

## *Written evidence submitted by Westminster City Council (BYC016)*

### **Introduction**

1. Westminster City Council welcomes the Youth Select Committee's inquiry into knife crime and is appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to your investigation. Tackling youth knife crime and promoting the best opportunities for our young people is one of the council's highest priorities, driven directly by those at the most senior level in our organisation – our Chief Executive and Leader of the council. Indeed, taking a Public Health approach to serious youth violence has recently been selected as one of the key areas of focus for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2. We are however seeing a significant rise in knife crime, with children and young adults the victims and or perpetrators on too many occasions. We are further witnessing the detrimental impact this has on our communities, particularly with the exploitation of young people, in many cases by organised criminal groups running 'County Lines'.

3. Whilst we have many initiatives, projects and interventions - and some examples are provided throughout our response to your questions - youth knife crime remains at unacceptable levels, and violence is now one of the biggest reasons for entering the Youth Justice system in Westminster.

4. We are working closely with government to help them understand what tools and resources we need so we can do more to prevent young people entering a life of violence and crime at an earlier age, as well as increasing police resourcing to make our young people feel safer. We know however that it will take time to see the changes we need, therefore in the meantime we will continue to deliver a whole-system approach with the on-going commitment of the council, police and community Safety Partners, as well as our local communities to make a difference for our young people.

5. To help shape our response to you and ensure we capture as many views as possible we have included:

- Feedback from our Youth Provider Roundtable meeting in April 2019 which brings together a variety of stakeholders from across the city to discuss how best to prevent, identify and support vulnerable young people.
- 19 members of Westminster Youth Council (WYC) were asked for their feedback on the Youth Select Committee inquiry's questions. (WYC is comprised of Children and Young People aged 11-19)

- Two Youth Council meetings were also devoted to discussing the Youth Select Committee inquiry where Councillor Nickie Aiken and Rebecca Lawrence, Chief Executive of the Mayor of London's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) were in attendance.
- Data and officer learning from our direct work with children and young people and consultation with our front-line staff
- Published reports and analysis of young people in our City including:
  - City within a City: Understanding the needs of young people in Westminster
  - Our Health, Our Wellbeing: Young people growing up in Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster.
  - Young Westminster Foundation: Youth Conversations on Staying Safe

6. Please find our responses to your questions below and we look forward to reviewing your Report later this year.

## **SECTION 1: GENERAL**

### **1) Are there any prominent trends in the statistics on a) who commits knife crime b) who are the victims of knife crime?**

- In the last year knife crime has increased significantly in Westminster. However, Westminster manages a disproportionate volume of crime, including knife crime, the vast majority of which is committed by people who are not Westminster residents. This is due to concentration and accessibility of venues and activities in the West End throughout the evening and night, which attract a high volume of people.
- Most knife crime offences are where young people have been caught in possession of a knife. Around a quarter of all knife crime in Westminster resulted in injury to a victim
- In 2018/19, 18 violent offences committed by under 18s involved the possession of a knife, blade or other offensive weapon, down from 27 in the previous year and 34 in the year before that.
- Last year, we saw 199 people being injured with a knife. Around half of these victims were under the age of 24.
- Most young people injured by a knife under the age of 24 were within our West End.
- Around a quarter of young offenders being managed by our Youth Offenders Service (a service that intervenes and provides a response to young people proven to have committed an offence) are those who have committed a violent offence (although this is not exclusively knife crime). The majority are males aged 16 – 17

### **2) Is the Government strategy to combat knife crime doing enough to effectively: a) prevent b) intervene and; c) sentence those committing knife crime d) rehabilitate those cautioned or sentenced for knife crime?**

We welcomed the National Serious Violence Strategy, and in particular the specific emphasis on steering vulnerable young people away from gangs and violent crime. Some of the gaps we have however identified include:

- Despite some references to working with the youth sector, the strategy does not include any plans for engagement or long-term service delivery with the youth or community sectors.
- The strategy also has omitted the trauma impact of knife crime and serious violence on those witnessing or experiencing it, and the impact this has on any wider support network. Initiatives are needed to support this as victims can go on to perpetrate this type of crime in the future.
- The strategy has not acknowledged the importance and impact of early intervention and support services for vulnerable children and young people. This, coupled with child poverty and young people not in education or training, can leave some young people with feeling they have nowhere to go, making them more vulnerable to exploitation by gangs. In addition to prevention and early action, the government should also consider stimulating housing, employment opportunities and community facilities. The £11million committed through the Early Prevention Fund is a good start, but it must be followed up with sustainable, long-term funding for prevention and early intervention programmes.
- The strategy should have included a dedicated section that helps agencies understand their role to play on safeguarding children and young people in cases of serious violence and knife crime. We believe that knife crime and serious violence that involves young people is a safeguarding issue and that child-centred approaches should always be used, even in cases where children are the alleged perpetrators.

**3) Does the Government's Serious Violence Strategy strike the right balance between preventative and punitive action?**

We are in full support of the Government's position that it will take a combined commitment from resources across the police, health, education and the community to create long-term attitudinal change in society to do more to prevent young people from entering a life of crime and violence in the first place - rather than treating serious violence just as a criminal justice issue. Young people should always be protected and afforded the safeguarding response that they deserve, as opposed to only using a punitive criminal justice response.

We were pleased that the Home Secretary has committed to tackle serious youth violence and that a joined-up cross-government approach is at the centre of the new strategy. However, we think for the strategy to have a meaningful, lasting impact, the Department of Health and Department for Education need to commit, in the same way the Home Office has, to tackle serious youth violence. It is important that if agencies within localised areas are expected to work in close partnership, that this commitment is also reflected across government departments.

#### 4) **Is treating knife crime as a public health issue an effective approach?**

Westminster is highly supportive of a public health/whole system approach as the most effective at delivering a long-term solution to reducing this crime. No issue relating to serious youth violence and knife crime has a single aspect or cause and no single agency, service or organisation can address this issue alone.

We are already taking a public health approach to tackle serious youth violence. This involves a range of partners and agencies such as education, health, social services, housing, youth and victim services, offender management and others. We also work in close partnership with the voluntary and charitable sector to develop targeted interventions in our local communities with action guided by evidence of the problems and what works in tackling root causes.

We take this approach at both a strategic level, as outlined in the Health and Wellbeing Board priority, and in our front-line delivery support services. For example:

- **Serious Youth Violence Taskgroup:** Since July 2018, we have established the Serious Youth Violence Task Group to place a greater emphasis on how we can work together across Council departments, the Metropolitan Police Service and partner agencies, to adapt and respond to the changing nature of serious violence and weapons use in Westminster. This taskgroup also working with a young person's charity to conduct individual interviews and small workshops with young people in order to understand young people's views on serious violence, obtain feedback on current youth activities and explore how young people can help safeguard each other, and empower our communities to help reduce serious youth violence
- **Working with Gangs:** The Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU), set up in 2011, is a multiagency team across the Police, Community Safety and Children's Services, Mental Health and employment services in response to a rising rate of gang involvement, county lines, and resulting crime and serious youth violence. It aims to intervene and get disenfranchised young people diverted away from gangs and criminality and keep young people from hurting each other. This long-term solution to serious youth violence, already goes some way in adopting a public health approach and it is based on the 'Boston Cease-fire model' and informed by the Glasgow public health approach.

#### 5) **How is knife crime affecting a) public services b) health services c) schools d) emergency services?**

Local authorities act as a partnership broker to tackle Youth Violence and knife crime. In addition to working with various agencies e.g. a range of NHS partners (including emergency services. At St Mary's hospital, a consultant specialises in this area), the Met Police and training and skills providers, the Council is also home to various services that can address youth violence, including Children's Services, Public Health and Public Protection. The Council also includes Housing and Employment Services, including

apprenticeships. These services can all contribute to prevention, early intervention and mitigation of any consequences of youth violence.

With council budgets under pressure across the UK, support for young people however is often focused on those already involved in knife crime. For services to be effective, they should proactively focus on prevention and supporting those at risk of becoming involved in knife crime. The work of our Youth Crime Prevention Partnership has been successful in reducing first time entrants into the criminal justice system and reducing violent crime, including knife crime offences, committed by young people up to the age of 18.

**6) Is judicial sentencing effective in a) serving as a deterrent and b) preventing reoffending?**

In Westminster, the majority of young people committing violent offences are between 21-24 years old, and the least likely to commit an offence are aged between 10-14. However, the trend we see in Westminster indicates that whilst we have a reducing number of young offenders ca. 60% of those 10-14-year-old offenders go on to re-offend, whereas only ca. 30% of 21-24-year olds re-offend. This indicates that a judicial sentencing response for our youngest offenders is not as effective deterrent as it is for those who may be older.

## **SECTION 2: YOUNG PEOPLE**

*Please note that for the Young People section of our response the views expressed from members of the Westminster Youth Council are highlighted separately – this is because if any sections of the Westminster Youth Council’s response are published or reproduced, we kindly request that they are attributed to the Westminster Youth Council.*

Westminster Youth Council had contrasting experiences and views about knife crime. Some Youth Council members were very worried about youth violence and knife crime. Although others were not concerned, they were aware of the issue. The majority (12 of 19) of Youth Council members knew someone who had been victim of knife crime and the current Youth MP campaigned on a manifesto that included mental health issues and knife crime. Some quotes from Youth Council members include:

- *‘Some kids are in the midst of a war zone’*
- *‘You don’t trust the police and don’t think they will follow up when something happens’*
- *‘You don’t want to be seen as ‘snitching away’ if we tell police or teachers’*
- *‘I avoid making eye contact’*
- *‘Kids are looking for a reason to stab’*

**7) How do differences in young peoples' lives (e.g. geographic location, education, mental health, household income and socioeconomic background) make them more vulnerable to being involved in knife crime?**

- Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), or Looked After Children (LAC) are more vulnerable to being exploited/involved in knife crime. In addition, around one in five children in custody have learning difficulties, highlighting their acute risk of being exploited.
- We are aware that vulnerability to crime and antisocial behaviour is becoming increasingly concentrated in the more deprived areas of our borough
- Our City within a City report highlights that children as young as 11 are exposed to or are aware of:
  - pressure from friends to take part in gang activity
  - access to drugs and alcohol is too easy
  - crowded housing
  - they are able to see a clear divide between rich and poor
  - parks sometimes being a place of danger
  - there are not enough places to go and that youth clubs are somewhere where young people do not want to be
  - that most things in the City are too expensive

It is this inequality (real and/or perceived) that comes with living in an inner City that gangs exploit and attract young people by offering an alternative way of earning money, providing a sense of belonging/power and lifestyle that they believe they cannot attain elsewhere. This is why in Westminster we are committed to making sure every young person here is able to grow up safe, healthy and happy and are offered the best opportunity for securing a future away from crime no matter the lifestyle or background.

*Westminster Youth Council response*

- Most agreed geographic location, education, family, socio-economic background increase risk of being affected by youth violence/knife crime.
- For those who were not concerned about knife crime, most said they lived in a 'safe area'.
- The majority of the Westminster Youth Council agreed that household income and family background were significant factors behind whether a young person would become involved in knife crime. Household income was also mentioned, and one WYC Member said that she believed that if a child can't have a designer product, he or she might be tempted to steal it instead.
- They agreed that happy families or households were the foundation to building a child's resilience.

## 8) What motivates young people to carry knives?

- Being part of a gang lifestyle offers an alternative way of earning quick money to some young people
- Pressure from peers
- Protection due to feeling unsafe
- To carry out other criminal offences, such as robbery

### Westminster Youth Council response

- Westminster Youth Council highlighted that there are various reasons for young people to carry knives. It could be for self-defence/protection; to imitate/copy another young person who is carrying a knife or to feel part of a gang where the others are carrying a knife.

## 9) Is fear a motivator for young people who carry knives? What causes this? What can be done to address it?

The Director of Public Health's Annual report 2017-18, "Our Health, Our Wellbeing: young people growing up in Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster" themes include crime and safety. In it, a local resident explains that

*There's this whole image of gang violence being a product of poor people being beasts and it's built in in their biology to behave like this and I think they're completely ignoring the fact that it's years of built up frustration and deprivation that's leading to these issues and instead of helping these communities, they're condemning them even more.*

The Young Westminster Foundation's report, City within a City, found that 1 in 3 young people say they experience occasions when they do not feel safe.<sup>1</sup> The most commonly held fear among young people is gangs (30%) and the threat of being attacked (26%). More deprived areas are also perceived to be more unsafe. Possession of a knife can help young people to feel safer, even though evidence suggests this is more likely to lead to injury.

## 10) Is there any evidence that gang culture, social media and/or music impact young people's involvement in knife crime?

Young people are becoming increasingly de-sensitised from serious violence through what they see on social media and through drill music. The ease of access to video's, photo's, streaming etc can lead young people to believe that knife crime and this lifestyle

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ywfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/YWF-Needs\\_Analysis\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ywfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/YWF-Needs_Analysis_Report.pdf). To inform this report, a variety of consultation methods gathered the views of more than 250 young people and 30 stakeholders over the Summer 2017 on the services, support and opportunities available to young people living in Westminster.

is more prevalent than reality - which may also contribute to why young people sometimes feel the need to carry knives to protect themselves.

Worryingly the use of social media extends to being used to support perpetrate violent attacks - we are aware of incidence where snapchat has been used to locate where someone is who then consequently was targeted.

### Westminster Youth Council response

Gang culture, social media and music do impact young people's interest and involvement in knife crime. Although many incidences can be posted on social media, some young people do not seem afraid of the consequences. Another member of the Westminster Youth Council explained that "for those creating drill music, it helps them get out of the street, and do something better with their lives"

#### **11) Is there a correlation between young people being excluded, or not getting enough support from, education and involvement in knife crime?**

Although not specifically linked to knife crime, prolific offenders of violent crime have considerably higher rates of absence and exclusion than non-prolific offenders; 42% of prisoners have a history of being permanently excluded from school (Source: Ministry of Justice 2019).

### **SECTION THREE: PREVENTION**

#### **12) What could be done to make young people less likely to a) carry knives b) commit knife crime?**

- **Getting the messaging right:** with young people for effective prevention of serious violence. The message needs to go beyond telling people not to carry knives but instead target the reasons why they are carrying a knife in the first place and it must be something that young people can relate to. In Westminster 'The Trap' is an initiative designed to challenge the belief that carrying a knife keeps you safe and selling drugs leave behind no victims. It is an online platform that through a series of films realistically portrays the full impact of drug dealing and carrying knives. The films were made by young people (from Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Hammersmith & Fulham), together with two film companies that specialised in co-producing films with hard to reach and disadvantaged groups. This has created a high-quality resource that has credibility with young people and is used to support young people to get out of 'The Trap' and make positive choices in their lives away from crime.
- **Earlier education:** Sessions in schools about serious violence should start early, aligned to sex education and drug education. Not to impose a fear-based approach but rather in the context of life skills learning, understanding social influences and decision making.

- **Better access to opportunities:** The more intervention points and diversionary activities there are for young people at risk of being involved in crime and knife violence, the more their propensity to engage in criminal activity will reduce.
- **Increased police presence:** Some young people in the City within a City report highlighted that the fear of crime and gang activity is a significant issue, and that an increased police presence would help them to feel safer.

**13) What support is available to identify and help young people at risk of getting involved in knife crime. Is it effective?**

- **Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU):** In Westminster the IGXU is a multiagency team across the Police, Community Safety and Children's Services, Mental Health and employment services in response to a rising rate of gang involvement, county lines, and resulting crime and serious youth violence. It aims to intervene and get disenfranchised young people diverted away from gangs and criminality and keep young people from hurting each other. This long-term solution to serious youth violence, already goes some way in adopting a public health approach.

Children's services have a key role in the prevention of serious youth violence, including the provision of the following services:

- **The Youth Offending Team (YOT):** has a multiagency partnership set up under the direction of the crime and disorder act, which includes representatives from social services, police, probation education and health. The aim of this team is to work with young people and families to address factors that lead to offending. The YOT is overseen by the YOT management board (the Youth Crime Prevention Partnership).
- **The Multi-Agency Safeguard Hub (MASH):** brings together key professionals to facilitate early, better-quality information-sharing analysis and decision-making to safeguard vulnerable children more effectively.
- **Early Help:** aims to achieve outcomes for children and families and a key area of delivery is the prevention of crime and serious youth violence. Early Help can make a significant contribution to the prevention of youth crime thanks to their close links to universal providers, which enables the early identification of need. "Prevention of crime" is a referral criterion for Westminster's targeted Early Help team. As part of this, the team undertakes one-to-one work with young people and their families.
- **New Family Hubs:** are important community assets, where families and young people can access a range of support.
- **#MyWestminster Staying Safe Programme:** sees partnership working (including Metropolitan Police Service, Young Westminster Foundation, Avenues Youth Project, Marylebone Bangladesh Society, Red Thread, Victim Support) to support 50 young people at risk of crime and rolling out capacity-building programme to youth workers.
- The service hosted a **Youth Providers Roundtable** in April 2019 to discuss how, together with partners, we can help young people fulfil their potential and offer them the

right mix of services to inspire young people and support them to achieve their ambitions.

- **A school inclusion pilot** was recently launched to tackle increased exclusions as a way of reducing youth crime. This has three components; 1) trauma-informed training for staff, 2) a dedicated team of Early Help Family Practitioners led by a family therapist, and 3) one-to-one or group mentoring for each child.
- **Children's Social Care** provide a range of support to children in need and their families. In Westminster, social care practitioners use a systemic practice model to develop relationships with children, young people and their families so as to work with them to build strengths to tackle and resolve identified difficulties.

**14) Are there examples of local initiatives which have worked well to prevent young people being victims or/and perpetrators of knife crime?**

Westminster has a plethora of targeted schemes and agendas in place to tackle violent crime and gang/youth crime and reoffending, including knife crime action plans, Prevention Re-offending agendas, co-ordinated tasking processes that provide intelligence and target hot spot areas, and working with young people and schools. There is also a range of actives in place to:

- understand the issues and experiences of young people and serious violence
- address the root causes
- promote opportunities where young people can thrive and take alternative pathways away from crime and violence
- tackle gang related behaviour
- engage with the community
- disrupt and bring offenders to justice
- protect victims

Some of our projects and interventions include:

- **Westminster's Inclusion Pilot:** is on-going in seven primary schools, where a family therapist examined the cause of behaviours by working with parents and children to take a trauma-informed approach combined with a mentoring service. Following successful results, other schools have expressed an interest in implementing the programme. This is an early intervention programme that shows the earlier we intervene the better.
- **City Lions:** City Lions is an initiative about engaging with young people aged between 13-16, particularly those from a disadvantaged background, in the creative and cultural industry. Its aim is to enrich young people's lives by breaking down the barriers of participation and enjoying the cultural and creative opportunities they have available to them within the borough. City Lions is there to help young people discover and celebrate their own culture and creativity, and to provide them with better opportunities in Westminster. City Lion's aim to raise awareness of the career

opportunities that lie within these industries for those who may be affected by a disadvantaged background. A part of the programme, work experience for young people is arranged, as well as opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities and visits. These opportunities presented to these vulnerable children and young people, show them an alternative route in society and peruse a future in the arts. A series of workshops run in partnership with Westminster schools, youth clubs, Children Services and youth organisations. The workshops fall into three general categories and work with those most affected children and young people, at an age where they are most impressionable and demonstrate to them an alternative career and future path in a healthy, safe and, fun environment:

- *Higher-Need Programme:* 8-15 residents per programme with 50% from the most deprived areas of the borough.
  - *Wider Programme:* 30-60 students from Year 9-11. 6-hour programme including interactive workshop at a cultural organisation
  - *Holiday Programme:* 10-15 residents per programme prioritising those from the most deprived areas.
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- **Anonymous reporting:** Our Serious Youth Violence Taskforce is promoting the use of 'Fearless' amongst young people, which is a youth website that enables young people to anonymously disclose concerns about violent crime and weapons use to the authorities.
  - **Staying Safe Programme:** This is a partnership programme involving a range of young person's charities and projects and victim support who deliver targeted support to 50 young people at risk of crime and deliver a capacity building programme to youth workers in partnership with the police.
  - **Cross Border Interventions:** Our work also includes cross-border collaboration in respect of 'county line' issues that have resulted in joint work with police services and local authorities across the country, most notably we have worked with agencies in East Anglia. In addition, we support three cross London projects that deliver a pan-London response to improving the identification and response to the exploitation of young people by organised criminals.
  - **Sports:** As part of our diversionary activities we provide a physical activity and sports offer to all young people, which includes early intervention programmes, holiday programmes and providing free activities in areas of deprivation directly to where young people are, (i.e. not just in sports centres but for example bringing this offer to housing estates). We promote intergenerational activities so young people can integrate and learn from adults, as well as encourage families to participate together, and sports such as boxing also support a young people mentoring programmes.

- **Parenting programmes:** Children’s Services staff and community organisations deliver various parenting programmes, including Triple P; Circle of Security; Non-Violent Resistance; Parents as Partners; Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities. There is also a dedicated Parenting Practitioner based in the YOT and the Early help service. Finally, Westminster is leading the Department of Work and Pensions’ London area “Reducing Parental Conflict programme. This programme, delivered by Tavistock Relationships, tests face to face interventions to see which best help workless families who are experiencing couple or co-parenting issues. The 4 interventions commissioned, are open to 500 eligible Westminster parents from April 2019-March 2021.
- **Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting:** Facilitated by children’s social care, this meeting brings together a variety of partners to share intelligence about young people, their peers, potential exploitation and locations of interest to target disruption and protection activity.

**15) Are there any particular groups of young people who are overlooked by current prevention strategies?**

- Young adults (18-25) are a distinct group, largely because they are still maturing. Young adults are not afforded the protections given to children, despite their distinctive needs. Previously Looked After Children, or Not in Employment or Education are also a distinctive young adult group that require a targeted response.
- Children with learning disabilities are more likely to be exploited
- Children from migrant families whose parents may not speak English and be able to access information, help and resources in the same way as other families whose English is their main language.

#### **SECTION FOUR: INTERVENTION**

**16) Are there any examples of intervention schemes that have successfully rehabilitated young people who have been cautioned, reprimanded or sentenced due to knife crime, back into the community, education and/or employment?**

- **Youth Offending Team (YOT):** is a statutory response, support, and supervision service for young people who are proven to have committed an offence. Our YOT however also deliver a range of preventative interventions for young people, which include Knife Programmes, victim awareness interventions and work with ‘Street Doctors’ to help young people understand the risks attached to carrying weapons. The YOT have also provided a number of parenting workshops jointly with police and IGXU to provide a safe forum for parents to be able to highlight risks for children linked to violent offending and to consider ways of working together to reduce those risks.

- **The IGXU Employment Coach:** works collaboratively with the IGXU and the Westminster Employment Service (WES) to develop a programme of support and opportunities for young people in gangs or at risk of joining gangs. The role builds individual personal resilience, broadens a young person's horizons, raises aspiration, supports attainment and establishes a platform from which to succeed. The aim is to support young people access and sustain education, training and employment – and become economically active in meaningful and financially rewarding alternatives to criminal activity. Over the past 18 months, the IGXU Employment Coach has worked with 68 young people, ca. 50% of whom successfully secured a job start, ca. 10% went into further education and training and ca. 10% went onto an apprenticeship. More importantly, the Employment Coach has an engagement rate of 100% with those young people who have been previously 'hard-to-reach'.

**17) What examples are there for whole-community approaches to intervention?**

Many of our previous examples of initiatives given, such as diversionary activities including sports/culture and education offers - are both used to prevent and intervene in a young person's life and is driven by a whole-community approach.

We have however recently identified that whilst many different services intervene with a young person and their family following a serious violence tragedy to help them re-build their lives – there is an opportunity for us, our partners and the wider community to do more to work together ensure there is a better co-ordinated, holistic and whole community response. This is being led by our Serious Violence Taskgroup.

**18) Are there any examples of how police and communities have worked together to tackle knife crime?**

- **“Who Holds the Hope?”:** is a consultation forum between our young people (aged 16-19), the police, and our Gangs Team, which aims to re-build and improve relationships. Led by young people, the forum enables young people to give feedback and advice to the police and is aimed at “hard to reach” young people, including gang members, youth offenders, victims of child sexual exploitation and care leavers to help us tackle issues such as knife crime together.
- **Community Weapons Sweep:** Alongside the Police, we operate regular community weapons sweeps which are used to detect knives and offensive weapons left in open spaces - in vegetation or otherwise concealed from view. These items are then removed from circulation. These weapons have either been left for safekeeping so its owner cannot be caught with it, left for trade/pickup or even used as communal weapons for gang members. Residents and young people in our community are encouraged to take part with the police to show unity against weapons and a shared responsibility to keep the community safe.

- **Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC):** There are VPC units in every London borough and it's a central component of the Met's youth outreach. They aim to identify and engage with young people from all walks of life who are at risk from crime and social exclusion.
- **School Police Officer:** each school has a dedicated police officer, who is visible in the community at certain times during the school week

**20) Are the police stop and search powers effective in promoting safety and/or putting young people off carrying knives?**

We anticipate that the recent changes to Stop and Search powers will help to deter young people from carrying knives. Stop and Search powers are vital to the police to help them deter and tackle knife crime. They also help our community feel safer knowing that any knives found are removed out of circulation. Whilst we recognise that these powers have their challenges, there is currently no other alternative and it is important that the police have the right tools available to them to ensure our communities can remain safe and serious violence is reduced.

June 2019