

About Barnardo's

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. Last year we supported 301,100 children, young people, parents and carers through over 1,000 services. We believe in children – no matter who they are or what they have been through. We make sure their needs are met and their voices are heard. Barnardo's co-secretariats the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime](#).

KEY MESSAGES

- The Government's recognition that we cannot arrest our way out of serious youth violence and instead a focus on tackling serious youth violence through early intervention is welcomed.
- Some groups of young people are particularly at risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence and knife crime – growing up in poverty, being excluded from school or having a history of abuse or neglect all make a young person more susceptible to becoming involved in serious youth violence.
- Rising knife crime is impacting on more young people than ever before.
 - It has been estimated that as many as 21 young people a day may be attending A&E as a result of weapon enabled assault.¹
 - There were 4,500 knife and offence weapon offences committed by children aged 10-17 in 2017/18 - 7% increase in the last year.²
 - The recent growth of violence has been linked to the criminal exploitation of children through organized crime and county lines activity.³
- Young people affected by serious youth violence or 'at risk' have often experienced high levels of trauma which requires professional responses which understand the impact of trauma and how to work with young people in a trauma informed way to help them recover and build a better life.

Key recommendations:

1. Government should promote a multi-agency public health response to tackling serious violence. This approach should focus on early intervention and the impact of trauma and encourage Government departments and local agencies to work together.
2. As part of a public health approach, Government should use the upcoming Spending Review to invest in services for children and young people, such as youth centres, to provide them with safe spaces in their community, be exposed to new experiences and receive support.

¹ APPG on Knife Crime FOI to NHS hospital Trusts in England, 3 April 2019. Available at:

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/home-affairs/news/103012/worrying-gaps-nhs-data-could-be-underestimating-knife-crime-crisis>

²Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice, 2019. *Youth Justice Statistics 2017/18: England and Wales*. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774866/youth_justice_statistics_bulletin_2017_2018.pdf

³ NCA, Available at:

<https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/nca-publishes-annual-assessment-of-county-lines-as-over-600-arrested-as-part-of-national-coordinated-activity-targeting-drug-dealing-model>

Public health approach is needed to tackle serious youth violence

The concept of using a public health approach to tackling violence is widely recognised as originating from the Cure Violence model in Chicago, and the Violence Reduction Unit in Glasgow. This approach views violence as a health issue like a contagious disease because:

- a) The trauma from exposure to violence in the home or community has been scientifically shown to increase a person's risk of adopting violent behaviour, meaning that violence transmits and spreads based on exposure;
- b) Violence not only spreads but is preventable at point of transmission with early intervention taking place to interrupt and disrupt violent behaviour.

Central to a successful public health approach to knife crime is :

1. A multi-agency approach to identifying children and young people who are at the highest risk of violence. For example Barnardo's has been working with the Police in Newport to deliver its DIVERT project working with young people who are at risk or involvement in serious violence. Identifying these young people requires a multi-agency approach using data from both police and education to spot young people who may be "on the path" to involvement in serious violence even though they have yet to be arrested.
2. A multi-agency approach to intervening - including an understanding that a public health approach isn't on a single intervention, but multiple involvement from a range of agencies. The key is to provide bespoke solutions which address the specific needs of the young person, for example therapy to aid recovery from past trauma, diversion activities include social activities and options for a future life away from crime, for example access to training or education. Ensuring a young person is engaging with youth justice services, for example youth offending teams can also be key..
3. Having a central pot of long term funding. This pot should be available to provide funding for a range of projects that fit within the public health approach including ensuring existing good work is sustainable as well as setting up new services where necessary. The different departments of government should work together at a cross ministerial level, and in conjunction with young people, to produce a mission statement outlining what a public health approach involves and factors necessary for its success.

The Government has signalled its support for a public health approach in England, and have produced a number of welcome initiatives to take this forward. This includes the serious violence strategy and new money committed in the spring statement to establish more violence reduction units in various areas of the country. Barnardo's will be looking for the new Prime Minister to continue and build on these initiatives. We need leadership from the highest level if we are to successfully create a culture where solving serious violence is seen as everybody's business.

Barnardo's are calling the new Prime Minister to continue the work of Theresa May during started during her knife crime summit in April. We would like the ministerial task force to produce a clear vision, supported by appropriate funding, setting out what an effective public health response to serious violence looks like. This vision should set out what each minister will do at a departmental level to effectively encourage all organisations to become involved at a local level.

About Barnardo's Divert Service, Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru Divert Project is working in partnership with Newport Live's Positive Futures to provide one-to-one support with 11 to 16 year olds at risk of getting caught up in gang culture and serious and organised crime across Newport. Divert was commissioned by South- East Wales police and began in January 2019. The project currently works across 5 local authorities, including Newport and has already supported 15 young people and their families to create brighter, more positive futures.

Barnardo's Cymru Divert Project is taking a multi-agency, public health approach; working with Gwent Police and Newport Youth Offending Service. They are using early intervention in order to identify young people most at risk for gang and serious criminal exploitation in order to refer them to Divert.

The aim is to divert young people away from crime by providing them with a personal project worker they can trust and who will work with the whole family to create a more positive home life. Divert workers develop strong relationships with the young people, becoming trusted adults who can help to recognise positive alternative life paths. The project also runs workshops in four Newport secondary schools to reach vulnerable children and young people at risk of serious criminal exploitation early.

Investing in services for children and young people

Youth work is *"powerful as it is a voluntary relationship between the young person and the professional."* Often young people have *"no choice [but] to go to school...see [their] social worker if they want [them] to...have to go and see a police officer if [they] need to."* Whereas, youth work is *"one of the only professional disciplines where it's the young person's choice to engage."* And because it is the young person's active choice to engage with youth workers it means *"the level of relationship that is built is so much more powerful and so much stronger."*⁴

The informal nature of youth work means the worker can work with the young person at their own pace, and time can be taken to build trusting, respectful relationships, the aim of youth work is to work in partnership with the young people, rather than doing things for them. Youth work can be delivered through different models such as unhindered open access, detached youth work, or targeted one-to-one support.

Whilst buildings are important, detached youth work/outreach work is essential in engaging young people in local services, especially within the context of serious youth violence. Young people involved in gangs can face additional challenges to accessing services such as youth centres as they may be located in an area which a rival gang has control of, or they would need to pass through an area a rival gang controls.

Detached youth work provides an opportunity for youth workers to go to them, in their community, where they feel safe and are able to engage.

⁴ Quotes from young people and professionals who attended the APPG on Knife Crime session on the role of youth services in diverting children and young people from serious youth violence and knife crime, 7 May 2019

About Kieron from Barnardo's Divert Service, Cymru

Fifteen-year-old Kieron* was truanting from school and last year he began hanging around with a gang of youths in Newport. He had no positive male role model and his mother was concerned that he was running drugs, getting into fights and smashing things when angry.

Kieron said it felt good to be part of a gang and be respected. He denied that he was drug running but admitted that he had delivered drugs as a favour on his bike in the past. He was using cannabis daily and drinking heavily.

He was put in touch with Newport Live in January and now chooses to use the gym every day, not just his two allocated sessions. He is doing better in school, is using less cannabis and alcohol and is no longer meeting up with the gang.

Kieron initially had difficulty recognising his feelings, let alone expressing them or asking for help. He also failed to recognise his own strengths. His project worker is continuing to help him cope with issues and deal with emotions in a more constructive way. At the same time he is recognising his values and setting goals for life.

*Name has been changed

What do young people want from youth work?

Youth centres are not only places for young people to go to socialise but also to receive support, engage with a variety of activities, be exposed to new experiences, connect to their local community, and learn about opportunities for their futures. This can all help combat loneliness and an absence of purpose. Young people want:

- A trusted adult who is interested in them and can invest time in them, Someone who is non-judgemental and that they can relate to
- Safe spaces in their local community they can access to relax and socialise.
- A place where they can learn and experience new and different opportunities, whether that is fun day to day activities or access information about careers advice or qualifications to enable them to plan for the future.
- A place where they can access practical support to help deal with issues they may be struggling with for example counselling, help with their housing or assistance with applying for a job or further education.

Young people clearly stated that youth work can play a significant role in helping support young people involved or at risk of involvement in knife crime. Young people involved in knife carrying often get a sense of belonging and purpose from hanging around with friends on the streets. Youth work can help to redirect young people away from violent lifestyles and re-create this sense of community in other settings. As one young person who spoke to the appg on knife crime reported - *"I did a motorbike course, learning how to ride a ped and fix one up and everything and that kept me off the streets because it's something for me to do"*.

What needs to improve?

Youth work has experienced de-professionalization including a decline in opportunities to pursue youth work as a career - with some universities removing youth work qualifications from their curriculum completely. This is leading to a shortage of suitably qualified youth workers.

Investment in youth work should ensure that services are available both where and when young people need them. We believe that more youth work should be developed which includes outreach provision in communities and services which are available at weekends and in the evenings. Youth workers need to be paid well and offered professional development. Youth worker should be seen as a career with opportunities to progress, currently too many workers leave the profession because of low pay and lack of job security.

Cuts to children's services

There is growing evidence that cuts to children's services are impacting on the ability of local authorities to deliver effective early interventions to families in need of help. Recent analysis by leading children's charities into the impact of budget cuts showed that funding for local authority children and young people's services has fallen by £3 billion between 2011/11 and 2017/18 - a 29% reduction.⁵ Analysis showed a shift from spending on early intervention services such as children's centres and family support, to spending on late intervention such as safeguarding and children in care. Specific early intervention funding has fallen from £3.7 billion to £1.9 billion between 2010/11 and 2017/18 - a decrease of 49%.

Despite services reporting demand for youth provision increasing, youth services have faced significant cuts across the country creating a postcode lottery. An FOI by the APPG on Knife crime found:

- 87% of councils who responded to had seen one or more youth centre shut since 2011.
- Over the last three years the average council has cut spending in real-terms on youth services by 40%.
- Some local authorities have even reduced their spending which funds services like youth clubs and workers by 91%.⁶

We found in areas where youth services had experienced the most cuts, they had also seen an increase in knife crime. The top four worst hit local authority areas were:

1. City of Wolverhampton (youth services funding cut by 91%);
2. City of Westminster (91%);
3. Cambridgeshire County Council (88%); and
4. Wokingham Borough Council (81%).⁷

Police forces serving these areas have seen some of the highest knife crime increases. Since 2013/14 there has been an 87% increase in knife crime offences for West Midlands Police, a 47% rise for the Metropolitan Police area (London), a 95% increase for Cambridgeshire Police, and a 99% increase for Thames Valley.⁸

Barnardo's is calling on the Government to address the £3 billion funding gap in children and young people's services with a particular focus on early intervention and prevention. This focus should include investment in youth services which we believe are key in helping young people at risk of involvement in serious violence.

⁵ Action for Children, Barnardo's, NCB, NSPCC and The Children's Society, 2019. *Children and young people's services: funding and spending 2010/11 to 2017/2018*. Available at:

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/childrens-services-funding-report.pdf>

⁶ FOI by the APPG on Knife Crime, 7 May. Available: <http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/news/>

⁷ FOI by the APPG on Knife Crime, 7 May. Available: <http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/news/>

⁸ FOI by the APPG on Knife Crime, 7 May. Available: <http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/news/>

About Barnardo's The BASE North East Service, Newcastle

The BASE is a holistic youth service working with children and young people aged 11-25 years. It offers a range of group work and individual programmes informed by the needs and interests of the young people including health education groups such as cooking and nutrition, emotional well-being and sexual health and relationships. The BASE have engaged young people in local opportunities such as:

- Supporting young people from not in education, employment and training into employment, education or training;
- Speaking about LGBT+ issues to 150 delegates;
- Involvement in local 'State of the Area' event – with decision makers from the local council, presenting and publicising our work in school assemblies;
- Having a float in our local Whitley Bay carnival and involving them in our local youth council.

For more information or to request a meeting please contact Claire Stewart, Senior Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer, on 020 8498 7644 or claire.stewart@barnardos.org.uk