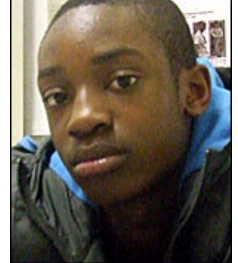


How can we stop the madness?

With so much focus on gun and knife crime and the media's focus on adult perspectives of it, Headliners reporters decided to go straight to the people more likely to have the answers. We spoke to two young people referred to Hackney Youth Offending Team to find out why gun and knife crime has increased in the last few years.

Some young people claim they carry a knife for protection, but is it fear or fashion? 17-year-old Terry, who has been referred to Hackney Youth offending Team, thinks it has more to do with current trends: "Certain people these days, if you look at man wrong you get poked. It's not even long; man will just poke you."



The mentality for a lot of young people is you can either be a somebody or a nobody. It's often the victim who is the nobody and the perpetrator who is somebody. As Kevin, 17, said for some people it's about reputation: "You might have a boy that's shanking up everyone so it's like he's the new king in town. Someone else might come along and yank him up quickly and take that king. One of them ones."

But as Kevin also pointed out it's only a minority of young people who think carrying a knife makes you a bigger person: "Certain people carry it just like a fashion statement to say 'Yeah, look I've got a knife, I've got a knife, I've got a gun.' But obviously, if you've got hard beef with someone and someone's gonna do you damage when they catch you (then) you need to carry it. Cos it's either me or you and I don't wanna die."

The mentality for some 21st Century youth is if someone violates you then you feel the urge to take someone's life. Today's generation think that if you leave someone hurt they will come back for you. Whereas if you kill someone it is less likely that someone will come after you.

It's often been said that peer pressure is one of the factors that leads to young people carrying weapons. Yet as Terry said: "That peer pressure sh*t's a joke, man. I don't like people that get peer pressure, make people tell them to do something. You're your own person out here. No one can send me out to go rob a house or do something to kill someone."

Whilst talking to Kevin and Terry at Hackney's Youth Offending service we realised there was one factor that most things they said came down to, something key in day-to-day life; communication & trust. Could communication and trust be the way to stop the madness?

The young people felt strongly that a communication barrier existed between them and a particular group of people in society - the upper classes such as politicians and the government. Kevin said: "Personally I don't like them. What can we tell them that they're gonna listen to." Terry agreed: "They'll just listen to us for as long as they have to."

We felt that one of the main reasons for the increase in gun and knife crime is that everyone is growing up too fast and being exposed to things they shouldn't be, for example Kevin told us: "You can buy pellet guns and obviously you can turn them into real guns. I've bought bare pellet guns even when I was younger than what I am now. The shopkeepers don't care as long as they're getting their money, they're easy. They'll even try and charge you extra because you're a kid and their selling it to you."

Gun and knife crime wasn't brought to the surface until young people became adults quicker, which is why it's now more exposed. Some teenagers are acting in a reckless way and it looks like this will be a problem for a long time.

The names of the young people in this article have been changed.

About this article

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