

London Assembly Police and Crime Committee – Wednesday 20 September 2023**Transcript of Agenda Item 5 - Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2**

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Welcome back to the Police and Crime Committee. Can I now introduce our second panel of guests? We have Barrie Laslett, who is the Chief Executive Officer from the Wickers Charity; Geethika Jayatilaka, Chief Executive of Redthread; George Hosking OBE, who is Chief Executive and Scotland Director of the WAVE Trust; Sherry Peck, Chief Executive of Safer London; and Stephen Barnabis and Connor Ellis, both from Project Zero. Stephen is Operational Manager and Connor is the Opportunities Co-ordinator. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): I understand that you have been listening in on our first session and have heard the voices of the young people, who were very clear about terminology and talking about young people affected by violence, not about youth violence. We all heard that very loud and clear.

I am going to start by asking all of you what the phrase ‘serious youth violence’ means to you.

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): My name is Sherry Peck. I work at Safer London, a charity that works in every London borough with children affected by violence and exploitation. When I joined Safer London about six years ago, we used to talk about children affected by serious youth violence or serious youth violence and gangs or what-have-you. Language is hugely important because it reminds us -- sadly, I am old enough to remember when we used to talk about ‘child prostitutes’. I would hope that everybody’s toes would curl if we started talking about children who are being sexually exploited as ‘prostitutes’, but it was language we used and we used it as practitioners. Language is very important and when we reframe the language we use; we reframe our interventions.

That is why at Safer London we coined the term - and I am glad to see it is being used more widely now - around ‘young Londoners’ because another thing where I would challenge is when we are talking about young people and what we are talking about is 12-year-old children. We need to remind ourselves that very often what we are talking about here is children and young people.

When we start talking about ‘serious youth violence’, like many of the young people that you heard from earlier, I see that as pathologising. I see it as labelling children. If you read the work of Peter Squires [Professor of Criminology & Public Policy, University of Brighton], you will see much of this is a moral panic around the statistics around violence. He knows far more about that than me and so I will not lecture you on that, but it is not a term we use and it is not a term I particularly like.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Is there anyone else who would like to comment on this?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): Yes. I guess there is a danger with the beginning part of that phrase, ‘serious’. What is serious? Yes, of course, if a young person loses their life or somebody sustains substantial injury because they have been injured in a knife attack or a gun attack or even other forms of weapons. We have seen it before when one punch can kill somebody; one little incident or one little fight can turn into something very serious and very life-affecting, whether to families or to the young person or even to the perpetrator.

I was recently doing a funding application where we were asked if we were involved with young people who are involved in serious youth crime and, if they were at the heavier end, there was a whole other set of questions and safeguarding measures that we needed to take in terms of proving our qualifications in looking after those young people. Any young person at any point can be involved in something that can turn into something very serious and that terminology is something that we should be careful of.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. George, did you want to come in?

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): Yes. Statistically, the majority of violence in society peaks in adolescence and there is much serious violence in London and on young people, but I entirely accept the point made by the young people earlier that we should say 'young people affected by violence' because I completely take the point that was made that very often people engaging in violence are people who themselves are being affected by violence. It is a very common comment made, particularly by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which I have also worked with a great deal. Which young person ends up being the murdered person and which ends up being the murderer is a matter of chance. It is a very challenging situation when young people are in environments of violence and so I would accept that correction that was made earlier on.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Geethika?

Geethika Jayatilaka (Chief Executive, Redthread): Thank you. Yes, to concur with what has been said, we would also very much refer to 'children and young people who are affected by violence'.

George's point also linking the experiences of young people as victims and the impact of that in terms of post-traumatic stress [disorder] (PTSD) or mental health and the connections there with potentially going on to perpetrate is an absolutely important issue to recognise.

The other link that we would flag is that, when we talk about violence, we also need to recognise that that goes more beyond -- in the way that we look at it, we need to make sure that we are not excluding, for example, recognition of the needs of girls and young women. Language does matter and we need to recognise that there are complexities in the issue and to think about how we can work with that so that we are genuinely able to include all young people in terms of protection and safety.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Barrie?

Barrie Laslett (Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity): I am not going to labour my point. Everyone else has made their points really well and I agree with every single one of them, to be quite honest with you.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Fantastic. We have unanimity.

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): Sorry, I just wanted to add on as well to that. I know 'serious youth violence', from what I feel about it, we have covered everything when it comes to the physical side of things already in what everyone has said. However, I feel like also, when it comes to social media and stuff, there is violence on that and it can come along to self-harming and stuff, which is also violence. I feel like that also should be considered when it comes to serious youth violence.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. A very strong point and, actually, something that came up in the earlier session around people raising mental health as well in relation to this.

My next question is about the root causes of violence in London and how this has changed over recent years. Barrie, shall I start with you?

Barrie Laslett (Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity): The root causes have not changed since I grew up, to be quite honest with you. Poverty is a big driver. Nine times out of ten, most kids who get involved in any sort of criminal activity are doing it to make money, the same as when I was a kid.

The challenge now and I suppose in terms of why it has risen so much more recently is because of the internet and because of social media. You have got amplified extreme messages on the internet that these young people are viewing and experiencing, seeing violence on these posts that are being put out there by potential rival gangs in rival areas.

Young people are fearful. I talked to one of our young people. He is a 19-year-old boy who lives two minutes from Shoreditch. I am like, "Would you go out on a weekend with your mates?" He is like, "No, we are too scared. We stay indoors". As a 19-year-old boy, I was lucky enough to grow up in the 1990s and I could go out and have a great time. If you took any of these young people back to the 1990s, they would not come back now. They would not come back to this day and age because they are scared; they are fearful of leaving their houses. They are not going out and enjoying themselves; they are living with PTSD because of serious violent incidents happening outside their houses in the areas that they live, happening to people that they care about, happening to people that they know. They are having to live with that and that in itself is absolutely horrendous. That is my viewpoint on it.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Does anyone else want to come in on the root causes?

Geethika Jayatilaka (Chief Executive, Redthread): Thank you. Again, there may be some unanimity in what is said, but we would absolutely concur that in order to understand and tackle violence, it does have to be seen in its context with the links to social inequalities and also the failure of systems of support that have been set up to date.

In addition, we would flag up the overstretched nature of preventative services at the moment. We know there has been a significant decline in early intervention support services in terms of funding over the years. I know that a London Assembly Member [Siân Berry AM] did the report [in 2020] around investment in youth services [London's Lost Youth Services] and youth work, for example. More broadly that, very recently there was a Children's Society [2023] report [The Well-Worn Path – Children's Services Spending 2010-11 to 2021-22] that highlighted a decrease in investment in early intervention services by local authorities of around 40% over the last 12 years. We know that that support network is not as strong as it needs to be. Those are really the areas we need to look at if we are to effectively tackle this.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. George?

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): I set up the WAVE Trust 27 years ago to tackle the issue of violence. WAVE stands for Worldwide Alternatives to Violence and our focus was looking at the root causes because what we discovered was that, throughout not just the United Kingdom but the world, governments and charities were tackling the symptoms of violence and not the root causes.

After ten years of research [in 2005] we produced the report *Violence and what to do about it*, which led to our working with the Home Office and the then Labour Government and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). What we found was that the root causes of violence had two components. One was the inner propensity to be violent in individuals and the other was triggers of violence such as alcohol, poverty or other circumstances. What we also discovered was that people did not become violent if they did not have the inner propensity. Many people can get drunk or watch violent television and be poor and not be violent, but those who are [violent] are the ones who have that inner propensity. That inner propensity occurs and is created in the first three years of a child's life. We spend about 90% of the money we spend on violence tackling the triggers. We spend less than 10% dealing with what I believe to be the true root causes.

We set it out in our 2005 report *Violence and what to do about it*. We set it out in our 2008 report, which we produced jointly with the 32 London boroughs and the MPS. The report is called *Working together to reduce serious youth violence*. I strongly recommend to everyone reading that report because everything in that report indicates actions we should be taking to tackle youth violence in London. The sad thing is its recommendations were never implemented; there are reasons for that that I will not go into unless I am asked. I have reread both of our reports, our 2005 and our 2008 reports, recently and I would not change anything that we said in those. Everything I have learned in the last 15 years since 2008 has only reinforced the conclusions that we made at that time. What I have learned is a lot more about what would be effective in tackling things.

However, the root causes are clear. They are the experiences children have in the home or in care in those first three years of life. It has been shown that at ages 18 months to two years, the children who will be the future violent adolescent offenders can already be identified or at least the group from which they come can already be identified and have been identified by researchers such as Professor Richard Tremblay [Professor of Paediatrics, Psychiatry and Psychology] at the University of Montréal, who has followed that cohort of children from one and a half years to adolescence. In the Dunedin [Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research] Study in New Zealand, nurses watching three-year-old children at play could pick out the future violent offenders just by watching those children at play, including identifying future domestic violence perpetrators at five times the level of accuracy of domestic violence perpetrators in the general population.

We know what causes violent behaviour and we even know how to stop it. The problem is we do not actually put the steps in place to prevent it.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): It sounds really distressing, the idea that that might be set from such a young age. Sherry, would you like to comment?

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): I am not going to argue with such an academic study and I agree with very much of it. Where we are seeing an increase is that increase in inequality. There is clear evidence that there is a shrinking middle class and there is an increase in inequality, which I am sure then puts pressures on families and leads to many of the things that George has just mentioned.

As well, what we know through our work is that we are facing an absolute crisis around harm outside the home and we have a statutory system that has no way of responding to that. Social care currently has no statutory framework in which to respond to a child when the biggest dangers for them are outside their home as opposed to inside their home. Throughout my entire career working with families and with children, I have never seen so many parents voluntarily attempt to put their children into care because they think it is the only way they can get support.

You mentioned earlier the work around parents. When I took over at Safer London, we did not work with parents. We do a huge amount of work with parents now because they are one of the biggest safeguarding factors for our children because I think - I do not know but George may know - a lot of this is intergenerational. I have never yet come across a perpetrator who is not also a victim. We say that victim-perpetrator divide is absolutely meaningless. If you looked at any of the casefiles of the children we work with and you dug down deep enough, they are victims. They might be perpetrators who need to be held to account right now, but they are also victims and very often historically they come from intergenerational trauma. It is a long-term thing.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Stephen and Connor, who wants to go first?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): The usual ones have been mentioned around poverty, low educational attainment, opportunities for young people. The very early start is crucially important. I just wanted to maybe talk about or mention -- let us think about the last five or six years. We have moved from Brexit to COVID to the war in Ukraine to the cost of living [crisis]. They might be not your usual things that you might put towards in terms of the root causes but, if you think about a - ten-year-old who is now 16, they have had that for the last five or six years. What that creates is, definitely, issues around mental health, the feelings of no hope, the feelings of no point.

Then we see that there are 15- and 16-year-olds now who literally are coming to us and we are asking them, "What are your dreams? What are your hopes? What are your ambitions?" They are like, "I don't know. I do not really have any". That creates a sense of, "What am I doing with my life? Where do I go with my life?" That will lead them into areas of criminal activities or doing stuff to get by rather than thinking about their career and their future.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Connor, did you want to add anything?

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): Yes. I feel like most of the main root causes have also already been spoken about, but I just want to reiterate what Sherry said about the families and how your parents have a big impact. Growing up in east London, I have seen it first-hand. Some of my friends go off on the wrong route. I feel like having a good family network will keep you grounded and keep you rooted. Even though I have seen it happen, I kind of knew the right path and the wrong path. From that, I feel like the root causes, if you have, like I said, a good family network, it will be able to help you get through it, really and truly, yes.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you very much. My next question, again, to all of you is about how your organisations deliver non-policing solutions to prevent violence and particularly around younger people. Stephen?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): At Project Zero, we engage young people in positive activities. Everything that we do kind of comes under three umbrellas. Engagement: that is our holiday programmes, our youth clubs, our youth provision, providing a safe place for young people to come, hang with their friends, take part in a wide range of activities. We do everything around fashion, sports, gaming, tech, music, a wide range of things that young people can get involved in. As much as there are engagement activities and just fun activities for them to do, there are also elements of, "What are the things that you enjoy? What are the things that you could potentially take into careers? What are the things that you can use in your home life and what you do outside of school and in the community?"

Then inclusion: that is looking at and targeting young people who may be at risk of gang or criminal activities or issues around mental health. When we talk about mental health, we also talk about confidence. Some young people may have low self-esteem, no confidence, and that also leads them into being vulnerable young people who could be led down certain roads. We provide a wide range of activities that do target the most disadvantaged young people.

Then the last element of what we do or the last umbrella is employment. Once we have got a young person and once we are engaging with them, we are thinking about their future. We are thinking about the things that they are going to do to be able to live independently, provide for a family if they make that choice. We make a difference between a job and a career, trying to get young people to think about their careers and thinking about being in a leadership position and thinking about the next steps and really valuing what they are doing in their lives.

That is what we do as an organisation and that is what we provide. We seem to be quite successful in working with young people from a very early age right up to 21 years of age and sometimes beyond with our employment opportunities and the programmes that we provide.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Connor, did you want to add anything? Having visited Project Zero, it is a hub of energy and different stuff going on all over the place. Did you want to add anything?

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): Yes. Just to add on to what Stephen said, I would say we do mentoring as well. We do go into schools and there are a bunch of youth engagement workers who go along, and we work with the kids whom they have targeted and said that they need a bit of extra assistance. Whereas the teachers may not be able to come in and give them that mentoring support, when there is someone of similar age to them, we can come along and share lived experience with them. We can come along and speak to them and put them back on the right path if they just need a little bit of assistance in that way. I would say, yes, we also do mentoring alongside everything that Stephen has already said.

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): Do you want to mention your role as well and what you do?

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): Yes. My role at Project Zero is Opportunities Co-ordinator. As Stephen mentioned with the employment side of things, I will email a lot of external businesses and let them know about Project Zero and who we are and try to get different insight days and different employment activities for them so that they can go into businesses, do interview days with them, see the business, see how it all works, the headquarters, and just give them the opportunity to know that there is way more stuff out there rather than what is just in Walthamstow. We take them out on trips into central London to see NatWest, Visa and stuff. Some of them have never even been out into central London and so even just seeing that is a big step for them.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): That sounds amazing. Thank you. Sherry?

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): Yes. As I mentioned earlier, Safer London works at any one time with between 300 and 500 children who have very complex issues going on for them. Sadly, in the last year, three of those children have been murdered. Two have been arrested and charged with murder. We have a need-to-know process, a little bit like a social work process, where things get escalated so that I am aware of

everything that is going on in the organisation. I cannot remember a week that has gone by for as long as I can remember when I have not had at least one or two alerts of children having been raped or been attempting suicide or being caught for carrying weapons. It is quite a high level of risk that we work with.

We will work with children for as long as they need an intervention. It is a casework model, it is not compulsory. To answer a question that came up earlier, about 20% to 25% of our referrals come directly from children and young people or their families. That is not enough; I would like it to be greater, but we are certainly getting there. We are getting our name known and getting out into communities. We will work with children.

Our logic model is around establishing physical safety for those children and that may be even moving the entire family and their accommodation and helping them with that to make them physically safe. We then look at relational safety and emotional safety. I very often talk about children being affected by emotional wellbeing issues rather than mental health issues. When you are living in proximity to violence and when you are living and dealing with racism, your emotional wellbeing is going to be affected. It does not matter who you are. It is going to be affected. It is not a character flaw; it is not a mental health issue; it is not a medical issue. It is the fact that you are managing your emotional wellbeing.

Last year we did an amazing -- led by ten amazing young Black men. It won a national award around encouraging other young Black men to talk about mental health and to get help-seeking behaviours. We are hoping to roll that out for young women as well. We do the physical safety, the emotional safety and the relational safety and we are very much guided by [Professor] Carlene Firmin's [MBE] work around contextual safeguarding. We work with people but we work with peer groups as well. Children absolutely listen to their peers; they are not interested in oldies like us, they're interested in what their mates are saying. So if you can work around peer groups, that is important.

The last thing is that we work around places. You can make a referral to Safer London for an unsafe place. We can probably rescue a single child and family out of that place, but unless you resolve the issue, another child is going to fall into it, so we do work around that. We will work with children for a long as they need, if they have court cases going on, but we always try to step them down into other services. We did an evaluation last year that said that 50% of the children - which is not good enough; I am not resting on my laurels - who work with us no longer felt like a victim to anything by the time they had finished, and about 25% were no longer involved in serious violence. That is probably some of the best evidence that you can get but it is a long way short from being good because we are still managing children when they are living in what I see as a brutal context. The environment is one of the biggest drivers here and until we can build up community guardianship -- I remember years ago if there was a noise in the street my dad used to walk outside and work out what was going on and intervene and be part of the local community. People are too fearful to do that now. That notion of community guardianship and investing in spaces and places and giving people some answers, that is what we do.

We work as part of the professional network, we sit within strategy meetings, we may be part of somebody's youth offending referral order. It is really, really diverse what we do. The one thing that I would say is that we cannot do any of that without our staff. Connor is a clear example of what amazing staff we have in this sector, but unless you can establish epistemic trust with these children you will never be credible to them, unless those kids are going to listen to you and think, "Yes, you get me, I will listen to you, why should I listen to you when I've not listened to anybody else?" We stay by children. If we are going to meet a child and that child does not turn up -- let's say I have said, "George, I'll meet you in Costa's at 11.00am." I sit in Costa's from 11.00am until 12.00pm waiting, because children will test you, especially damaged children.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): WAVE operates in two different ways, after people have been damaged and before they have been damaged. In the after-damaged part of our work, we work directly with people who have a history of violence or a risk of violence --

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Sorry, can I intervene? The idea of young people or children being damaged - Sherry, you used this term as well - are we not talking about young people being affected by violence rather than damaged? The young people who we were hearing from earlier were talking about stigma, and I wanted to pick up on that terminology.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): When I speak about damaged, mostly I am referring to people who have suffered child abuse, neglect, growing up in homes with domestic violence or other adverse childhood experiences.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you, that clarifies it, thank you.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): We work with Youth Offending Teams (YOT), we work with probation, we work with police, we work in prisons, working to turn people away from lives of violence. We have done a great deal of that, particularly in London and we have achieved an almost 100% record of people we have worked with not reoffending with violent offending. I do not know of any other course or programme that has had results like that. I put the success of our work down to the fact that we recognise that most of the people we have been dealing with are suffering from PTSD as a result of earlier maltreatment in their lives. I have been trained as a clinical criminologist and also as a traumatic stress counsellor. We put healing PTSD at the centre of the work that we do. It is not the only part of the work that we do, but it is a very critical part that I think is fundamental to the success that we have achieved.

We also do trauma-informed training with schools, with local authorities, with multiple third-sector organisations, with GPs, with health visitors, midwives, with police forces and with prisons. That trauma-informed work is very valuable in terms of healing the damage that has been done to people and ensuring that the contact that they have with agencies does not compound that damage - which sadly very often happens - but reinforces the healing process. There will not be time now, but if Lord Bailey has time later, as a former school governor myself, I would love to discuss with you, how trauma-informed schooling prevents exclusions and improves school behaviour for the well-behaved children as well as the not so well-behaved schoolchildren and boosts academic results as well. It is something that could be enormously beneficial in London and elsewhere in reducing violence and improve outcomes - life outcomes not just academic outcomes - for our children.

We also work with former victims of violence. We have set up a lived-experience council which advises WAVE. We have lived experience on our Board of Trustees, and we have set up a group called Hearts of ACE (adverse childhood experiences) of former lived-experience people who have had trauma in their lives, who provide self-help to each other through counselling. We do a great deal on the after the event.

However, the most important part of the work that we do is in what we call prevention. When we were set up, there were over 100 charities in Britain tackling child abuse, but they were all tackling it after it happened. I could not find one that prevented child abuse before it happened. WAVE was set up specifically to tackle preventing violence and child abuse before it happens.

One of our main areas of work has been in bringing programmes to the UK that are valuable. There is a programme called Family Nurse Partnership; many of you may have heard of it. It was brought to Britain by WAVE Trust back in 2004/05. We brought to schools a programme called Roots of Empathy, which is widespread in Scotland and Northern Ireland and even the Isle of Man but sadly not in England. It has been introduced in both [the London Borough of] Lewisham and [the London Borough of] Croydon in London. WAVE played a key part in that but it is not very widespread in England. Roots of Empathy is a brilliant programme for fostering empathy in schoolchildren, including children who have never experienced empathy in their home lives. By the way, empathy is the single greatest antidote to violent behaviour. Young children learn empathy by 12 months of age. Sadly, many children do not learn empathy because they do not experience empathy in their early years of caregiving. Developing and fostering empathy is one of the key building blocks of preventing violent behaviour in society. Those two programmes have benefited over 90,000 children and families in the UK.

We are currently working to bring a third programme to the UK, which is called Parent-Child Psychological Support (PCPS). It is a Spanish programme and it is utterly brilliant. I think that it has more potential benefit than either of the other two programmes in terms of preventing the development of violent behaviour and producing superb life outcomes, pro-social citizens, taxpaying citizens, instead of citizens who grow up to be a drain on the public purse, end up with mental health problems, substance abuse problems, aggression, violence and entering the criminal justice system. I would be happy to talk to anybody about that programme, because if I could do one thing before I died, that would be the one thing I would want to do, see that programme being introduced on a widespread basis in England.

We also act as policy advisers. We have been policy advisers to the Home Office, 10 Downing Street, the Cabinet Office, Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, Scottish Government, Northern Ireland health agencies, education agencies and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Perhaps we can cover the PCPS programme in writing after the meeting. Geethika.

Geethika Jayatilaka (Chief Executive, Redthread): Thank you. I am the Chief Executive of Redthread, and Redthread's mission is very much to support young people to live healthier, safer, happier lives. We have a team of youth workers based in hospitals and health settings, in 13 hospitals in London, Birmingham and Nottinghamshire. Our team works with young people when they are in those settings to build relationships to support them with what is needed when they are in there, but also to help them to stay safe, to plan with them around that and to ensure that there are support services that they can access when they leave. Last year we worked with just under 2,500 children overall, and just under 1,500 of those were in London and impacted by violence and exploitation.

A lot of what has been said - and George mentioned too - on the importance of recognising the impact of trauma. As an organisation we are very committed to working in a trauma-informed way. There is a growing understanding of the importance of that in schools, in social work and in other settings as well. Recognising that for young people who have experienced trauma and of the young people who we work with, a significant number had witnessed violence, experienced violence or abuse or neglect previously. Recognising that those experiences may have longer-term impacts around hypervigilance, about hyperreactivity, delay in developing executive functioning skills and emotional regulation and seeing all of those as some of those longer-term impacts and being able to work with young people where they are. Our work in hospitals is very much about that reachable moment, when a young person is in hospital maybe by themselves or away from others. There is an opportunity for our team to build that relationship and trust that is so important.

The other element of work that we do that I want to highlight is training professionals, clinicians and others in hospital to recognise the signs of exploitation and enable them to make onward referrals to us and to other agencies for that support. When we think about a whole system can work towards supporting young people and keeping them safe, making sure that all agencies that are in touch with young people have that in mind feels really important.

The last thing I want to say is we talked a little bit in the earlier panel about the importance of online safety. Our Social Switch programme, which we are working in partnership with Catch22 on, is very much about supporting young people directly and those who work with young people, to help keep them safe. We have to continue to adapt our work as we go.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Finally Barrie.

Barrie Laslett (Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity): The Wickers Charity was founded five years ago to tackle knife crime and gun crime and gang crime, in particular in Hackney. In the last five years we have developed a range of services similar to Project Zero. We offer free after-school, half-term and holiday programmes to the community and find a way of engaging younger people, because you need to be building engagement with these kids as young as eight in order to be able to build that relationship with them and take that through to their teenage years.

Another big piece of the work that we do is around mentoring. We get referrals from the police, social services, from schools, for children who are at high risk and vulnerable of getting into crime. We provide them with a relatable person, someone who has lived experience, someone who they can relate to and can build a relationship with that young person so that they can build some sort of influence over them. Unfortunately, you would think that would be a given, but what I have seen is a lot of young-people-facing roles in statutory bodies do not always provide these young people with someone who they can relate to and that is a big issue.

I previously worked at Barnardo's for 20 years. One of the things that I was asked look into, or one of the biggest wastes of money at the time, was about young people missing appointments. Naively at the time, I was working in a corporate part of the department and looked at it as just young people who did not want to be reached and did not want to be going to these sessions. Now I am sitting on the other side of the fence and have reconnected with my own lived experience, and I have come to realise that a lot of the time these young people are maybe not getting the support or not engaging with the person or building a relationship with the person who is there to help them. Therefore, mentoring is a big part of everything that we do. It is about building those trusted relationships to then try and build an influence over them in a more positive way.

There are a lot of organisations out there that are better placed to us to support them with their issues and needs as such and we are aware of them, but what we try to do is find out what these young people are good at and what they are passionate about and we try to then push them in those directions because we believe that if they have a focus and they have some sort of direction and some sort of income that they can rely on, sometimes those issues become less of a problem in terms of their day-to-day. Their mental health needs are met by other organisations that are better placed than us.

Our third set of services that we provide is around employability and we start that from around 15 years old, where we help these young people find out what they might be good at or what they like because, as we all know, you have not got a clue what you want to do, or if you do know at the age of 15 or 16 you are very lucky. People think that they want to do something and when they try it out they realise it is not for them; we

could probably all testify to that. A thing here, from my own lived experience and from the young people who we talk to, is that sense of not belonging and sensing that the rest of the world is for other people and not for you. Helping these young people realise that there are opportunities out there, that they just need a bit of confidence and someone to believe in them, that makes a massive difference. There are a lot of great opportunities.

Mental health is another thing that we pick up on quite a lot. Our staff have been neurolinguistically trained, but we also try to divert these to other organisations that are better placed than us. We work in a range of boroughs. We started off in [the London Borough of] Hackney and we now intensively work in Hackney, [the London Borough of] Newham, [the London Borough of] Tower Hamlets. We do a lot of work in [the London Borough of] Redbridge and [the London Borough of] Waltham Forest and our focus is mainly around east London. We have recently also taken lead of the My Ends consortium in Hackney, which is a great honour for us but also shows the development of grassroots organisations, because there are a lot of them out there doing good work but do not know how to access funding or do not have the right capacity or capabilities, but they are the ones that are engaging the young people a lot of the time. An interesting point that needs to be made is that the My Ends programme has enabled us as an organisation to grow in capacity and to have greater influence over statutory bodies within our community.

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): I wanted to add something that is important to what we do, that when we are thinking about our youth engagement provision that we are thinking about young people in general. When a young person or even a parent comes to us at the centre, they are not necessarily coming because they are bringing a child who has been involved in criminal justice, considered as a gang-banger or in trouble or got problems. They are bringing a young person who wants to be involved in the youth provision that we provide. This is quite important. I know that targeted funding and making sure that young people who are most in need get targeted provision is crucial, but it is the same with a young person being excluded from school. If you tell that parent that their child is about to go to a pupil referral unit, the chances are they are not going to want their child to go to that because they know of the additional damage that might happen to that child when they go there. What we try to do is say, "Here's a place that is a youth provision for young people. Come along, enjoy in the activities and everything that we provide." Then we look and we know young people who need additional help, additional support, and we will have specific programmes that will assist that young person. It seems seamless that you are not coming because your child is considered a problem child. That is important in thinking about the universal provision.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Sherry, you wanted to come in. There are lots of other questions.

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): Quickly to pick up on the trusted-relationships aspect. The group of young people who support Safer London in developing its work, working with Ciaran Thapar, a youth worker to do a piece of research around that. If you want to be invited to the launch of that research, I would be happy to share it with you. The other thing that we do is that when we have developed programmes we then put them on our website and allow smaller organisations to just use them opensource, that generous leadership.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): That sounds fantastic, and we will find out the invitation after the meeting. Lord Bailey.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I will be quick, because first of all what you have all said, words fail me. There is no way to convey the level of understanding that you have all given across. Barrie, I grew up in London like you did and I remember the ability to go to places. My nephew will not do that and it is an awful

shame but it signifies something very important. Sherry, that thing that you said about a safe area and a safe space, I did youth work for over 35 years and that is what we were doing as a group of organisations. The way you talked about having a place that is not for bad kids. We had a lot of talk about how kids are acting up because they can see where the funds are coming from. We need to provide something for all of our kids because the important thing is that all of these children are not too far away from being that kid. That is the important thing. As for you, George, I will be fully attending, with all of my ability to pay attention, to what you said. With the Redthread thing, the thing that touched me is teaching the professionals. I have been in youthwork for a long time and, yes, I enjoyed youthwork, but I am sensing from you almost the academic understanding has moved on and I want to get more on that, so I will be around to see you on.

Chair, I had what now seems like a trivial question about what we could do about social media, because you are the young people before talked about social media as a major driver. However, to my mind, as a parent we seem to be afraid to tell people, internet service providers, that they cannot put that up there. If they spent as much money taking stuff down as they do pushing products down our throats, maybe we would get an effect. Is there something that we could do about social media if you had a magic wand?

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Is that a question for everyone?

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Let me direct it.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Yes, can you direct it to one person?

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: To Stephen and George, what would you do about social media if you had that wand?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): I am a foster carer, I have raised seven children, I have seven grandchildren and it is an alarming thing. When I was a young person growing up, if you wanted to find anything out you would have to get on your bike and you would have to go out and look for it. Now you do not have to. You can be at your home and you can just push a button. Whatever you want to see and whatever you want to look at is right there.

The things around making age-appropriate stuff, I do not know how that can be done. I am sure that there is the technology to make it happen, because a young person who is supposed to be 13 should not be able to even get on Facebook, I understand. That does not make a difference to any of the young people who I see who have a mobile phone. We try to use social media in a positive way and we try to use it to our advantage. I do not like it myself but we have a big presence on social media because we know that is a way that we can communicate with our young people. It has its benefits and has its merits, but it is looking at who can get on to it, looking at the restrictions, looking at the information that is put up before it has to be taken down. I believe the technology is there so that certain things do not get on, let alone get on and then and then you have to try and worry about taking it down.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): I am going to pause this bit, Lord Bailey, because it is taking us down a slightly different track that was not within the main scope. Assembly Member Pidgeon.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much and thank you so much for your contributions so far today. It is such an interesting and important discussion. Feel free all of you to answer or do not if you do not have anything specific to add. You would have heard the session earlier; the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has been in existence now for years. Some of us question how much it has delivered and what we want it to

deliver. We spoke about how it is shifting, how it is approaching its work. What is your experience of the VRU and how successful has it been in bringing everyone together in this agenda and do you have any evidence to support that? Who wants to go first? Let's go with Stephen and Connor.

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): Connor can speak for himself. We are quite involved in Waltham Forest, the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP). Connor can speak about this; he attends some of the steering group meetings and we have young people who are on a number of the panels as well. Being involved in the conversations and being at the table, being even involved in panel conversations and having our opinions and our views heard has been quite crucial and quite important. I have learnt a lot as well in the delivery of my work, even the statistics and imagery around knife crime. We have adapted the things that we do in the provision that we provide. For example, we have done, just this summer gone, our second year of an event that we called Choosing Life. It is our anti-knife campaign, and it is an anti-knife campaign with a difference, from the statistics and from what we have learnt. Rather than having images around knives and posters around that, it has been a positive celebration of young people coming and doing performances. We have what we call Choosing Life Ambassadors: football players, musicians. They come in and they speak about where they were a young person and where they are now in their profession. Everything has been spun around in a positive anti-knife campaign, looking at your dreams, your goals and your ambitions, rather than, "Don't carry a knife, don't walk with a knife."

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Therefore, in terms of the VRU, you are learning from them but do you feel they listen to you?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): Yes, I think so. We have been to enough meetings. Connor is the person who is our representative for the VRU work and attending the steering groups as a young person himself, so I will let him add to that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Connor, anything to add?

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): Funnily enough, today later on I am going to be a part of the Young People's Action Group (YPAG) steering group. A young person who comes from Project Zero comes along with me as well. It is quite good because they have the young person's side of things and they also have the adult side of things. They split it up and then we come together and then we both discuss our opinions on how we can reduce youth violence. It is a lot to do with sports and how we can use sports to reduce that and engage them in positive ways rather than just leaving them to their own devices. Yes, I have learnt quite a lot; I have been to about three or four sessions now and I feel that they are going really, really well. We are coming up with different pilots that we are going to hopefully push them out there and get different projects on the ground. Yes, it is going quite well, I would say.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. Geethika, can I come to you and Redthread's work, which I hugely admire. What is your view of the VRU?

Geethika Jayatilaka (Chief Executive, Redthread): I do need to declare an interest in some ways, which is that we do receive funding from it. We would definitely recognise that the VRU has brought together different groups. We are part of some of its charity networks. It has funded a range of different innovative projects over the years, which has been hugely positive. As one of those projects, we can also very much see that sort of commitment to learning and reflection, which is important when you are doing work that is complex and there is not necessarily an easy outcome to be achieved. Supporting that learning process is hugely important.

One of the things that potentially it would be good to see going forwards is that support for longer-term work. I know that there is always a balance between that and the innovation side of things, but to build relationships and to build partnerships, to be a service that is trusted and that young people know that they can rely on does need that longer-term approach. Overall, yes, we think that it has been positive.

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): We have not been in receipt of funding from the VRU. We were a couple of years ago for a very small pilot but I am not at the moment. I would say that that prevention piece is absolutely critical within that space. We do need more funding and the more work that the VRU can do at a very local level - because I am a great believer that local organisations have the answers, and the reach into communities is very good. It also involves us and we get invited to lots of things. I have no vested interest in it, but it certainly does try to bring people together and seem to be investing in interesting pieces of work. I have no criticism.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. George.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): I can also say that we have never received any funding from the VRU. We have over the years worked with every one of the London boroughs, probably about a dozen of them quite intensively at times. We also for ten years worked very closely with the MPS. However I think that the VRU is the best agency placed to integrate the work that is being done across London. I personally think that Lib Peck is giving good leadership in doing that and I admire many of the things that she is doing. Particularly, like others, I think that the area that we are missing out on most is the investment in prevention. I would like to see more money given to the VRU to put into prevention. I cannot think of a better place in London to put funding in order to drive that across London in a way that produces not just benefits in one or two boroughs but across the whole area.

If the Chair will permit, can I answer a question that you asked earlier in the day, Assembly Member Pidgeon, which was the question what keeps you awake at night? That question resonated with me because I spent two hours awake this week thinking about this meeting.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That worries me. We are not that frightening.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): What kept me awake is this. I am going to be 80 years old this year. I have spent 27 years working on how to prevent violence in society. I believe that we understand how to prevent violence in ways that would be highly effective. We have known it since we produced our 2005 and 2008 reports, but they are not going to be implemented. I am going to be dead in 27 years' time and I have no confidence that we are going to put in place the measures that I know and we know will work. Why? Because they require long-term thinking and long-term funding. I once sat with a ministerial adviser to [The Rt Hon] Theresa May [MP] when she was Prime Minister and he said to me, "George, you're never going to succeed. Do you know why?" I knew the answer but I said, "Tell me why." He said, "It's simple. We're elected for five years. We've got to do things that produce results within four so that we can talk about them in the fifth year before we stand for re-election." That runs through local and national politics in this country. We do not do the right things. I have agreed with everything that my panel members have said today. I agreed with everything the young people said in the first meeting today. They know more about stopping violence than most of our policy-makers know. We know what to do, we just do not do it. That is what keeps me awake at night.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Very good, thank you very much. Did you want to come in, Barrie?

Barrie Laslett (Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity): Yes. We have obviously benefited from funding from VRU. We identified the opportunity but at the time were not a big enough organisation to take the lead. It meant us having to work with our local community and voluntary services to identify other organisations and take the lead on that. It enabled us to have a seat at many tables in the borough and work in a more partnership-focused way to give us that funding to allow us to increase capacity, to allow us to be sitting at these types of meetings and to have this influence. Fortunately we were able to take over leadership on the consortium in the extension year.

The support and what I see from the VRU is being able to learn from grassroots organisations, which it is learning from, and then taking that up and, as George rightly said, having that influence to be able to spread it across the 32 boroughs, which we cannot do. It is listening. As an organisation I sat in one meeting where we identified the school exclusions, the fact that there was an elephant in the room. We were all in the room and no one was talking about doing something about it. We are able, as part of My Ends, to call all eight consortiums together for a meeting to talk about school exclusions. Off the back of that, the VRU is now supporting someone from Scotland to look at how it can change that.

For us as an organisation, it has been critical for us. We are very much prevention based and the prevention model is key to what we do as an organisation, which is why we got on board with this My Ends programme in the first place and the reason why it made sense for us to take the leadership of it going forward. The team is very supportive and the fact that you can escalate issues at the ground level and it can amplify those messages and put its influence behind it is really, really crucial. The fact that it gives us the capacity within our team to be able to have the luxury of spending time and learning about best practice and sharing knowledge and sharing information is going to be key, because if you are going to tackle this, it has to be as an entire community. Partnership working and partnership is going to be key to this, and that is what it has enabled us to do the partnership working, being part of this programme.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Lovely. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Duvall.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you. I think that I know the answer to this question before you even respond, but in terms of the balance between work in tackling the underlying causes of violence and enforcement, is that a force issue? Clearly there are some issues here about how decision-makers allocate resources and where we get it. Where do you think we are within that in balancing out and tackling some of those underlying causes, and the enforcement piece? Secondly, where do you think that we are getting it right? Can you point to within your own projects or other projects that you have seen or other pieces of work with various partners?

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): I would like to quote a man called John Carnochan [OBE]. John Carnochan was the head of the Scottish VRU for many years. He is the real-life Taggart in the Glasgow police. He used to run the murder investigations for Glasgow. In a Scottish general election where there was a campaign among all the political parties to find out who could bid the largest number of extra police officers that they would fund as a result of getting power if they got power after the election, John Carnochan went public and hit the front page of *The Glasgow Herald* in Scotland, saying, "If I wanted to tackle violence, I would rather 1,000 extra health visitors rather than 1,000 extra policeman, because the health visitors will be far more effective in preventing future violence in society than the police officers." That is not because John Carnochan believed that we should underfund or understaff our police forces. Of course we should not and of course we need enforcement as part of what is done, but the area of greatest weakness is in that prevention, early-years area.

It is interesting that since that date Scotland has massively increased its investment in health visitors. Families in Scotland get up to 17 visits from health visitors, whereas I keep hearing in London and elsewhere families who tell me that they have never seen a health visitor, or they saw a health visitor once, and the health visitors tell me that they are hopelessly overwhelmed with the caseloads that they have and they are simply not able to do justice to the families that they are working with. Do I want to spend less money supporting police? No, I do not. Do I think we have the balance wrong and should be spending much more on early-years prevention? One thousand per cent.

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): I completely endorse that and completely agree with you. There are a couple of things. Interestingly, at Safer London currently we have a researcher embedded looking at our interactions with the police, because I am keen as well that young Londoners deserve justice too, and it is not happening so often for them. It is not unusual for me to hear about children and young people using our services where a girl has been raped, somebody has been stabbed. Is there any justice for them in that they get a resolution for that? No, there is not. We want to look at is there something better that we can do as we are intervening with the police.

The bottom line is that police are not relational, and children and young people do not see a police intervention as an act of care. You heard that very clearly today. Once we layer over that as well the fact that we do have, sadly, historically - you do not need me to tell you - a racist and misogynist police force in London, and until we begin to turn that around it makes it difficult for children and young people to engage. We need to understand the limits of the relationship with the police.

The notion of the child-first policy, I really encourage that. At Safer London we talk about safeguarding rather than criminalising children. If we could at least do that for under 16-year-olds. I can very often predict what the outcome is going to be when children have been groomed into dealing drugs, going county or what have you. I can absolutely predict what happens. Sadly, what usually happens is that that child then becomes criminalised at the end of it, which has done nobody any favours.

I agree with what George has said. My background is in safeguarding and when I took over at Safer London, the first thing that I did was I went up to Scotland and met Karyn [McClusky, Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland and former Director of the Scotland VRU] and John [Carnochan] and Niven [Rennie, former Director of the Scotland VRU] and different people. I have very often gone back to them -- and Graham Goulden [Former Lead of the Scotland VRU]. The work that you did in schools up in Scotland was absolutely incredible, the bystander intervention thing. Absolutely the balance is wrong but we also need a police force that begins to realise that children deserve justice as well and they need to learn how to interact with children, because they cannot at the moment. No, that is untrue, some can but it is not happening often enough.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): May I come back on this one, please? There is an approach called trauma-informed policing, which teaches police to adopt compassionate and empathic but effective methods of engaging with young people and others involved in crime. We have been involved in training many police forces across the UK in this approach. About four years ago I approached one of the Assistant Commissioners (ACs) in the MPS about this and a meeting was set up in Leicester Square with nearly 1,000 police officers and related staff, at which a decision was taken that the MPS would be made a trauma-informed police force. No action, to my knowledge, has been taken on that since that date. I attempted for about 12 months afterwards to follow up what was being done about it and I was unable to find any action that was being taken. When I speak to individual police officers in London and ask

them what training they have had in trauma-informed approaches, they look at me and they do not even know what I am talking about. Somewhere there has been a massive failure in following through their own decision to become involved in that. The person who was involved in it, I am not blaming her for it - I know it was passed on to someone else - was AC Helen Ball [QPM]. She will know what decisions were taken but I do not know why those decisions were not followed up.

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): Sorry, I am just going to jump in there. I completely agree that we need to train people. At Safer London we train our staff. We refresh and rethink and go through it every 12 weeks. It is not a one-off, 30- minute training programme that you can do and tick the box. It is a lifetime of learning. We do all of our learning with Karen Treisman, but there are lots of outstanding people. It is not a one-off.

Len Duvall AM: Can I bring Stephen in first and then I will come back?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): I heard the conversation raised in the previous panel. I do believe that we need to be a little bit careful with this question because it feels that it could be a little of either or either. It is very important that it is not. In 2004 I lost a cousin, my 16-year-old cousin, to knife crime and again in 2019 I lost a second cousin to knife crime. For our family we want to be able to see that there is justice being done and that the perpetrator has been brought to justice, and the support for that perpetrator -- I am going to say the support, even though when it happened for us we were not thinking in that frame of mind. However, for somebody who has worked with young people on both sides of the fence -- I used to work for Newham YOT beforehand. I have been there where I have been in prison working with young people as being the perpetrator of crime and then I have been in the hospital looking at my cousin lying on a table dead after he has been stabbed. I have been on both sides of the table.

The intervention and support for a young person once they have been convicted of a crime and they are inside, that work needs to be done quite intensively, because they are going to come out at some point, and then what? If they are not integrated into the community, into the wider society, they are going to go back to what they know. Everything that George mentioned and that early intervention and that early engagement and having a lot of resources there is crucially important, but it needs to be careful that it is not an either or either scenario.

Geethika Jayatilaka (Chief Executive, Redthread): Thank you, we would wholeheartedly endorse it needing to be more investment in early intervention and prevention rather than a false choice.

The other thing that I want to flag up is the focus on the Children and Young People's Strategy that the MPS has. It an important opportunity but in order for that to be met -- we heard from the young panellists this morning about some of the fearfulness and trepidation. We know from the [Baroness] Casey Review that the confidence of Black Londoners in police is less. Therefore, that strategy needs to start from a point of how to build trust, how to build relationships and that needs to underpin all of that work.

I would also echo the point made recently, which was that young people, and particularly children's and young people's interaction with enforcement needs to be an opportunity to make sure that the right support services are in place and we need to take that opportunity every time.

Len Duvall AM: Barrie or Connor, do you want to add anything to what has been said?

Barrie Laslett (Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity): I agree with everyone. In relation to the MPS, you have to look at its measures and how it measures success and how they get promoted within the organisation. I was speaking to a community engagement officer. We have great relationships with them and then there is a section 60 put across and all of sudden you have different types of police coming in and all of those relationships are then broken. There is also an element that if the MPS is serious about changing and being trauma-informed and all of these things, it is going to have to change the way that it measures success within the organisation. As far as I am aware, it is only based on arrest rate. If you want to measure something in terms of the amount of young people who you have directed away from the criminal justice as being a sign of success, maybe that would change attitudes within the organisation.

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): I felt that most things have been covered already, but to add on, the relationship between police officers and young people needs to be addressed because a lot of the time they will be there one moment and then the next week there will be another police officer in that area, so you cannot even build a relationship with them because they are always changing. I feel that they need to have just one person or a group of people in one area and just call them for this community and keep them there and let them build the relationship, because it will not happen the first time, it is going to take a couple of times over time to build that relationship with young people.

Also, from what the young people said earlier, I would say that doing common activities with them, like playing football or being there in the park and engaging in a positive way rather than just sitting there asking them questions or making it very formal. Informal engagement would be very good to build a relationship with young people.

Len Duvall AM: Let's take that as starting point in terms of building relationships with the MPS and its partners. Some of the things that you said earlier about building trust and how can you have trust and in terms of racism, misogyny and all the rest of it, how do we build trust, what works well, the movement of staff is not good and conducive to get better outcomes or building relationships. Are there any other issues that you could share with the Committee about what you think has worked well but is stop-start? I was taken by what George said. You had a meeting with 1,000-plus people and then all of a sudden it has gone silent and moved on and someone else has the brief or it is not the flavour of the month, the stop-start issues. Does anyone else have any other particular issues that you think that you should share with us to say that if they continued with that it would help? When we talk about the police and their enforcement role, they also do have that preventative role, which is not always about enforcement. We are being forced down that route in many ways and we need to remind ourselves about some of the core issues. Do you have anything else to share with us?

Stephen Barnabis (Operational Manager, Project Zero): We have been recently doing quite a bit of work. Our Borough Commander Simon Crick and the MPS Commissioner [Sir] Mark Rowley [QPM] came and visited us at the centre during the summer and met with our young people, listened to their views and looked at the engagement programme. There were some interesting conversations with regards to the police recruitment and training, how they can sometimes move around. Sometimes they are assigned to our borough but they might be there for a period of time during their training process. Once they get to a certain level, they move to another place straightaway. That makes it very hard for that long-term building up of a relationship and the community to get to know their officers who work within the borough. There is something all around the police recruitment, training and how they are allocated to their areas of work and how long they spend in the period of time and all of that stuff.

The point that I was going to go on to was the partnership working. There have been some brilliant examples of partnership working. We are very big on partnership working. We have just done a successful summer

programme. We do not profess to be the be all and end all in everything that we do and deliver. Bring in people who deliver sports programme, mentoring, counselling, mental health services, sexual health services, bring in specialist organisations that might not be big enough to develop a whole programme themselves, but working with us and having access to our young people has been very beneficial to the work that we do. The problem is that if you have a funding pot and you have to split it between a wide range of organisations to deliver one programme, it is very narrow and it becomes very bitty. Funding that supports partnership working and brings people and organisations together would be quite beneficial in the work that we do, and engagement work.

Sherry Peck (Chief Executive, Safer London): One small point for me is that so often the relationship between the children who we work with and the police is so broken down that even if you can arrange for the police to take -- there is one particular case that sticks and keeps me awake at night of a young child who had been sexually assaulted or raped seven times and we had never managed to get them successfully to be able to give evidence to the police because they did not want to do that without our worker next to them, and the police were reluctant to do that.

Therefore, for me there is definitely something about using the knowledge in third-party organisations that are trusted. It is certainly something that I have been speaking to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) about, about getting evidence from other people surrounding a child. If there is something there that we could do, but it is all about relational and at the moment that is not existing, in particular around sexual crime.

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): I would like to mention one MPS programme that I think is very effective. It is called Divert. It was set up by, now Superintendent, Jack Rowlands, who used to be a trustee of WAVE Trust. It basically helps young people divert themselves from lives of crime to employment and positive life events and life pathways. That is something that is being done extremely well by the MPS and could be expanded, and I would love to see more funding going into that because it is hugely beneficial in its impact in diverting people.

Geethika Jayatilaka (Chief Executive, Redthread): Can I add one final thing on the partnerships and part of the development of the Children and Young People's Strategy? There is some consultation work going on. Just to emphasise the importance of that involving young people's voices but also grassroots organisations, Black-led organisations, to make sure that that is as wide and engaging a process as possible before the Strategy is finalised.

Barrie Laslett (Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity): I agree with George. I am aware of the Divert programme and I think that it is a brilliant programme. There is an element that we have tried to build in around induction, as new officers come into the borough they spend some time with community organisations because there are perceptions on both sides on what the community is like, that every young Black person is carrying a gun or a knife or selling drugs and every police officer is racist. That is what is pushed out on social media. It is about breaking down barriers. We have police come in without their uniforms, building relationships with the young people, get to understand these young people and change their perceptions. That is something that we have seen makes a difference.

There is another programme called Account, in Hackney, which is when there is an arrest or something with the police, there is a panel of community members who can hold the police to account and ask for information about the arrest or about the investigation or whatever. That works so well that a previous Borough Commander wanted to shut it down. However, now that the new Borough Commander has come in, it looks like it is taking some roots again. It is about engagement, showing that they are real, showing that they care

about the communities that they are working in and that it is not all about coming in when something has gone wrong and they have to arrest someone.

Connor Ellis (Opportunities Co-ordinator, Project Zero): I want to add to what I said before about the community police officers within a certain area. It would be very hard for both parties to get along if they keep on changing. If a young person is now getting along with a police officer and then they change, when the new one comes in they are going to think there is no point in getting to know or build a relationship with them because they will probably change again. That makes it hard for both parties when it comes to that. Also when it comes two the uniform, them coming without their uniform sometimes would be really good because it shows that they are people just like us. When they come with their uniform I feel that it has already got that agenda, saying, "OK, they're a police officer, they've got handcuffs, they've got this and they've got that, so we'll be wary of that." However, if they come and maybe first of all have a normal conversation with them and after that say, "OK, I'm a police officer", but when they are in their normal clothes, that would be a good way to engage in the conversation at first, but they will be like, "Yes, we're just normal people just like you."

George Hosking OBE (Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust): I would just like to say Jack Rowlands is a senior police officer who really gets prevention. I spent nine years as an adviser to the MPS and I was working with senior police officers who got prevention in that time. I think that if the [London Assembly] Police and Crime Committee has some powers in this matter, encouraging those officers who are committed to and understand prevention would be very, very beneficial. I am not saying enforcement is not important. Of course it is, but we do not get the balance right at the present time.

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Thank you. We hear that very loud and clear and I would very much like to catch up with you afterwards about the trauma-informed policing decision that was made a few years ago, to understand a little bit more about that.

I am desperately aware of the time. It is 12.58pm and we do have two more sets of questions, but I did say we would have a hard stop at 1.00pm. I am afraid that we have to bring this to a close because I am aware that some of our guests have to leave by 1.00pm. Assembly Member Moema.

Sem Moema AM: There are various documents and other things that have been referenced. Could we ask panellists if they could provide additional reflections beyond the questions, because there is probably a lot more that we could discuss?

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Absolutely.

Keith Prince AM: The questions that have not been asked are important. I am not asking that we ask them, but would the panel be kind enough, if we wrote to them about these questions, to give us your views on those?

Caroline Russell AM (Chair): Yes, Assembly Member Prince, we are all in agreement. We are going to send you the last two questions. Do not feel that you have to write a massive essay but if you are able to give any brief thoughts, or longer if you like, we would be grateful. I would like to thank our guests for attending today and for your answers to our questions. It has been an enlightening session and incredibly helpful, so thank you for your time.