

# HEADLINERS

## Hoodie Hoodlums: Love or Loathed?

### Hoodies, how can such a harmless piece of clothing cause such an uproar?

#### Hoodie hoodlums: loved or loathed?

*Hoodies, how can such a harmless piece of clothing cause such an uproar? Aren't there better ...it's more about their attitude rather than what they're wearing topics for politicians to debate about?*

The government and the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, have publicly backed the decision by certain shopping centres in the UK to ban young people wearing hoodies. But can the government really ask us to change the way we dress because of the way a small minority of young people behave?

Nathan 15, from Lancashire believes it's wrong: "I don't think there is a big problem with wearing hoodies...most people are fine and upstanding citizens and some of them wear hoodies. It is the behaviour of a few that is the problem, not the clothes. I don't think hoodies should be banned."

Nathan, like many other young people, has first hand experience of being stereotyped by adults because of wearing a hoodie: "For the first time in my life, I walked out with a hoodie on and a lady said to me, 'ohhhh look at him wearing a hoodie.' Why should we be tarred with this stereotypical brush? We shouldn't be and I won't be."

Celestina, 17, from East London agrees with Nathan: "It's fashionable and I don't think there's anything wrong with wearing a hoodie. People tend to associate people who wear them as being bad or being part of gangs."

She thinks it's more about their attitude rather than what they're wearing: "If a gang was acting weird I would feel a bit intimidated but if they're just walking down the street I wouldn't feel anything."

It's not just young people who think a ban on hoodies is going too far. The recently appointed Children's Commissioner in England, Al Aynsley-Green, told us it was "crazy" to try to ban young people from wearing hoodies.

"I think it's very, very sad to condemn every young person because of the activities of some of them," he said. "Hooded jumpers are fantastic. They're warm, you've got a place to put your hands in the front and if it's cold you can put the hood up".

"In 1970 I was wearing a hooded jumper. It was the fashion to have one, so there's nothing new about it. But what is new is hoodies being equated with disorderly conduct."

If the Children's Commissioner thinks they're ok, why do other adults find them so intimidating? To find an answer to our question we headed to the N1 shopping centre in Angel, North London to talk to shoppers and shop keepers.

"I have two hoodies and I wear them both," 25-year-old Adele told us. "I might get intimidated by other people wearing them but it depends on who it is. If it's a whole group of guys then for some reason I will feel intimidated."

Another shopper Sue agreed: "Hoodies do intimidate me and if it's a gang of youths in hoods I definitely find it scary."

However, she says she can't imagine how a ban would work: "How are they going to control it? Are they going to walk around and say to people, 'take your hoods down?' It seems impossible to police it...it would never work."

Cherry, another North London shopper, said she was really suspicious of people who wore hoodies: "I don't like the feeling when I see people in hoodies because it looks like they are trying to hide their faces and not be known. It looks like they're up to something and that's why I don't like them. I think it would be a good idea if older people wore them and then younger people would not want to wear them. They'd think it was too old fashioned."

Ted, 27, doesn't think a ban would work: "You can't ban people from wearing hoodies, it's crazy. If young people are banned from wearing them, then so should adults. How can you ban an item of clothing? It doesn't make sense."

While most of the shoppers agreed they felt intimidated when certain types of people wore hoodies, they also said they couldn't see how a ban would work. But, a ban on hoodies is exactly what some of the shops in the Angel area of North London have put in place.

JD Sports on Chapel Market is one of them. Alvin, a member of staff at the store explained why they'd taken such drastic measures: "We've banned hoods for security reasons. We get a lot of people coming in with hoods on and so to safeguard against stealing we ask them to take their hoods off so their face can be seen in the camera. Once they know their face can be seen they're less likely to steal things. We've had loads of incidents of people trying to steal things, it happens weekly."

Another sports shop in Angel, Holloway Sports, has also followed suit: The Manager, Chris, said that when people wore hats and caps on top of their hoods, they were "just looking for trouble."

"There's no need to wear three types of hoods in one go. When they come into the shop I tell them to take off their hoodies, and if they don't I tell them they can't come in, simple as that. They have the right to wear hoods but if I can't see their face it's a problem."

But it's not just adults who think young people who wear hoodies are up to no good. Melissa, 14, from Poole in Lancashire agrees with the shopkeepers:

"I think young people are using hoodies to cover up criminal activities. They wear hoodies so that people can't remember their faces. If they have the hoodie right down then it's intimidating."

I feel scared to go near gangs who are wearing hoodies, because you can't really tell who they are. But, I don't think hoodies should be banned because they're just clothing, and if you ban that you can ban other stuff."

It's understandable that young people are afraid of other young people in gangs but Nathan still feels it's wrong for people to jump to conclusions based on what you wear: "If I saw a gang wearing hoodies, I would weigh up the situation...they might be there out of no choice of their own. They might not have anywhere to go...I would think before making judgements about them. I would think about what could be happening with them."

The people we spoke to were divided on whether young people wearing hoodies were intimidating but what they most of them agreed on was that it was not right to ban them, especially since not all young people who wore hoodies were be associated with bad behaviour.

So what's all the fuss about then? Perhaps the government should spend more time debating serious issues like teenage pregnancy and drugs in schools instead of worrying about our clothes. We don't tell them what to wear and they shouldn't tell us what to wear!

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## About the team

This story was produced by Jamie White, 14 and Lathaniel Dyer 16. Contributors: Siobahan Slowey 16, Tracey Jordan 17, Sonti Ramirez 14, Jordan Daley 11 and Chishom Edomobi 12. It was published by Reach for the Sky Website.

## 2 comments

Hoodies

it sucks hoodies rock

laura (age 13) from KENT, 24 September 2009 17:34  
05

Great article! Really clear and balanced. I am an English teacher working in Italy trying to explain about British youth culture to my students. I'd like to print this article and work on it with them, hope that's ok?

Gemma Brown from Verona, Italy, 30 December 1899 00:00

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