

Exclusion to Empowerment: Ending youth violence at every stage

BCBN's 6th Gala event is in support of disrupting the cycle of violence and crime for young people, helping young Londoners to fulfil their true potential.

Youth violence in London is on the rise. Tragically, in 2017, 46 young people under the age of 25 were fatally stabbed in London; 20 were under the age of 18. So far this year seven young men under the age of 20 have been murdered in the city (MPS, Feb 2018). While every death is one too many, the skill and dedication of paramedics, doctors and surgeons save the lives of many more young people who become involved in serious youth violence. In 2016, 1,844 Londoners under 25 were injured by a knife (Mayor's Policing and Crime Plan, 2017-20), and 4,600 suffered other violent injuries (MPS & MOPAC, Jul 2017).

The reasons for a young person becoming involved in violence or violent crime are complex and diverse. Experiencing adversity in childhood – such as poverty, physical, mental or sexual abuse, violence in the family home or homelessness – increases the risk of exclusion from education, disengagement from society, and becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. And violence spreads through communities like a disease. Exposure to violence in adolescence also leads to increased likelihood of being further involved either as victim or perpetrator (“Predictors of Youth Violence” Hawkins JD et al, Apr 2000).

Khulisa, StreetDoctors and Redthread are working together, in partnership with BCBN, to interrupt the cycle of violence at every stage. Our projects support young people at three high risk transition points in their lives and provide holistic support to divert young people towards a positive future. Together, we support young people by equipping them with the knowledge and emotional resilience to make more positive decisions, helping them to lead safe, happy and fulfilling lives, free from violence and crime.

In schools

Young people experiencing multiple and complex forms of disadvantage often struggle to attend school or engage fully in education, and may be excluded from school as a direct result of their violent or disruptive behaviour. School exclusions in the UK schools have increased by more than 40% over the last 3 years [IPPR, November 2017] and the most common reason for exclusion was reported to be “persistently disruptive behaviour” (Department for Education, 2015-16) For young people struggling with complexities in their lives, school exclusion will often exacerbate their problems, and will serve to further entrench their disengagement and sense of isolation. Exclusion from school often marks the beginning of a negative spiral for a young person where they become exposed to more negative influences. **Excluded pupils are four times more likely to be imprisoned as an adult (University of Edinburgh, April 2016), 85% of young offenders were excluded from school and most were 14 or younger when they last attended school (Chief Inspector of Prisons, Annual Report 2014-15).**

Khulisa's Face It: Youth Behaviour Change Programme supports children who have been excluded from school (or are at risk of being excluded). The programme helps the young people to identify and address the root causes of their disruptive behaviour, and equips them with new skills to manage conflict in their lives. After completing the programme, children feel more self-confident and more positive about their future, 91% demonstrate

improved behaviour in the classroom and 33% successfully reintegrate into mainstream schools. **This ultimately reduces the risk of young people entering the justice system, or re-offending in the future.** In this way, the Khulisa's Behaviour Change programme supports young people to live healthier, safer, happier lives.

In communities. Including youth and youth offending programmes

Violence remains a major cause of death, life-changing injuries and long-term conditions for young people in the UK:

- Rates of youth violence and knife crime have increased dramatically in some areas over the last year.¹
- 1 in 20 young people know someone who carries a weapon² and in many areas that figure is much higher.
- The largest increase in proven offences by young people was in violence against the person (increased by 8 percentage points to 26% of all offences)
- The number of young people (10 – 17 years) cautioned or convicted for possession of a knife or offensive weapon increased by 18% between March 2015 and March 2016 (3300 offences).
- The Metropolitan police report that the majority of young people carrying weapons do so out of fear for their own safety and not because they are gang affiliated. For some young people violence has become normalised, they see it as part of growing up.¹

StreetDoctors' volunteers equip young people at highest risk of violence with emergency first aid skills (such as haemorrhage control and cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and the confidence to use them. They target young people who already have a conviction for a violence related offence; who are deemed as being at risk by local agencies; or who are growing up in an area of high youth on youth violence (i.e. where violence has become normalised). StreetDoctors volunteers are medical students and young people themselves, able to create a peer to peer relationship. As well as teaching essential lifesaving skills they challenge attitudes, discussing the medical consequences of violence and encouraging young people to make positive choices. Young people start to join up the dots between carrying a weapon or the likelihood of them or someone they know getting hurt. **The programme reduces the risk of young people choosing to participate in violence, or the risk of death if violence does occur.** Attending a StreetDoctors' training session is both life-saving and life-changing for the young people who attend.

In A&E

Sadly, despite fantastic interventions, many young people do go on to become victims of violence. **The risk of death for young people in the ten years following an adversity-related injury (violence, self-harm, substance abuse) more than doubles, from 1 in 139 to 1 in 66, compared to accidental injury** ("Long term outcomes for adolescents hospitalised for adversity-related injury", Prof Ruth Gilbert, UCL, 2017). **And by the time a young**

person arrives at A&E with a life-changing or life-threatening injury they are likely to have attended hospital on four or five more occasions with less serious violence related injury (NPS Associates, Feb 2017). Without

¹ NHS A&E data <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/19/crime-figures-show-and-knife-offences-rising-ons-england-wales>

² Crime Survey in England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (March 2015)

intervention, these young people often find themselves spiralling into the victim-perpetrator cycle of ongoing, escalating violence.

Redthread's *Youth Violence Intervention Programme* meets young people during the intense crisis moment of arriving at hospital after experiencing a violent injury. It capitalises on the 'teachable moment', encouraging young people to reflect on the circumstances that brought them to hospital, and how they would like to change. It empowers young people to engage effectively with the services and support they need, and gives them the confidence to make positive changes within their lives. **The programme challenges violent attitudes and reduces involvement in violence, either as victim or perpetrator.**

Project aims

The project has four key aims, which will be delivered through the work of each of the partners:

1. Youth Behaviour Change Programme helps young people to identify and address the root causes of their disruptive behaviour and equips them with new skills to manage conflict in their lives.
2. Life-changing training sessions that equip young people at highest risk of violence with emergency life-saving skills
3. Youth violence Intervention Programme meets young people during the intense moment of arriving at hospital after experiencing a violent injury.
4. Empowerment: increasing young people's self-confidence and personal resilience

Beneficiaries – Charity Partners

About Khulisa (<http://www.khulisa.co.uk/>)

Khulisa is a charity working to change the system, change perceptions and change lives.

Our programmes are proven to reduce crime by improving the wellbeing, resilience and aspiration of excluded children and prisoners across the UK. We do this by supporting, inspiring and empowering excluded people instead of villainising, neglecting or further punishing them, which is an approach that has failed for far too long.

Khulisa – 'to nurture' in Zulu – represents our South African heritage and our core belief that everyone, no matter their background, has the capacity to learn and grow in a safe, nurturing environment. We believe that schools, prisons, communities and government need a much more joined-up approach to help people escape the cycle of social exclusion and crime, which is why we are Britain's only charity offering behaviour change programmes, training and research services at all key stages of the criminal justice system, giving us an unrivalled breadth of expertise of what works to reduce crime. With this, we are pushing for policy changes, so that we better support our schools, prisons and communities to reduce social exclusion and crime, and create a safer, more inclusive society.

About Redthread (www.redthread.org.uk)

Redthread is a dynamic youth work charity whose vision is a society in which all young people lead healthy, safe and happy lives. We empower young people to thrive as they navigate the challenging transition to adulthood, by integrating trauma-informed youth work into the health sector. Redthread began in 1995, and has been delivering innovative violence intervention programmes for the last twelve years.

Redthread's Youth Violence Intervention Programme empowers young people to consider how their lives could be different after a violent incident, and gives them the resources and resilience to make positive changes and break away from cycles of violence and crime. The Well Centre is Redthread's youth health hub. Here, an early intervention and emotional wellbeing programme is delivered by specialist youth workers, CAMHS counsellors, and GPs. This empowers young people to take agency for their own health and wellbeing, develop healthy help-seeking behaviour and use services appropriately.

Redthread believes that violence is a public health issue. By working together with police, youth offending teams, health services, social care and local groups, we believe young people can be supported to live lives away from cycles of crime, in which they are healthy, safe and happy.

About Street Doctors

Street Doctors is a national network of medical volunteers who utilise their skills and knowledge to reduce youth violence. Since StreetDoctors began in 2008, volunteers have taught almost 9,000 young people at high risk of witnessing violent incidents the skills they need to deliver life-saving first aid. Just as importantly, StreetDoctors use first aid as a tool to educate and empower young people, giving them confidence and a sense of responsibility for their actions, helping to change their attitude towards violence and make positive choices.

StreetDoctors has now has teams 18 teams in 15 cities throughout the United Kingdom, with 4 of those teams being based in London. <http://streetdoctors.org/>

Better Community Business Network and project partners

Redthread, StreetDoctors and Khulisa are partnering with Better Community Business Network to:

- Increase young people's self-confidence and personal resilience
- Prevent young people from becoming involved in violence and crime and prevent re-injury and reoffending.
- Disrupt the cycle of violence and crime and help young people to fulfil their true potential

Together our knowledge skills and passions can empower young people in London to lead safe, happy and fulfilled lives free from violence and crime.