



Prince's Trust

Written Evidence from The Prince's Trust

Home Affairs Select Committee

Inquiry into Knife Crime

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Background:

The Prince's Trust is a charity that believes in young people who often don't believe in themselves. We seek out those young people that need our help the most and work with young people who struggle at school, are in or leaving care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. We work with young people aged 14-30 to help them get back into work, education and training.

The Prince's Trust is helping to **break the cycle of crime** by offering offenders training and support so they can turn their lives around and give back to society. The Prince's Trust helps offenders and ex-offenders move into employment, training or education:

- 65% of offenders and ex-offenders The Prince's Trust supported in 2005/6 went on to employment, training or education.
- 67% of people released from prison go on to re-offend within two years. ¹

The Trust has supported a number of projects across the UK which tackle knife crime (case studies attached).

The Prince's Trust has a significant role to play in helping to tackle the growing rise in youth crime, including knife crime. We work on successful tried and tested programmes which are helping to tackle youth crime, through working on the very estates where gang culture is endemic.

All Trust programmes aim to help young people into education, employment or training and many enable young people to give back to their local communities. For example, The Trust's Team programme enables young people to take part in a community project. Through the Team programme The Trust contributes more than £4.75m to local communities through community projects.

More information on The Trust's work with offenders is available in its written submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into effective sentencing (dated 28th February 2007)

Case Studies:

NB: Names have been changed

Thoughts, Feelings, Action

Bristol

20 year old Finlay is unemployed and left school with no qualifications. He has been involved for some time with the Gang Awareness Project based in Easton in Bristol, which has a high rate of knife crime. The project works with young gang members to provide support and advice, looking at methods of conflict resolution.

The Thoughts, Feelings, Actions project, which Finlay established with a group of other young people, was given a Prince's Trust Group Award of £5,000 to use drama to explore the issues of knife crime, and promote an anti-knife message through a DVD.

Much of their work was based on personal experiences and reconstructions of real life events. The group got vital support from Gang Awareness workers, as all of the group have been affected by knife crime; either being involved in it, their family involved in it, or

¹ Prison Reform Trust (2006) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile

they know a member of their peer group who has suffered as a result. One relative of a group member was stabbed to death in the street in Easton a few years ago during a period of intense gang conflict.

The anti-knife DVD has been distributed to local youth clubs and schools, the Bristol Youth Offending Team and Safer Bristol. Operation Blunt is considering using the DVD in Young Offenders Institutes and prisons. UK Youth is looking at using it as a resource available for youth workers and young people across the UK. The DVD has also been sold to generate a profit to cover costs and to ensure the project becomes sustainable.

The project has provided a positive experience for the young people, many of whom are not in education or work. It has allowed them to address a serious problem within their community in a creative way, encouraging personal responsibility and conflict resolution. For many of the young people in this community, knife crime is a way of life - this group aims to change that mentality.

African Caribbean Youth Forum

Huddersfield

A group of Afro Caribbean young people, who know each other through the Hadawe Community Centre in Huddersfield, was given a £4,800 Prince's Trust Group Award to set up a forum for young people to ensure young voices are heard and local issues and worries are discussed and listened to by all the community. The primary aim is to stop crime, in particular gun and knife crime, which is on the increase in the area. The purpose of the forum is to guide the group towards what is needed and wanted by the community. They will then set up music, dance and sport events for the local community promoting unity and positive activities for local young people.

The project has started with a music competition called MC Factor, like X Factor but rapping. The group now plan to set up football teams, other sports teams, dance and drama groups and voluntary opportunities in the community. They will also invite the Police and anti gun/knife crime workers from other areas to talk to the young people in the forum to promote anti crime. The project is supported by the Police, youth workers and community leaders.

Trinity Music Event

Bristol

The purpose of this Prince's Trust supported project was to use music to tackle issues such as knife, gun and violent crime. The project was run by Darren, a young person who attends a local community organisation, Trinity Centre, which provides a space for young people to get involved in music and dance.

He ran an MC Competition and used the event as a way to spread anti knife and gun crime messages. They did this by having a 'positive MC battle', as opposed to the usual practice of saying derogatory things about the person you are 'battling'. Over 200 young people attended.

They also ran a series of MC and dance workshops leading up to the event to get more young people involved and particularly targeted young people who are touched by drugs, crime, unemployment and anti-social behaviour.

The project has been a very positive experience for Darren, who is now applying for another Trust Group Award to use the internet to promote the positive messages of the project.

Recommendations:

- a.** The Government should look at existing successful voluntary sector initiatives which tackle knife crime, such as projects run by The Prince's Trust, and ensure they are funded more robustly, rather than creating many new initiatives.
- b.** The Government needs to work with the private and voluntary sectors to deliver innovative solutions for effectively tackling the issues associated with knife crime.
- c.** The Government should listen to the experiences of offenders to help shape policies that help them stop re-offending.
- d.** The Trust supports the Government's community-led approach in the fight against knife crime and would encourage more funding for projects which allow young people to take responsibility for themselves and their communities, such as The Trust's Team programme.
- e.** More diversionary activities should be available to divert young people away from crime through positive activities such as The Trust's xl and Team programmes.

More information is available at: www.princes-trust.org.uk