

Written evidence submitted by The Ben Kinsella Trust (BYC005)

Background

1. The Ben Kinsella Trust is one of the leading anti-knife crime charities in the UK. We were set up following the tragic murder of Ben Kinsella in 2008. The Trust exists to campaign against knife crime and to educate young people about its dangers, helping them make positive choices to stay safe.

2. Our vision is for “A society where no young person needs to carry a knife”.

The programmes that we deliver

3. Knife Crime Prevention Workshops - We work with Primary and Secondary schools through our fixed exhibition Centres in London and Nottingham, to delivery preventative programmes that challenges young people in terms of knife crime, its impact and what steps young people can take to keep them and their friends safe. Through a series of interactive experiences, the exhibitions provide a unique learning environment on the causes and consequences of knife crime.

4. Over 16,000 young people have attended the Ben Kinsella Exhibition. Of those young people who had considered carrying a knife to protect themselves: 85% said they would no longer consider this option.

5. Working with Families - The Trust provides support and advice to help families who have lost someone to knife crime, in their emotional journey, in a non-intrusive and private way.

6. Supporting young people affected by knife crime – For some young people, their lived experiences means that they need a greater level of support so that they can build the self-esteem and confidence to turn away from knife crime. Our 6 week “Best You” programme and our tailored programmes for both young women and for Pupil Referral Units have been specifically designed to provide an environment where young people who have experiences of violence, bereavement, social, emotional and personal isolation, can discuss their concerns and be guided into support.

7. Turning policy and research into practice – The Trust is committed to make a long-term difference to knife crime. This requires building a strong body of evidence of what works, what needs to happen to ensure it is delivered and who can best deliver change. Our current work on the impact of social media and violence, combined with our focus on trauma informed practice, are examples of our work in developing a strong policy and research evidence base and turning it into practical support for schools and front-line agencies.

Key Messages

- **8. Prevention and Early Intervention is critical** – Findings from Academic and Social Research make it clear that Early Intervention and Prevention is vital in addressing young violence and knife crime. The work undertaken by Prof. Mark Bellis on Adverse Childhood Experiences and finding from Prof PO Wilkstrom’s Long Term Study into social behaviour of young people into adolescents, both reach the same conclusion. The recent social research carried out by Croydon Councils into 60 young adolescents with Behavioural Challenges, highlighted that over half were already known to services by the time they were 5 years of age; family breakdown, domestic violence in the family home, absent father and underlying health issues

were all constant features; a third were temporarily excluded at primary school with every one of them going on to have a criminal conviction.

9. KEY MESSAGE: - Investment must be urgently directed into preventative and early intervention programmes if we are going to make a long-term difference.

- **10. Focus on retaining young people in Education** – The educational environment remains the safest place for young people and provides the greatest opportunity in supporting young people to make positive choices.
- **11. Develop a Network of support at a local level** – Many of the young people we have worked with describe not having role models in their local community who can help them navigate the challenges they face. Establishing these networks, particularly in areas which are dominated by serious violence and knife crime is vital. There are people in these areas who have influence and by developing them, training them and using a defined “Navigator” role we can create the alternative pathways that so many young people are seeking.
- **12. Ensure every person delivering an intervention understands Culture and Identity within and across families** – Young people and particularly young adolescents defined their culture and identity very differently from that of their parents. In some cases, this can cause significant challenges within families, particularly when the values that parents hold so dearly is at odds with the cultural values that their children may hold.

13. Any interventions have to be sensitive to these differences. It has to consider the implications in term of the impact on the young person in the context of their family and how the family can be engaged, based on their cultural values, both as a family unit and in terms of their community. Merely delivering an intervention, without any consideration of its impact within the culture and identify of the wider family, will actually make the situation for the young person worse, cause greater social, emotional and personal isolation and a lack of a sense of belonging.

14. KEY MESSAGE – EVERY AGENCY, PARTICULARLY CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES SHOULD BE TRAINED IN UNDERSTANDING THE DYMANICS OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY WITHIN FAMILIES

- **15. The Voice of Young People should resonate in everything we do** – Our work with young people between the ages of 10-21 has highlighted that young people are becoming more aware of the power of their voice, how they can use that power to co-design what is being delivered, how it is being delivered and in the actual delivery itself. The constant message that we are receiving from young people that we work with, is that they are frustrated by the organisations, government and public sector bodies who consult with young people on key issues such as knife crime but do not involve them in what is being delivered, when, where, how and to who.
- 16. If we are going to demonstrate a significant change, there needs to be a radical statement of intent that no policy, strategy programme or decision related to youth violence will be adopted or implemented, unless the voice of young people in the

area has been heard and reflected. Options for co-designing a policy strategy or programme with the full involvement of young people should be included and consideration of how young people can support in its delivery should be considered.

17. If the Home Office has the intention to introduce a Public Health “Duty” to public sector institutions in terms of considering violence reduction in its decision making, the Secretary of State should extend this, so there is “Duty to Involve” young people in those considerations.

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