

Written evidence submitted by Mixtape Madness (BYC023)

The evidence provided below has taken into consideration the 3,000 word limit provided.

1. The Governments Serious Violence Strategy sets ambitious goals but doesn't do enough to address mental health challenges, social deprivation and addressing the challenges of social media. I feel more focus should have been put on the outcomes from The Youth Violence report commissioned by Vicky Foxcroft. The points of focus should be the following:
 - Boasting support for schools
 - Increasing employment
 - Fundamental reform of youth services
2. More emphasis needs to be placed on providing walk in mental health support facilities to support young people. Mental health intervention should mandatory when violent incidents occur. This will reduce the rates of retaliation and act as away of introducing alternative ways to addressing heightened emotions. Considering the both offline and online, young people faced with constant challenges to their mental health but unfortunately very few are equipped with ways to address these challenges until its too late. Over simplifications via the press don't help. The range of issues I have seen ranging from young people having adults and young family members that are dependent on their income to young people being dependent on illicit and/or legal substances.
3. Instead of focusing on words like role models, we need to focus on phrases like real models or relatable models. The reality of certain socially deprived parts of the UK, is that youth violence has been an issue for over a decade. Many people aspire to leave these environments once they climb the class/income/wealth ladders. This is not to criticise as everyone has the choice to determine what they deem as a better life, plus other socio-economic factors are at play such as house prices. We need more incentives to encourage these people to stay or at least engage more in these environments. A massive issue in deprived environments is a poverty of ambition and this would be one way to address it.
4. In this social media age, it has become extremely dangerous for latch key children and families isolated from their social support networks or community. Social media is a tool which is a blessing and curse. It allows young people to build and connect with communities beyond their geographical and current physical location. Often when engaging with young people I have noticed that they can have 2 personas, one for the family and one for the peers. The latter is amplified by social media. As older generations we need to be better equipped and more conscious of the digital landscape. Government policy needs to find a way to support and create time for parents. In this economic climate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to strike the balance of gaining financial stability and providing emotional support for the family. We already know that finance plays a big part in family breakdowns.
5. Many young people complain about the same cycle and breaking the cycle. Reforms in family policy and more support programs for young people prior building their own families is required. As much as we talk about "knife crime", we often forget that more people die from domestic violence. What impact does domestic violence play in young people associating violence with power?

6. Efforts to ban music from an older generation and law enforcement, merely acts as PR. To be honest rather the opposite tends to mute or shape music. From my experience, when older and mainstream society endorse forms of music born from working class environments, it loses its “cool” factor. Krept and Konan delivered a moving short film, titled as “Ban Drill”. The message was powerful but is also a narrative that spans generations. Music is a reflection as oppose to a cause and when you listen closely it also provides a means of identifying causes and potential solutions. From Grime, Road Rap to now Drill, we see young people from challenging environments transition and develop careers via music. It also provides a key insight into the teenage flight or fight phase. Mostack, Krept and Konan, Wretch 32, Stormzy, Dr Dre and Jay-Z are prime examples of this transition, but this wouldn't be the case if CBOs were applied to them. A recommended must watch but here at Mixtape Madness, we have the pleasure of working with young people from challenging backgrounds and we feel the issue goes far beyond drill. We have met young people who lack basic soft skills and if the same level of funding that goes into processing them through the criminal justice system, went into equipping them, we strongly believe we would be living in a better society. A lack of focus on rehabilitation and a disproportionate focus on criminalising young people has led to doors of legitimate income closed. From young artists losing out tour revenue to young photographers losing the right to take pictures.
7. I feel that society needs to adopt a less draconian style of policing, especially in communities where history has displayed it simply doesn't work and fuels an “us” verses “them” situation. When someone is given the power to engage with members of the public, they must be equipped in dealing with socially sensitive issues such as mental health and local tensions. Criminal Behaviour Orders have become a weapon of choice for the police when dealing with a certain demographic and gender with devastating consequences for the individuals who find themselves in breach. The effect of the order can be described as a noose around the neck of the individual which curtails their movements and dictates who they can speak to, associate with, where and how. The overriding experience for the individuals involved is a revolving door between prison and the community.
8. The omnipresent nature of the CBO has in recent years encroached on an individuals' ability to express themselves through music, art and curtail viable lucrative income streams.
9. We argue that these CBOs are causing more harm than good and in keeping individuals in a state of purgatory going between the community and prison for non-criminal/ non anti-social behaviour.
10. In essence we state the CBOs are not working and are unjust for the following reasons:
 - CBOs have a high reoffending rate;
 - There is no rehabilitation element to the CBO, only punitive;
 - Sending Individuals who have breached is a waste of tax payers money;
 - Custodial sentences for breaches is a trivial deterrent;
 - The CBOs are too subjective in their application and fail to take into account breaching a person's Human rights;

- The CBOs are disproportionately applied to inner city working class youth who make up a substantial number in custody.
11. The imposition of CBO's in the majority of cases kills dreams and ambition in young individuals who need it most.
 12. The following paragraphs are from the 4FrontProject's newsletter that came into my inbox today. Highlighting both issues with our prisons and the lack of rehabilitation. If we are really serious about addressing youth violence then surely evaluating how we are rehabilitating them and integrating them in to society is rather important?
 13. An alarming report illustrating substandard practice at Feltham, "more than one in four (26%) children were locked in their cells during the working day, while only around a third could shower every day" (Bulman, 2019). The report continued, "oversight and scrutiny were lacking and we found evidence of poor practice, including the use of pain-inducing techniques, that had not been accounted for". Furthermore, a survey found "13% of children said they felt unsafe, while nearly two-thirds said they had been physically restrained and many suggested they felt victimised by staff". What does this do to the psychology of young offenders?
 14. This clearly indicates that current approaches to justice are causing serious harm and that criminal justice institutions that are supposed to protect and support young people are failing. In order to adequately help young people to live lives free from violence, we must shift our reliance on punishment, to healing. Young people need supportive environments to improve their mental health and wellbeing and anybody working with a duty of care to young people, must be equipped and trained to respond to violence with compassion, not aggression. Only then will we begin to see young people grow, develop and thrive
 15. No Evaluation for Rehabilitation Programmes
 16. Research by Transform Justice has highlighted that many people in prison and on probation are participating in rehabilitation programmes that have not been evaluated.
 17. A BBC report explained that, "between 2010 and 2018, 16,434 prisoners in England and Wales began non-evaluated courses and 101,662 offenders serving community sentences started such programmes between 2009/10 and 2016/17" (Shaw, 2019). This data was supplied to Transform Justice by the Ministry of Justice, highlighting worrying flaws in the criminal justice system's approach to impact measurement.

June 2019