

Are Gangs Ruining Young People's Lives?

Two young people from north London report on the very real experience of having a friend stabbed by a rival gang.

In the last month my school friend got stabbed outside my school gates and it's hard to understand how this happened. But how many more young people will have their lives ruined because of London's gang culture, the revenge attacks that will never stop happening and the gang members who can't be seen as being weak?

As a young Muslim living in Finsbury Park I'm concerned that gang culture has become uncontrollable and dangerous.

It was March 15th when I received several phone calls saying that my school mate had just been stabbed. The news was shocking; I didn't know how to respond. There was an atmosphere of fear and horror. Some girls were crying as they told me the news but other young people were already looking for revenge.

I just remember that it all seemed like a dream and it felt like this wasn't happening. Everyone was upset and angry, but the only answer we had was more violence, more revenge attacks. But I thought there must be another way?

It all happened just outside the school gates. There were some boys from a rival school who had come to our school to get my friend. I'm not sure whether he had already had a fight with one of the boys in the gang or he had been caught talking to the girlfriend of one of the gang members. But whatever he had done it should not have ended in the way it did.

When the fight started my friend was singled out and stabbed twice. He tried to stand up but he got stabbed again. By this time the teachers came running from the school with our resident policeman but the gang managed to run away.

My friend was taken away in an ambulance. He had sustained injuries that were so bad he was on a life support machine for several days but thankfully he pulled through. Sadly he will never be the same person again, not mentally or physically. How can you forget this kind of thing happening to you?

Although the perpetrator was forced to turn himself in by his own father I think all young people can do more to stop this type of senseless violence. We should ask ourselves why these arguments end up in violence.

We have all seen it happen, a little joke is started or someone gets a stupid happy slap but then it develops into something more serious as young people start shouting at each other: "I'll bring my boys - you bring your boys." It gets to a stage where no one can back down.

Nobody can remember why they're fighting but somebody has to go down, someone has to be shanked, someone has to be hurt - that's the way of a gang. It's like once it gets started it develops a momentum of its own that everyone involved is scared of stopping as they will lose face.

There is nothing worse than a gang member who backs out of a fight. Like a pack animal, a gang will make an example of an ex-gang member. So how can we get out of this cycle of violence? What can we do?

I think young people feel pressurised into keeping silent. In my case there were many young people who witnessed the attack and knew who was responsible but they refused to say anything just in case the gang members turned on them.

If young people don't confide in adults or the police the circle of violence will continue. I believe there should be more police to help us with this situation. Days after the attack we had three or four police officers patrolling the school in the morning and after school.

But there is a barrier between young people and the police. Young people instinctively distrust the police, so reporting gang violence to them will feel strange.

I only wish the police force could meet us half way as we don't want to be blamed or prosecuted for giving the police information. If they could help us more maybe we will help them more.

But as it stands I can't see anything changing soon. But let's hope it will change for all our sakes.

About this team

This story was produced by Akram, 13, and published in the [Islington Gazette](#).

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