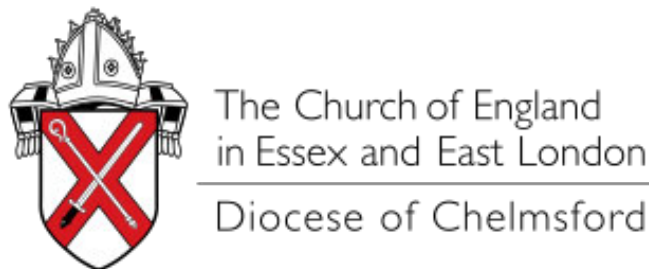


# Waltham Forest Citizens Commission on the Civil Society Response to Youth Violence



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This Youth Violence commission is the result of 2 years of listening in our borough. We are hoping that the suggestions brought forward will start to make a small difference to such a heartbreaking problem.

Nouf, Leyton Sixth Form, age 18

It is interesting to see how invested young people have become in this project. From being told to be become invested young people have become invested to want to get involved and make a difference.

Malachi, Leyton Sixth Form, age 18

The work has shown the importance of listening to the community and has grounded the assembly in reality, making its work relevant as well as showing the scale of the issue. This work shows that local people have a voice.

Sayeed, Leyton Sixth Form, age 17

I got involved because I wanted to have my voice heard. I got to hear voices of other young people from different ages and areas. Seeing how the local government and councillors reacted and got involved inspired me to continue my work. The reactions of others outside of my school and borough have shown me how much of an impact my work has done

Mya, Connaught School, age 16

The process we have been through as young people, having our voices heard by important and authoritative people has made us see that nobody can stop you from being passionate about something, and that nothing will happen if do not say something.

Leilani, Connaught School, age 16

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*3rd Commission Hearing at Connaught School for Girls, February 2019*



*Accountability Assembly, April 2018*

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# Introduction

## Need

The Commission is a collaborative response to the growing levels of violence committed by and on young people in Waltham Forest. As leaders in Waltham Forest Citizens (WFC), an alliance of 11 local faith and education organisations representing 12500 people in the borough, we have seen the impact of this violence on our young people and their families, our staff and our institutions.

Although the root causes of knife crime are complex they are intensified by the widespread effects of austerity, which has involved cuts to the criminal justice system, social care, mental health provision, youth services and local government. Whilst we acknowledge the efforts of those with statutory responsibilities in the face of this significant under investment, we also believe that community-based organisations have a vital role to play in developing an effective, multi-agency approach.

As leaders of civil society organisations, we therefore set out to gain a deeper understanding of how youth violence works in our area and to identify strategies through which it might be tackled. Over the last 6 months, the Commission has heard a broad range of experiences around youth safety from young people, faith and education leaders, councillors and police in the borough and has drawn upon the expertise of a number of charitable and voluntary organisations. Our work has also been informed by the public health approach taken in Glasgow and recently adopted by the new Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) established by Mayor Sadiq Khan, which is now being rolled out at borough level.

Fundamentally, we believe that young people are experts in their own experiences and that they have the capacity to lead on the development of new initiatives and strategies. Our role is to make sure that their voices are heard and that they are given the means to have a significant impact on policy development, practice and service provision.

## First Steps

In advance of the local elections in 2018, Waltham Forest Citizens ran a listening campaign, holding one to one conversations and small group meetings with almost 1200 people across the borough. Youth violence emerged as one of the key issues that local people care about. In April 2018, we held a Pre-Local Election Accountability Assembly at which 603 local residents heard the Labour and Conservative candidates make a public commitment to a number of key 'asks', including working with WFC to create a **Youth Violence Commission**.

Following her re-election as Leader of the Council, Cllr Clare Coghill has supported the work of the Commission through the involvement of both members of her cabinet and council officers.



*Accountability Assembly, April 2018*



*Accountability Assembly, April 2018*



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## Commissioners and Collaborators

### WFC Commission Secretariat

Daniel Mackintosh (Senior Organiser Waltham Forest Citizens)

Richard Hodgkiss (Leyton Sixth Form College)

Paul Phillips (Connaught School for Girls)

### Commissioners

Co-Chair: Bishop of Barking, Peter Hill

Co-Chair: Principal of Leyton Sixth Form, Gill Burbridge

President of the NEU, Kiri Tunks

Waltham Forest Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Ahsan Khan

Headteacher Faizan E Islam, Nasim Abraham,

Borough Commander for Waltham Forest and Newham, Richard Tucker

Local business leader, Cath Brown

Connaught School for Girls Student, Iman Rahman

Leyton Sixth Form College Student, Chloe Pirotta

Young Organiser, Nouf Abdulqadar

### Participating Organisations

Connaught School for Girls

Eden School

Faizan E Islam

Frederick Bremer School

Greenleaf Baptist Church

Parish of Walthamstow

St Barnabas

Youth Independent Advisory Group, LBWF

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime Head of Engagement, Natasha Plummer

### Associate Organisations

Redthread

Stop Watch

Worth Unlimited



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## Process

Between October 2018 and February 2019, hundreds of local residents in schools, unions, faith communities and charities throughout Waltham Forest listened to one another about how youth violence affected them and the people they cared about. The outcomes of this listening campaign were shared at three separate commission hearings hosted by participating institutions and attended by a total of 360 participants. Young people led the debate and shared testimonies and creative responses around 5 key emerging themes. The Council, the Metropolitan Police and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime brought regular updates on the important work that they are doing. Other organisations dedicated to keeping young people safe such as Redthread, Stop Watch and Worth Unlimited, also provided powerful examples of successful initiatives and programmes rooted in opportunity creation, education and skills development.

In response to the learning that we undertook and the recurring themes which emerged from it, local residents began to create long term suggestions on how to tackle youth violence in the borough and what they could do, in their organisations, to make the borough safer. Below are the 5 themes and specific solutions that the Commission – including local people, the police and the council - agreed to take forward.

## Emerging Themes

- 1. Exclusion.** Being permanently excluded from mainstream education leads to children and young people being outside of the mainstream of public care. It can result in feelings of marginalisation and worthlessness and this often feeds into a self perpetuating cycle of 'poor' behaviour and low attainment. Funding cuts to schools and colleges and to local children's services have reduced the capacity for early interventions.
- 2. Adverse Childhood Experiences.** ACEs have a significant impact on young people, especially those that occur within the first 5 years. However, under resourcing in the public sector has limited the support available and austerity policies since 2010 have had a disproportionate affect on the most vulnerable. There are 2 key components that can increase the likelihood of a young person's involvement in youth violence: direct or indirect exposure to domestic violence and a having a sibling involved in youth crime/violence.
- 3. Relationships between young people and the police:** young people, especially from BAME backgrounds, expressed fear and mistrust in their perceptions of the police. This was often a result of they or their friends having had a negative experience
- 4. Gang affiliation, sexual exploitation and drugs.** Gangs have become more violent as their activities have become more business-orientated and centred around the drugs market and child sexual exploitation. Gangs deliberately target vulnerable young people, particularly those who are searching for a sense of belonging or recognition.
- 5. Opportunity.** Young people from economically deprived areas feel that they lack meaningful opportunities to develop their skills and experiences. This lack of social mobility and a sense of economic inequality can lead to gang affiliation. In a society in which success is so often aligned with the accumulation of wealth, drugs are seen as a means to raise income.

## Solutions

- 1. Mentoring** - positive mentoring relationships can transform the trajectory of young peoples's lives by providing alternative life choices and sustainable and productive opportunities. Mentoring can take different forms. Developmental mentoring focuses on life skills and personal wellbeing whilst instrumental mentoring concerns practical skills development such as employability or achieving specific educational goals. There is also an important mentoring approach to supporting parents, carers and families. We believe that our institutions and the individuals within them, have an important role to play in investing our collective resources in a way that can extend the provision of, and access to, high quality mentoring. The Opportunity Bank, an initiative recently launched by the Council, offers a potential framework to establish a borough wide mentoring scheme that builds safe and sustainable relationships

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between young people, vulnerable families and mentoring volunteers. **We will look to build innovative models that can be rigorously evaluated and, if successful, can be scaled up both in terms of reach and longevity.**

**We call on Waltham Forest Council to support our goal to increase the number of Waltham Forest residents involved in mentoring by attending mentoring-promotion events, creating simple ways for residents to sign up and raising the profile of mentoring in the Borough.**

2. **Fostering** - there has been widespread media coverage of the shortage of foster care, particularly for older children and teenagers and we are aware of high levels of demand within the borough. Our listening campaign revealed powerful and moving testimony about the experience of being a looked after child and the significant role that good foster care can have in helping young people rebuild their lives. We believe that we have a role to play in promoting the importance of fostering within our community and in helping to identify new potential foster parents. **We will host an information evening and take specific steps to raise awareness and to build interest amongst our members.**

**We call on the Council to support our foster care drive, attending our foster care meetings and providing what resources they have to offer to raise the profile of fostering in the borough**

3. **Collaborative projects between young people and police** - building positive relationships between police and young people is vital. However, media representation, government policy and police practices often position young people as offenders and the young people involved in the commission spoke repeatedly of their own negative experiences, particularly in relation to Stop and Search procedures. We believe that in order to challenge the mythologies perpetuated on both sides, we need to develop long term projects which involve sustained and regular engagement of police officers and young people. **We will therefore work in collaboration with the Borough Commander and his team to design new programmes which allow young people and police officers to work together on a shared initiative. We will also identify opportunities for young people to gain a better understanding of the role of the police in keeping them safe.**

**We call on the police to publicly support these relationship-building and rights awareness projects**

4. **Reducing school exclusions and persistent absence** - our listening campaign highlighted the tension that exists between schools and colleges recognising the importance of keeping young people in education and their responsibility to provide a safe and constructive learning environment. The factors that result in young people being excluded frequently involve highly disruptive behaviours and/or violent acts or threats of violence and schools therefore adopt 'zero tolerance' policies in order to fulfil their statutory safeguarding responsibility. **We recognise that whilst we cannot directly influence practices in local schools, we can provide young commissioners with the resource to develop strategies that would support early intervention and prevention. To this end we will organise a youth summit on this issue. We will also aim to build an 'inclusion coalition of the willing' amongst educational institutions in the borough that want to decrease exclusions, share learning and work to encourage additional resources from the Mayor and national government to support initiatives in schools to help keep young people in education.**

**We call on the Council to publicly support this initiative and upon the Government to provide ring fenced funding to pilot dedicated youth workers in schools and colleges to establish early intervention and intensive dedicated support for young people at risk**

5. **Training for young people regarding how to stay safe** - young people are concerned for their own safety, even when they are engaged in everyday activities such as walking to and from school or socialising with friends. We believe we have the capacity to develop programmes in consultation with young people that would help to address these anxieties. Self defence, urban awareness and critical life saving skills are ways of developing responsibility and knowledge directly with young people. **We will run pilot schemes around activities that provide young people with strategies to build their confidence and to support their own wellbeing.**
6. **Cultural projects** that allow young people to develop creative responses to the issues, and which recognise and nurture talents and initiative. **We will support young people in developing creative outlets through which they can acquire new skills, form positive and supportive relationships and engage in peer learning. We will seek additional funding in order to resource these projects.**
7. **Contributing to community hubs to offer parenting support** - we want to help to mobilise local resources from statutory, voluntary and community sectors to support parents, carers and families within the borough. **We will seek to support local partnerships between children and young people, families and communities by offering facilities, activities and mentoring.**
8. **Offering employability and work readiness opportunities** - Young people need to see real opportunity to secure meaningful employment and career progression. **We will actively participate in the Opportunity Bank and other initiatives aimed at linking up business and industry in order to provide attractive and sustainable routes into employment for young people.**

**We call on businesses to actively participate in investing in and skilling up young people in the borough. And we call upon the council to work with us to find those businesses that want to invest in nurturing local talent**

9. **A Public Health Approach.** The work of the Commission has reinforced the importance of a multi-agency approach in developing and implementing community based solutions. The Council recently launched its Violence Reduction Partnership. **We will make an active contribution to the four proposed strands: Curtail, Treat, Support, Strengthen.**

**We call on the Council to create youth teams for each of the current Violence Reduction Partnership strands to ensure that the voices and agency of young people is at the heart of the public health approach in the borough**



*1st Commission Hearing, Leyton Sixth Form College, November 2018*



*Cllr Khan speaks at 3rd Commission Hearing, February 2019*



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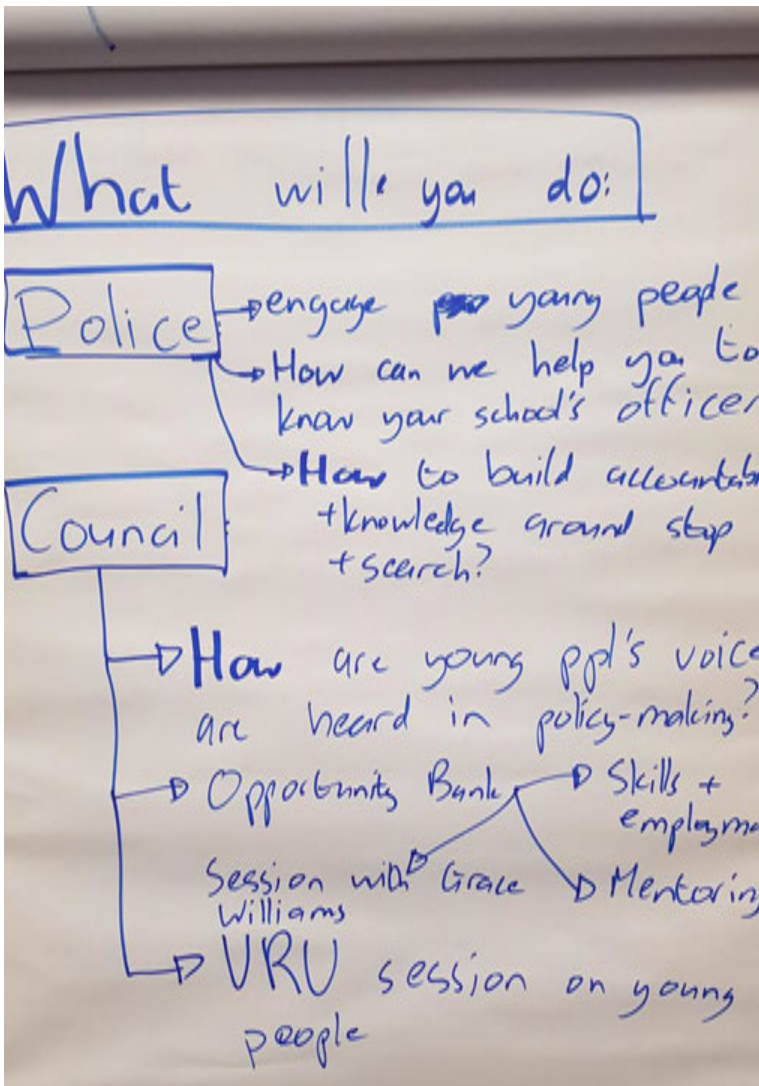
## Specific Actions and Next Steps

The work of the Commission represents over 1100 hours of work from students, teachers, councillors, officers, volunteers and experts who have all made a valuable contribution to the preparation and delivery of both the hearings and this report. All participants recognise, however, that the real work of the Commission lies in the specific actions that we have committed to and their sustained impact. At the time of publication, the confirmed key actions are:

1. **Mentoring information evening** - The **Bishop of Barking** will work with **Waltham Forest Clergy and Church Leaders** to promote mentoring training and programmes. An information and mentor recruitment meeting will take place at **St Mary's, Walthamstow on Thursday 23rd May at 7.30 pm**
2. **LBWF** have commissioned **Spark 2 Life** and **We Can Work It Out** who will be leading on training local people to become mentors to work with young people on the periphery of gangs
3. **Youth Mentoring Programme** is now available at **Greenleaf Baptist Church**
4. **Fostering Information and Recruitment event** to be held at **Leyton Sixth Form College** in June (date TBC)
5. **School exclusions summit led by young people** - **Leyton Sixth Form College** will host a summit in October 2019. Students in the borough will hear from a panel of experts in order to understand broader contexts and to explore alternatives to school exclusion. Year 9 pupils at **Connaught School for Girls** are developing ways of educating others on how to have positive relationships with adults. They are identifying a range of strategies and will engage outside agencies to develop peer to peer guidance on how best to foster good relationships with each other
6. **Early Intervention Opportunities** - **Happy Hounds** will lead on developing with local businesses and charitable organisations a range of short term placements for those at risk of exclusion.
7. **Cultural projects designed by young people** - **Leyton Sixth Form College** are leading on a project which seeks to involve vulnerable young people in a creative media programme supported by professional documentary makers and theatre practitioners. In conjunction with this, LSC have also produced another piece of verbatim theatre - **Lock Down** - focused particularly on knife crime and its effects. The College is working in collaboration with the **YIAG** and is offering performances and workshops to schools in the borough
8. **Collaborative project with police** - **Leyton Sixth Form College** will host a round table discussion with police representatives and headteachers to consider ways of building upon the current **Safer Schools** Programme and to explore collaborative projects involving young people and police officers. **Connaught School for Girls** will promote participation in the Police Cadet Scheme
9. **Knife Crime Assemblies** - Frederick Bremer School are developing a template for knife crime assemblies to be rolled out across the borough
10. **Participation in the WF Violence Reduction Partnership** - a number of organisations will participate in the 4 work streams, including **Leyton Sixth Form College**, the **Parish of Walthamstow**, the **Parish of Chingford**, the **Bishop of Barking**. We anticipate that the key actions resulting from the Commission with closely align to the pledges made by participants in the VRP. Following feedback from the Commission hearings around how we put young people at the heart of some of the solutions, **LBWF** will be including a group led by young people which will work across the four strands and feed into all of the work coming out of the WF Public Health approach
11. **Street Cafe** - **St Barnabas** will be supporting the Street Cafe initiative (created by the **Women's Interfaith Network** and funded by **Near Neighbours**) designed to promote community cohesion and to build relationships between different generations
12. **Staying Safe initiatives** - **Leyton Sixth form College** will run pilot self defence, first aid and urban awareness classes and **Connaught School for Girls** and **Leyton Sixth Form** will work with **Stop Watch** to offer training and advice on Stop and Search procedures
13. **Employability Skills and Opportunities**- Waltham Forest Citizens will collaborate with **LBWF** on the development of an Opportunity Bank, a key commitment within the Life Chances Report. Employability will be a key focus of mentoring schemes as they are established. Pupils at **Connaught School for Girls** are exploring work experience opportunities within the school
14. **Connecting Communities** - **LBWF** have committed to make devolved funding available through networks in Leyton, Leytonstone, Chingford & Walthamstow via the Community bank enabling local people and organisations to lead on innovations in the local area.

Waltham Forest Citizens will continue to build relationships within and beyond the borough to enable us to fulfil these commitments. **We call upon other organisations and statutory bodies to pledge their support in helping us to ensure that the commitments made here can be fully enacted.**

Pledges can be made during the launch meeting or via email to:  
[gill.burbridge@leyton.ac.uk](mailto:gill.burbridge@leyton.ac.uk)  
[b.barking@chelmsford.anglican.org](mailto:b.barking@chelmsford.anglican.org)  
[daniel.Mackintosh@citizensuk.org](mailto:daniel.Mackintosh@citizensuk.org)



Emerging Action Plans, Council and Police

**What will your organisation do?**

1) ST MARYS — + SE Gabriels + all churches in WF	• MENTORING
2) SE Barnabas —	• MENTORING • Street Cafe
3) YAIG	• Street base - "hot spots"
4) LSC	professionally + • Find passions • Mentoring • Police officer sessions • YStop sessions • Mental health awareness • Opportunities
5) Connaught • lower boundaries to exclusions • Broadcast stories • Police cadets • Better relationships with teachers	• Work experience • Space to talk to G. Carlos • Police to visit + conversations
6) StopWatch	• Offer training • Teachers + parents guides
7) Greenleaf Road	• Telling better story - Mentor • Young men evening space
8) Bremoner	• Knife crime assemblies by us

Emerging Action Plans, Education and Faith Organisations

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I like being part of the commission because it's been really fun to interact with other people you've never met before, and I've learned more about what's happening in my community.

Aaliyah, St Barnabas Church,  
age 12.

It doesn't need to be like this!  
A large number of young people have been involved in this Commission. Their input has been real, raw, creative and challenging and it is now time to respond.

Bishop Peter Hill  
Commissioner

From being part of Citizens UK youth crime commission, I have learnt that crime happens everywhere. I have learnt that there is a lot we can do as a community to help reduce crime. I have been to every meeting because I want to help change London

Kylie, Connaught School,  
age 16

I love how young people are able to speak out and be listened to. I learnt that a lot of young people have so much to say about issues as groups. Its amazing how we can come together to make a change

Jamelia, Connaught School,  
age 16

The Commission has huge potential to make changes. So far we have talked now we must implement what we have found.

Chloe, 17  
Commissioner

Being involved with the commission makes me feel like I have a voice, it helps me feel relieved that there are people who want our society to change. Being part of the commission has encouraged me to speak up and to feel like I'm making a difference.

Maegan, St Barnabas, age 12

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## Appendix: Our Stories

These are just a few of the testimonies that were shared during the hearings:

### **Exclusion**

*I have been at PRU for two years. They say I have anger management problems but really teachers don't know what I am going through. The council has had to move us because my brother is involved with the wrong crowd in the area and now I live with my relatives in another part of London. Still I make my way to the PRU every day and my attendance is good. The only problem is that I am late every day and my journey is long and tiring. I fall asleep in lessons a lot. I don't feel most teachers understand me and there's only two I can talk to. Even though they know my situation they give me 1-hour detention every day! I just can't take it and sometimes I swear and lash out. Some of the teachers used to stand in front of the door and stop me from getting out. It's claustrophobic and I feel like I am in a prison. Everywhere we go in the PRU a member of staff follows us, including to and from the toilet. We don't get play time or fresh air most days. I want to learn but most of the time I just feel like no one understands my situation. I am sad a lot. In the future I would like to be a social worker so I can help children like me.*

### **PRU Pupil**

*I have been at the PRU for a few years. My family hates me. They say I am a nasty piece of work!! Even my little brothers don't like me. The whole family of us live in a two-bedroom flat in an estate in the area but truly I am hardly ever home. I sleep in a crackhouse on the estate sometimes, but to be honest I probably only ever get 2-3 hours sleep a night. I have to be on call! I used to get picked on a lot for my size and race on my estate. I don't usually eat much and I have lost a lot of weight lately. My mood swings are bad. Extreme in fact. For the smallest thing I become aggressive, swear and threaten people. I am not going to be the victim anymore. I have made some friends on my estate. I know they are not really "my friends" but people I hang out with. Some of them take drugs themselves. I sometimes hear voices and get really paranoid. I think I might be losing my mind. I hate myself. I used to have a girl but even she stopped talking to me and I don't trust anyone anyway. At the PRU I am not really learning anything. The teachers just talk about GCSEs all the time. I just write F off on the work they give me.*

### **PRU Pupil**

*My older brother is in the unit. He doesn't like it there because he feels they treat him like someone who is incapable of understanding simple things. He got sent there because he got into trouble for something he didn't do, the teachers didn't even let him say his side of the story. He is not the only one who feels like this. Others there feel like they are idiots. Some have turned to violence just to let off steam.*

### **Connaught Pupil**

### **The Effects of Violence:**

*Youth violence was never something I thought of or really had an interest in because it was something that had not affected me or my immediate family. Up until July the 21st 2013 when my cousin was stabbed in the borough. I vividly remember coming home from school and for some reason a vibration, an ancestral spirit, my instinct, something, told me to check if there were any missed calls on my phone and I noticed there was two missed calls from my grandmother. So, I informed my mum and she called her back. My Grandmother announced that my cousin had been stabbed and rushed to hospital. Two or three years prior to this my cousin's uncle was stabbed to death on his way to the shops with his young brother, over a blackberry phone. He was 15 when he was killed. No this did not happen in the borough but the pain, discomfort and anger stretched from Enfield where he was killed to Waltham Forest where many of my family reside. Thankfully in 2013, my cousin survived. But was enough done? Was there enough*



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*intervention by those trained to help, counsel, support my family, no. Have I been fearful that this crazy behaviour will affect us again, affect him again, his brother again, or us in this borough...yes.*

**Kamahl Sami – Miller, YIAG member, age 22**

*I grew up on an estate where being shot or stabbed was almost on everyone's bucket list. I could tell you many stories...many that you have probably heard before. I grew up around violence, drugs and hate for the police. The first time I saw a stabbing was a family friend; at the time he only was 13, I was 10. He was stabbed 8 times because people were after his older brother. But this is my story from this year: I went school with a boy, the smartest, kindest individual ever, we grew up like the cliché "block kids" we were all like a family, one day a few friends came to my house and he was one of them. Oddly, we all said something bad is going to happen today, the boys left my house once it got dark and after that all I remember is receiving phone call after phone call telling me that my friend had been fatally stabbed. The moral of the story is I grew up around people who have to work illegally to make ends meet ie: sell drugs. My proposal is that instead of waiting for these young people to commit a crime or worse, prevent it. Send them to interventions, offer counselling. Never forget prevention is better than cure! A change of environment could possibly have saved my friend's life, yet there was no-one to help or show him life outside of the estate.*

**Female YIAG member aged 17, Priory Court estate.**

*When I was 15, I made friends from a certain area who were identified as 'gang' members, although we didn't actually identify as a gang, just a group of friends. They were attached to a certain area known for a big gang in the borough. Based on my affiliation with them, another group of people who were also identified as a gang but from my immediate area where I lived saw this as a threat / disrespect as they had issues with that gang. This led to me being stabbed one evening in a park near my house, I called an ambulance and the police arrived with them, where they began to interrogate me on whether the incident was 'gang-related' or if I was part of a gang. I was taken to hospital where I received treatment and stitches, and released later that evening.*

*After the incident, I was focussed on revenge and I also isolated myself, staying home reluctant to go out, unless I could somehow exact the revenge.*

*At the time, I was involved in a community fitness project and some mentors from the group, older black males from the community, came to the hospital and supported me. Their support helped me stay focussed on my future in a positive way. My suggestion to combat youth violence is to make the politicians & decision makers reflect the community and have an understanding our experiences.*

*I myself had a difficult upbringing and lived with an abusive father, I realise now the difficulties my father put us through were a reflection of his own childhood traumas, the cycle had continued through generations. So another solution is for young black boys particularly, to understand the roots of embedded historical trauma and even post-traumatic slave syndrome and to get support, awareness and understanding of this.*

**Danial, YIAG member age 23**

*My friend has a brother that has friends that do drugs. They say that their brother is influenced to do what his friends do as they are a very big part of his life. Just recently he is being less active with them as he is trying to do something different. Where they are involved in a gang it's like they almost have to do bad things or they are not in the "gang" and he is seen as weak if they do not have the courage to do what their friends are doing. The violence he has seen in these areas is because lots of people form gangs and it has led to fights over making fast money. The gang offered him a type of bond and support system that many like him believe they don't have. He said "It's when gangs start to make money that young people join gangs because it is a crucial part of growing up. Gangs do not always revert to violence. If there are positive, older role models involved with these gangs, they can hold the boundaries essential to stopping them spiralling out of control and turning violent and crime driven.*

**Connaught Pupil**

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## **Relationships with the Police**

*I went out with my sister and her friends we were walking to Mcdonalds. Some policeman kept looking at us as we were crossing the road and then he finally called us over. I got scared. He came over and started asking questions. We were confused at this point because we didn't do anything wrong. When he was 'questioning us' he felt really aggressive and he started to raise his voice because my sister would refuse to ask his questions as she didn't think we did anything wrong and we didn't need to be 'questioned'. When he left I felt angry and scared and targeted, maybe just for being black.*

### **Connaught Pupil**

*I was at home on evening it was around 7;00. The police came knocking on our door and said they needed to 'question' my dad. My dad and the two police officers went into the kitchen me, my mum and my sister were really worried. They closed the door, after a while i started to hear shouting. Someone was banging on the kitchen table i burst through the kitchen door i see my dad tearful but trying his hardest to keep it in. my mother told them to leave and they did. My dad started crying as soon as the door banged shut. I ran over to comfort my dad. To this day i still don't know why the police did that. But a part of me says its because I'm black or because my family is broke i don't know, but i do know i can't continue to live like this anymore."*

### **Connaught Pupil**

## **Hope**

*I've always been able to articulate myself quite well and speak up for myself and I've always been interested in politics and current affairs and how I as an individual can use my voice to help others. I was told about Citizens UK by my form tutor so I went for the first time and have been going back ever since. Being part of this group, I've been able to use my life experiences to help others and raise awareness of knife crime and other issues in meetings and even on national media. Since coming to the Commission, I've spoken about difficult life experiences I've had, some that I've never spoken to anyone about before and therefore been able to break stigmas, raise awareness, fight against knife crime and raise awareness of other issues in society. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to be part of this group as it has benefitted others and also myself, I have learnt to accept myself more and have become more confident and continue to find ways in which I can speak up to help others which is one of the best feelings in the world and makes everything I've gone through worth it.*

**Nicole, Leyton Sixth Form College Student, Age 17**



***2nd Commission Hearing, St Gabriel's Church, December 2018***



*2nd Commission Hearing, St Gabriel's Church, December 2018*



*2nd Commission Hearing, St Gabriel's Church, December 2018*



# WALTHAM FOREST CITIZENS

