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# No man's land

*How Britain's inner city young are being failed*

SHAUN BAILEY

CENTRE FOR YOUNG POLICY STUDIES

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## THE AUTHOR

SHAUN BAILEY runs a community initiative that helps disaffected and drug-addicted young people on the North Kensington estates. The views expressed in this paper are entirely his own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of his employers, funders or donors.

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*Note that some names of both individuals and organisations have been changed to preserve confidentiality.*

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*Dedication*

*This pamphlet is dedicated to Barran Hulme,  
a man who gave selflessly of himself to help those in need.*

## FOREWORD

THIS IS THE FIRST PUBLICATION by the Centre for Young Policy Studies (CYPS). The CYPS has been set up as a subsidiary of the CPS to study the problems facing the young (children and young adults), particularly the underprivileged young; and to put forward methods of alleviating these problems. The CPS has carried out much work in recent years in highlighting the importance to children – and to society as a whole – of family stability. Yet the fact remains that millions of young people will grow up outside a stable two parent family. Alternative support structures – predominantly voluntary – are urgently needed for these young people. Otherwise we will continue to waste their talent, destroy lives and impose great burdens on our police, prisons and social services.

The CYPS will publish papers, hold seminars and commissions and seek to influence the debate on the young, the future of our nation, in any way it can. For instance, at the CYPS's initiative, the CPS and the Centre for Social Justice are currently investigating the appropriate funding structures for charities and other voluntary groups.

Please contact us if you would like to contribute to this debate.

John Nash  
Chairman  
The Centre for Young Policy Studies



## CHAPTER ONE

### I AM SHAUN BAILEY

I AM SHAUN BAILEY. I come from a black working class environment. I was born and brought up by my single mother on the North Kensington Estates.

Where I live, the peer pressure to offend surrounds you. Crime is everywhere.<sup>1</sup> Education on the estates is not an issue. The teenage pregnancy rate is well above the national average. There is a teenage drugs epidemic. There are significant mental health and disability issues.<sup>2</sup> There is little mobility out of the area.<sup>3</sup> The number of people in contact with social services is way above the national average.

Yet just a few yards away on the other side of Ladbrooke Grove, you can find houses worth millions of pounds where bankers, celebrities and media stars discuss being attacked and the threat of burglary rather than the problems of today's youth.

I am one of the lucky ones. That I escaped my destiny I put down to three things: being part of a close-knit family; having a determined mother; and being enrolled with the Army Cadet Force (ACF) when I was 12 years old.

I had a role model in my uncle who when my dad wasn't around made a deliberate attempt to replace him in many of the fathering things. That was important to me. When everybody else was trying to grow up quickly and act like a man, my uncle

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<sup>1</sup> The estates are among the bottom 4% in terms of the national index of crime.

<sup>2</sup> The estates are among the bottom 10% in terms of the national index of health and disability.

<sup>3</sup> The estates are among the bottom 3% in terms of the national index of income.

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disallowed it. His being there meant I was able to be a child, to be interested in toys. This separated me from my peer group. One of my mum's proudest boasts about me was that I never brought the police to her house.

I also got to know my father when he came back to support us and that's a rarity in this area.

### **Breaking the culture of dependency**

A culture of dependency rules the working class. The first wave of migrants from the West Indies never had this, they fended for themselves.

My mum knew that she couldn't cope with me and my brother when we were teenagers. But unlike other people she never acted as if it was society's fault. There was a four year gap with my brother – so she concentrated on me as the eldest. She decided to keep me busy. Every day she had me organised – I did karate for a week, I did football for a week and my mum made me go, she encouraged me to go to stretch myself. Then she found me a gymnastics place, an independent club that had been going for 35 years. It was a long-term activity for me that was important in linking me to the wider society.

My peer group on the estate: they had no link to the wider society at all.

She also made sure that I never went to a school in our locality – she didn't want me to be too friendly with the boys here. A deliberate ploy not to leave me among too many black children. She had seen how black people interact with black people – what they say to other black people – that means you can't go forward. That you get trapped in your own poor community.

I wasn't very good in school. I hated school and school hated me, I wasn't the best behaved in school – I was suspended a few times. The problem for me was that I developed very slowly academically. I was quite far behind. I remember being quite low down the sets and stuff. I got close to the point that school was failing me.

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But I became a member of the Army Cadet Force (ACF). That really rescued me.

The son of one of my mum's close-knit family members had joined the ACF. He encouraged me to go too. I cannot exaggerate the effect it had on me. I was 12 at the time. Going into the cadets created the person I am today. Straight away I had a different version of how men were. I had so much more moral guidance – not stealing but supporting people – than anyone I knew. None of them were told there is always a consequence of behaviour – good or bad. I was. It was a crossroads thing: when everybody I knew was offending and doing bad stuff, I was literally too busy. I could easily have gone along when my friends decided to burgle a factory one weekend but I was busy. I said, “I am going away to camp for the weekend, I can't do it”. They all got in trouble and I wasn't even there – I was running up and down Salisbury Plain, training.

As I went through school I knew there was a definite difference between me and most of my friends. When the whole smoking and carrying knives thing came about I could have been one of them. I was physically big and I was part of the cool set. I was unique in that I was cool but I wasn't having to be carrying out the crime to be seen that way. What it was, Army Cadets had made me confident.

I saw their view of what is possible. For the people on my estates these were things that were not seen as possible at all. My connection with the army cadets gave me an understanding of Britishness and that made my life much easier. I felt much less separated. I didn't feel the whole racism thing.

I had role models who were men and who were not of the street. They came from good backgrounds and they introduced me to a British outlook on life, like the value put on the family.

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<sup>5</sup> The Certificate for Pre-Vocational Education, a qualification introduced in the UK in 1986 for 16 year olds plus who want a one year course of preparation for work or further vocational study.

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They had a traditional, positive outlook. They had seen what works for them and they tried to continue it. It helped me see the similarities with the original Jamaican community. With the ACF I learnt there were many things about being British that are positive – I realised then that those values have been eroded in the poorer classes.

My mother forced me to go to Paddington College to do the CPVE.<sup>5</sup> She said don't you think you are leaving school and not doing anything. That was not an option. I just scraped into college. Everybody wanted to be there – or at least had to be there – and that again changed my view. I went into BTech and I just battled through it. With my A Levels and my BTech I was just able to scrape into university – the whole grant thing made that possible though it would definitely have benefited me and my mum if I had left and got a job. That would have made life much easier.

Again I come back to Cadets – they gave me the ability to soldier on. To the cadets you are a worthwhile person. Obviously you should be doing something. I had one officer who had expectations of me. He was called Captain Connelly. He's a Colonel now. He really believed in me and he was just like, "so when are you going to be doing this and when are we going to be doing that?" He really kept on and on. It got to the point that I went to interviews thinking, this is just so he'll keep quiet. I would see him two or three times a week at Cadets so I had to do something. It got me through some difficult times.

By the time I was 20 or 21, heaps of my friends had been in jail. Almost all of them had some kind of drug issue – friends from my estate and from my school and college – but they were not aware of it being a problem. Some weren't actually taking them but selling them. That was one of the big issues. I could see the attraction but by that time I had developed an aversion to crime. When you are young and you get into the stealing of bikes for a laugh, vandalism and stuff, you develop a criminal mentality –

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once you get it as a child, it is difficult to stay away, crime becomes an opportunity you can't resist. Luckily I had missed all of that.

After university (Computer Engineering at the South Bank University) which I had to work at a job all the way through to the detriment of my grades, and after some soul-destroying jobs, I began to work here. On the estates. First with Barran Hulme, an inspirational youth worker who came from Scotland but lived on the estate running a local Detached Youth Project. It was based on connecting with young people and he believed I could do that. All youth work is based on personality, he said. If you don't have the personality, you can't connect with the people. He couldn't afford to pay me. Youth projects are not funded properly. But he said, "Become a volunteer". So I did that. That was seven years ago. And that was when I bumped into Timmy again, one of the boys I grew up with.

### *Case study: Timmy The Heroin Addict*

*I hadn't seen Timmy for years when up he popped on the estate, now 28 years old and in a terrible state. He had a really bad drug problem and was sick of going to jail. He came onto our project because he knew me.*

*He had been a school friend. His mother was alone and that meant Timmy was alone – all the time she was busy supporting herself and older siblings as well. He and his brother kept running away and became involved in drugs early on because of unhappiness at home and school failure. It got to the point that Timmy was living on the road, on the street at one point.*

*Once he'd failed at school what could he do? He couldn't go to college and stuff – he was on the street. When he couldn't find a job and had no support he became depressed. He got onto heroin and that really messed him up. It's a beautiful drug for covering your pain until the point it becomes your pain. That's when the big trouble starts. Once in the habit he had to raise money.*

*He was one of several other friends I had who did the whole classic young black boy thing. They were very flash, very macho – they'd failed at*

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*school and needed money. Drug dealing is a false opportunity but it is an opportunity. Timmy learnt a glamorised view of what it was to be about on the street from skewed television programmes and the myths that exist on the street. He got the notion that it was a big deal to be in and out of jail and have hundreds of different relationships. He was a boy who'd go out with someone for half an hour. He'd got a girl pregnant when he was young, she was very young – I mean he was probably 17 and she was probably 16. Now he's got a child. Then he had a massive problem.*

*Having the child helped him straighten out for a bit because in one sense he was pressured to try and get some work. But then he couldn't find any and that made him feel like he was failing. Like many I know he had no qualifications and didn't know how hard it would be to find work. So he went back to crime because it was paying. He was also involved in a lot of fights – this happens when you are “hussling” and you get into “beef” over money and respect issues. He ended up in jail. Jail was his University. He learnt there. He learnt more about crime. He met someone in jail and they promised themselves they'd be partners in crime on release. They had quite some success for a bit of time – they made a lot of money – they were driving cars – they were flash. But the girlfriend didn't like it, she wasn't getting her cut, and the fights started – “you can't see the child” – “I don't want to see the child” – and the little child is caught in the middle of this. That was when I met him. He was a crack addict with no where left to go.*

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### **From bad to worse**

The level of the crime on the estates was astonishing. Just from my immediate peer group, 12 have been in prison. Like Timmy they had all got involved in a life of burglary, stealing, fencing and all sorts of drugs-related crime. The false financial opportunity that drug-dealing offers appeals very much when you are young and have no prospect of a job. You know people, people know you. You need the money. You've got nothing else doing.

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These were young men of 19, 20, 21, and 22 who were in real need but not getting helped. It's then that their drug habits really grow because of the pain they were feeling. Their problems are greater than teenagers' because there is more expected of them . Yet they have few extra skills to show. They are under a lot more pressure. People will say, "what are you doing? You're 20, sort your life out". But they have no more experience or education than a 16 year old.

Where they've been in that time is no man's land.

Barran Hulme thought I could help them . He initially found funding from the Government sponsored Drugs Action Team.

I faced some extreme cases from the start. One was a boy bigamist who had got married three times by the age of 21 to help feed his drug habit. Another was a girl, already herself a prostitute, aided and abetted by her boyfriend. She was using her young sister to lure punters back home to attack and rob them. Many of the young people I saw were regularly robbing, three, four, five times a week easily. Burglaries were just off the hook because potentially, if you burgled the right house, you could make a real big score. Then there was the other end of the game – people who were fences because they had the connections to sell the gear.

Then it was bad. But life over the last four years here has got more extreme, and the levels of violence with drugs, guns and knives amongst the younger kids, much worse.

Eight years ago it would have been fantasy stuff to car jack. Four years ago maybe you would have found one person who'd entertain it and everybody would have thought he was a lunatic. Not any more. Now I could show you at least 15 people who would consider it, 10 or 15 who would do it and five who have actually done it. Those numbers are growing.

Kids are carrying guns now because guns are linked to bigger crime. They are selling crack because crack has a shorter turn around and a higher profit than the likes of weed and heroin. People who smoke crack are so desperate they'd do anything for

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the money. And the dealers get high on the power. I know one guy who's only 17 years old and is a very successful crack dealer. "It's not so much the money Shaun," he told me, "it's the fact that I've got people who work for me". He was enjoying the fact that he was controlling people. For rock he was able to get people to wash his car, clean his house, beat people up, steal stuff for him, send them on missions and tasks just 'cos it made him feel powerful. That's a worry.

I come from this place. There is a real feeling of inevitability of crime amongst young people. It's not a surprise to me now when you live in this place that you will be involved in crime. It's just what type of crime you will be involved in. And crime starts younger, spreads wider and goes further now.

The real issue is the number of kids that are "growing out of" crime is getting smaller than it used to be. It's why we get this horrible stuff with guns and knives: the serious nature of their offences is growing as the percentage of kids staying in crime is growing. The terror they cause and the amount of stuff they are into has a disproportionate effect way beyond what they do. The real scary thing is the young age at which it happens. Serious criminals used to be in their late twenties. If you went to Feltham now, or came into my area and interviewed my boys, they have been involved in quite horrible stuff and they are not yet 16 or 17.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **BORN ON THE NORTH KENSINGTON ESTATES**

THIS WAS AN AREA where poor white people were sent who couldn't afford to live anywhere else. But the estates have also become home to London's largest Moroccan enclave and to Jamaican, Portuguese and Spanish communities.

But racial tension is not a feature of life here. When they found the bombers on our estates, no form of war took place.<sup>6</sup> Although we have been housed in our racial groups, we do not pursue each other because someone is of the wrong race. Over in the Suttons – which is a mostly white area and where there has been a lot of beef – they will still define the Moroccan boys as being from Lancaster West rather than by their culture.

The estates form their own community. It's the kind of community where people, particularly kids, hang in and around the block. If you are the younger end of an overcrowded family you share a bedroom with your older brother. Maybe there are three of you in one small bedroom. You have no privacy so you come out of your flat for privacy. If your big brother is in and you don't want to do what he is doing, you are sick of him or your parents are in, that's where you come. You stay on the block because it's the only sort of place that you were allowed. It's the next closest thing to your house so you are comfortable there. It becomes your extended bedroom.

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<sup>6</sup> Three alleged associates of the 7 July London bombers lived in this neighbourhood.

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We are all too close to each other. On top of each other. We don't have any space at any time. That's why the parents can't love their children. They are too busy surviving.

As time has gone on, on these estates, the people who hang around the block have aged. They've turned from cute little five year olds to 10 year olds who were riding their bikes to 15, 16, 17, 18 year olds, in some cases 20 and 21 year olds who are still hanging around. On one of the estates here there are 1,600 young people and kids under the age of 19. The sight of a big group of young people just terrorises most people. This is where it starts. The kids are perceived as a threat. They are dealt with in that manner. Then they take on the role they were handed. Put that with difficult parenting conditions and you've got a problem. On the street the peer group has far more influence than the parent, who just has no idea what the kids are up to.

### **Clicks and gangs**

A child is known by the estate he comes from. The problem of having estates with names is that people become very territorial. Kids will literally fight with other kids just because they are on their road. It comes from a "this is our estate, this is our castle" kind of mentality. So you get *clicks* which generally are about the boys who live say in the Suttons, the boys who live on Golbourne, the boys who live in Lancaster West. It's a case of we're familiar to each other because we live together. You kind of defend your "ends". Because you don't want your "ends" – that's your locale – to be seen as where the pussies live. You don't want to be taken advantage of, so you club together loosely to make sure you stand up for each other.

A gang tends to be an advanced click – they've made a decision we're going to do this, we're together. Anyone who interferes with you, we won't even question you; we'll just go and deal with them. That sort of gang is very advanced. Some gangs have names – there is "*the biker crew*" because they used to speed about on mopeds and that kind of stuff, "*the cold hearted crew*", "*the heartless*

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*crew*". The names are very 'hip hop-esque' – always about being mean and tough. It is always about tough, tough, tough; another gang is called "*Cutlass*" and there's a group called "*Beg for Mercy*". Sometimes you'll name your gang after where you come from so you'll get "*HD*" – Henry Dickens – then you're an HD man.

You can have an estate with two or three gangs. A good percentage of the kids on an estate will belong to one of the gangs. The estates with the most and with the least anti-social behaviour have gangs. If their gang is very effective and if they are involved in serious crime they won't shit on their own doorstep. But you still get a few horrible incidents where they've smoked a lot and they are a bit mental and they come across an adult they'll bully. They will pick one adult in particular because they get a bite from that adult. It's very frightening.

Imagine you are a nine year old boy living here. What happens is you see these groups of boys – they are who you aspire to be. They seem to be tough. They seem to be having a good time. Nobody interferes with them. And when you are boy, with that whole wanting to be man, these appear to be men to you. If anybody messes them, they can fix it. There is a good camaraderie in it.

When you are poor, you see people on telly with stuff, phones, cars, iPods. To you, this gang is normally the best way of getting stuff because they steal, they rob. They do stuff that is perceived as cool – they'll get cars and drive you around. They'll look after you. When you're young there is nothing better than feeling like I can bully the people in school because my gang will come and back me up, my brother and stuff.

There are plus sides – it can stop inter fighting on the estate because they know each other. If you have a big fight with someone in your gang you risk splitting it up, falling out with people. It acts as a loose set of rules. It can police the situation.

But if you happen to be on an estate where the people are particularly bad, you are trapped. You have to become one of them for your own safety. You probably want to become one of

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them because you've seen at school that the kids that avoid gangs tend to be the really quiet, lame ones. If you are lame, it means they won't let you join. Newer members of the gang bully you to up their status. To avoid that, you tend to keep right out of their way. You have to hide. You can't hang around on your estate if they hang around on your estate. You probably end up staying in your house unless you have a mother to escort you. Your parents will keep you in.

If you are really lucky you'll have a sibling who is older who is involved who will think, "bloody hell I can't have you in this". He'll keep you out of it deliberately. That is where the gang is doing some serious stuff. But it tends to be the other way round. A boy gets great cachet from bringing a sibling in. It's almost like securing the future of the gang by bringing a younger member in.

### **The prisoner as role model**

In some of the gangs, some of the slightly older ones have already been in prison. They are phoned by the ones in prison. They hear, " We're watching scum yeah. Yeah I'm the man," and "I am the big daddy in here". The kids think he must be. He's in there and nobody is stopping him saying these things. Nobody's stopping them playing on their PlayStation. To the kids on the street, prison has definitely become a badge of honour. It's almost getting to the point that you have to go to prison. There is no stigma attached. Nothing can defeat the feeling of cool – definitely not – and that's what prison has.

### **Respect**

All their talk is about f...king people up, f...king people up. There is no notion of conflict resolution other than battering people. If you ask them, "so why do you do it? How come X is always in trouble?" The answer is always, "Because he had to batter someone". For every scenario given, the punishment is basically a different level of beating. If you say "I'll pick you out and I'll put my finger in your eye", they respond with, "but I'll put my blade

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in your back.” They exchange vicious ways of dealing with people with no irony, no joking, nothing. It is an accepted norm.

They have to take people on just because of what is said that might be disrespectful to them. They have to batter them. They have to be in charge. To be in charge they have to be physically violent. Violence is deeply engrained in their culture of ‘respect’. A lot of them need psychiatric help because of their bad family situation. They lack the family situation that is fundamental to their human growth. Any kind of family, two mums, two dads, whatever, provided it is some form of family. Not having that love is one reason the kids argue about respect so much.

If you talk to the boys at school about ‘bad boys’ their view is you have to be one or people don’t leave you alone. With white boys, it’s about being a nutter. You’ve got to be a nutter. You, don’t want anyone f....g with you, you’ve got to f..k them up, you’ve got to show people you’re a nutter. Its just a different lexicon. The black boy will say things like bad boy, gun man, man don’t take no shit. They talk about blowing people’s heads off and about stabbing people.

The kids here also feel they have to have money. These kids are 13 to 18. The great majority of them who are “going out there” – that means going out to rob, to make money – are just 14 or 15. They use terms like “running up in your house”.<sup>7</sup> They talk about needing a hundred to four hundred pounds a week. And a lot of it is to do with respect – if you have that kind of money, you have respect, and you can buy all the cool stuff, and you can show them you’ve got it. If you stand around with these boys, it’s not long before someone pulls out a wedge of money – they won’t say anything, it is just to look cool. It’s like wearing a Rolex.

And a lot of time they need the money to finance their drug habits.

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<sup>7</sup> “Running up in your house” is a hip hop phrase. It means it’s a burglary and if it needs to be aggravated, it will be aggravated burglary.

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### **Pop economics**

Young people here watch a lot of television, particularly MTV. It shows them cars and cribs (houses) and girls. They want it all. They don't learn about real economics, what's involved in working for money. That's why you see them performing some really ugly crimes now because that is the only way they can finance this lifestyle. Drug dealing here is all about pop, pop, pop. Burglary is all about pop, pop, pop. It means they do 20 minutes of something highly dangerous, then bang, they've got all the money. Then they have the whole next week, next month of doing nothing, waiting for their funds to run out and being forced to do something else. It's dangerous because as they get older they have to take bigger and bigger risks to make more and more money. They have to use more violence.

The chances of coming across a knife on the estate are high enough to need to worry about it. Most kids don't have them. But the kids who do make use of them, they produce their knives and they terrorise the rest. Soon the other kids will be joining in – you can't be left behind. Kids here are quick on the uptake and they are not scared of change.

### **Drugs**

Lots of kids smoke here – weed and skunk. You may be getting to 25%. It's a really serious problem. Use is starting younger than it did. And it is doing much more damage to society than crack or heroin because of the sheer number doing it. It affects their health. It affects their mental health. It undermines their schooling and their life prospects. And it affects everyone else.

The reality is that smoking or puffing is just not thought of as a big deal. With the kids I deal with I can see it in their behaviour. I am well enough in with them; they make absolutely no attempt to hide it from me – none whatsoever. At our local park some of the young schoolgirls come around and smoke – some of the young schoolboys too. Now they are closing the park early because people are sitting there and rolling up. They smoke on the way to

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the bus to go to school. It affects their ability to concentrate and their ability to be in class. They want to leave school to be able to smoke. It has a really bad effect on their motivation. It's a physical fact that as a teenager you need more sleep. They don't want to get up anyway, so if they've been puffing it makes it that much harder for them.

This is one thing that middle class adult smokers who support liberalising drugs don't understand. As adults, it may not be affecting their brain chemistry doing it once a week. And they have jobs to go to. They may control it.

But these young kids don't. They smoke so much drugs because they see famous people on drugs. Prime example in the paper is Kate Moss. She's been condemned but then she's back in the newspapers being praised for a few weeks in a celebrity treatment clinic. Kids here interpret it to suit them.

Weed affects their brain chemistry while their brain is still growing and forming. These kids need all the motivation that they can get. The drugs rob them of it. So they move into crime when they become more addicted and need to smoke more. So they get excluded or sent to a pupil referral unit or are truanting more or less permanently.

The bad 20% create 80% of the problems on the estates. They sell drugs to make money and they rob to finance a habit.

The impact is huge. The kids who don't smoke – which is still most of them – they have to behave in a manner to help them deal with the kids who do. They adjust their attitudes to deal with the aggression of the kids who do smoke, who are involved in crime. If you can't stand up to them, you are going to have to run away from them – you are scared. The wearing of hoodies and stuff – part of it is to intimidate people but the other half, is to hide. If your face can't be seen they don't know who you are. So the less likely they will be to mess with you.

We have a local school called Cardinal Vaughan, the kids there are seen as posh and well to do which is not true. But it is a very high achieving school. To the kids from our end of the world,

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these kids are cannon-fodder. They rob them at will. These kids rob, steal and terrorise another set of children to look hard, and to fund their drug habit. If you get robbed enough when you are 13, you never get passed it as an adult, you'll forever be nervous.

### Sex

Cannabis use here is equal across girls and boys. Girls are more likely to smoke to begin with – they have a smoker's attitude. The problem is if they come across a group of boys who smoke weed they need to appear cool. Then drinking and smoking and hanging around with the undesirables leads them to adopting a different sexual code. They let themselves be shared by the boys. I have been told that if a girl fancies your friend, you'll make her sleep with you first to get to your friend. Young girls are starting to accept this. Easy access to pornography lowers their sexual acceptance too and children are quick to accept a lower threshold. Sex is no longer special. Although these girls are not walking the street as prostitutes they will hang around with certain people. They will give sexual favours because it means they get drugs and stuff like that.

Then there is a set of girls who get passed around a crowd of boys. The next step up from this is when you get girls starting to have a baby just to get real love. Once they have been housed with their baby and they have had longer to be alone, they can get labelled as "MILF": Mothers I'd Like to F..k.

Many of the teenagers are the children of the first generation of single mothers to be housed here. Many of the first single mums were housed here on these estates. The assumption became that it was alright for mothers to have babies on their own. So it is doubly like that for their daughters. But what you see now is the mother and daughter fighting for attention from the men.

Young girls mistake sex for affection. And the boys set the tone. They want sex. The boys' attitudes are ruthless: "Tell them that you love them and you'll get it." But all the girls – each and every one – has told me that they wished that they had waited before they lost their virginity.

## **BORN ON THE NORTH KENSINGTON ESTATES**

They hadn't because it is the boys who get to push what's cool. For the girls there's a status of having a boy and having sex. You become popular because you put out. This gives you access to the popular boys. So they just feel that it's something that they have to do. People say to the girls "you're a virgin" and "you're frigid" if they won't have sex. These are two words they don't want to be associated with. The intimacy from sex is overpowering for them and once you have taken a step and got into it there is no going back.

### **Baby mothers**

What happens next is when a girl's being disrespected. Her self-esteem goes down, she starts looking for love.

One of the big things about having a baby is that it gives the unconditional love these girls are looking for. On the estates here, the word "girlfriend" suggests respect. But many of these girls are called "baby mothers". That's a whole different thing. The term "baby mother" tends to be someone that you are not with; or you are with her, and with other women too. I always say to young girls: "don't ever be someone's baby mother". It means stuff. It means the level of respect they can get has a ceiling. How they are treated has got a ceiling.

I watch a lot of the single mothers round here. I see that they are struggling with the loneliness. The depression. The mental health problems. I know several cases – I am not a mental health expert – where I can see issues bubbling up and down.

## CHAPTER THREE

### WHY?

THE ESTATES THEMSELVES are part of the problem. There are a number of blocks that are particularly bad. They were built cheaply in the first place and are coming to the end of their life. They can house up to 600 or 700 people with just one common entrance. The walkways are covered in moss and mould. The lights never work. The lift never works. The security door never works. People are coming in and out all the time and hanging around. People who you can't identify. Coming home through them, you smell their smoke and drugs. Some of the elderly people will not come out of their flats. Even some of the young people are scared.

The blocks were badly designed in the first place. You dare not open the windows for fear of being burgled from the long walkways they open on to. So the flats suffer from condensation and rot. The kitchen fittings are dodgy. None have showers: this is costly when the money spent on electricity can make all the difference to people's finances here. The rubbish chutes are too small; so people throw rubbish out of their window. None of the blocks of flats are sound proofed so even if your neighbour is not trying to annoy you with music, they cannot help it. Their existence makes noise for you.

Some of the estate backs on to the railway line. The rat condition there is insurmountable: one of the best things that can happen to you on our estate is to be housed higher up: the rats haven't got there yet.

## WHY?

One of the estates which was built for only 1,100 people now houses 1,450 people. There are a lot of Moroccans, a lot of blacks. Everybody there is poor. Whenever we have a residents meeting, you hear of desperate issues from the overcrowding.

It leads to anti-social behaviour and it has an impact on how young people behave. I ask them, “what are you doing out? It’s three o’clock in the morning?” They say that’s because everybody’s in my house, there’s no peace, no quiet and no privacy. There is nowhere for them to do school work. There are few public amenities.

Most of the flats are built in such a way that nobody can sit around a table and have that kind of family connection. There is no room for a table. That’s where families have discussions, where parents give attitudes to their children. That has not gone on here. If you look at how we live here, we all eat our dinner off our laps. Families start to not eat together because there is no point. Then children just stay out.

So there are implications for the relationship between parents and their children as well as for their diet. If children come home and their parents are cooking them food, it changes their opinion about their parents. It establishes their dependency on them. A conversation goes on. It gives the parent authority. They can start to say to them, “you need to come in for dinner”. They can start setting rules and boundaries. In a situation where your mother and your father cook for you there is big symbolism in the fact that they provide for you, you talk to them, you get input from adults who are there for you because they are your parents. That kind of stuff doesn’t happen here.

### **Poor parents and the poverty of aspiration**

Many of the young people I deal with have never spent any meaningful time with their mother or their father. That defines them. Their parents didn’t do anything with them and they weren’t given anything by them. They no longer have a set of family rules that they run by.

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If you go to social services and check the records often there is nobody new there. What you see is people from the third, fourth and fifth generations of the same family. Because you are talking about someone's mother who was involved. And their mother was involved. There is a real culture of dependency amongst the people on these estates. There is no attempt to break it. The real reason it is so bad is because people expect to be housed and expect never to be kicked out.

It is getting worse with every generation. You see the real forming of subclasses in the black community that is mirrored in the white community. We've got people who were bad as children. Now they will be even worse as parents.

One of the most corrosive aspects is the low expectation of parents. Nothing happens if you don't look after your child. The law protects you. Society does not frown on you. Too much of our policy around young people is nothing to do with their parents. You need to get their parents involved. Some parents need compelling, some need supporting. But all parents need to be involved. And all parents need to have responsibility, need to feel the pain, if their teenagers are offending.

Parents need to be told that there are higher expectations of them.

In turn, they need to have higher expectations of their children. Compare what the well-off expect from their children with what the poor think they can achieve: it is so vastly different that it is unbelievable.

Parents say to me that their children have more respect for me than they do for them. I say it is because I have got more to say to them.

Many a parent here treats their child like a friend. They let them raise themselves. This gives the peer group more power. They don't have the full facts to communicate to their children to counter it. That's how children grow up too fast. But it's also the other way around: they are growing up too slowly. Kids here are very immature. Their maturity is stunted by the fact that they are

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allowed to grow up too quickly – they are put in adult situations, given adult levels of money, given adult responsibility before they have the emotional stability to deal with it.

If you talk to those families where children are behaving the worst, you find that the kids have no rules and no boundaries. The reason is that the parents have never had any point at which to set them out – to put them in place. It should start from birth. It goes wrong when they have no routine when their child is a baby; then it goes into the young years; and then into the teen years.

Some parents seem to think that they have a choice as to whether they look after their kids. But they have no choice. If they don't put in the time, they will be visiting their child in a prison, a mental asylum or a morgue.

I often say to younger parents of babies that if you don't get hold of your child now, forget it when he is 14. You won't be able to impose rules on him then if you can't now. The parents I speak to do not find parenting easy. They ask me how to do it. They lack information and practical support.

The ethos around parents has to be changed to: "You've had the children; now they are your responsibility, you have a societal and a community responsibility to look after that child. We will support you in that but if you don't look after them there will be come-back."

### **The promotion of single parenthood**

None of this is helped by the lack of married families – except among the Muslim community and some of the older whites. Marriage does not exist amongst the black community. It is why we have so many problems with the men.

People with our lives, in our circles, understand that you are better off if you are a single parent. It has reached the point where you get a lot of people who are not single parents but who present themselves in that manner because it makes financial sense. If anybody thinks that people like us don't sit around and have these discussions they are deluding themselves. We soon

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figure out which way it will make us the most money. And that's an example of how we are trapped by government policy. Because it discourages us from raising our children in nuclear families.

The nuclear family should be the norm. It might not be any more, but it is an ideal to aim for. But if you have to be estranged from your father in order to survive financially there's a problem.

If you talk to young people, they all support marriage. There are very few who say they wouldn't get married, especially among women. But they are used to not being given that commitment. Men need some of that power back. This is very important for black men – to be more than partially responsible for their family. If they don't have to fully support their family, it becomes a war between what you want as a man, and what your family needs as a unit. It's a constant conflict and you swing between the two.

I see lots of men. One week they are really up on their family, then the next week when they want to be out with the boys, making some money, then the family is secondary to what they want to do.

### **The example of celebrity**

The music our children listen to says you are not worth anything unless you have lots of money: your worth is directly related to the money you have in your pocket.

All this reinforces the need, especially for these children, to get stuff, to expect stuff and to have stuff. It sets the standard. It shows them the end product. It doesn't show them the work involved. They are in the thrall of celebrity. They see the Wayne Rooneys, the Beckhams and their huge financial success. They have false aspirations and then they don't concentrate on what's real, on what's possible for us.

So the kids feel they have to have money. And this leads to crime. You hear statements like "I'm going out there, you're out on a rob, yeah". Kids from 13 to 18, the great majority of whom are 14 or 15, go out there to rob – to make money. A lot of it is to do with

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respect – if you have that kind of money you have respect and you can buy all the cool stuff and you can show them you’ve got it.

People here are having status anxiety. They hear from the top celebrities that you will succeed, you deserve to succeed just by being you – instead of by hard graft. They don’t realise that for every one person who has made it there are thousands more who haven’t. These boys here – they’re in families where their dad hasn’t worked and certainly where the mother has never worked – and not for those nice middle class reasons, because, you know, she is doing charity work. You are talking boys who are 22, 23, and 24 who have never been anywhere near a job. They don’t have the academic skills and they don’t definitely don’t have the social skills to attack a job. They are not able to talk to people without just saying, “wha’d’you want, wha’d’you want?”. Not getting offended, not getting scared when somebody asks them a question, not seeing it as a challenge to their respect when they are told or asked to do something – this is all beyond them.

Yet all they talk about is money, money, money. How to raise it. Ways to spend it. It makes the kids very profit oriented. They will only do something if they can see there is a direct profit, for immediate gratification. That has ramifications for their long-term success. The notion that young people invent stuff is utter nonsense – they copy what they see – what the celebrities like Kate Moss, like Tommy Lee, make cool – because they need to be cool too. They do not understand the notion of self-investment, of studying for their future. It all ties up with their drug use. If I meet a boy who realises he has to study rather than one who is pleased because he has got a £10 note in his pocket from selling some drugs, I am onto a winner.

### **Music, films, games and violence**

Young people have sex and violence pushed down their necks. It is no surprise that they copy it. It is commercial exploitation. Our children are consuming far more sex and violence than ever before.

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If you look at the violence in films, the violence in computer games and the violence in music it all adds up. It is reinforcing. Listen to 50 Cent or listen to Snoop Dogg. They'll tell you, "never hesitate to put a nigger on his back". That means to shoot someone. Go to a 50 Cent concert and see 50,000 people sitting there listening to, "go shoot the mother f..ker nigger in the head" or "I think its bye bye bye in battyboy head" – that means get rid of that boy, lets get them and stuff. Eminem does exactly the same thing.

Initially, hip hop was the protest cry of black people. It came from for the civil rights movement. One of the reasons I am here now is because of a hip hop song. My job, the fact that I have a degree, the fact that I am not in prison is because of a hip hop song by Public Enemy, "She watches Channel Zero". "Fight the Powers" is a different example. All of those songs, they educated me about life and they then made me look deeper. That's why I studied sociology and the rest of it. But hip hop's values have gone from protest to belligerence.

Now it is about getting money by any means. All they talk about is "you're not the man" unless you've got a gun, a hundred million pounds or are willing to put someone on their back. It's all about you and you'll only get as far as what you do. Ragga music is the same. It's massively powerful with black boys. And it is growing with white boys. It has become the culture of all young people.

A new computer game is being advertised with the slogan "Forgiveness is for Fools". Now this seeps into young people's psyche and they feel, "well I can't forgive anyone because I am not a fool" – that's the kind of thing. A new game has come out with 50 Cent. The opening scene sets the mood: 50 Cent is wrestling with a mafia guy. The mafia guy falls over the edge of the building, he's hanging off, 50 Cents reaches over with his gun and shoots him in the face. So the kids talk about blowing people's heads off and about stabbing people – one of them says to me about a bit in a computer game, from Lord of the Rings – "you just get your sword and you just hack people up" and he said "I love that shit, Shaun". This is excites young people. It sure as hell makes them feel differently about guns.

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I stand there and all the boys talk about is violence, violence, violence. Everybody they love is somebody who's been violent. The film SCUM had become folklore among them. 'I'm the daddy' (they boast). The snooker ball in a sock – it's quite a useless weapon – but it just carries cachet because its in this film. For people to say that these films don't influence these boys is bullshit.

People in the media have the voice and the means to defend themselves. These big record companies say that kids don't listen to the music and go out and create, that nobody has carried out a killing because of Snoop Dogg or 50 Cent or that kids don't watch these films and go out and do what it says in the film. But what they cannot deny is that it sets the scene for them. The music, the records, set the background as to what is cool.

### **Magazines, television, pornography and sex**

If you look at all the magazines they read they are full of sex, television is full of sex, computer games are full of sex. One of the main things that drives teenage pregnancy is horny young men, young boys. Why are they horny? Because the media tells them about sex, they are told that anything goes and that they can have sex.

They see it on TV and they read it in *Just 17* and stuff. They are told how to have sex and how to give oral sex. Sex is much more possible for them. Whereas if you go to Spain they are like oh sex, that's for adults. But our lot has been taught to believe it is for them. All we do is talk about the voluntary guidelines given to magazines to control it. Yet what we have is a creeping liberalisation of the law with regard to the sexual content of TV and magazines.

Children have far too much access to porn. So why are we surprised that our teenage pregnancy rate far outstrips anyone else's? The big argument has been about censorship. Censorship for adults may be a bad thing. Censorship for young people isn't. If we can't separate the two, then we will have to censor everyone, because we're destroying these children's lives.

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The liberal intelligentsia, the people in our society who are doing well, their children and their lives are not affected by the mass media in the same way. They have other interests and other ambitions. They've got other things in their lives that will stop their teenage children partaking in risky sexual behaviour.

### **The pushers of drink, drugs, violence and sex**

Government policy challenges the public with taggings, with ASBOs, with Stop and Search. But it never stands up to big business – the breweries, the publishers, the record companies who push the violence and the sex. Everything is voluntary this and voluntary that. Businesses never really sign up to these things. When they do they simply don't carry out any of their promises.

Look at how easy it is for young people to get alcohol and cigarettes – our underage drinking problem is rife. Alcohol is not a problem invented by young people. It's invented by adults, by our brewery companies, by the fact that drink is so readily available. Kids buy drink, are given drink by adults, by their parents. We live in a culture where you can go to work, you can say to your boss "I got absolutely blind drunk yesterday" and he'd laugh and he'd say – "me too". All these town centre drinking streets, just lines of bars and stuff where people get blind drunk and into fights: this is driven by the breweries. Alcopops were designed specifically to appeal to children. So please don't act surprised when children get drunk to the eyeballs.

Nobody talks about the moral implications of smoking drugs or the responsibility of the music industry that promotes them. You can listen to any number of songs that say, "I smoke the best weed because I've got it going on ". It just says: "you are not cool unless you've got a lot of weed to be smoking. And it has to be the good stuff."

Our government needs to start dealing with the companies, television, videos, computers, books and the outlets. Parents give up because they are fighting such an uphill battle. Where do children buy their cigarettes from? The shop. Where do they get their

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alcohol from? The shop. Where do they get knives from? The shop. *Max Power*, a car magazine. It's full of naked girls. They actually have a competition each year to find out who's going to be the next most popular girl; then they'll have her in the magazine.

Words fail me for how evil and wicked MTV is. Their programmes show young people that you can only feel good about yourself if you own lots of stuff. That is a real driver of crime. Black boys especially will talk about all they need. We need this. We need that. We have to have this. You are not cool unless you have that.

Look at magazines like *FHM* and *NUTS*. They claim to be for older people. They are not. *Max Power* is mostly bought by boys who are not old enough to drive. They might have some interest in cars. But how many magazines would they sell if there were only cars in it?

And that's the point. We are willing to sell our young people off.

### **School**

Some things are beyond the government's control. They never started off the cult of personality for example. But the tragedy is that what was needed to counteract it has been robbed by a liberal view of school.

School was where young people could have learnt some moral fibre. This is where we are going wrong. Governments have got rid of schools that gave strong moral messages. There is nothing now to counteract the huge social pressure that comes from the cult of personality. All stigmas have been removed. We have a big group of people wallowing in the ether. We are in a state now where for young people anything goes and that is not right.

Schools are failing children because they do not give them any boundaries, and they impart little. Anything that has children sat in it for so long should be imparting some virtue to them. We are in a situation now that when a child is told off their parents come to school and abuse the teachers. Children in Jamaica and also Malaysian children love school. They see it as their way out, they

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see it as a good thing. The difference is that schools in those countries have what can only be described as hard moral guidelines. Another is the respect that teachers carry in the community is huge and underlined by the position that the government accords them.

Removing religion and what it is to be British from school has been a disaster. Ethics should be taught in school. Where else are young people going to learn ethics? Citizenship is not enough. It's trying not to be offensive to anybody. Tough. If they don't like it, tough. Tough, because that's how we've had bombers here. They've come here and have not been exposed to some of the good things about being British.

Put this with the failure of school to give children real skills. Some children are not going to be academically sharp, yet school is finding nothing for them to do. We live in a world of trade and real skills, vocational skills. Yet school is GCSEs or nothing. This creates a separation between the main society and the rest of us. This is stopping our children from succeeding because they feel that pressure, they go for a job and people start speaking and they literally cannot understand them. When I'm in a big group of kids and they are being a bit too boisterous, and if I want them to be quiet, I tell them to fill in a form. Or I ask them to phone someone. It traps them, that makes them scared because they have no ability to do this at all. That's why when anybody ordinary deals with them, they start acting all bolshy. All because school has not taught them. Why is it that the most successful schools in the country run on an ethos of competitive sport, rules, punishments and discipline and the least successful don't?

This estate is not conducive to our kids being socially educated. But the failure of the schools to impart the most basic of social skills is absolutely astonishing. It is to the point that the teenagers here cannot speak to people that they don't know, they only know how to speak their own slang. These kids do not have anywhere to go mentally. If they don't succeed in school they don't succeed. And school only offers an academic route. Nothing else.

## WHY?

### **Sex education**

Sex education in schools has failed hopelessly. People despair about our teenage pregnancy and the massive rise in sexually transmitted infection. The education that goes on in school around drugs and sex is ridiculous because it is just about the technicalities. I have been into schools with our local drugs education people and have just been bored to tears. They tell the kids that crack cocaine and amphetamines are stimulants. But kids don't want to know that. It has not begun to counteract the problems. It has not dealt with the pressures and realities for kids here. I spoke in a girl's school. I used the word abstinence, only three of 90 of them knew what it meant. What we need to do is appeal to them before they get to a point that they could be getting pregnant, before they get to sex. But the teachers just talk about fallopian tubes.

When I give my talk I ask them, "How would any of you like to become a crack ho?" They say, "what?" And I say, "nobody woke up one morning and decided that they wanted to take a load of crack. At any point that you think I am being outrageous you intervene and then we go for it".

When I talk to them about sex I don't talk to them about fallopian tubes and nine months of gestation. I talk to them about boys telling you they love you to get sex. I talk about the feeling that having sex with this boy is going to make you feel important to him. Wrong. I talk about NO. How to say no. How to be assertive. These are the relevant bits of information that they need because what's being taught to them is science. When they are given health talks it's not real. They just tell them where the local clinics are and what chlamydia is. But the boys have got this opinion that if a girl looks clean, and that generally means she's good looking, she appeals to them, it is less likely she'll have an infection. If a girl appeals to one that way, she'll appeal to all of them. She'll tend to have been around.

I say to the girls that boys you like – all the cheeky ones – who are quite clever and all the rest of it. They are probably the ones that have been around. If you have a boy who doesn't want to wear

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a condom, do you think you are the first girl he's been with that he hasn't worn a condom with? These are questions you need to ask them. I say to them it is about avoiding that passion-killing moment when you have to rip out a condom because it won't happen. In the heat of the moment, do you ask for a condom not to look cool? So what I say you need to do is, a) avoid the situation or b) have the condom talk way before you get into that situation, so that you can have that argument in a place not when you are just about to have sex. That's the kind of sex education they need. If they want to learn about fallopian tubes, babies, the gestation period – they can do it in science. That's biology.

Addressing young people's attitudes is the only way of changing their behaviour. It sounds obvious but it is not done. Sex education in school is just science – science is not what happens on the street, it is not what happens in bedrooms up and down the country. The fact that they feel they should be having sex should be addressed. Safe sex also – when you say to them here's condoms – you confirm that young people should have sex. We make it all right for them.

Young people do not invent their needs, they follow, they try desperately to be adults. We must stop treating them like they *will* have sex. We must not promote it. We need to make a wider distinction between adult behaviour, what is appropriate for them, and what's appropriate for young people.

We are far too lenient with them. We are saying yes, you are going to have sex here, we are going to help you do it. What we should be saying is “*NO!*” We should tell them not to.

Listen to the messages we give young people. If you have a young person who is having sex, and they know it is wrong, they will be more careful than if they feel like there are not entitled to it.

Handing out contraceptives makes sex more possible. People think that it is much better to give out contraceptives than to have an unwanted baby. But that sends a message and with young people that message is big. It says you are going to have sex and we'll support you in that.

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The parents should be told that contraception is being handed out and absolutely a parent must be told if an abortion is being arranged, because you are talking about the physical and mental health of your child. Hiding it from the parents deprives the parents of the chance to raise their children. You are depriving the parents of their responsibility and also the opportunity to exercise it. Most parents want to be involved in their child's goings on. They feel robbed of that. Because what you are saying to them is "we are better parents than you, we'll parent for you". It assumes that parents will be bad. It removes their ability to be of consequence to their child.

It emasculates the caring parents and it gives dependency to the uncaring ones. If you take that away from them they expect everything else to be done for them.

### **Youth justice and prison**

Juvenile Prison is failing for the same reasons. At the moment prison is a boon because it is nice and boring. It encourages young people to be lazy. When our young people talk about being bored, actually they are lazy. Then prison encourages them to come out and lie about the situation. It is disgrace that there is no compulsory programme of education and literacy tied into their sentencing. Young offenders need to be taught ethics while they are in prison, a sense of restorative justice. The cost of their crime to themselves and society and to their parents. Where you say to a young person, look at what you have done. There is a victim in this. Many young people are very surprised by that and even if you talk to older criminals they start talking to you about a victimless crime and they can afford it. They will rob banks and not realise that they have terrorised the staff, they will only think we've got money out of the corporation and they can afford it.

For a lot of young people, crime is an accepted norm when they go in, and still is when they come out.

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### **Multiculturalism**

Among the working class, unless you are one of those 'Queen and Country who support the football team' sort of British people, you are lost. You don't know what to do. You bring your children to school and they learn far more about Diwali than Christmas. I speak to the people who are from Brent and they've been having Muslim and Hindi days off. What it does is rob Britain of its community. Without our community we slip into a crime riddled cess pool.

There are a lot of really good things about Britain as a place and British people as a body. But by removing the religion that British people generally take to, by removing the ethics that generally go with it, we've allowed people to come to Britain and bring their culture, their country and any problems they might have, with them. Lots of people come to Britain and think they'll be rich. But then they find it's not so easy. Then they are resentful. They are alienated because they haven't been exposed to the good things in Britain – our ethics. That's why we've now got a nation of people who wouldn't do anything for the country. They wouldn't fight for their country. Why would they? The nation has done nothing for them as far as they are concerned.

They are not aware of the fact that they have been clothed, educated, housed.

But these are things that children should be taught straight up; and part of that ethic should be about the community that is Britain and what it is to be British. Within the black community it is not such a bad thing because we've shared a religion and in many cases a language. It's far easier for black people to integrate. How we arrived here is different. If you talk to old black people, they will say they have been invited here by the Queen. They absolutely do not consider themselves refugees or immigrants.

I can see the argument of taking religion out of the state, out of politics, but as a moral guideline – arguably our laws are Christian-based – well, they need to be maintained. Losing them has meant that people have come here and had very little respect

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for us. That lack of integration and that lack of saying to people: if you are going to come to England, this is what we expect. That is why the Muslim religion is so powerful among the Muslim people. I spoke to a Muslim I met abroad, and he said to me, “Oh yeah you come from that England where they have no God at all.”

It's like we are ashamed of where we have come from.

### **The damage of liberalism**

The more liberal we've been, the more the poor have suffered. Poor people don't need all this liberalism. They need direction.

All this over-caring liberalism is damaging. Saying “we understand your pain”. Well, you don't, you are certainly not living in that pain, you do not suffer the pain that individualism is causing to others as well as to themselves.

We live in a world now where people are very selfish – me, me, me. And where there isn't any come-back for people. But people need to understand that there is a come-back.

Everybody talks about my rights – but there is some point when your behaviour needs to be balanced by your duty to your community. We have no community because we don't train people in duty. So people shut their doors and retire and it is all about me, me, me. What's affecting *me*, rather than what's affecting *us*.

When the liberal classes have the view that “oh, we can all smoke a bit”, they do not realise how it generates crime for young people here who need to finance their habit. By *not* making drugs seem like a big deal, by decriminalising the drug, they are criminalising the kids – by putting them on the path to a criminal lifestyle. The liberal intelligence relax the rules for themselves, not for us. But it's easy for them. If things go wrong, they have a different coping mechanism to us.

This sanctioning of drugs pushes poor kids into bullying at school, into stealing the odd phone and other “lower level” crime,

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<sup>10</sup> Local Community Education youth projects only deal with 13 to 19 year olds.

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to get the money for drugs they use. Young people don't recognise this pattern until you point it out to them. It takes them quite a while to trace the route back to what they do with the money that made them want to steal the phone, handbag, or wallet. Raising money this way introduces them to criminality. Most children don't begin with the desire or the confidence to rob someone. But once they bully for items at school, and then outside of school, they are in the robbery zone. They gradually build up and their targets become more frequent and bigger until they rob adults. And being a member of a gang gives them extra power and extra confidence.

This liberal agenda hasn't benefited the working class. The working class look to rules. The rules are important to them. Take away the rules and they are left in limbo. So they form their own: the kind which are driven by pop economics. Then they get into crime – because it's more acceptable – it's more readily done. Middle class people, they won't even buy counterfeit DVDs, they won't even consider it – the first time I heard that I laughed hard. We do it all the time.

No amount of government analysis will understand the community as well as the people who are in it. No amount of government intervention will help it. It just won't happen. Because the actions of the "State" itself are implicated in this social failure: welfare dependency, a morally empty school system, a non-rehabilitative prison system, a culpable youth justice system, powerless social services, chronic housing conditions, an uncensored, permissive, exploitative opportunistic media and music industry which the government refuses to take on.

They all let people down.

### **The police are not the solution**

The police can't deal with the causes of the problem. To expect them to is one of the big myths in our world. Everyone talks about more policemen. Absolutely useless. Anybody who knows anything about criminals will realise that they are not concerned with the

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police, they never have been and they never will be. The only way to cut crime or anti-social behaviour is to change people's attitudes. You know if you put on policemen at a certain place, nothing will happen. When they leave, something happens. It's people's attitudes and situations that drive crime.

What police can't deal with and shouldn't be expected to deal with is your low-level crime, your graffiti, your abusive behaviour, anti-social behaviour. What it does is undermine them. They try to do it but they look silly to the people who perpetrate the crimes. It's like, hold on a minute, the police are trying to deal with me, they are failing dismally, so I'll move on to a higher type crime and I'll get away with that too. That is exactly the mindset.

I have sat on the train and listened to three young people discuss the stealing of a car in very cold terms. One of them says:

"Oh, I know how to get a car, let me do it."

"No, let me do it", says the second boy.

Then the girl says, "no, let me do it".

"Why?"

"Because I've got no criminal record yet".

"So?"

"If I get caught, I get cautioned. If you get caught, you get done".

"Can you drive?"

And she says, "not really, but you can show me".

"What we'll do, I'll drive, if there's trouble we'll just swap seats."

"Cool".

The chilling part was when the girl said "yet". And she was going to cop the blame because she realised that she could get away with it. That's the level that people don't understand: anti-social behaviour is cheeky. I won't get caught and if I get caught I'll get off because.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

THE ANSWER IS NOT more government initiatives. What is needed is projects that originate from within the community and from people who already work in the community. Here is one that has worked in North Kensington.

#### **A Health Project**

Four years ago we set up a health project here on the estates. It has been massively successful.

It was developed with the support of a consortia of other agencies – including a large drugs agency, a local Youth Project, the Health Information Programme and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

We set it up to address the drugs and education crisis among teenagers and young adults who were falling through a gap in statutory provision.<sup>10</sup> Once you are 19, there is nothing for you, yet your needs may be greater than a 16 year old.

When someone asks me, “what is a definition of a young person? Is it someone 13 to 19?” I say, “no way – because they carry that teenage feeling, that emotional level right up into their twenties.” And their problems are more intractable.

When I came into post I immediately realised that young people do not want to have anything to do with a service called DRUGS, they don't want to be in a drug project. They will not have it. The word drug is a label; young people have enough problems with labels. You are dealing with adults who have not admitted that they have a problem.

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That's why we devised a health project. The whole point was to give them healthy options about all of their life choices – school, the food they eat, the places they go, who they hang around with. We put that against the unhealthy stuff they shouldn't be doing. We try to link them into education and training. In the beginning that was quite small because we were dealing with lots of chaotic drug users and we were establishing ourselves in our street work.

Government projects, like the New Deal or Connexions, were just a “no-no” for the type of young people we were coming across.<sup>11</sup> Many were above their specified age target. Young men of 22, 23, or 24 with a drug problem, who have never have been anywhere near a job, who don't have academic skills and don't have social skills – the staff at Connexions were not able to have a conversation with them. How could they understand them? How could they deal with the lingo? And this sort of young person would not accept it. I speak the lingo. We began to be effective because we knew the people. We understood the local situation.

### **Our ethos**

We have an ethos of developing people. You can't stop people using drugs unless they are busy, unless they have got some type of tie to society. This is fundamental to our approach. So Tony Blair doesn't take drugs because it wouldn't help his job – he's got reasons *not* to take drugs. You need to give that to Joe Bloggs who lives here on Ladbroke Grove. You need to say to him, “look, you can't get high because you need to be at work”. You need to link these things to his esteem. That's what we try to do.

And we try to bring that feeling into our youth work. Yes, we will support you and we are here for you – but when you are wrong, you are wrong and you will be told so.

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<sup>11</sup> Connexions is national scheme that was set up by the Government in 1999. It is intended to help young people into training and work, and has cost over £500 million. It is not regarded as a success: the cost of each job found for a NEET – someone “Not currently engaged in Employment, Education or Training” – has been estimated at over £11,000 per person.

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Our second major influence was Barran Hulme. He ran a Detached Youth Project over 10 years ago. Detached projects are now considered the cutting edge of youth work. The idea is that you go around the street and find young people (as opposed to generic youth work where you base yourself in youth clubs). You have no building in particular. You set up projects outside of the office. You meet young people in their environment. It makes it easier to connect with them, specially the hard to reach. You get to know stuff which working in a youth club you just wouldn't have done. Clubs are more expensive; you tend to become the defender of the building rather than the worker with youth. And you can't pick your youth club up and take it to another estate.

The big benefit is that I've been able to work across several estates. Where we used to have a gang problem, I've been able to help because I am not associated with one estate. In the minds of the kids I work with, I am *their* youth worker. You then gradually introduce them to the fact that you work with other kids as well – because they are territorial.

It took me at least 18 months before I got a real handle on it here. This is why I say that national level initiatives are no good. What passes as detached work here does not pass as detached work in Liverpool or Portsmouth. You have different geographies and different histories. What's cool and acceptable amongst your kids is different for theirs. This all makes for very, very different situations.

### **“Are you still there there?”**

Our continuity is critical – we're here all the time, we can adapt to the times, we are seen as consistent with the young people. I now have long term connections to people's families. People phone me and say, “Shaun, are you still here? Are you still there there?”. That's a Jamaican term. I say, 'yeah' and they say, “boy you are always here, how long have you been here?” It gives us a weight in the community and as a set of workers we are like elders in the community. Even the police have more respect for us because

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we've been here for a time. I have been here longer than the four top policemen. They have asked me about the history of the area.

To be continually setting up is a disaster. Funding which is year on year is a massive problem. Luckily for me the consortia really fought for the money to fund this project for the long term. Your effectiveness doesn't begin until you get to the people who are hard to reach. You can have a whole year of not really achieving anything, then all of a sudden, it explodes.

The fact that I live here on the estate like everyone else gives me more weight too. As a local I can go into the places which people from outside consider dangerous. When I sit in meetings I have a number of caps on. I am a resident so I can talk from their point of view, I can tell you exactly how we feel about the big group of kids on our estate. I'm a youth worker so I can talk from their point of view. Also when I go and ask other residents there's no hiding of the truth because I am one of them, in that sense we are from the same family, we speak freely. It pays dividends. It doesn't have to be that way but it more than helps.

We are seen as specialists in people who are hard to reach. Drugs and crime are our theme. But latterly it's also about anti-social behaviour, teenage pregnancy and public health as well. With my connections to so many people's children, uncles, sisters and mothers I can get to deal with older siblings. It's very hard to introduce yourself to established criminal adults, they just don't want to know, for obvious reasons, but when you are involved with their younger brother who will be your friend just to go go-karting – it makes your entrance far easier.

The project's major result to the community is crime reduction and drug use reduction. A lot of people on our programme reduce their use and a great deal stop all together and we have been dealing with crack addicts at the extreme end of the drug culture, who were in horrific situations, into some evil stuff and not particularly trusting. In the last eight to ten months we have also been very successful in finding young people work.

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### **Bringing back heavy crack users**

The three outcomes for crack are usually madness, prison or death. But some people make it back. Since we have been running we have brought back about 40 deep heavy crack users, and this is without a crack day project. The crack day project clients tend to be older. They deal with people who turn up to an appointment. I get mine before that stage.

*Case study: Back From The Abyss – Joe the Crackhead*

*Ordinarily Joe wouldn't have spoken to me. But I was with someone he knew. I was on the street so not someone he thought might be a mug, dangerous or a grass.*

*I always say to people if I can do anything for you let me know – call me if you need me so consequently I become part of their support network. They tell it to other people – they say, “This is Shaun, you know Shaun I was telling you about, he's the brother who brings us to the gym”. So straight away the fellow has got a reason to say hi and we converse. That's important. We swap facial recognition. That's the first time he appeared in my lexicon of people, but then after that I'm constantly looking for him. Now when I see him I'm a face in the area, I wave at him.*

*There are questions I ask. I say to someone “what's his deal?” and the guy will say “oh nothing nothing”. Straight away I know he's in some drama because if he's “just one of the mans” it'd be different. If he said “ah he's at work”, obviously that is a very different thing. Nothing. Nothing means he's one of us – he's around with us. There's a problem there.*

*When I first met Joe he looked presentable in our manner of presentable. About six foot, fairly lean, probably 22 at the time. Like any person of that age, clean clothes, smelling presentable. And his hair was groomed back, pre-parted, patterned: a massive give-away because for a black man to keep his hair groomed is quite an effort. So you are dealing with a man who is well up on his appearance. Weekly trips to the barbers – it's a major hassle.*

*Over four or five months I saw him decline. A couple of weeks later the hair's longer, uncared for; I'm seeing a beard now, it's a shifty hello now. If I approach him on the street now, I have to corner him otherwise he will*

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*avoid me. Some days you get a big hello when he's high and he's lucid and he's not looking for money – he's probably used an hour, a day ago, he's feeling level. So these are days you approach him. I was on the way to the gym, I saw Joe and I said come in the gym with me, so he came in the gym with me and we sat and we spoke. He didn't train. He stayed for only 20 minutes. But the fact that he changed direction to come with me means we are in. It means that I can ask questions.*

*Joe was known to social workers as he was growing up. But not heavily. He wasn't one of social work's top ten. But as an adult he'd slipped. He was a 50-50 case – you wouldn't look at his background and say yes, definitely he'll be involved. He'd had a police history – he'd been in a juvenile prison – not for drugs more for fighting, respect thing. He was known to be someone who could and would fight. He was big. I think he did a burglary as well.*

*But then he slipped off; he started getting criminal cases and – this is the difference being a community project than being something like Connexions – I could ask questions. If somebody working in Connexions asked the questions I asked, they'd get jumped, slapped or ignored. So I'm like, "who you roll with?" Immediately they tell you who he rolls with, I know who he's buying from, I know how much he uses. And I say to people "so where's Joe?" They tell you. There's a lot inferred. If you say, "Where's he been?" "Man got shift<sup>12</sup> about three days ago, for a little minor, Shaun, know what I mean, took their phone". Something like that and I know the level of crime Joe's doing.*

*One of the real indicators is when the level of crime becomes a little bit more petty, more hand to mouth – that's real chaotic use. When you are a lucid drug user you do more serious crime and get away with it unless it's violent crime. Joe was doing more and more little crimes just to keep going – opportunity crimes, mugging, mobile phones – taking the chance. But then he'd come to the gym and that's a sign he's trying to fight it. The whole police attention was beginning to annoy him.*

*On our project we ring you up and use the carrot. We say we'll feed you if you come to the gym. Joe had been having weekends where he'd been using all weekend with no food. He'd become emaciated. So I'd buy him*

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<sup>12</sup> "Shift" is slang for being arrested

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*coffee and we'd talk. And then I said to him, let's try to cut down. We're not talking about stopping, it's not likely; it's cutting down to give him more moments of clarity. He'd come to the gym and it wasn't really about being at the gym but somewhere where we were, that he felt safe; with people he knew. You can't come there and have any beef – beef means trouble between you and another person. The biggest thing to him was that he could have a bath, he could have a shower. We'd talk in the sauna – because he was of the belief that he was sweating the crack out which helped him deal with the whole thing .*

*From there we started having serious talks about his health and how we were going to cut down. I said you can join, you can be one of my boys proper, just me and you. Because there was a real need around privacy because he was quite ashamed internally to be a crack addict you know. You don't like other people knowing, you know they know but you don't like to discuss it.*

*He wouldn't have presented to a statutory project. No way. He told me that. I tried to bring him to one because he was serious enough for me to consider too much to deal with. No way. He wouldn't do it. It's the fact that he saw it as a government service.*

*We developed a care plan. I told his friend to watch him. I told Joe he's going to have to leave his girl friend. These are the kind of suggestions we can make that officials wouldn't – probably it's just not in their culture. Like if your girlfriend uses and you want to stop – you've got to separate. Even if she tries to stop as well, you cannot do it together. They had a baby which was in the care of her mother. The girlfriend had never tried to keep the baby, no way. When he came away from her, she actually went into treatment as well. I think it was a moment of clarity for her. I suggested that he needed to leave the area. I spoke to his mum. She wouldn't have him back but her sister would. The important thing about that was that she lived just far enough away to keep him out of the sight of his compadres as it were. Because people will not let you get clean; they're in it so they will drag you right back in. They will not let you recover. He was just far enough away from them to survive as it were but close enough to come and see us. It was quite a big day out to walk down to us.*

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*We started having official key work sessions. I would tell him to meet me in the café on Tuesday afternoon. On the times he didn't turn up, he'd concoct an excuse. Most of them were rubbish but the point was he felt that he needed to. For a long time I was kind of supporting him in his use. It meant that he could reduce his use and he could talk about crime. I could put to him, "you need to look at what you are doing to other people". There were discussions. I said, "What if I robbed your mum?" There was a real non-realisation with him that petty crime does hurt others. I said, "every time you rob someone imagine it's me robbing your mum...". He really came down. Then his mum said you should come and see your child. That was a little click for him – he needed to see his child. He said to his girlfriend "I'm going to see the child". Then she said, "we've both got to stop using".*

*We talked a lot about how to repair relationships. I wrote a letter to his girlfriend which he dictated. She was quite surprised. She wrote back. He spoke to his mum. I spoke to his mum. I spoke to two of his friends, one of whom was a dealer. I said, "You are his friend before all this matter started, so just leave it be". The dealer just stepped off. That was one of the real defining points for him. He was going three, nearly four, months without a lapse and stuff. He slowed right down but couldn't quite stop. As the mediation went on with his girlfriend, they almost began to enjoy it. I think it was very cathartic for them. And then she said to him, "you know I feel like one day I won't use crack at all". And he wrote back and said, "yeah me too". That was another real personal thing for him.*

*We began to talk about what it is to be a hard man. I say what's hard is to feed your family every day. That is how I introduce the concept of a big man. A big man is someone who looks after his family, not a commonly held view in our world, where "looking after yours" is beating up people who interfere with you. Looking after yours should be feeding them, educating them. I say you need to educate yourself if you are going to educate your child. You are living with your aunt now. How much respect does she have for you? Because he had no money, no income, he's on benefits. Then he started to clean and wash and cook so it was his way of contributing. She really appreciated that because she's a reasonably old woman – it meant she could like him again.*

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*He was an angry man, into confrontation. He had to learn a different way, to avoid confrontation and when it pops up. He had to see the signs. He said to his girlfriend – a girl who he'd punched in the head and held a knife to her and all sorts – he said to her, "please, let's not argue". A couple of times the agreement was went back on but generally it worked out. He said the best thing was, he hadn't had a fight. So she'd go and collect the baby and have it and then he would. They would just try not to meet up. One day all three of us happened upon the mother's house in the area. She said, "let me have the baby, I need to go and talk to my mum". And he said "you go". It was civil which was a big change. Latterly to that, his mum has had him back and his brother has accepted it. That's when he started talking about the job club. It was obvious that he needed something to do because he was talking about boredom a lot. I encouraged him to learn to play chess and read.*

*I had to warn him how long it was going to take to find a job. It got frustrating for him a couple of times and I worried that it would make him use. Actually it didn't. Four months in our job club and nothing happened for him. We'd done all the fake interviews and made him dress up. His reading and writing was not too bad – he was literate. I sent him on a security course. Luckily for him his criminal offences were spent and could ride because he did get done for drugs. The person who employed him was doing him and me a favour. He was really good on the course and that gave him such confidence. The man said to him, "look, you've been really good here". Because of his chequered past and his involvement with criminals, he knew a lot about the law. They had a question and answer thing about the law which he could do. And it made him feel good. I don't think he'd ever been in a situation where he'd been like the clever one as it were. And the guy said, "I'll give you a job here. I would like you to help me teach people the security course". That was it, because he came back to me and said, "I am an educator" and we had a big laugh about it.*

*He's getting paid. From that the guy told him to do school. He did that and from that another guy gave him a job and since then he hasn't looked back.*

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This individual is the top end of our work. Over the last four years, we have helped at least ten a year – heavy to medium crack

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users like him – to get straight since we began. We dealt with what triggered their criminal output. We also dealt with their relationship breakdowns. Drugs ruin people’s ability to link with other people, to connect. The ramifications for their mental health are huge. Once we showed we could help with this stuff, we got a rush of people who involved us in their whole friendship group. All this comes from the fact that we are not seen as a statutory service.

### **The Gym**

Our main continuity since we set up is our gym club. We have set times to take our clients at a local gym. For four years it has never stopped. We took it over from a local Detached Youth Project and we extended our age group up to 25 years old. People who I have dealt with years ago now say to me – “what, you guys are still in the gym?” And I say yes.

The tough part is keeping the gym manager happy with the sort of characters we bring in who she might not like the look of. There are always two of us there, she insists on us having two members of staff there. But we make it work because we make it part of our social education of people who wouldn’t normally come into a gym. Members of the gym project receive an induction where we explain informally what we hope to achieve with them. Membership for any individual is only three months, pending a review. Everything is designed to make people move forward. They learn to deal with members of the public, with professional sounding ordinary people. One of the problems of being from a “bad area” is that you only ever deal with people of your own kind – you can’t move on.

The gym club has attracted people who smoke crack and are trying to get away from it. The first thing they think, “oh my god I have lost weight – look at the condition I’m in”. Also boys like to pump iron. In there is where we start to have relationships and where people really begin to trust you and you can ask questions and I can suggest to them that I write them a care plan to help

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them cut down. Then with some of the boys who turn up I can say why aren't you at school, it's three o'clock. We have always addressed health issues but now we use the gym to steer people in the direction of work or training to help with their recovery.

The gym is oversubscribed, so we have added an additional session to our programme. We run this in the evening to attract a different crowd.

### **The Job Club**

Our Job Club is based on the fact we give people back their respect. For example we gave boys on one estate, where we'd been dealing with a difficult situation, CBT licences,<sup>13</sup> a little moped licence, so they could do pizza deliveries. It was about decriminalising what they were doing and giving them a link to the wider society. I found it transformed the young people involved. It was the first time they had anything in the way of a qualification. For some kids, it was the first thing they'd actually owned. Then the residents association from another estate called me and asked me to do it for them. The people appreciated it and it really worked.

Then we ran a project with them to help the kids build and repair their mopeds. Someone very civic minded who runs a mechanic garage who saw this took on two or three of the young people from that project. He trained them to be mechanics. We were able to sponsor them to go on to college. He had them half the week and the college had them for the other half. He's done this for three or four very difficult young boys. He has taught them stuff that is economically useful to them. Two of them work in a tyre shop and another two of them are welders. These were the kind of kids that school wasn't an issue for them. They would not attend. Since then he has taken on several more.

Any client from our wider youth/drugs action programmes can come to us to get help with finding work. The job club is often

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<sup>13</sup> Certificate of Bike Training.

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part of their care programme. Few have any formal qualifications. Many of them have a criminal record. Our role is to help them write a CV or fill in application forms. We also help them with the use of the phone, the internet, newspapers – how to find out what jobs they can seek. We give them pep talks about the realities, about not giving up when they don't get results. We encourage as many as we can to enter training – vocational training courses or education entry. We will support them all the way through their course, with the cost of books, other study materials, access to a computer, sometimes with the cost of the course itself. We also support them from lapsing into their drug use.

Over the past six months we have been running an 'ensured job scheme' in conjunction with FPH Electrical and Civil Engineering, a firm which employs one of our ex clients who is now a site foreman. He approached us to work in partnership with them as they had a shortage of qualified workers and we had the manpower. A plan was drawn up with the firm to put 13 of our more prolific offenders through the PTS (Personal Track Safety) training and then into employment with them. The contract with the participants was attendance of our Job Club for three months to ensure they were clear of drug use and prepared for work. The first stage of the training involved a medical with a drugs test. The second stage is the safety training. If they pass that they are guaranteed a job. The project cost £3,700. For that, we rehabilitated some of our most problematic offenders, whose anti-social behaviour had been impacting on the wider community. And we reduced local unemployment. And we reduced the level of economically driven crime. Eleven of the original thirteen are now in full-time employment. It was money well spent.

*Case Study: making contact with Paul*

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*It was at our football competition. Paul saw the big group of kids and he just came and watched. I make a point of walking up and down and then he saw me. He saw me talking to people. Every now and then I'd catch his eye and I'd do the little nod. One day we were involved with a group of boys and one of them was a good friend of his. So I said to this boy, who'd been smoking a lot of crack, "if any of your mates need help you should bring them here". So one day I saw them both on the street and he said, "look this is my friend". They never say to you they are crack dealers. And I said come to the gym. Because that's a good place to make the first contact. They came to the gym and we got to know each other. It got to the point we're saying "hi" on the street and my asking "what's happening?" I always ask them what they're up to. They know I'm going to ask them that and then they have to think about it. It puts the process in gear. And they are like "yeah - I 'm up to nothing". They don't actually like to say that to me. So I say, "Come you and me do something" and then we go and sit in a café and I buy them a sandwich and I keep buying them sandwiches and then they realise they can speak to me. Then they start talking, I inquire: "What man's been in jail?". "Yeah boy it was tough in jail", and we talk about jails and stuff and I say come to gym and we'll work out.*

*The gym is where you talk to them about their health because crack and heroin in particular and weed over a longer period have massive health ramifications. That's where they normally engage with you around their health and that's when you can say, "how much do you smoke? What else are you taking?"*

*Then you get to some pivotal point and either they'll admit to you that they need help, or they let you tell them they need help, or they ask, "can you get me a job?" The important thing for them is whether you can get them a job. In one of the early conversations I have, I normally say, "you should ease up the puffing, you're spending all your money on it, its smashing you up. That's why you can't get up in the morning. You're on the four o'clock lifestyle. You sleep till 4pm, you smoke and stay awake till 4am and then you get out of bed at 4 o'clock the next afternoon. That's why you can't do anything 'cos when you get up it's all over - everyone else is going home then."*

*Well they are the conversations. It takes a bit of time because they are very suspicious. They've had lots of time in jail and been up to some fairly*

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*dubious behaviours as it were. But they begin to see that you are right and what you start to do is to give them a bit of responsibility. He became a regular in the gym. He was really enjoying it and that's when I started saying to him, "you know what, yeah, you run this session, just sit in the corner and you just talk to these boys". It gives them the feel of drug-dealing without the drug-dealing. Everybody knows them and they know the young boys. They come up to them and say, "shit – you coming to the gym";' and all that and they get to speak to people. Again it's a community connection, important because people need to be loved and feel important. That's our peer group thing. Then they start to say to the young boys. "Listen ease up, you can't do that here".*

*Because I have so many trained trusted volunteers I can afford to bring one of them on a trip and tell him that he's a volunteer. He isn't but that's not the point. The point is he feels the responsibility and I am able to say to him, "don't talk to them like that" or "how do expect them to look up to you?" I tell him you can't deal with people through fear. If something happens they won't tell you. I say, "do you fear me? Why do you tell me stuff?" And again they see because their whole life has been one way and I'm trying to show them another. And then they start to take responsibility for themselves. We have big talks about what it is to be a man and that a man is not the MTV version with a big car and girls and stuff.*

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### **The Football Club**

Our football club has 60 members and is growing. It has five coaches, all local men from the area. It is a project in its own right. It acts as a feeder to our drug work.

I needed an activity people could be involved in, and also an activity I could use to carry across the ideas that the project wants to deliver for young people. So I happened upon football because people were always asking me to help them with their football teams and they were talking about the large amount of people who they get involved; and how it always breaks down because they can't fund it.

One guy in particular was running a football team that he had been paying for himself, on his own. The big issue was pitches and

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travelling to them. Then when you got there, you were the poor kids. You never had kit. This guy approached me and I said I could try to fund you if he would run it my way, and he was more than happy. My way involved: one, they have to attend training to play, to give them ownership of the club and to give them responsibility; and two, they must be responsible for their behaviour both on the pitch and on training pitches, which means no swearing, no smoking, no rolling up, no selling at the pitch. They come, they train, they can talk about whatever they want. But there has to be a better atmosphere, a positive atmosphere.

I told him you must be a qualified coach so no one can approach you and say you don't know what you are doing. We ran him through Football Association Training. He absolutely loved it. Plus he was good at it and he knew what he was doing. It gave many of his feelings for football some form. He told me he would need kit so they wouldn't go to matches dressed scruffy, like they are poor with its negative impact on how the boys feel about themselves and how they behave. He would need help with transport so we can travel as a team.

I said what I would need. The team must become a club. The elder boys in the team must be responsible for the younger boys. The team must talk about responsibility for other members in it.

I would enforce simple rules which also would facilitate the teams' feeling of ownership of their club. Rule one: all team members have to be responsible for themselves. If they got arrested, they could not play. They could only attend training. If they got charged they have to come and see one of us before they could attend training or play. If they are not attending school we want to know why. If you can't go to school you can't play football – that's our rule. Rule two: if you are unemployed, you must talk to the coach or us about your next forward step, whether that be education, whether that be training. Rule three: they have to pay their own fines for fouling on the pitch, bad language to referees and stuff. It has worked. Since we started we have had only five

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finances and that is out of 60 people who play regularly and that's because they feel they own the club.

It is more than football. It is about respect, self-respect and trust. That is our master plan. But they don't know that. It is open to everyone

We administer the whole operation – find and book the pitches and co-ordinate the Sunday league matches. We arrange the weekly training sessions, one in the gym, one session on the pitch. We get all the consent forms – book the mini-buses and we put all our coaches through training. We have gone through all the regulatory hoops. The club couldn't run on its own without this support. They need an organisation like us to do this. We are the mediator and fixer. That's how good quality voluntary organisations are vital to community development. There are things that we do that statutory organisations couldn't do because we understand the local people on the one hand and the system on the other.

We bring it together, we are the middle man, we knit those two things together. As competent as the coaches are, they could never have accessed the Football Foundation which funds the club. And the FF has been exemplary: they have not just funded the football, the kit, the goalposts, the transport costs. They have allowed us to use the bulk of this money to send kids through further education and PE training. On another level, they have allowed us to use the money to buy text books or software for college courses we have got them onto. And this has helped our way of using the football to spread our wider work and messages. This was their deliberate policy – they did not expect us to produce another Beckham but for us to run a community project through the medium of football. They were understanding and helpful from the off. The reason we have continuity in our football work is largely because of their continued funding and their understanding.

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### Having Rules

The liberal, namby pamby approach that they're always right, you mustn't offend anybody, they are only learning, is nonsense. If they don't learn the full picture, if they only remember only what suits them, they don't progress. We make a point of telling them the truth and we find that they grow from it.

And we live by the rules we give. I live in this area and I'm known to many people here. I make a point of not being involved in anything dodgy. If the kids bring me anything to buy I tell them I can't because I am pretty sure they have stolen it. Even if they haven't, I say I can't take the risk. We talk about why I think they've done it. And I say to them I try to live the way I teach you. I cannot tell you not to be a criminal, then help you with the proceeds and buy things from you. They say fair enough. Young people understand more than people give them credit for. This is just where school has failed. Young people want boundaries. School has been emasculated so it can't give those boundaries which need to be large and obvious.

I am notorious for sticking to my guns. I tell them the deal. This is the deal. I am the boss. This is not a democracy. I am in charge for good reasons because this is my job. I am a professional. I have been trained. I know what I am doing. You are here to have fun but if I say enough, that's it. Your duty as an adult and as a wider society is to say to people "some things are wrong. You mightn't like it but it's a fact. Even if it isn't wrong for you, it is wrong for us as a group".

We debate everything. I'll make my decisions at the time and that's the law. But I am quite open to being challenged. Often times they've challenged me and they've been right. Where I get the compliance from is because when I'm wrong I'll admit it. We had this thing about swearing, like one of them really annoyed me and I swore. "Hold on a minute, how comes you're allowed to swear and we're not?" And they are right. I said "you are completely right. What shall we do about it?" Then they make you pay. I buy them Kentucky or something to atone for my

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wickedness. I try to get over to them what's good for you is good for me. That's how we go.

We don't give them anything . We make them work for it. Any trip I bring them on – luckily we are established so I can give the carrot first and use the stick later – that's one of our tactics. I give them stuff but I let them know they owe me – these are the words I use. “You owe me”. “You sat here and ate McDonald's with me. You owe me.” “You've been go-karting with me. You owe me”. Then latterly they'll say, “how am I paying you back?” I say by attending school, by coming to our information classes about sexual health, about drug use, about personal development and personal safety, by coming to that course, then you'll be paying me back and we'll be even. They are quite happy to be involved because it gives them some respect.

The big thing about young people is not being responsible for their actions. Everything is someone else's fault. I've had kids I've dealt with who said they *had* to steal a laptop. It was on a back seat of a car. No, you did not have to steal it. From there all things spring. We are not scared to tell them when they are wrong. I am constantly telling mine, when they get arrested, don't give me that nonsense that it is police's fault. No its not. You are a criminal, you have been performing criminal acts. Don't come and tell me that they made you use.

We now have people who've gone through our system, recovered from use, stabilised their life and then have wanted to help. That gives us two things. It gives us community cohesion because a lot of people say this is our place for people who live here. And it gives our clients somewhere to go, something to move onto – helping other people.

### **Myth-busting**

Hollywood furnishes the facts for our young people much more than reality does. It is one of our aims to give out information not with leaflets but by word of mouth. Leaflets don't answer questions. We can and we bust all the myths around sexual health

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around drugs, around prison. Young men come out of prison and tell other young men how great it was. We counter that.

Former local luminaries in the criminal world, the 20 to 25 year olds that our 13 or 14 year olds want to be, help us myth-bust. They are quite happy to do peer education for us. We've helped them deal with their habit and get back into employment. It is their way of giving back. One of them once said to me, "it's very therapeutic. I spoke to those boys." In fact he didn't speak to them, he told them off. "When I went away and thought about what I said I just felt even more right. I wish someone had said that to me when I was 13 or 15, before I started." He has had quite a journey like many of our young people. He's had the single parent family, the no school, the many violent convictions. Trapped in a criminal lifestyle, he couldn't get a job. He was one of the people that locally was just feared.

### **Working with the Police**

Because we reach out into the community we joined the PCCG (the Police Community Consultative Group) to make sure we could give young people's issues to the police and so that we could give the police's issues to young people.

The police around here, the likes of Inspector Dave Evans, Inspector Tim Hardy, Dominic Clout, he's the actual top cop for the whole borough, and Mike Wise are very progressive as police. They haven't been the "lock em up and throw away the keys" sort. They had things that they did not understand about young people. We had talks with them about what constitutes a drug dealer. That their definition of one as being if you give drugs to someone you are dealer isn't how it is seen on the street. We had long conversations about who it is they should be concentrating on. They had conversations with me about what the law is, about stop and search and how and when they give an ASBO.

The police gain from our work. They know that we help people recover, we help people to stop offending. And the police know when not to ask; they make a point of not asking me any

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questions if it might put me in a difficult position or stop me from helping my clients. That is an advantage of being a local initiative.

Our local beat officers are superb. We have worked in conjunction with the police to look at particular local issues that were making everyone feel unsafe.

Our local police are concerned about the growing use of knives so we are currently working on a joint project with the police community safety team to counter it. We are rehearsing a play with some typical boys from the Youth Offending Team's caseload (who we also work in conjunction with). We have with the help of a professional acting teacher been building their confidence to put on this play to be shown in schools around the borough to raise awareness about the perils of knife-carrying. It's all part of a wider campaign the police are running in the borough. We are concentrating on the young people end. The police understand that the kids will be infinitely more cool than they are in getting this message across. They're helping us sponsor it, they are giving us all the technical information. We debated what message we wanted to get across and came up with something that we were very happy with. It's borough wide. There's a poster campaign designed by the kids – there are these bins for people to surrender their knives. For the young people, who with their criminal records are amongst the most difficult to help, it has been a turning point in the development of their self respect and ability to co-operate and do something positive.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A DIFFERENT VISION

THE MORE LIBERAL WE'VE BEEN, the more our communities have suffered. This liberalism is destroying our young people. I hate to think how with their levels of violence they will be as parents.

These are the rules for a better society we have to think about now to stop this happening:

1. We need clear expectations of parents, what they must be responsible for, and what the state can do to help empower them but what the state must not do if parents are to have authority.
2. We need a vision for our communities, a vision of what the people in them can do for themselves, of how they can be funded and supported, and of what the state can and cannot do to help.
3. We need a commitment on protecting young people from commercial exploitation, which challenges celebrity culture, the "coolness" of drugs and money, ends the promotion of pornography and alcohol to the young, and ends the music industry's promotion of violence.
4. We need a vision of a society in which people of all classes recognise that their actions have consequences, a vision of a society which allows families take responsibility for themselves.

We, in our no man's land, haven't moved on. The rest of society has moved on greatly. But we haven't joined in. We need someone to dig their heel in, to tell the chattering classes they are wrong and to say to people your lifestyles are wrong. If you don't like it, tough.



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Shaun's work is supported in part by voluntary donations. To make a contribution, please send a cheque made payable to the Shaun Bailey's Youth Fund, c/o The Centre for Policy Studies, 57 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3QL with a covering note mentioning this pamphlet.



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