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The Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP
Chairman
Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
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25 March 2015

Dear Keith

HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY ON GANGS AND YOUTH CRIME

On behalf of the Government, I am responding to the Committee's report on Gangs and Youth Crime published on 27 February. I would like to thank the Committee for its consideration of the Government's Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme and its report. Much progress has been made to better understand and respond to gang and youth crime since the publication of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence report in 2011.

Following the launch of the programme of work with local areas in April 2012, local areas have changed the way they work to tackle gang and youth crime, by reviewing the challenges they face, and making more effective and efficient use of their resources.

Over the last three years, we have published successive annual reports to highlight the achievements and challenges for the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, with the Annual Report for 2014/15 published on 12 March (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-programme-annual-report-2014-to-2015>).

The Government has considered the eleven conclusions and recommendations made by the Committee, and I have set out our detailed response in the paper enclosed with this letter.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. May', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Government response to the Home Affairs Select Committee's Thirteen Report of Session 2014-15: Gangs and youth crime, published on 27 February 2015

The Government would like to thank the Committee for its report published on 27 February on gangs and youth crime.

Much progress has been made since publication of the cross-government *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* report in November 2011 and the launch of the programme of work with local areas in April 2012. The Annual Report for 2014/15¹ (published on 12 March) provides an overview of our progress and sets out our achievements over the past year. The Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme has been a catalyst for change. It has encouraged local areas to take a fresh look at the challenges they face, and make more effective and efficient use of local resources. It has encouraged local innovation, and the sharing of learning amongst partners. The programme has led to a change in the way this problem is understood and tackled. It is now widely recognised that gang and youth violence is as much an issue of safeguarding vulnerable people and identifying undiagnosed mental health issues amongst gang members, as it is about ensuring the right sanctions are in place to punish criminal behaviour. It is now better understood that some young people who commit violence have been victims themselves, or witnessed violence in the home at an early age. There is a new emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Many local areas can now identify who their most violent and vulnerable young people are, and are targeting resources more effectively. For the first time, the dangers to girls and young women from gangs – including the significant risk of sexual exploitation – are being recognised and action is being taken.

However, challenges remain. Through our better understanding of the problems, we know that many gangs are changing. Local partners tell us that street gangs are becoming less visible in public, and more fluid in the way they organise themselves. The programme has also uncovered a hard core of gang members who are becoming more organised and sophisticated in their criminality, and are exploiting vulnerable young people and adults in order to sell drugs (known as county lines). We also know that young people who are drawn into gang violence – whether as a victim, perpetrator or both – are subject to a wide range of risk factors that need a tailored response. We know that gangs look and operate differently in different areas, that there are concerning levels of gang-related violence in prisons and young offender institutions, and no single approach will work in all cases.

Other important challenges include continuing our work to safeguard vulnerable gang-associated girls and young women; challenging attitudes amongst young men which can fuel violence; ensuring legislation is used effectively to disrupt gang members, including use of the strengthened gang injunctions and knife legislation; and ensure that our improved understanding of the underlying causes of gang violence means that safeguarding, health and education agencies continue to intervene early with children and young people at risk.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-programme-annual-report-2014-to-2015>

Whilst priority areas under the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme have so far not been identified in Wales, it is important to note that the police and criminal justice systems apply across England and Wales. However, other local delivery functions, such as health, schools, colleges and local government, are devolved in Wales and are the responsibility of the National Assembly for Wales. We will therefore engage and work closely with the Welsh Government and other local delivery partners in Wales, to ensure that the often complex interdependencies between devolved and non-devolved functions are fully understood and coordinated. This will allow us to tackle the problems of gang and youth violence in both England and Wales more effectively.

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence strategy

Conclusion/recommendation 1 – The Home Office has spent over £10 million on its Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, but has failed to effectively evaluate the project. The Home Office must undertake high quality comparative evaluation in order to assess what works best in combating gang and youth crime and in identifying areas for improvement. This will be vital in ensuring the ten new priority areas receive the full benefit of the programme.

The Government recognises that evaluation both locally and nationally are crucial elements of any programme. That is why we have used a range of sources to collect information on the effect of the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme. This includes seeking feedback from the local areas, developing a joint programme of work with the Early Intervention Foundation to determine what works, and supporting partners in assessing their work, through the peer review process we have put in place. However, the programme was designed to focus on supporting work in local areas to improve and change local service delivery to tackle gangs and prevent youth violence, and it was not about creating or imposing central targets or monitoring.

In reviewing the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme we have captured local practitioners' perceptions of the impact of the programme by:

- Obtaining feedback from the priority areas to ascertain the perceived effect the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme has had on their work to tackle the gang and youth violence problem across a number of themes. Themes included women, girls and gangs, working with local communities, sharing information and partnership working, health needs and early intervention. Feedback provided by 28 of the original 33 areas shows that 22 of these areas felt the programme had been very important in assisting with their work to tackle local problems. Feedback from nine of the ten new areas shows that eight of these areas felt the same.
- Conducting in-depth interviews with a number of practitioners in four local areas, to collect evidence on how the areas have changed their ways of working and the subsequent results. Our chosen review methodology enables us to highlight good examples for dissemination across all areas using an action learning approach.

In addition, two waves of surveys with Young Peoples Advocates (YPAs), their line managers and local partners have been conducted. Further information is provided in response to recommendation 4 below.

However, the Government is committed to improving how we assess and review the effectiveness of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme. We are therefore currently developing plans to review work in the 10 most recently joined areas and 10 areas with a longer history of participation to fully assess the benefits of their participation.

Enforcement - Identifying gangs

Conclusion/recommendation 2 – It is essential that gangs and their associates can be identified. It is vital that a unified gang definition is used across the Home Office and police forces to ensure that police forces understand the scale of this issue both locally and nationally. Data on gangs, including their members and associates, and individuals at risk, should be shared between police forces and other relevant bodies.

The Government agrees that greater consistency in the way gangs are defined, and the way data about gangs and their members is recorded and shared among police forces and other relevant partners, is crucial in order to tackle the problem.

The definition of a gang, which was developed by the Centre for Social Justice in its 2009 report, *Dying to Belong*, and adapted by the Coalition Government and police at the start of the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme, has been useful in providing a focus on the problem. However, the nature of gang crime varies from place to place and is changing, which means that the original definition has become outdated in capturing the way in which gangs operate in some areas. We are working with national policing leads, the National Crime Agency and partners in our priority areas to ensure there is a better understanding of local gang members, the underlying causes related to their offending and the violence and crime they commit, including exploitation of vulnerable individuals. This work will include consideration of a new definition of a gang which reflects the views and feedback from our partners.

The definition of gangs was also looked at as part of the review of the operation of gang injunctions, published in January 2014. This review found that the current statutory definition of ‘gang’ was unduly restrictive due to its focus on geographical associations and specific identifying characteristics, such as names or emblems. A new statutory gang definition was therefore included in the Serious Crime Act 2015, which received Royal Assent on 3 March 2015. This new statutory definition for the purpose of a gang injunction recognises the changing nature of gangs and reflects more closely how gangs now operate, and it will inform our work to agree a new definition with our partners.

We have also recently developed a new local assessment process, to help local areas to better understand their local gang violence issues through more effective data collection and information sharing. Ten areas have benefitted from this process already.

It should be noted that 71% (20 of the original areas who recently provided feedback) ² say that they now have a ‘better understanding of which young people are involved in or affected by gangs’, indicating progress in this area, however as stated above, work is being undertaken to improve the understanding across all areas and with our partners.

² 28 of the 33 original areas provided feedback.

Girls in gangs

Conclusion/recommendation 3 – In each of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas, the statutory and voluntary sectors need to share information to enable effective identification of girls at risk of gang involvement. Mentoring should be provided to identify girls' specific needs, to build trust and to provide a consistent relationship while the girl is referred between different statutory services.

The Government agrees that it is crucial that gang-associated girls are identified at the earliest possible opportunity and that information on these vulnerable young women is shared between the various statutory and voluntary agencies which they come into contact with, so that any interventions can be effective and supportive to the individual young woman. Whilst local areas are increasingly aware of and addressing the needs of gang-associated women and girls, we know that more needs to be done.

The Home Office is working with the Metropolitan Police to develop a 'problem profile' so that the police, local authorities, schools and other local agencies can identify which girls and young women are most vulnerable to gang-related sexual exploitation or crime, and can be given the right support. Data from both the police and external partners will be used to obtain a picture of the extent of gang associated females and their associated vulnerabilities, victimisation and offending. It has taken longer than anticipated for voluntary sector organisations to share their data with the Metropolitan Police, however, the profile is due to be published in summer 2015 and the learning from this work will then be shared with other police forces so that they can also map gang-associated girls in their area and work to develop appropriate multi-agency interventions for the girls.

In February 2015, Greater Manchester Police published a report on profiling potentially vulnerable gang-associated girls and assessing risks, which local areas can use to identify these young women.

With regards to mentoring, the Early Intervention Foundation and Home Office advice for those commissioning mentoring programmes sends a very clear message that mentoring providers need a good understanding of the risks of gang involvement for young women. The advice states that mentoring should be gender-informed if not gender-specific, as the reasons for gang association, the roles played, and the potential pathways out of gangs, may be very different for girls. The advice also states that mentoring providers and mentors need to be alert to, and appropriately challenge, misogynistic attitudes and behaviours which can foster violence against women and girls.

Child sexual exploitation

Conclusion/recommendation 4 – It is appalling that 2,409 children and young people are subject to sexual exploitation in gangs and a further 16,500 children are at risk. The Home Office recently committed one further year of funding for Young People’s Advocates, but has failed to assess the effectiveness of the programme or provide clarity around long-term future engagement. An assessment of their role should be included in the Home Office’s next Ending Gang and Youth Violence evaluation to discover whether this programme funding is beneficial, and what more can be done to combat gang-related child sexual exploitation.

The introduction of Young People’s Advocates (YPAs) – supported by Home Office funding of £1.6 million over four years – means that there is now a specialist service in around half of our priority areas which supports girls and young women affected by sexual violence by gangs. Common issues faced by the young people with whom the YPAs work include domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, school exclusion and going missing from home.

The Home Office-funded YPAs are based in eight organisations in London, the West Midlands and Greater Manchester, and cover 23 of the 43 Ending Gang and Youth Violence areas. The YPAs provide direct one-to-one support to young women who have been victims, or are at risk of sexual violence by gangs. The YPAs have been crucial in improving services to girls and young women at risk, or experiencing, sexual violence.

The YPAs work with local agencies (such as the police, schools, social, health and youth justice services) to ensure that the risks faced by young women can be managed effectively. This means raising awareness and delivering training to local agencies, advising local partners on cases, contributing to multi-agency meetings and helping to develop standards of practice to improve services for gang-associated young women and girls.

Two waves of surveys with YPAs, their line managers and local partners were carried out to establish the picture in areas prior to the role being created, how the YPAs are embedded in existing structures, and the effectiveness and efficiency of referral pathways. Within the nine areas that responded to the first survey, all YPA line managers stated that the YPAs had had a very positive effect in providing direct and intensive support for girls and young women who are victims or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation.

As well as working with girls and young women on a one-to-one basis, the YPAs work closely with the local partners such as schools to raise awareness about young people at risk of sexual violence or exploitation. In feedback from local partners, (including the police, youth offending teams and social workers) 87% (26) stated that the YPAs they worked with had had a very positive effect on providing direct and intensive support for young people who are victims or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation.

Further details of these surveys are contained in Annex A.

In addition, local partners that have received funding for a YPA have undertaken their own evaluations.

Safer London Foundation, which has four Home Office-funded YPA posts, is fully committed to evaluating the impact of all their work, ensuring that they are delivering high quality services that benefit children and young people in London. An evaluation of Safer London Foundation's Empower programme is currently being undertaken by Middlesex University. The Empower programme supports young women at risk of and experiencing gang related sexual violence and exploitation, and includes Home Office and MOPAC funded YPAs. The scope of the evaluation includes an impact evaluation, a process evaluation and a cost benefit analysis. The evaluation report will be published in autumn 2015. Emerging findings suggest that the one-to-one programmes provide critically important support for at-risk and high-risk young women who have had complicated needs. There is strong evidence from qualitative elements that demonstrate young women are engaging in safer activities, are more confident, are building better relationships with friends and family, and where relevant, with boyfriends as well. The young women have reduced risk-taking activities, and many of them are re-engaging with school/education as a result of these changes. There is a clear move towards positive attitudinal and behavioural changes.

Sandwell Women's Aid, which has two Home Office funded YPA posts, reports that significant progress has been made. The YPA posts have been an important asset in the development of services to tackle child sexual exploitation in the West Midlands. One of the YPAs has coordinated services and shared information on missing persons and sexual exploitation across boroughs; worked with children safeguarding teams in four boroughs in the West Midlands to commission child safeguarding services (in 2012 there were no local authority commissioned services), and helped develop the Sandwell Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The other YPA has focused on working with substance misuse services, youth services, schools, pupil referral units, and sexual and mental health services, to create coordinated and high-quality responses to the needs of young people. As a result, the number of cases supported by Sandwell Women's Aid has increased steadily, year on year, from 204 cases in 2012/13 to 488 cases in 2014/15.

Manchester Sexual Assault Referral Centre reports that there is a higher than expected demand on their YPA by other safeguarding professionals and those working with young people. Their work to identify the factors influencing sexual exploitation, including gang related issues, has been essential to working effectively with both professionals and young people. It has been widely recognised that this post has been pivotal in assessing risk factors, identification and safeguarding of young girls who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

The strength of the YPA model has led to additional funding in similar posts introduced by voluntary sector organisations and local authorities. The Safer London Foundation, for example, has attracted additional funding for another 15 posts from local authorities, MOPAC, and a range of charitable trusts and foundations, and it now has 19 YPAs working across London.

Conclusion/recommendation 5 – It is lamentable that such limited progress has been made in identifying and risk-assessing young people linked to gang members. Every Chief Constable should appoint a lead officer to take responsibility for mentoring and training on combating gangs. This lead officer should also address the needs of gang-associated individuals at risk of sexual exploitation.

Identifying and risk-assessing young people linked to gangs is essential to understand the scale and nature of the problem, protect vulnerable individuals, and to target support and disruption activities effectively. This has been a main focus of the programme.

We have enabled local areas to better understand their local gang and youth violence issues through more effective data collection and information sharing. This has been achieved, for example, through the development of the local assessment process. This is a new tool introduced in 2014, and tested initially in Lewisham, which enables local areas to identify information about gang-related problems that may otherwise be missed. Ten areas have since benefited from a local assessment process, tailored to their local challenges (such as sexual exploitation by gangs). To ensure all local areas can benefit, and to meet demand, a self-assessment toolkit has also been produced and shared across the 43 Ending Gang and Youth Violence areas.

Identifying young people in the secure estate with links to gangs and assessing any related risks is also crucial. We have taken action to ensure information is shared between the police and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) so that offenders who are gang members are managed effectively. A number of police forces are now sharing information about gang members with NOMS and we are encouraging other police forces to take a similar approach.

However, challenges remain and we know that gang violence is changing and a hard core of gang members are exploiting vulnerable people in order to sell drugs (known as county lines). The government is working with the National Crime Agency and National Policing leads to review current intelligence, and develop a national intelligence assessment and response to the issue of county lines.

The National Policing Lead for gang violence has a national strategic group which brings together representatives from forces across the country that have a local Ending Gang and Youth Violence area. This arrangement will be reviewed to see how the lead officer role for these forces can be strengthened, and how membership can be extended to other forces.

Combating gangs

Conclusion/recommendation 6 – It is shocking that London, while experiencing the most gang-related violence of any area in the country, has obtained only fourteen gang injunctions in total. The Home Office should produce a league table of gang injunctions on a six monthly basis. The lead officer on gangs in every police force should be responsible for a continuing programme of peer reviews within the police to ensure the efficacy and increased uptake of gang injunctions. We hope that our successor Committee will monitor this issue to check whether or not these changes have taken place.

Gang injunctions are one of a number of tools available which local partners can use to prevent gang violence, protect communities and support young people to leave a gang lifestyle.

Gang injunctions were viewed as useful when targeting those involved in gang-related violence. This was the view of the majority of participants in the “Review of operation of injunctions to prevent gang-related violence” published in January 2014.

The legislative changes to gang injunctions introduced in the Serious Crime Act 2015, which received Royal Assent on 3 March 2015, reflect the growing knowledge of the nature of how gangs operate. The Government is confident that the new statutory definition of gangs, as well as extending gang injunctions to illegal drug dealing, will make the gang injunction a more effective tool to tackle street gangs, as well as provide an effective intervention for addressing more serious and organised crime by gangs.

As part of our regular engagement with local areas to promote the use of gang injunctions, we have held seminars in March 2015 – in Birmingham, Liverpool and London – to raise awareness of gang injunctions and of the changes in the new legislation. We will in due course publish revised statutory guidance and practical advice to support local practitioners ahead of commencement of the legislative changes, and will continue to work with local authorities and the police to promote the increased uptake of gang injunctions.

The Government will also undertake two reviews with the police and other partners of the use and effectiveness of the gang injunction: at 12 months and 24 months from commencement of the legislative changes to gang injunctions. This will include examination of the efficacy and take up of the powers in different areas and the number of gang injunctions granted.

Stop and Search

Conclusion/recommendation 7 – The Committee welcomes the launch of the national voluntary scheme to reduce the number of no-suspicion stop and search powers. It is vital that forces undertake local consultation work to ensure that local complaints processes are accessible to young people of all backgrounds, to help restore young people’s confidence in the complaints system. A league table should be introduced by police forces, followed by a monthly pro forma which should be completed for the Home Office. The police should also report to the Home Affairs Select Committee with the progress they have made on this matter.

Conclusion/recommendation 8 – It is clear that young people feel that their experiences are not taken into account. The Home Office’s annual evaluation of the gangs programme should also include statements from local lead police officers stating what work they have completed on gangs and stop and search, alongside young people’s responses.

The Government recognises the importance of the ensuring the views of the young people affected by our policies are, where relevant, sought out and taken into account, to improve our understanding of the impact of our work on the ground.

The Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme was formally launched in August 2014. All forces have signed up to the Scheme, including the British Transport Police, and it has been implemented fully in 35 forces. The Home Office and the College of Policing are working with the remaining forces to ensure that they are able to achieve full compliance by summer 2015.

The Scheme is about making the use of stop and search more transparent and the police’s use of the powers, including the ‘no-suspicion’ power, more accountable. The Scheme includes a “Community Complaints Trigger”, which is a local complaint policy requiring the police to explain to local community scrutiny groups how the powers are being used where there is, for example, a large volume of complaints. Whilst there are specific features of the complaints policy which forces must ensure are in place, it is open to them to decide how the policy operates at a local level and whether any additional requirements are appropriate. Additional features might include, for example, ensuring young people are represented on local scrutiny boards.

At a national level, the Home Office, together with the College of Policing, will consider matters concerning age as the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme is implemented, monitored and evaluated.”

As part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme approach, we work closely with our voluntary sector partners, all of whom have connections with young people who are at risk of, or are affected by, gang or gang related violence. To date, the views and experience of young people have been considered through these channels.

We are happy to consider with voluntary sector partners whether and how it would be appropriate to engage young people more directly in future assessments of Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme.

Preventative Work

Conclusion/recommendation 9 – We should accept that children as young as seven are at risk of gang involvement. The Committee believes that primary school anti-gang education programmes should be expanded. In every school where there is local knowledge of gangs, a senior teacher should be nominated to coordinate the school’s anti-gang measures and ensure that relevant figures come in to the school to talk about gangs.

It is widely accepted that success in learning is one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime. Schools and colleges are places where important interventions can take place to help young people who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs. Even low levels of youth violence can have a disproportionate impact on an education establishment.

We have given advice to schools and colleges to help them spot the signs of gang involvement and refer young people for specialist support and we will be adapting this for primary schools.

We will also work with the Department for Education to consider how anti-gang education programmes could be expanded and delivered in schools. Head teachers and Governors, in liaison with local police forces, are best placed to decide on how to work together effectively to ensure young people feel safe in school. Dealing with gang or youth violence issues is a shared responsibility for the community and partner agencies. Schools or colleges affected by these issues will be able to draw advice from their local partners.

Local head teacher networks are the most common way to share ideas, practice and support. If the school or college is an Ending Gang and Youth Violence area, there will be someone within either the local authority or the police with a role in relation to gangs who will be able to provide specialist support.

It is a matter for schools to determine if it is appropriate to nominate a member of staff to coordinate anti-gang measures and ensure that pupils benefit from an appropriate anti-gang education intervention, in particular, where the Local Safeguarding Children Board, on police advice, has identified a local problem with gangs or youth violence. It is a good idea for schools to work together, so that a primary school can include preventative measures to support younger siblings of gang members.

In addition, the Young People’s Advocates (YPAs) work with schools. The YPAs at Sandwell Women’s Aid, for example, have a regular presence in schools, colleges and pupil referral units delivering preventative and awareness raising work. They provide training to school staff members and improve identification of young people who are vulnerable or at risk. The YPAs are currently working with primary schools in Sandwell to develop a pilot on relationship education that will begin in March 2015.

Our work with the Early Intervention Foundation to look at the evidence base of what works in preventing gang involvement and youth violence also includes evidence on school based preventative programmes.

Intervention

Conclusion/recommendation 10 – The Committee recommends that the existing work of local organisations that are well supported and have grown from the resident communities, such as Gangline and the SOS project, should be expanded. The Home Office should ensure that detailed evaluation is undertaken of projects deemed to be examples of best practice, in order to create models that can work for communities across the country. The Home Office should develop interactive online tools and the use of social media in order to gain the input of local communities on what can be done to combat gangs.

End to end approaches

Conclusion/recommendation 11 – Programmes with records of turning around the lives of young people in gangs and with entrenched behavioural difficulties need to be commissioned more consistently. The Government should expand support for mentoring programmes that focus on gang-affected young people. While it is vital that work is delivered in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, a key factor in the success of many programmes is their separation from local criminal justice agencies as perceived by the young people

Intervening to prevent young people from becoming involved in gang and youth violence is at heart of the Coalition Government's approach. We know that intervening early can help to stop young people becoming involved in gang and youth violence in the first place. We are aware that there are a number of existing projects that work with young people to encourage them to follow alternative paths rather than becoming entrenched in criminality. The Government agrees that this practice should be evaluated to determine effectiveness, with this information made available more widely, to help other local areas make informed decisions about the type of services they commission.

That is why we have worked with the Early Intervention Foundation to look at the evidence base of what works in preventing gang involvement and youth violence. The Foundation has also looked at academic evidence on risk and vulnerability factors for gang involvement and youth violence and developed practical advice on how to identify these risk factors. This information will be available shortly on the Foundation's dedicated gangs and youth crime webpage³.

We also acknowledge that research has shown that young people involved in gangs can be faced with high levels of mental illness because of the damaging circumstances they have been exposed to. We have supported Public Health

³ <http://www.eif.org.uk/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence/>

England and the Centre for Public Health to produce a briefing note on *the mental health needs of gang-affiliated young people*⁴. The document sets out, for the first time, the programmes and evidence-based interventions that promote health and emotional wellbeing, support recovery from mental illness and help young people move away from harmful gang-related activities.

We know that many local areas are interested in mentoring services for young people and that young people are more willing to engage with services that are run by voluntary sector services. We agree that mentoring provision for young people involved gang and youth violence can be an effective intervention, if targeted in the right way, with the right individuals, with clear outcomes. Through our joint programme of work with the Early Intervention Foundation, the Foundation has produced and published evidence based advice for commissioners. The advice includes information to help commissioners ask the right questions so that they can maximise the impact of the mentoring provision they are seeking to commission. It also advises that mentoring may only ever be part of the answer, and that it may need to be delivered alongside a wider package of preventative interventions.

Whilst the Government can facilitate and/or provide local areas with the tools to help them make informed decisions about the types of projects that are proven to work, it is also important to note that that we have been clear from the outset of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, that it was not the intention of the programme to dictate to areas where they should focus their resources. From October 2014, responsibility for commissioning local services was transferred to Police and Crime Commissioners and we would expect PCCs to take into account the needs of young people at risk at or involved in gangs and youth violence when identifying their priorities and commissioning services.

We welcome the work of local partners, such as the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) in London which fully embeds evidence and evaluation into the commissioning of their range of services and the delivery of projects and programmes. This ensures they understand the impact, what works and the cost benefit of investment. MOPAC works with partners to ensure that evidence and evaluation is built into all projects relating to gangs and youth violence from the commissioning stage onward. MOPAC Grant Agreements, for example, include a clause that work with children and young people, gangs or which seeks to address serious youth violence, is required to make effective use of Project Oracle evaluation tools as well as the Project Oracle/MOPAC youth crime outcomes framework, in order to assess impact.

One example is MOPAC's funding for Redthread to provide a specialist youth service for victims of serious youth violence across all four Major Trauma Centres in London. The funding agreement, using £600,000 from the Ministry of Justice Victims Fund, includes a condition that operational data is fed into a MOPAC evaluation. MOPAC has been working alongside Redthread to help them identify what data can

⁴https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398674/The_mental_health_needs_of_gang-affiliated_young_people_v3_23_01_1.pdf

be collated and how this would feed into an evaluation of the project. Two of the four Major Trauma Centres in London (The Royal London Hospital and St Georges Hospital) have a new specialist youth service as a direct result of this funding.

The Government also recognises the power of sport as a tool for social change and personal development. It can be an effective early intervention tool, giving young people an alternative path to follow and helping them avoid the sorts of life choices that can lead to gang related activity and youth crime. It can also be effective in giving those involved in gangs a way out of that lifestyle, focusing on something they feel is relevant to them. Additionally, it can be a means for former gang members to help others avoid paths that led them to be part of gangs, or to commit crime.

There are many good examples of how sport has achieved positive change in this area, with organisations like Sported working with over 3,000 community sport clubs to engage with and change the lives of some of the hardest to reach young people in the UK, and the Premier League's Kickz programme, a partnership with the Metropolitan Police, using the power of football to create safer, stronger, more respectful communities through the development of young people's potential. Reductions of anti-social behaviour of up to 60 per cent have been seen in areas where Kickz projects are delivered.

The power of arts and culture as a tool can also be used to enhance communities and reduce social exclusion. There are a number of good examples across the country of how Government supported arts organisations have worked within their communities to improve the experience for people who live there. Entelechy Arts Limited in London is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) that creates work to build bridges between groups of people and individuals who lead parallel and unconnected lives, often in the same neighbourhoods, including both older and young people. This initiative forms part of the Government's work on community cohesion.

Another ACE NPO that has been working with young people for over fifteen years is the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyne in Staffordshire, which runs the Borderlines programme which has won a number of awards. The programme works with some of the areas most disadvantaged communities such as young people at risk of offending. It uses theatre to help people find new and positive ways to understand themselves, their communities and their responsibilities as well as challenging anti-social behaviour.

The Home Office will also consider, in partnership with the police and PCCs how we can best gather the views of local communities in tackling gangs and youth violence, including through online tools and social media.

ANNEX A: Young Peoples Advocates (YPA) Survey summary findings

Table 3: YPA survey summary findings⁵

78% (8 responding managers) of YPA managers stated that the YPA role had increased their organisation's knowledge a lot. (22% (1) stated a little increase in organisational knowledge had occurred).
89% (8) stated that most local partners were aware of the YPA role. (Local partners not aware of YPA role 11% (1))
89% (8) of responding managers stated that the YPA in their organisation has engaged with other local partners (Not engaged with local partners 11% (1)) with 89% (8) also agreeing that local partners had a good understanding of the YPA role.
67% (6) agreed that their YPA had built up good relationships with local partners. (22% (2) Disagreed)
78% (7) of YPA managers strongly agreed that the YPA role is effective at engaging local partners to raise awareness of the issue of young people who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation. (11% (1) Agreed)
56% (5) of YPA managers stated that their YPA had had a very positive effect in working with local partners to establish clear referral pathways for young people who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation. (22% (2) felt YPAs had had a slightly positive effect)
89% (8) of YPA managers stated that their YPA had had a very positive effect in promoting multi-agency working around young people who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation.
78% (7) of YPA managers stated that their YPA had had a very positive effect in raising awareness within local partner agencies of the specific risks for sexual violence/exploitation posed by gang violence. (11% (1) stated YPAs had had a slightly positive effect).
100% (9) of responding YPA managers felt that their YPA had had a very positive effect in providing direct and intensive support for young people who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation.
Some of the views expressed were:
"We are now able to offer a holistic service to young women. The YPA Service enables the organisation to further offer a wrap around service for young women accessing support."
"The YPA role has enabled better communication between other partner agencies not based within our multi agency team. The YPA has had the capacity to link in with other agencies and develop collaborative ways of working to enable more consistent services for young people and maximise the resources we have."
87% (26) of responding local partners stated that the YPAs they worked with had had a very positive effect on providing direct and intensive support for young people who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation. (20% (6) reported a slightly positive effect).
77% (23) of local partners felt that YPAs covering their area had been very positive in promoting multi-agency working around young people who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence or exploitation. (20% (6) stated YPAs had been slightly positive.
Views expressed by local partners on the YPA role were:
"The young people that I have referred to the YPA service have benefited greatly and a positive change has been observed."
"The YPA role has led to an increased focus on the area of sexual exploitation and an improved understanding by the multi agency partnership on risk issues and support and provision and education required."

⁵ Where percentages do not total 100% the difference is due to non-response to certain questions.