



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR
CHILDREN

Chair: Baroness Massey of Darwen

Vice-Chairmen: Jessica Lee MP, Baroness Walmsley, Baroness Blood, Bill Esterson MP, Tim Loughton MP

Secretary: Baroness Howarth of Breckland **Treasurer:** Earl of Listowel

Clerk: Heather Ransom

There was a meeting of the
All Party Parliamentary Group for Children on:
Monday 3rd February 2014
4:30-6:15pm, Committee Room 3A, House of Lords
(booked in the name of Baroness Massey)

Children and the Police inquiry:

Oral evidence session 4: 'Engaging with children and young people who have mental health needs or SEND'

This was the fourth meeting of the APPGC's inquiry into 'Children and the Police'. This meeting explored the experience of children and young people with mental health needs or SEND in engaging with the police, and considered why they are at greater risk of being criminalised. It examined good practice used by police forces, including examples which drew on multi-agency working with children's services, and considered how engagement can be improved.

Members in attendance: Baroness Massey, Baroness Walmsley, Baroness Howarth, Baroness Howe, Tim Loughton MP

Speakers: Sergeant Nick Healey (Devon and Cornwall Police and National Volunteer Police Cadets), PC Tim Mann (Metropolitan Police), Jessica, Sonny and Bradley (Met Volunteer Police Cadets), PC Kath Bromilow (Lancashire Constabulary and National Volunteer Police Cadets), Glenn Major (I CAN), Louise Wilkinson (Criminal Justice and Acquired Brain Injury Interest Group), Helen Schofield (College of Policing), Helena Brice (Centre for Mental Health)

Voluntary and community sector in attendance: Marion Sandwell (YJB), Philippa Goffe (Ministry of Justice), Mary Hartshorne (I CAN), John Metcalfe and Rebecca Joy Novell (BASW), Elizabeth Fergusson and Phillippa Greenwood (West London Action for Children), Caroline Bennett and Helen Wheatley (Council for Disabled Children), Sheila Sheikh and Lisa Davis (Office of the Children's Commissioner), Alison Ryan (ATL), Tom Sheppard (NOVARES), Pete Hutin (Sussex Police), Mary Crowley (International Federation of Parenting Education), Mary O'Shaughnessy (SCYJ), Junior Nelson and Napa Condeh (Merton Civic Centre), Robert Baldry and Jasmine Rahman (Girlguiding UK), Michelle Burgess, Debbie Ayling, Jon Thompson (Volunteer Police Cadets), Sarah Carson (Kids Company), Sophie Wood, Enver Solomon, Heather Ransom and Rosie Eatwell-White (NCB)

Apologies: Earl of Listowel, Baroness Gardner, Mike Gapes MP, Graham Durcan (Centre for Mental Health), Harley Allen ('Raising Your Game' project, I CAN), Helen Atwood (Kids Company), Joseph Lyons

(West Ham United Community Sports Trust), Fiona Smith (Royal College of Nursing), Daniel McKenzie (Young NCB), Peter Cowlett (Sussex Police), Sarah Gates (Sussex Police), Hilary Emery (NCB), Elaine Arnold, John Kemmis, Heather Geddes, Amanda Henshall (University of Greenwich), Shelley Jones (Safer London Foundation), Michelle St John (Safer London Foundation), Andrei Illie (Safer London Foundation), Sureeta Persaud (Safer London Foundation)

Baroness Massey welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Sonny Burgess: explained that he was a Volunteer Police Cadet for Wandsworth and stated that the Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) programme taught him life skills and problem solving skills which he felt school could not teach him. He felt that VPC had offered him and others like him a huge amount and had taught him a lot about the world. Sonny has been a Cadet for two and a half years.

Bradley Burgess: added that being in the VPC had helped him to get out of trouble at school and had helped others not to get in trouble with police by giving them something to do after school. Bradley has also been a Cadet for two and a half years.

Nick Healey: explained that he is a Sergeant with Devon and Cornwall Police and that he represented the National VPC (NVPC) as a Programme Manager.

Work of the VCP

- The national team is working to bring a national standard and recognised brand to Police Cadets across the country as part of improving police engagement with children and young people.
- Based on a set of principles, which are part of the ACPO-agreed National Framework, which aim to promote an understanding of policing amongst young people, as well as giving young people the chance to support the police through volunteering and giving them a voice and a chance to be active in their communities.
- The aim is to break down barriers between the police and young people and divert them away from crime and anti-social behaviour, whilst also encouraging them to be active citizens.
- Access to training and qualifications is provided.

VPC membership

- Members are usually aged 13 to 18, although some forces have introduced Junior Volunteer Cadet programmes for children aged 10 to 12, recognising the transition from primary to secondary school.
- All groups engage a minimum of 25% of Cadets from a vulnerable background, such as crime victims, offenders, children in care, children with disabilities and those at risk of social exclusion.
- In London in particular, there is a real mix in terms of ethnicity and gender.
- As young people reach 18, they are encouraged to remain with the Cadets as volunteers, or to volunteer with other organisations. Some make take up full time roles within policing.
- Cadets volunteer three hours a month, supporting local policing and the local community.

Benefits of the VPC

- A key part of building better relationships with children and young people.
- Becoming a Cadet can improve a young person's sense of belonging, emotional wellbeing, educational outcomes and career prospects.
- The VPC can strengthen bonds between young people and other members of their community.

Kath Bromilow: stated that she was currently working with the NVPC, having started working with them 18 years ago. Under the previous system, there was no agreed purpose or sharing of resources, and as programmes were run from police station, the young people had to be vetted which meant there were hardly any that came from a vulnerable background.

Improvements in the VPC

- The programme has been opened up to 13 year-olds which means there is more chance to offer guidance and support than when the police only worked with 16 to 18 year olds.

- The National Framework has been agreed and adopted by many forces.
- The programmes are run from colleges or schools in the community, and not from police stations, so the young people do not need to be vetted, as this can be a barrier to inclusion.
- All young people are given the choice to join so that it is inclusive.
- A year ago, 16 police forces were working with VPC and there are now over 30 forces involved.

Baroness Massey: took questions from peers and the wider audience, including:

- What made you join the VPC?

Sonny Burgess: said that his cousin had joined first and he joined because he thought it would be something to do and something that would keep him interested. After attending for a short period, he realised how worthwhile it was and how it could help young people to develop their skills.

Jessica Fuller: explained that she had heard about the VPC and it sounded like an amazing thing to do.

- What sort of activities do you do in the VPC and do you work with other Cadet groups or with the wider community?

Jessica Fuller: said that the VPC practice marching and engage in team-building activities. She also stated that they are involved in 'test purchasing' in shops and her group has help to run a school fete at a local primary school. They are also involved in going into schools in small groups and talking to pupils about the role of the police.

Bradley Burgess: added that they spoke to young people and encouraged them not to get involved in gangs.

Sonny Burgess: said that the Cadets learnt the phonetic alphabet for police, codes for different ethnicities, and other areas of training that someone would undergo when becoming a police officer.

Kath Bromilow: explained that she had been involved in a project in which Cadets became Peer Educators and then went into schools to work with pupils.

Nick Healey: added that by running activities from schools, connections were made with the local community.

Michelle Burgess: stated that her son Sonny has ADHD and that involvement in the VPC had helped him considerably.

- How do you encourage young people to get involved who may view the police negatively?

Tim Mann: explained that perception and personal contact were important. In his role as Youth Engagement Officer he is school-based and works with a range of young people. It is important to listen to young people and let them talk about their experiences. He added that the best ambassadors for getting young people engaged were the Cadets, and that this helps to bring in children whose parents may have a negative view of the police.

- How do the VPC engage with children and young people who have physical disabilities or communication needs?

Tim Mann: explained that his unit had focused on trying to reach out to children with physical disabilities by working with local groups in the borough. There is still work to be done to improve engagement.

Kath Bromilow: added that there are children with significant physical disabilities in some of the VPC units across the country. Work was going on to make the VPC as inclusive as possible but forces also had training needs which must be addressed.

Baroness Massey: brought an end to questions and invited the next witness to speak.

Glenn Major: explained his role as a teacher and Communication Advisor at I CAN, the organisation supporting children and young people's communication skills.

Groups at risk of criminalisation

- Young people with communication difficulties are at a greater risk of being involved in crime
- Between 60% and 90% of young offenders have communication difficulties

Communication difficulties

- A child can be born with a special educational need or they can develop if a child grows up in a language-poor environment. Research shows that this is often in an area of social disadvantage.
- To varying degrees, children with these difficulties will have a reduced knowledge of words.
- They may have problems expressing themselves, understanding information that is given to them and understanding how to interact with different people appropriately
- They may have difficulties with 'inner speech' which is used to regulate our behaviour and think through actions and their consequences.
- Without support, the gap in language skills between these children and their peers will grow.
- They are likely to struggle in education. 90% of children who have communication difficulties also have reading and literacy difficulties. They are much more likely to be excluded or suffer mental health problems, and to leave school with low achievement.
- 35% of all offenders have the language skills equivalent to an 11 year old.
- Jobs are increasingly less manual-based and more based on sophisticated communication skills.

Engagement with the police

- From work with the Raising Your Game project, it was found that when the young people engaged with the police, most of them understood some of what the police said.
- Only one young person had asked for clarification, which is likely to be typical.
- Police need to have an awareness of the issue and have it as a 'default setting' to expect that young people could have a communication difficulty
- Police need to have strategies in place for interacting with young people with these difficulties
- I CAN have developed a course called 'Talk about talk', co-delivered to police by young people with communication difficulties.
- It is not a question of waiting for experts to arrive, in case they do not: what is needed by police is often common sense, empathy and a simple set of skills to improve communication.

Baroness Massey: took questions from peers and the wider audience, including:

- Is the 'Talk about talk' course being promoted to teachers as a form of CPD?

Glenn Major: clarified that this course was aimed at the criminal justice system, but that I CAN ran a range of projects, including a secondary talk programme designed for secondary schools. In particular, there are worries that speech and language skills will not get much focus in the new curriculum.

- To what extent is the family situation addressed when working on communication skills?

Glenn Major: confirmed the importance of working with families and encouraging children to have face-to-face contact with a responsive and reliable adult.

Baroness Massey: brought an end to questions and invited the next witness to speak.

Louise Wilkinson: explained that she spoke on behalf of the Criminal Justice and Acquired Brain Injury Interest Group, which she was involved in establishing.

Acquired brain injury (ABI)

- Less than 10% of the population have an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) yet typically between 50% and 80% of offenders have experienced a traumatic injury to their brain.
- ABI does not count as an SEN or disability under the Disability Discrimination Act, unless someone suffers a physical disability as a result of ABI.
- Those with ABI can suffer chronic fatigue, inability to focus and memory difficulties

Engagement with the police

- Those with ABI who come into contact with the police often have complex backgrounds, such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems, attachment issues or communication difficulties. They are already very vulnerable.
- They can manifest behaviour similar to those with ADHD but often many do not get diagnosed.
- Many can manifest over-sexualised behaviour due to a lack of inhibitions and can often lack an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour.
- The police need to understand that those with ABI may not be wilfully undertaking criminal actions. They may forget curfew restrictions, are prone to impulsivity and are more susceptible to peer pressure.

Areas for improvement

- A greater awareness is needed, not just for police but across education and social services.
- The Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool used in the Secure Estate could be expanded to be used upon arrest or in police stations to assess any potential neurological problems.
- Liaison and diversion schemes can be helpful and existing ones have already had a positive impact.
- A 'planned pathway' for these children could be helpful, with Appropriate Adults and perhaps a referral to healthcare and neuro-consultants following arrest.
- There is also work being done with HMP Wetherby on supporting transition back into society.
- Although the Child Brain Injury Trust has trained around 6,000 educationalists and around 80 Youth Offending Teams, it has trained very few police officers which needs to change.

Helen Schofield: stated her role at the College of Policing as Head of Learning Strategy and Development, responsible for setting professional standards and training standards for police across England and Wales.

Police training

- The College has overall responsibility for training standards across the 43 police forces, each of which has its own training arrangements and infrastructure.
- It works with statutory partners, with expertise from policing and criminal justice, and increasingly with external providers.
- Training is based around 'initial training' that new police officers receive, but the College also provides specialist training, right up to training police leaders.
- There are always recommendations emerging from Select Committees, HMIC, IPCC etc., and the College works to incorporate these into an already large curriculum of training.
- Police training in relation to children addresses a range of contexts, including missing children, the use of stop and search on children, public order situations, children in custody and children in the wider criminal justice process.
- There are a number of key themes in police training:
 - Communication, not just with children but everyone.
 - Safeguarding: recognising the signs of vulnerability and responding appropriately
 - Appropriate use of information about children
 - The rights and entitlements of children, for example in custody or at the point of arrest.
 - Interviewing children as witnesses and protocols for procedures such as taking samples.

Areas for improvement

- Helen stated that more work is needed around communication and engaging with young people.
- Police are good at recognising some of the signs of mental health needs and SEND but not all of the signs, and this needs to be improved.

- Work with the Royal College of Paediatricians has started on developing a portal for professionals in the criminal justice system.
- Work is needed on child sexual exploitation at every level, particularly on recognising vulnerability and the occurrence of child sexual exploitation.
- Police need to prioritise treating children in custody settings first and foremost as children. This is being reinforced in police training but it needs to keep being worked on.
- More work is needed on developing strong partnerships with organisations which have particular specialisms and can help deliver aspects of the training curriculum.

Helena Brice: passed on apologies from Graham Durcan, who was unable to speak at the meeting, and read a statement from the Centre for Mental Health in his place.

Engagement with the police

- Police custody is an opportunity for mental health needs to be identified.
- Detention can aggravate and adversely affect children's mental health difficulties.
- Generally, police are too driven by arrest deadlines (e.g. PACE clock) and tend to respond to behaviour in a superficial and punitive manner. They do not systematically prioritise making links with community support in order to help make a difference to children's lives in the longer term.

Children and young people in the criminal justice system

- Six in ten young men in the criminal justice system have a speech and communication problem.
- Young people in the criminal justice system are three times more likely to have a mental health diagnosis than those who do not enter the system. With older age groups, this increases: eight in ten 16-20 year olds in the system meet the criteria for a mental health diagnosis.
- Many show signs of ABI, including 60% of young men in custody, or will show signs of ADHD.
- There is evidence to suggest that the more risk factors a child is exposed to, the more likely they are to become entrenched in poor behaviour potentially leading to offending and criminalisation.

Areas for improvement

- Police need to be an integral part of an early intervention system which identifies children at risk.
- Health and Wellbeing Boards and Community Safety Boards need to develop a whole-system pathway for children with vulnerabilities, mental health problems and early behavioural problems. This pathway should include:
 - Clear referral gateways and protocols for the police, to enable them mobilise support from a range of children's services.
 - A jointly commissioned diversionary infrastructure delivered through children's services, health and the voluntary sector. Commissioners should include PCCs, children's commissioners, health commissioners and schools.
 - Children and their parents should help to shape and monitor commissioning decisions.
- Police Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs have the potential to support coordinated activity so as to help pick up vulnerabilities early on and respond appropriately. This system uses systematic data sharing to help identify vulnerabilities. Databases are hosted in police settings and representatives from various local authority and health agencies work together.
- Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion schemes can also help with early intervention and support for older children. These schemes operate at the point of arrest and aim to improve early identification of children with health problems. They are currently being piloted by the government.

Baroness Massey: took questions from peers and the wider audience, including:

- Why do parents not inform schools if their child has ABI?

Louise Wilkinson: explained that many parents may not realise that their child has ABI, as ABI can be caused by a small incident and need not have been a result of serious trauma.

- Do police receive training on dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in order to help them to support children who have experienced trauma?

Tim Mann: said that in his experience, he had not known enough about this area and that when dealing with young people who had suffered trauma he realised that he was approaching it purely from a policing perspective. He worked with local organisations in order to develop a better understanding of the community he was serving and this sharing of knowledge was common in his unit at the time.

Helen Schofield: stated that police covered PTSD in their training, but not in great depth, and for the most part the focus was on recognition. It is important to recognise that particular incoming communities may be experiencing trauma and to recognise when individuals may be vulnerable. When situations arise, police may turn to more specialist help but this is not systematic enough. Police need to know when they need to ask for more support.

- Is there a clear enough distinction between delinquency and criminality?

Helen Schofield: said that from a policing point of view, it was a question of problem-solving and recognising problems which, if not tackled, could lead to criminality. Police officers need to always be thinking about how they can steer young people away from criminal behaviour.

- Is there scope for the College of Policing to review its training on children and young people?

Helen Schofield: stated that there is scope for this. She suggested that the APPGC might want to make this one of the recommendations of the inquiry.

Tim Mann: explained while working as a police trainer he had put together training with NSPCC in order to educate police about the vulnerabilities of some of the children they come across. At first, this was quite challenging but when police started to take it in, it had a real impact.

Glenn Major: added that often children who come across as very streetwise can have real difficulties with communication and understanding, and may not understand the language of the criminal justice process.

Marion Sandwell: said that she felt that the volume of content in police training meant it would be hard for police to be trained on every condition. A general overview of how to address and treat children and to recognise their differences from adults is needed. There are responsibilities for other statutory organisations to step in and provide expertise when more specialised understanding is needed.

Baroness Howarth: added that in the face of cuts to local government, children's services could find themselves without the necessary expertise in this area. She asked speakers to identify which other professions need to improve their support in this area.

Marion Sandwell: gave the example of health services who do not provide sufficient support for mental health patients detained under the Mental health Act.

Baroness Massey: summed up the meeting by drawing out key themes.

- The issue of partnerships, bringing in experts for support and working holistically
- The importance of seeing children first and foremost as children and the rights of children
- The importance of communication
- The need for awareness of a huge range of issues
- The management of information
- Safeguarding and the identification of children at risk

Baroness Massey thanked all speakers and everyone who had attended.