

Five Boroughs' Alliance
Stakeholder Perceptions of Violent Youth Crime in
South London

February 2009

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1. Overview

Survey results revealed a high level of concern about violent youth crime both in individual boroughs and across South London. Just over two-thirds (68%) of stakeholders believed that violent youth crime in South London had increased over the past two years. Furthermore, group discussions revealed that a number of stakeholders dismissed official statistics as unrepresentative of what they believed to be happening on the ground, as not all crimes were reported.

However, it appears that stakeholders are not looking to apportion blame for the increase of violent youth crime. The statement ‘the police are not doing enough about the problem’ only received a mean score of 4.74 out of 10; similarly ‘Local councils are not doing enough about the problem’ received a mean score of 5.96 out of 10. Rather stakeholders believed that positive activities and family support were needed to steer young people away from crime, that agencies needed to work together and that more opportunities for education, training and employment needed to be provided. The statement ‘National policy needs to make sure we balance enforcement with measures to prevent young people committing violent youth crime and offering positive alternative activities’ received a mean score of 8.8 out of 10.

The survey revealed that community sources (88%) were the most popular source of information about violent youth crime amongst stakeholders. In addition, 82% of stakeholders used information from local police and 79% used information from local councils. Community sources (78%) and local police (75%) were also the most trusted sources of information. Local councils (61%) were rated slightly lower on trust because they were deemed to be more remote from what was happening on the ground.

Responses to the Community Reassurance Network and the Community Reassurance Pack highlighted the diverse range of stakeholders and the need to accurately target information; not all stakeholders thought that the information was aimed at them. Some thought that the Community Reassurance Pack was aimed at people who did not have day-to-day dealings with young people. They felt that this

was demonstrated through the type of advice offered, and the visuals displayed in the booklet.

Finally, whilst there is some scope to develop the idea of a Community Reassurance Network it may be worth broadening the appeal and naming it a Community Information Network. Stakeholders are likely to want input into the information they are asked to present and first and foremost they will have to believe it themselves.

2. Approach

2.1 Objectives

The overarching objective of the research was to understand the views of key opinion formers across the five boroughs and develop a tested evidence base that can be used to determine common approaches to managing stakeholder relationships. More specifically:

- Stakeholders perceptions of gang/youth violence
- Levels of knowledge of the actual statistics and drivers of youth violence
- Motivators for their publically expressed views on the issue

2.2 Methodology

The methodology comprised of both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Quantitative research provided the necessary numerical data from which to draw conclusions about stakeholders' general views of youth violence and gangs. Qualitative research enabled a more in-depth exploration of these views and provided an opportunity to gain stakeholder feedback on the idea of a Community Reassurance Network and the existing Community Reassurance Pack.

2.2.1 Phase 1 – Quantitative research

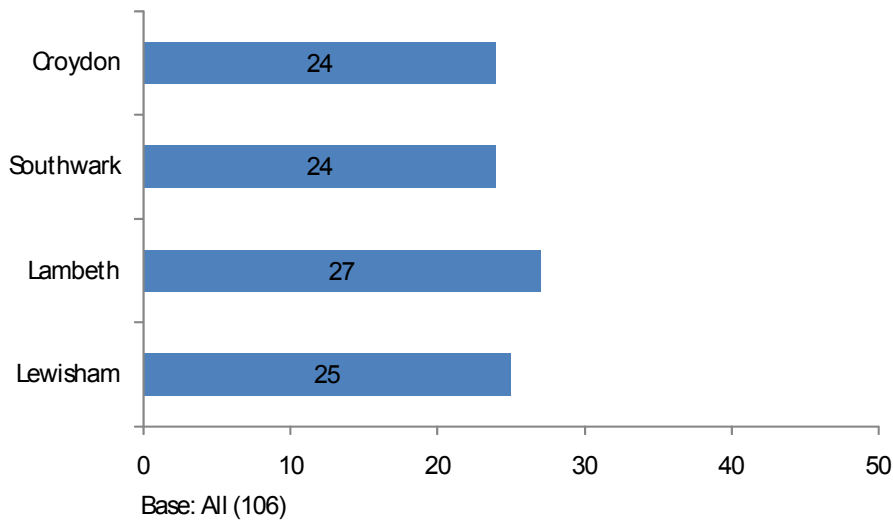
106 x 15 minute telephone interviews were conducted with stakeholders in Lewisham (25), Lambeth (27), Southwark (24), and Croydon (24) in November 2008. Stakeholders comprised a mix of elected representatives (26), community organisations (24), faith organisations (26), journalists (8) and others (17). 'Other' stakeholders included national charities and council employees. All respondents were drawn from lists supplied by the four boroughs.

Quantitative sample structure

- By borough

Question: *In which London borough is your work based/which London borough do you represent?*

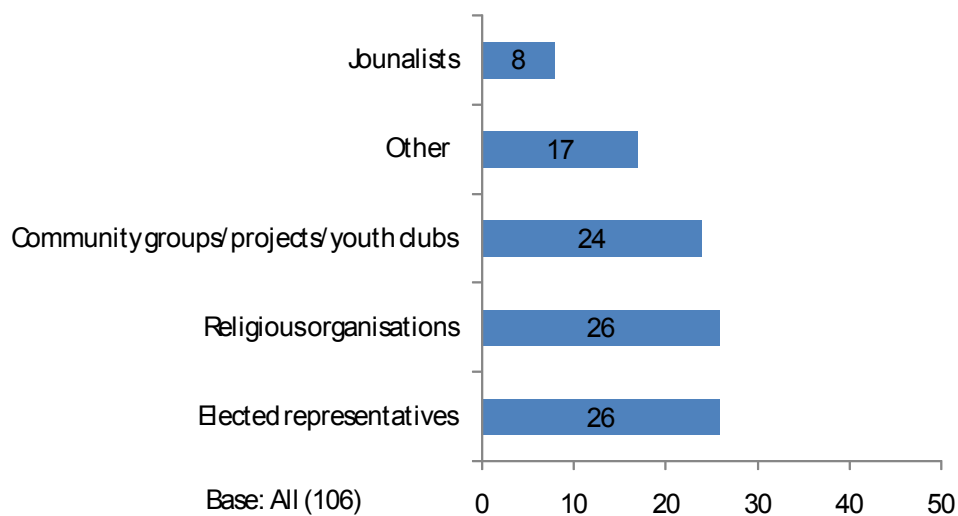
Figure 1



- By role/organisation

Question: *Can I ask which of the following best describes your role/organisation?*

Figure 2



2.2.2 Phase 2 – Qualitative research

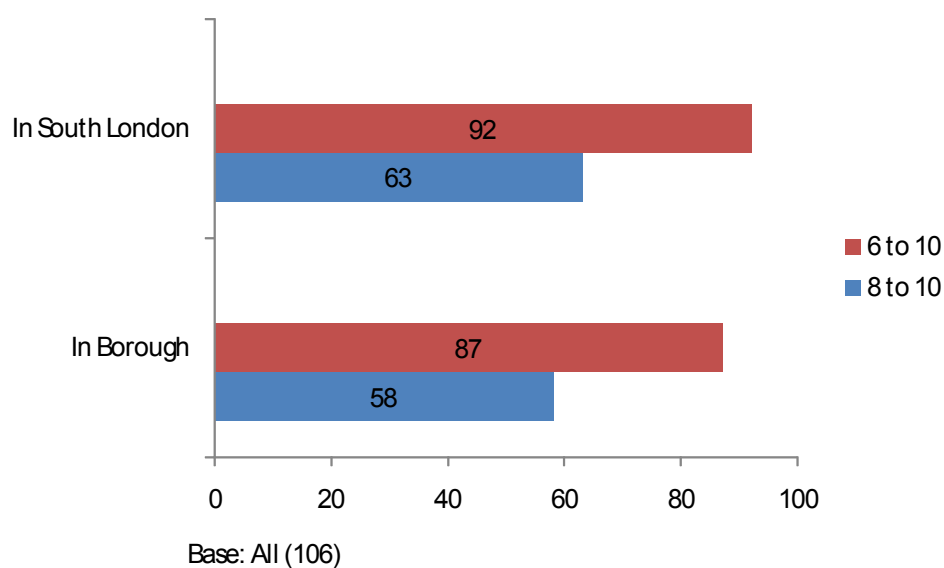
After the survey of 106 stakeholders was completed 3 x 1.5 hour mini-group discussions were held with **religious organisations, community groups/projects/youth clubs** and **other** stakeholders who had taken part in the survey and agreed to be re-contacted. These group discussions took place in Peckham, Brixton and Lewisham in February 2009 and comprised a total of 17 stakeholders.

3. Level of concern about violent youth crime

Key highlights: Stakeholders expressed high levels of concern about violent youth crime both in their borough and across South London. Furthermore, around two-thirds (63%) of stakeholders believed violent youth crime in South London had increased over the past two years. Stakeholders taking part in the subsequent group discussions were unconvinced by police statistics indicating a decline in the level of violent youth crime across Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark, Greenwich and Croydon in the past 2 years as they felt that a number of crimes never got reported.

Question: How concerned are you about the level of violent youth crime in South London/Your Borough? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all concerned and 10 is extremely concerned

Figure 3



The majority of stakeholders (92%) expressed some level of concern about crime in South London (rating 6 and above out of 10) and 63% of stakeholders reported being very concerned about crime in South London (rating 8 and above out of 10). Stakeholders expressed similar levels of concern about crime in their own borough as they did for South London as a whole (87% expressed some concern, 58% were very concerned).

Subsequent group discussions revealed that most stakeholders were not surprised at this level of concern. They felt that even if they did not come into contact with violent youth crime via their work they were concerned about it at a broader borough

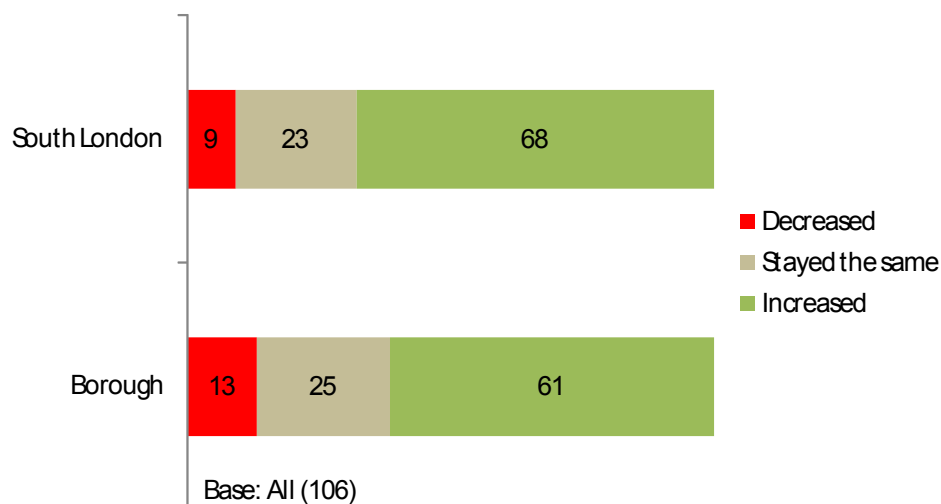
and South London level. Discussions revealed that this concern was often driven by what they heard from young people themselves and the media.

“If anyone said they were not concerned I think that is shows their lack of knowledge of their area – so you have probably got 8% who probably have not got a clue what were are talking about” – Stakeholder Peckham

“I think concern is naturalwhether you’re directly involved in providing a service or if you’re going along with the media.... it influences a lot of stuff” – Lewisham stakeholder

“Question: How would you say the level of violent youth crime in South London/Your Borough compared to 2 years ago?”

Figure 4



Over two-thirds (68%) of stakeholders believed that violent youth crime in South London had increased over the past two years. Similarly, 61% of stakeholders believed that the level of violent youth crime had increased in their own borough.

In group discussions, in order to challenge these perceptions, stakeholders were presented with police statistics highlighting that violent youth crime had decreased over the past two years. However, most stakeholders dismissed the statistics as unrepresentative of what they **heard** was happening in their area. They explained that they often heard about youth crime that went unreported and therefore would not be included in the official statistics.

“But are all victims actually going to report it” – Lambeth stakeholder

“I don’t believe it, [the police statistics] you have also got to think about the crimes that are not reported” – Peckham stakeholder

“I know of someone who got stabbed a couple of weeks ago and the police turned up at the hospital and they’re not pressing charges because they say that they’re going to deal with it in their own way. So, that isn’t included in the statistics and there’s a lot of that goes on” – Lewisham stakeholder

Stakeholders believed that the media also influenced their perceptions of an increase in violent youth crime. Some felt that, along with what they heard from young people, the reporting of violent youth crime could be shaping their view of violent youth crime.

“It is partly the newspaper as well, you see so much more of it...” Lambeth stakeholder

“Two problems here, one is media, media raises tensions in some ways...the hype from the media has made it worse” – Peckham stakeholder

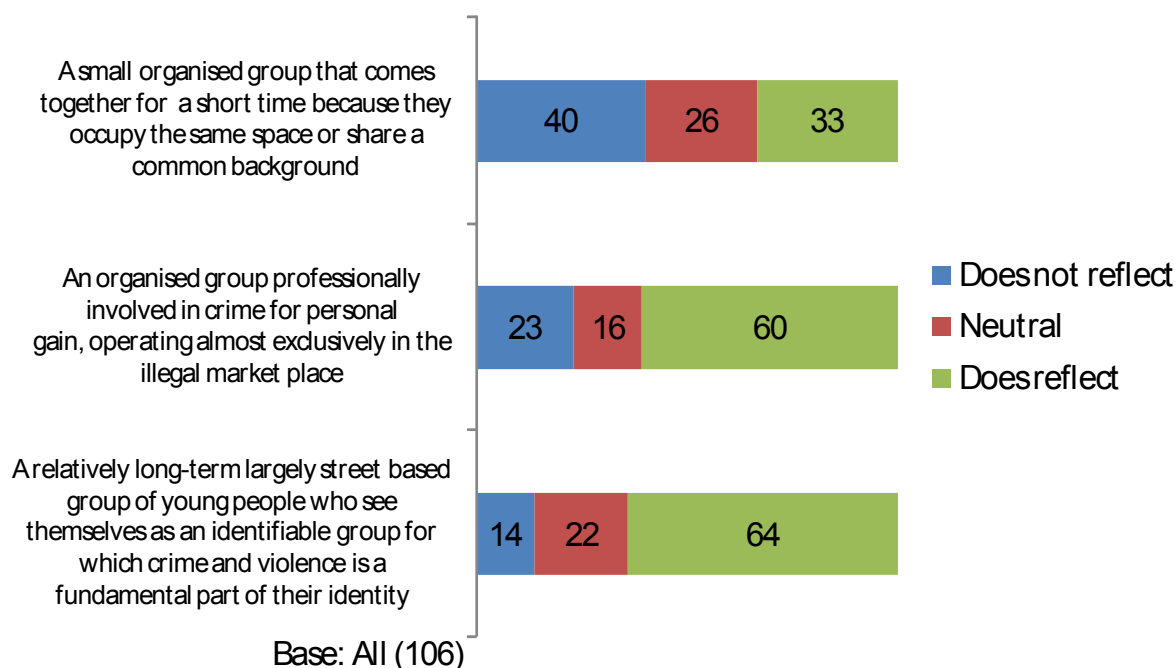
“The media have picked up on it, so it looks as though it’s increased” – Lewisham stakeholder

4. Perceptions of gang related crime

Key highlights: There was no agreed definition of the term 'gang'. Whilst almost two-thirds of stakeholders who took part in the survey linked gangs to criminal activity one-third of stakeholders believed that a gang could be more accurately described as a small organised group that comes together for a short time because they occupy the same space or share a common background. What became clear from subsequent group discussions is that the term 'gang' is considerably emotive to those working with young people.

Question: Gang is often a word used in connection with crime. We would like to find out what people understand by the term gangs. I am going to read out several definitions of 'gang' and I would like you to tell me to what extent each definition reflects your own understanding of the word 'gang'. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is does not at all reflect your understanding of the word gang and 5 very much reflects your understanding of the word 'gang'

Figure 5



On the whole stakeholders believed that the term 'gang' had a connection to crime. 60% believed that a gang was 'an organised group professionally involved in crime for personal gain, operating almost exclusively in the illegal market place' and 64%

believed a gang was ‘a relatively long-term largely street based group of young people who see themselves as an identifiable group for which crime and violence is a fundamental part of their identity’. Although the majority of stakeholders believed that gangs had a connection to crime one-third (33%) believed that a gang was a small organised group that comes together because they occupy the same space or share a common background. Some stakeholders who took part in the survey also provided alternative definitions, these included:

- *A group of people with a common cause, not necessary negative, there are positive gangs that support each other in whatever their common purpose is*
- *Either a small or large group of people, young or old, that have a common cause. This could range from hobbies, sports, liking the same music to violence and criminal activities*
- *Groups of youths who are on their own patch or territory. It's a way of giving themselves an identity*
- *Group of friends, doesn't necessary have to be involved in crime or violence*
- *A group of people who have a motive to humiliate people to create attention for themselves. They want to occupy space and territory. A gang is a group of people who have leaders, commanders. A gang must have a leader and a deputy; it's not just a group of young people hanging about on the street. They have codes. They have hiding places. It's a secret society. They are well organised and want to protect their identity and what they do. You have to be a member of a gang to know their next move.*

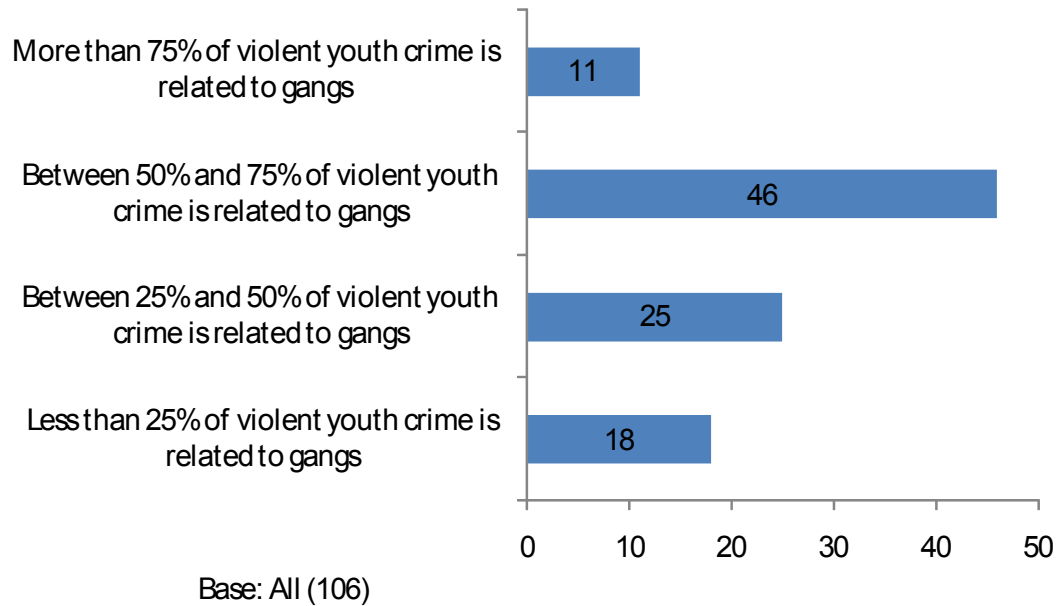
In short, survey results and subsequent group discussions revealed that there was no universally agreed definition of the term gang. What is more, the use of the word gang in connection to young people was not always welcomed.

“It's going back to that word that I don't like: “gangs”, because you can have a group and they could be seen as a gang and they're not a gang, they're a group” – Lewisham stakeholder

“I think there's too much emphasis on young people as gangs. That's nothing new. As we've acknowledged that's something that's happened for years and years. The emphasis by the media is put onto gangs, but actually it's the exploitation of young people” – Lewisham stakeholder

Question: What proportion of violent youth crime across South London would you say is related to gangs?

Figure 6



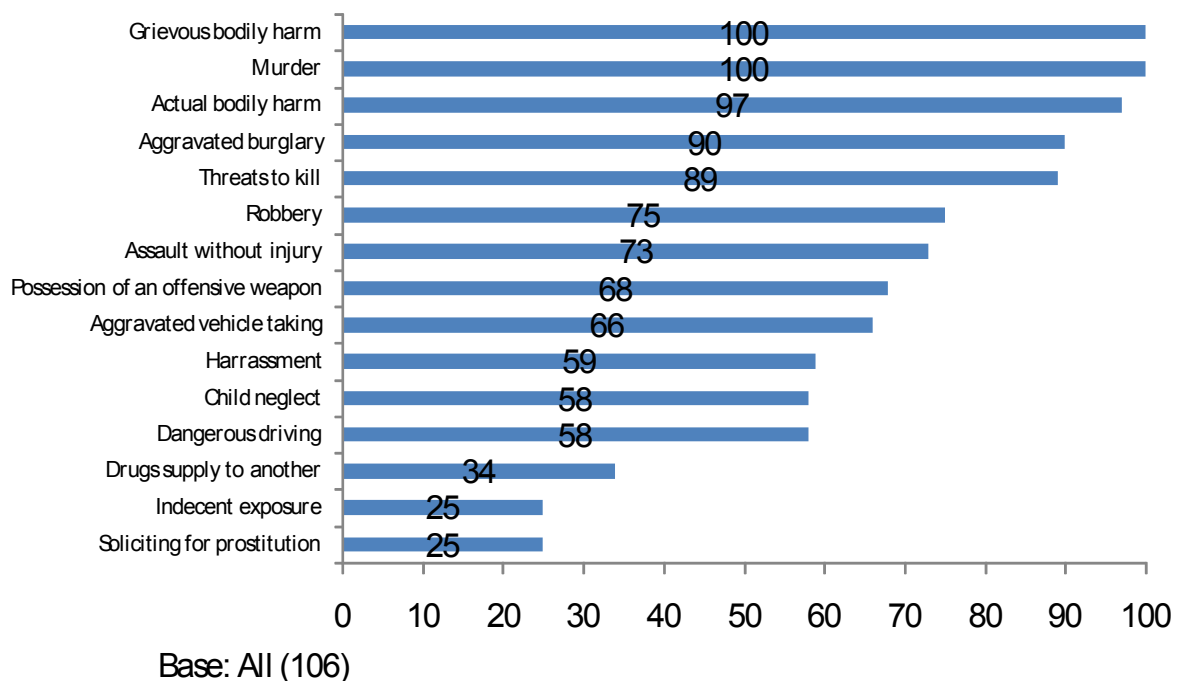
Regardless of the precise definition of gang, 57% of stakeholders believed that over 50% of violent youth crime across South London was related to gangs.

5. Understanding how violent crime is classified

Key highlights: Not all stakeholders are aware of what is classified as violent crime. Stakeholders wrongly believed aggravated vehicle taking (66%) and aggravated burglary (90%) was classified as violent crime. Conversely, the majority of stakeholders did not believe that indecent exposure (25%) and soliciting for prostitution (25%) was classified as violent crime.

Question: Which of the following do you understand as being classified as violent crime?

Figure 7



Survey results showed that there was some confusion over what was classified as a violent crime. The majority of stakeholders (90%) believed that aggravated burglary was classified as a violent crime and two-thirds (66%) of stakeholders believed that aggravated vehicle taking was also classified as a violent crime.

In subsequent group discussions stakeholders supported the survey results and were adamant that aggravated burglary and aggravated vehicle taking were violent crimes. They explained that 'aggravated' described an attack against an individual and therefore had to be interpreted as violent.

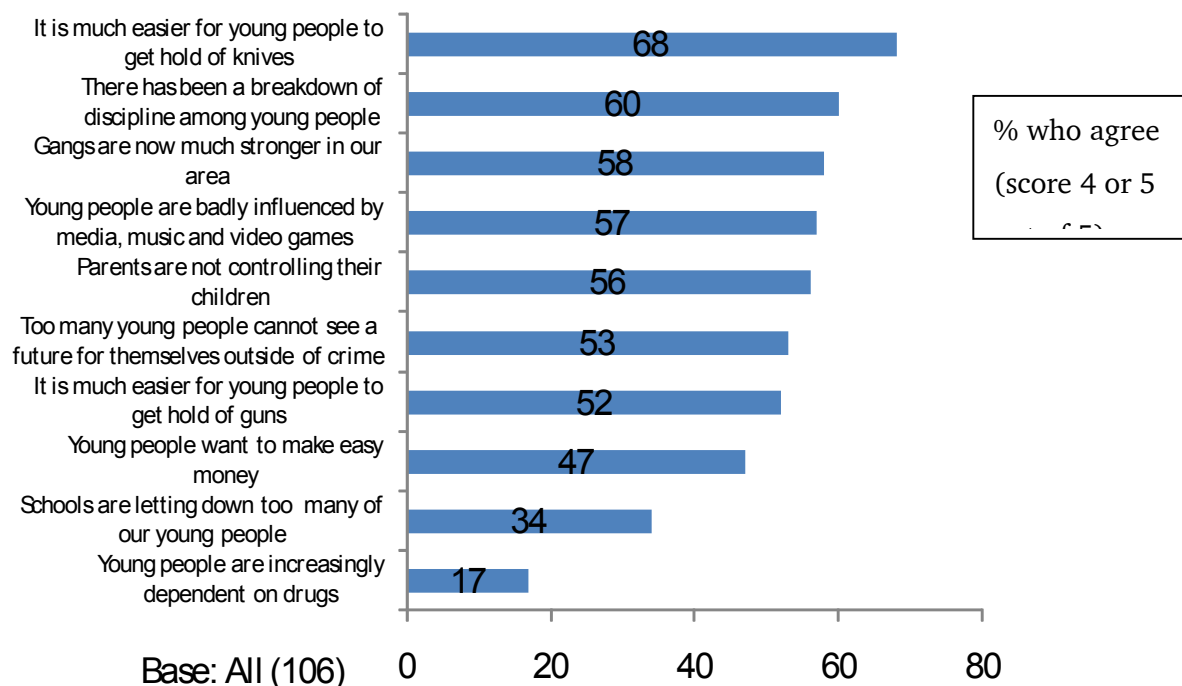
“Anything with any aggravated features, which means an attack, is a violent crime. Aggravated burglary carries up to life so I cannot see how that is not classed as a violent crime” – Lambeth stakeholder

6. Perceptions of drivers of violent youth crime

Key highlights: Stakeholders responding to the survey believed that one of the key causes of an increase in violent youth crime was that it was much easier for young people to get hold of knives (68% agree). This result was widely contested in subsequent group discussions and stakeholders were keen to point out that knives had always been readily available. However, what was clear from both the survey and the group discussions was the number and complexity of potential causes of an increase in violent youth crime.

Question: Thinking about some of the causes of an increase in violent youth crime, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree

Figure 8



In the survey stakeholders were asked to consider some of the causes of an increase in violent youth crime. Firstly, stakeholders believed that it is much easier for young people to get hold of knives (68% agree), and secondly, they believed that there had been a breakdown of discipline amongst young people (60% agree). They were less likely to believe that an increase in violent youth crime was a result of

schools letting down too many of our young people (34% agree) or young peoples' increasing dependency on drugs (17% agree).

However, in subsequent group discussions a number of stakeholders disagreed with some of the results for this question. They were surprised that as many as 68% of stakeholders had agreed that it was much easier for young people to get hold of knives. They explained that whilst knives may be used more, they had always been readily available. However, they did agree that it was much easier for young people to get hold of guns.

"I mean they may use knives more but they have always been there and they could have always got hold of them, so it is not to do with the availability of the knife" – Lambeth stakeholder

"That is a load of rubbish - 68% say that it is much easier to get hold of knives. You have always been able to get hold of knives, you just go in the kitchen" –Lambeth stakeholder

Stakeholders in the group discussions were also surprised that only 17% of stakeholders taking part in the survey believed that young people were increasingly dependent on drugs. They believed that drugs played an important role and, in particular, that there was an increased use of and potential dependency on 'skunk' rather than class A drugs.

"That should be higher, but there has not been an increasing dependency on class A drugs, but in terms of young people's reliance, use, dependency on skunk then that has increased dramatically" – Lambeth stakeholder

Groups discussions further revealed that stakeholders believed that there were a number of other drivers of an increase in violent youth crime that were not captured by the survey. These included:

- The exploitation of young people by adult gang members
- A lack of positive male role models in some communities
- Racial segregation; the need to recognise diversity negatively impacting on a sense of community

"It doesn't actually talk of the lack of male role models in the family" – Lambeth stakeholder

"It's organised criminals who are using younger people as stooges for various reasons and there is a hell of a lot of that goes on. The problem with it is that someone older, who is a role model to someone, can then use that influence to get them to do things" – Lewisham stakeholder

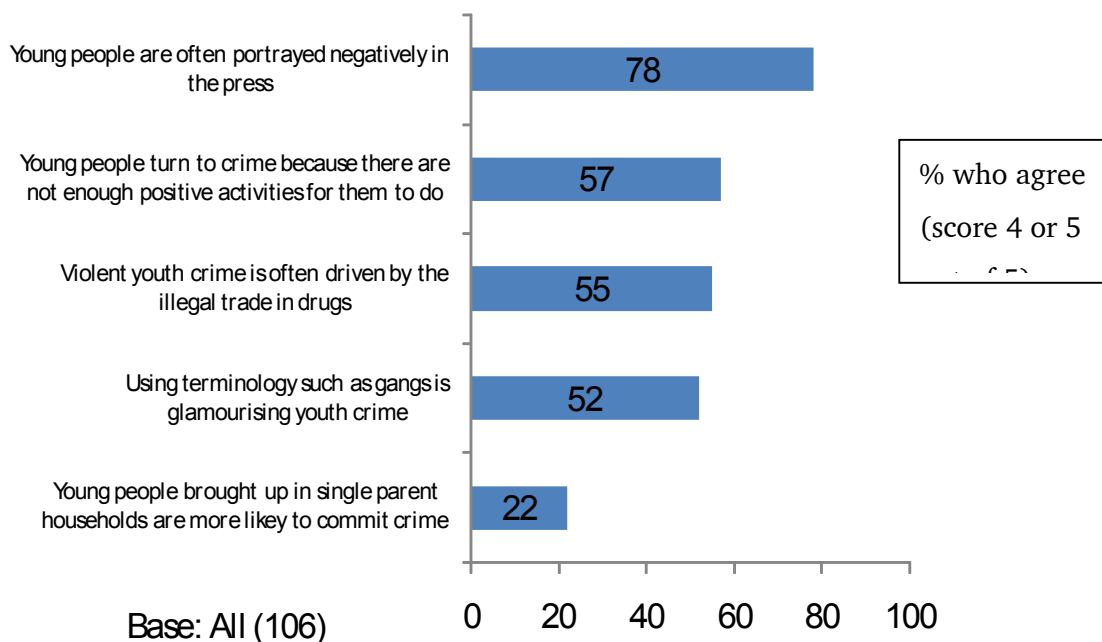
“Race does enter into it. There is no doubt about it” - Lambeth stakeholder

“I think amongst the youth of today that diversity is actually turning round into making things very segregated” – Lambeth stakeholder

The word diversity has made things worse in some respects because we are looking at everyone’s needs separately - Peckham stakeholder

Question: I would like you to tell me on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, to what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Figure 9



78% of stakeholders taking part in the survey agreed that young people were often portrayed negatively in the press and 57% agreed that young people turned to crime because there were not enough positive activities for them to do. Both these results were supported by subsequent group discussions with stakeholders. Lewisham stakeholders were most vocal about local newspapers coverage of young people’s positive achievements.

“And it’s a high priority for young people as well, that always comes up. A lot of the time when we do our consultation stuff one of the major things that comes up, apart from their fear of crime and whatever else, is about how they’re portrayed as young people” – Lewisham stakeholder

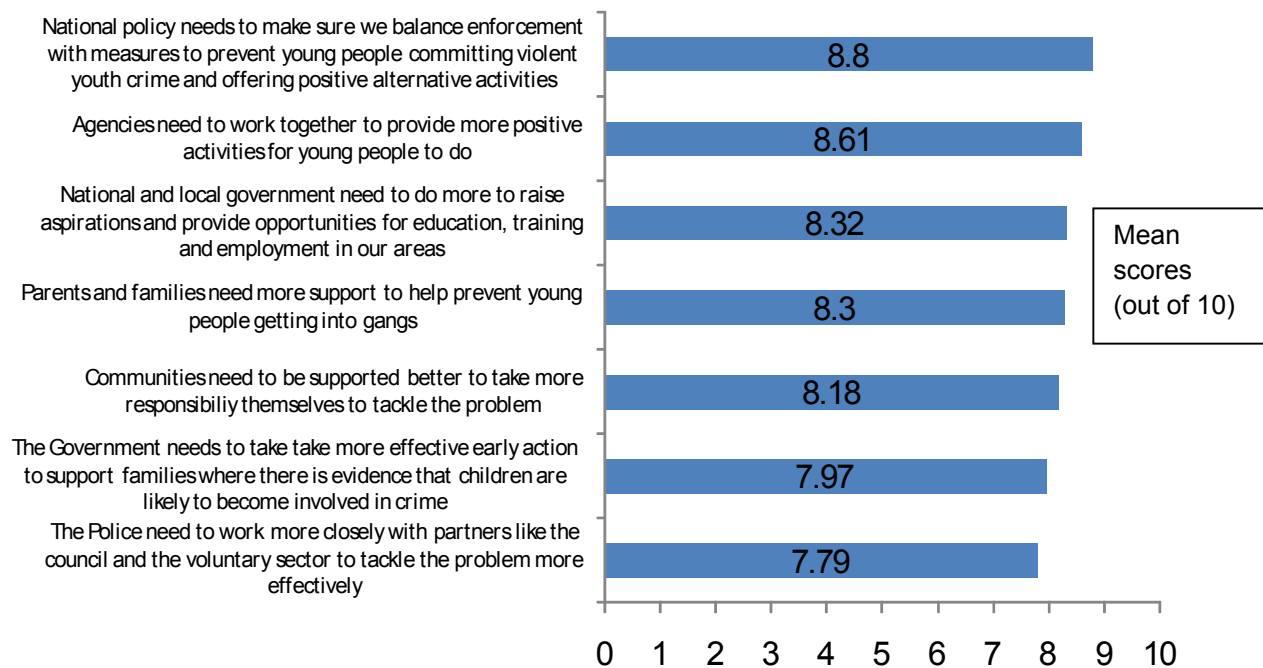
“I mean the classic example is Jimmy Mizen who got murdered just up at Lee. His murder was all over the papers. I know something positive came out, the fund that was set up [by his friends] to provide minibuses and that, but that was not reported on” – Lewisham stakeholder

7. Agency and government response to tackling violent youth crime

Key Highlights: Stakeholders were not looking to apportion blame for the perceived increase in violent of youth crime. On a scale of 1 to 10 stakeholders tended to disagree with the statement ‘the police are not doing enough about the problem’ only received a mean score of 4.74 out of 10. Similarly, stakeholders only slightly agreed that ‘Local councils were not enough about the problem’ (mean score of 5.96 out of 10). Instead stakeholders believed that positive activities and family support were needed to steer young people away from crime, as well as cross agency working to provide positive activities and better provision of opportunities for education, training and employment.

Question: Thinking about how agencies and government are responding to the challenge of violent youth crime, tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

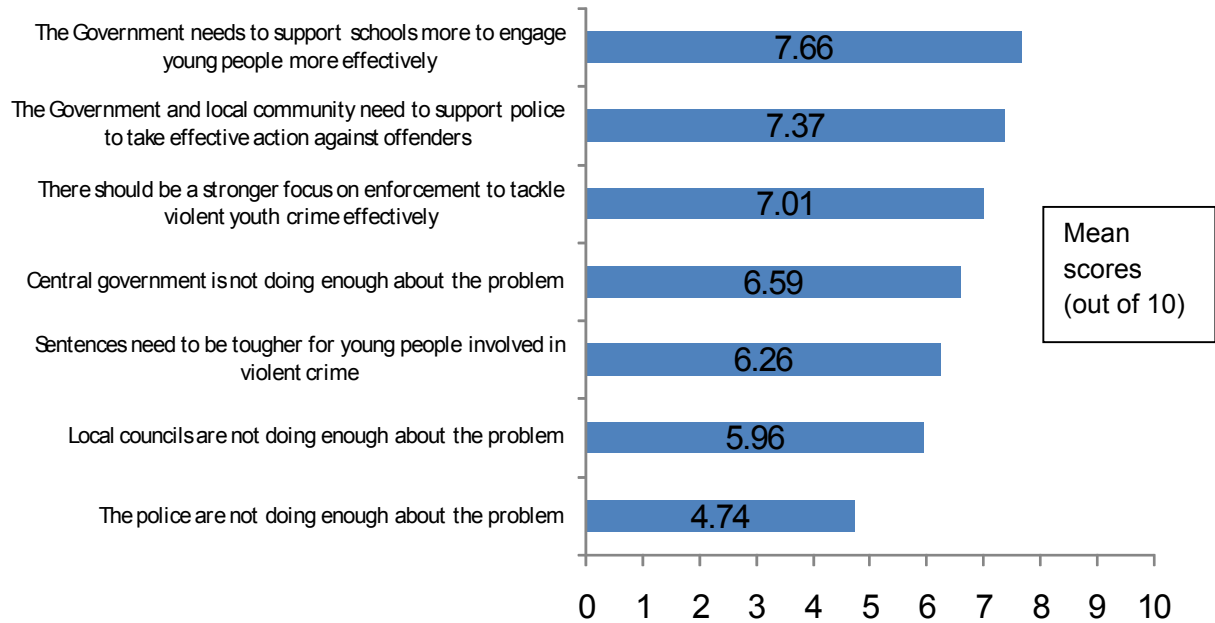
Figure 10



Base: All (106)

Question: Thinking about how agencies and government are responding to the challenge of violent youth crime, tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (continued)

Figure 11



Base: All (106)

Ranking the mean scores revealed that stakeholders were most likely to believe that ‘National Policy needed to balance enforcement with measures to prevent young people committing violent youth crime and offering positive alternatives’ (mean score 8.8 out of 10). As opposed to simply adopting ‘a stronger focus on enforcement to tackle youth crime effectively’ (mean score 7.01 out of 10). The ranking also revealed that stakeholders did not believe that ‘the police were not doing enough about the problem’ (mean score 4.74 out of 10). Furthermore, stakeholders were not inclined to believe that ‘local councils were not doing enough about the problem’ (mean score 5.96 out of 10).

“The police are doing enough, they are doing what they can, they are in a no win situation. The only thing I would add is that police need to be doing joint initiatives” – Lambeth stakeholder

Verbatim comments from the survey and subsequent group discussions with stakeholders revealed a range of other measures that stakeholders believed would be effective in tackling violent youth crime, these included:

- *More funding for local/grass roots organisations aimed at helping young people*
- *More positive role models for young people; more youth mentoring*
- *Early intervention; educate younger children about the danger of gangs*
- *More sports facilities*

- *Promote the positive activities that young people already do; don't just focus on the negative*

Stakeholders in group discussions also emphasised the potential for more joined up working across the agencies, reflecting findings from the survey. They explained that they themselves were not always aware of the positive activities available in their area and agencies and community groups were not always good at, or willing, to share information. They believed that competition for funding could make agencies and community groups territorial and protective of good ideas.

"There is a lot of competition for funding, it is very territorial" – Peckham stakeholder

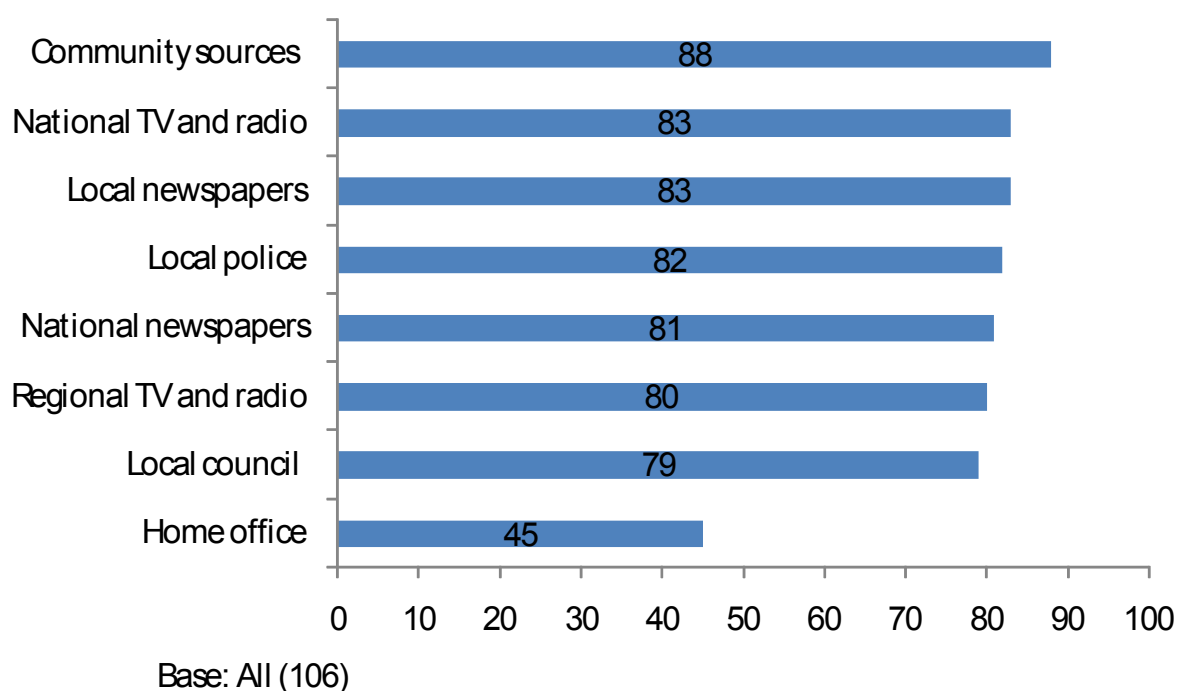
"What should be happening is multi agency working – joint funding, joint initiatives, joint projects - but what you are finding is that community groups are individually tapping into funding streams and as a result are being very competitive with everyone around them, to the extent that they don't embrace this type of forum. If they are running a successful project they want to keep it closed so they can benefit from funding opportunities" – Lambeth stakeholder

8. Information sources about violent youth crime

Key highlights: Community sources (88%) were the most popular source of information about violent youth crime, followed by national TV and radio (83%) and local newspapers (83%). However, whilst 78% of stakeholders trusted information from community sources only 16% trusted information from national newspapers.

Question: Which of the following sources of information about violent youth crime do you use?

Figure 12



Survey results showed that 88% of stakeholders used community sources for information about violent youth crime, followed by national TV and radio (83%), local newspapers (83%), local police (82%), national newspapers (81%), regional TV and radio (80%) and local council (79%). They are much less likely to use the Home Office (45%) for information about violent youth crime.

Group discussions revealed that Home Office information was more likely to be used by stakeholders responsible for completing funding applications, rather than as a day-to-day source of information about violent crime

"I always go to the Home Office website when I am working on proposals for projects because I know that the government will use whatever research they have done to

divvy the money out, and if we weren't working from the same page we would miss out" – Lambeth stakeholder

In order to accurately interpret the results, stakeholders attending the group discussions were asked how they had interpreted community sources when answering this question. The general consensus was that community sources comprised:

- Fellow professionals working in the community
- Friends and neighbours
- Young people

For some professionals it also included more formal community networks such as local forums and tenants meetings and the minutes from these meetings. There was also one mention of reports derived from CCTV on the local estate.

"But if you live on an estate these days, their CCTV, the CCTV is monitored 24/7, you get the statistics off of there" – Lambeth stakeholder

"Community sources are the people you talk to as you walk around" – Lewisham stakeholder

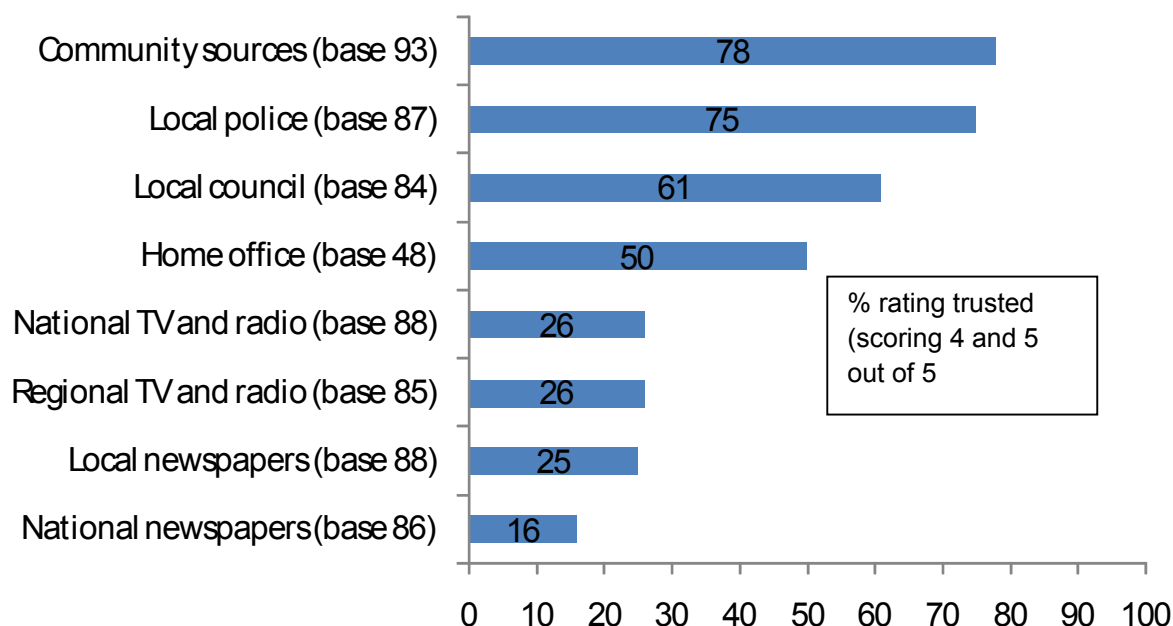
"The grapevine" – Peckham stakeholder

"I sit on lots of local panels in different areas around Lewisham and Southwark, so lots of like local panels, estates, tenants associations, bits and pieces, so a lot of this stuff I will pick up from minutes of meetings that I don't get to attend as well" – Lewisham stakeholder

8.1 Level of trust in information sources

Question: And tell me to what extent do you trust the following sources of information about violent youth crime? On a scale on 1 to 5 where one is not at all trusted and 5 is extremely trusted

Figure 13



Community sources were not only the most popular sources of information about violent youth crime but also the most trusted. 78% of stakeholders who used community sources rated them as 4 or 5 out of 5 on trust. In contrast the media was the least trusted source of information, particularly national newspapers. Only 16% of stakeholders who used national newspapers as a source of information on violent youth crime trusted them. Interestingly, the Home Office was only trusted by 50% of stakeholders using the information.

Information for local Councils was reasonably well regarded but there may be some scope for improvement. 61% of stakeholders who used local council information trusted it, making it the third most trusted source of information.

In subsequent group discussions the issue of trust was explored in some detail. With the exception of the media, the general consensus amongst stakeholders was the closer they felt to the information source the more likely they were to trust it. Hence community sources and **local** police were trusted because stakeholders were likely to come across both in their day-to-day lives. They had the opportunity to develop an interactive relationship.

“Who are you going to trust – a neighbour or someone sitting in a very posh office who has never been anywhere?” – Lambeth stakeholder

“In our youth group we are actually on first name terms with a lot of the local police” – Lambeth stakeholder

“I think part of the trust with the local police is that you do get the opportunity to speak to them” - Lewisham stakeholder

“I think the street police who are there and actually see it may have a different opinion to the people who are actually doing the statistics” – Lambeth stakeholder

In comparison, most stakeholders regarded the Home Office as a remote institution that had little connection to them or their area. Some also pointed out that the reputation of the Home Office had been tarnished by recent events such as Jackie Smith wearing a bullet proof vest when visiting Peckham and the apparent ‘selective’ reporting of knife crime statistics. Stakeholders also expressed concern about the independence of Home Office information with many feeling that the information had to be in line with government policy and targets.

“Local police respond to their communities better, the Home Office is in an ivory tower” – Lambeth stakeholder

“Why trust something that is so irrelevant” – Lambeth stakeholder

“Well it has been proved recently that it [Home Office information] was a pack of lies, hasn’t it?” – Lewisham stakeholder

“It seems that everything that comes from the Home Office always ends up to be some sort of mess” – Lewisham stakeholder

“There’s also behind that as well people’s belief that there’s a political need within the Home Office to report in a certain way for the benefit of the government” – Lewisham stakeholder

Happily, information from local councils was regarded as more trustworthy than information from the Home Office. This was largely due to the fact that stakeholders felt closer to their local council and better able to hold the council to account.

“I think on a local basis it’s easier to hold a council more accountable than it is central government” – Lewisham stakeholder

Reasons why local councils may have not have scored higher on trust include:

- The belief that local councils would want their information to paint a positive picture of the area
- The fact that council information is thought to be based on statutory agencies and government statistics rather than what is happening on the street or reported by local communities

“I think that they statutory agencies, their statistics are based on reported incidents and some intelligence but they are distanced from the acutually word on the street in term so what is happening within communities” – Lambeth stakeholder

“I think to some extent local councils, like schools, want to have a good reputation, that the work they are doing is effective. So I think they may focus more on the good things that are happening” – Lambeth stakeholder

“I think the reason that is, is because they don’t necessarily include the people in the meetings that they need to. They tend to stick to statutory bodies or senior management” - Lewisham stakeholder

9. Reactions to Community Reassurance Network

9.1 General reactions

In group discussions stakeholders were asked to assess the concept of a community reassurance network. The concept is outlined below:

To create and support a Community Reassurance Network from community group representatives and individuals. The network would largely operate virtually receiving news updates on reassurance work, statistical information on violent youth crime and on positive activities for young people. Information would be in their chosen format – mainly through text message (but with email and hard copy offered as alternatives).

The network would be recruited through, and eventually would deliver a series of programmed presentations to community groups on behalf of the reassurance group. The group would prepare a core presentation and train an initial group of volunteers to speak on behalf of the group.

Stakeholders expressed mixed reactions to the idea of a creating a Community Reassurance Network, with individuals running local youth clubs expressing the most enthusiasm and interest. They believed that the network would offer an opportunity to receive more information and were particularly enthusiastic about receiving information on positive activities for young people. They thought that it was important to learn and communicate about successful projects that their communities could potentially learn from and implement.

“If it is going to give updates and statistical information on youth crime...if it has the ability to inform us, then it has at least served a bit of purpose. I think that kind of information and statistics is important no matter how we use it” – Lambeth stakeholder

“It’s got some legs because if people locally are more aware of the positive things that are going on, so not in terms of these are positive activities that we provide for young people and like advertising or whatever, but actually in terms of good news stories of things that happen and in terms of outcomes that people have achieved by working together” – Lewisham stakeholder

“I would say I would be happy to be part of a community group that is reassuring people as long as it doesn’t preclude me from providing information that might not be so reassuring at times” – Lewisham stakeholder

However, a number of stakeholders criticised the concept for several reasons:

- They believed that the concept was just another, in a long line, of positive initiatives
- They objected to the word ‘reassurance’ and felt that the information they would be asked to present could be biased
- They believed that money and effort would be better spent on funding more youth projects

“I think calling it a Reassurance Network is frightening. It sounds like newspeak out of 1984” – Lambeth stakeholder

“It is cascading information, it is not really anything new” – Peckham stakeholder

“I think it is just more of the same” – Lambeth stakeholder

“It is not even our own message” – Lambeth stakeholder

There’s still that whole underlying current that it’s just another initiative that’s out there – Lambeth stakeholder

“I think it’s a bit cheap really of the council to come up with using providers to reassure members of the public when actually who’s going to be reassuring us that they’re doing everything they can to support our young people and our services?” – Lewisham stakeholder

9.2 Implementing the idea

Although reactions to the overall concept were mixed there was some discussion about how the concept could be implemented. The general consensus amongst stakeholders was that email communication would be more effective than text messaging. They felt that text messaging was a useful method of communicating with young people; however, as professionals they preferred communication to come through to their computer so that they could save it and keep it for reference or to print out.

“To be honest text messages fail a lot more than email and hard copy” – Lewisham stakeholder

Some of the more enthusiastic stakeholders also called for face-to-face contact and input into the content of the presentation. They believed that it was important that

they were given the opportunity to shape the information they would eventually present to community groups.

“If you allow community representatives opportunity to help develop the presentation they will have more ownership. You can’t just go out cold with a ready-made package” – Peckham stakeholder

“Virtual is good but I also think it needs communication face-to-face” – Peckham stakeholder

Stakeholders believed that the need for support and training would be dependent on the individual. Some already felt well equipped to deliver presentations, whilst they thought others might need training. Some even warned that it was important to vet community representatives before relying on them to disseminate information. They explained that individuals and community groups had their own agendas and different standards of work.

“I think they should be trained and one of the things that we found out is that when you are taking information from community groups – they might be a reliable source of information but they should be vetted because to be honest with you there are a lot of different standards of community representatives/groups” – Lambeth stakeholder

10. Reactions to the Community Reassurance Pack

10.1 General reactions

There was no awareness of the Community Reassurance Pack amongst stakeholders attending group discussions. On seeing the pack for the first time impressions were generally positive and the directory of local services and organisations was instantly appreciated.

“I think it is OK. I like the directory of local services and organisations. I think that is helpful to have that in there” – Lambeth stakeholder

“It is quite good for me, a youth worker or someone who deals with young people. I would welcome some information like ‘what to say to young people’...informing them of things that can get them into trouble and I think it has the answers for me as a youth worker.....It’s not too weighty but there is enough to inform you” – Lambeth stakeholder

“You know it is quite good, I am sorry that I have not had it” – Peckham stakeholder

“There are a lot of organisations in here which go across the 5 boroughs which is good” – Peckham stakeholder

However, when asked to explore the Community Reassurance Pack in more detail stakeholders started to become more critical of the content. A number of them felt that some of the general content was patronising and, in some instances, inaccurate. For example, they did not believe that there was a minimum sentence of five years for possession of a gun. These stakeholders felt that the pack was aimed at people who did not have day-to-day dealings with young people.

“It is not saying anything to me at all, I think it is slightly condescending. I look at it and it is common sense” – Stakeholder Peckham

“It is a narrative for police who have never dealt with young people. I think that is what it seems like” – Lambeth stakeholder

“If you’ve grown up on an estate and, you’ve probably hung with some people who have gone inside, you know what’s what basically, what the running is anyway. This [what to say to young people] is not going to help” - Lambeth stakeholder

“But it is not true, they’re not getting five years, so why are we telling them a lie?” – Lambeth stakeholder

Several stakeholders also commented on the use of photographs within the pack and the potential overuse of images of Police Community Support Offices (PCSOs). Some Lewisham stakeholders thought that the images were overused in other council communications, whilst one of the Lambeth stakeholders felt the images of PCSOs offered little reassurance. Furthermore, the perceived dominance of photographs of PCSOs in the Reassurance Pack could be driving the opinion that the Community Reassurance Pack is aimed at people who do not have day-to-day dealings with young people.

“Every single one of those people that are in the booklet, they’ve probably all got the leaflets...because they’re the people they’re recognising. They’re not recognising other groups” – Lewisham stakeholder

Without doubt these more considered opinions reflected the diverse range of stakeholders and highlighted the difficulty of producing a common communication that will have appeal and relevance to all.

However, stakeholders were less divided in their opinion of the directory of local services and organisations. Whilst they welcomed the directory, they recognised that it was not a comprehensive list of every organisation working with young people to reduce crime. They wanted to know how the organisations listed had been selected, and in some instances why their own organisation was or was not listed.

“Have they only included people in here that they have given money to?” – Peckham stakeholder

“The problem is the directory – how do you determine what sits in a local directory?” – Lambeth stakeholder

“These are all projects with major funding, straight away they have discounted voluntary and community projects” – Lewisham stakeholder

“INVOLVE – Intensive Gangs Intervention – finished over a year ago” – Lewisham stakeholder

10.2 Suggested improvements

Peckham stakeholders believed that ‘What to say to young people’ and ‘What to say to communities facing violence’ suggested that one had definitive answers to offer. They felt that it would be more appropriate to soften the title to ‘How to advise...’ or even ‘How to approach...’. In addition to adapting the titles, stakeholders thought that the Community Reassurance Pack needed to cover the topic of approaching young people with respect; emphasising the importance of respect to young people.

“If you say ‘what to say to’ it suggests that you have all the right answers” – Peckham stakeholder

“How to approach young people’ is better than ‘what to say to young people’ then you can include respect – Peckham stakeholder

“I think they need to include something about respect, respect is hugely important to young people” – Peckham stakeholder

“Respect is their [young people’s] cry” – Peckham stakeholder

Lewisham stakeholders focussed on the need to offer more direction alongside the advice. For example, under ‘It’s your choice’ they thought it would be beneficial to list some of the organisations that could help a young person get out of violence and crime, rather than relying on the directory at the back. This builds on the idea of locating the Crimestoppers number under the text relating to ‘Report it!’

“It doesn’t tell you where to kind of go with that. It’s not that directional unless someone is going to sort of flick through and look and think “Well okay” and then look at these numbers at the back and try and see what fits” – Lewisham stakeholder

“You have choices, make the right ones”. Give some examples of these choices” – Lewisham stakeholder

In addition to these changes in the general text, the majority of stakeholders called for a more comprehensive directory of local services and organisations set out in clear categories. They called for a wider range of services to be included, such as parental support and counselling.

However, some recognised that a comprehensive directory could become unwieldy and would be difficult to keep up to date. Instead, they suggested that the Community Reassurance Pack could list a limited number of services and organisations AND act as a signpost to a more comprehensive on-line directory.

“They should probably broaden the directory - What about counselling? And there is nothing here on drugs?” – Peckham stakeholder

“If you categorise the information it would be easier , for example – parent support, positive activities for young people, intervention and prevention provision, and then community support services like your Greenwich volunteer centre and youth services like youth offending teams” – Lambeth stakeholder

“If we’re going to have a directory, then have a good directory with everything otherwise just put a website on that can be updated on a regular basis” – Lambeth stakeholder

“I mean the problem with producing a directory of local services and organisations is will they actually still be here by the time this thing gets printed and out?” –
Lewisham stakeholder

10.3 Alternative formats

Stakeholders were happy with the existing format of the Community Reassurance Pack. Most believed that it was light enough to transport in a briefcase and sturdy enough to keep as a reference booklet at their desk. With this in mind, whilst most stakeholders liked the Z-card format, they viewed it as a useful **additional** format for the information rather than an alternative.

“Something like that could be handy rather than something to put in a briefcase” –
Lambeth stakeholder

“If it is for professionals you need a booklet – to keep in their office as a resource you are not going to need it in that format that they need to have available right now” –
Lambeth stakeholder

11. Conclusions

- The level of concern about violent youth crime is high amongst stakeholders. 63% reported being very concerned. Furthermore, 68% of stakeholders believed that violent youth crime had increased over the past two years. Some stakeholders believed that the media could be influencing perceptions.
- There appears to be a reliance on community sources for information about violent youth crime and a general lack of trust in more official statistics. Stakeholders explained that official statistics can only include reported incidents and therefore did not always reflect the information they picked up from community sources.
- There is no widely accepted definition of the word gang. Whilst two-thirds of stakeholders related gangs to criminal activity, one third of stakeholders regarded them as groups with common backgrounds. Group discussions revealed that use of the word gang can provoke strong reactions from stakeholders working with young people.
- The perceived drivers of violent youth crime are complex and led to a great deal of debate amongst stakeholders. However, survey results revealed that stakeholders believed that 'it was much easier to get hold of guns (68%); 'there has been a breakdown of discipline amongst young people' (60%); 'gangs are now much stronger in our area' (58%); and, 'young people are badly influenced by media, music and video games' (57%).
- Stakeholders believed that agency and government response to tackling violent youth crime needed to balance enforcement with positive activities, involving more cross agency working and more opportunities for education, training and employment. They also believed that parents and families needed more support to help prevent young people getting into gangs.

- Stakeholders were most likely to use and trust community sources for information about violent youth crime, followed by local police. In group discussions stakeholders explained that frequent interaction with these information sources enabled them to build that trust. They felt more remote from local councils and the Home Office.
- Responses to the Community Reassurance Network and the Community Reassurance Pack highlighted the diverse range of stakeholders and the need to accurately target information. For example, those running general youth clubs were more open to the Community Reassurance Pack and the Community Reassurance Network than some of the stakeholders involved in more specific roles that focussed on working with violent youths or reducing crime.
- There are several suggested improvements to the Community Reassurance Pack covered in section 11 of this report. They involve alterations to the directory and modifications and additions to the general text. However, on the whole stakeholders were happy with general format of the pack and see the z-card format as an additional rather than alternative format.
- Finally, there is some scope to develop the idea of a Community Reassurance Network but to broaden its appeal it may be worth considering naming it a Community Information Network. Again, it would have to be well targeted and stakeholders would want input into the information they are asked to share with their communities. They would be unwilling to share reassurance messages they did not believe themselves.

12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1 – Survey questionnaire

LEWISHAM COUNCIL
Quantitative Questionnaire

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. My name is I am calling on behalf of the London boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. These boroughs are working in alliance with the Metropolitan Police and other partners to address the issue of violent youth crime. They would like to improve their understanding of what people know, think and believe about youth violence. In order to do this effectively we would like to avoid giving you any more information about the content of the survey at this point.

ALL RESPONSES ARE GIVEN IN CONFIDENCE.

If the respondent is interested, but can't spare 15 minutes ask if you can make an appointment for a time convenient to them

Name of respondent: _____

Job title: _____

Organisation: _____

SECTION ONE: SCREENING AND QUOTAS

S1. Can I ask you which of the following best describes your role? READ OUT; SELECT ONE

Role	
Councillor	
London Assembly member	
Journalist	
Religious leader	
Community group leader	
Other (please specify)	

S2 Tell me are you a member of the following? READ OUT AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Community Police Consultative Group (CPCG)	
Independent Advisory Group (IAG) Note to interviewer: Formally working the police to promote community cohesion	
None of the above	

S3. Tell me in which London borough is the majority of your work focused/which borough do you represent?

READ OUT: SELECT ONE

Borough	
Southwark	
Croydon	
Greenwich	

Lambeth	
Lewisham	
Other (please specify)	DON'T CLOSE BUT CAN WE KEEP TABS ON HOW MANY OTHERS

SECTION 2: CONCERN AND PREVALENCE

Q1. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all concerned and 10 is extremely concerned, how concerned are you about the level of **violent youth crime** in South London (defined as Southwark/Croydon/Greenwich/Lewisham/Croydon)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Q2. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all concerned and 10 is extremely concerned, how concerned are you about the level of **violent youth crime** in your borough (pre-populate with responses from S3)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Q3. How would you say the level of **violent youth crime** in your borough compares to 2 years ago? READ OUT AND SELECT ONE)

Increased a lot	
Increased a little	
Stayed about the same	
Decreased a little	
Decreased a lot	

Q4. How would you say the level of **violent youth crime** in South London (defined as Southwark/Croydon/Greenwich/Lewisham/Croydon) compares to 2 years ago? (READ OUT AND SELECT ONE)

Increased a lot	
Increased a little	
Stayed about the same	
Decreased a little	
Decreased a lot	

Q5 Which of the following crimes do you understand as being classified as violent crime?
(READ OUT AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

	Answer
Actual Bodily Harm	
Grevious Bodily Harm	
Aggravated vehicle taking	
Assault without injury	
Aggravated Burglary	
Threats to kill	
Murder	
Harrassment	
Child Neglect	
Robbery	
Indecent Exposure	
Drugs Supply to another	
Soliciting for prostitution	
Possession of offensive weapon	
Dangerous driving	

SECTION 3: PERCEPTION OF DRIVERS OF YOUTH CRIME

Q6. What do you believe are the top three causes of violent youth crime?

Q7. Thinking about some of the possible causes of an increase in violent youth crime, to what extent do you agree with the following statements, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree (READ OUT: ROTATE)

It's much easier for young people to get hold of guns	1 2 3 4 5
It's much easier for young people to get hold of knives	1 2 3 4 5
Gangs are now much stronger in our area	1 2 3 4 5
There has been a breakdown of discipline among young people	1 2 3 4 5
Schools are letting down too many of our young people	1 2 3 4 5
Parents are not controlling their children	1 2 3 4 5
Young people are badly influenced by the media, music and video games	1 2 3 4 5
Too many young people cannot see a future for themselves outside of crime	1 2 3 4 5
Young people want to make easy money	1 2 3 4 5
Young people are increasingly dependent on drugs	1 2 3 4 5

Q8. I am now going to read out five more statements and again I would like you to tell me on a scale of 1 to 5, where one is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (READ OUT: ROTATE)

Using terminology such as 'gangs' is glamourising youth crime	1	2	3	4	5
Young people are often portrayed negatively in the press	1	2	3	4	5
Young people brought up in single parent households are more likely to commit crime	1	2	3	4	5

households are more likely to commit crime					
Young people turn to crime because there are not enough positive activities for them to do	1	2	3	4	5
Violent youth crime is driven by the illegal trade in drugs	1	2	3	4	5

Q9. Thinking about how agencies and government are responding to the challenge of violent youth crime, tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (READ OUT: ROTATE)

The police are not doing enough about the problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Central government is not doing enough about the problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Local councils are not doing enough about the problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The police need to work more closely with partners like the council and the voluntary sector to tackle the problem more effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Parents and families need more support to help prevent young people getting into gangs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agencies need to work together to provide more positive activities for young people to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communities need to be supported better to take more responsibility themselves to tackle the problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sentences need to be tougher for young people involved in violent crime	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The Government and the local community need to support police more to take effective action against offenders	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The Government needs to support schools more to engage young people more effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The Government needs to take more effective early action to support families where there is evidence that children are more likely to become involved in crime	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
National and local government need to do more to raise aspirations and provide opportunities for education, training and employment in our areas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
There should be a stronger focus on enforcement to tackle violent youth crime effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
National policy needs to make sure we balance enforcement with measures to prevent young people committing violent youth crime and offering positive alternative activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q10. Are there any other measures you think would be effective in tackling violent youth crime?

SECTION 4: UNDERSTANDING OF GANGS

Q11. Gang is often a word used in connection with crime. We would like to find out what people understand by the term gangs. I am going to read out several definitions of 'gang' and I would like you to tell me to what extent each definition reflects your own use and understanding of the word 'gang'. (Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 does not at all reflect your understanding of the word gang and 5 very much reflects your understanding of the word gang)

A small, organised group that comes together for a short time because they occupy the same space or have a share a common background.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

A relatively long-term, largely street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as an identifiable group for which crime and violence is a fundamental part of their identity.	1	2	3	4	5
An organised group professionally involved in crime for personal gain, operating almost exclusively in the illegal market place	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please specify)					

Q12. What proportion of **violent youth crime** across South London (defined as Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) would you say is related to gangs?

READ OUT; SELECT ONE

More than 75% of violent youth crime is related to gangs	
Between 50% and 75% of violent youth crime is related to gangs	
Between 25% and 50% of violent youth crime is related to gangs	
Less than 25% of violent youth crime is related to gangs	

SECTION 5: INFORMATION SOURCES

Q13 Which of the following sources of information about violent youth crime do you use?
(READ OUT AND SELECT ALL THAN APPLY)

Q14 And tell me to what extent do you trust the following sources of information about violent youth crime? On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all trusted and 5 is extremely trusted

(ASK FOR ALL, NOT JUST THE ONES THEY USE)

	Q13 Use	Q14 Trust
Local newspapers		1 2 3 4 5
National newspapers		1 2 3 4 5
Regional TV and radio		1 2 3 4 5
National TV and radio		1 2 3 4 5
Local police		1 2 3 4 5
Home Office		1 2 3 4 5
Community sources		1 2 3 4 5
Local council		1 2 3 4 5
Other, please specify		1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 5: FINAL QUESTIONS

Q10. Are you willing to be re-contacted about future research into violent youth crime for the Five Boroughs Alliance?

YES	NO
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Q11. Would you like to receive a summary of the results of this survey?

YES	NO

THANK AND CLOSE

12.2 Appendix 2 – Group discussion guide

Objectives:

- Gauge stakeholders general reactions to survey results
- Focus on understanding which sources of information about violent youth crime are used and trusted by stakeholders
- **Explore the potential use of community sources to channel reassurance messages**
- Develop specific communication ideas/strategies

Introduction and warm up (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderator introduction and background to the project ▪ MRS code of conduct ▪ Gain permission to record ▪ Participant introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organisation ▪ Role ▪ View of violent youth crime in South London 	
General reactions to survey results (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore spontaneous reactions to summary of results ▪ Any surprises? ▪ Explore in more detail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of concern about violent crime ▪ Increase in violent crime over the past 2 years ▪ What constitutes violent crime ▪ Drivers of violent youth crime ▪ Agency and government response to violent youth crime ▪ Gang related violent youth crime ▪ Stakeholders to explain why they would agree or disagree with each of these results ▪ Use this section to inform participants about the actual statistics on violent youth crime 	Handout: Summary of results
Focus on information sources about violent youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholders to note down individually their sources of information about violent youth crime ▪ Introduce survey results on sources of information 	

<p>crime (15 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do survey results reflect individual results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any surprises? ▪ Explore in more detail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do they understand by community sources ▪ What community sources have they used ▪ Explore verbal v non verbal community sources ▪ Why they think community sources are most used and most trusted sources of information about violent youth crime ▪ In contrast, why do they think only 50% of stakeholders trust Home Office Information ▪ How do they feel about Local Council information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have they used it ▪ If not, why not? 	
<p>Explore development of community networks (20 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore any spontaneous suggestions of how community representatives could help communicate messages of reassurance about violent crime ▪ How would this work ▪ What would the benefits be ▪ Introduce hand out explaining idea of community networks ▪ How is it similar or different to what already suggested ▪ Is it of interest ▪ If not for them, who do they imagine would volunteer ▪ How should they be communicated with - Email, text, hard copy ▪ Would they be prepared to talk to groups and spread positive messages ▪ Would they need/welcome support and training ▪ How do they envisage this working 	<p>Hand out explaining community networks</p>
<p>Explore Community reassurance pack (20 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spontaneous awareness of pack ▪ Have they used it/what do they think of it ▪ Hand out individual copies of pack and review for 5 minutes ▪ Explore likes and dislikes in the group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it the right sort of information 	<p>Community reassurance pack</p> <p>Z card</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What other information would they like - Is the format right/would z-card format be more useful ▪ Then in pairs work on key recommendations for improvements if pack is to be republished for community representatives ▪ Share recommendations with rest of group 	example
<p>Thank and close</p>		