

**Leap Confronting Conflict
Response to Recent Disturbances Policy Paper
October 2011**

This paper sets out Leap Confronting Conflict's (Leap) key recommendations in response to the recent disturbances to support Government policies. Leap is a charity that provides training to help young people and adults understand the causes and consequences of conflict.

Over the past two months, we have worked in partnership with 29 other organisations to identify factors that led to the recent violence. Our recommendations, set out below, aim to repair the damage to community relationships caused by the disturbances, and prevent future escalation of violence.

1. Work in partnership across voluntary, statutory and business sectors

Partnerships and conversations between different agencies such as local residents, police, local businesses and local organisations, are essential for using local experience and knowledge, and developing community-led programmes. By building shared understandings and programmes, community relations can also begin to be repaired.

This approach is aligned with the Government's commendation of the 'Community Initiative to Reduce Violence' (CIRV) initiative as highlighted by David Cameron and others¹. This programme in Glasgow in 2009 provided training for the Strathclyde police and its community partners (including Leap) to work with gangs and reduce violence. This effective joint working resulted in violent crime by young gang members in the East End of Glasgow almost halving in one year. Adopting this approach for other programmes will ensure the highest return on investment; using the best possible available expertise and achieving the highest impact.

2. Provide restorative programmes

45% of those under 18 who offended in the disturbances were first time offenders. Providing restorative programmes for them will build their understanding and offer opportunities for them to take responsibility and make amends. There is strong and growing evidence that restorative practice delivers a wide range of benefits for different settings such as schools, pupil referral units and the secure estate.

Recent independent evaluations of restorative practice in schools have shown that whole-school restorative approaches are 97% effective at preventing bullying. Moreover, restorative justice training leads to increased confidence among staff to deal with bullying and conflicts in school².

Within the youth justice sector, a number of restorative practices have been piloted and evaluated with both adult and young offenders in England and Wales with promising outcomes that include lower levels of reoffending and high levels of victim satisfaction.³ The Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour recommended that restorative justice should become the

¹ David Cameron 11/08/11

http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2011/08/David_Camersons_statement_on_disorder_in_England.aspx?Cameron=true; Theresa May 04/10/11

http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2011/10/May_Conservative_values_to_fight_crime_and_cut_immigration.aspx

² Restorative Justice Council http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/restorative_justice_works/

³ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) *Safeguarding the Future. A Review of the Youth Justice Board's Governance and Operating Arrangements*. London: DCSF.

standard means of resolving the majority of cases: either pre-trial where prosecution is an alternative option, or when children and young people are convicted by a court⁴.

3. Invest in early intervention and prevention

Delivering early intervention work in schools and colleges provides children and young people with an opportunity to avoid violence and continue to make better choices in the future. This is particularly important to develop for families with complex needs in local areas with higher levels of social and economic need.⁵

Leap's experience of this type of work in schools (by running one and three-day workshops) in Tower Hamlets shows how early intervention can help build successful resilient communities. External evaluations showed there was a positive change in school culture and ethos, a significant reduction of high-level conflict previously experienced by both young people and staff, and greater self-confidence among young people to take responsibility for their behaviour and achievement.^{6,7}

4. Develop young people and adults to become leaders and role models

Supportive and engaging processes where young people and adults have the opportunity to become mediators and mentors have proven successful at increasing personal and social skills, self esteem and emotional wellbeing, and employability skills.

For example, after three murders took place in 2008, a cohort of Year 9 pupils across three schools in the London Borough of Waltham Forest were trained (and accredited) to become peer mediators. Reports from Ofsted and head teachers at the schools have stated that the schools feel safer, and there has been a drop in the escalation of conflict, i.e. physical fights in the playgrounds. The level of student attainment has increased across the schools, attendance has improved by at least 2% which is above average for the borough and the number of permanent exclusions for one school is zero.

5. Share information and best practice

There are many successful initiatives in the UK that target specific issues that young people face. These could have an even higher impact if the existing networks of local organisations across the statutory, community, education, voluntary and business sectors were to share information and create new ways to strengthen their communities.

Investment is needed to bring information together effectively, where best practice can be shared, resources exchanged and understanding improved among a range of audiences including media and business. This should not duplicate existing resources, such as Project Oracle, but should find ways to work with them to ensure the highest impact.

⁴ Independent Commission on youth crime and antisocial behaviour (2010) *Time for a fresh start*. London: The Police Foundation

⁵ David Cameron wants to "transform the lives of the 120,000 most troubled families by 2015" (15/08/11) http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2011/08/David_Cameron_We_are_all_in_this_together.aspx

⁶ *Emotional Health and Well-Being: A Practical Guide for Schools*, Prof. Helen Cowie, Dr. Chrissy Boardman, Dr. Judith Dawkins & Dawn Jennifer, [Paul Chapman Publishing, 2004], p88

⁷ The Centre for Social Justice (2011) *No excuses: A review of educational exclusion*. London: The Centre for Social Justice. p92

Appendix 1: Method

Leap is a charity that works nationally with young people aged 11-25 and professionals that want to address issues of conflict in their lives. Our training helps individuals to understand, manage and resolve the everyday conflict in their lives, empowering them to become role models and leaders of positive change. In particular, Leap works with young people who are 'NEET', excluded, or involved with gang activity, anti-social behaviour or crime.

Leap worked with 29 other organisations to better understand the causes of the recent violence and identify a sustainable cross-sector programme as a result of that analysis. Organisations within the consortium work with young people across a broad range of areas such as emotional development, offending behaviour, conflict/ violence and community engagement, and therefore have the professional expertise and wide perspective to be able to identify the key issues.

Organisations involved in the consortium include:

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Leap Confronting Conflict | Deep:Black | Not in my Name |
| One London | Working with Men | Talk for a Change |
| UK Youth | London Youth | Chamber of Commerce |
| Arrival Education | Changemakers | NCVYS |
| Diagrama Foundation | Foyer Federation | Metropolitan Police |
| Beyond Youth | Safer London Foundation | High Trees Community |
| Khulisa | Enfield Youth Service | Development Trust |
| IARS | Brook | Streetleague |
| Foyer Federation | Trust for London | Brathay |
| Kaizen Partnership | Catalyst in Communities | |
| Enfield Police | Tottenham Hotspur Football Club | |

Leap also facilitated a youth engagement event to hear from young people themselves. It's important to note that some of the young people at the event might easily have got involved in the unrest in the past; however they were able to make different choices having reached a stage of maturity and/or through work done with some of the partner organisations involved in this consultation.

Appendix 2: Reactions from adults and young people following the violence

A combination of different factors, sparked by the lack of information regarding the death of Mark Duggan, led to the violence (see appendix 3). There were also a range of reactions following the violence, both from young people and adults:

Reactions: Narrow minded enforcement unrealistic; stereotyping; blame on parents; criticism of police strategies; disproportionate sentencing; extreme sentencing measures; criminalisation of young people who would not normally be criminalised; blame focused on young people – it's an issue for whole society; political point scoring; blame and punish; excusing of behaviour

Legacy: Still only a small minority involved; impact on school communities; need for sentencing that incorporates restorative justice; need to change investment in young people; voice of reason not being heard; need to define why it happened for the public to reduce speculation; desire for change; mistrust; local communities want to sort out their problems; who is listening now; frustration; anger; capture the good e.g. clean up; when young people leave custody; wake-up call

Appendix 3: Factors that led to the violence (research from consortium members)

Before the violence:

- **Young people (emotional, physical, external):** Boredom; powerlessness/impotence; feeling unheard; low self-esteem; poor self-image; feeling abandoned or targeted by society; easily influenced; frustration; anger; lack of connection with others; lack of belief in future or politics; peer pressure; lack of skills (e.g. dealing with anger); informal/ formal gang membership offering excitement/obligation; drug and alcohol issues; summer time; ability to MSN/Blackberry Messenger undetected; nothing to do (school holidays/no employment/no youth provision); lack of roles; lack of role-models; lack of channels to speak out; nothing to lose
- **Adults:** Fear of young people; lack of positive relationships with young people; lack of adult mediators to influence young people
- **Agencies:** Lack of co-ordination between agencies; a 'head in the sand' attitude by agencies
- **Police:** Variable relationships with community; 'long folk memory' about previous events; history of mistrust; young peoples' experience of stop and search; lack of police effective response; contradiction in police roles: Safer Neighbourhood Teams v Riot police putting down violence
- **Wider culture:** Blame culture; need for instant gratification; consumerism; current economic situation; changes in tuition fees and EMA cuts; inequality; ill-defined social contract between young people and society; power of 24 hour news
- **Media:** Negative publicity about young people; focus on young people as perpetrators (despite wider age range of offenders); negative messages given airtime; questions re who gets the opportunity to be heard; need for increase in positive messages from and about young people; use of labels to describe perpetrators; background of 7 months of coverage of the unrest and violence associated with the Arab Spring

During the Violence:

- **Emotional:** Adrenalin rush; excitement; biochemical factors; sense of power in the moment; low sense of responsibility; peer pressure to join in; nothing to lose; opportunism; low risk; not wanting to miss out; everyone else is doing it; sense of being part of something; instant gratification; sense of entitlement; fun; belief of taking back what is theirs; sense of belonging; fear of not joining in; had a reason to act; sense of contagiousness; moment of madness; lack of sense of responsibility; lack of emotional development
- **Practical:** They thought they would not get caught; lack of action from the police; police powerless; 'there were more police at the royal wedding'; 'youths hate towards police'; heavy handed response; sense that it is the police's job to deal with this; people not prepared; not enough of Tariq Jahan's voice; opportunity to get stuff; use of social media to communicate/rally others (see below)
- **Media:** 'Non-stop coverage of un-stoppable violence'