



House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

Gangs and youth crime

Thirteenth Report of Session 2014–15

Report, together with formal minutes

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Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

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The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom

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The current staff of the Committee are Tom Healey (Clerk), John-Paul Flaherty (Second Clerk), Dr Ruth Martin (Committee Specialist), Duma Langton (Committee Specialist), Andy Boyd (Senior Committee Assistant), Iwona Hankin (Committee Assistant) and Alex Paterson (Select Committee Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Home Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2049; the Committee's email address is homeaffcom@parliament.uk

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Summary

- Prompted by the summer 2011 riots, the Government conducted a review assessing the scale and causes of gang and youth violence. The 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' strategy, which aims to match a robust enforcement response with robust support to exit gang life and an intensive prevention strategy, has been running for three years.
- The Home Office has spent over £10 million on its Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, but has failed to effectively evaluate the project. The Home Office must undertake high-quality comparative evaluation in order to assess what works best in combating gang and youth crime and in identifying areas for improvement.
- It is vital that a unified gang definition is used across the Home Office and police forces to ensure greater understanding of the scale of this issue both locally and nationally.
- Every Chief Constable should appoint a lead officer responsible for combating gangs, including mentoring and training officers and addressing the needs of gang-associated individuals at risk of sexual exploitation.
- The Home Office should produce a league table of gang injunctions on a six monthly basis. The lead officer on gangs in every police force should be responsible for a continuing programme of peer reviews to ensure the efficacy and increased uptake of gang injunctions.
- The Committee welcomes the launch of the national voluntary scheme to reduce the number of no-suspicion stop and search powers. It is vital that forces undertake local consultation work to ensure that complaints processes are accessible to young people of all backgrounds, to help restore young people's confidence in the complaints system.
- It is clear that young people feel that their experiences are not taken into account. The Home Office's annual evaluation of the gangs programme should also include statements from local lead police officers stating what work they have completed on gangs and stop and search alongside young people's responses.
- We should accept that children as young as seven are at risk of gang involvement. The Committee believes that the primary school anti-gang education programme should be expanded. In every school where there is local knowledge of gangs, a senior teacher should be nominated to ensure mentoring to assist young people at risk of gang involvement.
- The Committee recommends that the existing work of local organisations that are well supported and have grown from the resident communities, such as

Gangline and the SOS project, should be expanded. The Home Office should ensure that detailed evaluation is undertaken of projects deemed to be examples of best practice, in order to create models that can work for communities across the country.

- Programmes with records of turning around the lives of young people in gangs and with entrenched behavioural difficulties need to be commissioned more consistently. The Government should expand support for mentoring programmes that focus on gang-affected young people.

Key facts

- The London Metropolitan Police Service reported in 2012, that they had identified 259 violent youth gangs and 4,800 'gang-nominals' in 19 gang-affected boroughs. Also in 2012, Greater Manchester Police identified 66 Urban Street Gangs and estimated the total number of gang members across Greater Manchester to be 886.
- The Office of the Children's Commissioner's 2013 inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups found that 2,409 children and young people were subject to sexual exploitation in gangs and a further 16,500 children at risk, using a survey period of August 2010-October 2011.
- 21 police forces in England identified that they had criminally active gangs operating in their area. In total, individual forces reported 323 gangs as being criminally active, with 16 being associated with child sexual exploitation.
- In London between March 2013 and February 2014, only six per cent of stop-and-searches were conducted on females.
- London, while experiencing the most gang-related violence of any area in the country, has obtained only fourteen gang injunctions.

Report

Background

1. Prompted by the summer 2011 riots, the Government conducted a review assessing the scale and causes of gang and youth violence. The ‘Ending Gang and Youth Violence’ report, published in November 2011, concluded that a robust enforcement response needed to be matched by robust support to exit gang life and an intensive prevention strategy.¹ During this Parliament, the Committee has taken an active interest in the development and progress of the Government’s Ending Gang and Youth Violence strategy. This report examines the effectiveness of the strategy to date, with particular regard to enforcement, prevention and intervention. In addition, we make recommendations to strengthen protection for young people at risk of gang-related sexual violence.

The ‘Ending Gang and Youth Violence’ strategy

2. Through the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, the Home Office initially invested £10 million in 33 priority areas identified as facing the biggest challenges in relation to youth violence and gangs.² The programme areas were selected following consideration of local violent crime levels, hospital data relating to violence, and police and local authority intelligence on gangs and youth violence, for instance the location and nature of gang issues. The funding was intended to help these areas build their capacity to respond effectively to their particular local issues, with half the funding intended to be used for services delivered by the non-statutory sector.³

3. The Home Office produced yearly reviews of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence strategy in December 2012 and December 2013.⁴ The 2013 report concluded that overall, the first year of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme was “considered to be a success” by the local priority areas. The report highlighted in particular that areas felt that they “had been able to drive the programme to a greater extent” than previous Home Office initiatives, with particular strengths of the programme being peer reviews and the encouragement of local cross-agency working. The reported benefits of the programme were accompanied by falls in overall police recorded youth violence in the areas taken as a whole in 2012-13 compared with 2011-12. These falls occurred against the background of a reduction in the national level of violent crime overall. The review concluded “while we cannot link these reductions directly to the programme, the picture is positive.”⁵

1 Home Office, [Policy paper: Ending gang and youth violence: cross-government report](#), 1 November 2011, p. 4

2 HM Government, [Ending gang and youth violence: 2013 annual report](#), December 2013, p. 14

3 Home Office, [Ending Gang and Youth Violence: Review 2012-13](#), December 2013, p. 4

4 Home Office, [Policy: Reducing knife, gun and gang crime](#)

5 Home Office, [Ending Gang and Youth Violence: Review 2012-13](#), December 2013, p. 4

Figure 1

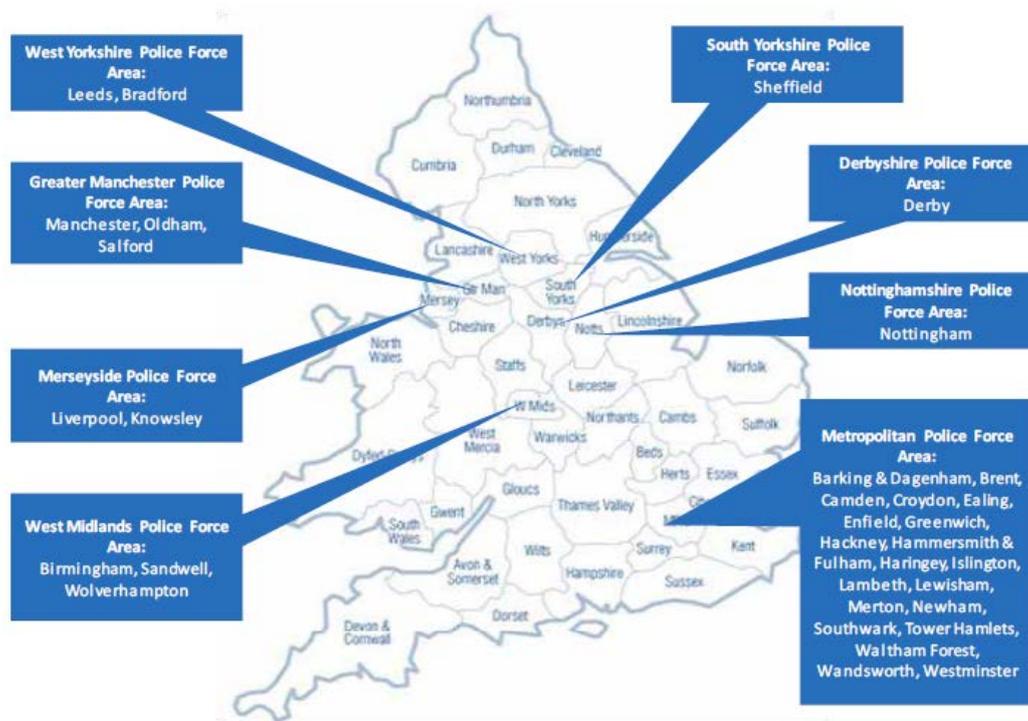


Figure 1: Ending Gang and Youth Violence initial priority areas⁶

4. Greater Manchester Police found the EGYV's timescales in distributing the funding from the Home Office to local authorities and then to successful applicants to be "bureaucratic and lengthy", while deadlines by which the funding had to be spent were "equally as ineffective", resulting in rushed implementation due to the short time scales in both receiving and having to spend the funding before the end of the financial year.⁷ The Home Office's 2013 report recognised this issue as a general lesson for the future, acknowledging that programme timings and a lack of clarity around future engagement has raised concerns amongst local areas about their ability to sustain community support for gangs and youth violence prevention work.⁸

5. The academic research group Manchester Gang Research Network evaluated the Home Office's review, stating that the evidence provided was "scientifically insufficient" to warrant the Government's claims of effectiveness, with the various policy measures not being subject to "rigorous scientific evaluation." They concluded that the "sparse data" provided did not support success claims, in particular highlighting the "excessively short-termist" nature of EGYV funding which "further reduces the likelihood of establishing a

6 Home Office, [Ending gang and youth violence: 2013 annual report](#), December 2013, p. 14

7 [Submission by Greater Manchester Police](#)

8 Home Office, [Ending Gang and Youth Violence: Review 2012-13](#), December 2013, p. 4

robust evidence-base.”⁹ In January 2015, the Minister of State for Crime Prevention Lynne Featherstone argued that “it is not a top-down driven approach. We are not collecting that kind of information. We are working with local areas. The reason they like it is it is flexible”, but that the Home Office would in future “try to ask local areas to be more exact about their reporting. At the moment, we are doing it by interviews, online surveys, and so on and so forth. It is not scientific, if that is what you mean.”¹⁰

6. The Home Office did not produce a review in 2014, but will publish it within a “few weeks” of January 2015.¹¹ In October 2014, ten new priority areas were chosen which will work with the programme’s network of more than seventy individuals with frontline experience of dealing with gangs “to develop a coordinated response to issues faced on the streets.” New challenges highlighted by the Home Office include drug dealing by gang members travelling from other areas, due to better enforcement activity in existing priority areas.¹²

7. The Home Office has spent over £10 million on its Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, but has failed to effectively evaluate the project. The Home Office must undertake high-quality comparative evaluation in order to assess what works best in combating gang and youth crime and in identifying areas for improvement. This will be vital in ensuring the ten new priority areas receive the full benefit of the programme.

Enforcement

Identifying gangs

8. The Government adopted the definition set out in the Centre for Social Justice’s (CSJ) 2009 report, *Dying to Belong*, as its definition of a gang. A gang is defined as ‘a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who: 1. see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group; 2. engage in criminal activity and violence; 3. lay claim over territory (not necessarily geographical but can include an illegal economy territory); 4. have some form of identifying structural feature; and 5. are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.’¹³

9. There is no comprehensive national figure of the number of gangs, or the number of young people involved or associated with gangs. Greater Manchester Police conducted an assessment in January 2012, identifying 66 Urban Street Gangs and estimating the total number of gang members across Greater Manchester to be 886.¹⁴ Also in 2012, the London Metropolitan Police Service reported that they had identified 259 violent youth gangs and 4,800 ‘gang-nominals’ in 19 gang-affected boroughs. These gangs ranged from organised

9 [Submission by Manchester Gang Research Network](#)

10 Q26, Lynne Featherstone

11 Q27, Lynne Featherstone

12 Home Office, [News story: Ending Gang and Youth Violence: government programme expanded](#), 8 October 2014

13 Home Office, [Have you got what it takes: Tackling youth and gang violence](#)

14 [Submission by DCI Debbie Dooley, Xcalibre Task Force & Integrated Gang Management Unit, Manchester Police](#)

criminal networks involved in class A drug dealing and firearms supply, to street gangs perpetrating violence and robbery.¹⁵

10. Sheldon Thomas of Gangsline argues that in London alone there are 11,000 individual gang members. He “refutes” police statistics because he does “not believe that the police have a full understanding of who is in a gang from who isn’t in a gang. In fact, one of the things we have been trying to get the police to understand is that gangs are one unit today and tomorrow they are three different gangs fighting against each other. They are not like organised crime or organised criminal networks.”¹⁶ Edward Boyd of the Centre for Social Justice conducted a review and found that the problem “is definitely not getting better and potentially getting worse”, with “a worry that there was increasing fragmentation within gangs.”¹⁷

11. Due to varying definitions of gangs across police services, it is not possible to aggregate data to give a comprehensive reliable picture at a national level. The Manchester Gang Research Network concluded that the police have not flagged ‘gang-related’ offences in a “systematic and unified manner across all forces” and that while various forces have developed systems that list gang members and their associates based on internal ‘intelligence’, there has been “very little research and official guidance in relation to this process and its products.”¹⁸

12. While local partnerships are increasingly working to an Association of Chief Police Officers definition of gangs, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) states that gang-related data cannot be considered to be reliable at present. Much of the available data is held at a local or regional level, however, and the YJB considers that most local authorities working on gang crime will have a “fairly comprehensive picture of their local profile.”¹⁹

13. It is essential that gangs and their associates can be identified. It is vital that a unified gang definition is used across the Home Office and police forces to ensure that police forces understand the scale of this issue both locally and nationally. Data on gangs, including their members and associates, and individuals at risk, should be shared between police forces and other relevant bodies.

Girls in gangs

14. The University of Bedfordshire (2013) identified a number of different roles girls take up within gangs, including ‘gangster girls’, who are young women who adopt male personas, and as a result, are generally protected from sexual victimisation; female family members, who are seemingly protected within the gang but at risk from rival gangs because of their relationship with a gang-involved male; ‘wifeys’ (girlfriends), who are often protected within the gang so long as the relationship lasted, but frequently exposed to

15 Office of the Children’s Commissioner, [If only someone had listened: Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups Final Report](#), November 2013, p. 28

16 Q46, Sheldon Thomas

17 Q2, Edward Boyd

18 Juanjo Medina, Andreas Cebulla, Andy Ross, Jon Shute, and Judith Aldridge (Manchester University and NatCen Social Research), [Children and young people in gangs: a longitudinal analysis: Summary and policy implications](#), 2013, p. 12

19 [Submission by Youth Justice Board](#)

domestic violence and at high risk of sexual victimisation should a relationship end and are also at risk from rival gangs; ‘baby-mothers’, who are young women who have children with gang-involved males; and ‘links’, who are young women associated through ‘casual’ sex with one or more members of the gang. The latter are the group most at risk of sexual victimisation both within the gang and from rival gangs.²⁰

15. XLP, a London-based youth work charity, state that there is a dearth of intelligence in this area, and that the nature of girls’ involvement with gangs often means that their vulnerabilities remain ‘invisible’ to statutory services. Whereas statutory services will often only engage with a girl once a crisis has occurred, voluntary sector organisations can work in communities and build relationships consistently over a long period and therefore can identify girls more effectively. XLP conclude that while there are a number of different services available for the range of girls’ different needs, but too often, the girl’s needs are not adequately understood and “the constant referrals from one service to another leaves the girl feeling isolated and she will often end up falling through the gaps.”²¹

16. In each of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas, the statutory and voluntary sectors need to share information to enable effective identification of girls at risk of gang involvement. Mentoring should be provided to identify girls’ specific needs, to build trust and to provide a consistent relationship while the girl is referred between different statutory services.

Child sexual exploitation

17. The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s (OCC) 2013 inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups found that 2,409 children and young people were subject to sexual exploitation in gangs and a further 16,500 children at risk, using a survey period of August 2010 to October 2011. Cases involved victims from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities, and while most victims were girls, boys were a significant minority.²²

18. In response to the OCC’s inquiry, 21 police forces in England (55 per cent) identified that they had criminally active gangs operating in their area. In total, individual forces reported 323 gangs as being criminally active, though only 16 have been associated with child sexual exploitation (CSE). The OCC argues that this represents a significant under-counting of the true incidence of gang-related CSE in England, with policing activity against gangs appearing to focus on disrupting and tackling the more traditional forms of criminality associated with gangs, whilst failing to put in place measures to identify and tackle sexual exploitation.

19. The OCC recommended that all police forces should work with partner agencies, including third sector specialist organisations, to log information on the girls and young women linked to gang members, and then risk-assess these young people for sexual exploitation. Since the OCC made this recommendation in 2012, there has been very

20 It was noted that they may be in several different roles at any one time, or move between these over time H. Beckett et al., [“It’s wrong... but you get used to it”](#) p. 7

21 [Submission by XLP](#)

22 Office of the Children’s Commissioner, [If only someone had listened: Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups Final Report](#), November 2013, p. 28

limited progress, only two forces have sought to do this, with an additional eight seeking to do some partial or smaller scale activity.²³

20. Similarly, the MsUnderstood partnership found an under-reporting of domestic violence and sexual violence in the context of gang-related offences. Conducting a partnership audit of local sites, the partnership discovered that the data collected by local areas on youth violence often fails to include any data on sexual violence alongside statistics on stabbings and shootings.²⁴

21. The Home Office is working with the Metropolitan Police to develop a 'problem profile' that will help the police, local authorities, schools and other local agencies understand the indicators which may identify which girls and young women are most vulnerable to gang-related sexual exploitation or crime. Greater Manchester Police is also developing an approach for assessing risk.

22. The Home Office has produced a specialist training programme for practitioners working with gang associated women and girls. Together with the YJB, they have run a series of training events for frontline practitioners. The Home Office also widened the definition of domestic violence in March 2013 to include those aged 16-17 and the concept of coercive control. The Home Office argues that extending this definition will increase awareness that this age-group experience domestic violence, encouraging more of them to come forward and access the support they need.²⁵

23. In January 2015, the Home Office announced that it was providing £400,000 funding for 13 Young People's Advocates to coordinate local safeguarding action in 2015-16, building on the £1.2 million funding given over three years between April 2012 and March 2015. The advocates provide direct support to young women who have been victims, or are at risk of sexual violence by gangs and also raise awareness in schools, and amongst police officers, youth offending, sexual health and social workers.²⁶

24. It is appalling that 2,409 children and young people are subject to sexual exploitation in gangs and a further 16,500 children are at risk. The Home Office recently committed one further year of funding for Young People's Advocates, but has failed to assess the effectiveness of the programme or provide clarity around long-term future engagement. An assessment of their role should be included in the Home Office's next Ending Gang and Youth Violence evaluation to discover whether this programme funding is beneficial, and what more can be done to combat gang-related child sexual exploitation.

25. It is lamentable that such limited progress has been made in identifying and risk-assessing young people linked to gang members. Every Chief Constable should appoint a lead officer to take responsibility for mentoring and training on combating gangs. This lead officer should also address the needs of gang-associated individuals at risk of sexual exploitation.

23 [Submission by Office of the Children's Commissioner](#)

24 The MsUnderstood project is a three year partnership between the University of Bedfordshire, Imkaan and the Girls Against Gangs Project, [Submission by MsUnderstood Partnership UK](#)

25 [Submission by Home Office](#)

26 Home Office, [News story: Ending gang violence: £400k to tackle sexual exploitation](#), 21 January 2015

Combating gangs

26. Introduced in the Policing and Crime Act 2009, gang injunctions allow the police and local authorities to apply to a county court, or the High Court, for an injunction against an individual who has been involved in gang-related violence. The courts can place a range of prohibitions and requirements on the behaviour and activities of a person involved in gang-related violence. These conditions could include prohibiting someone from being in a particular place or requiring them to participate in rehabilitative activities. Police and local authorities across England and Wales have the power to apply for gang injunctions for 14 to 17 year olds.²⁷

27. The Home Office's January 2014 review of the operation of gang injunctions found that their take-up had not been as wide-spread as anticipated.²⁸ David Bethom, a peer reviewer on the EGYV programme, argued that "the fact they are not being taken up is due to a lack of knowledge, resourcing this specialised type of work, the risk of losing and incurring huge costs, and maybe even upsetting the gang thus causing more violence who may cause retribution."²⁹ The Home Office pledged to work with the College of Policing to develop more practical advice and support on the use of gang injunctions, including peer-led support and practice sharing between local areas, and a series of seminars across the country.³⁰

28. The 2009 Act defines a gang as consisting of at least three people; using a name, emblem or colour or has any other characteristic that enables its members to be identified by others as a group; and is associated with a particular area. Following consultation, the Home Office concluded that this definition was unduly restrictive and failed to reflect the true nature of how gangs operate in England and Wales. For instance, gangs are increasingly involved in criminality beyond their own areas and can be less associated with a particular area, instead moving to other locations within the UK as a result of black market forces or being pushed out by rival gangs. Clause 50 of the Serious Crime Bill amends the 2009 Act to revise the definition of "gang related violence", defining an activity as is gang-related if it occurs in the course of, or is otherwise related to, the activities of a group that: consists of at least 3 people; and has one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified by others as a group.³¹

29. Paul West, Jessica de Grazia, David Bethom, and Alistair Richardson were jointly commissioned by the Home Office in 2014 to prepare a practitioners' guide to gang injunctions, and a legislative reference guide explaining the full range of civil powers available to address the harm caused by gangs. They argue that three police forces, Merseyside, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, have led the way in obtaining gang injunctions. In contrast London has obtained only 14 gang injunctions.³²

27 Home Office, [Injunctions to prevent gang-related violence](#)

28 Home Office, [Review of the operation of injunctions to prevent gang-related violence](#), January 2014, pp. 5-6

29 [Submission by David Bethom](#)

30 Home Office, [Review of the operation of injunctions to prevent gang-related violence](#), January 2014, pp. 5-6

31 Home Office, [Serious Crime Bill fact sheet: Gang Injunctions](#)

32 Serious Crime Bill, [Written evidence submitted by Paul West, Jessica de Grazia, David Bethom, and Alistair Richardson](#)

30. It is shocking that London, while experiencing the most gang-related violence of any area in the country, has obtained only fourteen gang injunctions in total. The Home Office should produce a league table of gang injunctions on a six monthly basis. The lead officer on gangs in every police force should be responsible for a continuing programme of peer reviews within the police to ensure the efficacy and increased uptake of gang injunctions. We hope that our successor Committee will monitor this issue to check whether or not these changes have taken place.

Stop and search

31. Through the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, the Home Office introduced new offences of aggravated knife possession for those who carry a knife or offensive weapon in a public place or in a school and go onto threaten and cause an immediate risk of serious physical harm to another person. These offences are subject to a maximum penalty of 4 years imprisonment and carry a mandatory minimum sentence of six months imprisonment for an adult and a 4 month Detention and Training Order for a person aged 16 or 17 years.³³ While sentencing remains a matter for the independent judiciary, the Government is currently legislating in the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill to make it clear that cautions should no longer be used for knife possession offences for adults.³⁴

32. The Safer London Foundation stated “we know from our practice that young people who are fearful often carry knives for protection” and “we believe that compulsory criminalisation of these young people will not support breaking cycles of offending but instead further reduce life chances and increase the negative impacts of crime.”³⁵

33. The Home Office announced the ‘Best Use of Stop and Search’ scheme in December 2014, a voluntary scheme that will ensure the recording all outcomes of stop and search and whether there is a connection between the grounds for the search and the outcome. It will also give members of the public the opportunity to observe stop and search in practice and introduce a community complaints trigger. Among the measures announced was a revision of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act Code of Practice A to make clear what constitutes “reasonable grounds for suspicion”, the legal basis upon which officers carry out the vast majority of stops. It also emphasises that where officers are not using their powers properly they will be subject to formal performance or disciplinary proceedings.³⁶

34. Girls and young women are frequently used to stash weapons and as drug mules, because they are less likely to be stopped and searched by police. For example, in London between March 2013 and February 2014, only six per cent of stop-and-searches were conducted on females.³⁷ Jennifer Blake, chief executive of Safe ‘n’ Sound, a charity for young people based in Peckham, argued for girls to be searched, “when you see a young girl pushing her buggy down the street, you just see a young girl pushing her buggy down the street. But take that baby out of the buggy or go through the buggy and you’ll see what

33 [Submission by Home Office](#)

34 Jeremy Wright, Hansard, 7 April 2014, [col. 126W](#)

35 [Submission by Safer London Foundation](#)

36 Home Office, [News story: Launch of Government’s Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme](#), 1 December 2014

37 Centre for Social Justice and XLP, [Girls and Gangs](#), p. 32

they're carrying."³⁸ The Home Office has committed, together with the police and the National Crime Agency, to look further at this issue.³⁹

35. The Committee welcomes the launch of the national voluntary scheme to reduce the number of no-suspicion stop and search powers. It is vital that forces undertake local consultation work to ensure that local complaints processes are accessible to young people of all backgrounds, to help restore young people's confidence in the complaints system. A league table should be introduced by police forces, followed by a monthly pro forma which should be completed for the Home Office. The police should also report to the Home Affairs Select Committee with the progress they have made on this matter.

36. It is clear that young people feel that their experiences are not taken into account. The Home Office's annual evaluation of the gangs programme should also include statements from local lead police officers stating what work they have completed on gangs and stop and search, alongside young people's responses.

Prevention and intervention

Preventative work

37. The Home Office states that the 2011 Ending Gang and Youth Violence report placed a strong emphasis on the need for early intervention to prevent young people becoming involved in gangs in the first place. For instance, Family Nurse Partnerships are giving support to first-time teenage mothers, starting in early pregnancy until the child is two, and there is strong evidence that this approach is effective. The programme is delivered by specially trained nurses to help parents care well for their child and themselves. The Troubled Families Programme is also working with gang-affected families and most Ending Gang and Youth Violence areas are using gang involvement as a way to identify families for the programme.

38. The Home Office has stated that it had produced advice for parents worried about gangs, signposting them to further support and information and are working with the NSPCC to extend their helpline to support parents or other adults concerned about a child who might be affected by gang violence. They have given advice to schools and colleges, helping them identify the early signs of gang involvement and refer young people for more specialist support and extended this to primary schools in autumn 2014. They are also working with the Early Intervention Foundation to help local areas understand what works best to prevent young people getting involved in gangs or other criminality.⁴⁰

39. CSJ Deputy Policy Director Edward Boyd argues that there is a need for recognition within schools of gang problems, so that experts and mentors can help. CSJ's *Time to Wake up* and *Girls and Gangs* reports highlighted that while some schools were open to support from the voluntary sector, for instance charities who work with gang members, there were

38 Guardian, [Exposed: the exploitation of girls in UK gangs](#), 22 March 2014

39 [Submission by Home Office; Q24](#) (Lynne Featherstone)

40 [Submission by Home Office](#)

a number of schools with gang problems they were not admitting to because of concerns over the school's reputation.⁴¹

40. Junior Smart, team Leader of the SOS Gangs Project, runs a preventative project called SOS+, which works with schools and youth centres via tailor-made sessions to young people about the dangers of gang involvement, aiming to prevent them from becoming caught up in the lifestyle. He stated that “in delivering the prevention, we have been called out increasingly by primary schools. One primary school was on the back of an estate where there was a predominant gang and teachers noticed that the following day after these guys had been in a recruitment process, the kids came in wearing the same colour bandannas tied round their faces.”⁴²

41. Sheldon Thomas, founder and Chief Executive of Gangsline argued that the best time to give a young person the “resilience” to stop them from getting involved in gangs is between the ages of seven and 11, arguing that “once they are entrenched, like some of the kids in the primary school now who are earning £40 a week selling drugs, if they don't get caught the money goes up. If they don't get caught again by the time they're 15 they're earning more than £400-£500. It is very difficult to pull them out of that cycle.” Gangsline was founded by Thomas in 2007 to provide help and support to young people involved in gang culture. Gangsline has expanded from an information and advice service to offering support and exit strategies to young men and women involved in gangs, and a prevention service to young people on the peripheries of gang activity. Its specialist outreach response team, all of whom are ex-gang members themselves, access and work alongside gang leaders and members.⁴³

42. We should accept that children as young as seven are at risk of gang involvement. The Committee believes that primary school anti-gang education programmes should be expanded. In every school where there is local knowledge of gangs, a senior teacher should be nominated to coordinate the school's anti-gang measures and ensure that relevant figures come in to the school to talk about gangs.

Intervention

43. There is growing evidence that young people who offend, and those who join gangs, have longstanding histories of multiple vulnerabilities, many of which could have been prevented or mitigated earlier in life. Data from point of arrest mental health screening pilots supported by Centre for Mental Health between 2009 and 2012 found that most children identified at point of arrest had an average of three ‘vulnerabilities’, such as a history of family conflict, exclusion from school, behavioural problems before age 12, or a learning disability. The study found that 10 per cent had a diagnosable mental health problem. By contrast, young people involved in gangs had eight vulnerabilities on average, with 24 per cent having a diagnosable mental health problem.⁴⁴

41 Q14, Edward Boyd

42 Q93, Junior Smart

43 Q50, Sheldon Thomas

44 [Submission by Centre for Mental Health](#)

44. The Health Select Committee published a report on children's and adolescents' mental health and child and adolescent mental health services in November 2014. It concluded that there were “serious and deeply ingrained problems with the commissioning and provision of Children's and adolescents' mental health services, [which] run through the whole system from prevention and early intervention through to inpatient services for the most vulnerable young people.”⁴⁵

45. Intervening at the right time, the ‘teachable moment’ when young people may be receptive to support, is vital. The Committee took evidence from two organisations cited as examples of best practice by the Home Office, MAC-UK and Redthread.⁴⁶ The voluntary organisation Redthread places youth workers in Accident and Emergency departments in areas where the numbers attending due to youth violence are high. At Kings College Hospital, over 70 per cent of young people admitted following attendance at A&E took up the offer of support from Redthread in a sample of cases from December 2010 to May 2011 of 31 cases. Since then, the team has expanded to three youth workers, and the level of engagement has increased, with the team engaging with over 250 young people between May and September 2013.⁴⁷

46. In October 2014, the Home Office announced funding of £30,000 to expand a pilot placing youth workers in A&E units in London.⁴⁸ An evaluation of the King's and Redthread model will occur with the St Mary's programme over the next three years. The Mayor's Office Policing and Crime Team are funding a pan-London rollout of the Redthread and King's model over the next year, which will fund some evaluation of the project.⁴⁹

47. MAC-UK is a small grass-roots charity in North London that delivers mental health interventions to young people aged 16-25 involved in antisocial or gang-related activity. MAC-UK has developed an evidence-based model called ‘Integrate’ to reach out to excluded young people who are involved in youth crime and gangs. It seeks to improve mental well-being and engagement with services and reduce youth offending. The clinical teams are based in the community, rather than primary mental health clinics, where engagement with this group is low. They engage and work with young people wherever suits them and they feel comfortable, for instance the street corner, the gym, or during a music project. The Centre for Mental Health is currently evaluating MAC-UK's Integrate model across four sites.⁵⁰

48. Charlie Howard, MAC-UK founding director, stated that it took two years to get control offending data from the Government for their research. She argued “[the Government] are saying, ‘We want evidence-based models.’ Well, it is hard to do evidence-based models if the data is not available to help you to do that. We were having a

45 House of Commons Health Committee, [Children's and adolescents' mental health and CAMHS, Third Report of Session 2014–15](#)

46 [Submission by Home Office](#)

47 [Submission by Home Office](#)

48 Home Office, [News story: Ending Gang and Youth Violence: government programme expanded](#), 8 October 2014

49 Q173

50 Centre for Mental Health, [Mental health and gangs](#)

discussion that if data could be collectively gathered by practitioners or collectively provided by Government we could begin to create a much more powerful evidence base.”⁵¹

49. The Committee recommends that the existing work of local organisations that are well supported and have grown from the resident communities, such as Gangline and the SOS project, should be expanded. The Home Office should ensure that detailed evaluation is undertaken of projects deemed to be examples of best practice, in order to create models that can work for communities across the country. The Home Office should develop interactive online tools and the use of social media in order to gain the input of local communities on what can be done to combat gangs.

End to end approaches

50. The Committee also took evidence from two organisations that are conducting end-to-end approaches. First, the Catch22 Dawes Unit is a pilot gangs programme in Wolverhampton where young people and their families are supported through all the key points of risk in their lives, including points at which they are ready to make changes. The work is delivered in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies and aims to respond to need, ensuring that the right interventions are in place at the right time.⁵²

51. Catch22 have stated that effective services and interventions work because they use the power of the relationship and are able to utilise ‘teachable moments’ with at-risk young people by providing trusted positive relationships in their lives. Key workers should provide positive relationships and link people with relevant services, supporting engagement. This follows a model which builds a team around the person, linked by the key worker, instead of having the young person being approached by multiple service providers who deliver ‘short and shallow’ interventions.⁵³ The Dawes Unit is being evaluated by Sheffield Hallam Centre for Community Justice, the outcome of which will be used to refine the gang prevention and exit model.⁵⁴ The evaluation focuses on individuals, for instance levels of engagement in education and reoffending rates.⁵⁵

52. Second, St Giles Trust’s Southwark Offender Service (SOS) project aims to help break the cycle of prison, crime and disadvantage and create safer communities by supporting people to change their lives. Around one-third of its staff are ex-offenders who are trained to use their skills and first-hand experience to help others through peer-led support. Since its inception in October 2006, the SOS project has offered intensive support to young people helped many individuals, to help them break free from gang crime. SOS currently works in 13 boroughs across London. The SOS team is staffed and managed by ex-offenders, many with personal experience of gangs who have trained with St. Giles Trust. Every team member holds at least a NVQ level 3 in Advice and Guidance, and offers

51 Q111

52 Catch22, [Wolverhampton Dawes Unit](#)

53 [Submission by Catch22](#)

54 Catch22, [Gangs](#)

55 Q76, Tom Sackville

practical help for clients aiding them in accessing benefits, getting housed, finding educational courses and gaining training and employment.⁵⁶

53. In 2012/2013, St Giles Trust engaged The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) to conduct an evaluation of the practices and impact of the SOS project. TSIP carried out a mixed-methods evaluation that aimed to analyse impact of SOS and optimise its implementation. This included a quantitative analysis of re-offending rates, a review of administrative data, a programme assessment and interviews with staff, clients and external partners. One of the TSIP's main findings were that the caseworkers were the biggest strength of the SOS Project, namely their commitment, willingness to challenge their clients, and ability to address their attitudes and behaviours whilst still providing support were integral to the SOS Project's work.⁵⁷

54. Programmes with records of turning around the lives of young people in gangs and with entrenched behavioural difficulties need to be commissioned more consistently. The Government should expand support for mentoring programmes that focus on gang-affected young people. While it is vital that work is delivered in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, a key factor in the success of many programmes is their separation from local criminal justice agencies as perceived by the young people.

56 SOS Project, [What is SOS](#)

57 TSIP and SOS project, [An Evaluation of St Giles Trust's SOS Project – A narrative Summary](#)

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The Home Office has spent over £10 million on its Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, but has failed to effectively evaluate the project. The Home Office must undertake high-quality comparative evaluation in order to assess what works best in combating gang and youth crime and in identifying areas for improvement. This will be vital in ensuring the ten new priority areas receive the full benefit of the programme. (Paragraph 7)
2. It is essential that gangs and their associates can be identified. It is vital that a unified gang definition is used across the Home Office and police forces to ensure that police forces understand the scale of this issue both locally and nationally. Data on gangs, including their members and associates, and individuals at risk, should be shared between police forces and other relevant bodies. (Paragraph 13)
3. In each of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas, the statutory and voluntary sectors need to share information to enable effective identification of girls at risk of gang involvement. Mentoring should be provided to identify girls' specific needs, to build trust and to provide a consistent relationship while the girl is referred between different statutory services. (Paragraph 16)
4. It is appalling that 2,409 children and young people are subject to sexual exploitation in gangs and a further 16,500 children are at risk. The Home Office recently committed one further year of funding for Young People's Advocates, but has failed to assess the effectiveness of the programme or provide clarity around long-term future engagement. An assessment of their role should be included in the Home Office's next Ending Gang and Youth Violence evaluation to discover whether this programme funding is beneficial, and what more can be done to combat gang-related child sexual exploitation. (Paragraph 24)
5. It is lamentable that such limited progress has been made in identifying and risk-assessing young people linked to gang members. Every Chief Constable should appoint a lead officer to take responsibility for mentoring and training on combating gangs. This lead officer should also address the needs of gang-associated individuals at risk of sexual exploitation. (Paragraph 25)
6. It is shocking that London, while experiencing the most gang-related violence of any area in the country, has obtained only fourteen gang injunctions in total. The Home Office should produce a league table of gang injunctions on a six monthly basis. The lead officer on gangs in every police force should be responsible for a continuing programme of peer reviews within the police to ensure the efficacy and increased uptake of gang injunctions. We hope that our successor Committee will monitor this issue to check whether or not these changes have taken place. (Paragraph 30)
7. The Committee welcomes the launch of the national voluntary scheme to reduce the number of no-suspicion stop and search powers. It is vital that forces undertake local consultation work to ensure that local complaints processes are accessible to young people of all backgrounds, to help restore young people's confidence in the

complaints system. A league table should be introduced by police forces, followed by a monthly pro forma which should be completed for the Home Office. The police should also report to the Home Affairs Select Committee with the progress they have made on this matter. (Paragraph 35)

8. It is clear that young people feel that their experiences are not taken into account. The Home Office's annual evaluation of the gangs programme should also include statements from local lead police officers stating what work they have completed on gangs and stop and search, alongside young people's responses. (Paragraph 36)
9. We should accept that children as young as seven are at risk of gang involvement. The Committee believes that primary school anti-gang education programmes should be expanded. In every school where there is local knowledge of gangs, a senior teacher should be nominated to coordinate the school's anti-gang measures and ensure that relevant figures come in to the school to talk about gangs. (Paragraph 42)
10. The Committee recommends that the existing work of local organisations that are well supported and have grown from the resident communities, such as Gangsline and the SOS project, should be expanded. The Home Office should ensure that detailed evaluation is undertaken of projects deemed to be examples of best practice, in order to create models that can work for communities across the country. The Home Office should develop interactive online tools and the use of social media in order to gain the input of local communities on what can be done to combat gangs. (Paragraph 49)
11. Programmes with records of turning around the lives of young people in gangs and with entrenched behavioural difficulties need to be commissioned more consistently. The Government should expand support for mentoring programmes that focus on gang-affected young people. While it is vital that work is delivered in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, a key factor in the success of many programmes is their separation from local criminal justice agencies as perceived by the young people. (Paragraph 54)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 24 February 2015

Keith Vaz, in the Chair

James Clappison
Michael Ellis

Tim Loughton
David Winnick

Draft Report (*Gangs and youth crime*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 54 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Thirteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 3 March at 2.30 pm]

Witnesses

Tuesday 10 June 2014

Page

Edward Boyd, Deputy Policy Director, Centre for Social Justice and **Sheldon Thomas**, Chief Executive Officer, Gangsline

Q 1-74

Tuesday 8 July 2014

Carol Davies, Catch22 Dawes Unit, **Tom Sackville**, Catch22 Dawes Unit, **Junior Smart**, St Giles Trust, SOS Project, and **Antoinette Harriott**, St Giles Trust, SOS Project

Q 75-102

Tuesday 14 October 2014

Dr Charlie Howard, MAC-UK, and **Lorraine Khan**, Centre for Mental Health

Q 103-126

Tuesday 25 November 2014

Detective Chief Inspector Debbie Dooley, Xcalibre Task Force and Integrated Gang Management Unit, Greater Manchester Police

Q 127-169

John Poyton, Chief Executive, Redthread, and **Dr Emer Sutherland**, King's College Hospital

Q 170-182

Tuesday 20 January 2015

Rt Hon Lynne Featherstone MP, Minister of State for Crime Prevention

Q 183-237

List of printed written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry web page at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/gangs-and-youth-crime/>. GYC numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 4Children ([GYC0021](#))
- 2 Amanda Wood ([GYC0020](#))
- 3 Catch22 Dawes Unit ([GYC0013](#)); ([GYC0029](#))
- 4 Centre for Mental Health ([GYC0003](#))
- 5 Children's Commissioner for England ([GYC0006](#))
- 6 Damian Allain ([GYC0005](#))
- 7 Dave Thompson QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, West Midlands Police ([GYC0017](#))
- 8 David Bethom ([GYC0004](#))
- 9 DCI Debbie Dooley, Manchester Police ([GYC0030](#))
- 10 Greater Manchester Police ([GYC0007](#))
- 11 Home Office ([GYC0022](#))
- 12 Independent Police Complaints Commission ([GYC0018](#))
- 13 Kirsty Varley ([GYC0001](#))
- 14 London Borough of Hackney, Safer Communities and Young Hackney ([GYC0015](#))
- 15 London Borough of Lambeth ([GYC0011](#))
- 16 London Youth ([GYC0008](#))
- 17 Manchester Gang Research Network ([GYC0014](#))
- 18 Metropolitan Police ([GYC0024](#))
- 19 Msunderstood Partnership UK ([GYC0012](#))
- 20 National Children's Bureau ([GYC0002](#))
- 21 Paul Kassman ([GYC0023](#))
- 22 Police Federation of England and Wales ([GYC0025](#))
- 23 Safer London Foundation ([GYC0010](#))
- 24 Wales Probation ([GYC0019](#))
- 25 Whitney Iles ([GYC0016](#))
- 26 XLP ([GYC0009](#))
- 27 Youth Justice Board for England and Wales ([GYC0027](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/publications/>

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Fifth Report	Police, the media, and high-profile criminal investigations	HC 629
Sixth Report	Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow-up	HC 203
Seventh Report	Effectiveness of the Committee in 2012-13	HC 825
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Ninth Report	The work of the Immigration Directorates (January-June 2014)	HC 712
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Thirteenth Report	Unauthorised tapping into or hacking of mobile communications	HC 907
Fourteenth Report	New Landscape of Policing	HC 939
Fifteenth Report	The work of the UK Border Agency (April–July 2011)	HC 1497

Sixteenth Report	Policing large scale disorder	HC 1456
Seventeenth Report	UK Border Controls	HC 1647
Eighteenth Report	Rules governing enforced removals from the UK	HC 563
Nineteenth Report	Roots of violent radicalisation	HC 1446
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