



Engaging Young People as Community Leaders Against Crime

Co-working on Community Safety III

conference summary and
recommendations



Introduction

The Community Safety Advisory Service (CSAS) held its third annual conference “Engaging Young People as Community Leaders Against Crime” on 24th March 2006. Over 100 delegates attended to hear a mixture of speeches and presentations and to participate in workshops and a panel question and answer session.

The aims of the conference were:

- To increase the capacity of small and medium voluntary organisations to participate in the youth crime and anti-social behaviour agenda.
- To enable partnership working and the sharing of good practice across a range of issues relating to young people and crime.
- To raise the profile of initiatives involving young people in identifying solutions to crime.

Setting the Scene

The theme for the conference was chosen because of the current political climate and media representation of young people. Increasingly, we hear about ‘hoodies’ and ‘Asbo kids’, and CSAS wanted this conference to look at the potential for young people to be part of the solution to youth crime, rather than always being perceived as the problem.

Whilst a few young people are perpetrators of significant levels of crime, they are also often the victims of crime and have very high levels of fear of crime. Most offending against young people is perpetrated by other young people and we need to tackle this issue head on, diverting young people away from crime and involvement in the criminal justice system.



Keynote speech

Lee Jasper

Mayor of London's Director for Equalities and Policing

Lee Jasper talked about the importance of preventative work – and discussed how we could build young people into being part of the solution to crime, rather than continuing to demonise them. He recognised that CSAS groups and conference delegates are already doing some excellent work, and talked a lot about the complexity of the funding situation. He said that “we must be supported by government providing a clear, simplistic and accessible means of giving us the funding necessary to do the jobs.”

Lee suggested that, as a sector, voluntary and community organisations need to come together with one voice to increase funding being spent on preventative work and our existing good practice. He made the business case for this, but said that it is not yet understood in terms of the perspective of crime and crime prevention.

Lee focused on the importance of dealing with the

victimisation of young people: “kids who were bullied, bully; kids who were robbed, rob; kids who were beaten up, beat up; so getting prevention into the heart of what we do is absolutely critical”.

The GLA supports the idea of taking criminal assets from criminals and investing these in community organisations doing ‘risk-taking’ work with young people. This would allow the voluntary sector to be a lot more creative, and start taking chances on investing in young people on the edge. Lee talked about the importance of using ex-offenders who can be an asset in convincing young people to keep on the right track.

In conclusion, he commended the work done by projects on the ground and in very marginalised areas, and said how appreciative the Mayoral Office are of that, saying “these little islands of excellence in a sea of criminal mediocrity are real lifelines for some of our young people.”



Funder's presentation

Tony Shepherd

Safer London Foundation (SLF)

Tony encouraged projects to approach SLF for funding. They are the charitable arm of the Metropolitan Police and are an independent registered charity. SLF are a grant making trust and can also supply a wide range of support and skills.

Aims include:

- Reducing crime in London by providing innovative community led projects; and to reduce the perceived fear of crime.
- Work with local communities and police teams to develop safer neighbourhoods in London.
- Provide the necessary resources, finance, training, education and skills to enable local people to challenge criminal and anti-social behaviour.

SLF offers:

- Financial support of up to £20,000 (or more in exceptional circumstances) for pan-London projects which are innovative and sustainable, showing a demonstrable need and who engage with SLF.
- Skills from corporate sector volunteers.
- Hands on assistance and consultancy.

SLF ask that potential applicants discuss their project with them first. They can be contacted at:

Safer London Foundation,
Skyline House, 200 Union Street,
London SE1 0LX
Tel: 020 7021 0301
www.saferlondonfoundation.org



Workshops – conference

Workshop 1: Young People as Victims of Crime.

Facilitated by Laura Bailey, Young Person's Co-ordinator at Victim Support Wandsworth

Main recommendations:

- Necessary policies must be in place to ensure young people's welfare.
- A safe environment to allow young people to speak freely is essential, and the young person should be kept informed throughout the process.
- Simple, open-ended questions should be used to ascertain the victim's views, and support given to enable them to talk to the police, parents or other agencies.
- A Directory of Service Providers should be available to ensure effective signposting.

Workshop 2: Young People – Guns, Knives and Gangs.

Facilitated by Fiona Atkinson, Trident Independent Advisory Group and Ejós Ubiribo, Freelance Writer and Social Commentator and Independent Adviser to Operation Trident.

Main recommendations:

- Fewer exclusions in school.
- More youth facilities and learning centres which are affordable for all families.
- More Saturday clubs, after-school clubs and summer clubs provided by schools.
- Government to provide 'weapons bins' in schools to collect knives.



delegates could choose from six workshops

Workshop 3: Anti-Social Behaviour and Mediation.

Facilitated by Dave Walker, Director and John Olanipekun Student Mediator, from Southwark Mediation Centre.

Main recommendations:

- Recognise that mediation is effective by dealing 'in the moment' and not focusing on the past.
- Training young people in schools to be peer-mediators.
- We should work with young people from age 10 to address the anti-social behaviour of their peers.
- Teachers can be trained to 'mediate' rather than to 'tell'.

Workshop 4: Community Cohesion in the Light of the London Bombings.

Facilitated by Zaheer Kadri, Muslim Organisations' Development Worker, London Crimestoppers and Faridha Karim, Project Co-ordinator, Muslim Youth Helpline.

Main recommendations:

- The voluntary and statutory sectors need to recognise that Muslim young people face the same issues as all young people – crime, poverty, housing issues, education etc.
- We must recognise diversity within Muslim communities.
- Effective relationships with and within Muslim communities must be built – for example through the use of youth workers in mosques.
- Peer-to-peer work is essential.

Workshop 5: Young People as Community Leaders Against Crime.

Facilitated by Decima Francis, Chief Executive, From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation.

Main recommendations:

- Use different techniques to increase interest and engagement with young people and increase young people's desire to learn.
- Reduce alienation by avoiding the exclusion of young people from their schools, where possible.
- We need adults to lead and be positive role-models.
- The skills of young people involved in street crime should be turned into positives.

Workshop 6: Working with Young Offenders.

Facilitated by: Gemma Buckland and Bob Jones, Policy, RESET (Rainer).

Main recommendations:

- Advisers need to build up relationships with young offenders whilst they are still in custody.
- Young offenders should be actively involved in their resettlement process.
- Youth Offending Teams should work closely with other agencies to promote stable resettlement and reduce recidivism.
- Projects should set up services in advance of the young person being released from custody.



Panel Questions and Answers

Main Themes

The panel session brought together a range of expertise in the field of working with young people against crime. Each morning workshop provided a question which was put to the panel by Elizabeth Manning, the conference Chair. Panel members were Anne Coughlan, Chief Executive Officer of Victim Support London; Sergeant Paul Dunn, Metropolitan Police Service; Decima Francis, Chief Executive, From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation; Mike Roberts, Director, Newmartin Community Youth Trust; Massoud Shadjareh, Chair, Islamic Human Rights Commission and Tony Shepherd, Chief Executive of Safer London Foundation.

The main themes were:

- The importance of longevity of funding for the voluntary and community sector.
- That work with victims needs to be increased – including mediation work and the work of Victim Support Services.
- That we must recognise that young victims of crime and offenders may be the same young people.
- Prevention work is vital and needs to be well funded. It must include parenting support and work with positive role models including ex-offenders.
- That we have not looked openly at the causes of the London bombings on 7th July 2005, and we need to ensure that young Muslims are not stereotyped, and to find ways of reducing alienation by breaking down barriers and working together as a society.
- That we need to increase pan-London working to reach ‘hard-to-reach’ groups including Latin American communities.

Summing Up Exercise

The conference delegates worked together in groups to draw up further recommendations as part of a summing up exercise. The following represents their key points.

Promoting youth participation in crime reduction

- Work with young people to design and run their own community safety projects.
- Young ex-offenders to deliver projects in schools about the consequences of getting involved in crime and drugs.
- Young people to be delegates and workshop leaders at youth crime conferences.
- Young people to be represented on project steering groups.
- Set up structures so young people can contribute to decision making bodies about youth crime i.e. CDRP crime audits, neighbourhood police panels, local area agreements.

Investing in youth crime prevention

- Voluntary sector to run a strong united campaign to focus on a call for early prevention.
- Voluntary sector to make the business case for the value of prevention work.
- Government to value generic youth provision as enhancing community safety.
- Provide arts, creative drama classes, music, dance and sport classes.
- Set up and run after school activities and holiday programmes for 12-19 year olds.
- Start teaching life-skills from a young age (primary schools).
- Government to fund the voluntary sector to deliver projects that reward positive actions and behaviour.



Reduce the cycle of offending amongst young people

- Increase the number of projects working with young people before their release from custody.
- Ensure young offender's accommodation needs are met.
- Utilise the experience of young ex-offenders in a mentoring capacity.

Increase community cohesion

- Voluntary sector to challenge the stereotyping of young people, particularly young Muslims and black young men.
- Provide more inclusive and culturally sensitive projects.
- Improve the effectiveness of partnership working across diverse ethnic and faith groups.
- Deliver projects where young people can be seen as active citizens.
- Celebrate the achievements of young people.
- Deliver projects which encourage young people and older people to mix to reduce fear and misunderstandings.

Increase the use of mediation

- Deliver conflict resolution classes to children in and after school.
- Deliver peer mediation projects.
- Deliver training on mediation to community safety professionals and youth workers.
- Promote success stories where mediation has been used to address anti social behaviour.

Increase parenting skills

- Parenting projects should emphasise "improving parenting skills" rather than helping "bad parents".
- Deliver community development projects that encourage mutual support for parents.
- Increase access to advice and training on good parenting skills.

Reduce youth victimisation (and re-victimisation)

- Provide personal safety training for young people.
- Teach young people to deliver personal safety/victim awareness training etc to other young people.
- Services and resources for young victims to be "mainstreamed".
- Publicise existing provision for young victims of crime.
- Carry out a needs assessment on how to support young victims.

Second tier support to improve practice

- Provide crime reduction programmes and seminars.
- Deliver courses on understanding young people's development.
- Provide cultural awareness training.
- Develop more toolkits and practical examples of participation techniques.

Increasing the quality and effectiveness of partnership working in the sector

- Deliver joined up services and avoid duplication.
- Facilitate projects that cross boundaries – geographical, cultural or gender.
- Voluntary sector to speak with one voice.

Increase funding and sustainability

- Simplify funding applications.
- Provide more long term funding.
- Provide more funding for generic youth provision.
- The voluntary sector should lobby government for more of the recycled assets of crime to be distributed to crime prevention projects.