to be getting younger. Definite figures are hard to come by but some experts estimate that the numbers of gang members aged under 16 years old have more than doubled in the last five years alone.[4]

2.2   There is also evidence that levels of gang involvement in Britain are increasing,[5] as are levels and seriousness of gang-related criminality,[6] especially in terms of weapon use.[7]

2.3   The nature of gang culture varies from one place to another. In 2007, the Home Office set up a police-led, multidisciplinary team, from across Government, to drive forward the Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) in England in the following cities: Birmingham, Liverpool, London and Manchester. It aimed to explore practice in key hotspot areas affected by gangs with a view to sharing good practice nationally.

2.4   A recent report by the Street Weapons Commission[8] listed the number of gang members identified for action by the TGAP programme in each area. Ninety-six individuals were identified in Liverpool, of which 96 per cent were white. This ethnic make-up of 'key gang members' is in stark contrast to the other TGAP areas where gang members identified by police were predominantly black Caribbean.[9]

2.5   The mean age of gang members in Liverpool was 21 and they were predominantly male. They often had extensive criminal histories (mean = 16 offences each), with 94 per cent of identified gang members receiving criminal convictions before they turned 18. The most predominant offences were for drugs (76 per cent of gang members had a conviction for this), theft (58 per cent) and violence (55 per cent).

2.6   TGAP focused on a different number of gang members in each area: 76 in Manchester, 96 in Liverpool, 127 in Birmingham and 356 in London.[10] As gang members were identified by local police forces through local intelligence processes, it is unclear how representative these individuals are of gang membership;[11] however, some overall demographics are useful to begin to build a picture of gang membership in the UK.

2.7   The TGAP monitoring report (2008) established that 92 per cent of the gang members identified for action under TGAP had a criminal history. Common offences committed included public order/harassment (63 per cent of those with a record), drug offences (62 per cent), violence (62 per cent) and theft/burglary (52 per cent). The number of convictions ranged from 1 to 80 (mean = 11) and

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[4] London Councils (2003) London Bulletin: Teenage warning.

[5] Bennet, T and Holloway, K (2004). 'Gang membership, drugs and crime in the UK'. *The British Journal of Criminology* 44 (3) 305-323.

[6] Schneider, J, Rowe, N, Forrest, S and Tilley, N (2004). *Biting the bullet: gun crime in Greater Nottingham*. Technical report to multi-agency Crime and Disorder Partnership.

[7] Lemos, G (2004). *Fear and Fashion: the use of knives and other weapons by young people*. London: Lemos & Crane.

[8] Channel 4 (2008) *The Street Weapons Commission Report.* [online] http://www.channel4.com/news/microsites/S/street_weapons_commission/index.html.

[9] Eight per cent of gang members identified by TGAP in Manchester were white. This was even lower in Birmingham and London where the percentage of white gang members identified for action was just three per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively.

[10] Channel 4 (2008) *The Street Weapons Commission Report*. [online] http://www.channel4.com/news/microsites/S/street_weapons_commission/index.html.

[11] Dawson, P (2008). *Monitoring data from the Tackling Gangs Action Programme*. [online] http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentstreet/violentstreet011.htm.

the mean age at first conviction was 15. Gang members were typically young (mean age = 20), male (98 per cent) and black Caribbean (75 per cent).

2.8 Other UK cities that have experienced considerable gang-related problems include Nottingham and Glasgow. Nottingham is synonymous with reports of gangs and gun crime;[12] however, research indicates that gang members are not seen to be associated with gun crime and that the overall level of gang-facilitated crime has been exaggerated by media reporting.[13]

2.9 Glasgow is reputed to have a substantial gang problem; according to Strathclyde Police, there are around 166 gangs operating in their police force area.[14] Numbers of members vary by gang, as does the severity and volume of offending. The ethnic breakdown of gangs is similar to Liverpool with the majority of gang members being white. Strathclyde Police report that there are 1,760 individual gang members in Glasgow; a sample of 462 indicates that the majority of gang members are white, male (90 per cent) and young (average age was 18). Almost 30 per cent of the sample was in care and half were known to the criminal justice system.

2.10 There is little information regarding the extent of gang-related activity in Wales. The Chief Superintendent of Cardiff, Josh Jones, recently warned that gang-related crime could migrate to major Welsh cities, such as Cardiff, in the same way street robbery did. Although he reported that there is no gang culture in Cardiff, there are concerns about the growing use of knives and other weapons.[15]

2.11 The increasing prominence of gang membership amongst under-16s has not surprisingly raised the issue of how gangs and gang culture are impacting upon schools.

2.12 The report *Managing Challenging Behaviour*[16] (based on schools in England) by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) demonstrated that gang culture was perceived to be widespread in one in five secondary schools visited.[17] Shropshire and McFarquhar (2002:4) claim:[18]

> *A typical secondary school in a gang affected area may have up to 20 seriously gang involved pupils, 30 or 40 less seriously involved and up to 100 more who are either marginally involved or at serious risk of later involvement.*

2.13 The issue has attracted attention from the Government. The Schools Minister, Jim Knight, admitted in January 2007 that there was a growing problem of 'criminal gangs infiltrating schools' and said the issue had led to an escalation of 'gang-related bullying'. The infiltration of gangs into schools, identified particularly in Birmingham, Manchester and London, was often for the purpose of communicating messages between gang members (who are often

[12] Choudhury, B (2005). *Shadow of gangs over Nottingham*. [online] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/nottinghamshire/4327066.stm.

[13] Schneider, J, Rowe, N, Forest, S and Tilley, N (2004). *Biting the bullet: gun crime in Greater Nottingham*. Technical report to multi-agency Crime and Disorder Partnership.

[14] Channel 4 (2008) *The Street Weapons Commission Report*. [online] https://www.channel4.com/news/microsites/S/street_weapons_commission/index.html.

[15] James, D (2008). *Top Cop's gangs and guns warning to Wales*. [online] http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2008/06/09/top-cop-s-gangs-and-guns-warning-to-wales-91466-21039834/.

[16] OFSTED (2005) *Managing Challenging Behaviour.* [online] https://www.ofsted.gov.uk.

[17] This statistic should be interpreted with caution since only fifteen schools were visited to inform the study. The prevalence of gang culture and weapon carrying clearly varies considerably from one area of the country to another and from school to school.

[18] Shropshire, S and McFarquhar, M (2002). *Developing Multi Agency Strategies to Address the Street Gang Culture and Reduce Gun Violence Amongst Young People*. [online] http://www.iansa.org/documents/2002/gang_culture_and_young_people1.pdf.

their siblings) and to recruit new members to serve as runners and drugs mules.[19] Some argue that the introduction of fixed penalties for people over 18 for certain offences has resulted in younger individuals being recruited who will evade stiff penalties, e.g. carrying a gun has an automatic penalty of five years for over 18s.

2.14   In response to some of these concerns, the DCSF has issued a guidance document for schools on gangs and group offending. This resource is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/ docbank/index.cfm?id=12639.

2.15   The Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP)[20] was published by the Home Office on 15 June 2008 outlining the Government's approach to tackling youth crime in England and Wales,[21] and includes a number of points that are relevant to the school community. These specific points are discussed in more detail in Section Four. The YCAP (2008:57) lays out objectives for numerous agencies including Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), the Police, Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Children's Services and schools, and states that:

> *We must ensure that their [young people at risk of offending] underlying problems and needs are tackled through a joint approach between mainstream Children's Services and those working in the youth justice system.*

2.16   This document makes repeated references to partnership working, recognises that parents also need to be made accountable for the actions of their children and makes it clear that schools cannot tackle problems in isolation.

2.17   Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate systems in place. Scotland's Youth Justice Framework (2008),[22] for example, includes a number of key actions, including to *'promote positive relationships and behaviour in schools and ensure the relevant inspections reflect these objectives'.* Northern Ireland on the other hand has introduced a range of innovative new measures for dealing with children who offend, the most significant being youth conferencing, which is based upon inclusive restorative justice principles.

2.18   Against this backdrop, in April 2007 the NASUWT commissioned PRCI to investigate the potential impact of gangs and gangs culture on schools in the UK.

2.19   There were four aims to the study to:

- review and summarise previous work on gangs, street culture and their potential impacts on schools;
- identify a typology of school interventions aimed at managing any impact;

[19] Paris, N (2007) 'Drug gangs using primary pupils for playground deals'. *The Telegraph.* [online] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1540487/school-drug-gangs-claim-questioned.html.

[20] HM Government (2008). *'Youth Crime Action Plan 2008'*. [online] http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan/.

[21] Some policies relate to England only.

[22] See www.scotland.gov.uk for a copy of the Framework that has been agreed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA) and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).

- review four case studies where gangs and street culture may have had an impact;
- assess if there is a significant issue that requires solutions.

2.20   In order to undertake the study, the team at PRCI undertook a literature review supported by a case study approach (the methodology is described in more detail in Section 3). The review of recent published and unpublished literature covered the areas of gangs, street culture, schools and school-related interventions in the UK.

2.21   Although the team experienced difficulties in accessing schools to take part, over a twelve-month period four case study schools were selected that had concerns/problems with gangs and gang culture. All four schools were accessed through existing contacts from different regions of England. Given that the team was reliant on their existing contacts in England to act as gatekeepers to schools, no schools from other parts of the UK were included in the study and, indeed, the research team had greater success in reaching schools where support was offered through existing contacts that had links with local schools (for more information regarding school selection see Section 3).

2.22   Where possible, information has been included in the literature review and also in the case studies on other parts of the UK, particularly from Scotland (mainly from Glasgow where the problem of gangs is felt most) to bring a more UK-wide perspective. The situation in Northern Ireland, and Scotland to a lesser extent, in relation to gangs is somewhat different given the history of religious tensions. In both countries, work is underway to address sectarian tensions in schools. However, even in Glasgow where there are real gang issues, activity associated with gangs is not necessarily seen as sectarian in terms of promoting bigotry although there are 'flashpoints' between gangs that have resulted in bigotry being used. That said, gangs do not appear to be formed on sectarian lines in the same way as they are not formed on ethnic lines elsewhere in the UK. In these areas, gangs are more often than not mixed groups that owe their identity to a particular location or neighbourhood rather than a religious background.

2.23   In the same way that the relationship between ethnicity and gangs is under-researched, the link between gangs and sectarianism and the impact on schools would benefit from additional study.

2.24   As a result, we consider the findings from the study to be of relevance to all parts of the UK suffering issues related to gangs. For those in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the exact nature of the problem will need to consider the extent to which sectarianism may impact on the problem as part of the process of adopting solutions.

2.25   The case studies were designed to provide some pointers to the sorts of problems schools, teachers and others in schools face as a result of gang-related activity – this provides the basis for a more detailed investigation of the issues, including the development of a toolkit to help schools address the problem of gang-related activity in schools. The case study findings were summarised in individual reports written by PRCI and verified by school

headteachers. An interim report was published in February 2008 to present emerging findings.[23]

2.26   This report draws upon findings from four case study schools in urban areas in England. The report is structured as follows:

- Section 3 provides an account of the research methodology used to undertake the study, including the school selection process, how the researchers gained access to schools and a description of the case study site visits.

- Section 4 provides a review of the available literature and provides a useful framework within which to place the current trends in gangs and the potential this has to impact on schools in the UK.

- Section 5 to Section 8 presents the findings from the individual case studies. These are presented separately to illustrate the differences in how gangs and gang culture can affect schools across the UK.

- The final section of the report provides a discussion of the main findings, drawing on information from the literature and all four case studies.

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[23] The interim report published in February 2008 was based on two case studies. The interim report is available at www.nasuwt.org.uk and from www.perpetuitygroup.com.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   This section describes the methodology used to undertake the research. The research was exploratory and used two main research methods, namely literature reviews and case studies. A case study methodology was used because this allowed the team to undertake an investigation of a contemporary real-life situation using multiple qualitative data sources, including semi-structured interviews with staff and focus groups with young people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.2   The first task was to undertake a review of recent published and unpublished literature covering the areas of gangs, street culture, schools and school-related interventions in the UK. This was achieved by reviewing academic texts and reports produced by agencies such as the Youth Justice Board (YJB), the Home Office, the Youth Justice Agency in Northern Ireland and the Scottish Government. Where appropriate, media coverage was also utilised.

3.3   The literature review was an important task as it provided a useful framework within which to place the current trends in gangs and their potential to impact on schools in the UK. It also informed the development of the research tools, including interview schedules and focus group discussion guides.

CASE STUDIES

The Selection Process

3.4   Having reviewed the available national literature, a number of cities in the UK were highlighted as being more vulnerable and/or exposed to gang culture. In the first instance, some of these cities were targeted by the research team to recruit a suitable sample of schools to participate in the research as case studies. It was agreed with the NASUWT that four case studies would be selected for this research.

3.5   To aid the schools, a definition of 'gang' was required but, as we discuss in Section 4, defining the term gang is recognised as a difficult task. Hallsworth and Young[24] make the distinction between peer group, gang and organised criminal group, offering the following descriptions of each (these are discussed again in Section 4):

  • **Peer Group:** a relatively small, unorganised and transient group composed of peers who share the same space and a common history. Involvement in crime will be mostly non-serious in nature and not integral to the identity of the group.

  • **Gang:** a relatively durable group who have a collective identity and meet frequently. They are predominantly street-based groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence are integral to the group's identity.

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[24] Hallsworth, S and Young, T (2004) 'Getting Real About Gangs'. *Criminal Justice Matters* (55) 12-13.

- **Organised Criminal Group:** a group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain (financial or otherwise).

In order to examine the issue of gangs and schools in this study, we adopted the second description 'gang' when selecting schools to participate – that is a group of peers/friends with a collective identity for whom crime and violence are central. In actual fact, a more flexible interpretation of the term 'gang' is used in the case studies. This is to reflect the different interpretations of the term by those interviewed as part of the research.

3.6   In order to invite schools to participate, the following approaches were taken:

- e-mails were sent to existing contacts in England, including Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), police and local authorities, who had the potential to act as gatekeepers to local schools.
- an article was posted on the National Community Safety Network (NCSN) forum inviting interested professionals to contact the research team. The NCSN has members from across the UK.
- articles promoting the research were published in the NASUWT publication *Teaching Today* and through Perpetuity's monthly Newsletter.[25]

3.7   Given the sensitivity of the subject of gangs and schools, there was understandably some reluctance on the part of schools and other professionals to be involved in this study. Some contacts, for example, in cities with known gang problems were not willing to participate in the study. Other reasons given for nonparticipation included:

- no schools in the area fitted the criteria, particularly when searching for a suitable suburban/rural school;
- one school that initially agreed to take part withdrew their involvement because they felt that they had managed the problem of gangs in school and were concerned that their involvement may reverse some of their good work;
- in one school, although there was concern regarding gang problems, senior staff were reported to not recognise the problem;
- one school refused to take part in any research regardless of the subject area.

3.8   These are interesting findings in themselves and raise the question of whether schools are indeed concerned about being involved in research studies on gangs and gang culture because of the risk of being stigmatised. The number one priority to all schools involved was that their anonymity would be safeguarded to protect the reputation of the school.

3.9   The research team had greater success in reaching schools where support was offered through existing contacts that had links with local schools. Given the sensitive nature of the research subject, it was important that the schools could trust the research team. We found that by working with local gatekeepers that had established trusting relationships with schools, accessibility was less problematic. Not surprisingly, schools that were 'cold called' were less inclined to participate and on this occasion this method was not successful in generating any case studies. Interested schools sourced through existing contacts were provided with the following information:

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[25] No other specific networks outside of England were used to invite schools to participate.

- an information sheet that provided details of the study, including assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, what would be required of the school and what they could expect from the research team;
- a list of preferred interviewees, including teachers and non-teaching staff, e.g. mentors, police officers, Connexions, etc;
- a draft outline timetable of interviews and focus groups;
- the opportunity to meet with the lead researchers to clarify the research aims and objectives before committing to take part in the research.

3.10   The original selection criteria were designed to include a combination of urban/suburban and rural schools. Although the researchers strived to access a mixture of schools that were perceived to have a problem with gangs and gang culture, this proved impossible in the time frame of this study and all schools that agreed to take part and identified that they had some issues relating to gangs and gang culture were located in urban areas in England. One of the reasons that the team may have had difficulty in acquiring a suburban/rural school may be that gangs and gang culture are less of an issue in suburban/rural schools. There may be benefit in exploring this further.

3.11   Although the team experienced difficulties in accessing schools to take part, over a twelve-month period four case studies were accessed through existing contacts across different regions of England. Given that the team was reliant on their existing contacts in England to act as gatekeepers to schools, no schools from other parts of the UK were included in the study.

3.12   It is important to note that three of the areas where the schools were located were reported to have deeply entrenched gang problems in the local community, and drugs were perceived as a major contributory factor. There were also reports of shootings in the local community and cases where pupils/ex-pupils had been murdered. Findings from the remaining case study display some behaviour that is akin to gang activity, albeit on a lesser scale.

3.13   The lead researchers met with two schools prior to them agreeing to take part in the research. The remaining schools were happy for the site visit to be arranged using e-mail and telephone communication.

3.14   The preparations for each visit were consistent across all schools. Each school was required to draft a timetable of interviews and focus groups with young people. A breakdown of the number of interviewees and focus groups is provided in each case study. It is important to note that due to concerns regarding confidentiality, no titles of staff are included in the findings; rather, all interviewees are referred to generically as staff.

3.15   In order to prepare for the case study site visits, the research team conducted some basic Internet searches to find out more about the local gang problems in the areas the school were located. The team was heavily reliant on national and local media coverage. This assisted the researchers when visiting the schools to understand some of the names of local gangs and areas referred to by staff and young people.

3.16   A basic area profile was also produced to gather a better understanding of the local areas in which the schools were located, including demographics, local housing, employment figures, etc. The data sources included census data taken

from the Neighbourhood Statistics website.[26] In the absence of more recent data, the 2001 census data was relied upon. A brief area profile is presented at the start of each case study. All information has been generalised to safeguard the anonymity of the schools.

3.17 It is important to bear in mind that the national census is undertaken once every ten years. The most recent census was undertaken in 2001 and therefore the area profiles are based primarily on data collected seven years ago. An area could significantly change during this period of time, thus the profiles may not be an accurate reflection of the areas' current demographics.

Site Visits

3.18 Two researchers attended the site visits for a full school day and undertook concurrent interviews with staff. All staff were reassured of the anonymity of the school and of the confidentiality of their responses in that no specific remarks would be attributed to individual staff. Staff were asked for their opinions on a number of thematic areas, including:

- their understanding of the term 'gangs';
- their concerns (if any) with gangs and school;
- the potential impact of gangs and gang culture in and around school on teachers, pupils and the school;
- the relationship between weapons, violence and gangs;
- interventions to tackle gangs and gang culture;
- recommendations to tackle gangs and gang culture in schools.

3.19 Consultation with young people was undertaken in focus groups. These sessions were facilitated by researchers, without the presence of a school teacher, although in case study one, at the school's request, a security officer who was a former school pupil was present in the room. All young people who took part in focus groups were asked to sign consent forms, and in one school the headteacher obtained parental consent. At the beginning of each focus group session all young people were reassured of the confidentiality of the research and it was explained to them that no names or other personal details that could in any way identify them would be recorded. The focus groups were interactive sessions and task orientated. Some examples of the tasks that young people were assigned included:

- spider diagrams of words associated with gangs;
- positives and negatives of belonging/not belonging to a gang;
- the perceived impact of gangs on teachers, pupils and the school;
- the relationship between weapons, violence and gangs;
- interventions designed to tackle gangs and gang culture.

3.20 Despite the fact that at the preparation stage researchers stipulated the staff they would like to interview, there were some differences across the sites. A breakdown of those consulted is presented separately in each case study.

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[26] See http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk.

ANALYSIS

3.21   All interview and focus group transcripts were subject to content analysis and data was organised into key themes. In order to validate the case study findings, these were shared with the main contact (usually the headteacher) at the schools. This allowed them to approve that the school's anonymity was preserved and to ensure that the information was accurate and a fair account of the presenting problems in and around the school.

3.22   Although every effort has been made to ensure that all of the case studies are presented consistently, this has not always been possible due to the inconsistencies in the available data. These discrepancies may be a result of one or more of the following:

- the quality and depth of information provided, particularly where verbatim quotes are used;
- the length of time researchers had with individual staff and groups of young people;
- how much information young people and staff were willing to share.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

3.23   It is important to stress that due to the methodology used (case studies) and the small number of schools involved, these findings cannot and must not be generalised to represent schools across the UK; rather, they provide insight into some of the issues that have been unveiled as a result of consulting with a sample of teachers, staff and young people in urban schools in England. However, the case study approach does have considerable advantages compared with other methods.[27] Firstly, case study analysis is useful to generate hypotheses about why problems occur, and the qualitative nature of the approach allows for the examination of these potential causal factors, in this instance for gang-related problems in schools. Case studies are also useful as they concentrate on the collection of specific information, which means that findings can be presented in both thematic and local contexts. The specific nature of the information gathered during case study analysis also provides opportunities for the development of tailor-made local strategies to deal with gangs in schools, and to provide targeted advice and guidance to individual schools.

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[27] Collier (1993) cited in Sprinz, DF and Wolinsky-Nahmias, Y (Eds). (2004). *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying*. University of Michigan Press.

SECTION 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1   Prior to selecting the four case studies, a review of the available literature on gangs and gang culture in the UK was carried out. This was structured around key themes, including:

- defining gangs;
- gang member characteristics;
- linking gangs to weapons;
- risk factors;
- impact on schools;
- national guidance and action plans;
- interventions.

4.2   Firstly, it is important to stress that a large proportion of literature on gangs and gang culture focuses on the US and there has been a tendency to impose these findings upon the UK. However, the review presented here provides very limited reference to US-focused research, and only where there are large gaps in the UK research. The danger is that a one-size-fits-all approach is taken to tackle gangs in the UK and the US where there are clearly cultural differences; the licit access to guns in the US being just one example.

DEFINING GANGS

4.3   Despite extensive reference to gangs in the mass media and political discourse, there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a gang. The term is often used to describe a broad range of collectives from relatively innocuous peer or friend groups that identify with particular culture (music, style of dress, language, etc.), to the more serious organised criminal gang. In fact, how best to define a 'gang' has been hotly debated within academic circles for decades.

4.4   A lack of research in the UK has exacerbated the definitional issues surrounding the concept of gangs, and reliance upon US research has developed. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the UK gang culture has emulated that of the US.

4.5   The inconsistency around the definition of a gang has led to one consensus: that gangs are not a singular phenomenon.[28] The definition is complicated further by the way in which young people socialise and congregate within the school environment. For example, would a group of ten friends who call themselves the 'Urban High Crew', wear the same clothes, listen to the same music, use the same terminology, have their own 'tag', which they invariably mark on school property, and congregate in the same space (their 'turf') in the school at lunchtimes constitute being a gang?

4.6   To some, they would. However, it is argued that this is to confuse peer identity and street culture with gang membership. Every generation of schoolchildren have subcultures to which they adhere, from the Mods and Rockers of the 1960s to the 'grungers', 'goths', 'chavs' and 'townies' (to name but a few) that have arisen in contemporary culture.

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[28] Marshall, B, Webb, B and Tilley, N (2005) *Rationalisation of current research on guns, gangs and other weapons: Phase 1.* UCL Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science. [online] http://www.ucl.ac.uk/jdi/downloads/publications/research_reports/gangs_and_guns_2005.pdf.

4.7   In order to remedy the issue of peer groups being classed as gangs, Hallsworth and Young[29] make the distinction between the peer group, the gang and the organised criminal group. They provide the basis for the following descriptions:

- **Peer Group:** a relatively small, unorganised and transient group composed of peers who share the same space and a common history. Involvement in crime will be mostly non-serious in nature and not integral to the identity of the group. Peer groups are thought to be the most pervasive of all delinquent groups. Schoolchildren will usually be part of a peer group.
- **Gang:** a relatively durable group who have a collective identity and meet frequently. They are predominantly street-based groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence are integral to the group's identity.
- **Organised Criminal Group:** a group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain (financial or otherwise). For most, however, crime is their 'occupation'. These groups operate almost exclusively in the grey and illegal marketplace where market transactions are totally unregulated by the law.

4.8   The distinguishing feature of a gang that separates it from a peer group or group of friends hanging out together is that crime and violence are integral to a gang.

4.9   Gang-related criminality is rooted in a broad cultural context and reinforced by certain themes in music and fashion that glorify guns, knives and violence.[30,31,32]

4.10   The organised criminal group are seen to go one step further to the gang by 'professionalising' their gang membership for personal gain. One police officer in Manchester commented on the nature of gangs there:

> *We're not talking about slick criminal organisations – we're talking about kids with guns.*[33]

4.11   Without a firm definition of gangs and gang culture it can be difficult to evidence their existence. OFSTED reports have illustrated that even schools that claim to have a 'gang culture' were unable to evidence it in part due to their intangible nature.[34]

4.12   What will become apparent in the findings from this study is that even when the definition of what constitutes a gang is defined for research purposes, it is far too fluid a term to expect all research participants to interpret it in the same way. It is certainly not possible for interviewees to categorise groups of young people into the three clearly defined tiers (described above) used by Hallsworth and Young (2004) because the networks and relationships simply do not fit neatly into the three boxes – the boundaries are blurred.

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[29] Hallsworth, S and Young, T (2004). 'Getting Real About Gangs'. *Criminal Justice Matters* (55) 12-13.

[30] Young, J (1999). *The exclusive society: social exclusion, crime and difference in late modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

[31] White, D (2004). 'Taba and the rude girls: cultural constructions of the youth street gang'. *Journal for crime, conflict and media*, 1 (2) 41-50.

[32] Pitts, J (2007). *Reluctant gangsters: youth gangs in Waltham Forest.* University of Bedfordshire.

[33] Thompson, T (2004). 'Battle to Save Children from Gang Terror'. *The Observer* [online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2004/mar/07/youthjustice.crime.

[34] Op. Cit.

4.13 Therefore, it is appropriate to question the adequacy of the definition offered by Hallsworth and Young and explore whether an alternative theoretical framework or definition might be more appropriate.

4.14 The most recent study into UK gangs has been undertaken by the University of Manchester and this study similarly highlights the 'fluid, loose, messy' nature of gang networks noting that they exist with 'far less organisation than expected'. The study similarly struggled with definition and recognised that although the term 'membership' may be convenient, it carries with it potentially misleading implications about the nature of these groups. The study found that 'gangs are very much like informal friendship networks whose boundaries vary according to whom you ask in the network. Indeed the notion of 'membership' was somehow alien to the vocabulary of young people ...interviewed'.[35]

4.15 Research by the Jill Dando Institute (JDI)[36] unveils the fluid nature of gang membership. The study notes that many individuals, who may easily have been 'perceived' to be part of a gang by the police, media, etc., did not actually consider themselves to be 'gang members'. Other 'gang members' rejected the term 'gang' but described themselves as being in one nonetheless. Indeed, it has been noted that in some cases, intelligence reports create a cycle of misinformation causing gangs to be created where they may not actually exist. This, along with the liberal use of the word 'gang', may lead to events that may not be gang-related at all (such as interpersonal arguments), being redefined as gangland conflicts.

4.16 Within this study into the impact of gangs on schools, it will be clear in later sections of this report that different interviewees appear to have different interpretations of what constitutes a 'gang'. For this reason, caution must be exerted when interpreting some of the findings.

GANG MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS

4.17 Gangs share a particular identity, which may be based on age, location, ethnicity, peer networks or blood relationships.[37] Indeed, the majority of gang names represent the territory that they control (or fight to control), e.g. The Peckham Boys, The Longsight Crew and The Gooch Close Gang, etc.

4.18 Communities that Care conducted a survey called Safer London Youth. It surveyed over 11,000 young people aged 11 to 15 in London secondary schools. It identified that almost one in five respondents said they would call the group of friends they hang around with 'a gang'. Of these, one in three said it had its own name, and half said their gang had a territory or 'turf' of its own.[38] When taken together, the survey shows, however, that less than four per cent of young people in the age band belong to a gang that has a name and a territory.

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[35] Aldridge, J et al (2007). *Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs and Violence: Full Research Report*. ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-23-0615. Swindon: ESRC
[36] Marshall, B, Webb, B and Tilley, N (2005). Op. Cit.
[37] Marshall, B, Webb, B and Tilley, N (2005). Op. Cit.
[38] Rainer Communities that Care (2005) 'Findings from the Safer London Youth Survey'.

4.19   The study found that there were few discernable age or gender patterns, although the older boys were more likely to report involvement in a (self-defined) gang.

4.20   UK surveys have failed to find a significant relationship between ethnicity and gang membership.

4.21   The JDI report identified that gangs were less likely to be based on ethnicity than on location, and the University of Manchester[39] study has similarly found that gangs in the study area were generally ethnically mixed, reflecting the ethnic composition of their location, also arising in predominantly white areas.

4.22   That said, the Safer London Youth Survey found some patterns with regards to ethnicity. They discovered that white British and black Caribbean young people were more likely than their black African and South Asian counterparts to be in a gang that had a 'turf' or territory of its own, and to be in a gang with ten or more members. More so, black Caribbean pupils were significantly more likely than other groups to say that they were in a gang that had a name.

4.23   According to the Youth Justice Board (YJB), the young people involved in gangs tended to have grown up together, often in adverse circumstances that already increased their risk of involvement in crime.[40] The YJB reported that many practitioners saw the risks being exacerbated in the school context as a result of:

- exclusion;
- unauthorised absences;
- a lack of affordable youth facilities.

4.24   Research conducted in North East London suggests that up to 40 per cent of gang members there do not join gangs through a desire to be 'gangsters' but rather because they are intimidated. The 'reluctant gangsters' feel their families will be better protected from gang violence if they are part of the gang.[41] They also feel protected from rival gangs because their own gang associates would protect them. The research also listed other reasons for 'involuntary affiliation' as lack of legitimate life opportunities and gaining access to educational/recreational resources in gang territory. Continued affiliation was linked to fear of repercussions if they left the gang.[42]

4.25   The following quote, taken from a group of young people asked to comment on the problem of gangs in schools, illustrates the complexity of labelling gangs. One young person below describes a gang as simply a harmless friendship group:

> *We might have a few gangs at our school, but they don't exactly hang around carrying knives and dangerous weapons. The gangs are normally around the same year group like a group of Year 11s, also they aren't particularly a problem to anyone just a group of friends having a laugh.*
>
> *(Female, 11, Newcastle)*

[39] Aldridge, J et al (2007) Op. Cit.
[40] Youth Justice Board (YJB) (2007). *Groups, gangs and weapons.* Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.
[41] Dobson, J (2007) 'Streets of Shame'. *New Start*.
[42] Pitts, J (2007). *Reluctant gangsters: youth gangs in Waltham Forest*. University of Bedfordshire.

4.26   Here the individual considers a gang to be an innocuous social affiliation. However, when looking to the other extreme, another young person regarded gangs as being associated with violence and weapons:

> *Gangs are a serious problem out of school for us in London. Getting threatened with a knife is not unusual anymore and attacks are regular.*
>
> (Male, 14, London)[43]

4.27   Clearly young people's interpretations and perceptions of gangs can be influenced by where they live, who they associate with and the school they attend.

4.28   It is important to make the distinction that not all gang-involved young people are 'gang members'. It is common for a young person to be 'associated' in some way with a particular named gang or crew yet not regard themselves as an actual member of that gang but identifying, however, with the wider 'gang culture'. Many young people do not even consciously identify with gang culture; rather, it is circumstance (e.g. where they live, the school they attend, who their friends and siblings are) that leads others to identify the young person as gang involved. This has particular importance for schools. If gang membership is based on circumstance, e.g. location, it may well be that a school finds itself located within a particular gang's turf. As such, it may become a symbol of the territory and therefore a site of contention between rival gangs. Similarly, it may be viewed as a fruitful recruitment site for new members.

GANGS AND WEAPONS

4.29   The presence of weapons at school can create an intimidating and threatening atmosphere, making teaching and learning difficult.[44] A survey conducted by *SecEd*[45] found that three out of five teachers were aware of pupils that had brought weapons into their school.[46] The most common were knives, but teachers also reported having seen BB guns, batons and, in one incident, a meat cleaver.

4.30   In the Safer London Youth Survey, one in ten young people reported carrying a knife in the previous 12 months, one in 17 a gun of some kind (including BB guns, replicas, etc.) and one in 14 a weapon of some kind other than a gun or a knife.

4.31   The use of weaponry is often associated with gangs. The JDI study suggests that gang members are more likely than others to carry weapons and guns. For instance, arrestee data shows that gang members are five times more likely than non-gang members to report owning a gun; similarly 39 per cent of gang members admitted to carrying a knife within the last year, compared to seven per cent of non-members. A survey conducted by the YJB reported that the majority of young people excluded from mainstream education said they had carried a knife within the last year.[47]

[43] CBBC Newsround (2005). 'Are Gangs a Problem at Your school?' [online] http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4300000/newsid_4308400/4308419.stm.

[44] Ingersoll, S and LeBoeuf, D (1997). *Reaching Out to Youth Out of the Education Mainstream.* Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

[45] *SecEd* is the weekly voice for secondary education.

[46] Henshaw, P (2006). 'Most teachers have seen weapons in class'. *SecEd* [online] http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/cgi-bin/go.pl/article/article.html?uid=32914;type_uid=1.

[47] Youth Justice Board (YJB) (2007). *Groups, gangs and weapons*. Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

4.32   A Home Office study regarding shootings, gangs and violent incidents in Manchester[48] concluded that the carrying of firearms for gang members was partly protective, partly instrumental for carrying out violent crimes and partly symbolic. Whereas, a Bridge House Trust-sponsored report cites the two main triggers for carrying a weapon as fear of attack and fashion (Lemos and Crane, 2004).[49] The 2004 MORI youth survey suggests that 21 per cent of young people in school admitted to carrying a weapon but never used one (compared to three per cent who admit to having used a weapon against another person). This may support these two more passive reasons for carrying weapons, i.e. they are not carried in a proactive way, rather for protection or as a symbol.

4.33   A number of fatal stabbings on school premises,[50] coupled with the perception that the number of pupils carrying weapons onto the school premises has increased, has resulted in some calls for tighter security measures, including the installation of metal detectors. These have been met with mixed feelings as some feel they create a climate of fear and suspicion rather than tackling the underlying issue of why young people feel it necessary to carry weapons.

4.34   The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 has introduced new powers for pupils to be searched for knives and other offensive weapons without consent with a view to curb the numbers of pupils bringing weapons into school.[51]

4.35   Although incidents have occurred where guns have been fired on school premises, these have predominantly included air pistols, BB guns and replicas. In a report analysing gun crime in Manchester, Shropshire and McFarquhar (2005) argue that once serious shootings within the school environment occur it would open the floodgates to gang-related gun violence in and around schools by removing the existing taboo against using guns in the school environment.

RISK FACTORS

4.36   Research has suggested that the process of joining a youth gang is made up of both 'pulls', i.e. attractiveness of membership to the individual, and 'pushes', i.e. factors that may drive an individual into gang membership.[52] In terms of 'pulls', numerous benefits of gang membership have been identified, such as enhanced status amongst friends and peers,[53] excitement[54] and an opportunity to make money through illicit activities.[55] As such, many youths see themselves as making a rational choice in deciding to join a gang because they believe that there are personal advantages to gang membership.[56]

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[48] Bullock, K and Tilley, N (2002). *Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a crime reduction strategy*. Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 13. London: Home Office.

[49] Lemos and Crane (2004). *Fear and Fashion. The use of knives and other weapons by young people*. [online] http://www.bridgehousegrants.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1E936C45-7D23-4880-BBBA-0340CB46D2AB/0/FearAndFashionWeapons Report.pdf#search=%22fear%20and%20fashion%20bridge%20knives%22.

[50] For example, in November 2003 Luke Walmsley was stabbed to death by a fellow pupil in a school corridor in Lincolnshire and headteacher Philip Lawrence was stabbed to death at his school in Westminster in 1995 whilst trying to protect a pupil.

[51] Full details of the Act are available here: www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060038_en_6#pt2-pb6-l1g45.

[52] Decker, SH and Van Winkle, B (1996). *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

[53] Baccaglini, WF (1993). *Project Youth Gang-Drug Prevention: A Statewide Research Study*. Rensselaer, NY: New York State Division for Youth.

[54] Pennell et al (1994) *Down for the Set: Describing and Defining Gangs in San Diego*. San Diego, CA: Criminal Justice Research Division, Association of Governments.

[55] Decker and Van Winkle. Op. Cit.

[56] Sanchez-Jankowski (1991). *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

4.37   On the other hand, some maintain that youth gang membership is based more so on the 'pushes'. Social, economic, and cultural forces push many adolescents in the direction of gangs. In this respect, reasons for gang membership may include: protection from a perceived risk (e.g. other gangs, bullying, etc.), or feelings of marginality whereby gang membership may give them a sense of identity.[57] Johnstone (1983)[58] claims that in some communities, youths are intensively recruited or coerced into gangs. As research in Manchester has found, some individuals are virtually born into gangs as a result of neighbourhood traditions and their parents' earlier (and perhaps continuing) gang participation or involvement in criminal activity.[59]

4.38   Research on gangs – conducted in both the US and the UK – reveals that gang membership enhances and facilitates offending. In other words, some individuals who previously engage in minor offending tend to engage in more serious offending after joining a gang, and some individuals, who didn't commit crime before, are encouraged to start offending after joining a gang.[60,61,62] This indicates that the group dynamics associated with gangs are a factor for offending behaviour.[63]

4.39   The Safer London Youth Survey found that young people who reported being a member of a gang (as defined by name and territory) were significantly more likely to report engaging in criminal behaviour in the previous year, especially vandalism, assault, carrying a knife or other weapon and, to a lesser extent, carrying a gun.

4.40   They were also found to be more likely to have ever used drugs. In the UK, there is a gap in the literature exploring the link between drugs and youth gang membership. As such, it is useful to refer to findings in the US where research found drug use, in particular marijuana, to be a precursor for gang involvement[64] and children who use marijuana are reported to be nearly four times more likely to join gangs.[65]

4.41   According to the Safer London Youth Survey, gang members were also more likely to have sold drugs and to have been arrested at some point in their lives. All of the behaviours outlined above could point towards gang membership amongst youths.

4.42   The JDI study found that individuals who have relatives and peers with a history of problem behaviour (involvement with drugs, guns and gangs) are likely to be involved in problem behaviours themselves. Related to this, it has

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[57] Vigil and Long (1990). 'Vietnamese youth gangs in Southern California'. Cited in Huff, CR (ed). *Gangs in America*. CA: Sage Publications, 146-162.

[58] Johnstone, JW (1983). 'Recruitment to a youth gang'. *Youth and Society* 14:281-300.

[59] Shropshire, S and McFarquhar, M (2002). Op. Cit.

[60] Bennett, T and Holloway, K (2004). 'Gang membership, drugs and crime in the UK'. *The British Journal of Criminology* 44 (3) 305-323.

[61] Smith, DJ and Bradshaw, P (2005). *Gang membership and teenage offending*. Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and crime, No. 8.

[62] Tita, G and Ridgeway, G (2007). 'The impact of gang formation on local patterns of crime'. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 44 (2) 208-237.

[63] Jacobson, J and Burrell, A (2007). *Five Boroughs' Alliance: Guidance for the Communications Strategy*. UCL Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science.

[64] Hill, KG, Lui, C, Hawkins, JD (2001). 'Early precursors of gang membership: A study of Seattle teens'. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin.* [online] http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/190106.pdf.

[65] Johnson, S. North American Youth Gangs: Patterns and Remedies, Testimony, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, U.S. House of Representatives (2005). [online] http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/tst042105a.cfm.

been suggested that an absence of suitable male role models, such as a responsible father, might promote gang involvement whereby young individuals see an older gang leader or brother as a substitute. The University of Manchester study found strong family connections within gangs, which is consistent with research and practice highlighting that having a family gang member is a risk factor for gang involvement.[66]

4.43   It is suggested that gangs may form through processes of social exclusion and/or discrimination with people coming together for self-defence and a sense of 'safety in numbers'. Immigrant populations, or those excluded from mainstream education, are therefore likely to be particularly at risk.

4.44   In terms of schools, the US report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)[67] states that low educational aspirations, academic failure, negative labelling by teachers, a lack of teacher role models and educational frustration may all contribute to the membership of gangs by school pupils.

4.45   A consistent theme within the University of Manchester research was the failing of gang members by the education system. Many had poor qualifications and left school early, through self-exclusion, unofficial exclusion (e.g. schools may urge parents to withdraw their child to avoid the stigma of enforced exclusion) and official exclusion. Leaving school was identified as a 'critical moment' in gang involvement.[68]

IMPACT UPON SCHOOLS

4.46   Gangs can have considerable and varied impacts upon schools. However, research in this area is extremely limited and Internet and library searches did not identify any published research studies that had explored the impact of gangs and gang culture upon schools in the UK. There are, however, aspects of research studies that touch upon the topic. For example, Ingersoll and LeBoeuf (1997)[69] identify that the existence of gangs and weapons in schools can make teaching and learning difficult.

4.47   To follow is an overview of the brief research evidence that has acknowledged how the existence of gangs and associated violence may impact upon schools. Much of the available literature relates to studies in the US.

4.48   Gangs can create their own norms and values that members must adhere to in order to retain their status and membership within the gang. These values will often go against mainstream values and aspirations. For example, research has illustrated that some gang members will deliberately fail their exams in order to remain being considered 'cool' by their peers.[70] This can have detrimental effects upon schools' results, which in turn impact upon staff recruitment and retention as well as attracting pupils. Research has suggested that in some gang afflicted areas, some individuals are only able to use schools and education facilities in gang territory if they are themselves 'gang members'.[71]

[66] Aldridge, J. et al (2007). Op. Cit.
[67] Howell, JC (1998). 'Youth Gangs an Overview' *OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin* [online] http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/jjbulletin/9808/contents.html.
[68] Aldridge, J. et al (2007) Op. Cit.
[69] Ingersoll, S and LeBoeuf, D (1997) *Reaching Out to Youth Out of the Education Mainstream*. Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, OJJDP.
[70] BBC News (2008) *Gangs who fail exams on purpose.* [online] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3663916.stm.
[71] Pitts, J (2007). *Reluctant Gangsters: youth gangs in Waltham Forest*. University of Bedfordshire.

4.49   Drawing on research in the US, Boyle (1992)[72] found that gang members who have been suspended, excluded or have dropped out of school, could often be found on-site with their friends, thereby effectively using the school as a 'hang out' as opposed to an educational institution. It could be argued that their presence on school grounds is likely to be disruptive to other pupils, especially their friends who might be persuaded to miss classes to continue socialising with them.

4.50   Burnett (1994)[73] argues that gangs have played a significant role in the widespread increase of violence in US schools. This is supported by research[74] that found that the presence of gangs more than doubled the likelihood of violent victimisation at school (eight per cent compared to three per cent). The presence of gangs can also impact on fear of violence, for example, Trump (1993)[75] reported that pupils in schools with a gang presence were twice as likely to report fear of becoming a victim of violence as their peers who attended schools without gangs.

4.51   Results from a Bureau of Justice Statistics survey reported that schools with gangs were significantly more likely to have drugs available on-site than schools without gangs.[76]

4.52   Research[77] in the US, concentrating on responses to gang-related survey questions aimed at young people, highlighted some reasons why gang prevalence is greater in some schools compared to others. These include:

- Demographics: for example, the percentage of students reporting gang presence in their school increased with age.
- Population: the presence of gangs in schools is correlated with the size of the local community.
- Income: as household income level increased, reports of gang presence in school decreased.
- Drugs: gang presence is positively correlated with the numbers and types of drugs available within schools (i.e. the more types of drugs there are available; the more likely pupils were to report gang presence).
- Security: presence of gangs was correlated with security measures; the more security measures there were in place, (e.g. guards, metal detectors and locker checks) the more likely there was to be a gang presence.
- Victimisation: prevalence of victimisation was positively correlated with gang presence in schools.
- Type of school: almost 40 per cent of pupils in public schools reported gang presence compared to 16 per cent at private schools.

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[72] Boyle, K (1992). *School's a rough place: Youth gangs, drug users and family life in Los Angeles*. Washington, DC: Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

[73] Burnett, G (1994). *Gangs in Schools*. ERIC Digest. [online] http://www.ericdigests.org/1995-1/gangs.htm.

[74] Chandler, KA, Chapman, CD, Rand, MR, and Taylor, BM (1998). *Students' reports of school crime: 1989 to 1995*. Washington, DC: Department of Education.

[75] Trump, KS (1993). *Youth gangs and schools: the need for intervention and prevention strategies.* Cleveland: Urban Child Research Center.

[76] Cited in Bodinger-deUriarte, C (1993). *Membership in violent gangs fed by suspicion, deterred through respect*. Los Alamitos, CA: Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

[77] Howell, JC and Lynch, JP (2000). 'Youth gangs in schools'. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, US Department of Justice.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND ACTION PLANS

4.53   Following the fatal shooting of 11 year old Rhys Jones in Croxteth, Liverpool in August 2007, the Government has vowed to crackdown on gangs and weapon crimes. The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, stated:

> *Where there's a need for early intervention, we will work very intensively with those families so that young people are deterred from going into gangs and guns and knife crime.*

(Gordon Brown, August 2007)

4.54   The former Liberal Democrat leader, Sir Menzies Campbell, has highlighted the need for education and early intervention to tackle the issue of youth gangs. He stated:

> *It can only be solved by making sure that young people have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, rather than seeking respect by joining gangs and carrying weapons. Education is crucial in this task. We need greater investment in early year's education for the most disadvantaged children. The school curriculum must be diverse, with vocational elements to give maximum choice in employment. And grassroots youth and sports clubs should be properly funded.*

4.55   In early September 2007, the Government launched a £1 million crackdown on gun crime in four of the English cities that have suffered most from gang-related crime. Neighbourhoods in London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham have been targeted. Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said that communities affected by gun gangs would 'absolutely' notice a difference in their neighbourhoods over the Autumn as a result of the launch of the Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) overseen by a Ministerial Taskforce. The initiative entailed a tailored package of enforcement, action and community reassurance work, including:
- covert operations and surveillance of known gang members;
- high visibility police presence, including on routes to and from schools;
- use of civil orders to restrict gang members;
- safe houses for victims, witnesses and people trying to leave gangs;
- mediation services to stop disputes between gang members;
- greater witness protection to possibly include enhanced anonymity for witnesses;
- community forums and additional activities and support for young people at schools.

4.56   Analysis of recorded crime data in the TGAP areas has indicated that firearms injuries reduced by 51 per cent (from 93 offences in October 2007 to 46 in February 2008) during the period of TGAP's operation, a greater reduction than seen in the same period in the previous two years. Similarly, firearms offences overall also showed a decrease during the TGAP period (27 per cent; from 165 offences in October 2007 to 120 in February 2008) but there was no clear trend when compared to the previous two years.

4.57   An analysis of gang members in TGAP areas identified by the police showed they were predominantly young, black Caribbean and male, often with extensive criminal histories. Of particular relevance to this research is the finding regarding the age of gang members. Although the mean age of identified gang members was 20 years old, it was discovered that the mean age of identified gang members when receiving their first conviction was just 15. Furthermore, 82 per cent of identified gang members across the four targeted neighbourhoods had received a youth conviction (i.e. they were convicted of a criminal offence under the age of 18). This clearly highlights that young people of school age are becoming seriously involved in gang membership and associated crime.

4.58   The crackdown on gangs and gang culture is very much in its infancy. Only time will tell whether the initiatives devised at the national level will impact upon the trend towards youth membership of gangs. In the meantime, schools will need to rely upon their own strategies to curb and tackle the impact that gangs have upon their pupils and staff.

4.59   Although not specifically written for schools, the Home Office (May 2008) published a tackling gangs practical guidance document for local authorities, CDRPs and other local partners to support the development of local gang strategies. This guidance document includes some useful examples (although most have not yet been evaluated) of school-based interventions implemented in the four TGAP areas[78] in the UK. This document may be a useful reference point for schools in terms of school-based interventions to tackle gangs and gang culture and also for guidance on building partnerships to develop and target work in schools with vulnerable young people. Case study examples include diversionary activities for young people, restorative justice models and work with parents. For a copy of this practical guidance, please go to www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentstreet/violentstreet012.htm.

4.60   The YCAP, published in June 2008, also includes a number of actions that will impact on schools in addressing youth crime more broadly, including:

- Permanent exclusions from school will now automatically trigger a comprehensive needs assessment under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
- Encouragement of the expansion of the Safer Schools Partnership (SSP), which links police officers to schools.
- More face-to-face support for parents will be made available through Parent Support Advisors who will be linked to schools in every local authority.
- After school police patrols will target antisocial behaviour and disorder at school closing time and at transport interchanges.
- Extended services in schools will provide opportunities for disadvantaged pupils.
- School search powers have been extended from just weapons to include drugs, alcohol and other inappropriate items.

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[78] The four TGAP areas include London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Greater Manchester. These four areas have been the focus of renewed action to tackle gun crime and serious violence.

4.61   Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own policies in respect to tackling youth crime. The Youth Justice Agency of Northern Ireland works with children aged 10 to 17 years who have offended or are at serious risk of offending and has a principal aim to reduce crime and build confidence in the youth justice system. The Justice (NI) Act 2002 introduced a range of innovative new measures for dealing with children who offend, the most significant being youth conferencing, which is based upon inclusive restorative justice principles.[79] A number of statutory and voluntary bodies operate early intervention programmes to try to prevent children at risk of offending from doing so. This co-operation across the sector has been formalised in a Charter for Youth Justice. Similarly, in 2008 Scotland published *Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action*,[80] which outlines a number of key actions that demonstrate its commitment to address youth crime, including:

- expanding positive opportunities for young people;
- supporting parental and child responsibility;
- putting in place effective information sharing systems;
- improving the range, quality and effectiveness of residential services for young people;
- developing evidence-based interventions for offending linked to drug misuse;
- promoting positive relationships and behaviour in schools ensure the relevant inspections reflect these objectives.

4.62   Dealing with violence, threats of violence and disillusioned youths requires sensitive handling and so means that those dealing with violence and threats of violence need to be equipped with the skills to do this. Indeed, some work has been done to try and equip teachers with the training and skills needed to tackle gang-related behaviours in the school environment and the DCSF have published a guidance document for schools on gangs and group offending. This resource is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12639.

4.63   Some research and studies, including guidance from the DCSF and Home office, suggest that existing school policies can be adapted or, indeed, modified to incorporate additional elements, such as gang reduction strategies, as and when these become pertinent to schools across the UK. For example, for those gang members who deliberately fail their exams in order to remain being considered 'cool' by their peers,[81] it is worth considering alternative methods of reward to encourage good behaviour. It is also worthwhile considering actions taken against poor behaviour and whether these are helpful in minimising future poor behaviour. For example, excluding troublemakers from after school activities could negatively impact on behaviour if they have a tendency to misbehave or commit crime due to boredom.

4.64   Schools also have a responsibility to promote community cohesion.[82] In the context of gang reduction, this offers many opportunities to engage with the local community, as schools can work with outside agencies and the community to develop activities that are accessible and affordable for all young people.

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[79] For further information see www.youthjusticeagencyni.gov.uk.
[80] To access a copy of the Framework see www.scotland.gov.uk/.
[81] BBC News (2008) Op. Cit.
[82] See 'Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion' available at http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11634.

Promoting activities within the community could also feed into work that the school is doing to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

GANG INTERVENTION: THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

4.65   There are a number of initiatives that aim to challenge and tackle gangs and their related culture often by using popular culture and activities as viable alternatives to gang membership.[83] However, there are few that are active within schools. In a similar vein, there are initiatives in schools aimed at tackling various behaviours, such as violence and indiscipline, but they do not focus specifically upon tackling gangs.[84] That said, there is a lot more that schools can do to address gangs and gang culture and to equip pupils to resist problematic gang activity.

4.66   Multi-agency working is a requirement of an effective local strategy to address gangs and schools and are key players in tackling gang-related activity. In terms of profiling the problem of gangs locally, schools may find links with the police and the local community safety partnerships helpful in obtaining information about escalating rivalries between gangs and other groups in the community.

4.67   Studies show that there are links between school attendance and attainment and involvement in gangs and crime and therefore schools have an important role to play in preventing young people from becoming involved in gangs and gang-related activity. Similarly, given the rivalry that exists between different gangs, some of which may be based on community lines or on the grounds of ethnicity, it is appropriate for schools to consider the extent and effectiveness of their work in promoting community cohesion, tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in terms of reducing gang involvement and rivalry.

4.68   The Home Office guidance on tackling gangs[85] encourages school partnerships to improve behaviour and tackle persistent absences. In line with research undertaken by Cornell (2006), consistent enforcement of school uniform policy by schools can include the banning of items of clothing against school uniform rules, such as gang colours.[86]

4.69   A search of the literature has produced some information regarding interventions that have the potential to directly/indirectly tackle gangs and gang culture in and around schools in the UK. In the Home Office guidance for practitioners on tackling gangs, they advise a three-pronged approach, which covers preventative, targeted education and enforcement interventions. Using these three approaches, it is possible to divide school-linked work to address gangs into preventative, targeted education and enforcement interventions.

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[83] Some research has claimed that such interventions are counterintuitive and actually place young people at risk. One gang worker interviewed for the study conducted in North East London stated: "telling…families to take responsibility for their kid's behaviour is like telling them to take their kids into the jungle and take responsibility for them not getting eaten by lions and tigers" (www.newstartmag.co.uk).

[84] For example, the UK Observatory for the Promotion of Non-Violence (UKO) joined forces with the then DfES to create the Violence Reduction in Schools (VIRIS) partnership. More details are available at: www.ukobservatory.com/projects/project_viris.html.

[85] Home Office (2008) Tackling Gangs: *A practical guide for local authorities, CDRPs and other local authority partners*, London.

[86] Cornell, DG (2006). *School Violence: Fears versus Facts.* Routledge.

4.70   The summary that follows is the start of a much larger piece of work that is needed to understand the interventions and initiatives that have been implemented in schools and youth-based organisations in the UK. The second phase of this research programme is to map the interventions and initiatives (in detail) that prevail in the UK with a view to providing an information bank of effective practice.

Prevention

4.71   In line with Home Office guidance, delivering a prevention programme that highlights how young people can become unwittingly involved in gangs and how to protect them from doing so is a role for schools.

4.72   One focus of school-based preventative work centres on diversionary activities. Many schools offer extra-curricular activities and after school sports and music clubs and these can offer at risk youngsters the opportunity to engage in positive activities. After school clubs are often set up to offer pupil's alternative leisure activities (and are not necessarily packaged as crime prevention projects). However, these activities can have unintended benefits for crime reduction as young people have opportunities to take up sports or hobbies that they might otherwise not be able to afford to do or have access to.

4.73   Diversionary activities also have the potential to support those in gangs seeking to exit them. The research literature has highlighted the challenges associated with offering gang members legitimate exit options;[87] however, emphasis is consistently placed on the provision of youth resources and legitimate life opportunities[88] indicating a role for diversionary activities in a school context.

4.74   The Tackling Violence Action Plan 2008 to 2011 reports on plans to expand the Extended Schools programme. This programme focuses on enabling school premises to be used for positive activities, such as sports and clubs, after hours. This work will be fast-tracked in areas where problems with youth gang violence have been identified.[89]

Targeted Education

4.75   School-based interventions targeted at reducing gang affiliation and crime are frequently education based. These schemes often target teenagers (for example, 11 to 16 year olds) and focus on emphasising the negative implications of involvement with gangs.

4.76   Educational programmes are often delivered by non-school agencies, for example, Prison Me No-Way!!!!, presented in greater detail in the appendix, is a good example of how external agencies, in this case the prison service, can offer educational programmes to schools which can help deter young people from gang involvement and/or criminal activity.

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[87] Jacobson, J and Burrell, A (2007). *Five Boroughs' Alliance: Guidance for the Communications Strategy*. UCL Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science.

[88] See, for example, Bullock, K and Tilley, N (2002). From strategy to action: the development and implementation of problem-oriented projects. Cited in Bullock, K and Tilley, N (eds). *Crime Reduction and Problem-Oriented Policing*. Willan. See also Rainer Communities that Care (2005). Findings from the Safer London Youth Survey 2004.

[89] Violent Crime Action Plan 2008-2011 (16).

4.77   The Humber Mentoring Project works in connection with the YOT to deliver workshops to groups of young people in schools, youth referral units and community centres. Workshops are run by ex-offenders and are specifically aimed at young people who are identified as at risk of offending or engaging in a criminal lifestyle. The focus of workshops are wide ranging, covering topics such as gun and knife crime, drugs, reputation and peer pressure, victims, social responsibility and attitudes to asylum.

4.78   The 'Tooled up for School' programme was developed by Birmingham Children's Fund, Birmingham Community Safety Partnership and West Midlands Police as part of the 'One Knife, One Life' campaign. Tooled Up for School is an interactive educational resource (DVD) aimed at Key Stage 3-4 pupils (11-16 years old), which aims to give them the strategies to stay safe and resist the need to carry a knife or weapon. The DVD includes a film about a fictional fatal stabbing in a school, a documentary, including interviews with the family and friends of fatal knife-attack victims, and a music video, which highlights the devastating effects weapons can have in schools and for young people.

4.79   The STABB (Students and Teachers Against Bullets and Blades) programme is a series of workshops that aim to explore issues and attitudes around gang-related behaviour. The STABB programme is run in the London Borough of Merton and specifically targets young people at risk of getting involved in gang-related activity, or those who already are involved or known gang members. It is unclear where these sessions are held (schools versus other youth centres) but it has been noted that these sessions are well attended by young people not normally involved in youth service activities.

4.80   Streetwise is a crime prevention programme aimed at educating young people about the consequences of gun, gang and knife-related cultures. The Streetwise programme consists of six education/training programmes, and focuses on the use of music, drama and role play to challenge young peoples' attitudes and demystify the appeal of street crime. The six training packages are:

        1. Street Gangs – the complete gang education programme;
        2. Doin' Time – the impact of prison on self and others;
        3. Dealers – drugs education programme;
        4. Bite the bullet – weapons awareness programme;
        5. 'Freestylin' – creative writing and rhyming;
        6. Positive Paths – identifying alternatives to crime.

4.81   Each training package consists of a manual that includes simple, easy to follow lesson plans. The structure of lesson plans covers the aims of the session, the materials needed, the time needed for each task and the method of application. For more information visit www.streetwiseinfo.co.uk.

4.82   Other examples also discussed in Appendix One include The From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation, Leap Confronting Conflict working in Glasgow and London, the Gang Reduction Projects run by Southwark YOT and Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.).

4.83   Most of these organisations offer intensive focused educational programmes that, in part, aim to dispel myths about gang culture and encourage young people to consider the consequences of gang-related crime. These programmes are not exclusively delivered in schools, with pupil referral units (PRUs), YOTs,

youth clubs and other youth organisations also choosing to use these schemes to educate young people about the negative impacts of gang-related activity.

4.84   It is encouraging that educational schemes are not just school based as there have been concerns that school-based interventions only engage with those young people who attend school. This means that the young people, who are arguably, as research indicates, most at risk of engaging with gangs,[90] such as truants and school excludees, would not benefit from these educational programmes. This illustrates the value of complementary community-based initiatives.

Enforcement

4.85   Enforcement options take a number of forms. Perhaps the most controversial are search powers for teaching staff and the use of metal detectors in schools. The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 introduced powers that allowed teachers to search pupils for knives and other offensive weapons without consent. This has recently been extended to include the ability to search for drugs, alcohol and other inappropriate items under the YCAP 2008-2011. The installation of airport style scanners have also been introduced as a method to reduce the number of weapons in schools;[91] however, there is concern about stigmatisation for those schools that are subject to the scheme.[92] Further work to tackle knife crime using scanners is planned under the Tackling Violence Action Plan 2008-2011 with 100 portable arches and 400 search 'wands' being issued to the police and other delivery partners[93] at the outset of the action plan, and more equipment planned for the next three years.

4.86   Clothing and accessories can form part of a gang's identity and suggestions have been made about the potential benefits of introducing school uniform policies to help counter gang activity. For example, Cornell (2006)[94] reports that school uniform policies prohibit gangs from wearing gang 'colours'. This reduces the opportunities for gang members to be identifiable in the school environment, thereby reducing fear and intimidation.[95] Concerns have also been raised in relation to school uniforms and inter-school rivalries, with some schools being advised to encourage their pupils to change out of school uniform before leaving the premises to reduce the chances of being assaulted by pupils from a rival school.[96] According to this research, guidance was also issued to schools in relation to drawing up school uniform policies, with emphasis being placed on consideration for the impact of styles and colours of clothing associated with gangs. Schools were also advised to look out for pupils wearing gang colours, bandanas or specific jewellery.

4.87   The Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) scheme is referred to in both the Tackling Violence Action Plan 2008-2011 and the YCAP 2008-2011. This scheme aims to improve the relationship between the police and young people by providing links between police and schools. Police officers work on-site to promote school safety and discourage young people from engaging in crime and antisocial behaviour.

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[90] Marshall, B, Webb, B and Tilley, N (2005). *Rationalisation of current research on guns, gangs and other weapons: Phase 1.* UCL Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science.

[91] BBC News (2008) *'Metal detectors plan for schools'.* [online] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7198633.stm.

[92] Prince, R (2008). 'Metal detectors in schools to stop knife crime'. *The Telegraph* [online] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1576120/Metal-detectors-in-schools-to-stop-knife-crime.html.

[93] It is unclear what the definition of 'other delivery partners' is.

[94] Cornell, DG (2006). *School Violence: Fears versus Facts.* Routledge.

[95] National School Safety and Security Services website: www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/uniforms.html.

[96] Clark, L (2008). 'School Children told to change out of uniform to avoid being attacked on the way home'. *Daily Mail* [online] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1039241/school-children-told-change-uniform-avoid-attacked-way-home.html.

SECTION 5: CASE STUDY 1

CONTEXT

The Local Area

5.1   This case study is based on a secondary school located in an urban area in England.

5.2   Compared to national figures, the area where the school is located has a higher proportion of Asian British and black or black British residents. The two most prominent religions in the area are Muslim and Christian.

5.3   The local area has a higher than average[97] number of residents living in Council or Housing Association rented accommodation and the number of Owner Occupied dwellings (including Shared Ownership) is significantly lower than that for the rest of England. The remaining households are either private rented accommodation or rented from another source and are comparable with figures for the rest of England.

5.4   Residents aged 16 to 74 have lower levels of academic achievement than the population for England. For example, half of the residents do not have any qualifications, compared to just under one third in the rest of England. Similarly, the proportion of residents in the area that achieved one of the highest qualifications included in the census was half the proportion for rest of England generally.

5.5   According to the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation, the school is situated in one of the ten per cent most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in England. There are 32,482 of these areas in England; each one containing a population of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. Meanwhile, just under a quarter of residents are in full-time employment compared to 41 per cent nationally.

The School

5.6   A number of services are delivered at the school, both out of school and during school hours. There is a youth club at lunchtime, for example. The school is also used by the local community for a range of activities in the evenings.

5.7   As of September 2007, there were slightly more female than male teaching staff employed at the school. Over one third of staff were from a black or minority ethnic (BME) background whilst the remaining staff were white or European.[98]

5.8   At the time of the case study,[99] there were over 1,100 pupils on roll (years 7 to 13) at the school. The largest proportion of pupils were of Pakistani origin, followed by pupils from Bangladeshi backgrounds, with these two groups making up more than three quarters of the cohort. Indian was the next largest group. The vast majority of pupils were Muslim.[100]

5.9   Pupils' attainment at the school was significantly below average when compared to national figures.[101] The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE's or equivalent A*-C, including English and maths, was significantly below the average for the local authority.

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[97] These figures are compared to the rest of England.
[98] Figures are based on information provided by the school.
[99] The case study was undertaken in November 2007.
[100] Op. Cit.
[101] Information from: www.dcsf.gov.uk.

5.10   Nevertheless, the most recent OFSTED Inspection[102] states that, despite lower than national average standards in Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils' overall level of achievement is 'satisfactory'.

5.11   The general behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school was ranked as 'good' by OFSTED, whilst pupil attendance was deemed 'satisfactory'. The rate of unauthorised absences[103] of pupils during the Autumn and Spring terms of 2006/07 school year was around twice the national average.[104]

5.12   For the past five years, the school has had a full-time police officer based on-site with a view to providing continuity of how the police deal with young people in school. The school also buys in a senior social worker to support the school three and a half days a week.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH STAFF

5.13   Eight interviews were held with staff, including the following: security and learning mentor; home school liaison officers; social worker; police officer; assistant headteacher; head of year; school governor; and learning co-ordinator mentors.

Defining the Term 'Gang'

5.14   The term 'gang' was considered to be contentious because of its negative undertone; some staff preferred the word 'group' and commented that 'hanging out' in groups was part of youth culture. One comment was made to suggest that some innocent young people were labelled as 'in a gang' because they hung out with each other; however, they were not associated with the street gang as defined by Hallsworth and Young.

5.15   Throughout the presentation of findings in this section we have selected the comments that relate more specifically to gang culture, which is perceived negatively unless otherwise stated.

The Local Community

5.16   When asked to describe the local area in which the school was located, the picture painted by staff was an area that had experienced gang problems for many years. Staff described scenes where gang culture and drugs were deeply entrenched in the local community.

5.17   When asked to expand upon some of the gang issues in the local community, the division between two communities, namely the Pakistani community and the Bangladeshi community was reported by some staff to have been a problem in the area for years, with the entrenched problems ingrained in the community generation after generation. The tensions evident in the local community were reported to date back to historical events in the native soils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi men. In the words of one interviewee:

> *There is a big problem with young people from different ethnic backgrounds – mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshi divide.*

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[102] Information from: www.ofsted.gov.uk.
[103] Total percentage of half day sessions missed by pupils without school authorisation.
[104] Information taken from the BBC education league tables: http://news.bbc.co.uk/.

5.18   Bangladeshi boys were referred to as the main perpetrators of recent gang culture in the local area; however, one staff member made the following remark regarding pupils who were at the crux of problem behaviour:

> There's about 40 Pakistani pupils and 40 Bangladeshi pupils who are involved in the 'hard core' groups. The 'hard core' groups are involved in persistent trouble, have ASBOs, walk about together.

5.19   Gangs were associated with postcodes and particular localities where young people congregated, some gang names, for example, related to street names. To safeguard the identity of the school, these are not named in these findings. A number of comments were made by staff to suggest that postcode rivalry is currently the main issue in the local area; this had become increasingly overt for some teachers in the last two years. So, although historical rivalry was evident between Pakistani and Bangladeshi young men, this was reported to have dissipated now issues of postcodes have developed.

5.20   The main gang issues in the local area stemmed from disputes between young men. Although young girls were reported to form peer groups, their peer group culture was distinctly different to that of their male counterparts. Verbal abuse between girls, using bad language and 'blazing'[105] were common traits of groups of young girls that adopted what was described as a 'ladette' culture.

5.21   Some staff made clear distinctions between the behaviour of young boys and young girls. Outside of school in Asian families, young girls were associated with being *"kept at home to do the housework".* One staff member articulated that many young Asian girls excelled well academically because they were not given the freedom out of school that young Asian men were given. In the words of one interviewee:

> Not getting girl gangs, [this is a] large Asian Muslim area – girls excel academically. Lads are allowed out and get into mischief. Girls are incarcerated and they thrive and do well.

5.22   It is important to note that these opinions are based on a small number of interviewees and there is no claim by the research team that these perceptions are an accurate reflection of the lives of young Muslim women living in the area.

5.23   In the opinion of staff working at the school, invariably gangs form for a number of reasons. Those most commonly reported included (although were not limited to):

- influence of older brothers/elders;
- to gain status in the community;
- they may have started as a bully.

5.24   A number of reasons were put forward by staff suggesting why they thought young people associated with gangs, including:

- protection;
- status/to be important;

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[105] 'Blazing' is the colloquial term used by young people to direct insults towards another person's family/peers.

- fear;
- lack of parental control;
- underachieving;
- badge of honour;
- copycat behaviour (particularly the case where young people are in families with older brothers);
- street 'cred'.

5.25   In the opinion of staff, the attractiveness of joining a gang for young people was the lifestyle, the flash cars and the money. These influences were seen as major drivers to young people's involvement in gangs, particularly those described as underachievers.

5.26   One staff member identified a clear link between gangs and drugs in the area and commented on the ease of recruiting young people as drug runners, as highlighted in the following quotation:

> *There is the issue that some young people in the Asian community have a lack of hope. They are selling drugs, they have no fear – the consequences are not acting as a deterrent.*

5.27   Cannabis use amongst young Bangladeshi boys in particular was reported to be a problem at the time the research was being undertaken. According to one teacher, it was not unheard of for young people of primary school age to share a 'joint'.

5.28   Family affiliation was also reported to be a determinant of young people's involvement in gangs. There were reports from some staff of older brothers (in their 20s) waiting outside school to collect their younger siblings. Some staff noted that, occasionally, the police would visit the school to disperse groups of young people home safely.

5.29   Some of the other reasons why the problems with gangs and gang culture persisted in the local community were cited as follows:

- lack of activities for young people;
- poor/lack of parenting skills in the family;
- parents who are too afraid to confront their children;
- family breakdown.

5.30   The breakdown in the family unit was reported to result in a lack of positive role models for young men living in the area who went on to aspire to the behaviour of negative role models in the community who were involved in illicit behaviour.

5.31   Some staff also suggested that parents did not seem to care about their children. Consequently, young people turned to others (gangs) for a sense of belonging and identity.

5.32   Staff also commented on the lack of trust in the police amongst the local community, which made it difficult for the police to gather evidence against criminals in the area.

Gangs and Identity

5.33   Having a sense of identity was reported to be a common feature among young people affiliating with gangs. Staff described clothing, e.g. hoodies or young men wearing trousers below the waistline to identify themselves. Historically, young people were reported by one staff member to have attended school wearing clothing with postcodes displayed on their jackets/anoraks. Hairstyles were also associated with group/gang culture.

5.34   The Bangladeshi young men in particular were reported by some staff to be trying to replicate the mannerisms adopted in the American black culture, including the use of controversial song lyrics used by famous rap artists. In the opinion of another staff member, young people were reported to make full use of 'gangsta' vocabulary. One interviewee echoed this sentiment commenting that gangs in the area were imitating the behaviour of well-known local African Caribbean gangs.

5.35   Some comments were made by staff about the conflict between eastern and western values and the negative impact this was having on young people and their sense of identity. Children and young people were living in families where parents conformed to Islam and the Koran, yet their children were becoming increasingly westernised and exposed to new and developing technologies. This conflict was reported to exacerbate the difficulties young people experience in understanding their sense of identity.

5.36   Websites including Bebo, YouTube and MySpace were reported by some staff as tools used by young people to depict a certain image. The school had firewalls to filter out access to these sites; however, some staff were aware that young people were using these websites out of school to illustrate a likeness to gangsta lifestyles, e.g. posing as though they are holding a firearm.

Gangs and Schools

5.37   The main concern for staff was that street gang culture had the potential to impinge on the school environment. Rather than describing a problem of gangs in schools, the situation was reported as a problem with the impact of gangs on schools, meaning that if the school was removed from the equation, the problem with gangs in the local community would still exist. In the opinion of one interviewee, pupils were reported to bring gang-related problems into the school rather than gang problems emanating from within the school.

5.38   One member of staff remarked that gangs and gang culture infiltrated into the school and, in the last two years, had become more visible. The same interviewee reported that young people involved in gangs comprised the minority of pupils at the school, with no more than an estimated 20 in each year group. Another interviewee estimated that there would be no more than ten in each year group. Year 9 upwards was reported by one member of staff to be when the signs of affiliation with gangs and gang culture became more conspicuous. One staff member commented that there would be no more than 20 to 35 young people across the school involved with gangs; however, the damage they could cause in terms of the people they influenced was seen to be significant.

5.39   One interviewee remarked upon the apparent leaders in the school who upheld a particular image in the way they wore their clothes, their use of language, even the way they walked. A number of young people (described as followers) were reported to be influenced by these leaders.

5.40   Discussions with staff in the school suggested that the schools gang issues stemmed from the long-standing issues between Pakistani boys and Bangladeshi boys. More recently, they had noted emerging issues amongst newly arriving communities, namely Somalian boys. Not only was ethnicity an issue for these young men, religious affiliation was also reported to influence gang culture amongst young people. Although the school had a high Muslim intake, other religions were practised by young people attending the school, including Sikhism and Christianity. In sum, cultural differences and religion were cited as the main causes of conflicts between local gangs.

5.41   One staff member emphasised that male pupils from both communities would happily attend lessons together and were even friends. That said, if an incident 'kicked off', the response of young people was to stick to their own ethnic groups. This point of view potentially raises questions as to whether these young people can in fact be described as belonging to a gang. It also raises issues about the nature of identity and the complexity of the relationship between identity/identities and gangs or group association.

5.42   The conflicts between the Bangladeshi and Pakistani young men were thought to be less exposed in the classroom, yet more evident in the school playground. One member of staff described a hypothetical incident to explain their comment. If, for example, a fight broke out between one Bangladeshi male and one Pakistani male, those consulted described a scene where there would be an instant divide between the two communities, where peers from their immediate ethnic group would congregate to support their fellow comrade.

> If it is a Pakistani and a Bengali having a fight, communities support each other.

5.43   There was a feeling that if there was a conflict between two members of rival gangs in the area, other gang members would be informed and this is where situations could escalate out of control for seemingly trivial affairs. Using the previous example, if a fight occurred between a Bangladeshi pupil and Pakistani pupil in school, this was reported to spill out into the community where other peers would (unnecessarily) become involved.

5.44   Although there were reports of fights between pupils at lunchtime, it is difficult to attribute this to anything other than playground squabbles. When instances of what was perceived as gang-related behaviour and fights did break out, this was a playground/outside of the school gates problem and was not reported to have a negative impact inside the school classroom.

5.45   On the other hand, and an important point to make, it was not unknown to one interviewee for problems to emerge between rival gangs in the classroom. Although this was described as a rare incident, this was reported to cause some disruption in lessons. Any rivalry that did take place in school was reported to put additional pressure on support staff; young people were also in school feeling agitated, which in turn may cause them to be disruptive in class.

5.46   One interviewee had concerns that young people were becoming involved in gangs as young as age nine, ten and 11. Another member of staff had similar worries that young people of primary school age were affiliating with postcodes relating to local gang networks. The divide between Pakistani boys and Bangladeshi boys was reported to surface in primary school.

5.47   Some staff reported that graffiti, which symbolised the names of some of the gangs in the area, had been an issue in school in the previous year. This was reported by one member of staff as a new problem and not a common phenomenon.

5.48   The general consensus amongst staff was that the problem with gang culture remained quite well hidden in school and did not have a significant impact on the ability to teach pupils. Some comments were made by staff to suggest that the school was regarded as a safe haven for young people, a place where they could have respite from the community-wide problems they were exposed to outside of school.

5.49   In the previous year, the school had experienced some incidents involving the possession of weapons by young people on school premises; one young person had brought a gun into school (where the police were involved) and another was in possession of knives. Three exclusions had been made as a result of this. One member of staff was certain that young people in the school had access to weapons if they wanted them. The same interviewee remarked that they had not experienced a situation when an offensive weapon had been used to injure a member of staff.

5.50   There were reports of young people carrying screwdrivers, hammers and chisels and toy guns in school. One staff member remarked that young people carry weapons to impress their peers or to feel safe, rather than with intent to injure. One interviewee remarked that the police had conducted a one-off weapon search using a metal detector in school and reported that very little was found.

5.51   Although one interviewee raised the point about school exclusions and believed in excluding young people from school, they did not believe in excluding young people without offering alternative provision. Turning young people out onto the streets was seen to heighten their risk and vulnerability to further involvement in gang activity.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

5.52   Staff described a situation where education to these young men (in the example given, they were year 9s associating with gangs) was becoming less and less important. Getting an education was not perceived as cool by these young men and aspirations were low. One staff member commented that for some young people, being in a gang was paramount to them and their reputation was more important than their education. Another insinuated that for some young people, being a drug dealer was their only aspiration because it was perceived as an easy way to earn money. One interviewee reported on the lack of fear that young people have and that the potential consequences of their actions are not acting as a deterrent.

5.53   In the short term, one interviewee identified that young people with the potential to achieve good grades in school could become disaffected as a result

of the influence of gang culture outside school. In the longer term, their involvement in more serious crime was perceived as a major risk factor in their development from childhood to adulthood.

5.54   Some staff believed that the reputation of the school, because of its location and (at times) police presence around the school, may at times affect the recruitment of teachers. Others stressed that the reputation of the local area, not necessarily the reputation of the school, could potentially have an impact on staff recruitment. A comment made by one staff member was that some of the newer teachers at the school did not necessarily have the 'staying power' that some of the more established teachers in the school had. The assistant headteacher, for example, had been with the school for ten years.

5.55   One interviewee remarked that there was the potential for some of the newer female teaching staff at the school to feel intimidated by young people and found it difficult to deal with more challenging behaviour.

5.56   Another staff member commented on the impact that the behaviour of the minority could have on teachers. Bouts of stress, depression and tiredness combined with poor behaviour were all seen to impact on teachers' ability to teach.

5.57   The rivalry between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys was reported to destroy harmony and could impact negatively on the teaching and learning of other pupils who did take their education seriously. There was no indication as to how the school was seeking to address this issue but with a duty to promote race equality and community cohesion, effective work on these areas may impact on restoring the balance and harmony to the classroom.

Interventions in Schools

5.58   Staff were aware that security had certainly increased in the school. Metal detectors had been deployed by the police on one occasion to detect weapons in school, but evidently very little was found. The on-site police officer had started issuing fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to young people in the school for public order offences.

5.59   The police officer delivered lessons on gangs and guns to young people as part of citizenship lessons. The same officer had also been involved in mediation work to resolve community tensions that may impact negatively on the school. Some staff reported that dispersal of groups of young people leaving school was managed so that rival groups did not leave the school gates at the same time. In the past, police officers had also supported the safe dispersal of young people at school closing time.

5.60   The general impression given by staff in the school was that teachers were not equipped to tackle gang-related behaviour in school, nor should they have to be unless they were trained appropriately to deal with these issues. There was no evidence to suggest that any teacher had been trained or policies developed to respond to gang-related issues in school. The school did, however, have policies on bullying, health and safety and discipline and learning for example. Some interventions were implemented in the school to work with challenging behaviour in pupils, e.g. anger management and behavioural projects; these were, in the main, delivered by external agencies.

One staff member commented that teaching assistants and learning mentors had been trained in conflict resolution and that these courses were also available to teachers if they wanted to attend. That said, some may argue that support staff rather than teachers are best placed to take on these roles. What is important in schools is for all teachers to be aware when support staff have attended training courses on these matters and that they can access their support when needed.

5.61　In the opinion of some staff, the school was very proactive in dealing with any issues that prevailed. In the past, the school had been known to form peace treaties between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities to resolve any disputes. One staff member described a number of incidents where there had been fights between Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys in the school that had intensified. The school had worked with the elders from both communities and brought together the two groups of young people to teach them about the consequences of their actions. This was reported by some staff in the school to have been a success.

5.62　Examples of other work undertaken with young people in the school included mentoring programmes (some involving influential sixth-form pupils) and restorative justice interventions; the challenge for the school was how to sustain these.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

5.63　One interviewee suggested that any school-based intervention to tackle gangs and gang culture needed to start in primary schools under the banner of prevention and early intervention as opposed to reactive policies. Another staff member supported this way of thinking, suggesting that education on gangs was needed for young people at an early age because of peer pressure as they got older. A number of other suggestions were made, including:

- training sessions (on gangs) for teachers;
- sessions for young people at risk of becoming involved in gangs;
- lessons on gangs, guns and drugs in citizenship lessons;
- positive role models – using sixth formers, for example, to mentor younger pupils;
- programmes of weapons awareness sessions (not just one-off seminars);
- prison visits to learn about the consequences of involvement in gangs to demystify the glamour that young people associate with the 'gangsta' lifestyle;
- involving ex-gang members in the delivery of interventions (having conducted a vetting process to find the right characters);
- offering alternatives for young people that are excluded from school.

5.64　One staff member commented that any intervention to tackle gangs and gang culture would need to be implemented in school and out of school in the community setting. The problem was seen to be too complex for just the school to deal with; the need to engage with parents, peer groups and the wider community was seen as vital to encompass a holistic approach to tackling a problem that is so entrenched in the local community. This raises the question of

how the school can link to and contribute to a broader, holistic approach to gangs. A discussion on the partnership approach to gangs is covered in Section 9.

5.65   One interviewee stressed that the Government needs to provide funding for locality-based interventions to tackle the issues that are specific to the school and community where these problems are apparent. Others argued that any initiative needs to be developed by someone who understands the local community.

5.66   The main blockage in terms of developing interventions to tackle gang problems in schools was that the majority of staff in schools would not admit or recognise they had a problem. In order for any intervention to be trialled, those consulted highlighted that the first step would be to encourage schools to get their problems out in the open and welcome any intervention that is made available to them.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

5.67   Two focus groups were undertaken with young people. All participants were male and researchers were reliant upon the staff in school to select young people to be involved. These young people were specifically selected and were thought to represent the two groups of young people commonly referred to by staff involved in the consultation. Group one comprised seven young Bangladeshi men, aged from 14 to 16. All of the young people were Muslim and had lived in the area for the majority of their lives. Group two comprised eight young Pakistani men, aged from 13 to 16. The two religions reported by this group of young people were Islam and Hinduism. The young people had lived in the area for most of their lives.

Consultation with Group One

5.68   To set the context of these findings, it is important to note that the entire sample of young people involved in this discussion had been excluded from school at some point[106] and some had been involved with the YOT.

5.69   The young people were asked to discuss some of the words they associated with the term 'gang'. Some of their examples (although not exhaustive as there were many) were as follows:

- clothing, e.g. hoodies/low trousers;
- machetes;
- ASBOs;
- exclusions;
- enemies;
- postcodes;
- fights;
- drugs;
- theft;
- weapons;
- criminal records;
- police.

5.70   Consistent with the views of the staff, the majority of the young people were not in favour of the word 'gang' because of the negative connotations and labels that were all too often placed upon them, when in their view they were 'hanging out' with their peers. They were more partial to the term 'group'. Both terms are used interchangeably throughout this section.

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[106] All the young people were, however, currently attending school.

5.71   The young people made a number of statements to describe what they understood gang culture and gangs to mean. Some examples are presented below:

>   *You are part of something if you belong to a gang.*

>   *If you are in a gang, you have backup in case you get into trouble.*

>   *Gangs are seen as negative by some people but they are not always negative – they can be good.*

5.72   The young people were quick to communicate the divide (as discussed by staff) between the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. One person remarked that he was friends with boys from the Pakistani community at primary school; however, when he attended secondary school the divide was instant. The young people attributed the divide between the two communities to historical events dating back many years. Clearly they did not know the details of these events.

5.73   The young people gave details of subgroups within the two groups, for example, divided by age or by postcode. In the main, young men did not mix with young females because of their religion.

5.74   When asked to describe the benefits and consequences of joining a gang, the following points were made and are displayed in the table below. These findings suggest that young people are indeed aware of the consequences of joining a gang but there are also some key pushes that may place a young person at risk of gang involvement, particularly with regards to peer pressure, a sense of protection and a sense of belonging.

Benefits	Consequences
• Protection.	• Criminal record.
• To be part of something (belonging).	• Being judged.
• Not seen as a weak person.	• Injuries.
• Taken care of.	• Risking your life.
• Access to backup.	• Putting the family through stress.
• Self defence.	• Exclusion/lack of jobs.
	• Have to look out for your family.

Gangs and Identity

5.75   According to the young people, clothing such as hoodies, bandanas and trousers worn low on the waist were symbols of gang affiliation.

Gangs and Schools

5.76   The young people believed that group culture starts to establish amongst peer groups in years 7 and 8. Contrary to the perceptions of staff at the school, they disagreed with the notion that gangs started to form in primary school, commenting that young people were too young to be exposed to gang culture. They also believed that young people were most impressionable at the ages of 13 and 14.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

5.77   The impact of gangs was significant. The young people associated fighting in school with being excluded from school. They articulated how school exclusion could have long-term negative implications on their future prospects. Some of them had peers who had been excluded from school for fighting. They associated exclusion from school with a spiral of decline and increasing vulnerability to involvement in gangs because of a lack of positive activities and more generally *"a lack of things to do"*.

Weapons and Violence

5.78   Although not all local gangs were associated with violence, the young people made it clear that if gangs had to use violence, they would. They also commented that if larger disputes erupted between the Asian community and black community, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities would unite.

5.79   Some of the young people gave examples of fights they had been involved in because of gang rivalry; one person had assaulted another person because of tensions in the local community.

5.80   The young people communicated a clear hierarchy based on age in terms of weapon ownership; they remarked that young people start off using sticks and stones at about 14, move on to carrying knives at about 16 and then older groups have guns.

Interventions in Schools

5.81   The young people were not aware of any interventions to tackle gangs and gang culture in school. One person remarked that if work was delivered in schools on gang culture, it would not necessarily be taken seriously.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

5.82   Anger management was suggested as one possible intervention that may be beneficial for some young people in school.

5.83   One young person thought that pupils in years 5 and 6 should be targeted to try to prevent them from joining gangs. Another suggested that young people needed to be targeted at primary school age. Although young people remarked that primary school children were not exposed to gangs at this age, they alluded to the need for early intervention and prevention programmes with these age groups.

5.84   The young people thought that any interventions should be delivered by ex-gang members. In one person's opinion, money should be invested into inclusion programmes (keeping young people in school) rather than introducing interventions to tackle gangs and gang culture.

Consultation with Group Two[107]

5.85   Similar to the discussion with group one, the young males in this group were asked to discuss some of the words they associated with the term 'gang'. Some of their examples (although not exhaustive as there were many) were as follows:

- drugs;
- ASBOs;
- smackheads;
- street rep;
- weapons;
- conflict;
- shanks (knives);

- criminals;
- heroes;
- self-esteem;
- being cool;
- women;
- rude boys;
- murders.

5.86   The young people preferred to use the word 'crew' or mates or referred to local group names. For ease and consistency, the words group and gang are used interchangeably.

5.87   The young people put forward a number of reasons why they thought young people joined gangs. These were as follows:

- friendship;
- protection;
- safety;
- status;
- to be associated with someone/something.

5.88   The formation of gangs and joining gangs were discussed. Some of the young people described how non-gang members had to undertake an access test to prove themselves before joining a gang, e.g. smoke some drugs. In the opinion of one young person:

> *If you want to join a gang, you must speak to the leader of the gang.*

5.89   When asked to describe the benefits and consequences of joining a gang, the following points were made and are displayed in the table below. Similar benefits and consequences were identified amongst this cohort of young people; however, a bigger emphasis was placed on the reputation and street credibility when belonging to a gang than in the previous group.

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[107] It is important to note that the head of security who acted as a learning mentor was present during this focus group. Any comments made by the head of security have been included in the staff findings.

Benefits	Consequences
• Street cred.	• Prison.
• To get a name for yourself/street fame.	• Death/get shot/get 'shanked' (knifed).
• Popular with girls.	• Bad name for the family.
• Get respect.	• No qualifications.
• Feel safe.	• No job/no income.
	• Beatings.
	• Get involved with the police.

Gangs and Identity

5.90   The young people described how clothing was associated with being in gangs. Consistent with the views of their peers, they referred to low trousers sitting below the waistline, hoodies and bandanas. Additionally they mentioned balaclavas and turbans. Some gang members were reported to have tattoos to represent different crews.

Gangs and Schools

5.91   All of the young people knew of someone who was in or associated with a gang; they referred to brothers or local people in the community. They did not, however, describe themselves as belonging to a gang, nor did they indicate that there were active gangs in school; rather, they referred to a division between 'cool' people and 'geeks'.

5.92   These young men also communicated the divide between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities and referred back to historical events that had caused these tensions. Similar to the group of Bangladeshi men, they could not provide any details of the causes of this rift.

5.93   The young people provided information regarding rivalries in the community that were associated with drugs. If one gang distributed drugs on another gang's patch, this was reported to cause problems in the area.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

5.94   One young person remarked that disagreements in school did not impact on what happened in the community and vice versa. Another young person thought that gangs had no place in school; they perceived that pupils came to school to learn. It transpired that most of the young people wanted to get a good education as opposed to joining a gang.

5.95   One young person commented on occasions when issues relating to gangs may become known in school when a young person bragged about gang-related behaviour.

Weapons and Violence

5.96   According to this group of young people, gang members were not all violent; many were just groups of friends 'hanging out'.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

5.97   Some of the young people thought that it would be beneficial to have lessons on gangs in school. The most favoured intervention was to visit prisons to learn more about the consequences of gang-related behaviour.

KEY MESSAGES

Gangs and street culture and their impact on schools

The problems with gangs and gang culture for this school were understood by staff and pupils to relate to divides in the local community, namely between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. These were described as deeply entrenched problems and cultural differences and religion were cited as the main causes of conflict amongst small groups of young men. That said, the young people involved in the study were not clear on the causes of the rift between the two communities and therefore the school has a role to play here, particularly given their duty to promote community cohesion,[108] race equality, gender and disability equality. All schools, whatever the mix of pupils they serve, are responsible for equipping pupils to live and thrive alongside people from many different backgrounds.[109] The issues experienced within this school highlight the need to ensure that policies to promote equality and community cohesion inform and influence policies and practice in all schools.

Staff perceive there to be a number of reasons why gangs persist in the local community, including the absence of positive role models, poor parenting skills and a lack of diversionary activities. This, combined with the attractive lifestyle, e.g. financial rewards commonly associated with gangs, contributed to their ongoing presence and influence on young people of school age.

Understanding the perceived costs and benefits of belonging to a gang will help schools to shape their education programmes to deglamourise the lifestyle young people commonly associate with gang membership.

Typology of school interventions aimed at managing impact

Pupils were not aware of any interventions in school designed to specifically address the problem of gangs and gang culture and some were sceptical as to how effective school-based interventions could be. Staff, on the other hand, remarked on some successful initiatives that had been implemented in school that had the potential to suppress the impact of gangs on the school, (although there is no evidence to suggest that these initiatives have been independently evaluated and would therefore require in-depth evaluations to measure their effectiveness). These included having a police officer based on-site, facilitating peace treaties in the community with community leaders, peer mentoring schemes and restorative justice models of practice. The school appeared to have

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[108] The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002 introducing a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion.

[109] See 'Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion' available at http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11634.

used a range of educative, preventative and enforcement-led approaches to manage the problems they had experienced.

This highlights the importance of ensuring that schools are working in partnership with external agencies to ensure that young people are educated about gangs, either by inviting external providers into school to facilitate these discussions or by ensuring that there are interventions in the community.

Proposals for future interventions centred very much on early intervention and prevention, with requests for lessons for staff and young people on gangs and gang culture, prison visits to highlight the consequences of gang involvement and, above all, adopting a holistic approach to manage the problem, working with local partners to tackle local issues.

Is there a significant issue that requires a solution?

The school was concerned about the potential impact that street gang culture could have on the school and its pupils. Although confined to a minority of pupils (estimated to be no more than 20 in each year group), some staff had noticed an increasing visibility of gang affiliation over the last two years.

At the time of writing this report, the actual impact of gangs in the school was considered minimal and for some young people the school was regarded as a safe haven away from the community problems that they were exposed to outside of school hours. However, there were some concerns that problems in the local community had the potential to affect staff recruitment and retention. Therefore, it is important that the positive work to tackle gang issues that takes place in schools and the wider community is promoted.

SECTION 6: CASE STUDY 2

CONTEXT

The Local Area

6.1   This case study is based on a secondary school located in an urban area in England.

6.2   Compared to national figures, the area where the school is located has a below average number of white residents and a higher than average proportion of black or black British residents. The most prominent religion in the area is Christian.

6.3   The local area has a higher than average number of residents living in Council or Housing Association rented accommodation and the number of Owner Occupied dwellings is significantly lower than that for other parts of England. The remaining households are either private rented accommodation or rented from another source.

6.4   Residents aged 16 to 74 have similar levels of academic achievement to the rest of the population of England. The proportion of residents who do not have any qualifications is slightly lower than the national average. The proportion of residents in the area that achieved one of the highest qualifications included in the census was above the average for England as a whole.

6.5   According to the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation, the school is situated in one of the 25 per cent most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in England. There are 32,482 of these areas in England; each one containing a population of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. The proportion of residents living in the area who are in full-time employment is comparable with the employment figures for the whole of England.

The School

6.6   The secondary school works with the local authority, local providers and other schools to provide access to a core of integrated services.

6.7   There is over 100 teaching staff employed by the school. The school also has a police school liaison officer[110] and a counsellor that works with emotionally disturbed young people.

6.8   At the time of the visit,[111] the secondary school had over 1,100 pupils on roll. The largest proportions of pupils attending the school were of black and African, Chinese and Asian and other Eastern European/Latin American origin. Over one third of pupils were reported to have English as a second language.

6.9   The most recent OFSTED inspection[112] states that pupils tend to enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average. In general, pupils make satisfactory progress in years 7 to 9, with substantial improvements in years 10 and 11. The overall level of attainment at the school is equivalent to national expectations.

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[110] Unfortunately this person had been off sick for some time and had not been replaced.
[111] The case study took place in November 2007.
[112] Information from: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

6.10   The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE's and equivalent A*-C, including English and maths was above the average for the local authority.

6.11   The general behaviour of pupils was ranked as 'good' by OFSTED whilst pupil attendance was deemed 'satisfactory'. The rate of unauthorised absences[113] of pupils attending the school in the Autumn and Spring terms of the 2006/07 was higher than the national average.[114]

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH STAFF

6.12   Interviews were undertaken with ten members of staff, including the headteacher, learning mentors, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, programme manager for crime and community safety (external), school counsellors, learning co-ordinator and a head of year.[115]

Defining the Term 'Gang'

6.13   The term gang was defined by some staff as organised criminal gangs with distinct names and reputations. This definition was used to describe some of the well-known gangs that were notorious in the local area. For others, the term was taken to mean groups of young people that had bonded together or who had common interests. Some of the definitions are presented below:

> *Organised criminal gangs that recruit. They have distinct names and a reputation in the area.*

> *Group identity, do things to show that they are part of that group, codes and initiations. They have reputations in the area.*

6.14   Throughout the presentation of findings in this section we have selected the comments that relate more specifically to gang culture, which is perceived negatively unless otherwise stated.

The Local Community

6.15   When asked to describe the local area in which the school was located, it was portrayed as a multicultural area with high Vietnamese and Chinese populations, with an ever increasing, newly arriving Somalian community. The picture painted by staff was an area that had experienced gang problems for many years. Some staff who had worked in the area for a number of years remarked that gang culture was deeply embedded in the local community. In more recent years, some of the gangs in the local area were reported to have become more prominent.

6.16   When asked to expand upon some of the gang issues in the local area, young men were reported to be notorious for their involvement in gangs; by and large, the same could not be said for young women. However, one interviewee pointed out that young girls were attracted to the kudos of men in gangs and for this reason became affiliated. Another interviewee commented that girl gangs did exist in the area and that problems between girl gangs emanated from their involvement with young men.

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[113] Total percentage of half day sessions missed by pupils with school authorisation.
[114] Information taken from the BBC education league tables: http://news.bbc.co.uk.
[115] The head of year did not specify the year group they were responsible for.

6.17 Staff were aware that gangs in the area had clear hierarchies, describing scenarios where older gang members recruited the younger boys to work for them, stashing guns and running drugs were some examples given. Clearly, there were concerns in relation to older groups (school leavers who were controlled by their elders) trying to influence their younger peers to join gangs. There were reports of school leavers hanging around outside of the school gates. It was revealed that entire family gangs also operated in the area.

6.18 There were some who associated gangs in the area with violence. Some staff recited violent incidents in the community and attributed these to local gang members. One named gang in particular were held responsible for recent shootings; further enquiries unveiled that there was a heightened fear of this gang amongst some of the young people in the school.

6.19 Local gangs were commonly associated with criminality, including robberies and muggings. Pupils in the school were not necessarily reported to be the perpetrators of these crimes; however, they were regarded as potential victims of these crimes.

6.20 Gang issues were coupled with drug problems; crack cocaine, heroin and cannabis in particular, which were ingrained in the community. One member of staff explained that younger gang members got into trouble with their elders if drugs (they were assigned to 'run') were stolen by rival gangs. There were reports of kidnappings in the local community because of disputes relating to drugs and money.

6.21 A number of reasons were put forward by staff to suggest why young people associated with gangs, including:

- protection;
- kudos;
- safety in numbers;
- family connection;
- area of residence;
- power/status;
- to make money;
- bravado;
- boredom;
- replacing family networks;
- poverty;
- acceptance;
- peer pressure;
- low self-esteem;
- lack of identity.

6.22 In the opinion of some staff, the lack of positive role models in the community, combined with too much freedom and a lack of responsible adults was regarded to have a negative impact on young people. One member of staff expressed the view that there was a negative culture for Somalian young people:

> *Negative culture for Somalian youngsters – education not cool, doing homework is not cool, this culture of the music which is negative and they listen to it more and more, they have negative role models who they try to imitate. More kids following negative models.*

6.23 For one or more of these reasons, staff were of the opinion that some young people, albeit the minority, were drawn into gangs for a sense of belonging, for acceptance and, in some cases, to have their backs covered.

6.24   Others described how young people do not always have an understanding of the consequences of their own actions. There were concerns that newly arriving communities can become isolated. The growth in the generation gap between parents and children, language barriers and a lack of communication were all perceived to have a negative impact on young people. Some staff suggested that there was a conflict between western and other values that was having a significant impact on some young people.

6.25   One interviewee felt that young people were desperate for identity and a sense of belonging. This interviewee summed up their concerns in the following statement:

> *I feel that kids are desperate for identify and security and sense of belonging and if we are unable to provide that as a school and if the family is unable to provide that, the kids will look elsewhere – worryingly, hardnosed criminal gangs are offering that identity.*

6.26   The risks of being involved in gangs were many; the overarching one was that young people were running the risk of being killed. One staff member pointed out that in 14 years there had been two murders of ex-school pupils. Another member of staff was aware of the deaths of four or five young people within a two mile radius of the school in the last 12 months.

6.27   One interviewee stressed that once in gangs, it was difficult for young people to exit them; they feared reprisal, for example.

Gangs and Identity

6.28   Having a sense of identity was reported to be a common feature of local gangs who were known to use codes and initiations to recruit new members. Staff were aware of a number of gangs in the area and identified them by name. To preserve the anonymity of the school, these are not named in the report.

6.29   One member of staff associated overt identities with less serious gangs; identity was perceived to be more covert amongst more serious gangs.

6.30   Gangs were, however, reported to distinguish themselves by wearing different coloured bandanas[116] or by associating with the colour of wheelie bins that represented different areas. Some staff remarked upon hairstyles that distinguished one gang from another.

6.31   Some comments were made by staff to describe ethnic gangs, e.g. Vietnamese and Somalian gangs – the latter are discussed in further detail below.

Gangs and Schools

6.32   The general consensus was that there was not a strong gang culture in the school, although there were anecdotal reports of a minority of young people either associated with, or members of, gangs.

6.33   The main concern for staff was that street gang culture had the potential to infiltrate into the school. Historically, incidents relating to gangs and street culture were reported to have taken place beyond the school gates; however,

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[116] The school did not allow young people to wear bandanas in school.

recent events led some staff to believe that these issues were slowly creeping into the school. One interviewee suggested that if the school did not respond quickly to incidents in school (as it had), there was the potential for it to escalate. Ordinarily, the problems that transpired in school were not related to gangs and the general consensus was that the school was not experiencing an overt problem.

6.34   Some staff remarked that gangs had become more visible around the school in the last one to two years. When asked to estimate the numbers of young people in school who may be involved in gangs in the local area, the only estimate given was no more than 30. In the opinion of one interviewee, gang leaders were not mainstream school pupils; rather they attended PRUs and recruited their associates from their school community. Another interviewee suggested that there was a lot of secrecy around gang involvement; young people would not want their parents or teachers to know, for example.

6.35   Some staff were concerned that young people's involvement in gangs was much more entrenched than what teachers in the school would like to believe. Another believed that all schools (to a greater or lesser extent) had problems with gangs in school.

6.36   Discussions with staff suggested that young people's interest in gangs intensified with age. Young people were not reported to become active members until year 8 or year 9 or when they became idealised by other peers. In the opinion of one interviewee, there were fears that young people from age nine upwards could potentially be showing signs of gang alliance. When considering the hierarchical issues discussed previously, the elders were reported to recruit their younger peers because it was perceived that they would be less likely to get into trouble. The local primary school was reported to have a particularly bad reputation because of its location.

6.37   School life and community life were differentiated by some staff who made a distinction between street culture and daily life at school. School was set apart from 'the street' and almost seen as a sanctuary for young people. It is what happened at the school gates and beyond that concerned staff. There had been incidents when young people had organised gatherings of gang members to come together outside the school. There were concerns that the time between leaving the house and arriving at the school gates and vice versa could be potential flashpoints.

6.38   The school had a zero tolerance approach to weapons in school. One member of staff made the following comment to explain what was meant by this:

> *Within the context we are in I can say every single child that brings a knife into the school will be excluded from the school. That helps, but it does mean that one or two kids get permanently excluded that should not. Bigger message does have an impact.*

6.39   One staff member described the downside of this policy, in that there may be young people in school carrying weapons for protection who are placing themselves at risk of permanent exclusion from school if they are caught. One interviewee expressed their concerns in relation to the impact that carrying weapons may have on young people as follows:

It worries me that if nice kids are carrying weapons and they are carrying them for fear, they risk a permanent exclusion from school or jail because of the fear of gangs. Protection against the gangs is more important than being caught in school or by the police.

6.40   Another interviewee cited fashion and glamour as reasons for carrying weapons.

6.41   There were reports of young people carrying weapons in school; scissors and screwdrivers were the main ones discussed. One interviewee commented on occasions where young people had posed in class as though they are holding a gun. The same interviewee remarked upon an assembly on guns in which 80 per cent of pupils self-reported that they had seen guns (although the source of these viewings was not reported and therefore this could include sightings on the TV, magazines, etc.).

6.42   Although the school's policy on weapons was rigid, the school generally reported making a huge effort not to exclude young people from school. They recognised that this opened young people up to further involvement in antisocial activity that they would not be exposed to in school. There were schemes, such as Manage Move, that sought to identify an alternative school placement for school excludees. The school also linked in with alternative education providers where possible to ensure that continuity of education was provided in the appropriate setting.

6.43   Four young people had been excluded from school for carrying weapons, although the time period for these exclusions was not reported.

6.44   Staff remarked on the intensity of pressure that was enforced on young people in the area who were reported to carry weapons for nothing other than their own protection. One staff member described an incident where a pupil was stopped and searched and found in possession of a knife. When scrutinised, the pupil was reported to have carried the weapon for protection. The media was considered to play a huge part in increasing the fear amongst young people. Whether young people would use a weapon was unbeknown.

6.45   A recent incident in the school was described by staff interviewed. The reasoning behind the event was because a young Somalian male had converted from Muslim to Christian faith. When the so-called 'leader' of the Somalian boys discovered this, the young person was beaten up in school. The Somalian boys in the school were reported to have very aggressive tendencies – their experiences in Somalia were perceived to cause post-traumatic stress disorder in these young men.

6.46   The difference in culture was clearly apparent for staff working with Somalian boys, who were reported to have a different understanding of the threshold of what constitutes violence, coming from a country where scenes of violence had been an everyday occurrence. This resulted in their failure to understand or recognise that it is not acceptable in Western culture.

6.47   The Somalian community was described by one interviewee to be very isolated from other pupils. Another described the newly arrived Somalian young people as a cohort of pupils that were struggling with the language and cultural differences. This coalesced with the traumas they had experienced in

their native soil and the visibility of the well-established groups of young people in the community, was reported to leave them with no alternative other than to join in a gang or form an alternative. In this instance the latter was the case. The following quotation illustrates this point:

> *Newly arrived group of Somalian kids struggling with language and cultural changes and traumas in your past and these things are looming – you join in or you bond together or form an alternative.*

6.48   The Somalian gangs (newer immigrants) appeared to be causing the most concern to staff. Some teachers gave details of a new arrival to the school from Somalia who entered the school with no school uniform, no personal belongings, etc., within a couple of weeks the young man had a designer coat, a mobile phone, trainers, etc. – the general consensus was that this young man had been lured in to a local criminal gang. Some of these young boys were suspected to be older than school age and did not have passports as proof of their age.

6.49   One member of staff, however, did not describe the Somalian boys as gangs, rather they were seen to form small groups, largely to keep each other company, particularly if they were new to the country and spoke little English. That said, the older age groups (beyond secondary school age) were reported to be involved in gangs and were described as engaging in more problematic behaviour, e.g. drugs. The influence of older gang members on the younger age groups was a real concern for some staff and was a situation that had to be managed. One interviewee commented on the mixed impact of older gang members on their younger peers; some looked up to them, others were terrified of them.

6.50   One interviewee expressed a concern for young people who were perceived to be vulnerable to exposure to gangs and involvement in gangs:

> *They don't always know what to watch out for – they don't always have an understanding of the consequences of their actions, e.g. the law, in life – not so aware of the decisions they make now and how it may affect them in later life, e.g. missing opportunities to achieve.*

Impact of Gangs on Schools

6.51   Opinions regarding the potential impact of gangs in the school were mixed. Some staff described how in their observations of young people in school, some did buy into education and learning but were involved in gangs outside of school. The upshot of this was what young people learnt in school was totally at odds with their learning and influences out of school. In the opinion of another, learning was perceived to be affected because some of the more influential young men gave the teachers a hard time.

6.52   Two examples of what the more senior gang members were enticing some of their younger peers to do were 'bunking off' school and smoking cannabis. The associated health risks and the impact on their education were of concern to some staff.

6.53   One interviewee did not think that teachers would recognise that there was a problem with gangs in the school and that the subject itself would not be discussed. The potential risk for teachers if pupils were carrying weapons in school was highlighted; however, there were no reports of incidents involving weapons and teachers.

6.54   One staff member thought that the position of the school in an area well known for gang-related issues did no favours for the reputation of the school, commenting that the *"school was a victim of* [poor] *reputation"*. However, the general consensus was that the school was oversubscribed to and produced good and improving exam results.

Interventions in Schools

6.55   There were mixed opinions in relation to whether staff were equipped to deal with gang issues in school. In the opinion of one interviewee, some of the younger/newer teachers to the school were regarded as less well equipped to tackle gang-related issues.

6.56   Restorative justice models were used to tackle conflict and disputes and were seen as good practice. One interviewee discussed how they were implementing a strategy to break down the links between the younger and older age groups and were involving parents to ensure that young people were not associating with some of the undesirable elders in their community.

6.57   The local police were also present at school closing times should there be a requirement to safely disperse young people from school to home.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

6.58   The need for teachers to be more aware of what young people were exposed to in the community was highlighted. Another suggestion was for schools to have access to risk assessments to determine what the level of need for interventions relating to gangs and gang culture was in the school.

6.59   One interviewee commented on the importance of interventions for primary school aged pupils, particularly through transition programmes. The importance of mentoring schemes was communicated by one staff member who remarked that young people do not trust adults to tackle gang-related issues because they cannot offer them a solution or a way out. This is an important point that must not go unrecognised and must be considered when introducing any intervention to tackle gangs in school.

6.60   Another interviewee suggested that teachers would benefit from training on recognising the signs of young people's involvement in gangs and gang-related issues. If this was to have a positive impact, engagement with external agencies was seen as paramount. The same staff member suggested that schools would benefit from having a lead professional to deal with these issues; this person could then act as a single point of contact responsible for monitoring incidents.

6.61   One interviewee remarked upon the difficulties of putting in place exit strategies for young people involved in gangs. The lack of trust in school staff and the fear the young people felt was perceived to make it impossible to tackle the issue.

6.62   On the whole, the issue of gangs extended beyond the school and for that reason, any intervention was reported to need a community-wide approach. The school alone was not seen as the solution; the influences beyond the school gates were too great. The importance of involving the local community (including parents) and other agencies was stressed.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

6.63   Two focus groups were undertaken with young people. Group one comprised of five young females, aged 14 years. Three of the young women described their ethnicity as black British and two white British. Two of the young women were Christian, one Catholic and two were not religious. They had lived in the area for different lengths of time with the shortest being two years and the longest 13 years. Group two comprised of young males: two black Moroccan, two black African and one mixed race. Two of the young males described their religion as Chrislam[117] and two were Christian. Most had lived in the area for most of their lives, whilst one had been in the area for seven years. In addition to the group exercises, two young people were interviewed together and one young person individually.

Consultation with Group One

6.64   The first point to make is that the young females were far more open about issues relating to gangs and gang culture than their fellow male pupils. It is not fully understood why this is the case; however, throughout the study some of the male pupils were more suspicious of the researchers and were cautious when responding to some of the questions.

6.65   The young people were asked to discuss some of the words they associated with the term gang. Some of their examples were as follows:

- group of people;
- violent;
- mischief;
- unruly children;
- street rats;
- code words;
- borough;
- hoodie;
- tracksuits;
- hand signals;
- against the law;
- 'blacked out' (disguised in all black).

6.66   Although girls were also reported to be involved in gangs, it was mostly boys. The young females made a number of statements to describe why they thought gangs existed as follows:

> *Protection – to get a name for themselves.*

> *People in gangs don't even know why they are or what they are about, it comes down to family history and they just carry on fighting a battle that was started by their dad or family. They don't know.*

> *Some just start up, they call themselves a name and then that's it.*

> *Poverty – they do it so that they can make it and make money.*

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[117] This was defined as Christian and Islam.

6.67   The young people gave examples of what people had to do in order to join a gang as follows:

> You have to be like them. You have to be doing what they do,
> e.g. if someone is robbing someone then you would have to too
> – you can't just stand there otherwise they wouldn't wanna roll
> with you.

6.68   The young people were asked to describe their perceptions of the benefits and consequences of belonging to a gang. The following comments were made and are displayed in the table below. The young people in this group were aware of many of the consequences of belonging to a gang; however, they also identified a number of benefits, particularly in relation to a sense of belonging and to make money.

Benefits	Consequences
• Know people.	• Get in too deep.
• Backup.	• Get fake friends.
• Not rejected.	• Death.
• Got a leader.	• Fights.
• Got your own patch.	• Prison.
• Look hard.	• Lose everything.
• Make money.	• Impact on family and siblings.
• Protection.	

6.69   Some more general points were made by the young people:

> If not in it – shows that you are not in a gang. They're gonna
> beat you up for not being in one.

> There is more pressure on boys.

> There are a lot of shoot outs – many that aren't known. It's
> mainly over drugs and 'their spot', their patch.

> They all recruit youngsters.

Gangs and Identity

6.70   According to the young people, different coloured bandanas distinguished local gangs. It was not only the colour of bandanas; local gangs were identifiable by a colour – related to the colour of the neighbourhood wheelie bins. They were also reported to be 'blacked out' (see 6.65 for meaning).

6.71   Local gangs were also known to chant the names of their gang when out 'in the street', as well as using hand signs to symbolise the first letter of their gang. The young people were clearly familiar with a number of local gangs, frequently referring to their names throughout the discussions.

6.72   Gang members in the same crew were reported to all look very similar in the way they dress and present themselves.

Gangs and Schools

6.73   In line with comments made by staff, the young people regarded school as a place where they were occupied – a safety net. School exclusions were seen to place young people at risk of gang activity.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

6.74   Consistent with staff, the young people felt that gang issues tended to remain in the community unless someone had 'beef'[118] with someone in school; this could then erupt after school. The following comment was made:

> *Keep street to the street, school to school.*

6.75   By and large, the young people thought that it is not gangs that have an impact in school, rather it is the attitude that young people learn from the street that has the impact, and the upshot is a lack of respect for teachers.

> *If you bring gang culture and rudeness to school, it's a problem;*
> *it can distract young people if something kicks off.*

Weapons and Violence

6.76   All of the young females agreed that gangs were violent and reported on the hierarchies of local gangs where those of lower rank would be recruited to commit the crimes.

6.77   Some of the following comments were made in relation to young people carrying weapons:

> *It's not a bad thing to bring a weapon into school. You might*
> *get attacked on the way to school, on the way back. It's*
> *protection.*
>
> *I can protect myself with a knife or a gun. I would rather be*
> *arrested than dead.*
>
> *Not a bad thing to bring weapons into school because of the*
> *area you are going to on the way to school.*

Interventions in Schools

6.78   The young people discussed how they had been taught about gangs in citizenship lessons, particularly in relation to stereotypes. However, they remarked that it taught them nothing new. When asked whether they would be in favour of having lessons on gangs in schools, the following comment was made:

> *No, it would not be helpful to have lessons. Even if you learn it*
> *in school, it's different to when you are out on the street.*

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

6.79   The young people spoke more positively about inviting ex-gang members into school to educate young people about gangs and the consequences of belonging

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[118] Beef is a slang term for someone having issues with a particular person.

to a gang. However, this was offset in their comments that ex gang members would not be available 24/7 when young people may be in need of help.

6.80 The most effective exit strategy from gangs and gang culture was to move away from the area. Some boys were reported to escape if they found a girlfriend or if there was an illness in the family.

6.81 Clearly young people did not trust teachers nor did they think that they understood the issues that penetrated the streets. Although the young people were aware that the police assured them of confidentiality, they made the more general point that *"the police won't be your bodyguard forever"*.

Consultation with Group Two[119]

6.82 The young men preferred to use a different word to gang, which was the local terminology used to describe gangs. To ensure that the area is not recognised, this term has not been used and for ease, the word gang is used here.

6.83 This group was also asked to discuss some of the words they associated with the word gang. Some of their examples were as follows:

- money;
- weapons;
- drugs;
- elders/youngers;
- area;
- trust/loyalty;
- feds;
- safety;

- harm;
- commitment recruits;
- postcode;
- theft;
- rivalry;
- ranks;
- youth;
- stereotypes.

6.84 The formation of gangs and joining gangs was discussed. The young people described how gangs formed based on peers having similar interests or by postcode affiliation. Clearly there were territorial issues; young people would not venture onto another patch.

6.85 They described the overlap between gangs and drugs in the local area and commented on the rivalry between local gangs over drugs and money. They also linked family connections with gang membership.

6.86 The young people put forward a number of reasons why they thought young people joined gangs. These were as follows:

- protection;
- influence of friends;
- popularity;
- to make money;
- it may appear cool;
- to gain respect;
- have an introduction and get recruited.

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[119] Although most young people were consulted in a group, two young people were interviewed separately at their request. All of the information is presented in this sub section.

6.87   The young people did not think that there was any pressure to join gangs; rather it was seen as a choice that people make. However, the hierarchy of gang culture was discussed in the sense that youngers don't step on the elders' territory.

6.88   In line with some of the comments made by the young females, in order to join a gang, new recruits had to *"prove themselves"*. Thieving was one example given. In the main, gangs were associated with young men. Some comments were made to suggest that some people were converting from Christianity to Muslim for protection. Their reason for this was because most gang members in the area were of Muslim faith.

6.89   In keeping with the views of staff, Somalians were described to unite as a separate gang. One young person commented that although they hang out together, they are not a gang; rather they stick together because of their religion and country. A similar point was raised by a member of staff and therefore there are contrasting views amongst staff and young people.

6.90   When asked to describe the benefits and consequences of belonging to a gang, the following points were made and are presented in the table below. A number of the benefits identified by this group relate to the status that can be acquired when joining a gang. The young people were also aware of a number of consequences, particularly in relation to the involvement with the law.

Benefits	Consequences
• Protection.	• Weapons.
• Reputation.	• Stop and searches.
• Money.	• Police.
• Girls.	• Permanent exclusion from school.
• Power.	• Death.
• Loyalty.	• Commitment.
• Drugs.	• Lose respect.
• Popularity.	• Can't get out.
	• Get robbed.

Gangs and Identity

6.91   Consistent with their female peers, the young males described how different coloured bandanas were associated with different gangs. They also remarked upon the colour of local authority bins and how bandanas would be matched to these.

Gangs and Schools

6.92   All of the young people knew of someone who was in a gang or associated with a gang; they also commented that if you 'hung out' with people in gangs, you became stereotyped as a gang member. With the exception of one person who had previous links with gangs, the young people did not report that they were involved in gangs. The young males estimated that the equivalent of half a class per year group were in gangs. Some young people in school were, however, reported to have associations with gang members beyond secondary school age.

6.93   One young person commented that young people in school did not really belong to a gang nor were they described as gang members; rather they were associated with gangs, because of the postcode area they lived in or their family connections.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

6.94   One young person commented that the only time gang culture would impact on school was if there was tension in the community; in certain cases fights could then take place in school.

Weapons and Violence

6.95   They were some comments made to suggest that young people carried knives even though they knew they would get permanently excluded. Some of the comments made insinuated that knives were carried for protection.

6.96   The young males described incidents of shoot-outs between different gangs in the area; this was associated with the elders who were described as 18 years of age upwards. The youngers were associated with committing some crimes, one young person made the following comment:

> If they are dumb enough to do it, they will do anything they are told. They take mobiles, rob other people.

Interventions in Schools

6.97   The young males were very strong in their views about permanent exclusions and remarked that exclusion resulted in a spiral of decline where young people had nothing to do, and therefore, caused trouble and got further involved in criminal activity. In the words of one young person:

> You see them – just street rats, (walking the streets), make it worse, it gives them time.

6.98   Although they had received some lessons on gangs, they were ineffective in their view because they were not taught anything that they did not already know.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

6.99   Starting education at primary school age was viewed positively. They did not see the need for it at secondary school because it was considered to be 'too late' by then to make a difference.

6.100   Similar to their peers, they were in favour of ex-gang members delivering lessons about gang culture. However, they had concerns that ex-members may be seen as 'grasses' for exiting the gang in the first place.

6.101   The young people had little confidence in teachers and did not give the impression that they would trust teachers with confidential information, although they did describe how some teachers were 'cool'; perhaps because they had young children themselves.

6.102   Parents were seen by young people as critical to the education agenda. The following comment was made by one young person.[120]

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[120] It is important to note, however, that this was a general theme identified by the majority of young people.

Need to get to the parents, it's most important to tackle what's going on in the family, that's where they learn, how they get their freedom. There needs to be more respect in the home and then people will respect their teachers.

KEY MESSAGES

Gangs and street culture and their impact on schools

The problem with gangs and gang culture for this school were understood by staff and pupils to result from deeply embedded problems with gangs in the local community, and these were reported to have become more prominent in recent years. There were reports of clear hierarchies amongst local gangs that had the potential to increase young people's vulnerability to becoming lured into illicit activities, such as stashing guns or running drugs for the elders.

The gang problem in the local community was commonly associated and linked to the local drugs trade. Ex-pupils from the school had been murdered in this area and shootings in close proximity to the school were not uncommon.

The lack of positive role models in the community, combined with too much freedom and a lack of responsible adults, were cited as the most common reasons why young people were being drawn into gangs, often for a sense of belonging, for acceptance and, in some cases, to have their backs covered.

Typology of school interventions aimed at managing impact

Although pupils had received lessons in schools, they did not speak favourably of this approach to managing the impact of gangs. There was a lot of mistrust of teaching staff and therefore a desire that school-based interventions were delivered through peer mentoring schemes or, indeed, ex-gang members who appeared to be more credible amongst young people. Educating young people from primary school age was important to some young people.

Staff in the school spoke positively about using restorative justice practices in school.

There was some discussion amongst staff in terms of identifying risk factors and precursors to gang involvement and having access to risk assessment frameworks. Consideration needs to be given to the role that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) can play in risk assessing young people who may become involved in gangs and gang-related activity. This will allow for more analysis of the CAF process, including an examination of whether local services are geared up to provide this sort of support. For more information on the CAF, please see www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf.

There was some variation between staff in terms of their level of understanding of gang culture and activity. Also, feedback from pupils and staff points to a need for more training and support for staff on effective interventions.

Using the police to disperse groups of young people safely home from school was also used by the school, particularly at times when tensions may be high in the community.

Is there a significant issue that requires a solution?

There was not a strong gang culture in the school, although a minority of pupils were either associated with, or belonged to a local gang. Similar to the previous case study, the main concern was the potential impact that street culture could have on the school and its pupils. However, there were some concerns that these issues were creeping into the school and had become more visible in the last two years. Young people described how issues in the community may be the cause of (rare) outbreaks of fights in school.

Views on the impact of gangs on the school were mixed. Some staff felt that learning was affected because some of the more influential young men gave the teachers a hard time. However, it was not clear if this was gang related or a behaviour issue more generally. Other staff described how young men involved in gangs outside of school did buy into education and learning but said that this was at odds with their influences on the street. School was, therefore, seen as a sanctuary for many young people. There were particularly concerns for young people leaving the school gates and arriving home safely and vice versa. Anecdotal reports of pupils carrying weapons in school for protection on the journey to and from school substantiate these concerns.

The consensus was that any solutions to minimise the impact of gangs on this school required a community-wide approach.

SECTION 7: CASE STUDY 3

CONTEXT

The Local Area

7.1   This case study is based on a secondary school in an urban area in England.

7.2   The area where the school is located comprises a majority white population (British, Irish or other white) and mirrors the proportion of individuals from a white background across England as a whole. The remaining residents are predominantly from Asian backgrounds (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other Asian). The most prominent religion is Christianity. Over a quarter of local residents are not religious.

7.3   Over one third of housing is rented from either the council or the Housing Association; almost double that for the rest of England.

7.4   Educational attainment in the local area is relatively good compared to the rest of England, with lower than average numbers of people aged 16 to 74 with no qualifications.

7.5   According to the 2004 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the borough in which the school is located has a relatively low level of deprivation with no Super Output Areas[121] (SOAs) ranked within the ten per cent most deprived in England and the majority of SOAs, (more than 80 out of 100 in the borough), ranked in the 50 per cent least deprived in England. That said, a borough-wide view can mask pockets of deprivation and the school is situated in an SOA that features within the top 20 per cent of the most deprived SOAs in England. Some of the highest levels of deprivation in the county are found in the surrounding areas that are likely to form part of the catchment area for the school.

7.6   There is a similar picture with regards to the Income Deprivation Indicator.[122] Although more than three quarters of the SOAs in the borough are ranked in the 50 per cent least deprived in England, one area is ranked within the ten per cent most deprived in England and four are ranked within the 20 per cent most deprived. Again, it would appear that some of these relatively deprived SOAs fall within the catchment area of the school.

7.7   When compared to the unemployment rate nationally, the area in which the school is located compares favourably; however, there are a very low number of individuals who are in full-time employment and this is significantly lower than the national average.

The School

7.8   At the time of writing[123], there were just under 1,200 pupils enrolled at the school. The majority of pupils attending the school were described as British, the second largest cohort of pupils were from an Asian background.

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[121] Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a new national geography created by the Office for National Statistics. They are created by combining a number of Output Areas that were created for the 2001 Census. The borough in which the school is located contains 100 SOAs.

[122] The income deprivation domain measures the proportion of the population living below 60% of median income. A number of indicators are used to compile this domain. These include:
   • adults and children in Income Support households;
   • adults and children in Income Based Job Seekers Allowance households;
   • adults and children in Working Family Tax Credit households;
   • adults and children in Disabled Persons Tax Credit households;
   • supported asylum seekers in receipt of subsistence only and accommodation support.

[123] The case study was undertaken in April 2008.

7.9   Over 150 teachers and support staff are employed at the school. Almost three quarters of the staff are female and most are from a white British ethnic background.

7.10   The school was described by those consulted as very multicultural with a number of languages spoken, including (although not exclusively) English, Bengali, Polish and Arabic. In fact, the school had students representing over 20 different nationalities.

7.11   Pupils' attainment and achievement levels of pupils are comparable to the average for the local authority area. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE's and equivalent A*-C, including English and maths was only slightly below the average for the local authority.

7.12   The most recent OFSTED inspection ranked pupils' behaviour and attendance as 'satisfactory'.[124] The rate of unauthorised absences[125] of pupils attending the school in the Autumn and Spring terms of the 2006/07 school year was higher than the national average.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH STAFF

7.13   Nine interviews were undertaken with staff, including the following workers: behaviour attendance manager, Connexions personal advisor, heads of year and the vice-principal.

Defining the Term 'Gang'

7.14   When asked to define the term gang, some staff remarked that the media representation of what gang cultures encapsulate, such as 'hoodies', 'knives' and 'guns', was what first entered their minds.

7.15   In the context of the school and the local community, staff described a culture of groups of students defined by common interests, such as music or the schools/areas they come from. It is important to highlight that the group activity discussed in this section bears no resemblance to the media representations of gangs and gang culture defined in 7.14. The following quotation by one member of staff illustrates this point:

> *I would say we have groups of students defined by what they like, music; social peer groups rather than necessarily gangs as defined in the above by the press. When I think about gangs portrayed in the media I think about initiation ceremonies and we don't have any of that.*

7.16   In the opinion of another, gangs were defined as follows:

> *I would say a gang is a group of people who identify themselves most strongly with each other and have their own values, culture, norms within that group that may be different from the rest of society – that is not really the case in this school.*

7.17   The term gang was disliked by some staff because it was considered to have a negative undertone. Staff preferred to use the term 'groups' when describing young people's networks.

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[124] Information taken from: www.ofsted.gov.uk.
[125] Total percentage of half day sessions missed by pupils without school authorisation.

The Local Community

7.18   When asked to describe the local area in which the school was located, the general picture portrayed by staff was of a very mixed area serving a large catchment area. The school therefore enrolled pupils from affluent families as well as those from some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the area.

7.19   One interviewee noted that there was a lot of racism in the local community; furthermore, this person went on to say that the BNP was fairly active in some parts of the community and may be an indication of the unrest caused by a relatively high immigrant population.

7.20   Although tensions since 9/11 had considerably subsided, some staff suggested that its impact was still apparent in the local community. Some comments were made by staff to suggest that what was happening worldwide, e.g. the war in Iraq and the London bombings, had an impact on young people's behaviour towards one another, in some cases causing conflict and tension. Some staff also discussed how this was apparent amongst some parents.

7.21   There was certainly no evidence from those consulted to suggest that the local area had problems with gangs and gang culture. One interviewee summed up the local issues as follows:

> *Problems with groups of males that align themselves together, either of a racial natur*e *or through the opposing schools.*

7.22   This highlights the subtle differences between what is regarded as gang activity and group formations. Clearly, not all groups of males can be regarded as a 'gang' as defined by Hallsworth and Young (see Section 4).

Gangs and Identity

7.23   Two groups of young people were described by staff in school, they were all male; aged 14 to 16. One group was exclusively Bangladeshi, the other, the majority white (but not exclusively). Although young females were not associated with this group activity, staff had observed that young girls had the potential to cause rifts between groups of young men, particularly if they were to date a pupil from one of the two main groups.

7.24   Some staff described how pupils from different ethnic backgrounds created their own groups, which had the potential to create tensions. Groups had a tendency to form based on common interests, such as culture, language, etc. A lack of understanding (culturally) between the Bengali community and other pupils was described as an area of contention that had the potential to ignite problems.

7.25   Although some staff were aware of groups in the school, they were not aware of any particular identities (e.g. names, tags and clothing). The most common attributes were the feeder schools and/or ethnic divides (which are discussed in more detail in the next section).

7.26   The introduction of school uniform had certainly made any identities based on the way young people dress less of an issue in school as all pupils were expected to attend school in full uniform. One member of staff remarked that

before the introduction of school uniform, there may have been groups of young people dressing in similar ways, although this was not necessarily attributed to gang culture and was more commonly associated with more general youth culture.

7.27   Some staff described how some young people may be drawn into group culture for a sense of belonging, particularly those who may not be getting any attention at home. Others described how their family background may act as precursors to young people's involvement, particularly if they were known for criminal activity or had associations with certain groups in the community.

Gangs and Schools

7.28   The majority of staff did not describe the school as having a gang problem or gang culture. Having said that, they did recognise that if the school did not respond to the group culture that was evident in the school, there was the potential for the problems to escalate. As highlighted in 7.25 the main tensions stemmed from the fact that pupils came from a number of feeder schools across a wide catchment area, where there were already clear divisions between groups of young people. This was further complicated by an additional divide amongst some young people based on their ethnicity. One interviewee explained how the feeder schools segregated the community along the lines of race, with a majority white population at one school and a majority Bangladeshi population at another school. These two factors appeared to create some tensions between certain groups of young people in the school.

7.29   One staff member in particular had concerns that some of the behaviours of these groups were akin to gang activity, and therefore did feel that the school had a problem with gangs, albeit on a small scale. As discussed earlier, mixing students from feeder schools was the historical reason for these divides. Each year, the groups were replaced with a new group of young men as they moved up into the next school year.

7.30   On two separate occasions, staff remarked that no more than five per cent of school pupils were associated with group activity.

7.31   Other staff echoed this sentiment and stressed that these issues were confined to a small minority of pupils. When asked to estimate the number of young people involved, the core of each group was described to extend to no more than 20 pupils. The vast majority of pupils were not in any way associated nor were they seen to be provoked into becoming involved with these groups of young people.

7.32   The behaviours of the two main groups of young people were considered to be unusual. Staff discussed how young people prearranged one-on-one fights between individuals from the two main groups, often accompanied by a mass audience. On some occasions, fights took place without onlookers but usually they would be organised as a spectacle with a large number of pupils gathering to watch. One member of staff commented on how technologies, such as mobile phones, facilitated large numbers of pupils congregating in a short space of time to watch the outcome of a fight. Some staff were also aware that older siblings and the wider extended family may also be involved in prearranged fights, although this was the exception not the rule. The

impression that one member of staff had was that these fights were all in aid of earning respect and securing a reputation.

7.33   Some of the fights that took place between young people were described by one member of staff as racial in their origin. Another described how fights often took place as a result of someone *"looking at another person in the wrong way"*.

7.34   It was fairly common for staff to discuss the potential impact that incidents out of school could have in school, and these instances, although rare, tended to coincide with the start of a new term or after the school holidays. Some comments were made to suggest that on occasions it was the influence of extended family members that triggered these episodes of tension and conflict.

7.35   One interviewee felt that because of the nature of the activity that took place and, more importantly, the preparations that took place, it did in some way resemble gang behaviour. The fights that took place off school premises (which in the majority of cases they did) were targeted and premeditated. Other behaviour that appeared to be gang-like to this individual was the fear that these individuals had if they were alone. The following passage illustrates this point:

> *There was a fight yesterday between two boys, it is not tempers flaring, it is all pre-planned, they both agreed and went to a place to have that fight, they won't fight on the site, it is very pre-planned, very organised behaviour. So in that way I think that it is gang behaviour, targeted, premeditated.*

7.36   The group of Bangladeshi boys had a reputation in the school as good fighters and did not back down. In other words, they would not be seen as cowards.

7.37   There were reports of young people carrying weapons (infrequently) in school, including tools such as hammers and spanners as well as knuckle dusters and (concealed) knives. The school had a zero tolerance policy on weapons in school resulting in permanent exclusion. There had been six permanent exclusions in the last five years for carrying weapons in school. Generally, staff did not feel that there was a culture of violence in the school and where pupils had been known to carry weapons, they had reported protection as the main reason for carrying it. Other staff referred to reputation as the rationale behind young people carrying weapons.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

7.38   In terms of the transition from the feeder schools, the school had a reputation for violence that was considered to have been blown out of proportion a few years ago when there had been a number of incidents in and around the school. However, it can be difficult for a school to shake off a reputation once it has set in and some staff suggested that parents would choose to send their children to a different school as a result.

7.39   There were reports that on occasions teachers had felt threatened or intimidated by the behaviour of pupils in the school – once again, it is important to emphasise that this is not necessarily because of gang activity, rather it can be the behaviour of one or two challenging pupils. One staff member reported that there may be a small minority of pupils carrying

weapons in school; this has the potential to place teachers at risk. Staff described one incident that had taken place two years ago when a weapon had been shown to a teacher.

7.40 Although the impact of the groups in the school was fairly minimal, some teachers described how it was possible to sense unrest in the classroom. On the other hand, one interviewee remarked that pupils from the two main groups were taught in the same classroom and any tensions evident outside of the classroom were not visible in school lessons. However, at the end of the lessons pupils were reported to go their separate ways.

7.41 By and large, staff did not feel that the school was a threatening environment to work in. Some staff remarked that they would not work there if this was the case.

Interventions in Schools

7.42 First and foremost it is important to reiterate that when the majority of staff discussed interventions, they pointed out that these were not implemented to respond to gang issues because that would imply they had a problem, rather they had in place a number of interventions to respond to episodes of conflict between groups of young people in school.

7.43 Staff considered that a lot of work had been undertaken in the school to neutralise any emerging issues, including work with the local community, parents and inviting outside agencies into the school to work with the young people in question.

7.44 The structure of the school day had been changed to respond to emerging trends and patterns when there had periodically been a higher number of incidents taking place. The final 15 minutes of a one hour lunch break had been the main flashpoint for disturbances for those not engaged in lunchtime activities. In order to respond to those issues, 20 minutes had been taken off the school lunch break and school closing times changed so that on certain days pupils had an earlier start time and later finish.[126]

7.45 Some staff described how the school behaviour policy had been refined and included clear rules in relation to the dispersal of groups (massing) of young people. There are certain guidelines in the policy that young people have to abide by in relation to any requests from staff to disperse. Large congregations of young people were described by some staff as intimidating for other pupils and for certain teaching and/or auxiliary staff.

7.46 Mobile phones were described to have added another dimension that needed to be managed by schools. One text message had the potential to create enormous problems for the school in terms of invitations circulated to older siblings and the wider community to watch fights. There was the potential for very small scale tensions to escalate into something much more uncontrollable with the advent of mobile phones.

7.47 There is a police officer connected to the school but not based on-site. According to staff consulted, the school has good relations with the police and works closely with them particularly when there are issues that the school feels require police attention.

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[126] The exact times of the schools opening and closing hours are not presented here to preserve the anonymity of the school.

7.48   Work is also undertaken with challenging pupils at the feeder schools who may be at risk of becoming involved in forming groups or joining existing groups. Work is done on school transition to disband some of the myths around violent behaviour associated with the school.

7.49   Some staff reported that pupils did trust staff and would report other pupils who bought weapons into school. Pupils can also be searched for weapons if the school feels that this is necessary.

7.50   School assemblies have been held in an attempt to diffuse certain situations when tensions were high in school and/or there had been episodes of violence.

7.51   A local company had been bought into the school to undertake some work with the two groups that the school had concerns with. Mediation work in an attempt to resolve some of the conflict was undertaken with these two groups of young people.

7.52   Some of the more challenging students had been taken on a prison visit to be shown the reality of a day in the life of a prisoner, although this was not specific to young people involved in group activity.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

7.53   Some staff suggested that teaching staff would benefit from generic training on tackling conflict/tensions rather than a session dedicated to dealing with gang behaviour, this would be seen to label the school as having a problem with gangs and staff were keen to reiterate that this was not the case. Another member of staff suggested that more preparatory work was needed in the feeder schools; however, this had resource implications.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

7.54   Eight young men aged from 14 to 17 took part in the first focus group discussion. When asked to describe their ethnic group, four were British Bangladeshi, three British and one British Pakistani. All of the young men described their religion as Islam and had lived in the area for seven to 17 years. Group two comprised of eight males aged from 14 to 16. Six of the young people described their ethnicity as white British, one Indian and one mixed race. All young people with the exception of one (Hindu) described their religion as Atheist. The young people had lived in the area for different lengths of time, from as short as two years to all of their life. It is important to note that the two groups selected to take part represent the two groups that have been discussed in detail throughout this report.[127]

Consultation with Group One

7.55   The young people were asked to discuss some of the words they associated with the term gang. Some of their examples were as follows:
- friends;
- dress style;
- racism;
- fighting;
- girls;
- strength in numbers;
- intimidating;
- peace and laughter;

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[127] It is important to note that these are not the views of the authors, rather the staff in the school that selected the young people to participate in the discussions.

- weapons;
- safety;
- knuckle-dusters;
- whites vs. blacks;
- peer pressure;
- crew;
- riots;
- drugs;

- being there for each other;
- fights without reason;
- stereotypes;
- enemies;
- *Gangs of New York*;
- American gangsters;
- support;
- labelling.

7.56 When asked to describe gang culture, the young people talked about how being part of a group equated to safety. They also commented that young people often get labelled as a gang because they hang out together in a group. Some of the young people felt that they were unfairly labelled as a gang; rather they defined themselves as a friendship group that had formed at primary school.

7.57 When asked why gangs exist, the following points were made:

> *Safety.*

> *When there are a lot of you, people won't start on you.*

7.58 These comments suggest that there is a perception that young people are safer in numbers and that groups of young people are less likely to get targeted. There was an increased sense of vulnerability if young people walked alone. Consistent with comments made by staff in the school regarding group formations, groups of young people were associated by ethnic group, with discussions of white versus black and school versus school. The group discussed how each year there would be a replacement group; this was reported to date back for years with talks of older siblings in their 30s describing similar trends. The only discernable difference was that they reported elders using weapons, this group of young people denied using weapons.

7.59 The young people were asked to describe their perceptions of the benefits and consequences of belonging to a gang, the following comments were made and are presented in the table below. The benefits of belonging to a gang in this school were more commonly associated with friendships and having fun. They also commented on the benefits derived in terms of feeling safer. The consequences associated with belonging to a gang for this group of young people were much less serious than some of the earlier consequences identified in case studies one and two.

Benefits	Consequences
• Interdependent. • Socialisation. • Friendship. • Fun. • Safer. • Fame. • Strength in numbers. • Entertainment.	• Unreliability. • In-house beef. • Labelling. • Trouble. • Get accused of things you haven't done. • Family get stuck in the middle. • Might get jumped/targeted when alone.

Gangs and Identity

7.60   Clearly, the young people identified certain dress style with groups of young people, defining 'chavs' as wearing tracksuits and 'emos' as wearing skinny jeans. This group of young people described their style as wearing all black clothing.

7.61   The young people were familiar with the names of a number of gangs and referred to these throughout the discussion. To preserve the anonymity of the local area, these have not been reported here. In total, there were six named groups, some of these groups were small in number and some were beyond school age.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

7.62   The young people were aware that groups of young people had the potential to intimidate other pupils and teachers, particularly if weapons were bought onto school premises. However, in the main, the impact was perceived to only ever affect the two main groups of young people discussed, not other pupils.

Weapons and Violence

7.63   The young people reported that pupils may bring weapons into school. One young person estimated that ten per cent of young people may bring weapons into school; another remarked that a weapon may be brought into school if they were aware that members of the other group had weapons in school. In the opinion of another young person, weapons may be bought into school if there was tension between the groups. Generally, young people who carried weapons were described as having no prospects and therefore no future.

7.64   Although fights were reported to take place between individuals, these could escalate into group fights. This group made it clear that they did not cause the fights; they did not make the first move. They alleged that their rival group were the instigators.

Interventions in Schools

7.65   Further into the discussions, the young people recalled some work that had been done in school to try and tackle some of the underlying issues amongst the rival groups. They described how counselling/mediation sessions had taken place with the two groups of young people before bringing them together to try and resolve some of the conflicts. Although the young people spoke positively about what this had achieved, they were disappointed that promises had been made and that this work had not been sustained. In the words of one young person:

> *Nothing happened, it just suddenly stopped. They just decided to stop it – we actually got on quite well together, played football. We were socialising with each other and then suddenly it stopped and it went back to normal again.*

7.66   The group were disgruntled that they had assurances of going on a residential trip together with young people from the other group to try and resolve some of the issues, yet felt that they it had been abandoned because the teachers only implemented a temporary response. This raises an important point about the sustainability of initiatives and the need to ensure that work in schools is ongoing as opposed to one-off interventions.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

7.67   The young people in this school felt that there was a need for team building work using residential trips to facilitate this area of work.

Consultation with Group Two

7.68   Similar words were used by the second group of young people to describe what they understood by the term gang including:

- drugs;
- violence;
- fights;
- racial differences;
- alcohol;
- popularity;
- criminal;
- girls;
- protection;
- mates;
- fair;
- bad man.

7.69   The young people were asked to describe their perceptions of the benefits and consequences of belonging to a gang. The following comments were made and are displayed in the table below. This group of young people associated the benefits of belonging to a gang with the status, power and financial rewards. For these young people, the main consequences related to the risk of becoming a victim of violence.

Benefits	Consequences
• Money. • Power. • Respect. • Girls. • Nice clothes.	• Lack of respect. • Abuse. • Head kicked in.

Gangs and Identity

7.70   Gangs were reported to form based on age, gender, and ethnicity. Groups of friends were reported to give themselves a name; they then became labelled as a gang. They referred to a particular named gang who they had tensions with. They were also familiar with gang names according to postcode area; seemingly geography played a role in the groups they were familiar with.

7.71   A number of the young people did not like the term gang and associated the term with the negative labelling of young people. They felt that others labelled them as gangs even though they described themselves as a 'crew' of friends. This group of young people described how their connection stemmed from their feeder school and is therefore consistent with feedback from staff.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

7.72   When asked to consider the impact that gangs may have in school, the young people were aware that other pupils may feel scared. They also reported that the reputation of the school may be affected if others perceived there to be an issue with gangs in the school. They also acknowledged that it may be intimidating for teachers who try and break up any fights that occur on the premises.

7.73   There is a danger here that a local gang problem or perceived problem, if left unaddressed by partner agencies, can promote a fear avoidance cycle that can, in turn, impact negatively upon the school. Fear avoidance cycles usually start off as a result of incidents, such as litter, minor damage and graffiti, being left and not tackled but a street gang problem in the eyes of the young people in this school appears to have the ability to kick-start a similar cycle of decline. Here a failure to address problems or concerns associated with gang activity has raised concern and fear amongst young people. This in turn may then impact on the school's reputation with a perception emerging that the existence of gangs locally is a possible indicator that the school also has a gang problem. The perception of danger could then lead to avoidance of the school by young people or more specifically affect the parents' selection of schools with the ability to choose where they do and do not want their child to go, which in turn leads to a still greater perception of danger and to even more avoidance.

7.74   In line with comments made by staff, the young people did not cause conflict between each other in school lessons, rather any tensions would be outside of the classroom and, therefore, their behaviour was not seen to impact on their learning.

Weapons and Violence

7.75   The young people suggested that there would be calm periods and no rivalry between groups followed by outbreaks of tension and conflict. Episodes of violence were reported to stem from rumours, such as "he was staring you out". One young person summed up the issue as follows:

> *Staring is the worst. Then they will square up and there will be a fight. It won't happen there and then, it will be arranged.*

7.76   There were some comments made to suggest that young people were carrying weapons. Samurai swords, meat cleavers and machetes were all mentioned. It is important to note that it was not stated by this group whether young people brought weapons into school or whether they carried weapons themselves. It is not clear the extent to which this is hearsay or based on fact. It did become apparent that a lot of the issues stemmed from exaggeration designed to stir up trouble.

Interventions in Schools

7.77   In line with comments made by the other group of young people, they alluded to sessions that had been held between the two groups to mediate and resolve some of the tensions and conflict. They too were disappointed that this was suddenly withdrawn and nothing happened as a result of it. They suggested that promises of activities had been made but were not followed through. One young person made the following point:

> *We used to have a counselling thing but they stopped it. They [other group] had their turn, we had our turn. They [the intervention] made loads of promises. Ten of them and ten of us – put us all in a circle to try and resolve issues. They promised to take us on trips and everything, started to plan it and then it never happened. Had a football match and they thought everything is alright now, there is no trouble. Made promises but [they] don't keep them.*

KEY MESSAGES

Gangs and street culture and their impact on schools

Unlike the two previous case studies, there was little evidence to suggest that gang culture was an entrenched problem in the local community. However, there were indications of racial tensions in the local community and sometimes these problems infiltrated the school. The problems were exacerbated by clear divides between groups of pupils based on feeder schools across a wide catchment area and notable divisions between different ethnic groups.

Typology of school interventions aimed at managing impact

Although the majority of those consulted stressed that the school did not have a gang problem to manage, they were very proactive in their approach to managing conflict in the school. Rather than gang-specific interventions, they had in place a range of policies and interventions to manage any conflicts that had the potential to escalate into more problematic gang problems, including dispersal policies and the restructure of the school day to accommodate shorter lunch breaks.

The school appeared to have good links with the local community to tackle and prevent the escalation of emerging issues relating to tensions and conflict between groups of young people in school. The school was also proactive in their approach to dispelling some of the myths in relation to violence and bullying, particularly amongst some of the more challenging primary school pupils at the point of transition from primary to secondary school.

Pupils raised concerns that interventions were short-lived and there was some evidence that the sudden withdrawal of a programme or initiative resulted in some pupils mistrusting the school. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the interventions and highlights the importance of ensuring that effective programmes and initiatives are sustainable.

The case study highlights the need for a holistic, multifaceted response to gangs. Schools are just one of the partners that need to be involved in local strategies to reduce gang-related activity. The case study highlights benefits from other agencies, such as the police, supporting and working with schools. With this in mind, it is important that the nature and quality of partnerships between schools and external agencies is considered.

Is there a significant issue that requires a solution?

The problems with gangs and gang culture for this school were in their infancy and some staff and young people described emerging behaviours (including targeted and premeditated fights) akin to gang activity that had the potential to develop into more serious gang problems if they were not effectively managed. On the whole, staff did not describe the school as having a problem with gangs and therefore the impact was considered to be minimal.

For this school, their main focus was on preventative interventions to ensure that the conflicts and tensions did not develop or indeed worsen.

SECTION 8: CASE STUDY 4

CONTEXT

The Local Area

8.1 This case study is based on a secondary school in an urban area of England. The information presented in this section is based upon the area in which the school is located but it is important to note that the school serves a large catchment area and pupils travel to attend the school.

8.2 The local population is predominantly white. Those from an Asian or Asian British background are the second most represented. The most prominent reported religion is Muslim followed by those who are not religious.

8.3 Although reference has been made to the local housing stock in sections five to seven, information was unavailable at this level to illustrate the number of households that were privately owned/rented/social housing.

8.4 All of the feeder school wards have areas that are ranked in the top ten per cent most deprived areas on the Index of Multiple Deprivation and, furthermore, a number of them have Super Output Areas (SOAs) ranked in the top one per cent most deprived in England.[128] Educational attainment in the ward is relatively poor compared to the rest of England, with above average numbers of people aged 16 to 74 with no qualifications.

8.5 The area has double the unemployment level nationally and is above the local authority unemployment rate.

The School

8.6 The school has under just under 1,000 pupils on roll, although at the time of writing it was undersubscribed.[129] The school has a very high proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. The largest cohort of pupils is South Asian (Pakistan, Bangladesh). The second largest group comprises white pupils and the remaining pupils represent a wide range of other minority ethnic groups including (although not exhaustive) Somalian and Black Caribbean.

The proportion of students for whom English is not their first language is among the highest for schools nationally and over 30 languages are spoken in the school.

8.7 There are seven main areas from which pupils travel to attend the school. This provides an interesting situation for the school as its pupils have little association with the surrounding area and the community in which it is located has little connection to it. This could clearly impact upon community cohesion and the integration of pupils coming from disparate areas and feeder schools.

8.8 The school employs around 65 teachers and 20 teaching assistants. Approximately two thirds of teachers are white, a quarter are of Pakistani origin and the remainder are from black or other minority ethnic backgrounds. Around half of the teaching assistants are from black, Asian or dual heritage backgrounds.

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[128] Super Output Areas are a new national geography created by the Office for National Statistics. They are created by combining a number of Output Areas which were created for the 2001 Census.
[129] The case study was undertaken in April 2008.

8.9   According to the recent OFSTED Inspection,[130] pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Pupils tend to make good progress at Key Stage 4, achieving standards that are close to the national average. Pupils' attainment at the school showed only slightly lower than average results (pupils achieving five or more GCSE's and equivalent A*-C including English and maths) when compared to the local authority.

8.10   The behaviour of pupils at the school was ranked as 'good' and attendance as 'satisfactory' by OFSTED. The rate of unauthorised absences[131] of pupils attending the school in the Autumn and Spring terms of 2006/07 was substantially higher than the national average.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH STAFF

8.11   Interviews were held with nine members of staff and included the following: welfare officer, head of house, assistant headteacher, deputy headteachers, classroom teacher, and chair of governors, headteacher and careers co-ordinator.

Defining the Term 'Gang'

8.12   Clearly there were different perceptions as to what constituted a gang, some of these are presented below. In the words of one interviewee:

> *Gang covers everything from groups of young people wandering around aimlessly with no real purpose to associations of criminals, involved in drugs, prostitution and protection rackets. It is a continuum and one can lead to another, not necessarily so but they can do, it is where the continuum picks up speed that concerns me.*

8.13   In the opinion of another staff member:

> *My view of a gang is a group of youths who really are meeting together and have an agenda of their own. I don't think gangs are necessarily a bad thing; there may be some that are associated with sporting activity – entirely benign, others that are destructive.*

8.14   One interviewee defined gangs as follows:

> *Gangs applied to this school are crime gangs, groups, with different and unique identities involved in serious criminal activity. Regular suppliers of drugs and firearms. Quite a bit of organised car crimes.*

8.15   It is important to note that some staff recognised that not all gangs were involved in criminal activity and not all gangs were negative. Staff were aware that some young people may form a gang based on a sporting activity, e.g. football. Some of these gangs were reported to form in primary school and even though young people may give their gang a name, they were not regarded as destructive.

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[130] Information taken from: www.ofsted.gov.uk.
[131] Total percentage of half day sessions missed by pupils without school authorisation.

8.16   Throughout the discussions with staff at the school, clearly gangs in the context of this study were defined as gangs involved in criminal activity with different and unique identities. This is discussed in more detail below.

The Local Community

8.17   When asked to describe the local neighbourhood, it was regarded as relatively better than some of the wards from which the pupils lived. As highlighted earlier, pupils who attended the school did not live in the area. The school was reported to (predominantly) serve a catchment area that enrolled pupils from areas of multiple deprivation.

8.18   The local picture painted by most staff was an area that had experienced significant gang-related issues that dated back almost thirty years. It soon became apparent from discussions with staff that gang culture was deeply embedded in the local community, with reports of a number of shootings resulting in serious injuries and in some cases fatality. Indeed, there had been a number of shootings in the area related to gang activity, the details of which are not discussed here to preserve the anonymity of the school. Many of the local notorious gang leaders were reported be serving long custodial sentences.

8.19   Staff articulated the links between local gangs and the local drugs market and commented on the amount of money that was being made through drugs in the local area, particularly locally home-grown cannabis (skunk). Some staff were aware that a number of cannabis factories had been discovered and closed down, some in close proximity of the school.

8.20   In addition to drugs offences, local gangs were also seen to be associated with other criminal offences and there were concerns that young people, (some as young as 11) were starting to unite with older gang members and in turn become involved in delinquent activities.

8.21   Young people were reported to be used by older gang members to transport firearms and drugs. One member of staff talked in detail about young people under the age of 16 being recruited by drug dealers involved in gangs who used them to deal (drugs) or run (transport drugs) for them. Others were reported to be used by older gang members to store weapons.

8.22   Although the perception was that a smaller number of pupils were involved in gangs than several years ago, the young men that were currently involved were described as being more dangerous and becoming involved at a younger age. The following point was made:

> *There are kids of 11 to 13 who are starting to associate with older people who are dangerous, they are killers, they are prepared to kill and enjoy killing.*

8.23   The fact that local gang leaders were infamous for their flash cars, jewellery, women, etc. was considered to drive some young people towards this lifestyle. It was reported that young people were attracted to the lavish lifestyle that was perceived to be led by some gang members. This was exacerbated by the fact that they were from socially and economically deprived backgrounds and so the pull towards expensive cars, designer clothes and jewellery was all the more seductive. One interviewee made the following point:

> *The fact that gang leaders have all of the trappings of richness and very fancy cars, Rolexes, gold, women draped on them. Boys aspire to that.*

8.24   Some of these men, that young people aspired to, were perceived as highly dangerous individuals.

8.25   Young boys who were leaning towards these behaviours were typically described as follows:

> *Amongst the small number of students who aspire to be in gangs – it affects what they wear, how they walk, whether they have a school bag, do homework, what time they arrive. They don't do anything that is the stereotype of a 'normal' pupil.*

8.26   Other reasons given by staff as to why they thought young people were involved in gangs included: deprivation; family breakdown; lack of a father figure; a lack of morals and values amongst young people; and more generally a lack of positive activities for young people living in these neighbourhoods. A lack of aspiration amongst these young men was also reported to significantly impact on their behaviour and the life choices they made. The view was that young people growing up in socially and economically deprived areas could see little opportunity or avenues leading to legitimate success.

Gangs and Identity

8.27   Local gangs were clearly defined by geographical area and named gangs were associated with distinct localities. Some staff reported that certain gangs in the local area had formed based on cultural allegiances and/or ethnicity. On the other hand, some young people were affiliated with gangs because of their notorious family name. Familial gangs often had subdivisions that were headed by different members of a large family network. This increased the infiltration of gangs within the community as they spread across geographical areas and sought allegiances to assert themselves.

8.28   Some staff also remarked on the influence of contemporary music on young people. The whole fashion industry was also perceived to promote gang membership as fashionable and 'cool', e.g. the wearing of hooded tops, balaclavas, etc. Indeed, consumerist society was viewed to exacerbate the problem as a whole by instilling a desire for materialistic goods without providing the means to achieve them within societal conventions.

Gangs and Schools

8.29   Clearly there were concerns that a small minority of young people (consistently reported as less than ten) in the school were seriously involved in gangs. They were described by one interviewee as young people who had access to guns and had been involved in or witnessed shootings. These young people were commonly described as young men aged between 15 and 16. Staff were also aware of one or two pupils in year 8 and year 9 who were affiliated in some way. They were described as often having a family member, usually an older brother, who was seriously involved in a gang.

8.30   Further into the discussions, staff went on to describe a second cohort of young people (possibly up to 20) who were described as 'wannabe' gang members who associated with local gangs and had a good understanding of what was going on in the community. These individuals were portrayed as being very streetwise, yet not hugely involved, but with clear potential to be drawn into local gangs and associated criminal activity. These young people, therefore, are a high risk group that had to be managed to prevent further escalation into gang-related activity.

8.31   Although what has been presented here in terms of estimated numbers of young people involved in gangs is the consensus, it is important to note that some staff predicted that higher numbers of young people were involved in or had the potential to become involved in gangs.

8.32   One interviewee expanded on the extent of the problem of gangs in the community and the potential this street-based activity had to infiltrate in school. Indeed, this interviewee went on to cite a number of previous incidents (over a period of several years) where at least one pupil a year had been shot. It is important to note that these shootings had not taken place on school premises but the victims were current and ex-pupils from the school. This was a huge concern for some.

8.33   On more than one occasion, staff suggested that the involvement of boys from the school in gangs had escalated in the last ten years.

8.34   A number of weapons had been confiscated from pupils in school and passed to the police who made arrests. Staff were aware that weapons were less likely to be secreted on individual pupils; rather they were stashed around school to avoid having them in their possession. Some of the weapons that had been recovered included various types of knives, BB guns and other sharp instruments and tools.

8.35   In the previous two years, two pupils had been excluded for carrying weapons in school. When questioned by staff, young people had reported carrying weapons for protection. One interviewee made the following point:

> If carrying with real intent, it is because they are fearful of the journey to and from school.

8.36   One member of staff spoke about one young person in school who was known to have access to firearms. They also discussed that drugs were bought into school by those associated with gangs in the community.

8.37   New immigrants to the area who had fled from war-stricken countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, were reported to have become almost desensitised to violence because of what they had witnessed in their native countries, as cited by one interviewee in the following passage:

> A number of our students live in very threatening environments. Many of our students are immigrants and recognise it [the violence], yet don't see it as a problem because of their background. We have a number of boys for whom watching people being shot was part of their life, e.g. Iraqi boys, Afghanistan.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

8.38   Given the areas young people lived in, what went on outside of school was thought to have a significant influence on their lives. Some young people were reported to have cousins, neighbours, brothers, sisters, etc. involved in local gangs. So even though the priority for teaching staff was to teach pupils in school, they were aware that some young people lived fairly chaotic lives outside of school that made it difficult for them to concentrate in school.

8.39   Although the everyday impact of gangs in the school was considered to be fairly minimal, the impact that gangs had on the school through the behaviour that local gangs were cultivating outside of school was seen as significant and a situation that the school had to manage. In the words of one interviewee there were:

> *Conflicting behaviours learnt in school and on the street.*

8.40   In the opinion of one staff member, there was nothing in the school that promoted allegiances to gangs; rather it was the associations and incidents outside of school that was the main influence. However, there were some concerns that gang culture was creeping into school.

8.41   Some of the young men involved in gangs had reported to staff that they liked going to school because they felt safe and it provided respite from what was happening in the community. Another interviewee reported that young people regarded school as a safe haven.

8.42   Staff were of the opinion that it was not possible for incidents in the community to not have some impact on pupils in the school. At the time incidents and/or shootings occurred in the community, this would become the 'hot topic' amongst pupils at school; this was reported to have the potential to disrupt learning. In the words of one interviewee:

> *They [pupils] spend more time talking about the gangs than they do learning. After breaks and lunch, the lessons can be quite seriously damaged by what has gone on, not all on gangs, but some. If there has been some big shooting, they will come in on a Monday and everyone will be buzzing about that. There are far more shootings than are ever reported…I shouldn't have to accept it – schools are about learning.*

8.43   Although violent incidents inside of the school gates/outside the school gates were rare, there were reported incidents of intruders (described as gang members) coming on-site with intent to injure or harm other pupils. Staff in the school had been physically injured by intruders. Alarmingly, on some occasions weapons had been brought on-site and used indiscriminately against members of staff who were trying to secure the school and protect individuals inside. Some members of staff saw the protection of pupils as their personal responsibility and would place themselves in danger trying to protect young people. As one member of staff stated:

> *I have to make sure that someone does not get killed.*

8.44   A number of interviewees described situations where staff had to come forward to either prevent an incident taking place or to provide damage limitation. Staff were concerned about the risks of getting caught up in rival

gang issues if a gang member outside of school attempted to come on-site to target a school pupil. Some staff spoke about older siblings/peers meeting pupils outside the school gates. On occasions there had been incidents when ex-pupils had entered the school premises. All of these situations had to be managed by staff to prevent any unrest. One interviewee made the following statement in relation to the potential risk to staff:

> *Significant risk to staff. It is only a matter of time in a school in the UK that something happens and a teacher is on the end of it [shooting].*

8.45   This statement clearly illustrates the severity of the problem being experienced by this school, as well as the personal responsibility that some members of staff feel about their pupils' and staff safety.

8.46   There was also some mention of cars with gang members as passengers coming onto school premises and driving at speed to potentially put staff and pupils at risk if they didn't quickly move out of the way of the vehicles. Without a doubt there was a risk to staff that were prepared to put themselves on the frontline to manage these issues. It is important to note that most staff remarked that teachers were reluctant to get involved in breaking up fights or dealing with other more serious issues. It seemed that senior staff in the main took the most responsibility for this.

8.47   Clearly, some pupils also had concerns regarding their safety. Staff reported that they were aware of young people wearing bullet-proof/stab-proof vests in school, in particular one interviewee knew of three pupils who attended school wearing a bullet-proof/stab-proof vest. Some comments were made to suggest that some young people boasted about wearing body armour, which in turn made staff question the seriousness of it. However, one young person wearing a protective vest was described as 'needing to'. There were further concerns that there might be pupils in school wearing body protection that they did not know about.

8.48   The reputation of the school was considered to impact on the number of pupils attracted to the school. Although exam results had improved at the school, parents were reported to be sending their children to other schools in the area that were not performing as well. There were concerns that one of the reasons why parents would not send their children to the school was because its reputation rested with past events.

Interventions in Schools

8.49   The school had a number of generic policies in place, e.g. behaviour policies and a rule that pupils had to wear full school uniform, which was considered to provide routine and structure. Hooded tops were banned in school with the exception of Autumn/Winter terms when the weather was cold.

8.50   The school employed three mentors who were assigned to work with groups of young people at risk. The mentors were reported by teaching staff to have a good understanding of the issues facing young people living in communities where gang issues were rife.

8.51   The school day had been restructured to limit 'free time'; and to avoid clashes with other schools' finishing times.

8.52 The school had recently invested in a metal detector and pupils were aware that they could be searched if a member of staff suspected that they were in possession of a weapon. In the words of one member of staff:

> *We will search students. When we want to avoid problems of intimate searches, we have got a metal detector.*

8.53 Some staff remarked that pupils would inform teachers if they thought that a pupil was in possession of a weapon in school. Also, on occasions weapons would be handed in by young people who would claim to have found them when at school. One member of staff reported that they regularly searched pupils and that they had a drawer full of knives that were passed on to the headteacher who handed these over to the police. The school was also reported to have links with local partnerships, including statutory partnerships and community groups with a remit (amongst others) to tackle gangs. The school also had links with youth workers, in-school counselling services, police and parents. There were mixed opinions in relation to the effectiveness of these partnership arrangements. Healthy Schools days had been used in the past to educate young people about gangs. External agencies had visited the school to educate young people about gangs and the consequences of gang involvement. These days were part of the 'Prison Me No-Way!!!!' scheme.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

8.54 Some staff believed that there was a need for more intense work with young people to inform them about the consequences of gangs and gang-related activity. They felt that previous sessions had been pitched at too basic a level for young people to take it seriously.

8.55 In terms of tackling some of the problems with gangs and schools and reducing the impact of gangs in schools, staff requested that a police officer was based on-site at the school. Historically, the school had a police officer deployed on-site. However, the shifting of resources from one divisional area to another resulted in the on-site school police officer being removed and redeployed to a different area. The benefits of having a police officer based at the school were considered to be substantial by staff. These included a reduction in violent behaviour as well as an improved relationship between the police and young people. The presence of a police officer at the school had also resulted in a quicker police response due to having a single point of contact that had instant links to police response teams. Some staff reported that they had felt safer when a police officer was based on school premises. The need for a police officer based on-site was stressed by the majority of those consulted.

8.56 One member of staff spoke very passionately about what resources were needed in the school and quite clearly stated that local solutions were needed to tackle local problems. National policies that encompassed training from external agencies were not held in high regard. The member of staff was clear on what their school needed to help tackle the problems but did not have the resources or support of key agencies to implement them. Rather than having sweeping national policies to tackle gang issues in schools, the view was that localised solutions that recognised the specific issues in an area were considered imperative. This was echoed by other interviewees who requested resources to respond to local issues using professionals who have a good understanding of local issues facing the local community.

8.57　Implementing early intervention and prevention programmes was considered important to tackle the problem of gangs and gang-related behaviour. Increasing resources to conduct preventive work with young people to provide them with the skills and resilience to take control of their own lives and make informed choices was suggested by one interviewee. Involving ex-gang members in education programmes for young people to educate them about the reality of gangs was also suggested.

8.58　Employing people who had similar life experiences to these young people and who had possibly lived in communities where gang problems were rife was also recommended. These people were reported to act as the eyes and ears of the community and could inform the headteacher of any potential tensions in the community if it was suspected that an incident was going to take place. In fact, there were teachers working in the school who had a good understanding of the local community and who lived or had grown up in the area. Some teachers had attended the school as pupils themselves.

8.59　Increasing training for staff was also suggested. Some staff felt that teachers would benefit from stress management, training to better understand gangs and gang culture (localised to the area), anger management, restraint training and conflict resolution.

8.60　Although slightly beyond the remit of this study but a point that is worth mentioning, is the discontent that interviewees had with the media, including local and national media reports that were seen to glamorise gangs and gang-related behaviours. The need to present a more accurate picture of the reality of living in a community beleaguered with gangs was stressed.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

8.61　All young people involved in the discussions were male. Group one comprised six males aged 14 and 15. Three of the young people described their ethnicity as Asian, one British Asian, one British Pakistani and one English/Irish. Five reported Islam as their religion and one had no religion. All of the young people lived in the area and had done so for varying lengths of time. The second group comprised seven males all in year 10. Four of the young people described Muslim as their religion, one Catholic, one Islam and one Jehovah Witness. The majority of the young people in this group were mixed race and had lived in the area for different lengths of time.

8.62　It was not possible to speak to young people involved in gangs; however, the groups consulted were well informed on the local gang issues in the community and lived in the areas that some of the notorious gangs had links with. Findings from the two groups are presented separately.

Consultation with Group One

8.63   The young people were asked to discuss some of the words they associated with the term gang. A selection of their examples are presented below:

- bordom;
- crime;
- fighting;
- weapons;
- easy money;
- bullying;
- theft;
- crews;
- lies;

- drugs;
- reputation;
- protection;
- violence;
- laws;
- stereotypes;
- snitches;
- ghetto;
- rivalry.

Gangs and Identity

8.64   When asked to expand upon the issues of gangs, including formation and identify, the majority of the young people were familiar with the names of local gangs and associated their identity with different coloured bandanas. They also spoke about feeder gangs that were described as subgroups of larger gangs. For this reason, rivalries between gangs extended to conflict between subgroups within larger gangs and it was not unknown for intra-gang rivalry to take place. References were made to two or three different gangs in each neighbourhood.

8.65   When asked to consider why young people join gangs or even form gangs, some remarks were made to suggest that their peers join gangs because they feel safer in numbers. Similarly, there was some discussion that gangs form for protection.

8.66   In the opinion of one young person, young people joined gangs because they were lazy or they *"had no future"*. In the words of another young person, young people join gangs for the following reason:

> *Some join to up their cool, easy money. They don't find anything in life. If you have no qualifications, no source of income, some will join the gangs to get their rent book and earn some money on the side.*

8.67   There was, however, an appreciation that some young people were born into families where belonging to a gang was the way they were brought up. One young person made the following statement:

> *If you are brought up in a certain area, you can't help it; a lot of gangs are based on postcodes. You are different if you come from another area, you are a different postcode and you are enemies.*

8.68   According to the young people, a common attribute of those in gangs was a hatred for the police because they enforce the law. However, these laws conflicted with the 'laws' upheld by gang leaders and members; the most important being never to 'grass'. Indeed, there was some discussion amongst the group that one of the main tests in terms of acceptance into a gang is that

'you don't snitch'. The young people also insinuated that in order to belong to a gang you would be given a test to ensure you are trustworthy.

8.69   American gang culture and contemporary music were both considered to have a negative influence on young people. These genres of music in particular were considered to promote violence and guns. Some of the younger age groups were reported to aspire to belong to a gang because they thought it was cool to behave like a gang leader, with it came respect, status and power.

8.70   Using music to communicate messages and Internet sites such as Bebo and MySpace were commonly associated with young people who promoted their involvement in local gangs. One of the young person recited a verse from a rhyme and explained that the terminology used was to communicate a message to opposing gang members not to venture into another gangs turf and to not be caught unaware. It was reported that the websites often named specific individuals who may be subjected to a targeted attack. This was referred to as *"laying down a boydem track"*.

Gangs and Schools

8.71   The young men in this group were of the opinion that only a small number of pupils in the school were involved in gangs. However, this minority, coupled with previous incidents that had occurred at the school, resulted in the preconception that it was a 'gang school'. Clearly, the individuals who were associated with or involved in gangs were well known amongst this group of young people. The group spoke about one young person in particular and agreed that *"everyone in school knows he is gonna get shot one day"*. The young people suggested that 90 per cent of pupils in the school would know someone in a gang.

8.72   The group were also aware of a number of incidents that they believed were associated with gangs, including intruders coming on-site with weapons.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

8.73   The young people were asked to consider the impact that gangs may have on teachers, pupils and the school. Firstly, they communicated concerns for the personal safety of teachers. They also described the fear that other pupils may experience, which in turn may lead them to carry weapons in school, which could result in consequences for innocent pupils, e.g. school exclusion. They also had concerns that pupils may feel scared and join gangs because they feel pressured.

8.74   In terms of the school itself, the young people were concerned that gangs could and had damaged the reputation of the school. They thought that the school had significantly improved in recent years because those involved in gangs had been removed from the school. However, they were also aware that every year a pupil from the school had been shot. They also considered the views of parents and suggested that some parents may fear for their children and therefore send them to an alternative school.

Weapons and Violence

8.75   Some comments were made to suggest that not all gang members carried weapons and not all young people who carried weapons were involved in gangs. Indeed, one of the young people made the following comment:

> *I will admit to owning a knife because I am scared of gangs.*

8.76   The group were divided in terms of whether they thought young people carried weapons in school.

8.77   The leaders of gangs were regarded as very callous individuals who *"have no feelings, no emotions, for anyone, they are born for killing – that's what it is"*.

8.78   In the words of one of the young people:

> *They don't just shoot you once, they shoot you loads of times.*
> *People in gangs are aggressive and like to hurt people.*

8.79   One young person disclosed that he had witnessed a shooting incident, claiming that the victim was involved in gangs and had wanted to leave. This young person remarked that the shooting was his punishment. The young people agreed that once you became a gang member, it was very difficult to get out. The incident the young person described above was testimony to this belief. As the discussion evolved, more of the young people admitted that they had seen someone get shot. The majority of the young people also claimed that they had seen a real gun, although it is important to note that the context in which the sightings of guns and shootings occurred are unknown.

8.80   Generally, the young people thought that the level of violence amongst local gangs had subsided because they were more interested in making money through drugs.

Interventions in Schools

8.81   The group recalled visitors coming into the school, including ex-gang members, who had informed the young people about the history and formation of gangs in the local area. This was part of the 'Prison Me No-Way!!!!' scheme, which took out one day of lessons and invited visitors into the school. They described how a mother who had lost her son in a shooting came into school and communicated her message to young people about the consequences of gangs, knives and guns. The young people felt that they had learnt a lot from this.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

8.82   The young people suggested that there was a need for more security in schools, such as metal detectors, to ensure that pupils did not bring weapons into school and to ensure that those who did were caught. They also suggested implementing electric Taser guns in schools.

8.83   The young people stressed the importance of educating pupils at a younger age, (preferably primary school age) about gangs to demystify some of the glamour. One young person in the group made the following point:

> *It is their future we need to work on.*

Consultation with Group Two

8.84 Similar words were used by the second group of young people to describe what they understood by the term gang, including:

- popularity;
- protection;
- ASBO;
- violence;
- weapons;
- hoodies;
- crime;
- bullying;
- wannabes;
- trouble;
- intimidation;

- racism;
- gang fight;
- drive-bys;
- death;
- guns;
- identity;
- murders;
- flash cars;
- camouflaged clothes.

Gangs and Identity

8.85 When asked to discuss some of their responses, belonging to a gang was often associated with protection and having others to look out for you if you ever ran into any trouble. Other reasons included:

> *Young people want to fit in.*
>
> *To be popular.*
>
> *Follow their friends.*
>
> *May get drawn in because of older brothers, cousins, uncles, etc.*
>
> *For money through drugs.*
>
> *They want the bad wannabe rep.*

8.86 Gangs were considered to form based on area, ethnic group and feeder schools. Some of the young people in this group believed that gang problems were the outcome of racial tensions and talked about whites versus Asians. In the words of one young person in the group:

> *Some of the gangs are really old and it is more to do with racism in my opinion.*

8.87 In the opinion of another:

> *Massive issues with black people, Asian people.*

8.88 They also remarked upon territorial issues that were perceived to separate communities and create divides. There was also recognition that if you were seen to spend time with someone who was in a gang, you became labelled as belonging to that gang by association.

8.89 Consistent with comments made by group one, local gangs were identifiable by coloured bandanas. The young people also described how gang members could be identified by distinct clothing, e.g. hoodies and tracksuit bottoms.

8.90   The young people were asked to describe their perceptions of the benefits and consequences of belonging to a gang. The following points were raised and are displayed in the table below. Generally, this group believed that the consequences outweighed the benefits. They did, however, associate the benefits of gang involvement with reputation and financial rewards.

Benefits	Consequences
• Team work. • Protection. • Fast money. • Income. • Popular. • Identity. • Reputation.	• Bad qualifications. • Bad reputation. • Shooting. • Death. • Jail. • Impact on family. • Crime. • Violence.

Gangs and Schools

8.91   The young people in gangs were described as aged from 14 to 17, and some of the young people were of the opinion that some (albeit a small minority) pupils in the school were from different gangs. There were reports of representatives from two or three different local gangs in the school.

Impact of Gangs on Schools

8.92   When asked to consider the impact that gangs in the community have on the school, the popular opinion was that gangs rarely affect the school. Indeed, one young person made the following point:

> *I have been here since year 7 and I don't think there has been a gang problem in school.*

8.93   When issues did arise, these rare incidents (cited as twice a year) were described as fights taking place. These incidents did have the potential to escalate and young people described how it had been known for older brothers or older family members to come down to the school if there was conflict between rival communities.

8.94   For young people described how teachers protected the school and they felt safe in school. Some felt safer in school than in the community.

8.95   In terms of the impact on teachers, the young people suggested that teachers may find it difficult to teach pupils who they may find intimidating and threatening. However, it was not necessarily gang behaviour that was the concern, rather challenging pupils more generally.

8.96   In the main, the young people did not feel scared of gang members in school. However, they did recognise that some pupils may feel intimidated by certain individuals. The school generally was reported to have a bad reputation for gangs particularly because of the death of a number of pupils from the school.

This group of young people, however, felt that the school was a good school, and that the situation had improved but it was difficult to shake off its old reputation.

Weapons and Violence

8.97   Being in possession of a weapon was commonly associated with fear. The young people described how someone may carry a weapon in the following circumstances:

> *It depends on the situation; if there is a fight, someone may carry a weapon. If you are afraid, if something has happened, you may carry a weapon.*

8.98   On the matter of whether young people carry weapons in school, one young person in the group estimated that one in 50 young people might bring a weapon into school. However, this was a perception and there was no evidence to support his claim.

Interventions in Schools

8.99   In line with earlier discussions in group one, this group of young people recalled a visit from an ex-gang member who came into school to educate young people about the history of gangs in the local area. In addition, they recollected the army and the police visiting the school as part of the 'Prison Me No-Way!!!!' scheme that showed young people a range of firearms, including real guns and replicas.

8.100   The group spoke positively about visitors coming into school and sharing their experiences. This applied to both the ex-gang member and also a mother whose son had been murdered.

Proposed Interventions to Tackle Gangs in Schools

8.101   Consistent with group one, the young people felt that it was important to educate pupils in primary school about the consequences of gangs and techniques to avoid getting drawn into gangs.

8.102   The lack of positive activities for young people in the community and the importance of providing more facilities for young people were also highlighted.

Gangs and street culture and their impact on schools

The problems with gangs and gang culture for this school were understood by staff and pupils to relate to gangs involved in criminal activity with different and unique identities. Gang issues in the local community were reported to date back some 30 years and were deeply embedded in the local community. Indeed, there had been a number of shootings in the area relating to gangs and it was estimated that one pupil (current and former pupils) per year had been shot over a period of several years. Local gang issues were also reported to go hand in hand with local drugs markets, in particular, locally home-grown cannabis.

There were concerns that young people of school age were being recruited by older gang members to deal and/or transport drugs or to store weapons. The fact that local gang leaders were infamous for their lavish lifestyles was considered a key driver for young people to become involved in gangs and illegal activity. Other reasons given by staff included deprivation, family breakdown, the absence of a father figure, a lack of morals and values and a lack of positive activities for young people living in neighbourhoods associated with gangs. A lack of aspiration amongst young people growing up in socially and economically deprived areas was also considered to impact on the decisions and pathways young people in the area chose to take.

Typology of school interventions aimed at managing impact

Staff in this school spoke very positively about their previous experience of having a police officer based on-site; this was regarded as a highly important response to managing the impact of gangs and schools. Unfortunately for this school, a decision had been made by the local police force to redeploy the police officer to cover a different school. The direction and continuation of some initiatives may, therefore, be dependent on decisions that are outside the school's control.

Certain aspects of other multi-agency working were credited by staff for the impact that partnership working can have on responding to local issues with local solutions.

Staggering school closing times to prevent clashes with other schools was one measure that had been taken by the school. Enforcing strict school uniform rules was also a strategy that had been implemented that prevents young people from attending school in colours that may represent different localities and be associated with different gangs.

In line with comments made in previous case studies, there was some recognition that staff in schools would benefit from being more aware of local community issues. Indeed, some staff at this school either had lived or currently lived in communities where gangs had been a problem. These figures were reported to act as the eyes and ears of the community. They also had an increased awareness of any issues in the community that had the potential to escalate and, in some cases, infiltrate into the school. These warning signs could be communicated to the headteacher in advance of any events taking place.

The young people consulted requested that primary school aged children were educated about the consequences of gang involvement; they spoke positively

about the 'Prison Me No-Way!!!!' scheme. They felt that the glamour associated with gang involvement needed to be challenged more to prevent young people from joining gangs.

Increasing security in schools, particularly in relation to weapon searches, was important to the groups of young people who took part in this case study.

Is there a significant issue that requires a solution?

There were a small but significant number (reported to be less than ten) of pupils in the school that were seriously involved in gangs. The additional cohort (no more than twenty) of young people described as 'wannabe' gang members who were considered to be at a high risk of being drawn into gangs and criminal activity also caused the school some concern.

On a day-to-day basis, the impact of gangs on the school was considered to be fairly minimal although they were reported to be creeping into school and there were some reports of young people attending school wearing body armour. The impact that gangs had on the school through the behaviour they were cultivating outside of school was significant and had to be managed. As in previous case study examples, although the issues were widespread in the community, the school was still regarded as a safe haven.

On some occasions, weapons had been brought onto the site and used indiscriminately against members of staff who were trying to secure the school and protect individuals inside. Staff who saw the protection of pupils and other staff as their personal responsibility were therefore placing themselves at risk.

SECTION 9: DISCUSSION AND KEY MESSAGES

9.1   There were four key aims to this exploratory study to investigate whether schools in the UK are facing issues with gangs and gang culture. These were as follows:

- to review and summarise previous work on gangs, street culture and their potential impacts on schools;
- to identify a typology of school interventions aimed at managing any impact;
- to review four case studies where gangs and street culture may have had an impact;
- to assess if there is a significant issue that requires solutions.

9.2   Using the findings from this research, this section summarises the key messages using the following headings:

- Gangs and street culture and their impact on schools.
- Is there a significant issue that requires a solution?
- Typology of school interventions aimed at managing impact.
- Key areas for further investigation.

9.3   Firstly, it is important to stress that a large proportion of literature on gangs and gang culture focuses on the US and there has been a tendency to impose these findings upon the UK. Secondly, the findings in this report are based on four school case studies in urban areas in different regions of England.[132] For this reason, it is important that these findings are not generalised to represent schools across the UK. It is also important to highlight that these findings are based on the views and perceptions of a small sample of staff and young people and cannot be taken to represent the views of all staff and young people in schools across the UK. What this study does provide is an insight into some of the issues that have emerged during consultation with teachers, staff and young people in urban schools in England.

9.4   Given the reluctance of some schools to participate in this research and the comments made by some staff to suggest that teachers would not necessarily admit to or indeed recognise that the school had a problem with gangs, it is imperative that a climate is created where schools that do have emerging or embedded problems with gangs have the confidence to admit that they have a problem and that they feel supported to tackle these issues. Schools require a number of tools to do this and the DCSF have recently published a guidance document for schools on gangs and group offending; this resource is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12639.

GANGS AND STREET CULTURE AND THEIR IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

9.5   What has become apparent throughout the study is that even when a definition of what constitutes a gang is defined for research purposes and presented to the case study site for the purpose of consistency, it is far too fluid and subjective a term for all research participants to interpret the term gang in the same way.

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[132] To safeguard the confidentiality of the schools, the specific details of the schools involved are not available.

9.6 For practitioners, being able to categorise groups of young people into clearly defined groupings, such as those developed by Hallsworth and Young (2004), may be expedient in trying to understand the problem but for those engaged in and loosely linked to gangs, the networks and relationships do not fit neatly into compartments because the boundaries and relationships are blurred and frequently changing.

9.7 More recent studies into UK gangs undertaken by the University of Manchester note the 'fluid, loose, messy' nature of gang networks and recognises that whilst the term 'membership' may be convenient for practitioners, it carries with it potentially misleading implications about the nature of these groups. As such, those who may be perceived to be part of a gang do not actually consider themselves to be 'gang members'.

9.8 Therefore, it is appropriate to question the adequacy of the definition offered by Hallsworth and Young and attempt to find a universal definition or categorisation of gangs. Perhaps a better approach would be for local partners to reach a consensus on the local definition of what they feel constitutes a gang.

9.9 Undoubtedly, what has become apparent from this research is that there is a continuum of gang behaviours that have the potential to impact on schools in the UK and some of these are more apparent in some schools than others. The evidence in this study suggests that the location of the school and/or the catchment area from which the schools enrol pupils has the potential to impact on the extent to which schools are facing these issues and in turn are being affected by gangs. If not addressed in a sensitive manner, there is the potential that the local gang culture will pervade the school raising fear and concern amongst pupils and then parents, which in turn could affect the school's ability to attract pupils.

9.10 To put the scale of the gang problem into perspective, all schools involved in the study stressed that the problem was confined to a small minority of pupils in schools. However, there were reports that the problems had become more noticeable in the last two to three years. In one school in particular (case study four), the concerns were that the young people involved in gangs had become more dangerous and were involved at a younger age. This is consistent with the wider research evidence that suggests that gang members nationally are becoming younger and more violent.[133]

IS THERE A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE THAT REQUIRES A SOLUTION?

9.11 As a rule, the problems with gangs and schools appear to emanate from established problems in the local communities they serve, rather than gangs developing in schools. It is these community issues that have the potential to infiltrate into schools, and there is evidence in this study to suggest that these issues are becoming more widespread in some schools and require a range of preventative, targeted education and enforcement-led solutions. For example, three of the four schools in this study gave examples of local shootings and in two of the schools, pupils and ex-school pupils had been involved in gang-related incidents and, in some extreme cases, pupils had been shot and/or murdered. This is the reality for some schools in the UK and a matter that must be recognised, addressed and taken seriously by schools and education policy makers.

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[133] Schneider, J, Rowe, N, Forrest, S and Tilley, N (2004). *Biting the bullet: gun crime in Greater Nottingham*. Technical report to multi-agency Crime and Disorder Partnership.

9.12   Whilst it would be wrong to extrapolate these findings to all schools in the UK, what we can say is that gangs and gang culture are issues for some schools and where they do exist, it is a significant concern and a problem that has to be managed by a range of partners adopting a holistic package of solutions.

9.13   What these findings also demonstrate is that where schools do have issues regarding gangs and gang culture, there are variances in the nature, scale and seriousness of the problem and therefore different schools will require different levels of support and solutions depending on the scale and severity of the problem. A one-size-fits-all approach to tackling gangs in schools will not suffice. Indeed, findings from this research highlights the importance that staff place on identifying local solutions to tackle local problems.

9.14   In comparison to the other schools in this study, the problems in case study three appear to be fairly suppressed. However, the school had identified some concerning behaviours amongst a small sample of young people and recognised that if they did not respond to the emerging problems, there was the potential for the problems to escalate into a much bigger problem. In the remaining case studies, the problems with gangs and gang culture were certainly more developed and would require a different approach to tackle the issues. In most cases, and more applicable to case studies one, two and four, school was almost seen as a sanctuary away from gang problems in the community. It is important that schools continue to be regarded as safe havens and that they are supported to remain as such.

9.15   Clearly, some schools have problems with pupils carrying weapons in school. This can include young people who carry weapons and/or those who hide weapons in and around school grounds. Small samples of pupils (three in total) in one school were reported to wear body armour for fear of attack, so in schools there clearly is a problem to be managed. Schools will need to make full use of the recent powers to search pupils for weapons.

9.16   The impact that gang cultures can have on school policies, their programmes, training and schools' capacity to tackle the problem must not go unnoticed. There are certainly issues to consider, including levels of awareness and understanding of gang and community issues amongst teachers and access to support, ensuring that teaching staff are aware of support staff who may have been trained to respond to these issues and links to workforce reforms.

TYPOLOGY OF SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT MANAGING IMPACT

A Partnership Approach

9.17   Given the potential that gang culture has to infiltrate in schools, the evidence from this research makes clear the point that schools alone cannot tackle the complexity of the problems of gangs and gang culture. These problems are often deeply embedded in local communities and/or have historical or family origins. Consequently, at the local level there is a need for a partnership approach to develop local solutions to tackle these issues. Children and Young People's services, including youth services, social care, police, YOTs, etc. and family support services will all be key players in the development of local strategies to tackle gang-related activity and it is important that they are all engaged in the process. The YCAP (published in 2008) repeatedly references

partnership working as the way forward to tackle youth crime. On this issue of tackling gangs, it is unlikely that the school will be the lead agency, but with a central role to play in terms of prevention and education as well as information sharing and profiling, the school is a key partner agency.

9.18　Additionally, any intervention designed to tackle gangs and gang culture needs to adopt a holistic approach that involves young people, the school, the local community and parents. Any response will require the development and implementation of a range of interventions that are relevant to the local problems and will need to be delivered by local professionals and community organisations that understand the local issues and context. Partnership working will be the key mechanism through which local solutions will need to be developed, implemented and evaluated.

9.19　School staff need the skills and support to be able to recognise, support and divert those at risk of gang involvement to be able to fulfil their role in the partnership approach. At the local level, this support may be available from other partners, such as the police or YOT, but there may also be some benefit in training a pool of staff across schools in the UK on gangs and gang culture so that they become 'champions' in supporting the development of strategies to respond to problems with gangs in and around schools. These 'champions' could then act as the link with local partners who also have responsibility to deal with gang issues in local communities, e.g. police, YOTs and the local authority. It will be extremely important that these 'champions' are carefully selected and that they are credible figures in the community and are trusted by young people in particular. The young people in this study had fairly negative opinions regarding their teachers' abilities to understand the real issues affecting young people living in areas where gang problems were deeply entrenched and it will be important that young people affected by these issues do have a professional that they can trust. These 'champions' may also benefit from training in conflict resolution and restorative justice approaches so that they feel equipped to deal and respond to gang problems in and around schools in the UK. They can then act as the lead professional for young people involved in gangs.

Prevention

9.20　Tackling the root causes of gangs and gang culture is essential to any strategy designed to tackle the problem and prevent future gang-related problems from escalating. Family breakdown, poor parenting skills, a lack of diversionary activities and opportunities for young people, often coupled with poverty and deprivation have been described by those consulted in this study as precursors to young people's involvement in gangs. The wider research evidence supports this view. Any response to tackling gangs and gang culture will need to consider all of these issues if the impact is to be positive. More importantly, any prevention strategy will require joined-up working at the local level.

9.21　For most schools, thankfully, serious gang activity is not a problem. That said, the school's curriculum and existing policies and practice on addressing poor behaviour, discrimination and promoting community cohesion can be used to full advantage in the prevention of gang activity without the need to label this activity a gang reduction tactic. Similarly, these mainstream activities can then be stepped up or reinforced if gang-related activity were to escalate.

9.22   Although there were reports from staff and young people alike of gang identities according to colours, clothing, appearance, etc., there was little evidence of these identities exemplified in schools and a strict uniform policy was considered by some staff to have a positive impact on preventing gang identities surfacing in school. As highlighted in Section 4, Cornell (2006)[134] reports that school uniform policies prohibit gangs from wearing gang 'colours'. This reduces the opportunities for gang members to be identifiable in the school environment, thereby reducing fear and intimidation.[135] In light of this, it is recommended that the formation of any gang prevention strategy should ensure that schools have strict school uniform policies to prevent any gang identities based on colours, clothing and appearance penetrating in school.

9.23   Implementing dispersal policies to prevent young people congregating in large groups that may be intimidating to other pupils and/or staff may serve to prevent gang-related behaviours in school and may be incorporated into school behaviour policies. This policy was particularly effective in case study three (discussed in Section 6) whereby the school had some concerns that some of the behaviours adopted by groups of young people were akin to gang behaviours.

9.24   The importance of adopting family-based interventions to tackle some of the more entrenched gang problems that cut across family generations may be needed in areas where gang culture is more deeply embedded. Engaging with parents and carers to resist gangs in the community will also be an important component of any strategy to tackle gangs. Once again, this highlights the importance of a partnership approach to tackling the problem with gangs.

Targeted Intervention and Education

9.25   Challenging young people's attitudes at an early age and developing education packages for children of primary school age who may be at risk of involvement in gangs is essential. Although the young people reported that they were most impressionable at ages 13 and 14, staff had concerns that primary school aged children were on the fringes of involvement and had the potential to be recruited by older gang members to act as runners or storers.

9.26   It is essential, therefore, that young people are educated about the consequences of their actions at a young age to assist them to make informed decisions and to have the confidence to say no. Targeting this work at those most at risk of becoming involved in gangs is also recommended. School-based police officers can also play a crucial part in communicating anti-gang and anti-weapon messages to young people. Schools in this study acknowledged the positive work done by police officers in schools.

9.27   The guidance document for schools produced by the DCSF outlines that school systems for dealing with gang issues are the same as for any other vulnerable pupil including identification, assessment, team support around the child and family-monitored interventions. Following the recognition and identification process, it is important that schools feel supported to tackle these issues. Key

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[134] Cornell, D.G. (2006). *School Violence: Fears versus Facts*. Routledge.
[135] National School Safety and Security Services website: www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/uniforms.html.

to public policy is the need to support schools in tackling emerging or embedded gang and gang culture problems in and around schools and a one-size-fits-all approach will not be sufficient. There is a need for a bank of effective tools and resources that schools can draw upon in order to respond to any emerging issues and in particular to prevent their escalation into more serious issues. The recently published guidance for schools is a step in the right direction, although much more targeted work will be needed in schools in the areas where the gang problems are more established.

9.28   School transition policies may benefit from incorporating work on gangs. Peer mentoring schemes involving ex-gang members (appropriately vetted) may also add credibility when educating young people about the reality of life in a gang.

9.29   Findings from the exercise that sought young people's opinions on the benefits and disadvantages of joining/belonging to a gang suggest that belonging to a gang and its associated activities can be perceived by some young people as glamorous, largely because of the money, status and lifestyle that this can bring. Young people who have low aspirations and live in communities where opportunities are limited are at a higher risk of being drawn towards negative role models in the community who in turn can offer them the rewards they are unable to acquire through a more legitimate career. For this reason it is important that this glamour is challenged through education and diversionary activities.

9.30   Equally important is the work needed in schools to inform young people about the consequences of belonging to gangs and their associated criminal activities. Prison visits may act as a deterrent to joining gangs and the young people in this study spoke positively about the 'Prison Me No-Way!!!!' scheme. Often the lavish lifestyle young people associate with gang culture appeals to them without truly understanding the potential long-term consequences.

9.31   The use of music, art and drama to challenge young people's attitudes and to offer alternative positive lifestyle choices is helpful. It is also important that young people are provided with positive yet realistic role models and have access to mentors, including peer mentors.

9.32   There is evidence in the research to highlight that some of the tensions are based on different cultures and beliefs and clearly schools have a duty to respond to this. One of the threads running through several of the case study findings is the racial nature of some of the gang-related activities and the potential for greater harm needs to be recognised given the age of those involved and their impending release from the school system into colleges and/or the workplace.

9.33   Whilst it would be an overstatement to claim that gang involvement is a precursor to involvement in violent extremism, the shared risk factors between the two issues could conceivably result in young people developing their low level activity into extreme violence and support of radical groups.

9.34   Clearly, gang-related problems cannot be seen in isolation of wider issues relating to behaviour and discipline in schools and it is important, therefore, that schools' adopt policies and practice to promote good behaviour, equality of opportunity and community cohesion whilst tackling poor behaviour and discrimination.

9.35   Findings from this research clearly demonstrate that there are issues relating to demographic changes that impact on gang activity in and around schools. Applying targeted interventions and support programmes to enable schools to respond to the challenges of rapidly/markedly changing pupil intakes/populations will also be an important component of any strategy to tackle gangs and gang-related activity.

9.36   Promising practice examples (although not evaluated) reported by the schools to tackle gangs and gang culture included: restorative justice models to prevent disputes escalating to gang violence; peace treaties between community leaders; peer mentoring schemes; and policies such as 'Manage Move' to deal with school excludees to prevent their further involvement in undesirable activities. Any national strategy to tackle gang-related activity will need to recognise and evaluate existing strategies to identify what works and what does not work and why. Evidence will need to be drawn from national and international literature to ascertain this level of information and any intervention/initiative will need to be relevant to the concerns of individual schools.

Enforcement

9.37   Successful strategies to tackle gangs depend on the use of enforcement measures. Whilst many of the tactics lie outside of the remit of the school, there are approaches schools can take. As we have seen previously in this section, effective enforcement of school uniform policies and the use of dispersal policies to prevent large groups from congregating and intimidating other pupils are useful tactics for schools to adopt.

9.38   Similarly, having a police officer based on the school site was clearly beneficial for the case study schools that had problems with gangs. School-based police officers form part of the national programme of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs) and are in 500 schools across the UK. Given the comments alluding to the poor relationship between the local community and the police, using school-based police officers as mediators and a single point of contact for young people, staff and the local community may break down some of these barriers and serve to build relationships and trust. When developing strategies to tackle gangs and gang culture in and around school, the benefits of having a police officer on-site must not be overlooked. Schools that had previously had a police officer attached to the school and since had them removed, stressed the need to have this resource restored in the school.

9.39   Some interviewees raised concerns that a hard line response to weapon possession resulted in young people becoming criminalised and excluded from school when the reason for carrying a weapon was fear, and/or intimidation. The recent announcement that any young person over the age of 16 caught in possession of a knife can expect to be prosecuted for their first offence[136] has the potential to further criminalise such young people. This, combined with the increased exposure that school excludees may have to gangs, is an issue that will need to be carefully managed by schools. It will be important that schools

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[136] Those under 16 who commit offences without aggravating factors can still expect to receive a caution coupled with referral to a knife education scheme to help them understand the dangers and consequences of carrying knives, and reduce the chances of reoffending. Their parents will also be notified and may receive parenting orders to ensure they play their part in changing their child's behaviour. If they go on to reoffend, they are likely to be prosecuted.

have links with alternative education providers and other community organisations working with young people to engage with those that are not in mainstream education and divert them away from negative peer groups.

9.40   More generally, strategies and guidance for tackling gang activity need to be located in national educational policies to address problems of truancy and school exclusion. A number of comments were made by staff and the young people in this study to suggest that school absences place pupils at increased risk of gang involvement. Pupil tracking systems to ensure that young people do not go missing from the education authorities is therefore paramount.

9.41   The findings show that there are flashpoints where young people may be exposed to or at greater risk of gang-related activity, whether as perpetrators or victims. The journey to and from school in particular raises questions regarding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The development of national strategies will need to address this issue. This will have implications for school travel and transport policies, for example, staggered school closing times may prevent clashes between rival gangs in local communities. Shorter lunch breaks, as adopted in some schools to limit 'free time', may also prevent any outbreaks of violence.

KEY AREAS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

9.42   Although powers have been introduced in schools to use metal detectors, more work is needed to understand why young people are carrying weapons in school. Many report fear, particularly on their journey to and from school, as the reason for being in possession of a weapon during school hours; these times were described in this study as potential flashpoints for gang rivalries to transpire. Although schools have zero tolerance policies on weapons, the outcome for young people caught with a weapon is often school exclusion. Whilst action does need to be taken, excluding young people from the 'safe haven' of the school into an environment they fear could increase their vulnerability and exposure to gangs and place them at greater risk.

9.43   Given the difficulties we had in this study to source a suburban or rural school that was perceived to have a problem with gangs and gang culture, there may be benefits in exploring the issues further to investigate whether there is a problem beyond schools in urban areas. Our sense is that the problem is largely an urban one.

9.44   Although complex and beyond the remit of this study, the inherent relationships between gangs, drugs and weapons cannot go unnoticed. A number of comments were made by staff and the young people to suggest that the three are interlinked. There were reports of young people of school age involved in gang activities, either by running drugs and/or stashing weapons for older gang members. Further investigation is required to untangle and understand these complex relationships.

9.45   Findings from this study also suggest that the subject of gangs and gang culture is complex and not one that is easy to disentangle. Further research, for example, is needed to better understand the relationship between gangs and identity/identities.

9.46   Further work is also needed to explore what work is undertaken in schools to raise staff awareness of pupils' backgrounds and local community issues that may infiltrate into schools because there was some suggestion that staff in schools that were from outside of the area did not understand the local community issues. This may improve the relationships between teaching staff and pupils in school and over time will encourage more trusting relationships.

9.47   There may be benefit in considering the extent to which the strategies used by the school that did not have gang problems might be appropriate to other school contexts, including those with gang-related problems.

CONCLUSION

9.48   This exploratory study into the issues of gangs and gang culture in schools in the UK shows that there are community gang issues in certain cities that have the potential to infiltrate into schools. Some schools are already starting to feel the impact and unfortunately there have been examples of where former/ex-pupils have been killed as a result of their involvement in gang-related activity.

9.49   These findings also suggest that there are signs of a developing problem of gangs in some schools that needs to be managed. The scale of the gang problem varies from school to school and whilst most schools will not be affected, there are a number of steps that schools should be encouraged to take to minimise their risk. First and foremost, schools will need to be held accountable for their role in promoting community cohesion, tackling and preventing discrimination, and promoting equality of opportunity, all of which have the potential to address conflict and gang-related activity.

9.50   Building on the typology of interventions identified in this report, there is a need for schools to have access to a range of interventions, including preventative, targeted education through to enforcement-led approaches to tackling gang activity. The current gap in research appears to relate to the lack of understanding of what works in schools to tackle gangs and gang culture and this will need to be the subject of a much larger piece of work if we are to take this agenda to the next level and ensure that the problem does not get any worse.

NEXT STEPS

9.51   What has been presented in this report is the findings from phase one of a wider piece of research to explore the issue of gangs and schools in the UK. The second phase of the research is intended to be two-fold. In the first instance, a mapping exercise of existing school-based and youth interventions designed to tackle gangs and gang culture in and around schools in the UK will be undertaken. This will be followed by the development of a toolkit for schools that will provide an information bank of effective practice to tackle gangs and gang culture.

APPENDIX 1: TARGETED EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

PRISON ME NO-WAY!!!!

Prison Me No-Way!!!! (PMNW) is an award-winning national charity founded by prison officers that aims to deter young people from committing crimes and antisocial behaviour by dispelling myths about prison fostered by popular culture. They also work to counter the influence of negative peer group pressure.

The focus of the work is educational and programmes are delivered within schools and youth organisations (including voluntary youth groups, charities, groups of excluded and disaffected young people, and youth offending and secure units) across the country.[137]

The educational programmes are proactive and core materials (e.g. videos, CD-ROMs, audio cassettes, worksheets, school modules and information packs) are developed in collaboration with teachers and young people. These source materials have a wide range of applications and are used to develop tailor-made educational programmes to meet the needs of each school/youth group.

PMNW also runs Crime and Safety Awareness Days. These sessions use high impact workshops, role playing and drama to engage with young people and get them thinking about the possible consequences of becoming involved in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour. The sessions are deliberately designed to be thought-provoking and are usually aimed at 12 to 15 year olds (year 8 to year 10 pupils).

The pupils involved in Crime and Safety Awareness Days are removed from their normal daily school cycle and become isolated from other members of their peer group for the day. They are treated like prisoners and asked to participate in exercise and meal routines. The pupils are even escorted from workshop to workshop as 'actual prisoners' are when moving round the prison. This is designed to give pupils a taste of prison life and to redress the exaggerated and often incorrect images of prison portrayed through television and the media. It may also help to dispel any myths or misconceptions young people may have. These days encourage participants to respect the value of their freedom whilst experiencing the restrictive regimes of a real day in the life of a prisoner first hand.

GANG RESISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING (G.R.E.A.T.)[138]

G.R.E.A.T. provides a school-based, officer instructed program that includes classroom instruction and various learning activities. The use of law enforcement officers has several advantages: they have a wide range of experience in recognising and combating criminal behaviour; they have the ability to recognise gang members; they are equipped with a referral knowledge; and, most importantly, can be a positive role model to students.

The instruction of life skills is the foundation of the programme. In accordance with a study by Dr. Esbensen in 2000, which found that delinquency often serves as a precursor to gang involvement, the G.R.E.A.T. program focuses on providing life skills to students to help them avoid delinquent behaviour and resorting to violence to solve problems. Communities need not have a gang problem in order to benefit from the

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[137] The charity is currently working with over 2,000 secondary schools and 1,800 plus youth organisations (www.pmnw.co.uk 14 August 2008).

[138] This programme was originally designed and introduced in the United States of America.

program as its primary objective is prevention and it is intended as an immunisation against delinquency, youth violence and gang membership.

G.R.E.A.T. has a number of subsidiaries for example, Karate for inner-city kids (KICK) based in Leeds.[139] KICK is a training programme that was developed in the US as part of the G.R.E.A.T. The programme has since been implemented in the UK. The programme is 12 weeks long and combines karate with awareness talks on drugs, gangs, first aid, and weapons. Students who complete the course receive a diploma in the subjects and karate.

GANG REDUCTION PROJECT – SAFER SOUTHWARK

A Gang Reduction Project is run by the YOT in Southwark. The project works with young people aged 11 to 18 years who may be at risk of becoming involved with gang activity. The project uses two dedicated workers to deliver a twelve-week programme to schools, PRUs and youth clubs, although a condensed 'one-off' version is also available for voluntary and statutory agencies involved in working with youths.

The project uses the mediums of art, drama, and video to demystify gang culture and to challenge young people's attitudes to various issues, along with forum-based discussions. When this group-orientated approach is not appropriate, they also offer confidential one-to-one sessions.

This project is now in its second year and is established in three schools, one PRU, Summer programmes, two youth clubs and three sport and crime diversion projects. The programme has involved over 350 young people in the area.

THE FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD FOUNDATION

The From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation is also part of the Safer Southwark Partnership, and is endorsed by the Mayor of London and the Metropolitan Police. A package of teaching resources called 'Calling the Shots' is used, with particular attention being given to those with educational issues and a history of exclusion from schools. 'Calling the Shots' brought together the expertise and knowledge of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and funding from the Government Office for London (GOL). The project is delivered using classroom-style lessons and group sessions where young people talk about their life experiences and how these experiences have shaped their lives. This project has been evaluated by Middlesex University. The project received positive feedback from steering group members and young people.[140] It provided a highly detailed educational resource that worked well in the school setting. It must be borne in mind, however, that the pilot did not offer an opportunity to examine how the package would work when used by teachers and volunteers. This is essential for longer term sustainability.

Referrals come from a number of sources, such as parents, social services, the YOT, courts and schools. The project also reports that they have a lot of young people making self-referrals, which is a good indicator of their success and reputation. They work with Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) and Connexions to work with the top 10 per cent of young people at risk. As a result, the project estimates that 40 per cent of the young people that they work with are or have been in gangs. It is the projects responsibility to locate the young people and get them into positive education.

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[139] See www.westyorkshire.police.uk/section-item.asp?sid=12&iid=3895 for details.
[140] Arnull, E. and Sadler, J. GLA *Anti-Gun Culture Education Initiative: 'Calling the Shots' Evaluation.* [online] http://www.london.gov.uk/gangs/docs/calling-shots-report.rtf.

In order to achieve this, gang members are encouraged to leave gangs. The project relies on a family atmosphere and environment using peer mentors, who are often ex-gang members themselves, to help the young people to gain confidence. They work with them to address any issues, such as drug problems, and to learn more appropriate methods of dealing with them. They discuss why the young person is in a gang and help them to understand what the gang gives them that society does not. They then work towards replacing this with more functional ways of achieving it.

The majority of cases work; indeed, 90 per cent are reported to go into education. The From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation project has been so successful that the centre is now recognised as a special school, receiving good OFSTED reports, and enabling the young men to sit their GCSEs.

LEAP CONFRONTING CONFLICT

This project has trialled in both Glasgow and in the King's Cross area of North London and uses the elements of energy and companionship of gang culture to develop leadership and learning. Of particular importance are the group sessions to develop conflict resolution, which can prevent gangs from turning to violence to resolve their difficulties. This project has worked with the dynamics of gangs rather than working with individuals, and the aim is not for young people to leave the gang environment but to enable gangs to engage with each other to consider the consequences of their actions and their membership of the group. The project has taken rival gangs on residential courses and has soothed gang relations to such an extent that members of the rival gangs have been able to attend community festivals together for the first time.

X-IT PROGRAMME, BRIXTON: LONDON

The X-it project aims to empower young people to make positive choices and develop self-esteem through engaging in challenges. It also seeks to identify goals and provide training to young people to increase their employability. The project works with young people from 14 to 19 years of age who are offending or at risk of offending and on the fringes of gang membership.

The programme is delivered to well-known 'crews' in hotspot areas, identified by police and youth workers. Attendance is voluntary, and the project operates in three different estates simultaneously. The programme consists of a four-part modular programme running over 32 weeks, including a 10-week group work programme, a six-day intensive residential, a 20-week leadership programme and a personal development and mentoring support scheme.

HACKNEY, LONDON: FREE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND

This project was designed and delivered by school pupils to raise awareness of the dangers of gang culture and related crimes in Hackney. The project won a Community Award in 2007. There were various aspects to the project, such as the creation of posters and leaflets as well an anti-gang booklet for circulation in other schools. There were also activities intended to bring young people together, such as a graffiti workshop, five-a-side football tournament and talent show.[141]

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[141] See: www.tochparticipation.co.uk/community-awards.htm for more details.

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