

# “Young People and the Police”



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper introduces a consultation report funded by the Community Safety Board about the perceptions young people have of the Police and community safety issues.
- 1.2 The consultation project was partly a response to the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) request for all London Boroughs to contribute to the MPA's Youth Scrutiny Panel. An interim report, following a first stage of the project, was submitted to the MPA on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The final report is now attached for information, with the findings and next steps previously presented to key stakeholders including the Borough Commander and Cabinet Member for Community Safety on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008.
- 1.3 A key outcome of this project has been securing funding (from the Community Safety Board) and support to form a Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) to inform the Police, the Council and their Partners on community safety issues. This is in acknowledgement of the value provided by actively engaging with young people on key community safety issues.
- 1.4 The project has been delivered in partnership between the police, Community Safety Board and Waltham Forest Council, with the Council's Community Engagement Unit managing the project.

## 2. PROJECT AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The overall aim of the consultation project was to engage directly with young people to inform local and regional policing and community safety activity with young people. More specifically, the objectives of the consultation were to:
  - Identify ways of improving the confidence of young people to report crime and engage with the police as witnesses
  - Identify ways to address the criminalisation of young people
  - Provide advice and recommendations for youth engagement activity to be taken forward in Waltham Forest

## 3. APPROACH TO CONSULTATION

### 3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The consultation activity took place over two stages:

- a) **Preliminary Consultation (21<sup>st</sup> February 2008)**: A group of young people were recruited to take part in a structured discussion on the issues outlined at paragraph 3.1. The discussions and findings from this session were written up into an interim report for submission to the MPA scrutiny panel by the deadline of **29<sup>th</sup> February 2008**.
- b) **Citizen's Panel Event**: The second stage of the consultation, was a 'Young People's Citizen Panel Event' on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008. On this evening, the young people received presentations from the police and those partners who the young people had identified as key players in preventing youth involvement in crime. The aim of this session was to establish a dialogue between the young people and the key stakeholders and provide an opportunity for both parties to challenge each other's assumptions. Inspector Mike Hamer (Youth Partnerships), Colette McCann (Head of Youth Service), Andrew Sinclair (Head of Youth Offending Team) and Alastair Macorkindale (LBWF Community Safety) were amongst those who presented. A final session was held with the young people on the 7<sup>th</sup> May to reflect on the findings and develop a series of issues to action.

## 3.2 The young people

3.2.1 18 young people were invited to take part in the initial consultation exercise. These young people were broadly representative in terms of age (14 – 20), ethnicity and geographic location.

3.2.2 The young people were recruited according to their particular interest in community safety and policing issues. So far as possible, we also deliberately invited a spectrum of young people in terms of their previous experiences of criminal activity. The young people ranged from those who have had no criminal involvement, or even exposure, to those who had previous and current experience of the criminal justice system.

3.2.3 The young people represented:

- **LBWF Youth Offending Team**
- **LBWF Young Advisor's Scheme**
- **Local Schools** (George Mitchell Community School, Norlington School for Boys, Leytonstone School, Rushcroft School, Highams Park School, Heathcote School, Tom Hood School)
- **Rollin-G** (a youth-led community mediation group formed of young people previously involved in crime)

- **Young People Stop & Search Group** (a student group formed within George Mitchell School to communicate Stop & Search Rights to other young people)
- **Barnardo's Children's Rights** (Looked After Children)

3.2.4 Of these initial 18, 12 young people have continued to be part of the project and it is intended that this group will go on to form the borough's Youth Independent Advisory Group on Community Safety Matters.

## 4 KEY FINDINGS

4.1 The consultation identified six key areas for attention:

- **Ongoing dialogue with Police and community safety issues**

The group felt that there was a need for a more frequent and ongoing dialogue with the police and young people. Their perception was that adults were always fighting the wrong fires, for example:

*"The police have it in their heads that its all about postcodes or road codes, when it's really not. They need to give us the chance to explain what's really going on."* (Female, 15, Leyton)

This issue provided the foundation for developing the Youth Independent Advisory Group

- **Get in there early!**

The perception of the young people involved was that children as young as 12 are involved in serious crime in Waltham Forest. By this stage they already have knowledge of knives, gangs and drugs. More needs to be done to identify these young people who are risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour or gang-related crime. In particular, this needs to start in primary school and provide the correct support during the transition to secondary school when young people are trying to form their identify with a new peer group and may be particularly susceptible to becoming criminally involved.

- **Train up parents!**

The young people unanimously felt that the role of parents and close family in supporting young people to develop a 'strong state of mind'

was crucial. However, in many cases, young people are let down in the home and, by their teenage years, are not equipped with the necessary values and strength of character to avoid trouble. Where possible, we need to support parents or carers to support their children.

- **Smart Guidance**

The group felt that a majority of young people, particularly those who don't benefit from a supportive home environment, need support to make smart choices in life. By 'smart choices', the group were referring to those decisions that would lead them away from crime and into a sustainable career path.

- **Breaking the quick fix system**

The young people identified the appeal of 'fast cash' as one of the main drivers for youth involvement in crime and, as such, felt that breaking this 'quick fix system' is something that needs to be explored. In part, they felt this was a question of educating young people about creating a sustainable future for themselves and providing them with incentives to have the patience to see this through.

The group felt that, key to the success of breaking this system, was the identification and elimination of the 'control figure' or 'big guys', spoken of in the context of one of the main causes of criminal involvement of young people.

- **A prison holiday**

The group felt that 'doing time' was not a deterrent to 'doing crime' – even when challenged on this at the "Citizen Panel" session the views of the group remained strong on this point. Several people felt that prison was actually a positive option compared to living on the estates, in that you are secure, well fed and have opportunities to get training. In sum, it was felt that prison had become normalized amongst a proportion of young people and was no longer considered to be the terrifying option it once was.

## **5 NEXT STEPS & TIMESCALES**

- 5.1 The borough's first Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) was established at the end of July 2008. More details about the YIAG can be found at Section 4 of the report (p. 26-28).
- 5.2 The project will be managed by Waltham Forest Council's Community Engagement Unit, and funded by the Community Safety Board. Its work plan will be guided by a steering group of representatives from the police, the Council and the Community Safety Board. Many of the issues raised above will inform the work and focus of the YIAG.
- 5.3 It is intended that the YIAG will be a flagship mechanism for engaging young people on police and community safety issues and will be an example of successful partnership working.
- 5.4 On a functional level, it will act as a sounding board on practical and strategic police and community safety issues and have an advisory function on tactical policing issues affecting young people locally.

# SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

## Context, Aims & Objectives

1. This report details the findings and recommendations emerging from youth consultation activity recently carried out in response to the Metropolitan Police Authority's (MPA) paper entitled 'Young People and the Metropolitan Police.' It builds on an initial interim report based on the first stage of the consultation and follows on from a presentation of the findings and key issues by some of the young people taking part in the project on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to an audience including the Borough Commander and Cabinet Member for Community Safety.
2. The first stage of the consultation was a 'Team Up, Speak Out' consultation event which took place in Leyton County Cricket Ground on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008 and its overarching aim was to add value to previous and planned work in the field of youth victimisation, criminality and policing in London.
3. In line with the aims and objectives prescribed by the MPA and following discussions with key stakeholders, this initial consultation placed a particular focus on the direct engagement of young people with the police and its partners. To this end, it aimed to:
  - Identify ways to address and prevent the criminalisation of young people
  - Identify ways of improving the confidence of young people to report crime and engage with the police as witnesses
  - Identifying ways to improve MPS strategy and policy with regard to young people
  - Identifying the resources allocated to this area of work by the MPS and undertaking an analysis of how they are utilised
  - Identifying ways to improve the MPS's involvement in partnership work with young people
  - Identifying good practice in MPS youth engagement
  - Identify local responses to be taken forward in Waltham Forest
4. The second stage of the consultation, was a 'Young People's Citizen Panel Event' on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008. On this evening, the young people received presentations from the police and those partners who the young people had identified as key players in preventing youth involvement in crime. The aim of this session was to establish a dialogue between the young people and the key stakeholders and provide an opportunity for both parties to challenge each others assumptions. Inspector Mike Hamer (Youth Partnerships),

Colette McCann (Head of Youth Service), Andrew Sinclair (Head of Youth Offending Team) and Alastair MacCorkindale (LBWF Community Safety) were amongst those who presented. A final session was held with the young people on the 7<sup>th</sup> May to reflect on the findings and develop a series of issues to action.

5. Section II of this report presents the findings from the initial Team Up, Speak Out consultation. Section III presents the points of action that, following discussion with key partners and the police at the 'Young People's Citizen Panel Event', the young people wanted to see addressed.

### **Setting the Agenda**

6. Within the parameters set by the MPA, it was intended that the young people would have a certain amount of free reign to decide what would be discussed on the evening of the consultation. However, research and discussions were held with partners in advance of the evening to ensure stakeholders had the opportunity to input into the process.

### Discussions with stakeholders

7. Discussions were held with colleagues from the LBWF Community Safety Unit, the Community Safety Board, the Youth Offending Team and the local Metropolitan Police. This process highlighted a number of issues to be raised with the young people including:
  - Mainstreaming youth engagement with the police
  - Young people's confidence in the police
  - Perceptions and fear of crime
  - The concepts of risk and resilience
  - Visibility of the police
  - Identification of good practice
8. This stakeholder group also guided the running of the 'Young People's Citizen Panel Event' and will act as the steering group to the first Youth Independent Advisory Group to the police, which it is hoped this group of young people will go on to form.

### Literature Review

9. In order to develop ideas and stimuli to guide the initial consultation, a review was undertaken of literature including the following:

- Prof. John Pitts, *'Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest'*, 2007
- The Community Action Team. *'What future: A Community Safety Plan for Young People'*, 2008
- Home Office Crime Reduction Toolkits ([www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/toolkits/](http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/toolkits/))
- Communities that Care, *'Building Safer Communities where children and young people are valued'*, 2005

### **Recruitment of young people**

10. 22 young people were invited to take part in the initial consultation exercise. These young people were broadly representative in terms of age (14 – 20), ethnicity and geographic location (north, middle or south of the borough).
11. The young people were recruited according to their particular interest in community and policing issues. So far as possible, we also deliberately invited a spectrum of young people in terms of their previous experiences of criminal activity. The young people ranged from those who have had no criminal involvement, or even exposure, to those who had previous and current experience of the criminal justice system.
12. The young people represented:
  - **LBWF Youth Offending Team**
  - **LBWF Young Advisor's Scheme**
  - **Local Schools** (George Mitchell Community School, Norlington School for Boys, Leytonstone School, Rushcroft Sports College, Highams Park School, Heathcote School, Tom Hood School)
  - **Rollin-G** (a youth-led community mediation group formed of young people previously involved in crime)
  - **Young People Stop & Search Group** (a student group formed within George Mitchell School to communicate Stop & Search Rights to other young people)
  - **Barnardo's Children's Rights** (Looked After Children)
13. Of these initial 22, 12 young people have continued to be part of the 'Team Up, Speak Out' project and it is intended that this group will go on to form the borough's Youth Independent Advisory Group on Community Safety Matters.

## **Method Statement**

14. The Team Up, Speak Out consultation was structured to provide a qualitative evidence base to compliment existing quantitative evidence around the relationships between young people, crime and the police. This approach to capturing the information presented in Section II (Findings) took account of the fact that many of the underpinning issues are unique and often sensitive for the young people and benefited from being captured in a personal, in depth and narrative way.
15. However, the nature of this approach means that caution should be taken in terms of extrapolating generalisations to young people in general. Whilst the views and perspectives raised in the next sections are real and valid to the young people involved, they should be considered as just this – a snapshot of the lives of 18 young people in our borough.
16. As the issues discussed were of a sensitive nature, informed consent was requested from all of the young people prior to the event, and parental consent was given where appropriate.

**Section II of this report outlines the findings from the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of the project. Section III outlines the key issues for action identified by the young people following the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the consultation.**

The authors of this report would like to thank the Community Safety Board for funding the project. We would also like to acknowledge the helpful input and support provided from the Local Police, Community Safety Board and Waltham Forest Council who have ensured that the project is appropriately focussed and the findings listened to.

# SECTION II: CONSULTATION FINDINGS

## What the young people said

17. The consultation was structured around three themes: doing crime, seeing crime and feeling crime. These headings were used to explore the experiences of young people as perpetrators, witnesses and victims of crime. The following sections relay the discussions that ensued amongst the group and the views that were raised.

### THEME I: Doing Crime

#### The Big Problems

18. The group listed the following crimes as those they associate with young people in Waltham Forest:

- Drug abuse
- Theft
- Burglary
- Dealing
- Stabbings
- Knife crime
- Rape
- Weapons
- Underage Drinking & Driving(although the group retracted this in saying vehicle offences aren't 'real crime', they are simply a way for the government to make money)

#### What lies beneath...

19. The young people felt that the combination of factors that lead a young person into crime varied according to the individual case. There were, however, a number of key factors that were agreed upon.

#### a) State of Mind

20. A number of the group felt that the 'state of mind' of young people was the single most important factor in determining whether he or she would become involved in crime. The group made a distinction between 'strong' and 'weak'

minded young people. A young person who was 'weak minded' was felt to be:

i) Subject to peer pressure

*"If you haven't developed your own thoughts and feelings yet, then it's hard not to let people get into your mind. You're more likely to give into peer pressure. Anyone over 12 is getting involved in stuff like gun crime now." (Male, Leyton, 19)*

ii) Lacking direction

*"If young people feel they have nothing in their life then they don't feel like they have anything to lose." (Female, no fixed abode, 16)*

iii) Lacking role models

*"Young people are exposed to bad things from really early on nowadays. If they don't have anyone to guide them through that from when they're young kids, then it's already gone wrong." (Female, Leytonstone, 15)*

iv) Without parental supervision

*"Parents only get involved once things have already started to go bad, but that's too late. If kids can fool their parents they think they can get away with anything." (Female, Cathall, 19)*

**b) The 'Quick Money System'**

21. Availability and accessibility of 'fast cash' was felt to be a key determinant in criminal involvement, and one a majority of the group agreed on. However the young people were split as to whether this was through 'need' or 'greed'.

*"It's all about the flashy cars, the bling...these are the things that make you stand out." (Male, Leytonstone, 18)*

*"In Essex, where I used to live, there were loads of rich people doing crime just for the hell of it. Here, where there's loads of council estates, people do crime just to get by." (Female, 18, Cathall)*

22. For those young people who felt 'greed' drove young people into criminal activity, they blamed this on what they called 'instant world' where people

think they can have anything they want without trying or working for it. This covered everything from electronic games to career paths, with the group agreeing that crime was one of the most profitable careers for young people to get involved in.

23. The link between family wealth and involvement in crime was another issue that caused widespread disagreement in the group. Whilst some young people felt that, had they grown up in a financially secure home they would have taken different paths, others felt that young people use lack of money as an excuse:

*“We live in a society where we will never be properly broke – with all the income support there is always a way to get by without turning to crime. People just don’t like that option. They think its not enough and it doesn’t come quick enough.” (Male, Walthamstow, 20)*

### **c) A prison holiday**

24. Unanimously, the group felt that ‘doing time’ was not a deterrent to ‘doing crime.’ (and despite a challenge to this viewpoint at the citizen panel session the young people held firm on this view – one often informed by personal experience) Indeed, several members of the group, when prompted, said they thought prison could be considered a ‘positive option.’

*“Jail is an easy life. Someone makes your dinner and brings it to you. You can use a free gym everyday. Most prisons have playstations and football teams now too.” (Male, Walthamstow, 17)*

*“The only thing you lose if you go to prison is your freedom. But freedom doesn’t mean much if you live in one of the estates round here anyway. If you live in Beaumont, you can only stay in Beaumont. So it’s like a prison anyway.” (Male, Leyton, 18)*

*“Prison isn’t a bad option. It’s an easy one. You don’t have to earn money. All you’d miss is sex and freedom.” (Male, Walthamstow, 17)*

25. The group felt that the only deterrent to getting involved in crime would be the knowledge that a harsher punishment awaited them. Several members of the group felt that the threat of capital punishment would be the only way of making young people think twice about their choices.

26. Behind this ambivalence towards prison seemed to lay the normalisation of the institution. All but one of the young people raised their hand when asked

if they had a friend or relative who is currently, or has been, in prison. It was clear that prison was no longer seen as the last realm of 'bad people in society.' Rather, it's a de-mystified familiar, reality for many of our young people.

### **i) Fear**

27. Without exception, the young people expressed anxiety and fear about crime, and about being victimised. This will be discussed further in the section entitled 'Feeling Crime', but is worthy of mention here in the context of fear leading to criminal involvement.

*"On the streets, you live by the motto "kill or get killed". If you don't you're stupid. If you're not scared you're stupid, because then you're not prepared." (Female, 18, Cathall)*

*"When young people carry guns it is to protect themselves and to scare other people, but then sometimes it just goes wrong." (Female, 16, Leyton)*

28. The young people expanded on this by explaining that, for the most part, this was not a personal fear of someone, but rather of a potential situation. However, several of the group spoke of a direct fear of the 'big guys' in Waltham Forest, of those figures who control criminal activity in the area and to whom they are personally known.

### **j) No Opportunities**

29. Lack of opportunities in the Waltham Forest area was another issue that caused disagreement. Some of the group felt that opportunities for young people to develop themselves simply didn't exist, others were adamant that there were good opportunities out there but young people just didn't make the most of them.

*'2 of my bruv's started on this Steps apprenticeship. One of them really stuck at it and after 2 years he had saved up £8,000 and now he is going to invest that in a business – something of his own. The other didn't drag himself out of bed in the morning and gave up on it after 6 months, nothing to show for it. The issue is work ethic, not lack of opportunities.' (Male, 20, Leytonstone)*

30. Many of the young people agreed with the young man's views on a lack of work ethic amongst young people in general. This was felt to tie in with the 'instant world' mentioned earlier, where people want everything now and will always take the 'easy way out' where possible.

*"It takes hard work to be successful and that's what most young people don't get. Jay-z didn't wake up one day and get famous, he was cleaning cars on street corners for years to get where he is now."*  
(Male, 17, Walthamstow)

*"Kids need to be taught the road to success. They need to be taught that they need to work hard from an early age, that it's good to start low and work yourself up. This needs to start at home. It's not about how much money your family has - it's about what they do with it."*  
(Male, 18, Chingford)

## **THEME II: Seeing Crime**

31. This section of the discussion focussed on young people as witnesses of crime. When raised, the suggestion of reporting a crime that they had witnessed ('snitching') immediately provoked a negative reaction amongst the group.

*"Snitching is the lowest of the low, especially if it's about something that happens in your community. No-one should be snitching on other youngz because there are always 2 sides to every story and you don't know it all." (Male, 15, Cathall)*

32. Aside from the concern that the young people may know the people implicated in a crime they have witnessed, it transpired that there were two principal factors dissuading the young people from furthering crucial information to the police.

### **a) Distrust in the Justice System**

33. Many of the young people looked upon the justice system as an enemy in itself. Their only experience of it was based on negative experiences:

*"They arrested me for disturbing the queen's peace because of the hand gestures I was making." (Male, 20, Leytonstone)*

*"My dad is doing 22 years for smuggling drugs into the country. If you do murder, you can get off with 6 years. Tell me, where's the justice in that?" (Female, 18, Cathall)*

34. With this perceived injustice and misdirected resources in mind, the group felt they would be loathe to hand any information over to the police, or its partners, as they would be unconvinced this would be handled appropriately, or handled at all.

### **b) Relations with Police**

35. The sentiments of the young people toward the justice system – frustration and distrust - were echoed in their direct experiences with the police. In short, there was a widespread feeling that the police were not 'on the side' of the young people and, hence, wouldn't be a port of call if the young people found themselves in difficulty.

*“My cousin was stabbed and it took the police 20 minutes to get there. By that time he was lying in a pool of his own blood. They don’t help people in real situations.” (Female, 15, Leyton)*

*Why would you ever go to the police when you have a problem? I was stabbed 5 times. They turned up when I was doped out on the hospital bed, trying to ask my questions. There was no sign of them when I actually needed them.” (Male, 17, Leyton)*

*“The police don’t do anything that we can see. They seem to spend their time dealing with the minor offences.” (Female, 15, Leytonstone)*

36. The group also had a strong voice in terms of perceived aggravating behaviour on behalf of police officers they had come into contact with. The group acknowledged that this was not a characteristic of all police officers:

*“It seems like, for every good cop, there’s a bad one. You can work out pretty quickly who the good and bad one’s are. When something comes up, the good one always hangs back a bit and assesses the situation rather than jumping straight in. He’s the one you want to talk to if you have a problem.” (Male, 17, Leyton)*

37. However, other members of the group were not so moderate in their views. The group felt that police were paid well to do a difficult job and part of that job is to deal with situations calmly and respectfully. Instead of taking this approach, the group felt the police often took ‘too much power from the badge’ and used this to aggravate members of the public.

*“Kids do crime because of police officers. I got done for GBH on a police officer. She was being really rude to me. She stopped me for playfighting – it was obvious there was nothing more to it than that. Once they get that badge they think they have too much power.” (Female, 18, Cathall)*

*“Police are always cussing us. They are disrespectful and they have no manners. They talk to us so differently when adults aren’t around – you never see that side to them.” (Female, 15, Highams Park)*

*“My son is 2 years old. They stopped and searched me for no reason when I was with him. They don’t realise that they just passed on my hatred of the police to my son.” (Male, 20, Walthamstow)*

### **THEME III: Feeling Crime**

38. This final section of the discussion was an attempt to explore the young peoples' experiences as direct and indirect victims of crime.

#### **a) Real v. Perceived Crime**

39. Overall, high levels of fear and anxiety around crime were revealed within the group. This seemed to stem from:

- Personal experiences of victimisation
- Anecdotal evidence from friends/ family
- Reporting of incidents in the media

40. When the proposal was put to the group that the media hype around criminal activity can not be supported by evidence of crimes committed, the young people felt adamant that their fear of crime was real as opposed to a perceived fear spurred on by the media. However, the group did then refer to a news story that has received a lot of recent coverage to substantiate this:

*"This isn't about media hype. Everyone is scared of somebody. Even the Home Secretary lady said she was too scared to go out at night on her own. It isn't so much a fear of someone in particular, but of a situation that we could be in." (Female, 18, Leyton)*

41. When asked to elaborate on the crimes or situations the young people feared most, the response was 'paedophilia'. The group identified this as the worst crime possible and the one they would have most fear of in Waltham Forest. The young people explained that this was a crime that was on a different level to others and it required a mentality they could never understand.

42. In contrast, whilst gun crime and stabbings were probably more commonplace, the group felt that they could understand these crimes, they had been somewhat normalised. This explained why they were united against paedophilia but not against gun and knife crime.

*"I guess gun crime and that sort of thing makes sense. I can understand why someone would pick up a knife or a gun because we all usually know the story behind it. People usually do these things for a good reason." (Female, 15, Leyton)*

## **b) Discrimination but not racism**

43. When considering their experiences as victims of crime, several of the young people were quick to point the finger towards the police as the source of that victimisation.

*“The police have their usual suspects and it’s all to do with what we look like and the close we wear. A pretty white girl will never be stopped over someone wearing a hoody!”*

A young, white woman in the group then corroborated this viewpoint.

*“This is true. I was with a mixed group of young people. One of the guys had weed. When the police stopped us, he gave it to me because I’m white and he knew they wouldn’t search me. They didn’t, but they did search the others in the group.”*

44. When asked if they were touching on institutional racism within the police, the young people felt that times had moved away from discrimination on the basis of race and they didn’t consider the police to be racist towards any one group. It seemed, they felt, that the police just came down harder on every group than in previous times.

*“Back in the day it was all about blacks and Asians. They were the targets of the police. But now, everyone carries guns. It’s not about race anymore. We’ve gone past that.” (Male, 16, Leyton)*

## SECTION III: ISSUES FOR ACTION

45. This section highlights the key issues for local and regional policy makers to consider and address. It also highlights some initial ideas some of the young participants had about how to address the key issues.

A key outcome already of this project has been securing funding (from the Community Safety Board) and support to form a Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) to inform the Police, the Council and their Partners on Community Safety issues. This is in acknowledgement of the value provided by actively engaging with young people on key community safety issues.

### **Moving the discussion forward**

46. The young people clearly felt that the issue of young people's involvement in crime was a complicated issue with many underlying causes. They recognised that there was no magic formula and that resources would need to be targeted in many different ways if any sustainable difference was to be made.
47. After deliberating the findings of the consultation and the presentations given by the police and partners at the 'Young People's Citizen Panel', the group summed up some key areas for action to be taken forward in partnership between the Youth Independent Advisory Group and the key stakeholders involved in this process:

#### **a) Break the 'quick fix system'**

48. The group identified the appeal of 'fast cash' as one of the main drivers for youth involvement in crime and, as such, felt that breaking this 'quick fix system' is something that needs to be explored. In part, they felt this was a question of educating young people about creating a sustainable future for themselves and providing them with incentives to have the patience to see this through.
49. The group felt that, key to the success of breaking this system, was the identification and elimination of the 'control figure' or 'big guys' spoken of in the context of one of the main causes of criminal involvement of young people.

#### Suggested actions/areas to focus on from the young people:

- Consider how best to educate young people around creating a sustainable

future for themselves, and how to provide the incentives to have the patience to see them through.

- Open and frank discussions need to be held from an early age – at school and at home – around crime and drugs. Young people need to grow up knowing that they're not going to win in the long run with 'quick wins'.
- Work more closely with employment and training providers to signpost opportunities to the communities that need them.
- Consider the 'youth offer' available to our young people. Providing plenty of things for young people to do can keep their minds busy and off cash.

### **b) Get in there early!**

50. The perception of the group was that children as young as 12 are involved in serious crime in Waltham Forest. By this stage they already have knowledge of knives, gangs and drugs. More needs to be done to identify these young people who are risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour or gang-related crime. In particular, this needs to start in primary school and provide the correct support during the transition to secondary school when young people are trying to form their identify with a new peer group and may be particularly susceptible to becoming criminally involved.

#### Suggested actions/areas to focus on from the young people:

- Recognize that early intervention approaches are cost effective in the long term and consider how current resources can be reallocated to focus on early intervention projects.
- More needs to be done to understand why and which young people are at risk of becoming involved in gang-related crime.
- YIAG to develop links with the Youth Service and youth providers to help signpost young people to positive activities and the funding available for these.
- Consider how to proactively involve young people in the development of local youth provision to ensure take-up of activities.
- Build on existing foundations within the borough rather than creating new, 'faddish' ones. For example, Langthorne Park is a great hangout for young people but, once the sun sets, the gates are closed and the young people sent home. If money were invested in extending the opening hours of these sorts of facilities that would be a big step forward.
- Consider how Extended Services within schools can provide more activities within school buildings in evenings and at the weekends.

### **c) Train up parents!**

51. The group unanimously felt that the role of parents and close family in supporting young people to develop a 'strong state of mind' was crucial. However, in many cases, young people are let down in the home and, by their teenage years, are not equipped with the necessary values and strength of character to avoid trouble. Where possible, we need to support parents or carers to support their children.

#### Suggested actions/areas to focus on from the young people:

- Consider how we offer more support to parents who are struggling to control and care for their children.
- Explore intergenerational projects that bring young people together with adults in more positive ways.
- Consider how to counter the negative portrayals of young people in the media. One idea we have is to make a short 'docu-film' which highlights the role of parents in the cases of young people who are involved in crime or heading that way. This would lay clear the problems young people face if they have no support network or boundaries at home.
- Consider how we can work with social workers to make the child protection system more proactive. We believe intervention should occur not only when abuse is suspected, but when communication has broken down within a family to the extent that young people no longer have the support or boundaries they need.

### **d) Ongoing dialogue with Police**

52. The group felt that there was a need for a more frequent and ongoing dialogue with the police and its partners. Their perception was that adults were always fighting the wrong fires, for example:

*"The police have it in their heads that its all about postcodes or road codes, when it's really not. They need to give us the chance to explain what's really going on." (Female, 15, Leyton)*

53. It was felt that a continuous dialogue would not only be an arena to identify proactive, rather than reactive, solutions to problems within the community, but would also be a means of addressing the deep-seated perception that police have the tendency to stereotype and discriminate against young people.
54. The group also suggested that this programme of activity would be the beginning of a 'community-led' approach to policing as the young people

involved in this mechanism (for example, a youth advisory panel) would bring to the group the views of problems experienced by local residents and communities.

Suggested actions/areas to focus on from the young people:

- Create a Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) that brings together young people from across the borough as a panel to advise the police on how they work with young people to reduce their involvement in crime. This would be a way of identifying problems in the community in a proactive rather than reactive way. It will also be a way of young people feeding back to officers on positive and negative experiences they have had with the police.
- Consider how young people and youth organisations could provide input into initial police probation training and ongoing training for officers. In particular, we were thinking of a 'Youth Respect' training package.
- In order to make sure that young people can develop confidence in the workings of the police, consider how the complaints system can be made accessible to young people and how the outcomes of this can be highlighted and promoted.
- Ensure young people's priorities inform the community priorities set within each neighbourhood.
- Continue to identify additional communication and information mechanisms to raise awareness of young peoples rights in regards to 'Stop & Search'.
- Create a 'buddying system' between the Youth IAG and officers on their respective estates. This would increase the visible connection between police officers and young people.

**e) Smart Guidance**

55. The group felt that a majority of young people, particularly those who don't benefit from a supportive home environment, need support to make smart choices in life. By 'smart choices', the group were referring to those decisions that would lead them away from crime and into a sustainable career path.

Suggested actions/areas to focus on from the young people:

- Develop a mentor scheme with different professions, whereby young people have regular guidance from an allocated professional in an area that interests them. This should be a partnership initiative between schools, the local council and police. This needs to be a scheme that instills in young people a sense of ambition and responsibility, in contrast to the work experience placements that are currently offered in schools.

## **f) A prison holiday**

56. The group felt that 'doing time' was not a deterrent to 'doing crime'. Several people felt that prison was actually a positive option compared to living on the estates, in that you are secure, well fed and have opportunities to get training. In sum, it was felt that prison had become normalized amongst a large proportion of young people and was no longer considered to be the terrifying option it once was.

### Suggested actions/areas to focus on from the young people:

- Agencies (police, schools, Connexions) needed to work harder to emphasise the long-term disadvantages of crime (e.g prolonged unemployment etc) and better inform them of the advantages of 'alternative paths.' (e.g. long term financial security, respect within the community, social capital, ability to make a change for the better).
- Recognise that young people in gangs are at risk both of further offending and of victimisation and design interventions that take this into account.
- Provide youth-friendly information on youth justice and tackle the myths that some young people have of custodial and community sentencing – perhaps through visits to prisons.

# SECTION IV: MOVING FORWARD

## a) Waltham Forest's first Youth Independent Advisory Group

### **An Identified Need**

60. A clear message arising from the consultation process documented in earlier sections was the need for a more frequent and ongoing dialogue between young people in the community, on one hand, and the police and its partners, on the other. The young people involved in the consultation felt that this would not only be a way of them, and their peers, feeding back to officers on positive and negative experiences they have had with the police, but would also be a way of identifying problems in the community in a proactive rather than reactive way.

### **Establishing the YIAG**

61. This identified need for an ongoing dialogue with the police has led to the creation of Waltham Forest's first Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) on community safety issues.
62. The YIAG held its first meeting in July 2008 and continues to meet on a monthly basis, with additional meetings in between if the need arises, for example, site visits, delivering training or even involvement in tension monitoring.
63. At a functional level, the YIAG is informing the wider community safety strategy and operational agenda, acting as a sounding board on practical and strategic issues. It also has an advisory function on tactical issues affecting young people in our community.
64. So far as possible, the young people will provide objective advice and guidance which is distanced from their personal reality. This is to prevent a situation where the young people become unofficial 'informants' to the police on activity taking place in their area. However, in those cases where they young people may wish to give information which falls outside of this remit, arrangements can be put in place to ensure that this occurs through safe, moderated and, most importantly, official channels.

### **Membership of the YIAG**

65. 22 young people took part in the 'Team Up, Speak Out' consultation exercise documented in this report. From this cohort, 12 have gone on to form the Youth Independent Advisory Group.

66. The members of the group are broadly representative of the borough's youth population in terms of age (14 – 21), ethnicity and geographic location (north, middle and south of the borough). All of the young people have been recruited according to their particular interest in community and policing issues and they range from those who have had no criminal involvement, or even exposure, to those who have had previous and current experience of the criminal justice system.

### **Governance of the YIAG**

67. Metropolitan Police funding has been secured from the Community Safety Board to run the YIAG in 2008/09. This is an acknowledgement of the value provided by actively engaging with young people in community safety issues. Please note that funding is only provided for one year and further funding will be required to continue the project beyond 2008-09.
68. As proposed above, the day-to-day management of the YIAG is through Waltham Forest's Community Engagement Unit. Currently, monthly meetings of the YIAG are led jointly by the borough's Youth Engagement Officer and the Metropolitan Police's Youth Partnerships Inspector.
69. The activity and direction of the YIAG is guided by a steering group of officers from the council's Community Safety Unit and Youth Offending Team as well as representatives from the police and Community Safety Board.
70. Strategic direction will be given to the project from both the Community Safety Board and the Youth Crime Prevention Board. The YIAG will have responsibility for presenting information to the Community Safety Board on a quarterly basis, in the form of either tabled updates or attendance at group meetings. It has also been agreed that it can make specific requests for information to the Youth Crime Prevention Board if it furthers the agreed actions of the YIAG work plan.

### **Future of the YIAG**

71. It is intended that the YIAG will be a flagship mechanism for engaging young people on community safety issues and will be an example of successful partnership working between the council, the police and the community safety board.
72. The work plan agreed by the young people and the steering group, outlines a series of tangible actions and outcomes under each of the six areas they identified as key to the involvement of young people in crime. Please see overleaf for a copy of the work plan.

**b) The YIAG's Work plan 08-09**

Issue	ACTION & BREAKDOWN	RESPONSIBLE	TIMESCALE
BREAK THE QUICK FIX SYSTEM	<b>Stuff to do:</b> Develop links with the panel that decides how to spend the Youth Offer (£3 million for young people in the borough).	YIAG (with one member to take particular responsibility)	08/09 <b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>
GET IN THERE EARLY	<b>Positive activities:</b> At least one member of YIAG to sit on the youth forums to help shape the future of the youth service. This will allow you to have a say in the development of local services and how money is invested.	YIAG (with one/ two members to take particular responsibility)	08/09
TRAIN UP PARENTS	<b>Promoting a positive image:</b> Produce a short docu-film that lays clear the problems some young people face if they have no support at home.	YIAG	09/10
ONGOING DIALOGUE WITH THE POLICE	<b>YIAG:</b> Establish a youth independent advisory group that brings together young people to advise the police on how they work with young people to reduce their involvement in crime.	YIAG/ Met. Police/ LBWF	08/09 <b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>
	<b>Training:</b> Develop a 'Youth Respect' training package for delivery as probationer training and ongoing training for officers. The first session will be delivered through a Key Encounter Workshop centring on Stop & Search training for new recruits.	YIAG/ Met. Police/ LBWF	September 2008 onwards <b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>
	<b>Complaints:</b> Consider how the complaints system can be made accessible to young people and how success stories can be promoted.	YIAG	08/09

SMART GUIDANCE	<b>Positive role models:</b> Organise a large scale event to highlight the different professions young people could enter into and how they would do so.	YIAG/ Met. Police/ LBWF/ Schools & Colleges/ Connexions etc.	09/10
A PRISON HOLIDAY/ GET IN THERE EARLY	<b>Identifying YP at risk:</b> YIAG to have advisory role on how these young people are identified and how interventions take account of their circumstances.	YIAG	08/09  <b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>
POLICE ACCOMPANIMENT	<b>Experience Operations:</b> YIAG to be given the opportunity to experience police operations first-hand in a managed and facilitated setting where their views can be taken seriously. This is with a view to improving how the police are perceived on the street. A first example of this is attendance at the 'Knife Arch Operations' due to take place in August/ September	YIAG/ Met. Police/ LBWF	September 2008 onwards  <b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>
ADVICE & GUIDANCE	<b>Youth-proofing:</b> At least 1/2 of every session will be an opportunity for the YIAG to 'youth-proof' the work and plans of the police in Waltham Forest and, where possible, comment on national work.	YIAG	08/09  <b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>
SHARING GOOD PRACTICE	<b>Site visits:</b> Visit neighbouring boroughs to evaluate what they are doing in comparison with what is happening in Waltham Forest, and make recommendations to the police based on this.	YIAG/ Met. Police (with accompaniment from LB)	08/09
TABLED QUESTIONS TO SafetyNet/ CSB	<b>Information Requests:</b> At times, the YIAG may request information around the issues they are considering from mechanisms such as SafetyNet and the Community Safety Board. The first area they would like to consider is the current effectiveness of the child protection system in Waltham Forest.	YIAG/ SafetyNet/ CSB	08/09

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: 'Team Up, Speak Out' Agenda – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008

### TELLING IT STRAIGHT! (Part 1)

**WHEN:** *Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February, 4:30 – 7:00*

**WHERE:** *Leyton Cricket Ground*

**WHERE:** Your chance to speak frankly about your experiences as a young person in Waltham Forest. You decide what's important – this could be anything from crime, safety, bullying to stop and search. What you tell us will be used to design the next session in March, and all your views will be sent directly to the Metropolitan Police Authority!

### AGENDA

4:30 **Arrival and food/ drink**

4:45 **Why we're here**

4:55 **Getting to know each other**

5:10 **Speaking out...**

- Doing Crime
- Seeing Crime
- Feeling Crime

6:25 **The way forward - Summing up your ideas**

6:45 **The Big Challenge - Making the most of the day**

6:55 **Any questions?**

## Appendix 2: 'Team Up, Speak Out' Discussion Guide – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008

Time/ Item	Comments/ Prompts
4:30	<p>Arrival and Food/ Drink</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hand out agendas and name badges (can put nickname/ pseudonym if they feel more comfortable)</p>
4:45	<p>Why we're here</p> <p><b>Overview</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Introduction to role/ the council</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Background to partnership work with the MPA</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Aim of discussion to give the police and the council an insight into the causes and effects of crime and young people, and to give them an idea of how to work with young people to put an end to this.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Discussion will be around three themes: doing crime, seeing crime and feeling crime. We will be asking them to put on three 'different hats' and contribute to each regardless of their experiences. Please contribute as much as you can with your views and stop the discussion if you have any questions or feel uncomfortable at any time.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Discussion as just one part of a programme of events and opportunities that we hope they will be involved in</p> <p><b>Introductions</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To each other (Name/ age/ reason for coming along)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To any staff (Name/ role/ interest)</p>
4:55	<p>Getting to Know Each Other...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Warm-up Grid!</p>
5:10	<p>Speaking Out</p> <p><b>Speak Up</b></p>

	<p>Want to make sure everyone has a chance to have their say  All opinions valid  Confidentiality – no responses can be traced back to individuals</p> <p><b>Respect</b></p> <p>People invited for their different perspectives, please respect and listen what they have to say  All opinions are valid, disagreements are OK  Don't talk over others</p>
<p><b>5:15</b></p>	<p><b>THEME 1: DOING CRIME</b></p> <p><b>Stimuli</b></p> <p>“Criminals are getting younger, and their crimes are more serious. In 28% of gun crimes last year, the accused was under 17”</p> <p>“Drink is closely linked to offending. Young people who drink commit eight times as many offences as those who have never taken alcohol. Young people who use drugs commit six times as many crimes as those who have never taken drugs.”</p> <p>“Lack of parental supervision is key to child offending. Parents who don't know where their children are, who they were going out with or when they would be home, are more likely to have children who offend.”</p> <p>‘Once a young person has become deeply involved in crime/gang-related activity, they are unlikely to stop this behaviour and leave the gang unless they choose to do so – they cannot be forced to do this.’</p> <p><b>Prompts</b></p> <p><b>ASB?</b></p> <p><b>What are the most serious problems around crime and ASB?</b></p> <p><b>How do young people become criminals?</b></p> <p><b>Why do they become criminals?</b> (Young people mention many causes of crime and gang-related activity including a lack of youth activities, easy availability of guns, music glorifying gangs, peer pressure, territorialism, lack of parental involvement, ‘easy money’ for drug dealing, schools ‘not coping’, no job prospects, stereotyping of young people and dissatisfaction with policing)</p>

	<p><b>What can we do to change their lives?</b></p> <p><b>What's successful in diverting young people away from crime?</b></p>
<b>5:35</b>	<p><b>THEME 2: SEEING CRIME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Young people are unlikely to report crime. In 2002, 51% of those who had been a victim of crime had not reported that crime to the police."</li> <li>- "Young people who have witnessed gun violence are more than twice as likely as non-witnesses to commit violent crime themselves in the following years."</li> <li>- "The most commonly reported offence categories are assault (committed by 16%) and other thefts (11%). Criminal damage, drug selling offences and vehicle-related thefts were less common. "</li> </ul> <p><b>Prompts</b></p> <p><b>Levels of trust/ satisfaction in the police trust, satisfaction</b></p> <p><b>What makes witnesses not want to come forward?</b></p> <p><b>What would make them want to come forward?</b></p> <p><b>What would you do if you witnessed a crime? Who would you turn to?</b></p> <p><b>Who is likely to be the witness of crime?</b></p> <p><b>How would the police use your information?</b></p>
<b>5:55</b>	<b>BREAK</b>
<b>6:05</b>	<p><b>THEME 3: FEELING CRIME</b></p> <p><b>Stimuli</b></p> <p>"In 2003, there were 31 victims of murders and shootings who were under the age of 20. In 2006, there were 79."</p> <p>"A review of 74 newspapers articles about young people and crime showed that young people were referred to as thugs 26 times and</p>

	<p>jobs 21 times.”</p> <p>“Just over a quarter (27%) of young people had been the victim of personal crime in the last 12 months. The most common forms of victimisation were assault without injury (11%) and other personal thefts (9%).</p> <p><b>Prompts</b></p> <p><b>Victims are young and getting younger</b></p> <p><b>What kind of person is likely to be the victim of crime?</b> (Children who have offended are more likely to be victims of crime)</p> <p><b>Why are people fearful of crime?</b> (Media, living in an area of high crime, feel vulnerable, powerless and isolated)</p> <p><b>Are perceptions of crime proportionate to the reality of crime?</b></p>
6:25	<p><b>The way forward</b></p> <p><b>Aim: To sum up the big issues coming out of the 3 themed discussions</b></p> <p><b>Stimuli</b></p> <p>“a flagging system should be devised, to identify children and young people who are at risk of offending or becoming involved with local gangs”</p> <p>“a diversion programme should be developed, which includes peer mentoring and in which parents also play a central role”</p> <p>“young people should be supported to develop and implement a range of activities that meets their needs and that promotes positive relationships between young people from different areas/estates – this should include careers advice, skills training and job-finding”</p> <p>“young people should be supported to show how relationships with the police can be improved; and also to set up conflict resolution and mediation projects between different areas/estates”</p> <p><b>Prompts</b></p> <p><b>What should be done to tackle the problems you have identified?</b> (more effective policing; targeting hotspot areas and young people involved in crime; better youth activities; more involvement from parents and local residents; developing a dialogue with young people; more job opportunities, careers advice and training; more effective deterrents and diversions; mediation as a means of introducing a truce</p>

	<p>between gangs in different areas; and more community involvement)</p> <p><b>What do the police and local council need to do to tackle the problems you've identified?</b></p> <p><b>What initiatives have so far been successful? Trident? Mentors? Parenting programmes?</b></p>
<b>6:45</b>	<p><b>The Big Challenge - Making the most of Part 2</b></p> <p>The big issues that needs to be discussed</p> <p>The people who need to be there</p> <p>The decisions that need to be taken</p> <p>Who will be part of the Citizens Panel</p>
<b>6:55</b>	<p><b>Next Steps &amp; Questions</b></p> <p>Prep session for those taking part on 15<sup>th</sup> March</p> <p>Sign-up for vouchers</p>

### **APPENDIX 3: YOUNG PEOPLE'S CITIZEN PANEL AGENDA – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2008**

#### **TELLING IT STRAIGHT! (Part 2)**

**WHEN:** *Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 5:00 – 8:00*

**WHERE:** *Pastures Youth Centre, Davies Lane, Leytonstone*

**WHAT:** Follow-up to the youth event held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February at Leyton Cricket Ground. A youth panel, made up of young people who participated in the first event, will receive presentations from the key people and agencies identified in 'Part 1'. The presentations will deal with the big issues raised by the young people and will be an opportunity for the panel and those agencies to work together to suggest long-term solutions to young people's involvement in crime in Waltham Forest.

## AGENDA

5:00	<b>Relations with the Police: moving in the right direction</b>	PC Mike Hamer & Co. (Metropolitan Police)
5:45	<b>Getting off the streets: what does Waltham Forest really have to offer?</b>	Colette McCann (Head of Youth Service) & Andrew Alan (Connexions)
6:15	<b>BREAK</b> (Food, refreshments and an opportunity for the presenters to meet with the youth panel on an informal basis)	
6:30	<b>'Doing Time': what's the real deal?</b>	Andrew Sinclair (Head of Youth Offending Team)
7:00	<b>a) 'Breaking the 'Quick fix' system</b>  <b>b) Fear of Crime: what's really behind it?</b>	Alastair MacCorkindale (Drugs & Crime Strategy Manager)