

# funding the frontline

tackling youth crime in London



**LONDON  
COUNCILS**

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## 01 the issue

Youth crime is a considerable and growing issue for London. The total number of murders in London has decreased since 2003/04 yet, despite this, the number of teenage murders increased significantly from 17 in 2006 to 26 in 2007, with a further 32 teenage murders in 2008.

In total, 72 young people aged 10-19 were murdered in the UK last year. In this context, London's figures are disproportionately high considering London only accounts for 11 per cent of the UK teenage population.

Local authorities in London are at the frontline of youth crime prevention in the capital but, as this report shows, the current way in which funding to tackle youth crime is provided prevents authorities from using these resources to their best effect. Youth violence in particular is a serious issue in London, and it is vital that as much funding for youth crime prevention as possible is targeted at the young people most at risk of offending.

This report sets out some of the difficulties faced by local authorities and suggests solutions which would allow a more efficient and locally flexible response to youth crime and its causes.



## 02

# the evidence

### **A myriad of schemes and initiatives**

There are currently a number of funding streams in place that focus specifically on preventing youth crime.

The table opposite provides a snapshot of the 10 main grants currently channelled to London local authorities to tackle youth crime.\*

This table does not cover all initiatives taking place in London; other interventions run by London authorities, such as work by the Metropolitan Police Service and the Youth Justice Board to tackle offending and reoffending directly, are not included.

The diversity of funding streams and overlapping of initiatives creates problems for London authorities on the frontline of youth crime prevention and leads to funding not being used efficiently to tackle youth crime where it is needed most.

### **Lack of strategic overview**

The breadth and complexity of current activity and funding to tackle youth crime in London reflects the range of different triggers that contribute to a young person becoming involved in crime.

The funding summary reveals how youth crime prevention work does not neatly fit into the remit of any one government department. This is also the case at a local level, where youth crime prevention is not just an issue for community safety teams or children's services, but transcends both these areas.

\* A detailed breakdown and description of funding streams across London's boroughs is available at [www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/youthcrime](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/youthcrime)

initiative	funder	recipients	details
Family Intervention Projects	DCSF/ Home Office	£1.7 million in total to 7 London LAs. Every LA area will receive funding within 3 years	Deliver assertive key working to families involved in persistent anti-social behaviour.
Parenting Early Intervention Programme	DCSF	£5.7 million in total to all LAs	Increases coordinated support for the parents of children aged 8-13 years old at risk of negative outcomes (particularly anti-social behaviour).
Intensive Intervention Projects	DCSF (Youth Taskforce)	£650,000 to 2 London LAs	Aim to transform the lives of up to 1,000 of the most challenging and problematic young people in each area at risk of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Coordinated by both children's services and community safety teams.
Respect Parenting Practitioners	DCSF	£500,000 in total to 10 London LAs	Offers structured parenting programmes to parents of families exhibiting anti-social behaviour.
Challenge and Support Projects	DCSF (Youth Taskforce)	£250,000 to 11 London LAs	Develop a more coordinated approach to providing support and enforcement to tackle anti-social behaviour among young people.
Youth Capital Fund Plus	DCSF	£450,000 to 12 London LAs	Improves youth facilities in areas of high deprivation. Linked to the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF), a programme of activities designed by young people and delivered through LAs.
Positive Activities for Young People	DCSF	£2.6 million in total to 7 London LAs	Provides diversionary activities during out of school hours to 8-19 year olds at risk of social exclusion and offending. Provision for the most disengaged young people at risk of joining violent gangs to take place across London by 2011.
Anti-Social Behaviour	Home Office	£1 million in total to 4 London LAs through the Area Based Grant	Projects to support LAs in tackling anti-social behaviour. DCSF's Youth Taskforce will add to this grant over the next 3 years to support existing good practice.
Preventing Violent Extremism	CLG	£11 million in total to 31 London LAs	Work to tackle violent extremism and support young individuals who have had contact with the criminal justice system.
Youth Crime Action Plan (intensive package)	DCSF, Home Office and Ministry of Justice	£700,000 to 13 London LAs	Incorporates some of the above, plus other initiatives such as street-based youth workers and visible police patrols during after school hours.

LAs = local authorities  
 CLG = Department for Communities and Local Government  
 DCSF = Department for Children, Schools and Families

Please note, where total amounts are not mentioned, these figures are amounts allocated to each local authority. All figures are for 2008-11 except Youth Capital Fund Plus (08/09 only).

The government has made some efforts to join up recent initiatives, such as the Youth Crime Action Plan and the work to prevent violent extremism. However, as the table reveals, there is still considerable duplication of initiatives. For example, the Family Intervention Projects overlap significantly with the Respect Parenting Practitioners.

Similarly, funding streams from government agencies can target the same type of work; recent grants from the Youth Justice Board to help tackle violent extremism were provided to the same boroughs already in receipt of funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for similar initiatives.

Receiving grants for similar activities from different government departments, or worse, duplicating funding from the same department for overlapping initiatives, creates needless bureaucracy and reporting requirements for London boroughs. The government should ensure that funding streams aimed at youth crime prevention are aligned and streamlined, including those from its non-departmental public bodies. This would lead to savings on administrative, reporting and support costs both centrally and locally, and enable authorities to maximise the funding at the service frontline.

London local government has been instrumental in setting up the new Serious Youth Violence Board that will take a strategic lead in strengthening efforts to reduce youth crime in the capital. As part of this work, the board will look at ways of maximising the benefits of the disparate funding streams channelled to London boroughs. However, it would significantly help the board's work if the government ensured that the allocation of funding was less fragmented.

### **A top-down approach**

The lack of strategic focus from the centre would be less problematic for local authorities if the government was more flexible in the way in which it allocates funding for youth crime prevention to boroughs. London authorities are best placed to understand the needs of their local young people and the government should be liaising directly with London boroughs when designing new initiatives and associated funding streams.

For example, in 2008, five young people were killed in Enfield by other young people. One was the result of domestic violence, one was gang-related revenge, one was related to the illegal economy and two were caused by 'personal conflicts'.

These findings show that there is no single appropriate response to tackling youth crime, even within individual areas, as the causes of offending are so diverse and complex. Central government is not in a position to be able to respond effectively to these diverse causes – rather it is local authorities who have the knowledge and expertise to provide a targeted response. It is therefore essential that the government acknowledges this by providing more flexible funding, allowing local authorities to respond to local circumstances.

At present, London boroughs are often allocated funding without any prior consultation. This can lead to a top-down, ineffective approach, whereby boroughs are asked to change their local priorities in order to deliver the government's funding aims. This has been compounded by the allocation of funding for the Youth Crime Action Plan, which gave selected boroughs only 10 days to write a funding bid.

Furthermore, local authority children's services departments are already subject to regular inspections and audits from the DCSF. There is no need for complex monitoring arrangements to be built into specific funding agreements for youth crime funding streams if the DCSF already has access to service information. This just adds another layer of bureaucracy and causes funding to be diverted to administration costs rather than crime prevention.

### **Targeting funding to boroughs with the greatest need**

The majority of money for the 10 funding streams analysed in the table goes to 12 local authorities in London. At the other end of the scale, around half of London's local authorities receive no funding at all, other than money for Preventing Violent Extremism and the Parenting Early Intervention Programme allocated to nearly all London boroughs. It is clear that for funding to make a real impact on serious youth crime, it must be carefully targeted to those areas with the greatest need. However, while significant sums have been allocated under these initiatives, not all the funding is targeted to areas with the highest incidence of youth crime.

As an example, data from the Metropolitan Police Service reveals that in the 10 months prior to the end of October 2008, the 10 boroughs with the highest incidence of serious youth violence were: Southwark (208); Waltham Forest (167); Newham (150); Hackney (149); Lambeth (148); Croydon (140); Lewisham (134); Greenwich (133); Enfield (132); and Haringey (124).

The Youth Crime Action Plan intended to allocate funding to local authorities with high levels of youth crime. In total, £700,000 was allocated to London boroughs under this initiative. However, neither Waltham Forest nor Enfield received any funding. Enfield has not been eligible for any of the 10 funding streams highlighted, despite witnessing five teenage murders in 2008 alone – a clear failure in the targeting of resources.

The government needs to consider channelling some of these funding streams through the Area Based Grant (ABG). Funding allocations through ABG would enable boroughs to use resources more effectively and tackle some of the local issues relating to youth crime in their areas, particularly those which may not otherwise be covered by funding for specific youth crime initiatives.

## **Results versus innovation**

Youth crime prevention work suffers from a lack of robust evaluation into schemes and initiatives that are successful. This can lead to innovative new projects being favoured over 'tried and tested' interventions. London boroughs have a wealth of information on how effective their local projects are and there needs to be a focus on assessing this work and expanding successful initiatives before new initiatives (and funding streams) to tackle youth crime are launched.

London Councils is working with the Mayor of London to create a repository of appropriate research and good practice for programmed prevention work and youth interventions to support commissioning by local authorities and other agencies. The government should use this information hub when devising new policy, so that it can be sure it is investing in proven schemes and initiatives.

## 03 the solution

### Recommendations

In light of the evidence, we recommend that the government:

- Takes a strategic approach to youth crime prevention in London. This needs to be delivered at a local level through local strategic partnerships, linking up both community safety and children's services within boroughs. Centrally, the government should align the various funding streams aimed at diverting young people away from offending and develop a more coherent, consultative process for allocating funding to local authorities. As London boroughs are, in the main, responsible for delivering these youth crime initiatives, they must be involved in initial conversations about new initiatives and their responsibilities for delivering results.
- Consults the new Serious Youth Violence Board for London, set up by London local government and its partners to strengthen efforts to tackle youth crime at local and regional level. The board aims to promote a better understanding of serious youth violence in London and help identify gaps and areas which could be approached differently on a cross-agency and cross-borough basis to achieve sustainable reductions in violence. It is crucial that government taps into this resource to consult on the best way to target funding across London.



- Develops a more sophisticated, proactive system of funding for youth crime prevention, in line with its strategic aims and in consultation with local authorities. London Councils and the Mayor's office are developing a best practice repository to support commissioning by local authorities and other agencies. The government should use this information hub when devising new policy, to ensure it invests in proven schemes and initiatives.
- Channels some of the funding for youth crime prevention through the Area Based Grant (ABG). Funding routed through ABG is non-ringfenced and would enable boroughs to better tackle some of the local issues relating to youth crime, which currently fall outside the scope of specific funding initiatives. More flexibility in funding agreements would enable boroughs to better respond to local pressures, particularly if it enabled boroughs to look at those initiatives that would be most effective and efficient in terms of achieving real impact.



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