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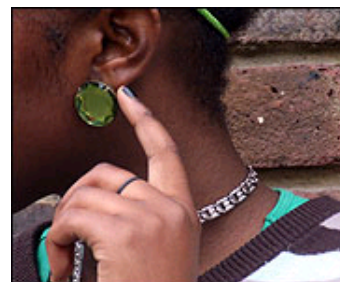
Girl Gangs in South London

When the media look at teenage gangs the focus is often on young males, but there are many females with strong links to gangs too. Marie Abbott, 14, and Belinda Matande, 14, look at how the support and protection gangs offer can be a big attraction to young girls.

Can gangs be positive as well as negative? The media puts across that gangs are all criminals and that they are all about danger but the truth is gangs can be about love as well as hate.

Roxy, 15, has been a member of two major gangs in south London for the last year and a half. We spoke to her about what it feels like to be in a gang.

You only join a gang if you know you're going to be protected; I don't see it as being in a gang; its more like a family, she says.



One way gangs are like families is that most members have older or younger. Kearna, 16, is linked to a few different gangs in south London and as an older she has responsibility for certain younger people in the gang.

If my younger has a problem she will come to me and I will help her. I have helped her when a boy was harassing her and anytime she has a problem, I'm the first person she calls. It's more like I'm her older sister than her friend.

For Roxy, part of the attraction of gangs as a girl is the sense of protection she gets. If I was raped I would be assured that that person would get what they deserve, the gang would definitely want to confront them in a violent way. I trust the gang more than I do the police to bring the person to justice. If I wasn't in a gang I wouldn't feel safe.

But she is also aware that there are dangers as well as benefits. One of the risks comes from how available drugs are in gangs. I smoke green and I've taken coke before.

"Every time I'm out with my gang there are at least five people taking drugs because you can get them cheaper through your connections.

Kearna says that violence is the other main danger: A lot of fights happen and a lot of people in gangs carry weapons. I know a few people that have been shot or stabbed before.

Both Roxy and Kearna think that if there were some other adults they could trust they wouldn't have to rely so much on gangs for support.

As Roxy says: I'm going to continue to be a part of a gang because it makes me feel wanted and protected.

About this article

This article was written by Belinda Matande, 14, and Marie Abbott, 14 as part of Bexley Summer University 2008.

Names have been changed.

Comments

being in gangs

i think being in gangs is wrong because you can be killed.you can not join to be protected.

jacqueline.opoku (age 16) from hackney, 23 July 2009 12:42

Girl Gangs

I think that there shouldnt be girls gangs full stop. If you cant fight with your fist then dont fight at all..

Weapons are a cowards way of putting a point across.

The police are here for a reason... use them!!!

You dont need a tight group of girls to protected your self. You family friends and forces are there for that also!!!

Jodie from Birmingham, 04 July 2009 07:04

I LOVE XBOX

I LOVE THE XBOX 360

Harry Clark (age 15) from NHM, 21 January 2009 12:10

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