

# TRAPPED



**CRIME SCENE DO NOT ENTER**

A MAGAZINE ABOUT  
GUN GANG AND  
KNIFE CRIME

# EDITORIAL

This magazine has been produced by young people from Mellor Community Primary School Leicester, Thomas Estley Community College Leicestershire, Leicester Youth Offending Service and HMYOI Glen Parva.

Questions, ideas and opinions were passed from the school participants to the young offenders who used this to inform the work they produced.

The work was all based around the issues of gun, gang and knife crime.

Young offenders were keen to present their experiences of the consequences of crime as opposed to the sometimes more glamorised perceptions presented through the media. For example, what many of the young offenders might see as hanging round on a street corner with a group of friends - which may involve committing crime - is often seen by others as being a gang with all the preconceived ideas that come with this.

The young offenders we worked with gave less evidence of having been involved in the use of guns but the carrying and use of knives - both being used by them and against them - was a common occurrence.

Everyone involved in making this magazine hope that the experiences shared by young people - how things can quickly escalate, often with unintended consequences - will help other young people to ensure that they make the right choices in the future.



# A DAY OF MADNESS

It all started as a normal day. I was at my dad's house having a few beers with my best mate. We knew we had to go and see someone who we had given drugs to on tick to pick some money up. As we walked to meet him we stopped off at the shops for more drinks on the way. We got more and more drunk and then arrived at the house where we were meant to meet him. I went around to the back door while my mate went to the front.

I knocked on the back door and it was answered by another lad. I asked this lad for the number of the lad we were meant to meet. "I haven't got it" he told me. I knew this was a lie because he'd given it to me the day before.

We started to argue with each other and within a second the lad had pulled out a kitchen knife and came towards us. We grappled with him on the floor and got stabbed in the hands in the process but I managed to get the knife off him and I started to stab him. As he lay there in a puddle of blood we left and ran to a house where we would be safe. Or so we thought....

It wasn't long before our phones started going off. It was our friends and family asking what we had done and why the police were doing door-to-door searches looking for us. Very quickly the police found out where we were and we were arrested for GBH. We were remanded for seven months before being found guilty of GBH and sentenced to two years.

If I had not been selling drugs and drinking that day I would not be in jail now for stabbing him. My message to other young people would be to stay away from crime and make the right choices in life.



# ANDY'S



**My name is Andy and this is my story. I had everything, good job, great family, great friends and I was engaged to be married in August 2012 then it all went bad. It was just a stupid drunken mistake.**

**It was a normal night out for me, nothing out of the ordinary, just a couple of drinks with the lads.**

**Who would have known that I wasn't going to be sleeping in my own bed for the next year and a half? It all happened so quickly I just lost control for a spilt second and now I'm doing 18 months for GBH. That's 18 months away from my friends and family that I'm never going to get back!**

# STORY

**It doesn't make you big and it doesn't make you clever coming to prison. It's a very dark place to live your life.**

**A man said to me 'It doesn't matter how big or hard you think you are, when a 2 year old passes you a phone you answer it!'**

**As a nice person you should be planning a life for yourself not spending it behind bars with no freedom. It's no way to spend the last of your teen years. Remember you're never going to get those years back!**

**DON'T WASTE THEM!**

# GUNS: MY REALITY

**Comments from an inmate of Glen Parva YO1 who has recently served in Afghanistan with the British Armed Forces**

When I joined the Army I was pretty excited about getting a gun. I thought 'wicked!' Now I feel differently about it. Guns are very dangerous. They are not toys. They are there for a purpose like a bird of prey is to a falconer. They are there to protect people and as a soldier my gun was there to protect me. When I first trained to use a gun I thought 'I can see myself killing someone'. Until you've done it you don't know what it's like. I've had to kill people - sometimes young people and sometimes adults - and I've thought 'they probably have sons like me'. My best friend was shot and he died in my arms. We are all just humans at the end of the day.

I was trained physically and mentally for the job I had to do. I killed people and even with my training I am full of regrets and doubts. I am still suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and I will always have flashbacks and nightmares. I know people who have come back from Afghanistan who have hanged themselves. That's because of the guilt they have suffered taking someone else's life. People think they are big running around with guns in this country. Teenagers take everything for granted and don't understand what people like me have gone through for them. They think it's all a game. It's not.



# Q&A

## **Specially Trained Police Officers from the firearms department of Leicestershire Police answer questions from young offenders**

*When you stop and arrest us at gunpoint do you think it is necessary to be as threatening as you are?*

Armed officers will only point weapons at people when they perceive a significant threat to themselves or others. They have to be very clear in their commands and instructions to you so you are left in no doubt what they are asking you to do. They are trained to make decisions by using what is called the national decision making model, to understand this model you would need to do your own research by simply doing an internet search on THE NATIONAL DECISION MAKING MODEL.

*Why do you send armed officers into our houses and point guns in our faces when there is no threat of us being armed?*

Armed officers will only be sent to incidents where the lead officer feels that officers may have to protect themselves or others from a person who:

- is in possession of, or has immediate access, to a firearm or other potentially lethal weapon, or
- is so dangerous that armed response is considered to be appropriate; or
- for the destruction of animals which are dangerous or suffering unnecessarily.

*When do you think it is ok to pull the trigger?*

When I believe there is an immediate threat to life and there is no other option available to me having explored every option and contingency that there is.

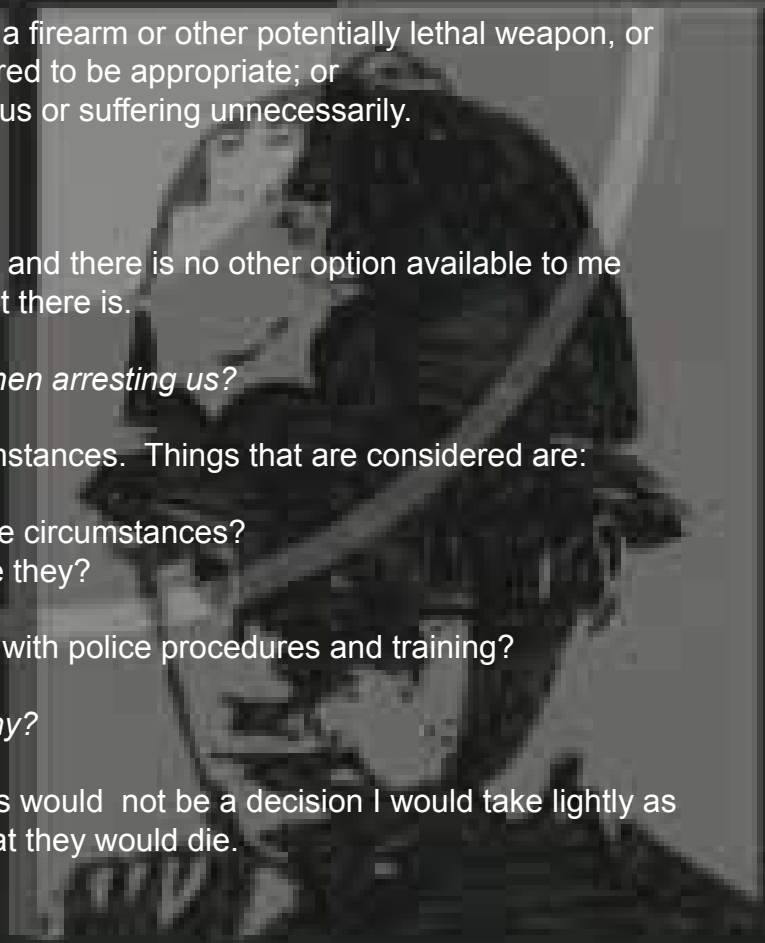
*Why do you think it's ok to use excessive force when arresting us?*

The use of force must be reasonable in the circumstances. Things that are considered are:

- was the use of force lawful?
- was the degree of force used proportionate to the circumstances?
- were other options considered? If so, what were they?
- why were these other options discounted?
- was the method of applying force in accordance with police procedures and training?

*Would you ever shoot an unarmed person and why?*

Yes, if I perceived an immediate threat to life. This would not be a decision I would take lightly as the realistic outcome of me shooting anyone is that they would die.





# GANGBAMA

'We used to just hang around on the same street every day. People thought we were a gang.'

'There are girls boys now. Some really

'Where I'm from everyone is in gangs. You feel protected. If you're not in a gang you're a victim.'

'The ju are a we a partic

'You have to keep up your re if you have been in a gang sometimes you don't wa

'There are more of you when you're in a gang. You are part of a community of like-minded people.'

'Being in a g influenced to It

DANGER



# WIGS

gangs as well as  
one of the girls are  
/ bad.'

judges try to make out we  
all in gangs just because  
are all hanging around a  
cular area with nothing to  
do.'

reputation  
, even if  
nt to.'

gang means you usually get  
do stuff you don't want to do.  
's peer pressure.'

'It's hard to escape the criminal  
lifestyle once you get involved. If  
you get sent to prison it's hard to  
get a job when you get out so you  
just get back into whatever you  
were doing before to try and make  
money. Then you end up back  
inside.'

'Young kids who get involved in  
gangs are doing stuff that should  
be well above their age group.  
They do some bad stuff to try and  
impress older ones. When they  
get older where do they go then?  
It just gets worse.'

POLICE LINE

POLICE LINE

# TRUE PAIN

*Now I've been in prison for 3 months, I got sent down in August. Later that day after my sentencing my brother was stabbed in the neck. Before this he had been stabbed 15 times all over his body, his neck, his left eye, his chest and his legs and he was on a life support machine. My friends and family kept it away from me because they know I would have mentally broken down. I recently found out that it's happened again and this wasn't as bad as before but he'd been stabbed in his voice-box and he may never speak again. As soon as I found out sudden tears were flowing down my eyes. Now I knew why everyone kept it away from me...*



# GANGS

A

*life*

I'm reporting from Glen Parva and I'm talking to John who's in for a gang related crime. How did you get involved in a gang?

I got involved through smoking weed and drinking which led to me beating someone up for money.

**FULL**

*of*

What do you miss most about life on the outside?

Overall I would say freedom of choice: freedom to see my family and girlfriend, to see friends, to eat what I like and live in a clean house.

**REGRETS**

*is*

What do you see as your future when you get out?

Being in prison has taught me not to be in gangs any more because I would prefer to have a job, be my own person and be independent.

**NO**

*life*

What advice would you give to the younger generation about gangs?

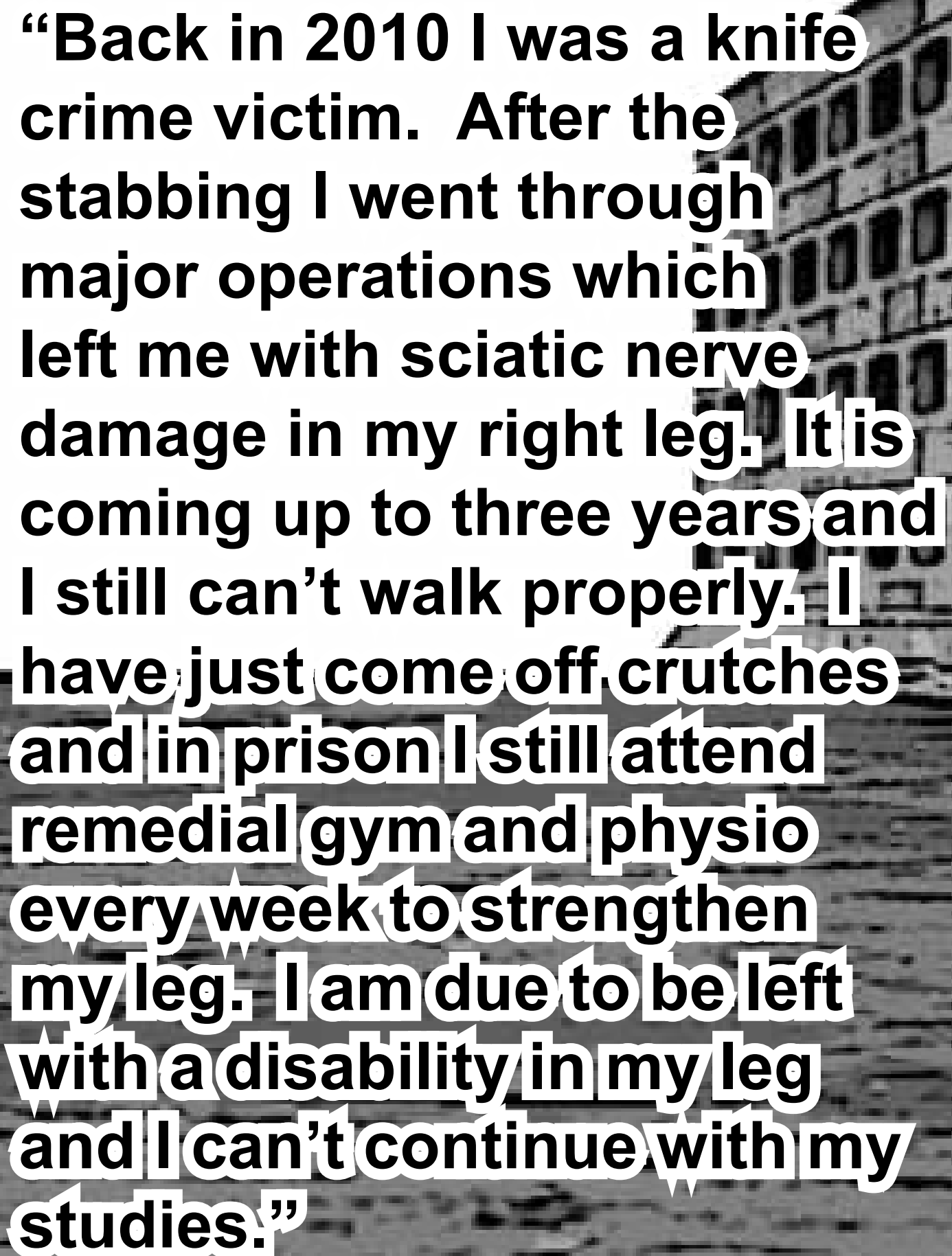
Gangs can be a mixed bag. They can be good in part for socialising, growing up and learning skills but also bad because of peer pressure and stereotyping. You need to learn to walk away.

**AT**

*all.*







**“Back in 2010 I was a knife crime victim. After the stabbing I went through major operations which left me with sciatic nerve damage in my right leg. It is coming up to three years and I still can’t walk properly. I have just come off crutches and in prison I still attend remedial gym and physio every week to strengthen my leg. I am due to be left with a disability in my leg and I can’t continue with my studies.”**



# UPBRINGING

My name is Jake. I'm currently serving a five year sentence at HMYOI Glen Parva for burglary. About nine years ago my mum passed away and a lot of people thought that was the reason I started committing crimes, but my upbringing was perfect. I had a lovely family, a mum and dad and an older sister and when my mum died if anything it made me want to behave even better than I was. But then I met a group of boys in my area who were getting into trouble with the police. I thought this was cool but that was the worst move I ever made. I wanted to impress these boys by doing bigger and badder things which I did and for a while it did impress them. All the money, the partying, the cars - but after a while I realised it wasn't that great. I got beaten up all the time for burgling people.

Then I started getting arrested but I didn't go to prison. I thought I was invincible but one day the police knocked and arrested me and from that day I haven't seen a member of my family as I have been in prison for 20 months and it is a 400 mile round trip from everyone I know and love. What a bad mistake I made trying to show off.

This is real life: I get told what to do and when to do it, I have no choice in the matter. At 7 o'clock at night I get locked in a tiny cell, end of. I just wish I didn't do the things I have done.

It's the biggest regret of my life.

I have now served 20 months out of 30 that I have to serve and now I'm scared to walk out of the prison gates into freedom - it's not just as easy as going into and coming out of prison. If you think about getting involved with a group doing bad things because it seems exciting, think about what I have written.



A man with dark hair and a beard is sitting on a green couch in a room. He is looking down and to the side with a thoughtful expression. In the background, there is a television on a stand and a window with a view of a green landscape. The room has a simple, lived-in feel.

# BIG QUESTIONS

If you think you may be heading towards being in my situation you need to start changing your life. Ask yourself the questions I wish I'd asked myself before it was too late. Be honest with yourself.

Why do you do what you do?

Who are you trying to impress and why?

How much do you value your life?

# TRAPPED



Produced by Soft Touch Arts Ltd.  
 This project is financed by the Home Office through the  
 'Communities Against Gangs, Guns and Knives' Fund 2012  
 This magazine can be found online at [www.soft-touch.org.uk](http://www.soft-touch.org.uk)



Project funded by:

Printed by Print Revolution Ltd on a waterless DI press using vegetable based inks on sustainable sourced paper that has been carbon balanced.

