

# **SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION** **ON** **KNIFE CRIME** **DRAFT REPORT**

## **CONTENTS**

<b>1 Recommendations</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 Incidence of knife crime</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 Policing</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4 Young offenders and sentencing</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5 Education and pastoral care</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6 Leisure activities for young people</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>7 Parenting</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>8 The community</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>9 Partnership working</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>10 Performance management</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>11 Conclusions</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix A: Incidence of assaults in Croydon and Greater London</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix B: Youth offending: risk factors and protective factors</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix C: Q &amp; A session with the Head of Youth Service</b>	<b>34</b>

# **Recommendations for the Scrutiny investigation on Knife Crime**

## **Recommendations for Council Departments**

R1 The Council should continue to review the developing range of services for all young people in Croydon. Specifically, investment in expanded opening hours for “places where young people can be” into the late afternoon and late at night during summer months should be explored and future opportunities for younger children actively considered. (see R2 below.)

R2 The Council should work with schools to provide adequate, strategically planned activities for young people aged 8 to 12 years of age.

R3 The Council should work with extended schools / school clusters to:

- a) Ensure that there is smooth and effective partnership work between extended schools and other agencies
- b) Provide local residents of all ages with a physical space to get to know each other through shared activity. This will directly contribute to the LAA target for ‘promoting community cohesion, a sense of community and community engagement’.
- c) Create more low cost opportunities for physical activities e.g. dance and sports, in local schools. Facilities in extended schools should provide easier access to a range of physical activities to promote a sustainable active lifestyle beyond the primary years and into adulthood.
- d) Offer greater access to involvement in performing arts as a means of attracting young people at risk away from the temptations of crime, particularly for those who are not interested in sport.
- e) provide support and information to parents to enable them to recognise electronic bullying and to help prevent its occurrence

R4 The Council should develop more innovative ways of ensuring that young people at risk and their families are able to access information on relevant services, and improve and simplify access to information and support through the internet, texting and other formats.

R5 Consideration should be given to the creation of a Croydon Youth Council to provide an opportunity for more young people in Croydon to influence decisions regarding local services and issues affecting them.

R6 All Council departments providing services to the public as a whole should specifically seek the views of children and young people as an integral part of 'Think Customer', and as recommended in the Scrutiny review of Young People's Citizenship and Involvement (completed March 2003).

R7 The innovative 'Crimestoppers' texting system, which permits young people to text details of those carrying knives, should be publicised more widely.

R8 The Council should ensure that the Courts have the information and contacts to be able to sign-post and refer perpetrators to the full range of services available to them at the end of legal proceedings and particularly to direct them to effective support to resolve their housing needs

R9 The Council should work with private landlords and estate agencies to encourage and enable them to provide longer tenancies to local residents, to help reduce risk to families by providing the stability and continuity needed to build and maintain relationships within a local community, and enable children to settle and gain the maximum benefit from their education.

R10 The Council should identify innovative ways of communicating existing information and sources of advice on housing matters more widely, including to young people, and to help the more vulnerable and 'hard to reach' private tenants in Croydon to access support on how to manage their tenancies and avoid the need for frequent house moves.

R11 The Police, the Council and the community should work together to prioritise the anti-social behaviour offences that the public find the most unacceptable locally and agree a consistent approach.

### **Recommendations to schools**

R12 The following recommendations are drawn on the basis of existing good practice which it is recognised many schools are already implementing.

- a) Commit to offering all elements of the Extended Schools programme in partnership with local agencies
- b) Seek regular meetings with local senior Police officers to ensure close co-operation and continuity
- c) Ensure that a rewards system which is seen as a credible incentive to good behaviour and educational attainment is embedded within school practice, using the views of School Councils in identifying worthwhile rewards
- d) Ensure that effective mentoring systems are used during a child's first year at a new secondary school, with a more intensive support programme for those subsequently identified as being at risk
- e) As some children and young people feel threatened while travelling to and from school, liaise with Safer Neighbourhood Teams to ensure that there is an adequate staff / Police presence at the school perimeter at the relevant times of day

f) All staff should be trained to respond effectively to serious incidents including finding pupils found in possession of knives or other offensive weapons, and to address the aftermath of such incidents appropriately, in order to provide a consistent and safe response to all such occurrences

g) As part of schools' responsibility for swift and easy access to services, sign-post up to date information and contacts for the many Council and voluntary services available to pupils and parents at risk, and ensure that all staff are aware of and encouraged to access these for vulnerable pupils and their families

h) The innovative 'Crimewatch' texting system, which permits young people to text details of those carrying knives, should be publicised more widely (R7 above).

i) Provide good access to mentoring throughout primary and secondary schools, and to help young people to get out of gangs

### **Recommendations to the Police**

R7 (see above) The innovative 'Crimewatch' texting system, which permits young people to text details of those carrying knives, should be publicised more widely.

R11 (see above) The Police, the Council and the community should work together to prioritise the anti-social behaviour offences that the public find the most unacceptable locally and agree a consistent approach.

R13 Senior Police officers should work to sustain the valuable links with local schools by:

a) supporting the attachment of police officers to all state and private secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units as a direct method of improving the relationship between the police and young people

b) making effective use of the attachment of police officers in all schools, following the good practice already in place in a number of schools

c) notifying schools when changes to the deployment of police resources are necessary and keeping themselves briefed on current issues at local schools

R14 That police officers, and particularly newly recruited staff, should receive specific training so that they are better able to manage interactions with young people, thus demonstrating responsible, respectful behaviour and reducing the potential for conflict.

## **1 - INTRODUCTION**

The Scrutiny investigation on knife crime was instigated after the death of Shakilus Townsend in Thornton Heath in July 2008 and media reports of other stabbings in Croydon and Greater London.

Scrutiny councillors decided to focus on knife crime among young people as a large number of victims and perpetrators were below 20 years of age (see appendix A).

Councillors identified the following aims for this investigation:

- to establish what is being done to reduce youth crime
- to identify what Croydon could do in partnership with other agencies to reduce knife crime
- to identify and discuss suggestions to prevent/reduce knife crime

It was decided that this investigation should be led by a Joint Committee of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Children, Learning and Leisure, which has the sole delegated responsibility to deal with any Local Education Authority matters in Scrutiny, and the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Community Services, which has the delegated responsibility for Crime and Disorder.

### **Information Sources**

Information was obtained through the following:

- A Scrutiny meeting held in public on 2 September 2008, with a wide range of stakeholders and representatives of the UK Youth Parliament
- An informal Scrutiny meeting held on 30 September 2008, with a group of young people, many of whom were vulnerable and or had past behaviour or offending problems
- An informal Scrutiny meeting held on 20 October 2008 with secondary school and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Head Teachers
- A meeting led by young people leading on the "Lives not knives" initiative on 18 September 2008
- A councillors' briefing on knife crime, providing information regarding policing, Council and school services to young people and parents and survey findings on young people's views of safety issues, gangs and knife crime, drawn from surveys carried out by Croydon schools and council officers, the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), the BBC and Kidscape
- An Ofsted report published in October 2008, "Good practice in re-engaging disaffected and reluctant students in secondary schools"
- The Croydon Youth Crime Prevention Strategy 2008-2011
- Additional information provided on Croydon's Youth Service (see appendix B)

## **2 - INCIDENCE OF KNIFE CRIME**

The following statistics for the borough, from July 2007 to July 2008, were provided by the Safer Croydon Partnership. The term 'young people' used here refers to those 10 to 19 years of age.

- 237 knife-enabled crimes were recorded
- 56% (134 offences) of knife crimes were robberies

- 71 (30%) of offences involving knives were Grievous Bodily Harm (36 offences) and Actual Bodily Harm (35 offences)
- Young people are involved in about 28% of overall crime; 3% (1,000 young people) annually are known to be involved within the Criminal Justice System
- 80% of the total robberies committed by youths are against other youths
- Most assaults take place in the town centre, where most offences are robberies - Broad Green and West Thornton have the second highest incidences
- Victims are most likely to be male and aged between 10 and 19
- Those who carry knives are likely to come from the more deprived areas
- Black males aged between 10 and 19 are most likely to be involved in knife crime, followed by black males aged between 20 and 29

The challenge of reducing knife crime is exacerbated by the fact that some shops still sell knives to young people under the age of 18, despite legislation prohibiting such sales (Violent Crime Reduction Act - 2006). Trading Standards officers carried out a series of test purchases in November 2008, and found 14 out of 48 outlets sold knives to youngsters under the age of 16.

Scrutiny councillors heard from a number of different sources, including young people and head teachers, that girls were increasingly involved in violent crime and gang activity. In addition evidence shows that girls are asked by peers in gangs to carry weapons or carry out other illegal activities in the belief that the police will not suspect them. Involvement in gangs can start very early, with very young children being groomed by older children, or emulating their older siblings who are already involved in a gang.

Mayday Hospital figures show that young people between 15 and 24 years of age make up a significant proportion of the patients admitted into Mayday Hospital for treatment after assaults (see Appendix A). Head teachers stated that the very few incidents of knife crime involving or affecting their pupils had had a profound impact on the communities concerned.

Intelligence has shown that a considerable amount of group offending and violent crime takes place across borough boundaries, a point highlighted by head teachers at the 20<sup>th</sup> October meeting. In recognition of this, Croydon is one of the boroughs involved in the Five Borough Alliance [Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham & Southwark], a partnership which aims to share good practice and develop new ways of working to tackle gang issues.

Police, Council and hospital staff concurred that there may have been under-reporting of stabbings as these may have been recorded under a wide range of different codes. However, councillors were advised that Mayday Hospital had been instructed by the General Medical Council (GMC) to report every stabbing causing a "penetrative injury", which could require anything from stitches to more serious medical interventions.

### 3 - POLICING

#### Young people and the police

The following key issues emerged from meetings with young people and surveys carried out with young people by the Council, the Metropolitan Police Authority, and the BBC.

- **Fear of crime**

Many young people suffer from an intense fear of crime, as noted by head teachers consulted and repeated survey evidence, including the following:

- 50% of respondents to the survey conducted by Croydon's Youth Offending Team stated that there was pressure to carry a knife, mainly for personal protection
- Only half of the young people responding to the YOT survey felt safe on a bus (a finding echoed in the London-wide MPA survey)
- The BBC Survey conducted in July 2008 showed that about 45% of respondents knew someone who had been a victim of knife crime

- **Trust in adults**

The MPA and BBC surveys showed that many young people did not trust adults to provide protection from anti-social behaviour, bullying, gangs or knife crime. 75% of respondents to the BBC survey did not think that the authorities would be able to reduce knife crime over the coming months.

- **Attitude towards the police**

Both the Scrutiny meeting with young people and the MPA youth survey showed that many young people had no faith in the police. They felt that the police saw them in a bad light and did not treat them with respect. Many also felt that the Police conducted Stop and Search procedures inappropriately, failing to explain the procedure properly or to hand out the necessary paperwork to young people but making many young people feel humiliated in the process.

The MPA survey results showed that young people felt the police did not take young people's requests for help seriously, and failed to respond to them.

Some young people were not positive about Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and were fully aware that these officers had limited powers.

However, while many young people expressed little faith in the police, this was not a universally held view. The two groups of young people questioned by Scrutiny councillors acknowledged that there were helpful officers as well as unpleasant ones, a view also acknowledged at the public meeting held on 2 September, and in the MPA's youth review.

Overall, there was room for improvement in the relationship between the police and young people. Measures to improve this relationship could include replicating the "Second Wave" initiative implemented in Lewisham. This project brings young people aged 16-25 and the police together for face-to-face dialogue and drama-based workshops that explore their different views and tackle issues such as Stop and Search. The project has significantly improved community relations in Lewisham and many of the young people at Second

Wave believe the project has helped build bridges in the community and is improving safety on the streets.

Councillors welcome the fact that Croydon Council officers have started to train on this methodology, and aim to adapt the programme to fit Croydon's needs.

- **Fear of reprisals after reporting a crime**

There was wide agreement among young people about the dangers of "grassing" on a known offender and of their fear of reprisals if they did so. Young people expressed the need to have some way of reporting a crime anonymously to protect them from such repercussions.

In recognition of such widely held fears, the charity "Crimestoppers" has introduced an anonymous texting service where pupils can send the name or nickname, school and school year of pupils carrying blades. The charity then passes the information to the Police without any details of the texter's identity. This service was launched across London in October, after the success of a pilot scheme in three schools in Tower Hamlets, targeting teenagers as well as children as young as 11. While posters advertising the Crimestoppers text number are to be distributed to schools in the coming weeks, it may be useful for relevant agencies in Croydon to publicise the service to a wide range of young people at risk using a variety of different media.

- **Head teachers' views regarding policing**

Head teachers interviewed in the course of this investigation stated that they had a good working relationship with Police Officers(PCs) working in their schools, and that they valued the input of PCs and PCSOs assigned to their school both in a teaching and a policing capacity. They felt that police officers and PCSOs played an effective part in making the school and its vicinity a safer environment, discouraging unwelcome 'visitors' to the area from anti-social or criminal activity.

Work in this area is important, as findings of the MPA Youth Survey showed that one of the most common locations for youth crime was in the vicinity of schools. The dangers of that environment were also highlighted at the 18 September meeting organised by young people, where a young assault victim explained that requests to provide police patrols near her own school had only been met after an attack in the area.

Head teachers valued police officers' input into lessons on the risks of gang activity and knife crime, and their ability to deliver hard-hitting lessons, drawing on first-hand experience to help young people build resilience to such activities.

However, head teachers were concerned that they had no contact with senior police officers and no opportunity to feed into the Metropolitan Police's organisation and resourcing of this work. The police sought to extend this facility to more schools but reduced existing provision to some schools with very limited prior notice. Head teachers also felt that this reduction in police work with school might lead to a significant reduction in the value that their work might bring to the school: for instance, one head explained that the officer allocated to his school would no longer be able to take part in classes, which not only conveyed the dangers of various types of youth crime, but also provided an opportunity for young people to form a positive relationship with the police.

Head teachers also commented on the educational value of using knife arches and wands in schools, but some raised concerns about their effectiveness and the messages these could send to parents and to the community about safety in the establishments concerned. If arches or wands were to be used, it was important for a school to be prepared to deal appropriately with the consequences of identifying a young person carrying a knife.

## **Policing response to knife crime**

The London-wide 'Blunt2' operation commenced in May 2008. Croydon's "Safe for All" initiative was unveiled after the beginning of the Scrutiny investigation on knife crime. This initiative aims to provide a multi-agency approach to preventing youth crime in Croydon. Over 60 uniformed officers have been deployed each day in the streets, backed up by mounted police, the Council's neighbourhood enforcement officers (NEOs) and mobile enforcement units (MEUs): the number of NEOs on duty in the town centre has been doubled, and the MEUs, with dogs have been conducting two patrols a day around the town centre, focusing particularly on major bus and railway stations. Its first week of operation resulted in 46 arrests and the recovery of seven knives.

Other proposals under the "Safe for All" initiative include the following:

- The confiscation of free travel passes from disruptive young people
- Increases in searches and outreach work to reduce truancy
- The launch of a Turnaround Centre, based on the successful format of the Family Justice Centre, where issues and concerns relating to young people at risk of offending can be addressed in a single place
- Introducing a helpline as a place of contact for young people and parents regarding gang issues
- A greater use of education welfare officers and police operations to reduce truancy
- Development of more youth activities, especially for Friday and Saturday nights including a mobile youth centre
- Extra training for teachers, college tutors and voluntary workers on how to identify and support those most vulnerable to gang influence, youth violence and victimisation
- Deploying mobile CCTV in locations where recording may be useful for securing evidence and deterring the assembly of young people.

Key determinants of success will be the resources to be allocated to these schemes, and their long-term sustainability.

Until June 2008, Police guidance on encountering people carrying a knife without good reason, had been to prosecute adults and to caution those under 18. The Police had been able to use their discretion over whether to caution a 16 or 17 year old by considering aggravating factors, such as whether the person is under the influence of drink or drugs.

As from June 2008, under new guidelines for police and prosecutors, anyone over 16 can be prosecuted on their first offence. The change followed a meeting between the Prime Minister, Police and legal chiefs, to extend the minimum age for prosecution in knife cases.

Croydon Police advised councillors that 25% of serious offenders were known to the authorities (eg schools and police) albeit not always by name, and that the conviction rate for knife crime was approximately 25%. Head teachers interviewed noted that a challenge facing the police in identifying and apprehending perpetrators is that some offences involve a large group of young people, a situation which makes it more difficult to ascribe guilt to specific individuals. Indeed, the Croydon Youth Crime Prevention Strategy states that 38.7% of the total crime committed by youths is committed within groups.

## **Recommendations to the Police**

**R7 The innovative 'Crimewatch' texting system, which permits young people to text details of those carrying knives, should be publicised more widely.**

**R11 The Police, the Council and the community should work together to prioritise the anti-social behaviour offences that the public find the most unacceptable locally and agree a consistent approach.**

**R13 Senior Police officers should work to sustain the valuable links with local schools by:**

**a) supporting the attachment of police officers to all state and private secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units as a direct method of improving the relationship between the police and young people**

**b) making effective use of the attachment of police officers in all schools, following the good practice already in place in a number of schools**

**c) notifying schools when changes to the deployment of police resources are necessary and keeping themselves briefed on current issues at local schools**

**R14 That police officers, and particularly newly recruited staff, should receive specific training so that they are better able to manage interactions with young people, thus demonstrating responsible, respectful behaviour and reducing the potential for conflict.**

## 4 - YOUNG OFFENDERS

### Sentencing

The Croydon Youth Crime Prevention Strategy 2008-2011 provides an overview of risk factors which may increase a young person's risk of getting involved in crime, as set out in Appendix A.

Young people interviewed by councillors and through recent surveys provided evidence regarding the reasons why many of them become involved in gangs and in knife crime:

- Older teenagers acquire a glamorous image in the eyes of younger peers after criminal acts or receiving a custodial sentence
- Older teenagers put significant pressure on younger gang members to become involved in criminal activity, either as proof of commitment to a gang, or with the promise of some material reward - which may carry a higher value to a young person from a deprived family than to one who has no experience of deprivation
- When young people get involved in a fight, they have little awareness or understanding of the consequences of their actions, for themselves or their potential victims
- Some young people form stronger relationships within their gangs than in their families, particularly where there is a lack of emotional support at home, and look up to unorthodox authority figures and models of behaviour
- A gang's grip on an individual may be very difficult to shake off, particularly as the individual concerned may incur retribution from the group; young people who had had some experience of gangs explained that one has to have a very positive, promising long-term alternative available to have the strength to turn over a new leaf
- Many young people carry a knife for protection because they fear for their safety and know of no other way of protecting themselves

In contrast to the above comments, some young people stated that too many "excuses" are made for young offenders, that everyone can make choices in their lives, and that "mollycoddling" young people after an offence would not help them change their lives. What they needed was a very firm and fair hand to steer them forward.

However, understanding the circumstances of young people involved in knife crime and other anti-social behaviour can help relevant professionals, voluntary workers and parents to find effective methods for guiding young offenders away from such activity, so that they may cease to represent a risk to their communities and grow to have a productive adult life.

Both groups of young people interviewed by Scrutiny councillors stated that there was not an intrinsic relationship between gang activity and knife crime, although the two may overlap.

Young people asserted that many young offenders felt that they would never be caught or apprehended, and had a sense of invulnerability. When young offenders are arrested and sentenced, while this may have a role in protecting communities for a time, there is some evidence that the sentence may not deter young people from offending again. Councillors were advised that community penalties were followed by a 40% reoffending rate, rising to 60% after a custodial sentence.

Both Scrutiny councillors' discussions with young people and the findings of the MPA Youth Review point to the fact that young offenders do not consider their sentences to be harsh, although young people felt daunted by the prospect of an adult prison sentence. As mentioned above, young people pointed out that some offenders gained a certain amount of kudos, particularly from younger peers, from having had to serve a sentence.

Young people interviewed by Scrutiny councillors felt that serving a sentence in a Youth Detention Unit would expose them to individuals who could exert a bad influence and lead them into further trouble and reoffending.

Another impact of a custodial sentence is its disruptive effect on young people's education, which in turn may decrease their chances of obtaining good qualifications and full-time employment, which might bring about more positive life chances.

Young people agreed that far more needs to be done to fine-tune sentencing practice, so that young people can perceive sentences imposed as genuinely unpleasant and to be avoided, but can acquire through them the means of turning over a new leaf and leading a positive adult life after the sentence has been served.

### **Services for young offenders**

Members received evidence regarding services to young offenders, and noted the good partnership working arrangements currently in place between the Council and the Magistrates' Court.

A particular need which was highlighted during the investigation was the homelessness experienced by many young offenders. Housing officers have indeed confirmed that there is a link between youth crime and exclusion from the family home. Once excluded, young people find themselves at risk of being drawn further into gangs and/or offending.

Overcrowding is another contributory factor in young people being drawn into offending behaviour. Children and young people living in overcrowded conditions may spend more time outside the home, on the streets, to find privacy and space and to socialise.

Croydon seeks to address the housing needs of young people through the multi-agency "HAP>25" project. This offers a comprehensive and holistic service to young single people in Croydon between 16 and 25 years and is co-ordinated and staffed by local charity CAYSH (Croydon Association for Young Single Homeless). However, officers have acknowledged the difficulties of placing young offenders in supported accommodation as a result of the risk that they present to other young people within the accommodation. Work is taking place to develop a cross-departmental response to this group. Members are keen to see that information on housing support is also made known to the *courts* so that they can signpost young offenders to the appropriate services.



## **Recommendation re young offenders**

**R8 The Council should ensure that the Courts have the information and contacts to be able to sign-post and refer perpetrators to the full range of services available to them at the end of legal proceedings and particularly to direct them to effective support to resolve their housing needs**

## **5 - EDUCATION AND PASTORAL CARE**

Scrutiny councillors were very keen to ascertain what links there were between problems at school and severe anti-social behaviour, and what could be done by schools and other agencies to prevent such behaviour from occurring.

They found that, while there is not a direct causal relationship between educational problems and serious anti-social behaviour, behavioural problems which are left unaddressed can lead to poor educational achievement, expulsion and later, far more serious problems due in part to ever decreasing access to positive life choices.

Young people consulted agreed that, while school could be felt to be unmotivating or irrelevant to young people's immediate needs or priorities, suspension or expulsion from school could have very serious repercussions, closing the door to a wide range of future educational, training or job opportunities, and exposing young people to new risks and temptations as they are left with nothing to do and no supervision.

Some young people providing evidence during this investigation had had some of their schooling at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) as a result of serious behaviour problems. Their experience of the PRU was far more positive than that of mainstream schooling: pupils felt the teachers there really cared about them.

### **Young people's educational needs**

In the course of the review, frustration was expressed at the difficulties in balancing young people's needs with the government's educational targets.

However, young people made a range of suggestions on how school life and attainment could be improved, which found a surprisingly faithful echo in an Ofsted report, "Good practice in re-engaging disaffected and reluctant students in secondary schools" (October 2008).

In particular, the report pointed to the effectiveness of a flexible curriculum, adapted to meet the specific needs of their students - a task which was easier to achieve at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 because of the greater availability of alternative education and training establishments, which could provide a better match to students' needs.

"Off-site courses made us see what is expected in the real world. They helped us change our attitudes." (Year 10 girl with a poor attendance record - Ofsted report.)

During this investigation, a number of suggestions were made by young people for practical ways in which they may obtain a realistic flavour of the world of adult work and find school more relevant and motivating:

- holding discussion sessions between pupils and adults from various work backgrounds to give young people a tangible impression of what various career paths may offer them in future, and thus provide them with a greater incentive to succeed at school, to follow their chosen career path
- giving young people more opportunities to do work experience, including paid work

A window into the work and decision-making of adults is provided through the “11 Million Take Over Day”, which takes place in November nationwide, where more than 5,000 children and young people will have a say in the running of over 400 organisations across England. This year, Croydon Council organised for local young people to shadow the work of various officers from the police, the Council and other local agencies and businesses.

Head teachers consulted during this investigation attested to the fact that some young people at risk come from very difficult backgrounds, and have very difficult problems to deal with at home in addition to educational challenges at school. Young people consulted reinforced this view by noting that long-term educational goals may seem insignificant when compared to their present problems. This does not mean that their ambitions in life should be in any way reduced. It does mean that they may need a great deal more help and support than other young people to hold such ambitions, and to achieve them.

In addition to a curriculum which takes young people’s needs and interests into account, rewards constituted another powerful motivator for young people consulted during this investigation. The above-mentioned Ofsted report supported this view. Moreover, both emphasised the need for meaningful rewards that were genuinely valued by young people, such as food, tokens, or trips. A head teacher observed that his School Council take a major role in identifying worthwhile rewards, eg the right to be first in the school dinner queue. Heads also remarked that parents need to make effective use of rewards to promote good behaviour and hard work at school.

Other needs expressed by young people were for a good quality of teaching, and for more classroom assistants to give them support, two issues which were reiterated in the above-mentioned Ofsted report.

### **Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE)**

PSHCE was discussed on a number of occasions during this investigation. This subject, which has been taught over many years and covers a wide range of issues, is not a compulsory element of the curriculum, but is taught in the majority of schools in Croydon. A number of young people questioned on their experience of PSHCE did not remember doing such classes, although one remarked that the issues discussed in these lessons acquired greater importance after he had left school.

While young people’s memories of such classes were hazy, they did state there was a need for schools to teach social and relationship skills, and “how to be responsible”. These are key elements of this subject, which also addresses the need for young people to develop emotional self-control, anger management and effective resilience to difficult challenges such as bullying and other anti-social behaviour.

Head teachers consulted valued the use of small discussion groups in their schools' PSHCE classes, to help young people grapple with current issues such as gangs, knife crime, interpersonal skills, etc., in depth. They also considered that the first-hand experience and hard-hitting messages of the police in such lessons played an important role in shaping attitudes and encouraging safer patterns of behaviour.

While these head teachers' evidence points to good practice in this area, young people's evidence suggests that the effectiveness of teaching in this area may need improving in some schools in the borough. Making effective use of resources available through the "Crossfire" and "Prison Me No Way" projects (see box below) may represent a way forward.

### **Two initiatives aiming to turn young people away from anti-social behaviour**

**Crossfire Schools and Youth Project**, an initiative led by Croydon Council and New Addington Fire Station. Working with schools and youth groups in New Addington, Fieldway, Monks Hill and Shrublands, the project tackles all areas of anti-social behaviour. Crossfire also runs a borough-wide project in partnership with the Youth Inclusion Support Panel and the Youth Offending Team.

The "**Prison Me No Way**" Trust currently works proactively with over 2000 secondary schools and more than 1800 other youth organisations including voluntary youth groups, charities, groups of excluded and disaffected young people, pupil referral units, youth offending teams, magistrates, secure units and attendance centres, police, fire and ambulance services. The Trust provides varied presentation styles and can individually tailor programmes designed to meet the needs of young people, who are disaffected, disadvantaged, socially excluded or at risk in any other way.

However, head teachers stressed that inculcating social skills could not be the sole responsibility of schools. There was wide agreement that the task needs to be shared with parents - an important issue that will be dealt with in section 7.

### **Decision-making opportunities for young people**

The youth of Croydon is represented in the UK Youth Parliament by two Youth Parliament members and a support team of young people. The UK Youth Parliament MPs visit colleges, schools, youth clubs etc. to hold forums and conduct surveys to ascertain the views of their peers on a range of key issues, eg education, gangs, the environment. They attend Scrutiny and other Council meetings, Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, national conferences, the Commons, etc. to represent the views of young people. Young people in the support group have also instigated the "Knives not Lives" campaign, which aims to raise awareness of the dangers of knife crime and the need for ways of reducing youth violence. A number of these youth representatives provided evidence during this scrutiny investigation on knife crime.

Within schools, opportunities for participating in decision-making are available through School Councils. Decisions made at such meetings include approving any changes to the school's behaviour policy, and devising and discussing effective reward systems to encourage good behaviour and educational attainment.

Some local authorities, such as the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Bromley, have set up Youth Councils to provide a borough-wide forum for activities and decision-making on issues affecting young people. The Youth Council operating in Lambeth is currently developing materials and workshops to train police officers on how to communicate effectively with young people during stop and searches, and inspecting youth centres in the borough to ascertain if they offer the service that young people want. Croydon does not have such a forum at present, and information on young people's views is obtained through a variety of surveys.

### **Recommendations regarding decision-making opportunities**

**R5 Consideration should be given to the creation of a Croydon Youth Council to provide an opportunity for more young people in Croydon to influence decisions regarding local services and issues affecting them.**

**R6 All Council departments providing services to the public as a whole should specifically seek the views of children and young people as an integral part of 'Think Customer', and as recommended in the Scrutiny review of Young People's Citizenship and Involvement (completed March 2003).**

### **The transition between primary and secondary school**

A number of stakeholders identified the transition between primary and secondary school as a time of particular risk. New pupils can find themselves exposed for the first time to a very large establishment and an alien and daunting environment, and where older pupils can take advantage of their vulnerability in various ways eg bullying, pressurising them to join a gang, or forcing them into aggressive behaviour to defend themselves. In addition, teachers are not always briefed on the educational and pastoral needs of new pupils who had already displayed poor patterns of behaviour in primary school. During this investigation, it was suggested that addressing this transition effectively might constitute a training needs in some schools.

Head teachers consulted explained that they had developed a range of methods for minimising the likelihood of problems at the beginning of young peoples' secondary years:

- Establishing a "collegiate" or "house" system, where the school is divided into smaller, more manageable social units where a 7<sup>th</sup> year pupil may feel more secure, may have a better sense of belonging and have greater access to support, such as mentoring from 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils; head teachers consulted stated this practice was in its early days, but first impressions were encouraging
- Being well briefed regarding the needs of individual year 7 pupils before they start secondary school, so that the appropriate support can be in place for both pupils and teachers at the very beginning of the year and so that any problems may be "nipped in the bud"
- Providing an intensive induction to pupils at greater risk, to help them settle into school
- Employing "transitional workers" to provide support and ease new pupils into their new environment

Progress from primary to secondary school can be eased through good contacts between secondary establishments and their “feeder” primary schools. In some schools, this is done by using children’s portfolios, which can raise the self esteem of the individuals and allow their secondary schools to get to know their new pupils. Sometimes however, a number of hurdles can hamper such communication, including geographical reasons: in one primary school, the pupils do not have one main secondary school to progress to: the 90 pupils in year 6 move on to 24 different destinations.

### **Access to support**

Much discussion during this investigation focused on access to support when young people feel they are in trouble or want to talk to someone about their problems. Many felt that there was no one appropriate to talk to on a one to one basis. They felt they could not talk to a teacher, because they found it difficult to talk to an adult or because they felt that the teacher would not be able to help them. Findings of various surveys suggest that young people’s doubts regarding teachers’ ability to deal with bullying are widely shared, and Council officers questioned during this investigation acknowledged that this issue needs to be addressed. One of the objectives of the Council’s bullying strategy will be to provide training to help teachers recognise and challenge such behaviour and provide effective support to the young people affected.

Head teachers consulted provide pastoral support to young people in a variety of different ways, such as mentoring provided through CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) or by older pupils in their schools. Evidence from council officers attested to the use of a wide range of support at primary school level, including Learning Support Mentors, who can also signpost children and their families to other useful sources of support.

Interventions can also be initiated by teachers in response to a young person’s poor behaviour. The Council’s implementation of the Government’s Targeted Youth Support (TYS) agenda aims to ensure that the needs of vulnerable teenagers are identified early and met by agencies working together effectively, in ways that are shaped by the views and experiences of young people themselves. Croydon’s Youth Early Support (YES) panels make up a key element of this agenda, and refer young people to appropriate support services. To address higher risk levels, Croydon has set up the multi-agency Youth Prevention, intervention and Protection model to work specifically with youth involved in gang activity, serious group crime and anti-social behaviour, and focus its work not only on enforcement, but also on prevention and intervention.

Many stakeholders’ overall impression of support services available to young people at risk is that while a lot of good work takes place at early stages of anti-social behaviour and after a young person has committed an offence, the threshold for services is too high for medium levels of ‘at risk’ behaviour. Those whose behaviour has deteriorated despite early prevention work can experience damaging delays before appropriate support can be provided, allowing the situation to worsen. Using the Council’s scale of risk levels set out in the table on the follow page, officers felt that the most limited provision was for risk levels 2 and 3.

<b>RISK LEVEL</b>	<b>NEEDS</b>
LEVEL 1	Universal provision
LEVEL 2	Children and parents needing additional support
LEVEL 3	Children and families requiring a formal intervention
LEVEL 4	Children and families in crisis, requiring urgent and / or intensive intervention

Another concern expressed related to the **consistency** of support to young people at risk.

Councillors were advised that long delays can be experienced between schools asking for support from Children's Social Services and a response being made, and that a faster response might help prevent some children's needs from escalating.

In addition, a service or form of support is sometimes withdrawn at short notice. This can happen because of budget restrictions or because the young person's eligibility for services has changed. After support has been discontinued, the young person can find him/herself back in the vulnerable situation which contributed to his/her behavioural problems.

For instance, a young witness contributing to the 30 September meeting did not obtain access to training until after he had committed an offence. He found the training more appropriate than school, but was withdrawn from the programme when his behaviour improved. He subsequently reoffended. Young people, head teachers and Council officers all agreed on the need for a consistent, long term approach to behaviour improvement and commitment to the young person concerned.

## **Recommendations to schools**

**R12 The following recommendations are drawn on the basis of existing good practice which it is recognised many schools are already implementing.**

- a) Commit to offering all elements of the Extended Schools programme in partnership with local agencies**
- b) Seek regular meetings with local senior Police officers to ensure close co-operation and continuity**
- c) Ensure that a rewards system which is seen as a credible incentive to good behaviour and educational attainment is embedded within school practice, using the views of School Councils in identifying worthwhile rewards**
- d) Ensure that effective mentoring systems are used during the first year of secondary education, with a more intensive support programme for those identified as being at risk**

**e) As some children and young people feel threatened while travelling to and from school, liaise with Safer Neighbourhood Teams to ensure that there is an adequate staff / Police presence at the school perimeter at the relevant times of day**

**f) All staff should be trained to respond effectively to serious incidents including finding pupils found in possession of knives or other offensive weapons, and to address the aftermath of such incidents appropriately, in order to provide a consistent and safe response to all such occurrences**

**g) As part of schools' responsibility for swift and easy access to services, sign-post up to date information and contacts for the many Council and voluntary services available to pupils and parents at risk, and ensure that all staff are aware of and encouraged to access these for vulnerable pupils and their families**

**h) The innovative 'Crimewatch' texting system, which permits young people to text details of those carrying knives, should be publicised more widely (R7 above).**

**i) Provide good access to mentoring throughout primary and secondary schools, and to help young people to get out of gangs**

## **6 - LEISURE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Much discussion focused on leisure activities:

- As a tool for building positive relationships among young people and with teachers and leaders
- As a means of teaching interpersonal and other skills
- As diversionary activities to reduce the risk and time available to get involved in anti-social behaviour
- Young people expressed their yearning for having a "place to be" during their free time, as "home" did not appear to provide a welcome refuge to many young people, and youth clubs were either unknown or unappealing to them, as discussed below
- While adult stakeholders valued the role of sport as a diversionary activity and a healthy option, particularly in the run-up to the Olympic Games, young people consulted expressed rather less enthusiasm for this type of leisure activity and displayed more interest in trips and "outward-bound" style camps.

### **Croydon's Youth Service**

Councillors were advised that the Youth Service is in contact with around 25% of Croydon's 13 to 19-year-old residents and works regularly with about 16% of that population. In addition, the Timebridge Centre in Fieldway provides leisure activities for young people aged 14 and under. Most of the membership live or are at school or college in the north and east of the borough.

The Youth Service provides seven Youth Centres and nine Neighbourhood Youth Clubs which operate in the evenings in term time and during the day (and some evenings) during the holidays.

The Youth Service also provides a wide range of diversionary and preventative services and activities for young people. For instance, "Positive Activities for Young People" is a programme of holiday and term-time activities for young people who are offending or at risk of offending, referred by Community Safety, the Youth Offending Team (YOT), schools, police etc. Specialist support is provided via bespoke teams for young people at risk e.g. the "Potential" youth group which is made up of young people affected by a specific murder involving a knife, who want to support other young people who may be carrying knives.

The Youth Service's detached team operates on streets and estates, away from youth centres and clubs, to establish contact with young people who do not, or cannot, access premises-based youth provision. Teams of youth workers operate in hot spot areas e.g. Thornton Heath and New Addington, working with young people on the street. High levels of contact are made with young people who have links to gangs, or who are directly involved with them.

The issue of knife crime and personal safety is addressed in all clubs and projects. All settings have a knife policy with supporting posters and back-up work.

The overall programme is promoted through the **croydonyouthtube.com** website, the annual Youth Service programme brochure, in MEGA, etc.

There is a high level of Youth Service support from the Voluntary and Community Sector and uniformed groups, as well as grants for training and publicity and accommodation subsidies. These groups provide preventative activities for a further 4,000+ young people.

### **Issues raised regarding the youth service**

Despite the work outlined above, young people consulted felt that there was very little to do in their leisure time, had little knowledge of what was available, and stated that their schools provided little or no information on the activities available to them. It was also observed that providing youth club activities for only one evening a week would have little positive impact locally. Councillors were concerned that current youth club premises were old and in poor condition. They were advised that it would be difficult to refurbish many such premises as they were used by a variety of different agencies.

Head teachers had limited contacts with the youth service, but acknowledged that they would probably miss any services that might be cut. They felt that youth clubs should be open immediately after the end of the school day rather than relatively late in the evening, to encourage young people to spend their evenings at home, and that activities available should be more in keeping with young people's current tastes and interests.

Despite the availability of some activities for 8 to 12 year olds in New Addington's Timebridge Centre, Highbury Youth Club (Norbury) and Redbarn Youth Club (Upper Norwood), councillors and officers agreed that there was insufficient provision for that age group. The needs of this age group were highlighted by young people's assertion that such children are often seen out in the street late at night. It was also suggested

that extending organised leisure activities to this age range would have the added advantage of enabling clubs to develop future youth leaders with similar experiences to their younger peers, who could understand their needs and hopefully become inspiring role models and mentors.

Councillors and young people discussed the advantages and disadvantages of “outward-bound” style camps. One group of young people felt that they would provide a positive and entertaining setting for learning various skills. However, other young people cast some doubt on the long-term benefits of such an approach. Such a tool might be of some value as part of a long-term action plan, where lessons learnt could be followed up and reinforced. This is in fact the practice with “residential” provided to young people at risk referred to the “Positive Activities for Young People” programme by Youth Early Support (YES) panels in which key workers in the Youth Service provide support to young people after their return from such a trip. Activity holidays open to all young people are also offered by each of the Council-run Youth Centres at least once a year (see Appendix B for further details).

### **Recommendations re leisure activities for young people**

**R1 The Council should continue to review the developing range of services for all young people in Croydon. Specifically, investment in expanded opening hours for “places where young people can be” into the late afternoon and late at night during summer months should be explored and future opportunities for younger children actively considered. (see R2 below.)**

**R2 The Council should work with schools to provide adequate, strategically planned activities for young people aged 8 to 12 years of age.**

**R3 The Council should work with extended schools / school clusters to:**

- a) Ensure that there is smooth and effective partnership work between extended schools and other agencies**
- b) Provide local residents of all ages with a physical space to get to know each other through shared activity. This will directly contribute to the LAA target for ‘promoting community cohesion, a sense of community and community engagement’.**
- c) Create more low cost opportunities for physical activities e.g. dance and sports, in local schools. Facilities in extended schools should provide easier access to a range of physical activities to promote a sustainable active lifestyle beyond the primary years and into adulthood.**
- d) Offer greater access to involvement in performing arts as a means of attracting young people at risk away from the temptations of crime, particularly for those who are not interested to sport.**
- e) Provide support and information to parents to enable them to recognise electronic bullying and to help prevent its occurrence**

**R4     The Council should develop more innovative ways of ensuring that young people at risk and their families are able to access information on relevant services, and improve and simplify access to information and support through the internet, texting and other formats.**

## 7 - PARENTING

During this investigation, it was acknowledged by all stakeholders and young people that parents had a pivotal role to play in helping a child develop into a responsible, productive adult. This view is backed by research showing that good parenting is one of the most important factors in helping a child secure good outcomes as an adult, far outstripping factors such as social class, ethnicity or disability.

The role of fathers has also been shown to be very significant, and to have an impact on educational expectations and outcomes, school attendance, behaviour and emotional outcomes. The presence of a positive father figure is particularly important for young men, to provide them with a good role model and encouragement as they grow into adulthood.

The significance of good parenting has been recognized in the Government's "Every Parent Matters" initiative, as a result of which every council has been directed to draw up a strategy to provide appropriate support to local parents and address local needs. Croydon's Parenting Strategy is being drawn up and is due to go out for consultation at the end of 2008.

Head teachers, the Youth Offending Team, the Police and young people questioned during this investigation highlighted the following range of problems which could seriously hamper young people's chances of improving their behaviour and future prospects:

- Many parents were found to be very ill-informed and somewhat naïve about their children's activities - an observation made by head teachers, the Youth Offending Team and the Police
- A number of parents were resistant to engaging with schools and communities to resolve problems faced by their children, particularly the parents of children at risk
- A black head teacher expressed concerns about a number of black parents abdicating their responsibility to their children and to the school concerned, and emphasised that they needed to be fully involved in helping to resolve their children's behavioural and other problems in co-operation with the school
- Young people expressed concerns about parents having to work until late and thus allowing their children - even young ones - to stay out in the street until late
- Young people felt that there should be **"education of parents and support for them"**

Young people contributing to this investigation spoke on many occasions of their mothers, but made no mention of their fathers. The Youth Offending Team has noted that many young offenders lack a father figure, and make particular efforts to recruit male mentors to provide young ex-offenders, or potential offenders, with positive role models.

One notable local male role model is Les Persaud, who set up the 'Potential' youth group in September 2005 following the death of his son Stefan, to encourage young people who had been friends of his son to turn away from violence and lead more positive and focused lives. After undergoing training to acquire the relevant skills, the group now offers mentoring to other young people.

## **Addressing parents' needs**

Head teachers consulted demonstrated their commitment to working with parents to provide young people with a good education and pastoral support, and inform them swiftly of any emerging problems, eg possible evidence of involvement in a gang. An important element of this co-operation was the need for positive dialogue with parents, and support to resolve problems, a point echoed in the above-mentioned Ofsted report. For instance, the Victoria House Pupil Referral Unit invests a great deal of effort in helping parents to provide their children with a happy home, while St Joseph's College provides support to parents through bespoke courses in their local extended schools programme.

Council officers involve parents of young people at risk through the wide range of initiatives and services targeted at them. For instance, the Youth Offending Team use a dedicated parenting service as part of the Youth Inclusion Support Programme (YISP), provided to children and young people to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The service, which provides young people and their families tailored mentoring and behaviour programmes for 3-6 months through a YISP case worker and other relevant agencies, helps parents to address problems such as parental supervision and discipline, lack of commitment to the young person's schooling, histories of chronic conflict, "burn-out", and the absence of a male role-model.

A Council service aiming to provide early support to families is the "Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities" programme, which forms an important element of the Council's support to parents. This is aimed at families with children and young people aged 8-13 years of age, and has been found to be very effective and popular with Black and Minority Ethnic families. Three such programmes are run every term in locations where the need for such support has been shown to be particularly high.

As at August 2008, 75% of parents and 64% of children invited had completed the programme, and feedback has suggested that they found the programme very approachable, with reported improvements in relationships between parents and children, and reduced conflict. Importantly, parents indicated that this programme provided a useful two-way channel with schools. Foster parents too have been attracted to this programme.

Other key services currently being provided to parents in the borough include the following:

- Producing a directory of parenting services, sign-posting parents to the wide range of services available and helping them to decide which to use, which was drawn up as a result of parents' expressed difficulties in finding the appropriate help for their children and families
- "Parentline+" (which also has a call-back service): 3,000 parents a year use this telephone helpline, including a high percentage of lone parents.
- Support from a parent adviser - up to four 45 minute sessions, then parent can be referred on if necessary - bookings are being built up.

All the above services seek to provide support to parents many of whom experience multiple problems and have particular problems accessing and demonstrating eligibility at risk levels 2 and 3, as do young people in need (see pages 12-13).

## **8 - THE COMMUNITY**

Croydon's Parenting Strategy acknowledges that disadvantaged neighbourhoods constitute a "risk" to the families within them. Linked to such neighbourhoods are a range of housing problems such as poor housing condition or housing management issues.

Disadvantaged neighbourhoods tend to be in poor condition, are prone to a high resident turnover and can suffer from a lack of neighbourhood spirit as residents do not know each other and may fear misunderstanding or reprisals if they intervene to halt anti-social behaviour. Apathy and lack of accumulated shared knowledge and co-operation can exacerbate the problems experienced by families in such neighbourhoods and allow acts of anti-social behaviour to go on unchecked. In contrast, a well established community spirit and willingness to challenge and report anti-social behaviour can discourage the occurrence of anti-social behaviour and provide support to families in need.

Issues affecting communities in Croydon include the following.

### **Housing issues**

The focus may have to be directed at private rented accommodation in wards with higher deprivation levels, for the following reasons:

- Research underpinning Croydon's Parent Strategy suggests that problems affecting children are increasingly being recorded in wards such as Selhurst and Broad Green, which have large amounts of private rented accommodation
- 85% of Council Homes meet the Decent Homes Standard as at 1st April 2007 and can access a wide range of community events. In contrast, the condition of private rented housing, particularly in the north of the borough, lags well behind at 63%. Families having to cope with poor housing conditions are more motivated to move housing, which causes disruption for children and their education, as well as to the family's social network, and reduces the commitment of the family to the area.
- To compound the above problems, private tenancies are far less secure than social housing tenancies: under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, private landlords have the legal right to terminate assured shorthold tenancies without setting out any grounds in court, and some use this right to evict tenants who pursue requests for repairs and maintenance. As explained above, this again may bring about disruption to both adults and children involved.
- While the Council plays a significant role in providing advice to private tenants on repairs, tenancy rights and other issues, recent Scrutiny discussions with the Croydon Housing Aid Society and Citizens' Advice bureau suggests that many private tenants are unaware of the limited rights they do have.

## **Residents' and young people's awareness of services available to them**

Evidence provided by young people, head teachers and officers dealing with parenting needs shows that there is little local awareness of the wide range of services available to young people and parents, despite the information provided by the youth service and such initiatives as the recently produced directory of parents' services. Many residents do not know what services are available, how to find out about them or even why they should make such efforts.

Research carried out to underpin the borough's Parenting Strategy showed that families at greatest risk had very limited contact with or knowledge of local services.

An examination of information available from the Council's call centre and website has shown that it can still be difficult to obtain the information and advice needed from these media, either because services are not clearly labelled or sign-posted, because search facilities provide poor results, or because information is several "clicks" away.

There exists some evidence of good practice in fostering links between local services and communities they serve. Head teachers explained that they connected with communities in a range of different ways, eg reporting specific problems to community leaders, developing police patrols in the vicinity of schools with the support of local residents, or developing extended schools programmes designed to address the needs and interests of local residents. The Council's Housing Services provide a range of different networks for their tenants to report problems, contribute towards the planning of housing services or take a role in bringing about improvements to their own neighbourhood and organising activities which can improve the local community spirit.

A number of schools are involved in planning and providing activities to local parents and young people to address the need of these communities. Such local centres can help families create a wider circle of acquaintances, which can provide them with informal support and information in a variety of different ways.

It is also necessary to highlight the role of voluntary work in Croydon in providing support, with over 88 organisations providing a wide range of services to young people and over 32 organisations providing services to families. For instance, one member of the public attending the 2 September meeting on knife crime highlighted the mentoring work being carried out in the borough to turn round the lives of black boys.

## **9 - PARTNERSHIP WORK**

Stakeholders consulted, including representatives of the Council, Mayday Hospital, Croydon Magistrates' Court and Victim Support, stated that they had good formal and informal relations and working relationships with other partners within the Local Strategic Partnership.

In addition, strategies such as the Croydon Youth Crime Prevention Strategy and initiatives such as Youth Inclusion Support Programmes are designed to involve key partners to provide support to young people at risk.

However, two areas for improvement arose from discussions held:

- While head teachers placed a high value on their partnership work with police officers and PCSOs, they had concerns regarding the way police staffing resources were reallocated to extend this work to other establishments, without adequate or timely consultation with schools which were set to lose part of the police support previously available to them.
- Head teachers expressed concerns regarding the lack of support provided by Social Services regarding pupils with serious problems. Some children experienced long delays in accessing support from Social Services, which could exacerbate their problems

## 10 - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Croydon Youth Crime Prevention Strategy 2008-2011 sets out the performance criteria shown in the table below.

NO	PERFORMANCE CRITERION	OWNED BY
1	The reduction in the numbers of First Time Entrants to the CJS	CYPL
2	% reduction in crime statistics relating to Serious Youth Violence and knife crime	Police
3	Numbers identified for early intervention and engaged in the projects	CYPL
4	The numbers of young people being supported by the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) who do not offend	CYPL
5	The number of successfully completed Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs) who do not come to the notice of the authorities again	Community Services
6	Number of successful completions of ABAs during the year	Community Services
7	% reduction in the number of young people re-offending	CYPL
8	Achieving the Youth Justice Board Target [YJB] that 90% of those supervised by YOT should be in education or training	CYPL
9	The numbers of young people engaged with the leisure activities programmes to be provided within schools	CYPL
10	Reduction in young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	CYPL

Some criteria are directly linked to the borough's Local Area Agreement:

- Criterion No 1 links in with LAA NI111 relating to young people, "First time entrants into the Criminal Justice System"
- Criterion No 2 links in with LAA NI15, "serious violent crime rate", although this LAA performance criterion covers all age ranges.
- Criteria 3 and 9 link in with LAA NI 110, "Young people's participation in positive activities" although they stipulate that monitoring will focus on activities in schools
- Criterion No 10 links in with LAA NI117, "Young People not in education, training or employment"

The other indicators are already in use by relevant teams to monitor the success of interventions such as Acceptable Behaviour Agreements or supervision by the Youth Offending Team.

This collection of indicators can provide a thumbnail sketch on trends relating to young people at risk for partnership work between CYPL staff and the police. However, it needs to be noted that a range of other factors may impact on these future trends in addition to action taken by local agencies.

## 11 - CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted during this investigation shows that the Council, Police and other partners have taken decisive and comprehensive action to address youth crime, and particularly knife crime, with such initiatives as “Safe for All”, and co-operate well together in providing a multi-agency response. Partners, including the voluntary sector, have praised those Council services and networks with which they have been involved.

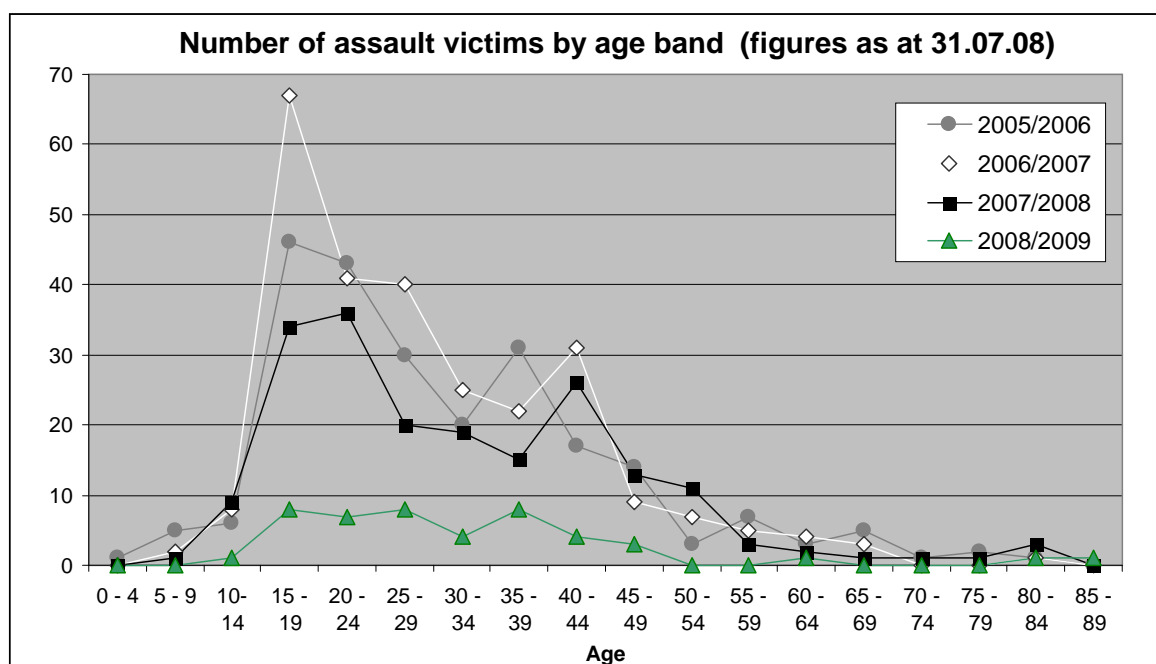
However, the following issues still stand out:

1. **Safety is a serious concern for young people.** 83% of young people responding to the YOT survey said that there was a gang problem. 29% of respondents said that there was a gang problem in their schools. 56% felt there was pressure to carry weapons, mainly for personal protection. The BBC Survey conducted in July 2008 showed that about 45% of respondents knew someone who had been a victim of knife crime and that 75% of respondents did not think that the authorities would be able to reduce knife crime over the coming months.
2. **There is a poor relationship between many young people and police.** This hampers co-operation between the two and the reporting of crime. Many young people interviewed as part of this Scrutiny investigation and during the MPA survey testified to the fact that the police don't take them seriously and don't respond to their requests for help. In addition, young people feel that “Stop and Search” is often implemented in an inappropriate and humiliating manner.
3. Young people's chances of overcoming behaviour problems and growing into responsible, productive adults can be seriously impaired by **poor parenting and the absence of a positive male role model.** Young people's, head teachers and YOT team officers all agreed that some parents needed support to fulfil their role effectively. In addition, officers working with young offenders attested to the need for a positive male role model in the absence of effective fathering at home.
4. While progress has been made to signpost relevant services to parents and target support to those in need through initiatives such as “Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities”, more needs to be done to ensure that relevant **families are targeted quickly and effectively**, and that parents who contact the Council for help can **gain easy access** to the services they need. In particular, head teachers have indicated that families need much quicker access to social services support to prevent risks from escalating.

5. Councillors were particularly concerned to hear of **the lack of support available for young people and families at “medium risk”** highlighted by a number of stakeholders. As a result of specific statutory duties and ring-fenced budgets for different levels of risk, many stakeholders felt that young people and families at “medium risk” were not given the support they needed, as a result of which their problems and the unlikelihood of improvement were likely to worsen further before any support could be provided, with a lower probability of success.
6. Service providers emphasised the **need for consistent long-term support** for young people at risk, but evidence showed that this was not always achieved. A young person stressed that a young person had to be offered “very attractive alternatives” in order to turn away permanently from patterns of poor behaviour which were the norm within his social circle. Councillors heard that a young person may suddenly cease receiving support if a risk is perceived to have subsided, although new behaviours may not yet have bedded down.
7. Young people and head teachers have **little knowledge of activities available through the youth service**. Head teachers felt that youth activities should be available most afternoons within school premises as part of the local “extended schools” programme, so that young people could pursue their hobbies immediately after classes and go home afterwards and thus have less reason to go out until late in the evening. Participants in the review also commented that a number of youth centres didn’t open enough evenings in the week, and thus did not offer young people “a place to be” during much of their free time.
8. **The responses to the risks of knife crime vary from school to school**. Some young people echoed head teachers’ views and the findings from the MPA youth survey, that the immediate vicinity of a school could present particular dangers, and reported that their school did not take steps to make that environment safe until after an incident had occurred. Head teachers consulted make considerable and effective efforts to keep children safe within the school environment and in some cases outside it, and to have a good two-way dialogue with parents if they have concerns regarding their behaviour or safety. A number of schools have also recognised the risks which arise during young people’s transition from primary to secondary school, taking steps to inform themselves regarding the profiles of their new pupils and to make the secondary school environment more welcoming to them.
9. The youth justice system still provides little protection for society against violent assaults and little chance of long-term improvement for the young people concerned.
10. Overall, a lot of work is being carried out by a wide range of stakeholders to address the risk of anti-social behaviour among young people. This includes many new initiatives, some following the recent reorganisation of the department for Children Young People and Learners, eg YES panels, YISP, the new bullying strategy, and others to address increase in knife crime (eg “Safe for All”). These many services need to bed down, and care needs to be taken to maintain continuity and monitor their success.

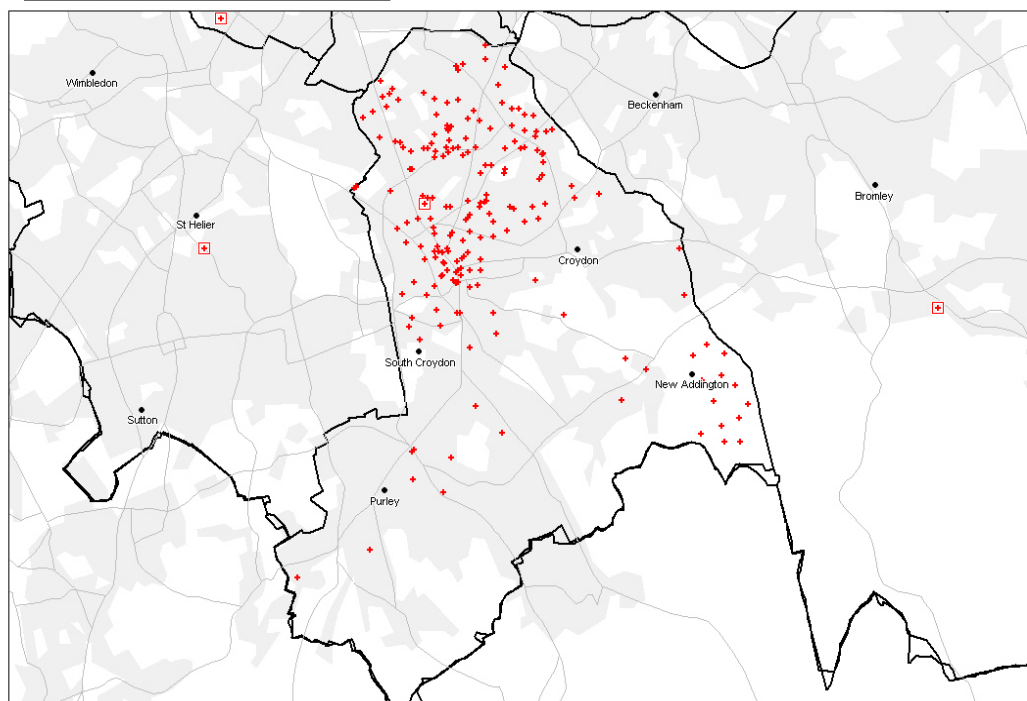
## INCIDENCE OF ASSAULTS IN CROYDON AND GREATER LONDON

The graph on the following page sets out the numbers of cases of assault treated in Mayday Hospital between April 2005 and June 2008 by age groups, regardless of weapon used. It shows that the largest numbers of patients are aged between 15 and 24.



The map below shows interventions by the London Ambulance Service to deal with assault victims in the borough between April 2006 and June 2008, as well as the hospitals in the area. Figures do not distinguish between different types of weapons used.

Stab/shot/weapon wound, within Croydon PCT: 01/04/06 - 30/06/08



**The table below lists the names of young people who have died in Greater London as a result of assaults in 2008, and the dates and locations of the attacks.**

NAME	AGE	DATE	LOCATION
Henry Bolombi	17	01.01.08	Chased by a group of youths and stabbed in Edmonton shortly after getting off a bus
Faridon Alizada	18	05.01.08	Stabbed in a tower block in Erith (Bexley)
Boduga Mudianga	18	21.01.08	Stabbed in a street fight in Edmonton, north London
Fuad Buraleh	19	26.01.08	Died of head injuries after attack in Ealing shortly after getting off a bus
Sunday Essiet	15	19.02.08	Died after attack in Woolwich following a row between groups of youths
Tung Le	17	23.02.08	Stabbed in Deptford, east London, during a row outside a night club
Ofiye Nmezu	16	15.02.08	Attacked by 3 men in high street Ponders End Hit with a brick, died of skull fracture 29.02.08
Michael Jones	18	13.03.08	Stabbed in Edmonton in an attack by an intruder at his home
Nicholas Clarke	19	14.03.08	Shot in the head at the Wyatts Field Estate in Brixton
Devoe Roach	17	27.03.08	Stabbed near his home in a street in Stamford Hill, north London after row
Amro Elbadawi	14	27.03.08	Stabbed in a street in Queen's Park, west London
Lyle Tulloch	15	03.05.08	Stabbed in a stairway in a block of flats, Peckham
Jimmy Mizen	16	10.05.08	Stabbed with a shard of glass in a bakery in Lee, south-east London
Rob Knox	18	24.05.08	Stabbed in a fight outside the Metro Bar, Sidcup, south-east London
Sharmaarke Hassan	17	24.05.08	Ambushed by 3 people and shot in Gilbey's Yard estate, Camden, north London
Arsema Dawit	15	02.06.08	Stabbed in a block of flats near London's Waterloo station
Ben Kinsella	16	29.06.08	Stabbed in York Way, Islington, north London
David Idowu	14	07.07.08	Stabbed in an attack in Great Dover Street, London SE1
Shakilus Townsend	16	03.07.08	Stabbed and beaten with baseball bat in Beulah Crescent, Thornton Heath
Melvin Bryan	18	10.07.08	Stabbed at a bedsit in Edmonton, north London
Frederick Moody	18	17.07.08	Stabbed near Stockwell Tube Station, south London
Ryan Bravo	18	06.08.08	Shot in a drive-by shooting at a Costcutter store in Walworth, south-East London
Nilanthan Murddi	17	16.08.08	Stabbed in a street fight in Croydon
Charles Hendricks	18	24.08.08	Stabbed in a street near a bus garage in Walthamstow, north-east London
Shaquille Smith	14	30.08.08	Stabbed in Hackney by a gang of youths on bikes
Oliver Kingonzila	19	13.09.08	Stabbed outside the E-Bar, South End, Croydon
Craig Marshall	19	26.09.08	Stabbed near his home in Acton, west London
Nabeer Bakurally	19	08.11.08	Stabbed in High Road, Ilford (Redbridge) following an altercation with a group of men

Stabbings have also claimed a number of adult lives in 2008, such as those of French students Laurent Bonomo and Gabriel Ferez, both 23, found riddled with knife wounds after a flat fire in New Cross, south east London, Tunisian national Hamouda Bessaad, 34, stabbed to death on Old Kent Road, south-east London while Dee Willis, 28, died after a knife attack in Peckham.

The above high profile cases hide the extent of non-fatal incidents. According to NHS statistics, the number of children admitted to hospital with stab wounds has doubled in the past five years. Among under-16s there was an 88 per cent rise in stab wounds, from 95 in 2002-03 to 179 in 2006- 07.

## YOUTH OFFENDING: RISK FACTORS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

(From the Croydon Youth Crime Prevention Strategy)

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<b>Individual Factors</b> Poor social skills / low self-esteem Hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour Personal or mental health issues Drug/alcohol misuse Positive view of aggression	Strong sense of self-belief and worth Social Skills including negotiation Moral understanding and beliefs Impulse control, problem solving skills
<b>Family &amp; Parenting</b> Close or wider family members who are offenders Poor supervision and inconsistent parenting/disciplining Experience of abuse Witness of domestic violence Lone parent/absent strong male role model Lack of warmth and affection	Good parental attachment from birth through to adolescence Stability within the home with clear, fair, firm & consistent boundaries, discipline & morality Positive adult influence[s], advice & support outside of the family home
<b>Education</b> Truancy, exclusion, experience of difficulty in school Inadequate behaviour management Peer group who condone or promote offending & violence	Association with a circle of friends who do not condone or commit offences Positive settled experience of school and learning opportunities Clear controls around violence Recognition of achievement
<b>Life Changes</b> Divorce and family break-up Death of a family member Critical transitional points [Looked After Child (LAC) with placement breakdown, move of schools etc]	Support from significant people at critical points to manage crises/major life transitions Stable placements or accommodation
<b>Community &amp; Cultural</b> Socio-economic disadvantage Poor housing conditions, overcrowding, deprived area Violence and substance misuse in the neighbourhood, crime hotspot Lack of support services / leisure activities	Attachment to the community Community networking Participation in locally available activities and community groups

## **Question and Answer session with the Head of the Youth Service**

### **Would it be possible for youth clubs to offer activities every day of the week?**

All youth centres owned by the Council offer activities every day of the week. Activities tend to be more limited on Saturdays and Sundays. Where the local centre is a church or a building that is not owned by the Council (as in the case of Redbarn and Crofteigh), youth clubs may find it difficult to open every evening as the building is used for a wide range of other activities.

### **What kinds of activities are usually offered at the council funded youth clubs, and who decides what activities to do?**

Young people decide what to do. A survey conducted in June 2008 to find young people's preferences showed that 13 year olds and younger people were particularly keen on football, games and swimming. Top preferences for 14 to 19 year olds were dancing, sports, and music (eg performing and burning CDs of their own music).

### **What trips away does the Youth Service offer? What sectors of the borough's young population tend to go on such residential camps?**

Every one of the Council's five youth centres offers a trip at least once a year. One of the destinations is Avon Tyrrell (Dorset), near Bournemouth, where young people can enjoy camping, archery, swimming, etc.

These trips tend to attract slightly more young men than young women, and a considerably higher proportion of BME young people than in the population of the borough. As these trips are low cost, they are popular with young people from lower income homes. All young people are welcome to attend providing they abide by agreed ground rules. As a result, young people who have behavioural difficulties in other settings have been known to participate and take a positive part in these holidays.

Special "residential" are also offered to young people referred to "Positive Activities for Young people" by Youth Early Support (YES) panels following various problems such as poor behaviour or performance in their studies. Apart from similar activities to the above-mentioned holidays, these "residential" also provide confidence building, counselling on behavioural issues and taking responsibility, one to one support, etc. Follow-up to such camps is provided by key workers employed by the Youth Service.

### **What contact do you have with schools to ascertain local needs and to advertise activities to them specifically?**

The Youth Service works with the extended schools co-ordinator and school cluster workers, and has had particular success working with schools on the "£11m project", where school children shadowed senior officers and councillors for one day, discussing the day's decision-making.

The Youth Service has a good relationship with a number of schools, working alongside Youth Early Support Panels (see page 11) to provide appropriate support to their pupils.

**What kinds of activities does detached outreach youth work involve?**

The borough deploys 4-5 teams of detached youth workers at any one time. They engage with young people on the street, organise a wide range of activities eg going to the cinema, playing football, skateboarding, using a minibus for a summer programme, etc. Detached youth workers also sign-post young people to other services. The service employs three targeted personal advisers, who can provide support to young people with special needs, and have links to services eg health services (where a young person may have health concerns eg pregnancy or alcohol/drug consumption) or drop-in centres for counselling eg bereavement support.

**What systems do you have for monitoring the number of young people involved in various clubs and activities, and for assessing the quality and effectiveness of various initiatives?**

Information on all Youth Service activities, including numbers of young people using the services, is stored on its “Y-base” system. It is also used to monitor performance against relevant indicators.

**New funding sources and initiatives eg “Safe for All” are supposed to offer funding for more activities. Will any such funding be made available to you to improve youth service provision, and what exactly will be done with this funding?**

The bulk of funding available for youth work has been allocated to the “Kickz” football project. The Youth Service will bid for funding in the next bidding round in 2009.