

Gangs: What's the attraction?

Four young reporters from a Headliners project in west London investigate the growing problem of teenagers being involved in gangs.

26 young people were killed in gun or knife crime in London in 2007. Many people are putting the blame on gangs. So the question is why are so many people interested in joining gangs today?

Peer pressure and wanting to look 'bad' are two of the reasons, but during our investigation, one thing seemed to stand out. Young people are searching for some kind of family unit.

Chris Saed is a youth worker at Sulgrave Youth Club, a place that gives young people something to do during the weeknights and keeps them from falling into things like gangs.

"I think what gangs offers you in comparison to a family are security and protection. Being in a gang means you always have someone watching your back, and people that feel they don't have that protection and support at home will look elsewhere for it.

Michael Lewis is another youth worker. "There are many reasons to why young people get into gangs. The main reason is just to have friends. Peer pressure can lead people into a situation where there is a need to feel like you belong to something. It can seem like a family, not all families are good though, but some are. It depends on what your gang does. You could be in a gang that helps old people across the road. A youth club is a gang, but not a negative one."

Once you're in a gang it can be hard to break free. But 22-year-old Kemar did. "At the time I was a kid, a gang was just being bad, troubling people, not to the full extent of stabbing someone but obviously harming them. Punching or kicking them; belittling them in front of people.

"We didn't have guns or knives. We were actually scared to use knives. It was only the few that used knives to make a big point, and this isn't going back too long ago. But we were scared most of the time. We weren't really troublemakers we were just doing it to fit in.

"I doubt gangs will fade away. People always want to fit in and even if it's in the bad or wrong crowd or the right crowd, people just want to fit in.

"A friend of mine is in prison, He's older than me but he's in a gang and he's still got that gang mentality. I managed to get out, but he stayed in, and now he's in prison for stabbing someone and really truly it was over nothing it was over a status. The guy said 'oh I'm badder than you, he's badder than you' so he stabbed him. Now that's it. His life is screwed up, if he comes out now he can't get a job, he can't have a proper life he's going to be trapped for the rest of his life.

"If any young person came to me for advice, I'd just tell them don't go into a gang. Seriously, gangs are just not worth it. Because when you reach my age you won't have anything to look back on, or have nothing to live off. You won't have education you won't have a job, you won't have money, you will be constantly on job seekers allowance, and I know how much that is; that's £90 every two weeks and that's ridiculous."

It seems that gangs come in different shapes and forms and not all are bad. Some are there to support and back up kids and teens like families. But choose the gang you pick carefully because you could be getting yourself into a sticky situation.

[Watch the video the reporters made](#)

About this article

This article was written by Jaclyn Adu-Sarkode, 12, Nataleigh Taylor, 15, Alysha Lonergan, 11 and Samsam Farah, 15, from west London.

Comments

gangs

its hard for adults to understand why us youth join gangs. you were once teens yes but times change so that arguement for understanding what we go through is invalid. there are many reasons why us youth seek out gangs. only youth can understand youth and it is very hard for an adult to grasp the full reality of our world. when i am older and an adult it will be the same. times change.

sweet (age 16) from south east london, 22 July 2010 10:58

£££££££

why do they join gangs? is it something big? well no, you just get killed.

gangzz (age 12) from sheffield, 09 June 2010 15:44

why people joining gangs

Hey - this article might be of use

http://www.headliners.org/storylibrary/stories/2008/girl_gangs

rebecca frankel from london, 01 June 2010 12:17

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