

Interview with Steve Tyler, Operation Trident

Inspector Steve Tyler from Operation Trident tells Headliners members why the police think tackling black-on-black gun crime is such a priority.

Inspector Steve Tyler works for Trident which was set up in the 1990s and is a unit within the Metropolitan Police that deals specifically with gun crime in the black community. Steve explains that there is a special unit for this because "for three out of every four shootings that take place in London, the victim and the perpetrator are from the black community".

Advertisements made by Trident have a strong message, such as "A Phone Beats a Gun." The aim of messages like these is to help witnesses come forward with information and prompt people to do something. Steve Tyler also said that the adverts help to reassure people that gun crime is under control.

We asked him if he had the power to do anything to get witnesses, what would it be. Steve said he would, "guarantee their safety and make sure they feel safe. That's one of the biggest hindrances of witnesses coming forward; they feel vulnerable by giving evidence." People are too scared to come forward and talk about the things they know, for obvious reasons."

Trident seizes money from drug dealers, "this money is then spent on projects based on tackling gun crime and the rest goes back to central government and they decide how the money is spent". Trident doesn't always have control of where this money goes, but we feel more of it should be invested in youth projects that are geared towards steering young people away from gangs and violent crime.

Steve Tyler believes that gangs are so popular at the moment because "some young people feel as though their power has been taken away from them and excluded so they see the criminal route as a way to make good amounts of money in a short amount of time." We've seen friends and peers go into criminality for the reasons Steve Tyler points out.

Despite the negative statistics, Steve thought it was worth saying that; "People do not need to feel scared when they are walking around on the street because people involved in gun crime aren't interested in other people. They are generally after the person they are having 'beef' with and unless you are caught up within the incident then you are relatively safe". But regardless of this statement we think you could be attacked for simply being in a different post code to your own.

Trident has also done work with the east London grime group, Roll Deep. They made a song called Badman on behalf of Trident. It had a huge number of downloads and loads of young people listened to it. But even with this success it doesn't mean young people actually took on the anti-gun crime message of the song. Despite this, we think music is still a good way to get through to gun users.

Steve explained that it's important for Trident to use rappers who promote a positive message and help change the culture of being bad to being cool. "Doing this is a big cultural shift but maybe the ball could slowly start rolling. As the message by 50 Cent in Get Rich or Die Trying isn't the best message for young people so maybe the recording companies could take responsibility so these people don't get contracts".

One of Trident's aims is to target young people before they get to an age where they're getting involved in violent crime by helping them to understand the consequences of gun crime. Steve points out that "the reality of gun crime is nothing like the films or computer games, as one bullet can kill you and you can't decide where that bullet is going to go. But the debate for these schemes is how young do you go to help young people avoid gun crime, and you want young people to be aware but not frightened." We believe it is important to intervene at an early age so young people don't see gangs and violence as a glamorous aspiration. This is what often leads to young people taking each other's lives.

About this article

This article is part of a series about gun crime in London. It was produced by Arran Sinclair, 17, Odaka Olugu, 14 and Antonio Akue, 14. It was published on the [BBC London](#) website.

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