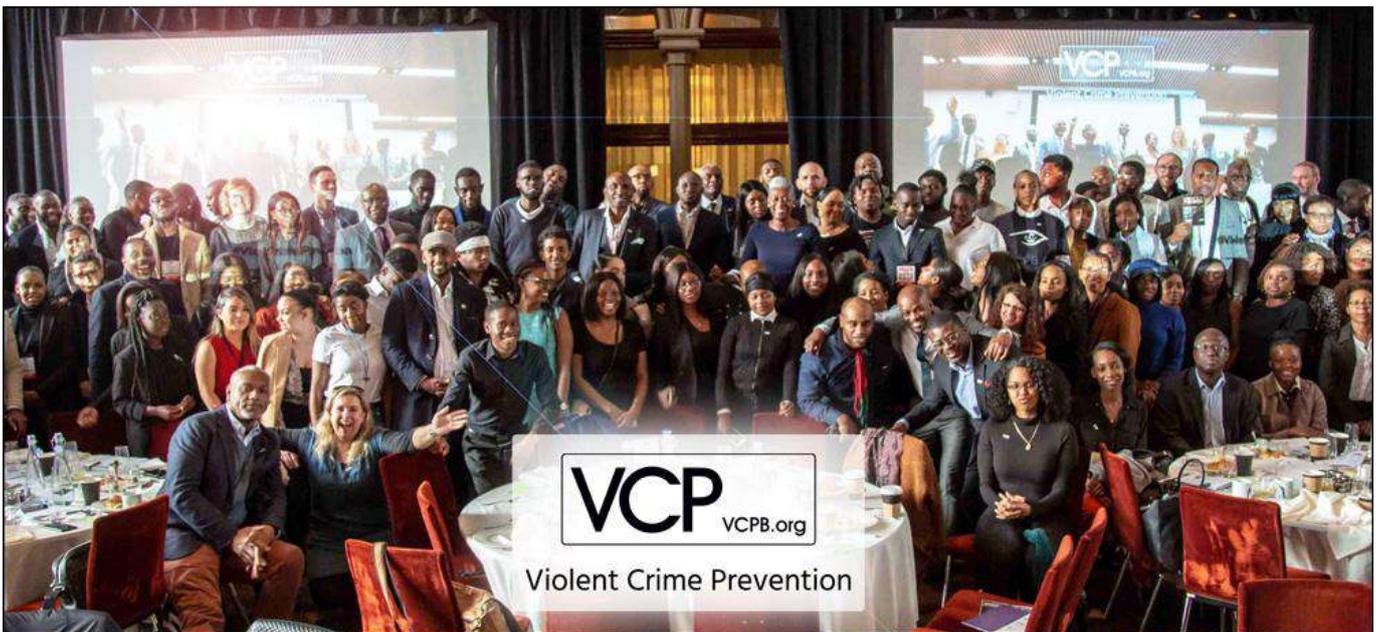


VCPB: Approaches to Violence Reduction

July 2019



Abstract

In a recent speech, Home Secretary Sajid Javid said ‘serious youth violence has now become a crisis’¹. Numerous government and charity backed reports have been published demonstrating that youth violence has been on the rise significantly. Resultantly, a Cross Party Commission was launched in 2017 to examine the root cause of youth violence in England, Wales, and Scotland.

In London specifically, there has been an upward trend in youth violence. Figures for Knife Crime with Injury in under 25s have risen steadily since January 2014, as have the number of Serious Youth Violence Victims.

Recent media focus has been on the level of stabbings in London, hereunder 24-years-old saw the biggest increase in the number of people killed by knives between 2017 and 2018, rising from 57 to 91, an increase of 59.6%.²

The complexity of youth violence makes it difficult to quantify and can include emotional violence, neglect, sexual abuse, and physical abuse.

The Violent Crime Prevention Board set out their objectives as follows:

‘We believe that London and the UK should be an aspirational place. Each citizen has a right to feel safe in the diverse, community where they live, study, work or visit. The Violent Crime Prevention Board (VCPB) is an independent body that seeks to offer intelligence-led, strategic advice and information. This will be of benefit to the community, local authorities, the police, statutory and government agencies to help prevent violent crime - in particular, among young people.’³

By adopting a joined-up, solution-focused, and intelligence-led strategy, based upon 8 core themes, the VCPB aims to address the main contributory factors of violent crime. These are areas which the VCPB feel are intrinsic to tackling the violence seen within the youth of London.



¹ ‘Barnardo’s welcomes Sajid Javid’s leadership on tackling serious violence’ published 15 April 2018

(<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/barnardos-welcomes-sajid-javids-leadership-tackling-serious-violence> accessed 31/05/2019)

² ‘Homicide in England Wales: year ending March 2018’ Section 7. Highest number of sharp instrument homicides seen in year ending March 2018. Office for National Statistics

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/homicideinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018#highest-number-of-sharp-instrument-homicides-seen-in-year-ending-march-2018> accessed 31/05/2019)

³ Vision for VCPB- taken from Violent Crime Prevention Board Strategy 26 September 2018. (<https://vcpb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-09-26-VCPB-Strategy-V1-with-action-plan.pdf> accessed 28/05/2019)

The VCPB operates with a focus on 8 themes which were each tested during an event they hosted in April 2019. This was done using a range of questions, each composed by a VCPB member who has lead responsibility in the corresponding area. These were presented to a large panel of over 250 people who came from a variety of professional and academic backgrounds, community leads, youth; parents of victims and victims of violent crime, faith groups (Christian) and interested individuals. Invitations to the event were advertised on Eventbrite.



It was theorised that if a general consensus can be identified for an idea(s) to reduce violence from the answers provided by a number of field ‘experts’, then the identified idea is one which is needing of pursuance.

Analysis of these answers would help ascertain what a range of individuals believed were beneficial approaches to the problem. And if such attitudes were apparent, were these shared across the group? Therefore potentially indicating an area relevant for development.

The overall intention of the event and this subsequent report is to aid the development of insight on how best to approach the subject of violence in young people, from a wide variety of people with different experiences, attitudes, and behaviours toward the subject matter. It will assist in building an understanding of opinions from a wide demographic of people regarding how to best prevent violence amongst young people and potential methods to be used to counter it.

Executive summary

During a Leadership Breakfast on April 16, 2019, the VCPB presented around 250 delegates with 8 questions⁴. Each question is based upon a theme the VCPB has identified, and intended to provoke discussion and ideas among the delegates.

Responses from the delegates were collated, and in doing so, a number of trends become apparent. Based upon these trends the responses were aligned alongside similar responses, producing 7 clear key groups. These 'concepts' were attributed to a description representing the ideas it covered.



The concepts identified from the event coalesce to form a concrete foundation for actionable recommendations.

The focus for these recommendations is on young people in London, and the development of intervention and prevention programmes at a community level. Not only is this recognised by the VCPB, but also a number of other charities and organisations.

Owing to the similarity of the responses from the delegates, reaching across all 8 questions, the VCPB could apply the concepts derived from the analysis across a number of its own themes.

Simplistic cross-partner sharing of the results is possible. Overall this presents a more resourceful way of applying new approaches to what is a large problem, effectively streamlining the process of developing ideas and practical applications as it provides a concentrated point of thought.

Real-world examples of initiatives that are already in place were used to support the concepts. Many mirror the ideas on which the concepts were constructed.

There is a real drive and endeavour to reduce youth violence, but it will not be possible without Government commitment and a concerted effort both from organisations and individuals working to reduce youth violence and those that support these.

When taking together the number of initiatives already in existence and the similarities in ideas of the delegates, investing time to draw together existing charitable and violence reduction schemes whilst acting as a spearhead for them would prove more beneficial.

The recently published Office of the National Statistics document 'The Rise in Knife Crime' has galvanised the debate on the role of the Public Health Approach in London. The influence of health and mental health well-being is central to the discussion and is one of the strategic cornerstones of

⁴ See Appendix 1 for list of full questions supplied

the newly formed Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in London. The VCPB Health lead has been appointed as the Clinical Director of the VRU in NHS London and will undertake a comprehensive review of health-related violence reduction practice and research to influence policy at a strategic level.



Key Findings:

- **343 responses** were identified from over 200 attendees, showing good engagement
- Many of the **responses were either duplicated or very similar**, indicating a **trend in the thinking of the delegates**
- Responses from the delegates were similar regardless of the direct question being posed, suggesting that **a solution may be applicable across a range of themes**
- The concepts represent a combination of thoughts and ideas for ways to reduce youth violence, these were easily attributable to **real-world examples already in use**
- Around **40%** of the responses could be aligned to **more than one concept**, suggesting that the problem faced would **benefit from a wide-ranging approach**
- Methods to approach the violence situation which promotes a **community focus was favoured**. Projects promoting feeling **safe in the community** and more **trust with the authorities** would prove beneficial
- Proportionally, more responses were given against areas seen as ‘traditional’ for violence reduction, such as education and youth engagement. However, **mental health received a significant amount of responses**, reflecting a changing attitude towards youth violence
- Funding is a key point. Resources are finite and all projects require a **sustainable funding source**
- There are **numerous existing, and ‘up-and-coming’ charities** and projects that are aimed at tackling the violence problem. Many of these either overlap in their goals, or their method in achieving their goals
- Drawing together a number of smaller community initiatives will prove beneficial, as **local knowledge correctly resourced and utilised could have quick and direct success**.
- A **concerted effort to align multiple projects** would be valuable. Therefore, enabling better direction setting, ability to campaign for funding, sharing of knowledge/data and identifying where problems are arising

- Owing to the number of **methods already in existence** for solving the youth violence problem, working to **find a method that works using these would prove more beneficial than re-producing a pre-existing idea.**
- Trying to **develop a completely new idea** runs the risk of becoming another initiative or charity in a **large group of pre-existing charities vying for finite resources**, which would seriously **hamper its ability to be effective.**
- The **VCPB need to utilise its different approach of opinions and perspectives** from a **variety** of different professions and backgrounds to achieve a successful impact in reducing youth violence
- A **re-questioning of the delegates will help** to further develop these concepts
- **Measuring the success** of any initiative to drive down youth violence is difficult. So, it is imperative to start developing a method to do this, in order to **establish best practice moving forward**

Recommendations



Concepts

The concepts developed from the responses provided by the delegates have been classified as per the below. A summary has been provided as a definition of the ideas represented. As these concepts have been developed from a multitude of responses, they are seen to have serious application possibilities across various areas within, and externally, of VCP. These ideas are realistic and applicable, copious real-world examples are supplied within this document, allowing for the VCPB to begin collating these and driving them toward the goal they all look to reach.

Development Opportunities:

- Development opportunities encompass a need to develop or enhance existing structures or operations that will help tackle the issues young people face that may ultimately lead them down paths of crime and violence.

Community Engagement:

- Tackling serious violence requires a cross-society and community approach. Early intervention can be driven by communities and is vital to protecting vulnerable children and young adults from being drawn into drugs, crime, gang culture, and violence.

Safety and trust:

- Removing fear and stigmatisation will help create secure and safe environments for youths, and make them feel like they belong. Also, strengthening relationships between young people and authoritative structures will develop more trust in existing systems

Direct Engagement:

- Direct engagement opportunities provide support in a manner that is done directly to youths. Additionally, it can provide support to young people in an environment they directly engage with i.e. school, youth club, church, family, etc.

Communication:

- A more proactive and communicative approach, that enables collaboration and better partnerships, is needed in order to recognise and share best practices at reducing violence.

Funding:

- Investment opportunities for charities and youth services will have a positive impact on young people, and the environments they live and socialise in.

Mentors

- There is a lack of positive role models for young people. The importance of a mentor or trusted older figure who can provide advice and a consistent, reliable source of support, which is something that many young people do not have in their lives.

Actions

1. The VCPB need to take the lead and begin to draw together different partners to start applying the initiatives that have been laid out. Promoting a close working relationship between partners will enable better direction setting, an ability to campaign for funding, an increased sharing of knowledge/data, and identifying where problems are arising.
2. The VCPB should draw together smaller community initiatives and become a leader for them. Giving them a stable platform to all work together. Utilising their knowledge and connections within the community will increase the chances of success.
3. Establishing a method to record the success of such endeavours will allow an establishment of best practice that can be shared.
4. Sustainable funding needs to be sourced, support from a governmental level would be highly advantageous. Alternatively, if funding is not achievable, the VCPB can become a point of contact for advice, where they can direct and help smaller charities gain funding.
5. It is essential to continue to approach a wide demographic and canvas them for more ideas. Keeping in touch with these groups will help to provide realistic feedback on what works.
6. Improving mental well-being in the community and schools. The new NHS appointed Clinical Director for the Violence Reduction Unit should provide strategic leadership in this area.
7. The commonalities in vision and delivery of the community-based violence programmes lend themselves to strategic coordination to prevent duplication, inconsistency, and competition for the limited funding streams available.

Results

The 8 VCP themes were each tested during an event hosted by the VCPB. This was done by a method of questions, each composed by a VCPB member who works in the corresponding area, put forward to a large panel of over 200 delegates coming from a variety of backgrounds.

The delegates were asked to write down their thoughts and ideas provoked by the questions they were given. Following the 8 questions at the VCP event, 343 definitive answers were identified. The answers were collated and qualitatively analysed.

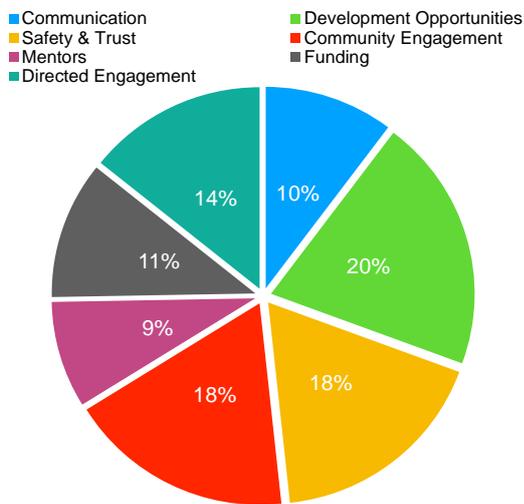
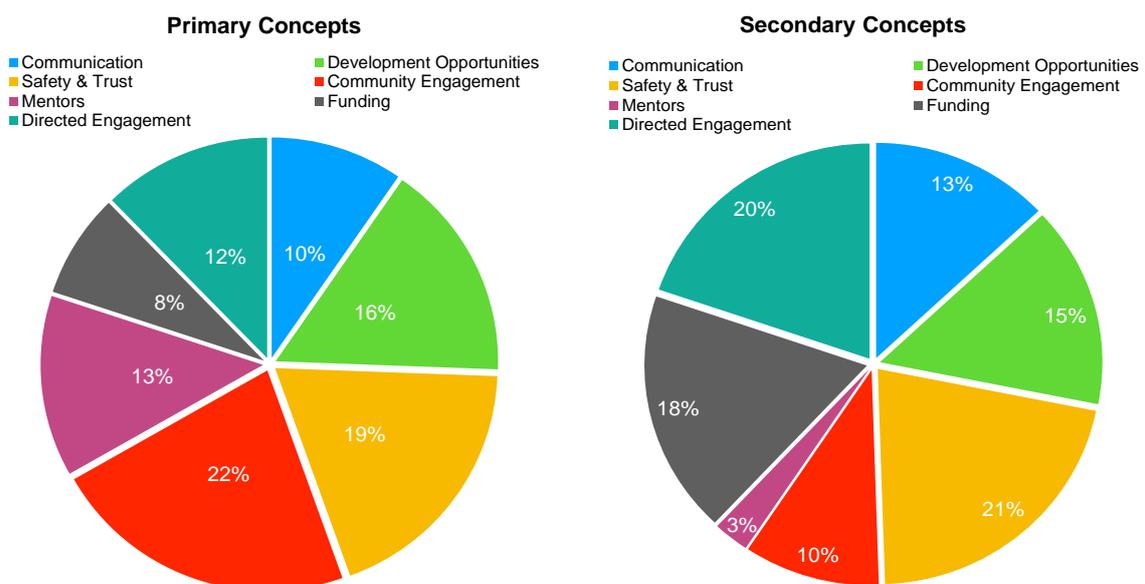


Figure 1: Chart of the percentage breakdown of overarching themes identified from the answers at the VCP event.

Collating the answers from the delegates, 7 overarching concepts were identified, that were derived from themes that best tied together with the answers they gave. Figure 1: shows the breakdown of responses by theme.

With some of the answers, it became clear that these could be aligned to more than one overarching concept. This was strongly apparent in 40% of the answers, therefore the results were further broken down into Primary and Secondary Concepts. This enables us to better understand that one idea to tackle violence may be intrinsically linked to another or needs another idea to support it.

This is represented with the charts below:



Question Theme	Number of recorded responses
Parent and Family	16
Police	21
Education	76
Health and Mental Health	58
Business	54
Stop and Search	19
Youth Engagement	61
Faith	38

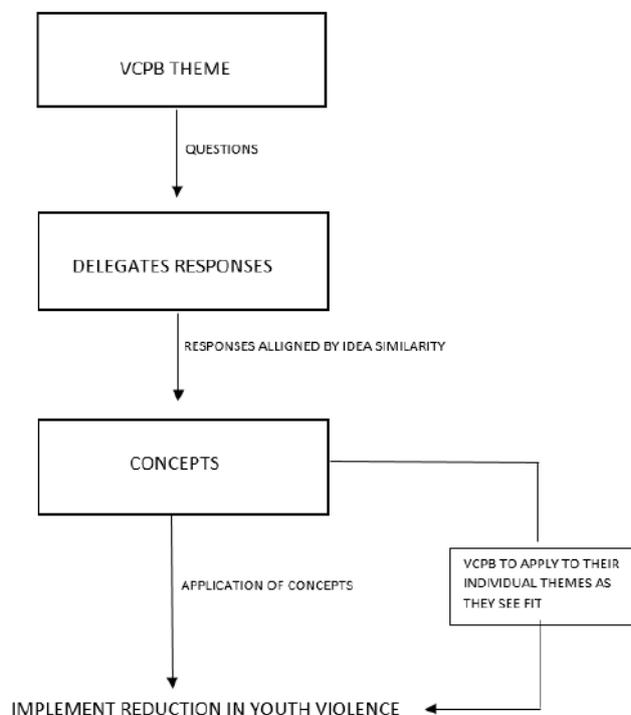
It was found that the number of responses by delegates was higher on questions that represented more established methods of working with young people, i.e. through education (22.15%), or youth engagement (17.78%).

Table 1: Number of recorded responses for each question theme

However, there were also high responses for health and mental health (16.9%), which could be representative of changing attitudes toward violence. The influence of the success had by Scotland’s Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is likely having an impact here. Albeit, the model must reflect the demographics and diversity of England/London, not experienced in Glasgow.

Application of results

Responses from the event were categorised by comments, personal views/opinions, ideas for initiatives and examples of initiatives that are already being delivered.



The responses can largely be described as ‘hands-on’ approaches to dealing with youth violence. With many suggesting methods that should be implemented to bring levels of violence down.

Furthermore, it was evident that a sizeable proportion of the responses were relatively general. Whereby they addressed the wider issue of youth violence and were not necessarily aligned to the specific VCP theme highlighted in the question the respondent was replying to.

This could indicate that the delegates used the opportunity to share their feelings about the overall issue of youth violence, and perhaps needed encouragement to compartmentalise the issue. Nonetheless, it was readily evident that numerous responses were very similar in nature.

Figure 2: Charts representing the percentage breakdown of identified overarching themes by Primary and Secondary strands

Figure 1: Flow chart showing the development of concepts and practical application

Taking these similarities into consideration it was possible to align a multitude of ideas together under overarching concepts. Enabling not only an opportunity to provide a concise description of the ideas represented, but also concentrate numerous methods of practical applications in one place.

Moreover, aligning similar responses together allows the ideas expressed to be applied simultaneously across multiple areas. Rather than developing numerous means to individually tackle each of the 8 VCP themes. Using this method, each new concept - and the ideas it represents - can be applied to multiple VCP themes.

The concepts also have the potential for cross-partner sharing if required. Overall, this is a resourceful way of applying new approaches to what is a large societal problem, and effectively streamlines the process of developing ideas and practical applications, as it provides a concentrated point of thought.

Summary of Findings

- Overall, Development Opportunities (20%), Community Engagement (18%), and Safety and Trust (18%) were identified equally when looking at overall results
- 40% of the ideas easily aligned to more than one concept, where this was an obvious factor the idea was aligned to a secondary concept
- The largest proportion of ideas (22%) could be ascribed to a community engagement concept
- The largest secondary theme was Safety and Trust (21%)
- Many of the ideas in community engagement were alike in that they suggested methods of utilising a community voice and encouraging better liaison with community organisations
- Safety and Trust was a large factor across both Primary (19%) and Secondary (21%) concepts
 - especially regarding removing the fear and stigmatisation that exists in some communities. Highlighting this as an area that needs focus
- Funding was an important Secondary theme, reflecting a consensus that funding is needed to be increased in order to make any effective changes. Without the funding, the necessary actions cannot be implemented
- Development opportunities were seen as equally important by all
- Despite there being such a varied demographic present, there were noticeable comparable ideas put forward. Suggesting that these methods have worth in further examination
- Proportionally, more responses were given against areas seen as 'traditional' for violence reduction, such as education and youth engagement
- A high amount of responses was prompted by health and mental health, reflecting the changing attitudes seen in general toward youth violence
- New and refreshed approaches to tackling violence were preferred over continuing with existing methods
- Many initiatives were already in existence, however, there was no concerted effort to align these together, which could potentially provide better results
- Traditional 'hard' methods such as stop and search, whilst important, still lacked understanding within the community and thus lent itself to being met with hostility.

Concept Analysis



Society is currently in a state of flux as more and more is being done to try to reduce violence. The effectiveness of these policies is yet to be truly understood, but this opens doors for organisations like VCP to get even more involved in decision making.

Therefore, the identified concepts can be used as a basis for the creation of recommendations. These can apply directly to VCP themes, and also any charity or organisation working separately - or in partnership. The ultimate aim is to create actionable responses, which can then be rolled out as best practice across London.

Fundamentally, the most important finding from this research is the need to act together as a united front to ensure maximum impact, and using these concepts as a point of reference can be an effective means to achieve this.



Development Opportunities

Development opportunities encompass a need to develop or enhance existing structures or operations that will help tackle the issues young people face which may ultimately lead them down paths of crime and violence.

One overarching aspect that was frequently mentioned regarding development opportunities is the pursuance of a public health approach. By definition, public health approaches aim to provide maximum benefit for the largest population⁵. A public health approach to tackling violence, therefore, involves looking at the problem inclusively, and not as an isolated, police enforcement problem. Violence is a preventable consequence of a range of factors⁶. So, becoming more directly involved in existing projects that focus on looking at early intervention and prevention, would allow the VCPB a chance to interject their ideas into the bigger picture. Developing and maintaining relationships with existing and new partners would be fundamental to expanding the VCPB's message, whilst also developing inclusive policies to reduce the adverse effects of early-life experiences, or harmful influencers and experiences.

Impetus is a charity chosen by the government to deliver the £200m Youth Endowment Fund⁷ as part of their long-term, public health plan to tackle serious violence across England and Wales. Working in partnership with the Early Intervention Foundation and the Social Investment Business, Impetus plans to grow this fund to provide more opportunities to others. The focus is on long-term early intervention by working with front line organisations to provide the continued support they need to put young people on the right track, or simply on track. The VCPB can benefit from uniting with this organisation to influence how funding can be brought into more London based charities and organisations to give life to some of their ideas. For example, developing the education system to support young people by training teachers and youth workers to identify arising, or existing problems that may be present in children's homes to ensure help and support can be provided early. This would then prevent youths seeking support from other sources like gangs, and would positively impact their educational futures. Aspire Education Group talks about the need to increase coaching, family learning programmes, and peer and specialist mentoring⁸.

⁵ https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/public_health/en/

⁶ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/violence-reduction-unit-vru/public-health-approach-reducing-violence>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-chosen-to-deliver-200m-youth-endowment-fund-to-tackle-violence>

⁸ Reference: taken from a London Mayoral briefing on Drugs Policy in the Capital produced by Blaksox June 2019. www.aspireeducationgroup.com, www.blaksox.com

Additionally, there is a long-overdue need to provide opportunities to develop practical skills that will be more beneficial after youths leave school at any age. Growing Against Violence (GAV)⁹ provides public safety training for youths in schools that follows the World Health Organisation's 'public health approach to tackling violence'. Their approach is evidence-based and since 2008, it has been delivered to over 180,000 students in nearly 700 schools¹⁰ – this figure is constantly growing. Their programmes include; parent and family training about gang membership and promoting active parental engagement, social media, and the consequences of handling a weapon. Lambeth Schools Partnership is aiming for every primary school in the borough to have access to GAV¹¹, and is beginning this process. This, therefore, shows how this model and approach can be developed to become code of best practice, and that the VCPB can take a similar approach and carry messages similar to these charities, to its partners and facilitate growth.



Community Engagement

Tackling serious violence requires a cross-society and community approach. Early intervention can be driven by communities and is vital to protecting vulnerable children and young adults from being drawn into drugs, crime, gang culture, and any form of violence.

Community engagement was found to be one of the most discussed concepts - and encompasses a majority of the VCPB's driving aims, such as; Youth, Voluntary and Community Organisations, Policing, Community Growth, Health, Education and Faith. The VCPB believe that an increase in community engagement from a plethora of avenues will inspire local communities to build a more aspirational future for young people and to provide a safe space where all can thrive¹².

Utilising the community voice not only empowers individuals to make positive decisions to actively change existing stigmas but also means that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and be involved in their individual betterment. To achieve this, community support groups that hold regular meetings with an 'open door' policy can be created. This would encourage everyone within the community to come together to talk about problems openly, and seek advice. This is similar to the Lions Society in Croydon, who believe that it 'takes a village to raise a child'. This group of barbers has created a space where young people can open up and talk about what's going on freely, without

⁹ growingagainstviolence.org.uk

¹⁰ <https://growingagainstviolence.org.uk/people-option-2/>

¹¹ lambethschoolspartnership.uk

¹² <https://vcpb.org/community-growth/>

fear of prejudice or judgement. Their agenda is to give young people an opportunity to be able to see that it is possible to have community unity without fear¹³. They embody community engagement and work with schools, councils, and youth clubs, to actively try and tackle gang culture in 'hot-spots', and how to avoid knife crime. They also offer apprenticeships, counselling on substance misuse and help into education. This group can be used as an example of best practice and can be expanded to other boroughs.

Of similar importance is the need to encourage greater youth involvement in community programmes. This can be done by encouraging youths to participate in groups like Street Games¹⁴, or signing up to organisations like 'Lives Not Knives',¹⁵ and the 'London Needs You Alive Campaign' to become a youth ambassador. There is also an opportunity to join the newly launched VCP Ambassadors and Champions initiative¹⁶. Not only does this create more opportunities outside of school, but also helps them build support networks based on trust and respect.

An example of positive community engagement is Another Night of Sisterhood (ANOS) operating in Croydon as a direct response to the perceived lack of grassroots engagement within the BME Community. With the increase in Youth Violence & Knife Crime across London, they created a safe space that would allow the voices of both parents, young people, and practitioners to share their experiences, with a focus on peer learning and improved engagement.



Safety and trust

Safety and trust was a large discussion point and it works in parallel with all concepts raised, therefore highlighting its importance when developing new programmes - or adapting existing ones.

Removing fear and stigmatisation will help create secure and safe environments for youths, and make them feel like they belong. Also, strengthening relationships between young people and authoritative structures will develop more trust in existing systems. Successfully improving the perspectives of safety and trust in young people hinges on something more than a 'catch-all' approach – but should be multi-faceted, and implemented across all VCP themes, so that these feelings and relationships remain consistent, even in times of negativity.

¹³ <https://www.croydonadvertiser.co.uk/news/croydon-news/how-croydon-barbershops-being-used-1880995>

¹⁴ <https://www.streetgames.org/>

¹⁵ <https://livesnotknives.org/youth-ambassador/>

¹⁶ <https://vcpc.org/ambassadors-champions/>

The relationship with the Police (a VCP theme), was highlighted as a hugely significant factor for safety and trust. The Police are an authority that should exude these feelings within communities, however, there is an entrenched lack of trust between police and young people. It is largely recognised that there is an intrinsic need to change perspectives around policies of stop and search, and organisations – including the police – are taking steps to improve these relationships. For example, StopWatch¹⁷ and the Haringey Stop and Search Monitoring Group¹⁸ highlighted that there is a distinct lack of understanding on how to approach stop and searches from both a policing, youth and community perspective. StopWatch aspires to be a conduit for stop and search police complaints and become a service akin to Childline, which young people with concerns about their experiences can call to receive support. StopWatch works to promote an inclusive community conversation to ultimately create a better understanding, and to reduce hostility and negative tension. They have created a guide¹⁹ which contains key information around police interactions, this is available on their website – but should be circulated around schools, hospitals, police stations, and youth clubs. The police, working in partnership with the VCPB, gives an opportunity for negative historic relationships to be challenged and developed. Therefore, promoting or helping the work of current organisations would be a positive way to spread messages of trust and safety.

This links in with another strong point raised by the VCPB - that schools should also be seen as a 'safe zone' rather than an avenue for risk of violence and distrust. They should be encouraged through policy to keep children in school, to keep supporting them, as it has been found that those more likely to become involved in violent crime are those that are excluded from education and school. These young people are referred to alternative institutions where they become more vulnerable to victimisation by gangs, dealers seeking runners for their 'goods' etc., as they have no alternative support.

A recommended way to achieve 'safe zones' is to have neutral intermediaries in youth clubs and schools with staff who are approachable and available to talk to without any fear of repercussion. This also includes increasing the availability of councillors to help with mental health. The VCPB strongly believe that there should be no stigmatisation or fear around talking about mental health, and educators need to start teaching that there is no 'normal' from a younger age. This will have a hugely important impact on a young person's value and self-worth, thus a decrease in an individual's mental vulnerabilities will make them less susceptible to being drawn into gang cultures and violent behaviour.

¹⁷ <http://www.stop-watch.org/>

¹⁸ http://www.haringeystopandsearch.co.uk/_about-us/

¹⁹ <http://www.stop-watch.org/news-comment/story/stop-and-search-a-guide-for-parents-and-children-plus-short-film>



Direct Engagement

Direct engagement means to encourage opportunities to provide support in a manner that is done directly with youths. Additionally, it means to provide support to young people in an environment they directly engage with i.e. school, youth club, faith communities, family, etc. Many studies show that being in education, training schemes, or employment, act as significant protective factors that reduce the vulnerability of youths – supporting the importance of this concept.

Interventions such as these arguably hold overbearing importance when children are growing into themselves and their communities, and so it is important to engage more in this process to ensure young people are in the very best position to make the correct choices. Fundamentally, the focus for direct engagement is on key times in young people’s lives i.e., the transition between primary and secondary school, and making facilities like Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, readily available to them. Care must be taken not to add stigma and labelling to young people who require support from these services.

A great way to encourage this is through the use of youth initiatives like ‘The Young Ambassadors’²⁰ from Phil Edwards Pupil Referral Unit in Croydon, to make the engagement more relatable. These students recognise the pressure young people face when starting a secondary school to join a gang – predominantly because they don’t have the confidence to lead their own paths, and are enticed by the prospect of protection and safety – and they engaged with Year 6 pupils to help educate them. There should be a plan in place to ensure talks similar to this are taking place in all primary schools, so every pupil has a chance to hear their advice and guidance.

Growing Against Violence²¹ and Solution Focused World are similar programmes that support the use of effective and reality-based engagement to build resilience and reduce trauma in young people²². Their teaching sessions and workshops are bookable for schools and youth clubs, and they are actively involved in the safer neighbourhood board in Lambeth, and also ‘Team Lambeth’²³ – which is a community anti-violence movement. These are examples of how engagement works on an individual level, but if more organisations come together to adopt similar programmes, more can be done to reduce violence.

²⁰ <https://www.london.gov.uk/node/46162>

²¹ growingagainstviolence.org.uk

²² <https://www.solutionfocusedworld.com/>

²³ <https://twitter.com/Solutionfocusw>

Additionally, sporting initiatives like Kick Off @3²⁴ provide opportunities for young people to engage with each-other across Boroughs and Counties. A number of football tournaments are hosted by the local police constabulary and community organisations throughout the year, culminating in a finale at the beginning of July where teams across London and the UK take part to win the prestigious De-Gale Cup. The fees paid from each tournament is donated to an identified charity, giving players an opportunity to give to others. This initiative demonstrates the possibilities of positive partnerships, and the importance of engagement.

The VCPB encourages Boroughs and schools to utilise the range of extra-curricular activities on offer to children and young people through Cadets schemes. The VCPB sponsored 10 young people in a London School to purchase uniforms in order to enrol as Police Cadets. Relationships with other services such as the RAF and the Army, also offer direct engagement with the potential to career opportunities.



Communication:

A more proactive and communicative approach, that enables collaboration and better partnerships, is needed in order to recognise and share best practices at reducing violence.

Now more than ever it is important to change the narrative around violence and crime to promote more positivity, rather than fear. For example, the Metropolitan Police post pictures of knife, weapon, and drug seizures on its Twitter page to show that stop and search is an effective method – despite its controversy – in removing weapons from the streets. Whilst this is proactive and shows the police are engaging more socially, there is no real evidence to suggest that these images reduce knife crime and violence, and could be seen as counterproductive²⁵. Success in reducing violence should be articulated in a much more positive light, to encourage youths to engage, rather than feeling a need to conform to a socially defined expectation.

This is closely linked to community and direct engagement – fundamental to a communicative approach is a unified message that is clear, accurate and sensitive. More nuanced consideration of wording in reports, talks, news stories, etc. is important to reduce a ‘branding’ effect towards youths and communities, which can subsequently create barriers. Similarly, there is a need to avoid racial bias or discrimination when discussing and developing strategic approaches. There is a need to

²⁴ <https://www.kickoffat3.co.uk/>

²⁵ <https://twitter.com/FloEshalomi/status/1135857147609321472>

explore and communicate with various sub-groups involved in violence to ensure maximum inclusivity²⁶.

Listening to young people - especially those who have been affected by violence, or are in prison as a result of violence - would be a good way to ensure relatable take-home messages. In order to reduce violence adequately, it's important to gain a better understanding of the levels of violence that young people experience in their lives, how this makes them feel and where they feel safe²⁷. The Youth Violence Commission conducted the Safer Lives Survey to measure this, and the results will be used as an underlying evidence base for work moving forward and ensures young people are at the centre moving forward.



Funding:

Investment opportunities for charities and youth services will have a positive impact on young people, and the environments they live and socialise in.

Funding was found to be an important secondary commonality amongst the collated feedback and is therefore considered as a significant factor to support the key primary recommendations, like development opportunities, in reducing violence.

There are numerous amounts of support outside of VCP that shows the necessity of re-investment into the younger generation. Analysis conducted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime highlights that cuts to youth services are one of the factors that have contributed to a surge in violence. On average, councils have reduced spending on youth services by 40%, but some have been reduced by up to 91% over the past few years – with the hardest-hit areas showing higher levels of violence.

Austerity has impacted youth services hard – it has removed vast amounts of youth workers and safe spaces - which are crucial to support young people who are particularly vulnerable during that transition between childhood and adulthood/ primary and secondary school age.

²⁶ <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngovmb/documents/s62485/04b%20SYV%20PH%20Appendix%20A%20-%20Report.pdf>

²⁷ <http://yvcommission.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Interim-Report-FINAL-version-2.pdf>

There are initiatives being rolled out by the government that is beginning to re-invest in preventing future violence. For example, the £200 million Youth Endowment Fund, the £45million Young Londoners Fund, £7 million to projects to combat youth violence across London, £250,000 to community group and grassroots initiatives, and £2 million in Gang Exit Services. It has been found that the Young Londoners fund is already benefitting 66,000 youths, and with continued investment could be on track to benefit up to 40,000 more²⁸. Football Beyond Borders²⁹ - a preventative charity working with disengaged youths, to bring them back into the community and prevent challenging behaviour patterns - is just one example of a charity receiving funding, and they urge other charities and organisations to follow suit if they want to make real and continued differences in the lives of young people³⁰.



Mentors

Mentoring is a concept that drives and supports a number of the aforementioned recommendations, and also encompasses a number of the VCPB’s main themes – especially Youth. Not only do mentors use positive examples to inspire others, but they provide a safe and trusted connection for youths who may not have that support elsewhere.

Mentoring presents someone who is relatable to those who feel like they are unrepresented or misunderstood, because they may have been in a similar position themselves. The VCPB have an existing Ambassadors and Champions Programme, and are currently aligned with proactive individuals like; Faron Alex Paul, whose prominent campaign ‘Don’t Stab Your Future’ is gaining traction and support from celebrities like Idris Elba, and also Amani Simpson, who made a short film based on his personal experiences that was screened in January this year. This is being shown to schools as part of their anti-knife crime programmes.

Other ambassadors such as Bernard Adjei – Young Banker of the Year 2016 and Programme Delivery Manager / Enterprise Programmes Group CIO at Lloyds Bank, and Jordan Campbell CEO of JC Sport

²⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/fund-for-youth-projects-and-programmes>

²⁹ <https://footballbeyondborders.org/projects/>

³⁰ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/fund-for-youth-projects-and-programmes>

and a secondary school teacher, have never been involved in criminal activity. They provide real-world examples of what can be achieved without engagement in crime, and highlight - as role models - that crime and deviance is not a rite-of-passage.

Individuals like this are promoting a shift when it comes to aspiring and influencing young people to push against violent crime. By spreading more positive stories and experiences of those who have managed to turn their lives around, and not about the violence and stabbings, creates realistic and relatable examples of what young people can do with their lives.

To enhance this programme further, in line with the VCPB's themes and the concepts identified from the recent event, schools and charities can work alongside its ambassadors and champions to help enhance their message and reach more young people. Therefore, creating sustainable partnerships that offer an opportunity to spearhead projects that are long-term and solution-orientated to the problems young people face.

Summary



- At the event 7 underlying concepts were found, all of which encapsulates ideas and solutions put forward by the participants.
- Overall, Development Opportunities, Community Engagement, and Safety and Trust were viewed equally as areas where transformation could be applied, all closely linked by the need for funding.
- The identified concepts will be used as a basis for the creation of recommendations. These can apply directly to the VCPB's themes, and also any other charity or organisation working separately or in partnership.
- It is believed that a framework that promotes collaboration and a solid 'bottom-up approach' to ensure maximum human development needs to be developed, consequently, all operational considerations will fall into place.

- Multiple charities and organisations may have a similar focus on violence prevention and early intervention programmes, but it is also important to avoid becoming 'silo-infrastructures' and acting as independent bodies. There should still be a focus on building partnerships between existing groups and charities, to ensure youth are the main priority and beneficiaries of the outcomes, rather than the charity or organisation itself.

Partnership working encapsulates the three main approaches used by the VCPB – mapping; where effecting initiatives are identified and presented on the VCPB website for easy access to good practice. Networking; is used by members of the Board to make referrals and connections with likeminded or similar organisations. The Board uses the profile of its members to attend and contribute to meetings and Boards where decisions are made that impact on the community. They use their influence to contribute the voice of the community into those discussions.

Appendix 1

Questions posed at the VCPB's leadership Breakfast – April 16, 2019

- Business – How can the government and corporate sector support the entrepreneurial spirit often demonstrated by young people that are lured into drug dealing and fraud?
- Education – Much of the rise in violent crime results from exclusions, low achievement and 'falling-out' of the education system. What can be done?
- Faith – What active and sustainable role can faith and community organisations play to address youth violence in London?
- Health and Mental Health – There is a clear connection between mental health and violence. What should be done to improve the emotional wellbeing of young Londoners (Young people)?
- Parenting and Family – How can we encourage parents to disclose concerns regarding their children's possible involvement in youth violence and what support should be available?
- Police – What actions can we take to improve our engagement with local community services that aim to prevent violent crime?
- Stop and Search – How can the relationship between young people and the police be improved?
- Youth Engagement – What is the best way to engage and support young people to arrive at solutions to tackle violence?

Organisations represented or contributions received:

Abianda – Young women affected by gangs

Access UK – BME Careers and youth services

Amos Bursary – Aid talented BME into education

Aspire Education Group

Aviard Inspires

Crimestoppers UK

Family Action – Building Stronger Families

Father 2 Father – Mentoring and coaching

Father Figure – Services for men accessing their children, Parenting for fathers

Generating Genius – Creating the next generation – STEM talent

Grit – Breakthrough Programmes

Hackney Wick FC

Inside Out Solutions – Transformational Life and Education Coaching Solutions

JC Sport – ‘It’s more than just football’

Kick Off @ 3 – Sport, education and employment

Leap – Confronting Conflict

Fazamnesty – Don’t Stab Your Future

London Village Network (LVN) – Youth Services App.

Neighbourhood Watch UK – Safer and stronger communities

Passion Project

Peace Alliance

Race Equality Foundation – Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

Red Thread Charity

St. Giles Trust

Spac Nation

StopWatch – Community Support for Police Stop and Search

The Safety Box – Youth Programmes

Together Transforming Behaviour

Tutu Foundation - Prevent and Resolve Conflict

UK Youth

Volunteer Police Cadets

Waltham Forest Young Advisors – Empowering Youth, Changing Lives

Young Black Business Awards