



## **“LET’S TALK Knife Crime 2019”**

A *Community TV* Trust Venture funded by The Peckham Settlement

DISCUSSION FORUMS & FILMS  
FOR SCHOOLS & YOUTH CLUBS

### **REPORT on Year 1 of a 4-year project**

**“Whatever we’re all doing isn’t enough”**

by

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## PREFACE

In March 2018 Community TV Trust held a one-off event in Peckham to discuss knife crime. Statistics were alarmingly high. Whatever we were all doing was not working. That's how it seemed.

Police, ex-gang members, a vicar, teachers, 2 young people, concerned citizens – we gathered, watched short films and discussed issues. One young person spoke occasionally and was to the point.

Afterwards it seemed to me we were upside down. We adults needed to listen not lecture. What did young people have to say on it all?

LET'S TALK was born, and found local funding for four years via Peckham Settlement and London Community Foundation.

When LET'S TALK began in January 2019, it was not clear how it would work. An hour was scheduled for young people to talk to a Panel of professional people about life, the world, their hopes and fears. The intention was to have a final 30 minutes with the Panel to reflect together on what we had just heard.

We never got those final thirty minutes. The young people had so much to tell us.

The project worked.

From the word 'Go', it was clear that there were real stories to tell and real concerns to share. One of the very first things to be said came from a Year 6 pupil at Surrey Square Primary School close to the Old Kent Road. She had a simple question:

*Why isn't it safe for a child to grow up here in Southwark?*

Devastatingly simple words, impossible to answer.

If anyone was not sure of the value of LET'S TALK, this pupil had underlined its need.

A solution would not come just through money and possibly not via the Police either. Aren't we all involved? Let's talk.

# “LET’S TALK Knife Crime 2019”

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## DISCUSSION FORUMS & FILMS FOR SCHOOLS & YOUTH CLUBS

- EVENTS:** Forums & Film Screenings across Southwark
- DATES:** Forums: January to March 2019; July 2019;  
Venues: Surrey Square Primary School, Bede YAP,  
Harris Academy Peckham
- Film Screenings: Autumn 2019  
Venues: Highshore School, Ark Walworth Academy  
Bradfield Club, Bethwin YC, Westminster  
House YC
- NUMBERS:** 10-20 young people aged 10 yrs, 13 yrs and 16 yrs.
- PANEL** a number of professionals drawn from across society were invited to form a panel to hear what young people have to say

The Panel for the 2019 series:		No. of Forums attended
Law/Criminal Justice	<b>Catherine Hinwood</b> Ministry of Justice	<b>5</b>
	<b>James Waddington QC</b>	<b>4</b>
Police	<b>Supt. Helen Lyons</b>	<b>2</b>
Community Liaison	<b>Avril Jones</b> , Stop & Search	<b>5</b>
Education	<b>Nicola Noble</b> , Head Teacher, <u>Surrey Square Primary School</u>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Kerry Rogers</b> , HAP	<b>4</b>
Academic PhD	<b>Malte Laub</b> , KCL	<b>5</b>
Youth Work/Youth Service	<b>Bobbi Mace</b> , Bede House	<b>3</b>
	<b>Donna Wallace</b> , Bede House	<b>3</b>
Faith:	<b>Kathleen Botchey</b> , youth pastor	<b>3</b>
Health/Mental Health	<b>Duncan Bew</b> , trauma surgeon	<b>2</b>
Chair	Chris Haydon	<b>5</b>
Audio recording	Peter Vautier	<b>5</b>

The panel’s job was to listen. It was essential that any Panel ‘intervention’ be done with open questions. The outcome would be (1) one report and one course of action agreed as relevant, worthwhile and achievable; (2) there might be multiple insights, ideas and action points, with several reports to be drafted by Panel members for use within their own professional sphere.

### *Key yardstick for new initiatives:*

avoid dependency on new money in order to  
facilitate an immediate response to events

**BRIEFINGS:** *Participating teachers/youth workers*

They were introduced to the broad themes but it was stressed that Forum conversations be allowed to go where they go. Themes suggested were:

Home Life & Parents /  
Peer Pressure, Drugs & Gangs /  
Social Life, (Sex), Self Esteem /  
Sport & Wellbeing

**SCHEDULE OF FORUMS 2019**

- 1 16<sup>th</sup> Jan – *primary* schoolchildren Yr 6: Surrey Square PS  
Some parents attended.
- 2 6<sup>th</sup> Feb – *youth club* members Yr 9: Bede YAP members +  
HAP Yr 9 students
- 3 27<sup>th</sup> Feb – *secondary* school students Yr 11: Harris Academy Peckham  
The Academy's Executive Principal and Principal attended.
- 4 20<sup>th</sup> March – Panel meeting: All Saints, Peckham
- 5 3<sup>rd</sup> July – Panel report back to participating young people

**OUTPUTS**

The schedule was adhered to, audio recordings and transcripts were made of each Forum. Case studies and quotes were then generated from the audio recordings and the transcripts. Some young people gave video testimony later and short films including these interviews subsequently went online. Contributions were always anonymous.

The aim was to distribute this work to local Police, local authority departments and managers, and where relevant to Government Departments such as - Department for Education; Department of Health & Social Care; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government; Ministry of Justice

**WEBSITE**

Given the strength of the forum discussions and alongside the 2019 autumn programme of films screenings in schools and youth clubs, it was decided to build a project website. This went live late in December 2019:

[www.letstalkknife.org](http://www.letstalkknife.org)

## 2019 FILMS FOR SCHOOLS & YOUTH CLUBS

Films chosen for these screenings came both from material generated across the year, featuring interviews with students and staff at participating schools, as well as films from the Community TV Trust archive that were made with local young people on bullying, revenge and knife crime.

These films may be seen online at

[www.communitytvtrust.org](http://www.communitytvtrust.org)

[www.letstalkknife-crime.org](http://www.letstalkknife-crime.org)

[www.youtube.com/southwarktv](http://www.youtube.com/southwarktv)

### *Film Screenings at Youth Clubs*

Bradfield Youth Club x 2 ...

October and November

Life at youth clubs is random, to use the current word. The turnout was poor at the first event and strong at the second. Real interest was shown in filmmaking and a short bespoke project to run over six or eight weeks was discussed.

Bethwin Adventure Playground ... October

This group was mixed in age from 7 – 12. This posed challenges of suitability and the session was run via the lead youth worker who for the youngest present provided the safest and most comfortable way of opening the children up to these more difficult subjects.

Westminster House YC (organised by local police) ... November

Twenty at risk students were brought to this Nunhead youth facility for a day-long exercise in addressing paths to criminality, such as county lines and knife carrying. The students came from a Charter school and a local Harris Academy. LET'S TALK was invited to deliver a 2-hour film screening session which on the day was tightened to 90 minutes. Attention was good and the session worthwhile.

### *Screenings at Schools*

Ark Academy Walworth x 2 ...

October and December

These two events were held in sixth form assemblies with at least 100 students. It is intended that these screenings will encourage participation in the March 2020 Forum

Highshore School (SEN) ... November  
As a special needs school, a group of higher functioning students was brought together, in part because they are more vulnerable to exploitation. They students were extremely forthcoming and keen on filmmaking. This session confirmed for the School that they would like to host a Forum in the 2020 Series

## 2019 “LET’S TALK” AIMS, OUTCOMES & HEADLINES

- 1 ***Age of Intervention***  
A priority is to define the appropriate age for a first, formal intervention in a child’s life to discuss knife crime, gangs and drugs. This may be delivered at school, at youth clubs and via faith groups.
- 2 ***Local community model*** for cohesion and engagement  
The Panel members will share ideas as a result of attending the series of Discussion Forums and see opportunities for collaborating. This could evolve into a clear network of new collaborations and partnerships, specific to the lead personalities of individuals and organisations in the central Southwark area. Other areas might then find aspects of this blueprint worth copying.
- 3 ***National Policy***  
Considerations & recommendations may emerge, in particular from Panel members linking to Government and the Law Courts.
- 4 ***Project Report***  
Community TV Trust will produce its own annual report based on the series of Discussion Forums, the partnerships brokered, the identifiable outcomes
- 5 ***2019 Headlines***
  - i “LET’S TALK connects two bereaved parents with the Prime Minister for a private meeting.” Two new jobs result.
  - ii ‘Police are not the right agency for solving our knife crime issues’, argues academic Malte Laub.
  - iii ‘Educate the parents’, urge students in Peckham. To do this there should be a special YouTube channel. Community TV Trust is seeking young people to lead on content generation.
  - iv To create a local model of practice, there are two problems:  
[1] Education - schools prove almost impossible to deal with. Curriculum dominates over pastoral care and local relationship  
[2] Communication – adults, including some Panel members, are appallingly slow to respond and in some cases never do.

## 2019 FORUMS: QUOTES / POINTS ARISING

Here is a compilation of points and insights selected from across the three 2019 Forums. They are all from the participating young people whose names have been withheld. **SSQ** is Surrey Square Primary School; **Bede** is Bede Youth Adventure Project; **HAP** is Harris Academy Peckham. Chris is Chris Haydon, chair of the Panel. Donna is Donna Wallace of Bede.

- 1 **SSQ** - Sport makes me happy and energized; I want to try harder; makes me happy and tired, when I feel tired I go to bed and have good dreams.
- 2 Sport - I want to try harder and it makes me feel unique.
- 3 Football is expensive (£5.50 per person per hour was quoted)  
... make a day where the football pitch is free.
- 4 Parents may not be consulted by their children over tough issues and dilemmas ... therefore need to develop peer mentors
- 5 Youth clubs are needed, not just once a week for 2 hours
- 6 Preventative police work on Brandon Estate ... but is cost too high to replicate this strategy widely?
- 7 "Technology has taken the fun out of interacting with people"
- 8 Drill music / G-check ... a link?
- 9 New partnerships – Surrey Square PS proposed a link with Bede youth workers for outreach work at their school
- 10 Sentencing : e.g. the Bede story of an attacker being sentenced to ten months of 1 hour per week talking to a person for stabbing a boy almost to death
- 11 Know your rights when stopped & searched
- 12 They had nothing to do so they went onto gangs and stuff
- 13 **HAP** – how can police be more sympathetic, approachable, less aggressive
- 14 'under cover' police a good thing ... always visible, the same grey car and Primark T-shirt!
- 15 **SSQ**: I think sometimes knife crime is because people don't get the opportunity like us, to sit down and talk to people like you guys to understand what it actually means and how it really affects people
- 16 S: everybody should be stopped and searched!
- 17 some girls/friends were given stuff to hide – guns/knives
- 18 There should be a behavioural study. Use of CCTV, psychologists
- 19 anxieties about reporting people and being found out
- 20 **SSQ**: you need to just calm down and focus on yourselves for at least 5 minutes, because you're here for a reason
- 21 **SSQ**: another way to stop knife crime is if you protest and you write a sign saying if you want to stop knife crime then join with us
- 22 **SSQ**: thank you. For listening to us, and listening to us share our opinion about knife crime.
- 23 **SSQ**: when you pray it just calms you down.
- 24 **SSQ**: You shouldn't hide your emotions, because if you need help people will help you. But you shouldn't hide it, because when you hide it bad stuff could happen. And that's some of the reasons why knife crime can happen.

- 25 SSQ: to stop knife crime you have to start from educating the children from a young age so they'll have knowledge of the subject and they'll know what's right or wrong
- 26 **BEDE:** the value of Bede? Bede's my family. My second family.
- 27 **BEDE:** as soon as I see the police I'd walk to the other direction
- 28 **BEDE:** When you're in Bermondsey, when you dress one way you could get stopped.
- 29 **BEDE:** Last year we had two deaths in our area, and I live right in front of the block. And obviously I knew the two boys, I used to play football with them. One of them was stabbed and one was shot. ... we should be investing in youth clubs.
- 30 **BEDE:** there could be opposite postcodes coming to your area to look for people and that's one thing you're really scared about: should I go to the youth tonight?
- 31 **BEDE:** I wouldn't even bother to go out of my house, I'm that scared.
- 32 **BEDE:** DONNA every time you guys come into the club there's always beef on the social media ... because someone's done something on Instagram or snap, or some other social media.
- 33 **BEDE:** social media before I used to think it's really bad, really like venomous thing, but the more I thought about it the more I got pulled into it.
- 33 **BEDE:** I think a way to stop knife crime is through education.
- 34 **BEDE:** create more awareness about knife crime and how not to be tricked into
- 35 **BEDE:** If you look at previous, the last generation, if you look at their photos when they're 13, they'll be looking at me when I was 7. Like everything just accelerates
- 36 **BEDE:** there's many bad things from social media, but social media is only a thing, we're the people who are in social media, we're the people who use social media.
- 37 **BEDE:** if I get stopped and searched what is actually meant to happen?
- 38 **BEDE:** But how am I supposed to not get involved? Sometimes, especially with groups of friends like with these gangs, they're just groups of friends until it starts to escalate like some things start to turn weird. I used to think that these are groups of friends that are just trustworthy but in reality it just switches up after a few weeks or even months. But yeah with parents, you can talk to them but only to a certain extent
- 39 **BEDE:** stop telling us what you've already done and start telling us what you will do
- 40 **BEDE:** more funding for youth clubs
- 41 **HAP:** school is for teaching and it shouldn't just be for yeah academic or knowing things from the textbook because life isn't like that, life isn't from a text book.
- 42 **HAP:** life lessons should start from primary school
- 43 **HAP:** another thing that needs to be worked on as well is keeping people safe mentally as well, because it's not a thing you can see easily but I feel like no-one takes it really seriously unless someone has a breakdown or something like that.
- 44 **HAP:** get people off the streets



45 HAP: the kids had nothing to do outside and were going in the wrong direction within one month I saw that people - I think because the youth club shut down they had nothing to do. It needs to be re-opened

46 HAP: I have left my house one day and I've seen a shooting, and someone was killed opposite my house.

47 HAP: Most of my cousins have either been in jail

48 HAP: I kind of get scared sometimes when people that I'm really close to go outside because sometimes people don't even need to be in a gang or involved in gang crime to actually get stabbed or to get shot and I feel like some people believe that that's the only way that people can get harmed.

49 HAP: I feel like the police are not searching the right people

50 HAP: Sometimes boys just going to football and home, sometimes they're just going to basketball and home and they're getting stopped and searched and its kind of like a panic for them

51 HAP: Like some students, as soon as they see the police officers, they start to get rude because they feel like the officers are going to react in a very negative way, so we start as young kids like  
x: Defending ourselves  
P: Yeah, defending ourselves, because some police officers they are just like "excuse me, stop right there!" and I'm like, "what did I do wrong? I'm just on my own"

52 HAP: You would think that one girl who looks really innocent and really smart has nothing to do with it, but she could be as guilty as the person carrying the knife.

53 HAP: [Q] behaviour detection officers - possible involvement by local young people?

54 HAP: it scares me to even talk to anyone. Most of the time I just bottle it.

55 HAP: if I spoke to my family they would get too worried and then they would do something that I don't want them to do

56 HAP: if you share with the police it's just going to get you into more trouble.

57 HAP: I think they'll just go after everyone they know until they get the right person

58 HAP: ... bush search. Because the park where my little brother goes to play like, if you walk through there in the bushes you can see knives in the park where all the kids are playing. And hammers and stuff like that. Yeah, and even kids areas it's not a safe environment

59 HAP: Chris: do you have a police liaison officer in the school here?  
Yeah. PC Rogers! She is friendly. You can tell her anything.

60 HAP: re Police - But sometimes the way how they handle it they're just too aggressive.

61 HAP: People get kicked out of school. That's when they become useless and have nothing to do.

62 HAP: everybody learns in different ways, like the way I learn is different to the way some other people in this room learn,

63 HAP: school needs to understand that teachers need to get more of their students personal lives rather than just coming in and teaching them for the eight hours

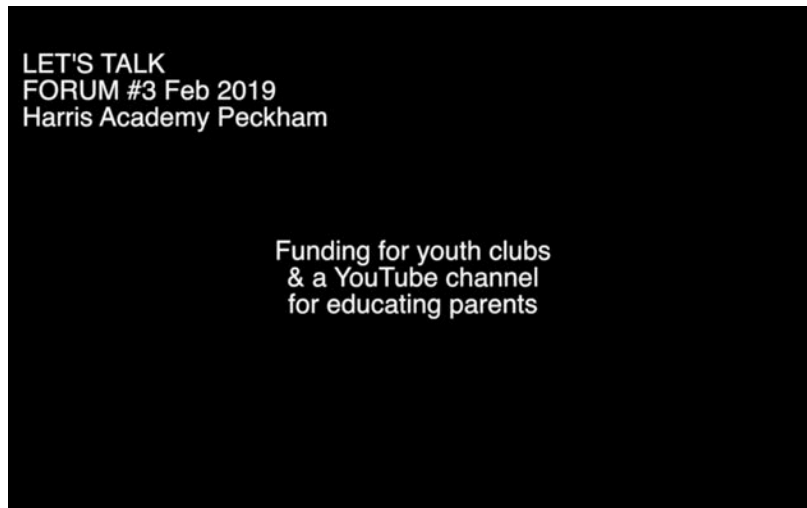
64 HAP: re J – you'd be a fantastic peer mentor  
65 HAP: In order for us to dig deeper into the situation of crime we need to think of people's mental health  
66 HAP: I used to go to I.E. (internal exclusion) every day and I used to get bored and everything no one there to talk to, so that has had an impact on my life because no I don't ever get in trouble any more because I can't be bothered to go in there and speak to no one [laughter]  
67 HAP: I mean because some men you see them they have big muscles. But when they see knives they start running. [laughter] it's just funny like what's the muscle for, is it just for show? [laughter]  
68 HAP: yeah, Fortnite keeps you inside! [laughter]  
69 HAP: we just have to find another time where you get down and you just talk like how we're talking now and yeah for the younger years just ... I don't know just be able to talk and I don't know just be free and able to share your problems and how you're feeling and, yeah.  
70 HAP: to stop knife crime from happening we need to start with the younger years.  
71 HAP: I was walking past a group of primary school kids and one of them was singing songs from drill music and the things that he was singing it sounded quite violent  
72 HAP: [Luke Williams, police officer] you mentioned violence in drill music. Do you think that creates more violence?  
E: I feel like it what we hear in music, what we see on TV, what we see on social media kind of wants  
T: Kind of? Fully!  
73 HAP: We never know what goes on at home  
74 HAP: I listen to drill music but I don't act that way.  
75 HAP: you see this yeah, I think that the school should be able to do it more because they helped us open up to  
Chris: you mean this sort of talking?  
O: Yeah, they helped us open up and say what we like. We've bottled it down, you helped us like bring it up and say our issues and everything.  
76 HAP: We know more than gang crime and violence, we should have more events like this but we need to speak about other stuff.  
77 HAP: maybe we need to know more about how to handle peer pressure in other situations, you know, how to deal with mental things in other situations, how to stay fit and physical  
78 HAP: I think the school they should do more sports so the people who are doing bad stuff they can get those thoughts out of their mind.  
79 HAP: we just need to sit people's parents down and just have a chat with them about things going on in society.  
80 HAP: Chris: yes but who's doing the talking to the parents?  
J: parents, teachers, policemen, anyone.  
Donna: like this? Same kind of thing like this  
81 HAP: there should be education for parents as well ... how to discipline their children because it's not things like drill music that like can impact a child, it's also things like violent games like Fortnite and stuff  
82 HAP: it could be schools that give us some activities to do, more extra-curricular activities

- 83 HAP: perhaps creating a YouTube channel or something like educating parents because anyone could just watch that while they are going to work, on their break,  
Chris: what goes on the YouTube channel?  
T: everything you would want to say if they were here.
- 84 HAP: I feel like there should be a YouTube channel that has people like you as a panel, and they go to different schools and have different secondary and primary schools give their opinion on serious issues and parents would actually watch it especially if their child goes to that school. And through hearing all these different opinions they will know how their child truly feels about serious issues that are going on. And it will maybe make the parent want to engage with their child more you know if they feel like their child is too quiet unto themselves about their issues it may actually help families a little bit more to understand their children.
- 85 SSQ: I feel like in schools they should have this type of thing where in class you have like 5 minutes just to think about themselves and think about what they can actually do to make this world a better place.



## Ideas for expansion of LET'S TALK

1 A YouTube channel to educate parents was proposed at HAP ... **CTVT** plans to deliver this once a team of young people has been identified to lead on content generation.



2 LET'S TALK to commission artistic responses to knife crime for exhibition and tours around Peckham, Southwark, London and UK

3 Increase the number of Forums on knife crime at schools and youth clubs

4 Further local Forums on other topics relevant to young lives ... this was a point argued for by students at HAP

5 Larger pool of Panel members on which to draw for subsequent series of LET'S TALK Forums

6 The decision to create a project website for LET'S TALK had been taken by summer 2019



## LET'S TALK 2019: PANEL REFLECTIONS

Panel members were invited to write up their thoughts and observations. See below. Not all provided this feedback.

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**Donna Wallace** - Feedback 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019:  
Deputy Youth Work Manager, Bede YAP

### **Surrey Square Primary School -**

I thought the children from the primary school set the pace, they were engaging, outspoken, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about what is going on locally with their youths in and around the area. I was very glad to see parents also engaging in this discussion, regarding their older siblings making mistakes and not wanting their youngsters to make the same mistakes, so finding out what is available for their youngsters to engage in and come out with positive results, that will inspire them not to get into crime or gangs but better themselves within sports or youth clubs, etc.

### **Bede YAP -**

This session was very interesting due to the cross zones that attended that night, the youths from Berms were hosting and were a bit apprehensive of Peckham school youths coming to their club, we had to get them bonding over pizza in order to get the ball rolling but after a while both sets of youths relaxed and asked some very interesting questions about the price of hiring a football pitch which isn't part of a subsidised youth club or charity, so it will cost them a fortune due to not all YP's having the money to pay for the pitches. The interesting part of this question was... "We have two youth clubs (Jack Hobbs) & (Brandon YC) and they are both not open. WHY IS THIS" when they are right on our estate and the council have closed them down. The problem of going to the pitch in the first place is being body checked (search by other Youths) every time you go and being stopped by police too!... It was very disheartening listening has a youth worker, to young people saying just open it up, please sort it out...

### **Harris Academy Peckham Yr 11**

This was the night where we could of have so many junior MP's sign up to parliament due to being so informative about their local areas, the Youths spoke very well and to the point about knives in their areas, being hidden in bins, play grounds, under the polices noses, trying to survive without being SAS by undercover Police, running away from Police when they should be after real criminals. Being scared to approach Police. YP's just coming up with so many ideas and maybe solutions for the police as well as the panel to take into consideration when moving forward with this forum...

## **'Recent Thoughts'**

**JAMES WADDINGTON QC 26 March 2019**

### **Personal experience**

I've been thinking about the various points which came up during the meeting. The thing that strikes me most is that, speaking as a barrister of 35 years' experience, nothing I have heard is new. Over the years, I have seen and heard a great deal about vulnerable, disadvantaged, excluded and sometimes dangerous young people. I have read and heard a great deal from social workers, probation officers, prison officials and mental health doctors and nurses. I have seen various initiatives to deal with knife crime in practice with varying degrees of success.

Although I don't know Peckham, I have personally experienced the effects of murder on a family. Although I don't know schools in Peckham, I have been a school governor in London and my son teaches in an Academy in London.

Therefore, I am frustrated that I find it difficult to think of anything new to say. It is not that we, as a society don't have a good idea of what to do, it is that we don't seem to be able to execute our ideas effectively or make any benefits long lasting. We seem unable to make a significant difference.

Unlike some others at the Church Hall, I find it encouraging that knife crime is in the news. Whenever this happens, the likelihood of some change taking place dramatically increases.

### **History**

The issue of knife crime has been in and out of the news for 55 years. Therefore, I was frustrated to hear talk in 2019 of demonising an entire generation. This is divisive and wrong. It is divisive because, cloaked in purported good intentions and glib words, it seeks to set one part of society against another. It is wrong because it has always been well known to be the case that a relatively few young people are responsible for the worst incidents. I see a lot of them. I represented them in the 1980s and 1990s. I have tried them since 2004. It is also wrong because media coverage, in highlighting the problem, dramatically increases the chances of something being done about it. This is exactly what has happened over the years.

The Prevention of Crime Act 1953 was enacted in the light of press concern about teddy boys. The topic has been in and out of the news like many other criminal behaviours ever since. Parliament has reacted by way of new legislation or increased sentences when this happens. After similar concern in the 1980s, there was the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which created offences of having a bladed article in public and also on school premises. After a period of austerity in the 1990s which like today had an impact on resources, during the 2000s, more resources were applied to policing and youth policy. In 2018, after very serious economic retrenchment, mandatory sentences of at least 6 months were introduced for second time knife offenders. The press is currently very interested in knife crime which is a serious problem. But, it is not the first time



that it has been a serious problem. Probably the single biggest reason for the recent increase in murders is a lack of police presence.

### **Money**

I think the problems and the ways to address them are well known. Put simply, we have been here several times before. The things which can be done most easily require a lot of money. I expect that because there is so much media attention to this problem, money will now be directed at this. We know that there will be more public spending in education and home affairs. This is why your timing is so good. You have an opportunity to get Peckham to the forefront of any consideration of future spending. Clearly, youth clubs and sports opportunities are valuable and are greatly missed. They will come back I think. However, the trick is to keep them when times become hard again. Don't you need to be engaging more closely with Southwark Council to make a case for money to go to Peckham on this issue?

### **Police**

There needs to be a bigger police presence on the streets with the minimum of intrusion into people's private lives. All crime tends to go down when there are more police on the streets. We have been backwards and forwards with this issue over the years. The Police need to continue to improve their relationship with the community. The police say that more work is being done on this at their end. They need to be more sensitive and also do more active work in the community. I think less stop and search is a good idea as I don't think it is a very effective tool and it is very intrusive. Again, we have been backwards and forwards with this issue. A lot of criminal groups hide their knives in a park or other public place to retrieve as and when needed. However, the police do need more resources to allow them to give help to and to provide education to children most likely to get into trouble or who have already got into trouble. Having said all this, the police have improved massively in these respects during the last 20 years.

### **Education**

A greater effort is also required within the community to effect a cultural shift from thinking that you don't talk to the police. This is obvious but very difficult to achieve. After all, you can't force people to be more forthcoming to the police.

More education by police and role models at schools would be welcome. Quite a lot of this goes on already. The best people are those who have grown up in a gang culture and escaped that life.

Mental health and other pastoral care at schools is very important but again dependent on resources. Unfortunately, a lack of money has impacted on pastoral care in schools, police presence, youth clubs and sporting opportunities.

If it is true that more pupils are excluded from schools than before, that is a fertile breeding ground for crime.

Further, the old problems of drugs and mental health are still the worst. That is what is seen in court. These issues are practically impossible to solve.

Most families provide the necessary guidance at home. However, some do not. This is another intractable problem.

### **Improvements**

I think that what has improved over the years is the behaviour and understanding of the police. Like you, I remember the riots of the 1980s. They do think in terms of intervention other than acting solely in direct relationship to the commission of an offence. They are more sensitive to the mood of the community. They also appear to realise that there is more work to be done by them in these respects. I also think that more could be done within the community to *demonise* knife crime. The message I got from the Harris Academy was that the children realised the police had a job to do but that knife crime was a matter for the police and not to do with them. That is not to denigrate all the responsible parents and teachers who do much good work to this effect.

### **Money again**

However, the immediate problem is money. This is a cyclical problem and one of priorities. One only has to think of these basic and well known points which relate to funding for the departments of Local Communities, Health, Education and Home Affairs:

1. Local authorities have no money. Presumably, that is why Southwark is charging over £5 a head to play football. Youth clubs and other social initiatives go.
2. Mental health care has reduced dramatically. It is almost always dealt with in the community now. The courts are full of people with mental health problems. In Bristol, we often have to deal with them on the spot with the help of a psychiatric nurse attached to the Court.
3. As we were told by the headmaster of Harris, pastoral care including mental health care is the first thing to go when there are budgetary problems. Ofsted is concerned with exam results. Linked to this is the fact that there is an increased temptation to dispense with disruptive pupils who are the most likely ones to end up committing offences on the streets.
4. Police have inadequate funds to effectively combat crime on the streets.

### **Conclusion**

I appreciate that this does not provide any useful answers. However, nor does a debate about the negative effects of calling some youths a *group* or a *gang* or talking about divisions within society and the demonization of a section of it.



That is to elide a whole raft of different issues when the focus should be firmly on how to discourage young people from carrying knives. Excuses get in the way of answers. In essence, it is a narrow problem. The answer to this particular problem is in creating a cultural shift. It needs the police, schools, other members of the community and families to participate.

I do think we are going in the right direction overall. It is just very slow and a recent trashing of departmental budgets has exacerbated the problem. I think that recent increases in knife crime is largely down to police resources.

There have been a lot of improvements in the way we think about these social problems. I think we are generally more inclusive and less prejudiced against or fearful of sections of society. I think the police are more inclined to focus on how to stop crime rather than clearing up after crime has been committed. Nevertheless, I realise this is an exercise in comparison between now and 30 years ago. Also, this type of improvement is slow and it is sometimes a question of two steps forward and one step back.

Long term improvements require input from everyone. This has been a problem since shortly after the end of the Second World War.

The money tap will be turned on soon to address this problem and there will be temporary improvements as a result. As I say, your timing may be very good in this respect.

In the meantime, let's try to think of ways to put Peckham at the top of the list for the funding which I am sure is coming soon. There won't be enough money so how do you get hold of it in your community? Who is the main person at Southwark Council on this? Why is Peckham more important than other communities? I am sure a strong case can be made.

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## **LETS TALK - PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS**

### **AVRIL JONES**

STOP & SEARCH Southwark Chair, Community Monitoring

The common thread from all the youth interventions was the acknowledgement that the Police have to perform S&S to keep people safe. However the underlying feelings from my perspective were that no age group that participated in the "Let's Talk" discussions spoke favourably with the experience or the perception of it from their peers.

Most of the girls "knew someone" but the boys of secondary school age had personal knowledge of the encounter and gave negative feedback.

Younger male participants were already aware how S&S affected their older friends/siblings. It was clear to me that the handing down of negative information ahead of an encounter with the Police would change their perception even before it happened to them. This in turn would be likely to affect

them when they were stopped, as they will become defensive during the interaction with the Police.

I think it seems that there is a vicious circle of activity that is unlikely to be broken, and the Police will have to find new ways to engage with young people to keep them safe, as this clearly causes an impasse.

It is important to note that young people have Rights during the S&S encounter. There is a misconception that they are under arrest at the time of the Stop which they are not. Knowing how to conduct themselves with confidence in a calm way will mean that the Police can get on with their job and as long as the young person has nothing unlawful on them, they should not be fearful.

When they discussed how they felt about being stopped, the general consensus was that no one really thought about their own attitude and behaviour. It was important to inform them that by showing some maturity, asking reasonable questions about the purpose of the Stop would soon assist everyone to get on with their day. I acknowledged that feeling humiliated in public view was possibly the worst part and only by acting responsibly would this lessen the effects of the procedure.

My advice may be useful to some of the younger audience, but the majority of the teenagers seemed unlikely to be convinced that making the effort to change behaviour would result in a better perception of the Police in a S&S capacity.

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**Supt. HELEN LYONS Southwark Police**

Apologies for failing to attend the last forum, though to be fair I have attended most of them. I had all good intentions of attending but the weight of several murders a few days prior, was too much for me to prioritise and get to you.

I agree that knife crime requires a response from all agencies. I don't agree that to remove the police is the answer. We personally in Southwark and the Met at large do so much around safeguarding, that to eradicate such a fundamental response, would be to increase vulnerability for our community. To be fair to the academic, they may have little knowledge, beyond the headlines, as to what we do.

We would be happy to help in any way in the future. I think it is hugely important that we don't assume and in fact remain talking to all members of society.

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**KERRY ROGERS & CATHERINE HINWOOD at Forum #5**

These two panel members offer their testimony given at the final Forum of the 2019 Let's Talk series. It brought with it a surprise.

**Kerry Rogers**, Music Teacher at Harris Academy Peckham

Kerry: The main impact that LET'S TALK has had is the connections that have been made. Catherine and I did not know each other before this started. Since meeting we have done a huge amount together.

**Catherine Hinwood**, Deputy Director of Policy, Ministry of Justice

Catherine: We came across a story that both of us had been really impacted by. ... We met this wonderful man, Wale, father of Malcolm a former pupil here at Harris who was tragically murdered last year. I got a call from the Prime Minister's special adviser which often happens. He said the PM was really interested in meeting with a family who had experience or been affected by knife crime and she wanted to talk with them directly about what that experience was. The first thing that came to my mind was Malcolm's family. I rang Kerry and we went from there.

Kerry: So we had that conversation and were able to sort that out quite quickly.

Catherine: It was very quick. It was a Friday afternoon to meet on a Monday morning.

Wale, you then had the experience of going to meet the Prime Minister. Would you share something about that?

**Malcolm Mide-Madariola, formerly a pupil at Harris Academy Peckham and the murdered son of Wale Mide-Madariola.**

Wale stepped forward and stood alongside Catherine and Kerry to address the Forum:

4 or 5 advisers were writing things down ... I spoke for about 45 minutes. When I broke down, she (the PM) came to hug me. I wasn't so happy about the way the case was being handled ... I'd better make a contribution to make a change.

Catherine: Whatever you said had a very deep impact on the Prime Minister. The next morning I got a phone call from her adviser setting out a number of different points you had made about things that needed to change in your view.

Wale: One of the things that really struck me when we were looking at the video (a video shown at the start of the final Forum) was the words of one of the kids –

“We don't just want words, we want change.”

Catherine: One of the first things we were able to do because of the words you had relayed to the Prime Minister was – from my budget we fund something called the National Homicide Service. It's a support service for any family who has their loved one murdered or killed by manslaughter. It provides emotional support, practical support, a person can attend trial with you. You've got a case worker who helps

you navigate this awful process when you have someone killed in your family.

Wale was able to really powerfully say that his case worker was overworked and what that meant was that because the Prime Minister heard that, her adviser called me and said what can we do about this. We were able immediately to provide an extra £200,000 to that service to hire two more case workers in London to support families like yours.

This project started ... and now families in London have two extra people. So that's the direct impact of this work.

Wale: Most of the recommendations were passed to the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office for implementation because all the advisers found they were very very practical. One thing I said was the law must change. What I have seen here – (videos made by CTVT from interviews with local young people) - has captured nearly everything we need to talk about. Someone spoke about mental health, someone said how can I be a child in Southwark. If kids can have these things going on in their mind, you can imagine what is going on in the mind of an adult.

I want to thank the power of connection, thank everyone for making it happen.

Catherine: There are a number of other things that we have been able to do to change policy. Your words (speaking to students there on the night) have all been reported back to the Government's Serious Violence Unit through me as things that you guys think need to change.

Kerry: Another thing is our musical – that means that our students will get their voices heard in a creative way.



*Still from "Forever Gs" working title for the Harris Academy Peckham musical created by Year 9 students under Kerry Rogers*

**AVRIL JONES, STOP & SEARCH at Forum #5 3 July 2019**

I have to say that some young people have come up with little nuggets and I hope I can come back and speak to you and Kerry (Kerry Rogers, music teacher at HAP) about what goes on, on the streets, for you.

From the three sessions it is clear that everyone has known about Stop & Search (directly or indirectly) and everywhere the story is mostly negative. I didn't get any positives from anybody. I know a lot of police will be working hard to make a positive encounter on the streets. Some units will be very good at it, others will be really awful at it. How do we change things to make it a better encounter? Probably you can't.

The police might get better at interpersonal skills, they could do things in private more than in public ... but you have to do certain things on the street, which is where it gets very dodgy for you guys. It's an embarrassment, you feel intimidated ...

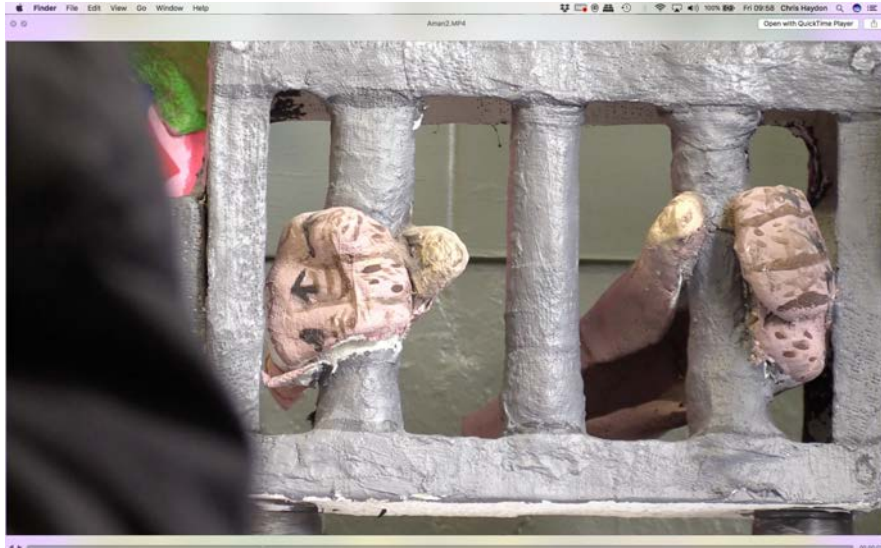
... you can get empowered to tell the police what you are feeling at the time they are doing it. A lot of young people think that if you are stopped you are being arrested.

It's not like that. ... what are you entitled to say. Yes you have responsibilities as well. Not just knowing your rights but taking responsibility for your own actions.

The whole demeanour can change. Try it some time. Say –

"Excuse me, officer. Who are you? Where are you from? What is the reason for you stopping me? And why do you think it's me?" At that point you've disarmed them and you are going to have a conversation rather than you being on the back end of their ability to be lawmakers.

One golden nugget was: they are looking for the wrong people. So I would like to hear from you guys more, about who are the right people to stop.



Hands on prison bars – by a student at Cavendish School, Bermondsey

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**MALTE LAUB, King's College London**

Forum#5 July 2019

'My name is Malte, I have done research here in Peckham and other parts of south London about knife violence, policing, and crime more generally.

I learned many things from our talks, but maybe most importantly that we think of knife crime too much in police and crime terms and that it is time for us to stop doing that.

So, I want to use my three minutes to be a bit provocative and make a case against the police as a tool against knife crime. We should challenge our reflex to hear knife crime and think police.

So why do I think this?

Well, firstly, because many of you have told us that you are afraid of the police:

One year-nine student shared his experiences being G-checked, so being stopped and harassed by a gang member, and in the next sentence compared this to police stop-and-searches. This is what the student said, it was in answer to the question if he felt safe with the police on the street.

*'it doesn't really make me feel safe. I mean they are around. They can stop me from getting G-checked, they can stop the person eventually that will come to me to ask me for my stuff. But they stop and search me. I don't know what the difference is. Because if they can ask me what I have, people who G-check me what I have, the police are doing the exact same thing.'*



One of the LET'S TALK groups more or less collectively said they would change the side of the road when they saw a police officer coming towards them.

I know that this is not to say that everyone feels that way. One student even suggested that everyone should be stopped and searched because it helps to take knives off the streets and that is certainly true to an extent. But generally, many of you were quite critical of the police, especially the older years. A group of year-eleven students were particularly clear of that. They said they would not talk to the police, because gangs might find out about this. They also said that the police would be stopping and searching the wrong people, that they would be too aggressive, and they would be present in the wrong circumstances, namely after something happened.

*Chris: would you not agree that if you were to speak to the police and it could be kept anonymous, that could be helpful?*

*Girl I: Nuh-uh.*

*Chris: it wouldn't be helpful to speak and advise the police? Why not?*

*Girl I: Because if you give..*

*Chris: but how are they going to know what is happening on the ground?*

*Girl I: Ok say if we knew a person that keeps stuff in their house. We go to the police and say, "oh, I know this person who keeps this stuff in their house with this person, this person and this person. If it's a secret, and you release the secret that only certain people know, they will find out somehow who did it. Plus you see how you guys can kind of see behaviour in people? They can also see behaviour in people. They are already intimidated, so they are going to see that something is up, something is wrong, so ...*

*So basically I want to add to what he says, so I think like sometimes the person is innocent, and like the police would push them down and everything. \_\_\_\_\_ it hurts but the police don't listen. I just think it's kind of stupid that they're all like aggressive towards them, if that makes sense, because they're going to stop but they keep on doing;*

*Girl II: [Policeman], I'm very sorry I'm not into the police*

*Policeman: No, it's alright*

*Girl II: I'm not saying they're stupid, they're just not doing the right thing, if you know what I mean. No, you're doing the right thing, but*

*Boy: You're doing it the wrong way*

*Girl II: yeah, it's difficult. For example, you see the police \_\_\_\_\_. I see them on the street, like on the street outside like where it's clear (?) and you think like you're going to catch gang members, like people with knives on the street. You're just going to see them and they're just going to walk right past you and say "I have a knife" like for what knife?*

So, we can think of that whatever we like, but we have to acknowledge that the police are a source of distress for many young people in south London. And if the last student is right, then we also have to think about effectiveness.

But there is another reason why we should stop the association knife crime – police.

You told us how complex the causes for knife violence are.

You told us about how there is nothing to do after school. Youths clubs have closed, football on the Astroturf costs £5 per person per hour. You told us how people get in contact with gangs because they can only hang out on the streets. And the gangs promise adventure. But they also promise money, new trainers, and protection. At the same time, you told us about how you felt there were only limited legal opportunities for you and your peers. One student said that people dream of being a doctor but at some point they realise that this is not going to happen.

There is a third point, too.

Yesterday, I went to a talk at the South Bank University up at the Elephant. There was a professor from New York City and he studies gangs there. He told us, the main reasons for people to fall into gang crime are

- 1. Anger**
- 2. Frustration**
- 3. Hopelessness**
- 4. Powerlessness**
- 5. Economic Despair**

Which one of these factors do the police fight? None. But a stop and search might make you angry, frustrate you and make you feel powerless. We know of the alienating effects of stop and search, at least since Stephen Lawrence we know about institutional racism, and we know about the effects of anti-social behaviour orders on young people. Considering all of this, our concern should not be to integrate the police better into the communities. Our concern should be to get the police out of communities.

Because who can fight these factors of the professor? A social worker can. A job can. Education can. Good housing conditions can. A strong, empowered community can.

This is why I suggest we stop talking so much about the police when we talk about knife violence and rather reduce their role.

This does not mean that I suggest that we abandon communities, and it also does not mean that this is something we can do tomorrow. But it means a shift in our preferences. In our efforts to tackle knife crime, we have to invest into communities, not community policing. We have to fund education, we



have to make sports and arts facilities easier accessible, we have to improve housing conditions, and we also have to give people employment opportunities.

Now you might say that this exceeds our possibilities and it might. But we need to acknowledge that to get rid of knife violence we need to look at all levels, from the individual, to the community, to the big policy level. I chose to focus on the latter. We need empowered communities, and we don't empower communities with more stop and search, we empower them with better living conditions, better education, better employment. So, what can we do? We can start lobbying for these ideas tomorrow, in our institutions, amongst our friends, in writing to our MPs and, indeed, on the local level. And we need to start here, but we must not stop here.

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**PETER VAUTIER** 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019

The main issues that seemed to arise were as follows:

A mutual distrust between police and young people, and anger towards police from young people who felt they were being harrassed by the police, who stopped and searched them far too often, and it was felt that this was mostly without justification. Being black seems to make it far more likely to be stopped and searched.

At the same time there was frustration from the young people that police were not meeting their expectations of making life safe for them. Police were seen to be reactive in their approach to dealing with incidents instead of anticipating, and were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and stopping the wrong people.

Funding being cut to services such as youth clubs and sports activities has had a major impact on children, leaving children hanging around the streets with nothing to do. One child reported seeing friends turning the wrong way within a month. In all the discussions we held, youth clubs were what children said they wanted, along with sports activities.

Funding cuts to schools accompanied by increasing expectations for schools to pick up the pieces has exacerbated the expectation, with teachers doing all they can to help, but ultimately there are limits to what can be achieved.

There seems to be a disconnect between children and the services such as school, police and other services, where children are left unaware of what is going on, or what is available to them, and they are having to work a lot of this out for themselves.

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As food for thought – about **sentencing guidelines** and the power of the Law to discourage, or not, here is a story from Bede. It is related by Donna Wallace, a youth worker with twenty years experience at Bede in Bermondsey. One of their young people had not come to the Forum that night:

## 2019 FORUM #2 at Bede YAP

Donna: So I had a young man come with me today and he was trying to sort out his CV stuff and he wanted to get on a CS CS course in an apprenticeship. So he was telling me about when he got attacked last year. So this is a little snippet from this boy.

*So he was 15, and he was confronted in his block by a few boys and he could see that they was carrying knives. He didn't have nothing on him at all, and he was trying to get to his block. So he's trying to get into his block to go up the stairs. I don't know what the beef was and I don't think he knows what the beef was, but the bottom line is they were stabbing, they stabbed him in his head, they sliced him, but what he was trying to get across is the police had CCTV, they had witnesses, the judge called the boys feral animals, when he went to convict them. Is everyone getting it? I need you to follow this story with me, right? The judge also said they don't deserve to be out, so they deserve to go to prison, right? The police said it's a good job the boy fought back, because if the boy didn't fight back they would have found his intestines on the floor and he would have probably bled out. So this is what the police are saying to him and his family. He probably would have died.*

*The boy said, "With all this being said to my family and me, the boys only got 10 months" but listen, hold on, the boys only got ten months and they were referred to the Youth Offending Team, which is called the YOT. So they got 10 months and they got this big sentence. Get ready for the big sentence: one hour a week speaking to a person. One hour a week. Is everyone getting this? So my man got stabbed up, he got stabbed up in his head, he got sliced. The police said if they didn't get there quick enough it would have been peak. Please hear what he said:*

*He said that the police were putting pressure on him to go to court. He believes that if he went through the whole process and the pressure of confronting the boys again he would have been psychologically affected.*

*Judging by the outcome, why did he have to go to court when they had CCTV of the assailants faces, all of their faces they had CCTV. They had witnesses from inside the block, they had witnesses from outside. And he was saying why are they putting pressure on him to confront these boys for them to only get 10 months and an hour a week going to check in with somebody? That was it. So basically all he was trying to say is he believes with all the evidence, the CCTV and all the rest of it they should have been given the maximum sentence for the knife crime to prove to the CPS it was serious about this life-threatening crime, and the one that is destroying his family's community locally. So basically he's still peak now, don't think he doesn't get flashbacks don't think he doesn't run down these stairs and think, are these boys going to be waiting for me downstairs? So he just wanted you to hear the thing, and he wanted to put it to the judge who's not here today. Because there was supposed to be a judge that turned up today. So he just wanted to know why. Why only 10 months? Why only one hour a week, when they're saying, is it knife crime does it hold 5 years? The maximum sentence is 5 years, and when you've got all the evidence and you can see their faces and you can see them knives that they brought into the block and you can see them using the knives, why didn't they get sentenced?*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS “Life isn’t from a text book”

We close with a few words from the young people we met:

**A student at HAP:** “School is for teaching and it shouldn’t just be for yeah academic or knowing things from the textbook because life isn’t like that, life isn’t from a text book.”

“... life lessons should start from primary school.”

“... another thing that needs to be worked on as well is keeping people safe mentally as well.”

Young people don’t feel safe. Young people are thoughtful. They sometimes seek more communication with their parents but it is not available. They have lots to say but are we hearing them?

LET’S TALK found that young people are not talking to their teachers, their parents or even their peers about sensitive issues –

“It helped us say what we bottled down.”



because it helps us open up and say what we bottled down

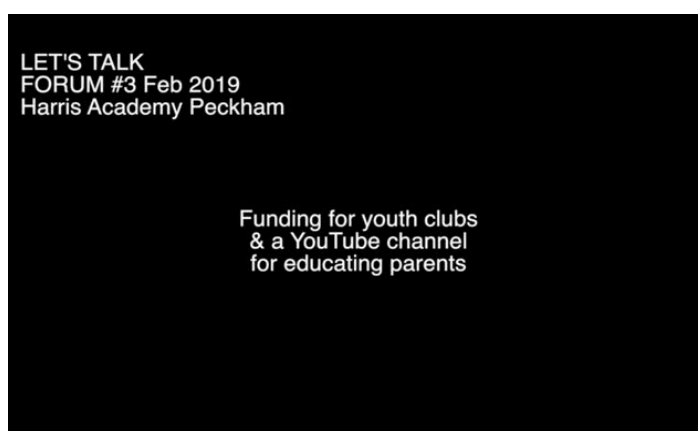
Can schools do more to facilitate community building? Yes. Protecting young people with fences, gates and security checks during the day but casting them out later in the afternoon makes no sense. Balance is needed. Relationship is needed, for example with local organisations seeking to run projects with schools, like Community TV Trust for example with LET’S TALK.

LET’S TALK actually found that one school stood in its way when wanting to contact the young people who had taken part in what was an excellent Forum. They had exams coming up. Talk to us after that. When we did, we were told they had left.

Curriculum pressure, the be-all-and-end-all of grades linked to school performance, funding and league tables ... We need a national rethink. As the student cited above so neatly put it, 'life isn't from a text book.'

Accumulated resentment of the Police, especially with regard to Stop & Search, will take a long time to weed out. Yet there is an opportunity to use the Stop & Search interaction itself for the bettering or in some instance the creation of relationship between Police and young people.

With police stations closed or closing in many areas, police officers are rarely seen on the streets unless at a crime scene or handling an 'incident'; there is little or no relationship with the community. Police officers themselves are not happy with this.



Local authority funding to re-open youth clubs that have closed can be part of the solution, where staffing and volunteer support is in place and of a standard.

Finally, *Community TV Trust* is pledging to support the running of a YouTube channel designed to education parents. Young people however must come forward to generate the content of this channel – whether text, podcast, video, whatever. This is one of the aims for 2020, to find that team of young content creators to help educate parents – and all of us.

Being young today is not what it was.