
Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest

John Pitts

Vauxhall Professor of Socio-legal Studies,
University of Bedfordshire

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About the Author

John Pitts is Vauxhall Professor of Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Bedfordshire. He was born and brought up in Walthamstow. He has worked as a printer, a cab driver a freelance journalist, a 'special needs' teacher, a street and club-based youth worker, a residential social worker, a youth justice development officer, a group worker in a Young Offender Institution, a trainer of workers in youth justice, a consultant to workers in youth justice and youth social work, legal professionals and the police in the UK, mainland Europe, Trinidad and Tobago, the Russian Federation and China.

His research includes studies of:

- The differential treatment of black and white young people in the youth justice system of England and Wales
- How social workers manage dangerous and self-damaging young people
- The responses of French and English professionals to child abuse and youth crime and disorder
- The violent victimisation of school students in Merseyside and East London.
- Inter-racial youth violence in a London borough.
- The independent effects of permanent exclusion from school on the criminal careers of young people
- The impact of youth work interventions on the life chances of socially excluded young people in Berlin (Germany), Den Helder (Holland), Anderlecht (Belgium) Palermo (Italy) and Hertfordshire
- The contribution of detached and outreach youth work to the life chances of socially excluded young people in England and Wales
- An Anglo-Finnish comparison of child and youth incarceration

His publications include:

- *Working With Young Offenders*, BASW/Macmillan (1999),
- *Positive Child Protection: A View From Abroad*, (with K. Baistow, A. Cooper R Hetherington & A. Spriggs) Russell House Publishing (1995),
- *Preventing School Bullying* (with P. Smith) Home Office (1995),
- *Planning Safer Communities*, (with A. Marlow) Russell House (1998)
- *Positive Residential Practice: Learning the Lessons of the 1990s*. (with D. Crimmens) Russell House (2000)
- *The New Politics of Youth Crime: Discipline or Solidarity* Macmillan (2001)
- *Crime Disorder and Community Safety*, (with R. Matthews) Routledge, (2001)
- *The Russell House Companion to Working with Young People*, (with F. Factor & V. Chauchun) Russell House (2001)
- *Reaching Socially Excluded Young People*, (with D. Crimmens, F. Factor T. Jeffs, C. Pugh, J. Spence & P. Turner) National Youth Agency, (2004)
- *The Russell House Companion to Youth Justice*, (with T. Bateman) Russell House (2005)
- *Othring the Brothers*, (with Suzella Palmer), Youth and Policy (2006)

He is a member of the editorial boards of:

- *The Community Safety Journal*
- *Youth Justice*
- *Youth and Policy*
- *Juvenile Justice Worldwide* (UNESCO)
- *Safer Society* (Nacro)

‘Everybody on the street
knows they’re going to lose, it’s just
that we don’t know how to win.’

(Key Informant KI.07 Waltham Forest)

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Introduction

This report, compiled between September 2006 and March 2007, brings together data from two surveys, 54 interviews with 'key informants': professionals, local residents and young people involved with, or affected by, youth gangs. Key informants are marked like this **(KI.01)** in the text to indicate the source of the information. However, the report also draws on the many insights I have gained from informal conversations at Waltham Forest YOT over the period. The interview and survey data is augmented by a literature review. Some of the material presented here is straightforward reportage, but some of it is more speculative, based on inferences or hunches drawn from what respondents have said or what I have read. So when, in the text, I write 'it appears' or 'it is said', I am drawing on hearsay and hunches or making an inference that seems plausible to me but is not necessarily a cast-iron fact. As such, these kinds of assertions or conclusions should be read with caution. In the interests of anonymity this report does not name the key informants; yet without them this study would have been impossible. They were always welcoming and generous with their time and their contributions invariably perceptive and thoughtful. I offer them all my sincere thanks for this. Alice Ansell of Waltham Forest YOT organised most of these interviews and guided me through the administrative labyrinth. I am extremely grateful for all her hard work, especially since she had at least two other 'day jobs' to be getting on with at the time.

The Aims and Objectives of the Research

Aim I: Understanding:

- ◆ To develop a clearer understanding of the sequence of events which led to the emergence of armed youth gangs in Waltham Forest
- ◆ To develop a clearer understanding of gang structures and the functions performed by gang members at different levels
- ◆ To develop a clearer understanding of the legal and illegal activities of gang members
- ◆ To develop a clearer understanding of the impact of gangs upon:
 - (a) Gang members
 - (a) The families of gang members
 - (b) 'Gang neighbourhoods'
 - (c) Policing
 - (d) The youth service
 - (e) Schools and colleges
 - (f) Young people's social services
 - (g) Youth and adult criminal justice services

Aim II: Analysis

- ◆ To develop an analysis of the key factors precipitating the emergence of violent, armed, youth gangs in Waltham Forest
- ◆ To develop an analysis of how these gangs are sustained, with a particular focus upon the role of narcotics and inter-gang rivalry
- ◆ To develop an analysis of the functions, rewards and incentives associated with gang membership
- ◆ To develop an analysis of 'gang careers', with a particular focus upon the factors precipitating onset and desistance from gang involvement
- ◆ To test this analysis with relevant experts:
 - Mr. Tim Bateman*, Snr. Policy Officer Nacro
Youth Crime Section
 - Professor Andrew Cooper*, The Tavistock Institute
 - Professor John Hagedorn*, University of Illinois
at Chicago
 - Professor Roger Matthews*, London South Bank
University
- ◆ To test this analysis with the 'key informants', the interviewees, who provided the information on which it is based.

Aim III: International Literature Review

- ◆ To investigate successful interventions with violent, armed, youth gangs in the UK, Mainland Europe, and the USA
- ◆ To identify the key elements of these interventions and the social, cultural and organisational contexts in which they had their greatest impact
- ◆ To identify those that might constitute part of an intervention strategy in Waltham Forest

Aim IV: Recommendations

- ◆ To present, on the basis of this understanding and analysis of the situation in Waltham Forest, and the material on intervention gathered in the literature review, recommendations for a multi-agency response to the gang problem in Waltham Forest.

Methodology

- ◆ Collection and analysis of data held by relevant local agencies/services/organisations, regional bodies and central government
- ◆ Semi-structured interviews with key informants: ie professionals and local citizens routinely involved with gang members or who experience the consequences of gangs and gang violence in Waltham Forest (to include professionals and managers in the YOT, the Police, the Youth Service and Education, Drug Specialists, Community Safety Officers and Neighbourhood Wardens) (see appendix I.)
- ◆ Semi-structured interviews with local residents in gang neighbourhoods (see appendix I.)
- ◆ Semi-structured interviews with young people affiliated to gangs (see appendix I.)
- ◆ Semi-structured interviews with young people not affiliated to gangs but living in, or adjacent to, gang neighbourhoods (see appendix I.)
- ◆ The administration of a gang gravity inventory (see appendix II.)
- ◆ The administration of a YOT caseload survey (see appendix III)

1. Explaining and Defining Gangs

The gang is an escalator.

(Terence Thornbury, 1998)

The Gang and the City

Youth gangs have existed throughout recorded history and, as far as we know, everywhere in the world (Pearson, 1983, Hagedorn, 2007). However, the systematic study of youth gangs only began in the United States in the early part of the 20th Century. These early studies, conducted in Chicago by Frederick Thrasher (1963) and Robert Park (1929), were primarily concerned with the impact of migration on the 'ecology' of the city and the apparent 'social disorganisation' of migrant families. They found that second generation migrant youth often formed gangs and that these gangs often broke the law. However, the researchers believed that, like the social disorganisation that supposedly blighted the lives of migrant families, gangs were a temporary phenomenon that would be remedied, over time, by acculturation to, and assimilation into, the social and economic mainstream.

The Gang and the Social Structure

The idea that the 'social disorganisation' which generated street gangs was a property of particular migrant groups at a particular stage in their social and cultural development was challenged in the 1960s by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin of the Columbia School of Social Work, NYC. In *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960) they explored the factors that produced different kinds of gangs in different kinds of neighbourhoods. They concluded that what they called the 'organised slum' produced criminal gangs while the 'disorganised slum' produced fighting gangs. And this, they argued, was because although both groups were denied legitimate opportunity, the organised slum had a well-developed criminal hierarchy that was linked into organised crime and maintained mutually beneficial relationships with the police, the Democratic Party political machine and City Hall. In short, 'the fix was in'. The 'disorganised slum', by contrast, was not 'connected' in this way, and so the only route to status was via physical prowess and illegitimate opportunity consisted of low-level opportunist street crime. Reading between the lines of *Delinquency and Opportunity* it is clear that, while the organised slum is inhabited by poor Whites, the disorganised slum is home to African and Hispanic Americans. The work of Cloward & Ohlin suggests that to understand the gang, we must understand the social and economic conditions and the criminal, political and administrative structures that foster its

emergence and growth and, within this, the crucial role played by race and ethnicity.

Building on the work of Cloward & Ohlin, in *Getting Paid* (1989), Mercer Sullivan tracked three groups of lower class adolescents from the Bronx; Hispanic Americans, African Americans and White Americans, through their adolescent years. Whereas at 14 and 15 they were all involved in similar kinds of legal and illegal activity, by their late teens, most of the White youngsters had been absorbed into reasonably paid, unionised, skilled and semi-skilled work, effectively unavailable to non-white, 'non-connected', applicants. The Hispanic young people either ended up in short-term, low paid work, on dead-end training schemes, unemployed or working in illicit 'chop shops', re-cycling stolen car parts. By their late teens, the African Americans were either involved in lower-level public service jobs, as a result of the remaining vestiges of the Kennedy/Johnson 'affirmative action' programmes, or in crack-dealing street gangs. What Sullivan shows is that opportunity, both legal and illegal, is crucially demarcated by social class and ethnicity and, like Cloward & Ohlin, that those denied legitimate opportunity have a heightened propensity to join street gangs.

The importance of these studies is that they throw light on the circumstances that foster the emergence and growth of youth gangs and suggest how we might intervene to address or ameliorate these circumstances. However, by the early 1980s US gangs, and the way people thought about them, were beginning to change.

The 1980s saw the collapse of manufacturing industry in the industrial towns of the American West and Mid-West, what came to be called the *Rust Belt*, and the massive influx of low-priced opiates into poor neighbourhoods (Hagedorn, 1988/98). As the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells has observed, in this period, poor neighbourhoods became the shop floor of the international drug economy. As the drugs business grew, so too did the size and the number of drug-dealing street gangs.

Whereas, in 1975, Walter B. Miller found that six of the twelve largest US cities had a major gang problem, research by Irving Spergel and David Curry in the early 1990s revealed that the problem had now spread to ten of the twelve cities. Moreover Spergel and Curry (1993) found increases in gang activity in cities of all sizes, with a remarkable 63% increase in the far smaller '*new gang cities*'. By the mid-1990s, chapters of what had originally been the Los Angeles-based '*Crips*' and '*Bloods*' could be found in 45 other cities, mainly in the Mid-West and the West. While official accounts of the gang problem are often at pains to obscure its racial

dimension, the gangs in the new gang cities were overwhelmingly Black and Hispanic. In the USA, as in Europe, it was non-white, non-indigenous and migrant youth, who bore the brunt of de-industrialisation and who came to populate the burgeoning street gangs.

Defining the Gang

As the number of street gangs grew and their activities changed, so too did the numbers of people studying gangs and the nature of these studies. Whereas earlier studies were 'appreciative', the new gang studies were decidedly 'correctional' (Matza, 1969) and, unsurprisingly the definitions they generated emphasised the 'criminality' of the gang. Critics, like veteran gang academic James Short (1965, 1997), have argued that the central place accorded to crime in these definitions projects too narrow and simplistic a picture of the gang and the motivations of gang members. However, the tide had turned and now, scholarly research was part of the fight against the gangs, which was, in turn, a key element in Ronald Reagan's *War On Drugs*

Thus, Walter B. Miller's (1982) influential, scholarly definition of the gang:

A group of recurrently associating individuals with identifiable leadership and internal organisation, identifying with or claiming control over territory in the community, and engaging either individually or collectively in violent or other forms of illegal behaviour.

... has strong echoes of the Chicago Municipal Criminal Code definition which describes the gang as:

Any ongoing organisation, association in fact or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its substantial activities the commission of criminal gang activity, and whose ... members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity.'

Currently influential definitions in the UK place a similar emphasis upon *criminality, durability, territoriality* and *structure* (see fig. 1.1 below). The US/European/UK *Eurogang* network, for example, having wrestled with the concept of the 'gang' for a number of years, eventually plumped for the term *Delinquent Youth Group* (Home Office, 2006).

Young people spend time in groups of three or more. The group spends a lot of time in public places. The group has

*existed for 3 months or more. The group has engaged in delinquency or criminal behaviour together in last 12 months
The group has at least one structural feature (a name, an area or a leader)*

The rather more coherent definition developed by UK-based scholars, Hallsworth and Young (2004), to describe English street gangs, or 'urban collectivities', once again bears strong resemblances to these other, earlier, US definitions developed in the shadow of the law (see fig 1.1 below):

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.'

Fig 1.1

Defining the Gang				
	<i>Criminality</i>	<i>Durability</i>	<i>Territoriality</i>	<i>Structural Features</i>
<i>Chicago</i>	X	X		X
<i>Miller</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Eurogang</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>H&Y</i>	X	X	X	X

Hallsworth and Young (2004) also, helpfully, locate the gang on a continuum, thus distinguishing it from other *Urban Collectivities* (see figure 1.2 below)

Fig 1.2

Hallsworth & Young's Three Point Typology of Urban Collectivities
Peer Group: A small, unorganised, transient grouping occupying the same space with a common history. Crime is not integral to their self definition
Gang: A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity
Organised Criminal Group: Members are professionally involved in crime for personal gain operating almost exclusively in the 'grey' or illegal marketplace.

Robert Gordon does something similar, offering a more nuanced differentiation between ostensibly similar youth groupings, all of which are sometimes colloquially described as gangs, (see figure 1.3 below) What Gordon's, Vancouver-based, work also suggests is that definitions may need to be highly specific to particular areas or neighbourhoods if they are to be useful.

Fig 1.3

Robert Gordon's Five Point Typology of Youth Groupings

Youth movements: Are social movements characterised by a distinctive mode of dress or other bodily adornments, a leisure-time preference, and other distinguishing features (e.g. punk rockers).

Youth groups: Are comprised of small clusters of young people who hang out together in public places such as shopping centres

Criminal groups: Are small clusters of friends who band together, usually for a short period of time, to commit crime primarily for financial gain and may contain young and not so young adults as well.

Wannabe groups: Include young people who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups of youths. Wannabees will often claim 'gang' territory and adopt 'gang-style' identifying markers of some kind.

Street gangs: Are groups of young people and young adults who band together to form a semi-structured organisation, the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behaviour or organised violence against rival street gangs. They tend to be less visible but more permanent than other groups.

Criminal business organisations: Are groups that exhibit a formal structure and a high degree of sophistication. They are composed mainly of adults and engage in criminal activity primarily for economic reasons and almost invariably maintain a low profile. Thus while they may have a name, they are rarely visible.

Malcolm Klein (2001) has attempted to deepen current definitions of what Hallsworth & Young call the 'Gang' and Gordon calls the 'Street Gang' by elaborating a five-point typology of street gangs (see figure 1.4 below). He argues that this level of specificity is

Fig. 1.4

Malcolm Klein's Five Point Typology of Street Gangs

The traditional Gang: Has usually been in existence for 20+ years. It has a large membership and a wide age range and almost always claims territory (Turf/'Hood/ Barrio) It is able to regenerate itself and is composed of sub-groups that are often determined by age (Seniors/Juniors) but sometimes by neighbourhood.

The Neotraditional Gang: Is similar to the traditional gang but has been in existence for a shorter period (less than 10 years). It usually contains sub-groups based on age or area but encompasses a smaller age range. It claims and defends territory like a traditional gang.

The Compressed Gang: Is small (less than 50 members). It has no sub-groups, a narrow age range and has been in existence for only a few years.

The Collective Gang: Is like the compressed gang but bigger with a wider age range but no subgroups. It is a 'shapeless mass' of adolescent and young adult members that has not developed the distinguishing characteristics of traditional and neo-traditional gangs

The Speciality Gang: Is narrowly focussed on a few offence types. Its major focus is criminal rather than social. It is small (less than 50 members), has a narrow age range and is less than 10 years old. Its territory is either residential or based on opportunities for particular forms of crime,

necessary because, with the 'globalisation' of the gang phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s, the involvement of youth gangs in far more serious, usually drug-related, crime and the consequent links they have forged with organized criminal networks, most earlier definitions fail to grasp the complexities of the contemporary gang phenomenon

To a British eye, Hallsworth & Young's and Gordon's typologies are more readily recognisable. However, when we apply these three typologies to what we know of the Waltham Forest gangs (see appendix 4), we find that Klein's also has considerable explanatory power.

However, none of them captures the complexity and variety of the of the Waltham Forest gangs revealed in the present study and we have therefore devised a new six point typology, derived in part from those of Klein, Gordon and Hallsworth & Young, but with additional ingredients (see figure 1.5 below). We elaborate on this typology in chapter 4., *The Gangs of Waltham Forest*. However, in what follows we are primarily concerned with the first four of these groupings: the *Articulated Super Gang*, the *Street Gang*, the *Compressed Street Gang* and *Wannabee Gangsters*.

Fig 1.5

A Typology Waltham Forest Gangs/Groups
The Articulated Super Gang
The Street Gang
The Compressed Street Gang
The Wannabee Gangsters
The Criminal Youth Group
The Middle Level International Criminal Business Organisation

Why Here, Why Now?

The question of definition notwithstanding, the question of why gangs emerge when and where they do remains an important one, not least because key informants in Waltham Forest believe that gangs have only been evident in the borough within the past decade. This perception is supported by research undertaken by Peter Stelfox (1998), a Superintendent in the Metropolitan Police, in the late 1990s. Having visited the USA and Canada, Stelfox, was unable to find a '*generally agreed definition of a gang which was*

applicable to the UK situation'. He therefore resorted to a far broader definition, describing the gang as:

'Any group which uses violence or the threat or fear of violence to further a criminal purpose, but excluding football hooligans and terrorists'

Although he elicited a remarkable 91.45% response rate from UK police forces, only sixteen of them identified gangs in their areas and this yielded a national total of only 72 gangs. By contrast, a survey conducted by Irving Spergel and David Curry in the USA (1993), utilising a similar methodology but using Miller's far tighter definition, found an estimated 4,881 youth gangs.

The majority of the UK gangs identified by Stelfox comprised adult males in the 25-29 age group. Some gangs spanned a broader age range with a few gang members below the age of 16. These gangs were predominantly white, only 25.4% had members described as 'Black Caribbean', and only 7% of gangs had members who were predominantly from ethnic minority groups. This led Stelfox to conclude that:

'These figures challenge the perception that violent gangs are primarily either a youth problem or one which occurs mainly within ethnic communities. Organisationally the majority of gangs tended towards a loose structure'

(Stelfox, 1998)

Yet, as we note below, within eight years the Metropolitan Police (2006) had identified 169 youth gangs in London alone, many using firearms in furtherance of their crimes and estimated to have been responsible for around 40 murders and 20% of the youth crime in the capital. Clearly, in the intervening period, things had changed and this directs us back to the concerns of those earlier gang studies that endeavoured to discover the conditions for the emergence of urban youth gangs and the factors that sustained them.

2. The Emergence and Growth of Gangs in Waltham Forest

As is always the case in accelerated social transformations, crises get shifted onto the life histories of individuals

(Jurgen Habermas, 1994)

When key informants were asked how long they had been aware of a 'youth gangs' in the borough, almost all of them said less than ten years with a substantial minority placing it at four or five years. If this is so, and we are concerned to find a remedy, we need to understand where they came from.

The Great Reversal

From 1979, the post-war tendency towards a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor was reversed, resulting in the growth of both absolute and relative poverty. Between 1981 and 1991 the number of workers earning half the national average wage or less, the Council of Europe poverty line, rose from 900 000 to 2.4 million. In the same period those earning over twice the national average rose from 1.8 to 3.1 million. In February 1999, the gap between the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the poorest and the richest regions in the UK was the widest in the European Union (Pitts 2003). It was during this period that political commentators strated to talk about the 'Winner-Loser Society', and economists the '30-40-30 Society', portraying the bottom 30% of the population as an unproductive, 'socially excluded', 'underclass'.

A Concentration of Disadvantage

In its report, *Bringing Britain Together*, the government's Social Exclusion Unit (1998) identified 1,370 housing estates in Britain which it characterised as:

...poor neighbourhoods which have poverty, unemployment, and poor health in common, and crime usually comes high on any list of residents' concerns.

Whereas, prior to the 1980s, 40% of heads of households in public housing were aged 65 or over, from the 1980s, 75% of newly formed households entering social housing were headed by someone aged between 16 and 29. A high proportion of these new residents were unemployed, not least because they included a heavy concentration of lone parents. As Malcolm Dean (1997) notes:

Two quite distinct communities are emerging within the sector with quite profound differences in lifestyles and culture. At one end there are the established elderly residents, who have lived in social housing all their lives and who remember a time when having a council home was a desirable goal. At the other end are the new, younger residents, frequently suffering from multiple problems: unemployment, poverty, poor work skills and perhaps mental illness and drug abuse as well.

As a result, whereas at the beginning of the 1980s the average household income of council house residents was 73% of the national average, at the beginning of the 1990s this had fallen to 48%. By 1995, over 50% of what had been council households had no breadwinner (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995). By 1997, 25% of the children and young people under 16 in the UK were living in these neighbourhoods.

Waltham Forest is one of the most deprived London boroughs. Sixty-one of the borough's 'super output' areas are amongst the most deprived 20% in England and Wales and 23 are in the top 5%. Unsurprisingly, most of these areas, located in Cathall, High Street, Leyton, Wood Street, Hoe Street, Leytonstone, Lea Bridge and Valley wards, have particularly high rates of crime in general and street crime and drug dealing in particular, and are home to the Waltham Forest gangs.

Neighbourhood Destabilisation

This income polarisation was mirrored in the housing market. The the *Right to Buy* and *Tenant Incentive Schemes* precipitated a 'secession of the successful' as, increasingly, the economically active vacated what became known as 'social housing' to be replaced by the socially disadvantaged (Page 1993, Hope 1994). As Malcolm Dean (1997) observes:

This happened despite the warnings of housing professionals about the problems which public housing projects generated when they were confined to the poor, the unemployed and the elderly.

This meant that many local authorities, including Waltham Forest, were left with the worst housing stock and the most needy tenants (KI.25, 32,33,34).

In response, at the turn of the century, the housing authorities in Waltham Forest embarked upon an ambitious programme of neighbourhood regeneration on some of the poorest housing estates in the borough. However, this ostensibly positive initiative had the

effect of displacing some established residents to other parts of the borough (KI.25). Meanwhile, between emptying the tower blocks on these estates and their eventual demolition, they were used to house temporary residents, many in acute social need and some with serious drug problems. This served to further weaken ties of kinship and friendship and established mechanisms of informal social control and social support (Page, 1993, KI.25,32,33,34).

Schooling

In their report, *Swimming Against the Tide* (1995), Anne Power and Rebecca Tunstall noted that:

In the most difficult big city areas of rented housing, levels of unemployment were more than three times the average, the concentration of lone parents was four times greater, and the proportion of children obtaining no GCSE passes was over four times the average.'

Educational attainment at GCSE is not spread evenly across the schools in Waltham Forest. In 2003, 69% of pupils in the best performing schools gained five or more A*-C passes at GCSE against a national average of 59.90%. This contrasts with 23% at the poorest performing schools; which tended to be those serving the poorest communities. However, these schools had also borne the brunt of earlier administrative difficulties in Waltham Forest Education Department of a few years before, which resulted in the transfer of educational responsibilities to *EduAction* (KI.10,23). The accompanying turmoil meant that truancy and exclusion escalated and several hundred children and young people fell out of the system altogether, becoming administratively untraceable. It is said that some, at least, of these children eventually gravitated towards the gangs. This already difficult situation was exacerbated by 'meltdown' in Hackney education department (KI.10,40,55), leading some Hackney parents to try to place their children in adjacent Waltham Forest schools. But because these schools were already under pressure, this led to persistent violent confrontations between Hackney and Waltham Forest students in some schools. This then generated even higher levels of exclusion and truancy in the affected schools, and the inevitable corollary, lower levels of attainment. This occurred, moreover, against the backdrop of escalating school exclusion nationally, which was particularly high amongst Black African-Caribbean and Mixed Heritage students (Berridge et al 2001).

Young, Black and Estranged

Although the 1980s and 1990s was a period of considerable upward educational and social mobility within Britain's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, this was paralleled by a worsening of the predicament of large numbers of BME people at the other end of the social and economic scale (Robins 1992; Power & Tunstall, 1995; Pitts, 2001). Loic Wacquant (2004), describing the plight of African Americans, notes that income polarisation within the Black community led to 'the collapse of the ghetto', wherein influential social and political networks fostered by the church and the business community were lost, serving to fracture pre-existing political and racial solidarity and the political power that some 'ghetto' communities were previously able to exert.

By 1995, 40% of African-Caribbeans and 59% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the UK were located in the poorest fifth of the population. This contrasts with only 18% of the White population (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995). In London, by the mid-1990s, up to 70% of the residents on the poorest housing estates were from ethnic minorities (Power & Tunstall 1997) and levels of adult and youth non-employment were amongst the highest in the UK.

Non-employment (unemployment and 'invalidity') is high in Waltham Forest in comparison with other London boroughs and particularly high for people described as 'Black/British' and 'Mixed'. Figure 3.1 (below) gives non-employment rates by race for those of working age in the borough. While it reveals high rates of non-employment for Mixed and Black/British residents in the borough for all age groups, the youth non-employment rates in gang-affected communities are significantly higher, topping 60% on some estates. Taken together with school exclusion and truancy, non-employment put unprecedented numbers of young people, with few if any formal qualifications or job prospects onto the streets of the borough.

Fig. 3.1

Non-employment by Ethnicity As a Percentage of Working Age Population, 2004		
	Male	Female
White	5.3	2.7
Mixed	14.8	15.3
Black/British	20.3	30.3
Source: (Waltham Forest Economic Profile Update, 2005)		

The 'collapse of the ghetto', Wacquant (2004) argues, is followed, by 'hyper-ghettoisation', in which material deprivation, the absence of regulating 'social relations' and the violence associated with the drugs trade leads to an intensification of intra-class and intra-racial crime and violence. However, it is important to remember that in Waltham Forest, while Black and Mixed Heritage young people are over-represented in youth gangs, White and Asian young people sharing a similar social and economic profile and living on the same estates, and in the same neighbourhoods, are also more likely to become involved. This suggests, as we have argued in chapter 1., that the impetus towards gang membership is ultimately determined by the social predicament of gang members rather than their race or ethnicity (Short, 1997, Pitts, 2003)

The Redistribution of Crime and Victimization

The 1992 British Crime Survey (BCS), based on interviews with randomly selected households, indicates that not only had there been a substantial increase in the volume of crime and victimisation in the preceding decade but that there had also been a significant change in its nature and distribution (Hope 1994). Tim Hope (2003) has argued that:

It is no exaggeration to say that we are now two nations as far as criminal victimisation is concerned. Half the country suffers more than four fifths of the total amount of household property crime, while the other half makes do with the remaining 15 per cent.

The neighbourhoods that experienced the greatest changes during this period were on public housing estates, which saw growing concentrations of children, teenagers, young single adults and young single-parent families. Old social ties, constructed of kinship, friendship or familiarity, withered away to be replaced by transience, isolation and mutual suspicion. Neighbours no longer watched out for one another's property or shared amenities. Nor did they approach strangers, rowdy adolescents or naughty children, for fear of reprisals. In their study of one such estate, Tim Hope and Janet Foster (1992) discovered a fivefold increase in burglaries over a three-year period.

Between 1981 and 1991 in Britain, those people most vulnerable to criminal victimisation and those most likely to victimise them were progressively thrown together on the poorest housing estates in Britain. As a result, although overall crime has been dropping steadily in the UK since 1992, crime in areas of acute social deprivation has, in many cases, become far more serious (Bullock & Tilley, 2003, Pitts, 2003)

The crime in these areas is distinctive in several ways. It is:

- **Youthful:** Young people are both victims and perpetrators (Pitts & Hope 1998)
- **Implosive:** It is perpetrated by and against local residents (Lea & Young, 1988, W.J. Wilson, 1989, Bourgeois, 1995, Palmer & Pitts, 2006)
- **Repetitive:** The same people are victimised again and again (Forrester et al, 1990)
- **Symmetrical:** Victims and offenders are similar in terms of age, ethnicity and class (James Q Wilson, 1975, Lea & Young 1988)
- **Violent** The violence is intra-neighbourhood, inter-neighbourhood and inter-racial and takes place in and around schools, and on the street (Pitts, 2003, Palmer & Pitts, 2006)
- **Under-reported:** Victims and perpetrators in the poorest neighbourhoods tend to know one another and the threat of reprisal prevents them from reporting victimisation (Young & Matthews, 1992)
- **Embedded:** Youth offending in these areas tends to intensify because, being denied many of the usual pathways to adulthood, adolescents fail to 'grow out of crime' and so adolescent peer groups transmogrify into 'gangs' and their age-range expands, linking pre-teens with offenders in their 20s and 30s (Hagan, 1993)

Taken together, these factors explain why children and young people living in the borough's poorest estates and neighbourhoods might be pre-disposed to become involved in crime and violence. It does not explain the emergence of violent youth gangs however. To explain this, we need to understand the link that was forged in this period between disaffected young people hanging-out on the streets of Waltham Forest and the international drugs trade. (Hagedorn, 1988/98, Pearson & Hobbs, 2001, Bullock & Tilley 2003).

4. Youth Gangs and the Drugs Market

Today, any crackhead can be a hitman.

(KI.15)

By the late 1990s, heroin, cocaine and crack were flooding into London. Four families dominated organized crime in Waltham Forest and four brothers from one of these families, who lived on the Beaumont Estate, having previously specialised in armed robbery were, like other career criminals of the time, moving into the highly lucrative illicit drugs business (KI.01, KI.07, KI.31). In 2001 the *Beaumont Gang* backed up by the equally violent *Tottenham Man Dem Crew*, the *Harlesden Crew* and, in Hackney, the *Love of Money Crew*, the *Holly Street Boys* and *Mothers Square* made a successful attempt to take control of local drug markets and much else besides (KI.20, KI.31). Such was the strength of this alliance that the *Yardies*, who at that time were making a pitch for domination of the East London drugs business, never gained a foothold in the borough (KI.07). As a result, the *Beaumont Gang*, became the major supplier of narcotics.

In the wake of these battles the local drugs market stabilised, leading to a sharp reduction in armed violence. Indeed, as recently as 2002, the Metropolitan Police still regarded the Borough as a relatively tranquil place, compared with neighbouring boroughs where drug-driven gang violence was on the rise and, ironically, where control of the Waltham Forest drugs market was being decided (KI.05, KI.20, 31).

Then, in 2002, a core member of the Beaumont Gang was robbed by someone from the Oliver Close Gang (OC), who was, in turn, 'bottled' by the brother of the victim. It is likely that the original robbery was related to a dispute over a drugs deal (KI.01). In the ensuing conflict, the *Oliver Close Gang* affiliated with *Chingford Hall* and later the *Boundary Boys* and the *Cathall Gang*, all of whom had 'beefs', smouldering resentments, with the *Beaumont Gang*, about, amongst other things, the way they had muscled in on the drugs business a few years earlier. At this time, these gangs were relatively small, resembling, in some respects, the criminal networks described by Hallsworth & Young (2004), with core groups of around half a dozen and a handful of associates (KI.01, 20).

From a Blag to a Business

Until the late 1980s, small 'firms' of professional criminals in London's East End tended to engage in one-off 'blags', designed to yield a big 'score'. Characteristically, these blags involved robbing banks, post-offices and security vans, or hijacking lorry loads of cigarettes or spirits. Job done, the 'blaggers' would put their feet up

for a few months, usually in all-day 'drinkers', until the money ran out. By the late 1980s, however, improved security meant that it was becoming much harder to rob banks and post offices, and the blaggers turned instead to a new and far more lucrative source of easy money, drugs (Hobbs & Dunningham, 1998, K1.54).

However, unlike the blags of yesteryear, the drugs business is a business, requiring a relatively elaborate division of labour within a large workforce, that must maintain and protect the supply chain; market, package and distribute the product, protect the key players, silence would-be whistle blowers, collect debts and ensure contract compliance. Moreover, it is in the nature of the drugs business that the numbers of people needed to run and protect it will increase until the market reaches saturation point, which it certainly had not by 2004 (Waltham Forest Drugs Audit 2004, 2005). In consequence, in this period, there was a growing demand for young people with the requisite skills and disposition to fill vacancies in this burgeoning illicit labour market (K1.07,31).

A Growing Market

Indeed, in Waltham Forest, the trade in illicit drugs in general, and in opiates in particular, has been growing for the past five years at least. Until recently, however, most arrests and prosecutions have, been for cannabis trafficking and possession. Yet, throughout this period, 'mergers and acquisitions' in the expanding opiates market, normally facilitated by violence, have become commonplace (May, 2004). While drug dealing appears to be what the 2004 *Waltham Forest Community Safety and Drug Audit* describes as a 'high gain/low risk' activity in the borough, more recent police action against drug-dealing gangs has led to more arrests for opiate dealing and seizures of the proceeds. However, the borough's police are only able to deal with the drugs trade locally and, because the problem of class A. drugs has its origins well beyond the confines of Waltham Forest, effective interdiction requires the co-operation of, and hence prioritisation by, national and international policing organisations and Customs and Excise.

The Waltham Forest Drugs Market: The Upper Level

Modern day drugs markets are segmented (see figure 4.1 below: *which uses fictitious names to characterise the various suppliers in the upper level drug market*). In the topmost echelon are the importers and wholesalers. Some of the crack-cocaine that reaches the borough is smuggled in large quantities directly from South America by established London crime families and distributed through their networks of 'franchised' dealers. The other source is Jamaica, where the cocaine business is said to constitute 40% of GDP (Silverman, 1993, Figueroa & Sives, 2002). Cocaine imported

from South America to Jamaica, is sometimes processed there and then exported on to the UK, but almost always in small quantities. Drug mules from Jamaica, and latterly Africa, are the favoured vehicle for this traffic and although the attrition rate, in terms of detection and death, appears high (for several years drug mules constituted around 50% of the women in UK gaols), so much gets through that the trade remains highly profitable. Distribution in the UK tends to be handled by local networks, often with familial or nationality links (Silverman, 1993) and often through crack houses, as has been the case in Waltham Forest (KI.05,07,35).

Most heroin used in the UK comes from Afghanistan via Pakistan. The wholesalers are often involved in a variety of illegal markets: drugs, firearms, people and contraband, as well as illicit financial dealings, like 'Carousel' V.A.T. fraud. Their enterprises are usually integrated into conventional businesses and both the money used to finance the deals, and the proceeds from them, may pass through a labyrinth of legitimate businesses in order to disguise the identities, and maintain the security, of the principal traders (KI.12,31,40,41).

Skunk is produced on UK-based 'farms', often located in apparently innocuous suburban houses, while dance drugs are readily available in the night-time economy, sometimes supplied by the security firms charged with keeping the pubs and clubs they 'police' drug-free.

The Waltham Forest Drugs Market: The Middle Level

At the next level down are the *Faces*; adult members, or close associates of, the four main crime families in Waltham Forest. *Faces* tend to operate in the background, leaving the higher-profile *Elders* in the gangs or crews to make reputations for themselves, but also to take the risks that the achievement of such notoriety involves (KI.07,12,24). John Silverman (1993) offers a succinct account of how the original middle-level London crack market was developed by the now notorious *Face*, Sammy Lewis, (see figure 4.2 below). *Elders or Faces* (aged 17-30). Many of the people drawn into the drugs trade at this level have extensive criminal careers and a penchant for extreme violence; the glue that holds illicit markets together (KI.01,07) Arlacchi, 1998, Pearson & Hobbs, 2001). In Waltham Forest, the *Beaumont Gang* has tended to play this role, selling drugs to other *Faces* and *Elders* on other estates, selling to the *Shotters* (see below) who deal the drugs in the neighbourhoods the gangs control, and the surrounding streets or, quite commonly, charging *Shotters* for selling drugs in the territories they control and offering the protection of their name in return. (KI.17,42).

Fig. 4.1

The Structure of the Waltham Forest Drugs Market

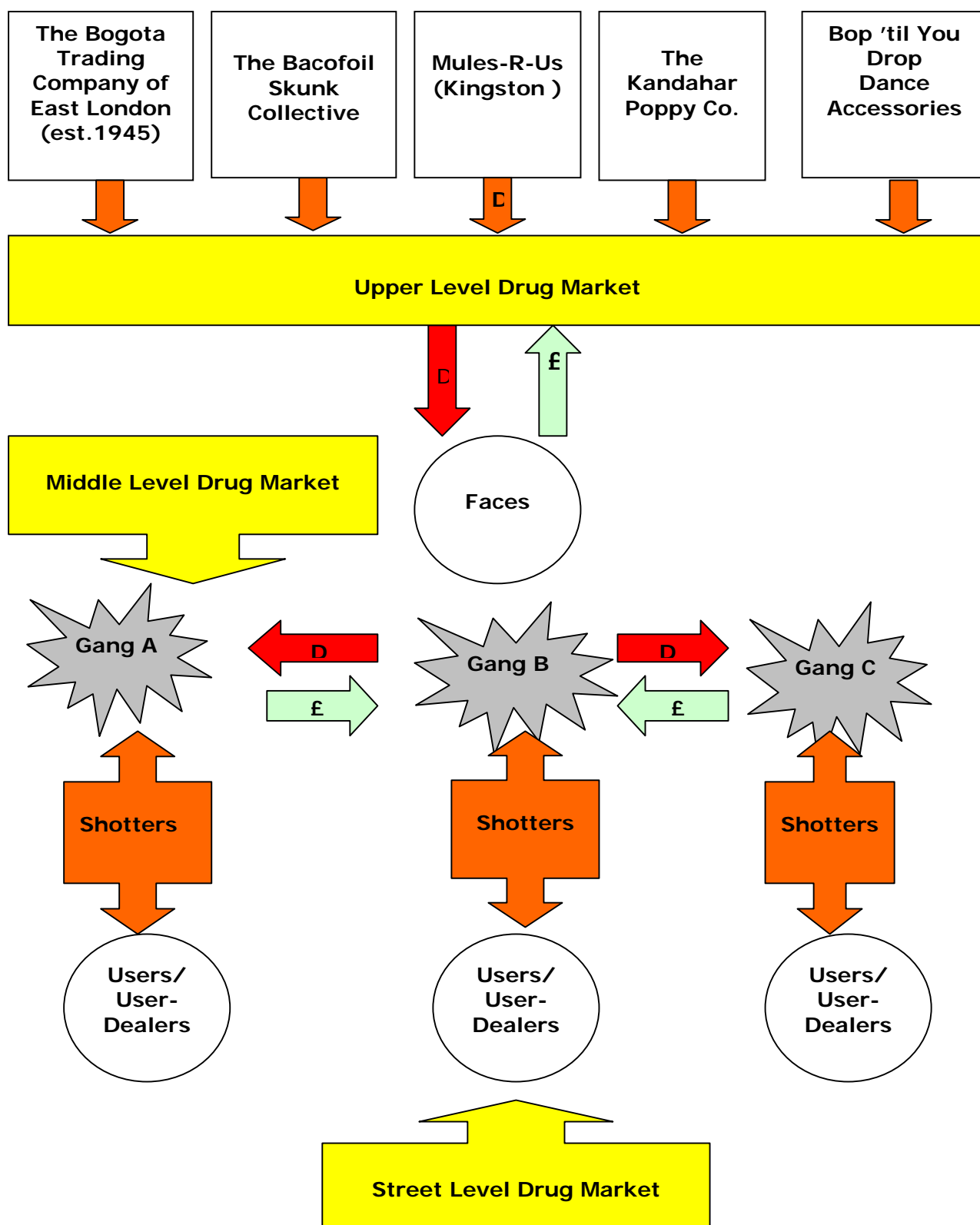


Fig. 4.2

"He buys two kilos of cocaine hydrochloride every fortnight from a white guy, who gets it in twenty-five or fifty kilo consignments from God knows who, most probably someone whose home is in Bogota or Caracas. Sammy pays his supplier slightly over the odds, £30,000 per kilo. He can afford to be generous because he 'steps on' or adulterates the powder with other substances so that each kilo stretches a long, long way. So far, in fact, that for every thirty grand he shells out, he gets back at least £65,000, more than doubling his investment. But unlike most of the competition, Sammy converts the powder into washed crack himself rather than selling it on as hydrochloride. He knows that it is crack which brings the heavy-duty returns and he supplies the slabs of magnolia-coloured rock, in two gramme parcels, to each of three dealers who buy regularly from him.

Sammy is the first big wholesaler in London to sell crack in this fashion and he can offer his 'crew', as he calls them a tempting deal. They buy a parcel for £175 and they can guarantee to double that amount when they sell it on to the street dealer. The crew are happy, they are each making £1,500 a week and the street sellers aren't complaining either. They recoup their stake from the punters, who will keep buying rocks even if they are only 75% pure, until there is nothing in their wallets but fluff – and then they start stealing for more.

John Silverman (1994) *Crack of Doom*, Headline

The gang-accredited dealers on the estates, and environs, deal in a variety of drugs, most notably crack cocaine, but the heroin market in Waltham Forest is the preserve of South Asian dealers who operate out of storefronts and restaurants. Relations between these two groups are said to be good and there is, evidently, trade between them because it is possible to buy both crack cocaine and heroin from both sources (K1.07,12,31,40,41).

The *Elders* direct the activities of the *Youngers/Soldiers* (aged 14 - 18 years old), who have many responsibilities, including:

- Ensuring drugs get to the *Shotters*; the street level dealers
- Protecting their drug markets from incursions by other gangs
- 'Hanging out' in the neighbourhood to give early warning of a police presence
- Patrolling the territorial boundaries of the estate to protect it from other gangs with a 'beef'.
- Enforcing contracts for *Faces* or *Elders*
- Collecting debts for *Faces* or *Elders*
- Taking vengeance and making 'hits' on those who disrespect or cheat them or the *Faces* or *Elders*
- Harassing and burgling rival dealers
- Undertaking street crime and burglary for the *Elders*

Youngers or *Soldiers* also engage in a great deal of 'anti-social behaviour', street crime attack and sexual assault in their own right. *Youngers* and *Wannabees* (aged 12-15) carry weapons, drugs or stolen property for the *Elders*, to ensure that if the *Elders* are stopped and searched, they will be 'clean' and that no 'forensic' is transferred by direct contact. They will also serve jail terms for them (K1.07,26,27,28,42). Why? (see figure 4.3 below)

Fig. 4.3

So if crack dealing is the most dangerous job in America and if the salary is only \$3.30 an hour, why on earth would anyone take such a job? Well, for the same reason that a pretty Wisconsin farm girl moves to Hollywood. For the same reason a high-school quarterback wakes at 5 a.m. to lift weights. They all want to succeed in an extremely competitive field in which, if you reach the top, you are paid a fortune (to say nothing of the attendant glory and power).

Levitt & Dubner (2005) *Why do Drug Dealers Still Live With Their Moms*, in *Freakonomics*, p.104)

Street-level Drug Markets

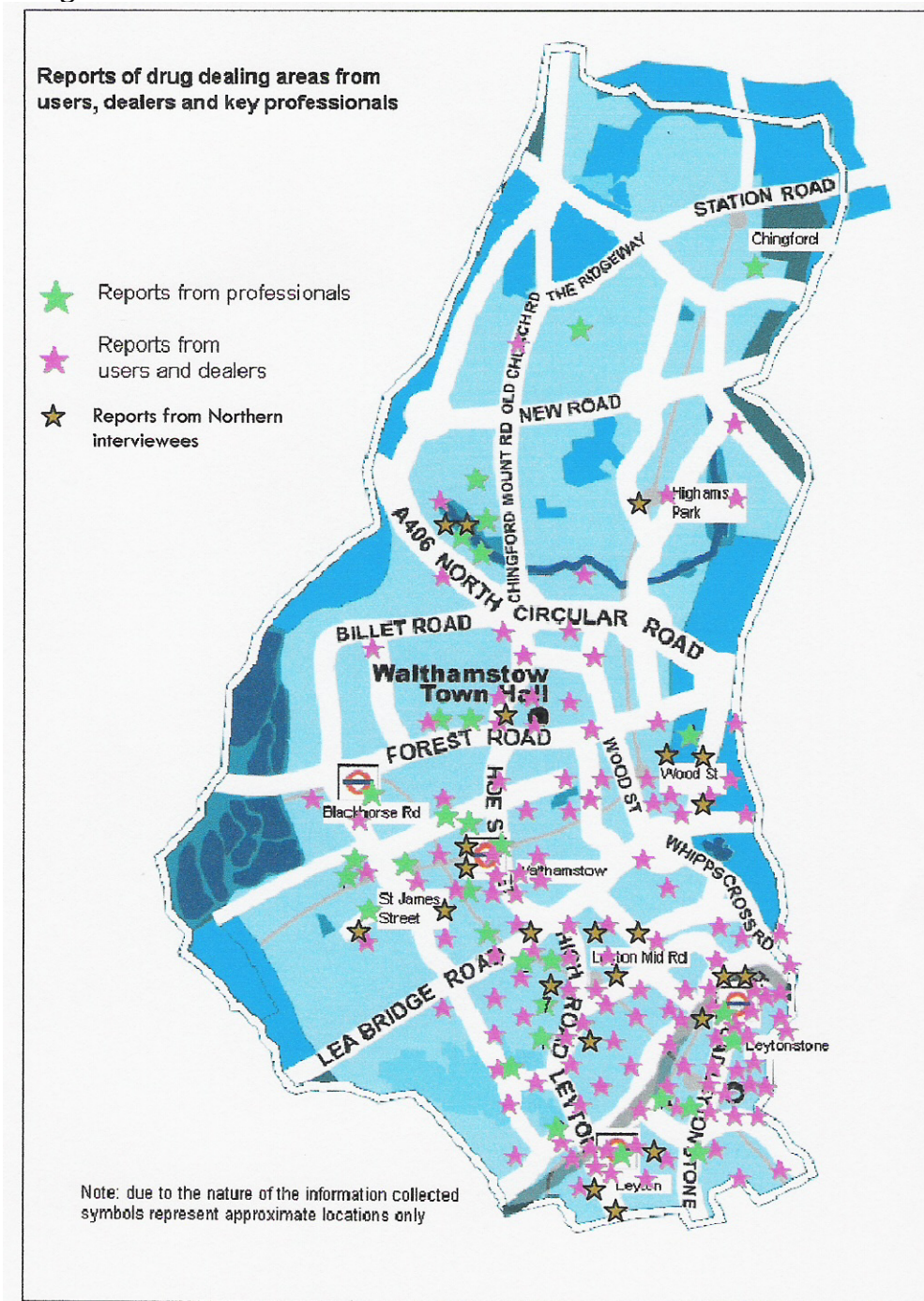
Shotters (aged 16-35) working for, or accredited and protected by, gangs are believed to earn around £300-£500. per week (K1.07,30,42), *Shotters* work in both 'open' and 'closed' drug markets (May et al, 2004).

An open drug market is one where, characteristically, several *Shotters* will sell drugs to anyone unless they are suspected of being police officers or rival gang members. As the *Waltham Forest Crime and Disorder Audit 2004* map (Figure 4.4 below) indicates, Lea Bridge Rd., Leyton and Leytonstone High Roads, and the areas around Walthamstow Central and Leyton Midland stations are all active open drug markets. They are busy thoroughfares adjacent to some of the estates where the drug-dealing gangs are located. An open market has the advantage for buyers that they can retain anonymity and exercise choice between dealers (May, 2004). On the other hand, buying from strangers lays the purchaser open to 'rip-offs' and the possibility of robbery because, as the 2004 Audit notes, the open drug markets in Waltham Forest are also robbery hotspots.

The advantage an open market for sellers is that it maximizes customer access. However, it also renders them vulnerable to police 'buy and bust' tactics and this means that to make a living, *Shotters* must be innovators. When policing intensified in Lea Bridge Road in 2005, for example, one inventive *Shotter* relocated to the rear of the *KFC Drive-Through* where he supplied crack and heroin to accompany his customer's *Colonel Sanders* 'Tasty Bites' (K1.07).

Open markets cannot be protected as well as closed markets and, on the Lea Bridge Road in 2006, rival gangs from Hackney tried to drive out the Waltham Forest *Shotters*, resulting in several fire fights. This kind of conflict is, of course, very bad for business affecting as it does both availability and quality, and making users reluctant to visit these sites.

Fig. 4.4



Inter-gang rivalry and police enforcement, if it is sustained, may precipitate a shift from open to closed markets. A closed market is one where a *Shotter* only sells to users who are known to them. Closed markets can be street- or car-based with contact maintained via mobile phone, but many operate out of premises of some sort. Until police action against them in 2005/6, several closed markets in Waltham Forest were located in 'crack houses', flats which either belong to gang members or were taken over by them against the wishes of their, usually vulnerable, owners (KI.25). Following police action to close down the crack houses in early 2006, some gangs switched to moped/scooter deliveries. However, by the end of the year the crack houses were reappearing (KI.30,31).

The Economics of a Closed Drug Market

It is estimated that on Oliver Close (OC), for example, a small closed market, there are around 150 people spending a minimum of £50 per week on illicit drugs. Thus the weekly OC drug-spend is £7,500 or £390,000 a year. (KI.07,30)

As fig.4.5 (below) Indicates the *Wholesaler* and the *Elder or Face* take the lion's share of the profit but as fig.4.6 (below) indicates, even the *Shotters* make a reasonable profit from the trade.

Fig. 4.5 Hypothetical Weekly Cashflow in the Oliver Close Drug Market			
	Buys	Sells	Profit
Wholesaler	1,500	2,500	£1,000
Elder/Face	2,500	5,000	£2,500
Shotters ('Dealers') X 5	5,000	7,500	£2,500
<i>Individual Shotter</i>			£ 500

Fig 4.6 Annual Income from the Oliver Close Drug Market	
Wholesaler	£ 52,000
Elder/Face	£130,000
Shotters ('Dealers') X5	£130,000
<i>Individual Shotter/Soldier</i>	£ 26,000

Clearly, there is a 'good' living to be made from the drugs business at all levels for those with the requisite skills, knowledge and disposition. However, they are inevitably vulnerable to police action.

Enforcement and Displacement

Sustained police action can seriously disrupt gang-controlled drug markets. We have already noted that dealers may withdraw from open, into closed, markets in the face of police action. But sustained action can fragment or displace gangs. One key informant (KI.22) said that, as a result of police action, he was now dealing drugs in an Oxfordshire market town, while another (KI.28) said that some gang members had moved to the 'country', and were now dealing

drugs in Liverpool and Manchester, a shift facilitated by pre-existing family and gang links.

Police action can also displace gangs into other forms of crime. Following sustained action against their crack houses, the *Beaumont Elders* moved into high-value car-jacking for export, in Hertfordshire and Essex, for which, in late 2006, one of them was completing a substantial prison sentence (K1.01,07,24,31)

Money

On the face of it, the enormous amounts of money generated by the drugs trade should enable senior figures in the gangs to lead the celebrity lifestyles to which they apparently aspire; A house in the hills above Antibes, a yacht on Montego Bay etc. Such aspirations are fuelled, in part, by MTV but also by the fact that many football stars, like Jermaine Defoe, Fitz Hall, Emile Heskey and, of course, David Beckham, come from the borough and are well known to some people on gang-affected estates. However, three main factors work against the attainment of such 'glittering prizes'. Firstly, the reputation, status, contacts and loyalties, which enable senior gang members to dominate their area are essentially local. To abandon the gang and move to another area would be to become 'a nobody', albeit a very rich one. And this suggests that the 'recognition', which flows from being a local 'big shot', is as important as the money they make from it (K1.07,24,31, Young, 2000). Secondly, many Elders not only sell crack cocaine; they also use it and the chaos this generates in their lives militates against the financial planning that would enable them to realise their aspirations:

(JP) *So where does all the money go?*

(K1.27) *I dunno it just goes ... clubbing, drugs, mates, girls, taxis, more drugs, mates, girls, going out ... it just goes'*

(JP) *Do they enjoy themselves?"*

(K1.27) *I dunno, they've got a brand new Merc. outside but they're cracked-out in some poxy flat with their mum. They can't use the front room in case someone shoots the house up, and they're looking at untold 'bird' if they get nicked. What's that about?"*

Thirdly, as we shall see, it is one thing to be a big shot in the gang, profiting from the protection it affords, but quite another to leave it.

3. The Youth Gangs of Waltham Forest

I'd defend anyone in E10

(KI.27)

This account of youth gangs in Waltham Forest, in November 2006, offers only a snapshot, because these gangs, and their membership, are fairly fluid, so the situation described here may have changed by the time it is published. However, this snapshot does give an indication of the dimensions, nature and severity of gang offending in the borough.

The *Metropolitan Police Pan-London Gang Profile*, produced in June 2006, identified 169 gangs in London, with 19 assessed as causing a high level of harm. The *Profile* cites 11 gangs in Waltham Forest, three of which it assesses as causing a high level of harm (see below). On the basis of this assessment, Waltham Forest was deemed to be a priority for the development of IPE (intelligence, prevention & enforcement).

The present study, undertaken over a longer period, with a narrower remit and access to more data sources, identified 18 gangs in Waltham Forest, some of which, for the purposes of this report, have been subsumed within two 'super-gangs', *Piff City* and *Drive*. This brings the total to 13.

For reasons we explain below, it is difficult to give an exact figure for gang membership. However, it is probable that in the autumn of 2006, approximately 600-700 young people aged 10-29 were, at some point, directly involved in gang activity in Waltham Forest. This constitutes around 1% of all 10-29 year olds in the borough, of whom there were 66,969 in 2001 (The 2001, National Census)

Beside the name of each gang listed below is a **Severity Score**, based on the *Metropolitan Police Harm Assessment Scoring Scale* (MPS 2006) (see fig. 4.1. below). The score is calculated by adding the maximum sentence length for offences committed by gang members. The scores for Waltham Forest gangs (see fig. 4.2 below) are arrived at on the basis of crimes proven to have been committed by gang members as part and parcel of gang activity or crimes where there is a very strong suspicion amongst professionals closely involved with the gangs, and their activities, that a particular offence has been committed by gang members. On this basis, six of the 13 gangs identified in Waltham Forest appeared to be causing a high level of harm (*A high level of harm equates with the commission of serious assaults, rape, kidnapping, attempted murder and murder* (see fig. 4.1 below).

Fig. 4.1: Metropolitan Police Harm Assessment Scale

Crime Type	Score/Sentence
Possession/Use Drugs	7
Supply of Drugs	25
Disorder (Affray)	3
Low Level Assault (ABH)	5
Serious Assault (GBH)	25
Kidnap	25
Murder/Manslaughter	25
Possession/Use Knife	4
Possession/Use Firearms	25
Vehicle Crime (TWOC)	.5
Burglary/Theft (no violence)	14
Robbery/Street Crime	25
Fraud/incl. Money Laundering	14
Criminal Damage (£500-£5000	.25
Graffiti/Tagging (Crim. Damage)	.25
Anti-social Behaviour	0

Fig. 4.2 Waltham Forest Youth Gangs Ranked on the Metropolitan Police Harm Assessment Scale

Beaumont	198 (max. score)
Piff City	198 (max. score)
Priory Court	169
Red African Devils	150 (est.)
Drive	145.25
Boundary/Monserrat	120
Canhall	100
Barrier/Brookscroft	41.5
Highams Park	35
New World Order	28
Asian Auto Theft	25+ (est.)
Hackney Overground Commuters	25+ (est.)
Russian/Lithuanian/Polish Gangs	Unknown

The Beaumont Gang (*Severity Score 198*)

The *Beaumont Gang* has been in existence for many years. Unlike the newer gangs, membership is drawn from across the borough and beyond. The gang consists of around 30-40 people and is controlled by one of the four Waltham Forest crime families. The Elders, drawn from the S**** family and their associates are aged 21-28. They dominate the drugs business in Waltham Forest and have links into several of London's most dangerous gangs/crews, most notably in Hackney, Tottenham, Haringey and Harlesden. They are involved in a wide range of serious crimes. The Youngers, aged 12-18 are also drawn from the S***** family and their associates. They are prolific violent street robbers. The *Beaumont Gang* has been described as the 'ruling street force' in Waltham Forest (KI.07,13,21,24). The *Beaumont Youngers* are in conflict with the *Oliver Close Youngers* (aged 10-22) and are in an alliance with *Priory Court*. Members of the *Beaumont Gang* were recently involved in a battle in Court with the *Oliver Close Gang* in which armed 'reinforcements' were called up from the Beaumont estate. It is said that the *Beaumont Gang* is responsible for several recent 'hits' but this has not been proven.

Piff City (*Severity Score 198*)

Piff City comprises the *Chingford Hall Gang*, the *Oliver Close Gang*, the *Chatham Close Gang*, the *Cathall Gang* and the *Langthorne Gang* and has around 100 members. Ultimate control of *Piff City* is in the hands of families of adult gangsters (aged 26-40). *Piff City* is named after a real person, but whoever assumes control becomes known as 'Piff'. *Oliver Close* has no *Elders* at present because they are all in jail. The *Oliver Close Youngers* are aged 10-22. The *Elders* in the *Cathall Gang* are particularly prolific criminals and are responsible for all of the offences listed (KI.07,13,21,24). The *Langthorne* and *Chingford Hall* *Elders* are aged 24-40 and the *Youngers* 14-18. *Piff City* is in conflict with the *Beaumont Gang*.

Priory Court (*Severity Score 169*)

The *Priory Court Gang* is said to have been in existence for only three years and is composed of 20-30 young people in two factions. The *Youngers*, GMD (*Get Money Daily*) and the *Elders*. *Priory Court* has family links with *Cathall* via the M***** family. It is allied with, and has family links into, the *Beaumont Gang* and is in conflict with the *Oliver Close Gang*. It is said that the *Priory Court Gang* will 'do anything' (KI.02,03,04,07,13,21,24).

The Red African Devils (*Severity Score 150, estd.*)

There is some dispute about the existence of a gang call the 'Red African Devils' but there appear to have been groups of young Somalis, many of them originally unaccompanied asylum seekers, involved in violent street crime across the capital in the past few

years. The half dozen young people in question live on the Leyton High Road and are allegedly involved in violent street crime using knives. They are said to be particularly dangerous because they have a tendency to use their knives prior to demanding their victim's possessions (KI.01,14).

Drive (Severity Score 145.25)

Drive is a new gang and comprises 30-40 young people aged between 14 and 17 from Atlee Terrace, Wood St., Marlow and Coppermill. Many of them know one another from their time at Warwick School. This area is in the top 5% of the most deprived areas in the country (Waltham Forest C&D Audit, 2004). It is said that they separated themselves from other gangs when the anti-social behaviour and inter-gang conflict of the other gangs was 'getting out of hand' (KI.3,4). Part of *Drive* is linked to *Priory Court* (PC) while another has links with *Oliver Close* (OC) even though OC is in conflict with *Beaumont*, and *Priory Court* is in an alliance with them. It is said that *Drive* was responsible for a recent firearms murder. (KI.07,26,27,28,31).

Boundary/Monserrat (Severity Score 120)

The Boundary Gang has been in existence for many years but Boundary/Monserrat is more recent, composed of two groups; Youngers aged 12-15 and Elders aged 18-22 totalling around 20-30 young people. Eight of the Elders are originally from Monserrat, which they left as children as a result of the eruption of the Volcano that devastated the island. The group is located in Manor Hall Gardens, an area vacated by the *Beaumont Gang* some time ago when the 'heat was on'. The group is said to be 'very quiet'. They don't 'hang out' and they 'don't do street business', partly because youth facilities in the area are good. They are, however, said to be 'into everything' and a recent 'supply shooting' is said to have been perpetrated by them. They have links into the *North Star Gang* in Hackney. Boundary/Monserrat is not in conflict with other gangs and has an alliance with *Oliver Close* (KI.07,26,27,28,31).

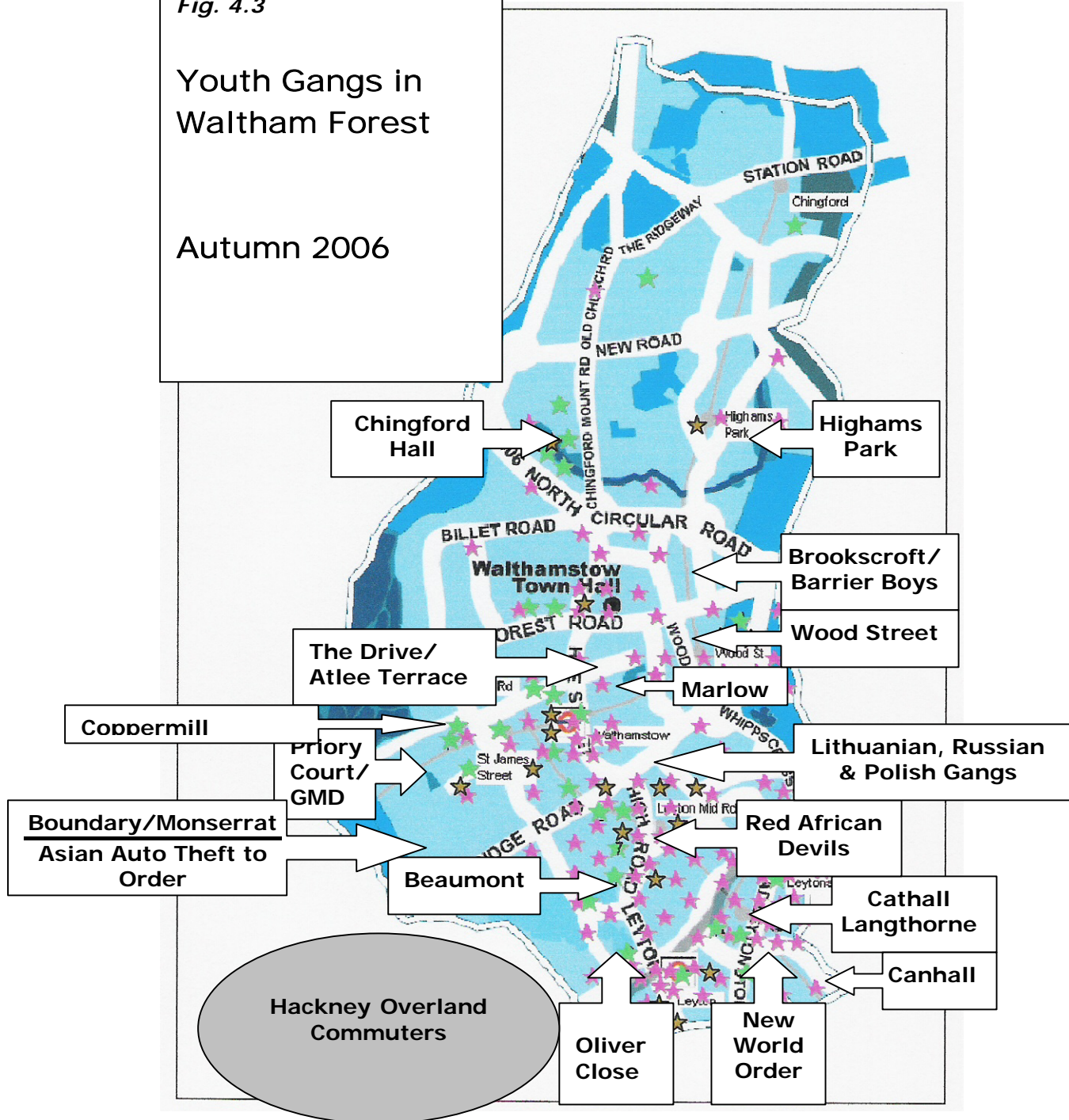
Canhall (Severity Score 100)

Canhall is a well-established local criminal gang, controlled by the B**** brothers, and located on the border of Forest Gate, where they do most of their 'business'. The age of members ranges from around 10 to over 30. It is said that *Canhall* has around 30 members. In recent times, the gang has been implicated in several stabbings and the shooting of a police officer. The *Canhall* gang is said to have links into gangs in Forest Gate and Stratford (KI.07).

Fig. 4.3

Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest

Autumn 2006



Barrier/Brookscroft (*Severity Score 45.5*)

The *Barrier Boys* have been a gang for about three years. The 10-20 members are aged 15-18 and hang out at a barrier across a side street near an FE college and 'tax' and harass people who want to come by. They specialise in anti-social behaviour, low-level robbery and sexual harassment. They use, and may supply, 'soft drugs'. (KI.14)

The Highams Park Gang (*Severity Score 35*)

The *Highams Park Gang* has existed for between three and five years and is composed of 5-10 young people aged 15-18, some of whom are 'looked after' by the local authority. They engage in street robbery, using knives as a threat and are involved in the drink-related disorder, for which Highams Park is currently a 'hotspot', (there is a dispersal order in operation) (KI.07,14,31,).

New World Order (*Severity Score 28*)

A Leytonstone-based group of half a dozen, who are said to be 'very friendly', possibly due to their prolific consumption (and suspected supply) of soft drugs. They are not violent and not affiliated to any other gang or crew (KI.07,20).

Asian Auto Theft To Order Gang @ Boundary (*Severity Score 25+ estd.*)

Little is known about this group except that they steal cars to order and work out of the same territory as the *Boundary/Monserrat Gang* (KI.07,12,20)

Hackney Overground Commuters (*Severity Score 25+ estd.*)

Over the past two years this group of 5-10 young people aged 12-18 from Hackney have been commuting in from Hackney Downs and fare-dodging to undertake street robberies in Highams Park and North Chingford where they believe the pickings are better because local residents appear to be well off (KI.07,14,20).

Russian/Lithuanian/Polish Gangs (*Severity Score Unknown*)

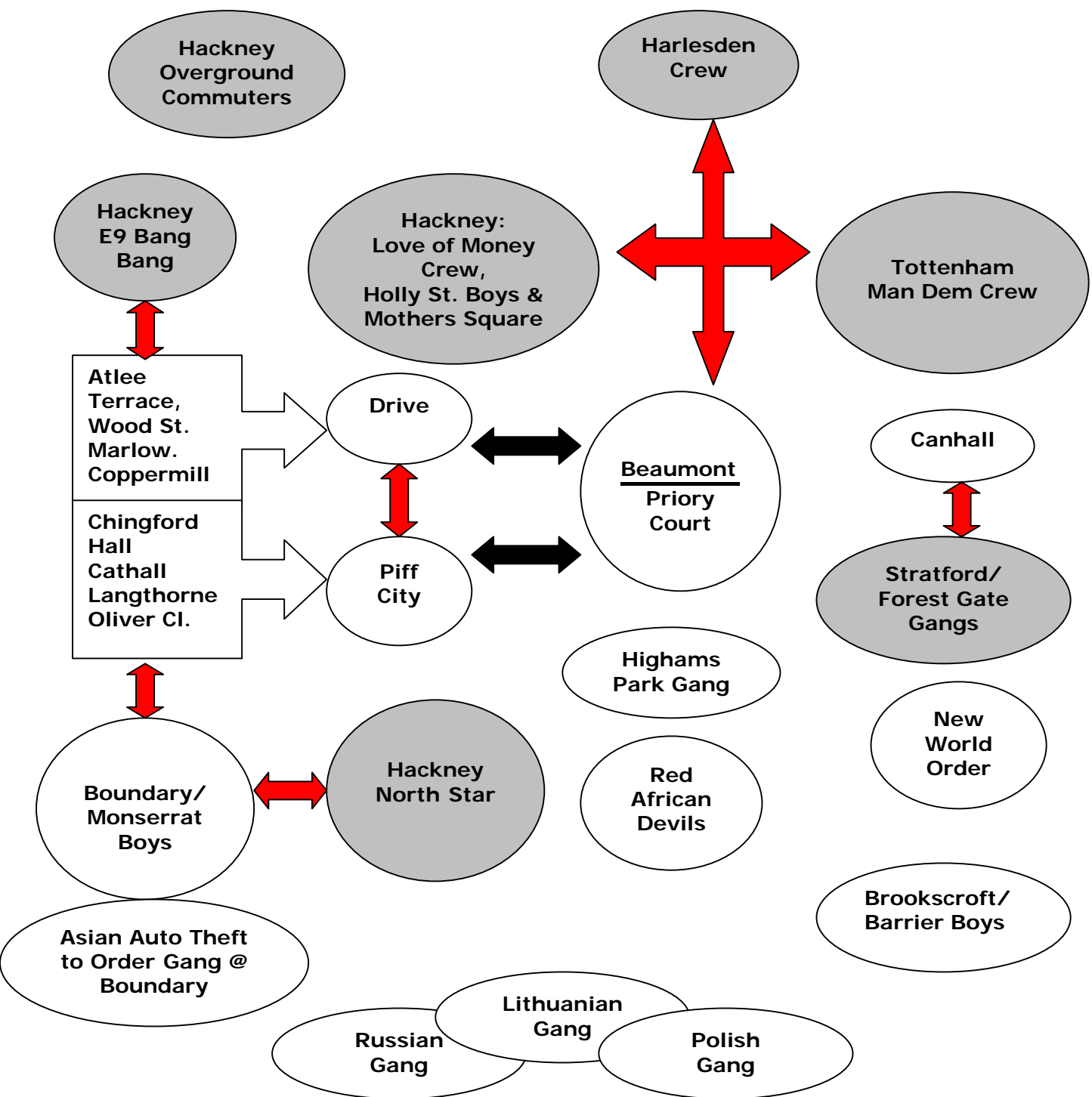
These groups reside on the other side of Leyton High Road from the Red African Devils and are allegedly involved in Prostitution (KI.07,31).

Inter-gang Conflict

Fig. 4.3 (above) plots the location of gangs in the borough, while figure 4.4 (below) maps the enmities and alliances between them. Some alliances, like that between the *Beaumont Gang* and gangs in Hackney, Tottenham and Harlesden are largely pragmatic, designed to maintain dominance in the London drug market. In some, like *Priory Court* and *Beaumont*, the link is partly familial. However, *Drive* maintains friendly relations with both *Priory Court* and *Oliver Close*, two gangs in conflict with each other. This suggests that gang rivalries and alliances are more complex and more fluid than they may first appear.

Fig. 4.4

The Affiliations of Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest, Autumn 2006



Key

Antagonistic relationships between gangs



Alliances Between Gangs



Out of Borough Gangs



As we observed in chapter 1. existing gang typologies fail to capture the complexity and variety of Waltham Forest gangs, and we have therefore devised a new five-point typology to overcome this limitation (see figure 4.5 below).

Fig. 4.5

A Six Point Typology of Waltham Forest Gangs

Definition	Description	Membership
The Articulated Super Gang	Is a local, originally familial, grouping, with a long history of involvement in organised crime that moved into the drugs business in the 1990s. It is 'institutionalised', having a broad age range and the ability to regenerate itself. Its subgroups are determined by age (Youngers /Elders) role <i>Shotters/Soldiers</i> and location. It has horizontal links into, and does 'business' with, other gangs, both within and beyond the borough. It has vertical links upwards into higher echelon organised crime and downwards to its retailers and the <i>Youngers/ Soldiers</i> who protect gang territory and gang business and support themselves via street crime. <i>Youngers/Soldiers</i> , in turn, delegate 'jobs' to the aspirant <i>Wannabees</i> who hover on the margins of the gang. The Super Gang has a name, and claims both residential and drug-dealing territories (although senior members may be widely dispersed) and exerts a high level of control over these neighbourhoods, thus drawing reluctant gangsters into the fold.	Beaumont (<i>Hackney</i> : Love of Money Crew, Holly Street Boys, Mother's Square, <i>Tottenham</i> : Man Dem Crew, Harlesden Crew) Piff City (Chingford Hall, Oliver Close, Chatham Close, Cathall, Langthorne) Canhall, Boundary/ Monseratt

The Street Gang	A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity. It has sub groups defined by age but is less than 10 years old. Its territory is either residential or based on opportunities for particular forms of crime.	<i>Priory Court</i>
The Compressed Street Gang	Is new, relatively small, has a narrow age range and no sub-groups. Members see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity. Its territory is residential	<i>Drive</i>
The Criminal Youth Group	Its raison d'être is criminal rather than social and is narrowly focussed on a few offence types. It is small, recent and has a narrow age range. Its territory is either residential or based on opportunities for particular forms of crime,	<i>New World Order The Asian Auto-Theft to Order Crew Hackney Overground Commuters Red African Devils</i>
The Wannabees	Wannabees have not developed the structural characteristics of traditional gangs. They have a narrow age range and high turnover. Although wannabees may assume the trappings of street gangs, insignia, street names etc. and lay claim to territory, they are loosely structured groups, engaging in spontaneous social activity and impulsive, criminal activity, including collective violence against other groups of youths	<i>Brookscroft/ Barrier, Highams Park</i>
The Middle Level International Criminal Business Organisation	They are composed primarily of adults and may well be the London end of an international crime network. They are involved in prostitution and possibly people trafficking as well. They also engage in street-level drug dealing, using local adolescents to undertake deliveries. They maintain a low profile.	<i>The Russian/ Lithuanian/Polish Gang of Leyton</i>

5. Gang Members

Friendships and loyalties which derive from social process on the corner may in some instances prove to be as binding and lasting as any. But the unstable gang context, serving as an arena in which status threats are played out, tends to undermine these friendships and loyalties and makes them shorter lived and less binding. Our encounter with the delinquent gang convinces us that it is not simply a 'middle class' bias which leads to the conclusion that their lives so often are miserable ...

(James Short & Fred Strodbeck, 1965)

Poverty

As we noted in Chapter 2., gangs and gang territories are located in the boroughs most socially deprived wards. The families of most gang members are poor, and an awareness of this appears to be reflected in the names of many London gangs; the *Love of Money Crew*, the *Get Money Daily Crew*, the *Poverty Driven Children* etc. However, the idea of the poor ghetto child who becomes a local hero is at the heart of street culture and it is therefore difficult to disentangle whether, and to what extent, it is the actual experience of growing up poor, or the social cache attached to this sub-cultural persona, that motivates gang members. Whatever the explanation, *Making their Ps*. (making money) is a major preoccupation for gang members, and a source of 'respect', amongst their peers:

"People get money-addicted. It's getting much worse. All they ever think about is money. Now you've got 13 year olds with guns going after the money." (KI.26)

Another said:

"It's OK for rich kids. They tell their mum and dad they want this and that and they give it to them, and then they come round here being all 'street'. My mum never had no money to give me and I can't get no job so how am I going to get my P's if I ain't taking it off them?" (KI.27)

Age

The *Metropolitan Police Service Pan-London Gang Profile* (2006) found that most gang members joined between the ages of 12 and 14, that a majority were under 18 and that the oldest were 25. In Waltham Forest some gang members are said to be as young as ten and as old as 40 or 50 (KI.01,07,24,25,26,31). However, some of the children who claim gang affiliation in Waltham Forest are as young as seven or eight. Several primary schools report conflict between self-styled gang members and, from time to time, gang-affiliated youngsters from secondary schools are summoned to

primary schools by their younger brothers and sisters as reinforcements in the aftermath of an 'inter-gang' playground 'beef'. It is alarming to think that, by dint of this, possibly notional, early gang affiliation, a link, however tenuous, is forged between the primary school playground and international organised crime.

Ethnicity

The *Pan-London Gang Profile* indicates that 48% of the gangs surveyed were 'African Caribbean' and 21% 'Asian', but the nature of the data collected means that these young people may well have been Black British, African, or of Mixed Heritage. In Waltham Forest, there are few single ethnicity gangs (KI.07,18,19,43,44,45). Gangs are estate-based and their ethnic make-up reflects the ethnic make-up of their estates. Nonetheless, because of their heavy concentration in social housing in the borough, African-Caribbean and Mixed Heritage children and young people predominate. Whatever their ethnic origin, however, gang members assume the style and manner dictated by popular, globalised, ostensibly 'Black', street culture (KI.07,18,19).

Gender

Some *Elders* and *Youngers* have several young girlfriends (aged 13-15) who are, apparently, 'attracted by the 'glamour' and 'celebrity' of gang members' (KI.02,15,18,19). These girls tend to play an ancillary role, sometimes carrying or hiding guns or drugs for the boys. They are often sexually exploited, sometimes in exchange for drugs. The relationship tends to be abusive; one of dominance and submission. Some senior gang members pass their girlfriends around to lower ranking members and sometimes to the whole group at the same time. Unreported rape by gang members, as a form of reprisal or just because they can, is said to occur fairly frequently and reports to the police are rare. A head teacher said:

One of my year 10 students was recently gang-raped by some gang members. I talked to her and her mother. They are obviously very frightened and the mother insists that it was consensual. The girl won't come to counselling because she is afraid of being seen to talk to anyone in authority about it.

(KI.38)

There are other girls, loosely associated with the gangs, who regard themselves as 'soldiers' and concentrate on violent street crime. They do not perform the same sexual role as the 'girlfriends' of gang members. The numbers of girls passing through Waltham Forest Youth Court, charged with theft and robbery, usually of jewellery from other girls, increased during 2006 (KI.10). While

between 2% and 5% of gun crime suspects in Waltham Forest are young women, they constitute around 30% of gun crime victims.

Educational Careers

In a recent study by the present author (Pitts, 2006), almost two thirds of the 23 active gang members interviewed had been permanently excluded from school. Key informants in Waltham Forest suggest that gang-involved and gang-affected young people are often excluded for attempting to bring weapons onto school premises (KI.23,38,39). Others say that gang-involved children and young people tend to see academic striving as '*uncool*' and, as a result, educational failure had come to be accepted as the norm amongst them (KI.43,45). A head teacher (KI.39) said that children and young people of African or African-Caribbean origin were caught in a double bind because they would be 'shamed' by the other children if they gave wrong answers in class, or achieved low marks, but if they consistently gave right answers, or achieved high marks, they would be ridiculed as a 'boff' (boffin) or a 'neek' (nurd/geek). This, she said, tended to generate or support a student culture in which academic success was juxtaposed with 'street' success, with boys, in particular, adopting an anti-academic 'cool pose' (Bowling & Phillips, 2006).

As we have noted, gang-affiliated young people may well have attended schools with relatively high levels of bullying and violence (KI.10,23) and a recent *Childwatch* survey in the borough said that many students felt that adults were unable to protect them. High levels of transience in schools serving areas of acute social deprivation mean that the 'pecking order' is never settled and conflict is continual. Such an environment is, of course, inimical to academic achievement. Taken together, these factors mean that gang-involved and gang affected children and young people are often educationally disadvantaged which, in turn, disadvantages them in the labour market.

Criminal Justice Involvement

Key informants in the Youth Offending Team (YOT) said that a high proportion of 'gang-involved' young people are known to the criminal justice system (KI.09,15,18,19,42,43,45) and a caseload survey of 59 young people under the supervision of Waltham Forest YOT revealed that 25 (42%) were 'gang involved' in some way. As figure 5.1 (below) indicates, just over half of these were regular, active, and probably willing, members, 24% were involved occasionally and not necessarily willingly, while 16%, at least, were involved unwillingly (we discuss the issue of 'reluctant gangsters' below). These figures are probably an underestimate of gang

Waltham Forest YOT caseload Survey, 2006		
---	--	--

Core Member	3	12%
Regular Member	12	48%
Occasional Member	6	24%
Reluctant Member	4	16%
TOTAL	25	100%

involvement however, because it seems that the more heavily gang-involved a young person is, the less likely they are to talk about it (KI.09,19,43,45).

Gang members on Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSPs) at the YOT, thought that the vocational training element of their orders was purposeful and that the achievement of a trade qualification could offer a way out of crime and the gang (KI.26,27). However, they also believed that to have this kind of future they would need to be living outside the area because, if they stayed around, they would be unable to avoid gang involvement. Gang members interviewed at the YOT felt uniformly hostile towards the police (KI.22,26,27,28). One of them suggested that Hackney was a kind of gangland paradise because there, the gangs ‘... *have got the police on the run*’ (KI.27).

‘Doing time’, particularly if they had committed a serious offence or ‘copped’ for one on behalf of an *Elder* or a *Face*, and not ‘grassed them up’, tended to be worn as a ‘badge of honour’ by gang members. ‘Inside’ the prison authorities try to locate members of the same gangs on the same wing to avoid conflict, but as one key informant said:

This makes you feel like you’re on holiday with all your mates, it can be a right laugh. (KI.46)

The imprisonment of gang members appears to produce defiance rather than rehabilitation and to thereby consolidate gang loyalties (Sherman 1993). The camaraderie and defiance developed in jail then tends to filter down into street culture, along with other elements of prison life, and this cultural interplay generates what Loic Waquant (2004) has termed a ‘deadly symbiosis’ between the prison and the street.

6. Gang Violence

There is nothing so dangerous as the weak when they try to become strong

(Emile Zola)

The American criminologist Terence Thornbury (1998) describes the gang as an escalator, taking young people to a new and more serious level of criminal involvement. And in many cases, this is because being in a gang means being part of the drugs business, and being part of the drug business means being involved in violence.

Although, as Pearson and Hobbs (2001) observe, the drugs business tends to attract career criminals with a penchant for violence, it is in the nature of illicit markets that, being unregulated by law, violence or the threat of violence, becomes the primary means whereby these markets are regulated (Arlacchi, 1998). One of the functions of this violence is to send messages to rival gangs and would-be 'grasses'. Thus, on one occasion, the Beaumont *Elders*, having kidnapped somebody who had crossed them in a drugs deal, stabbed him 17 times and sent the video to his mother (KI.01,07,35). Inevitably, everybody in the locality got to hear about this, indeed it is unlikely that they will ever forget it. These kinds of incidents are sufficient to silence most would-be 'whistle blowers', not least because of the widespread belief that 'the authorities' would be unable to protect them if they did break their silence (KI.07,31).

Much of the apparently irrational and excessive violence surrounding the drugs business is instrumental, designed 'to get the job done', and not simply reducible to the psychological proclivities of individual gang members.

I grew up with them. Some of them were really nice blokes, but that's just the drugs business, everyone does it. It's kind of expected. It's terrible but these blokes aren't nutters.

(KI.37)

Several other key informants pointed to the discrepancy between the apparent normality of some senior gang figures and the violent acts they commit or commission. (KI.01,07,24) This is not to deny however, that gangs also attract some very disturbed and dangerous individuals.

Gun Crime

Since the late 1990s, gun crime perpetrated by young gang members has escalated in the major cities of England and Wales

(Tilley & Bullock 2003). This is, in large part, a result of greater availability and falling prices.

Nowadays a gun's about £500. (KI.48)

Price is determined in part by whether the gun is 'clean' or 'dirty'.

You can get a clean (unused) gun for six hundred pounds and a dirty (used) one for two hundred or three hundred. (KI.47).

Demand is high, particularly amongst younger, would-be, gang members. On the Priory Court Estate in September 2006:

Five kids, aged about 14 and 15 were all clubbing together to get their own gun. They're all putting in fifty pounds. Everyone wants one. (KI.26).

There are cheaper alternatives, however:

Renting a gun don't cost much but it's dangerous – you don't know where its been. (KI.26).

This awareness of incriminating forensic residues is also expressed in the gang dress code.

JP *Why are you all wearing gloves?*

KI.27 *To hurt people when you punch them or to be ready if someone pulls a gun or a knife.*

JP *What do you mean by 'ready'?*

KI.27 *Say someone pulls up in a car and they've already got a gun out or they come at you with a knife. You haven't got time to get your gloves on, so you're gonna get forensic or blood or something on your hands.*

In the two years from 1st January 2005 and 31st December 2006, there were 493 incidents of gun-enabled crime in Waltham Forest, 275 in 2005 and 218 in 2006, (CRIS, 2007). The term *gun-enabled crime* covers everything from threats with a replica firearm to wounding and death. As figure 6.1 (below) indicates actual shootings constitute only a fraction of overall offences. This table also shows that in the period 2004-2006 Waltham Forest had the

seventh highest rate of fatal and non-fatal shootings of the thirty-two London boroughs.

Fig. 6.1

Fatal and Non-fatal Shootings Recorded by Trident

Source: MPA Specialist Crime Directorate, 2006 Performance Review

	2004/05	2005/6	+/-
Hackney	14	37	23
Lambeth	15	32	17
Brent	23	16	-7
Southwark	11	34	23
Lewisham	18	11	-7
Haringey	3	19	16
Waltham Forest	6	12	6
Croydon	11	5	-6
Newham	4	9	5
Wandsworth	5	7	2
Hammersmith	4	3	-1
Ealing	4	3	-1
Islington	2	4	+2

The Waltham Forest data on gun-enabled crime (see figure 6.2 below) shows that it is primarily a pursuit of the under-20s; that African Caribbean children and young people are heavily over-represented as perpetrators, and that perpetrators are, overwhelmingly, male. If we turn to the victims of gun-enabled crime, once again we find an over-representation of African-Caribbean youngsters but also a far larger number of White

Fig. 6.2

Gun-Enabled Crime in Waltham Forest

Source: CRIS Data, 2007

<i>Ages of Perpetrators</i>	<i>Percentage (average)</i>
1-10	11%
11-20	53%
21-30	30%
<i>Ethnicity of Perpetrators</i>	
White Caucasian	18%
Black African Caribbean	59%
Asian	10%
<i>Gender of Perpetrators</i>	
Male	92%
Female	5%

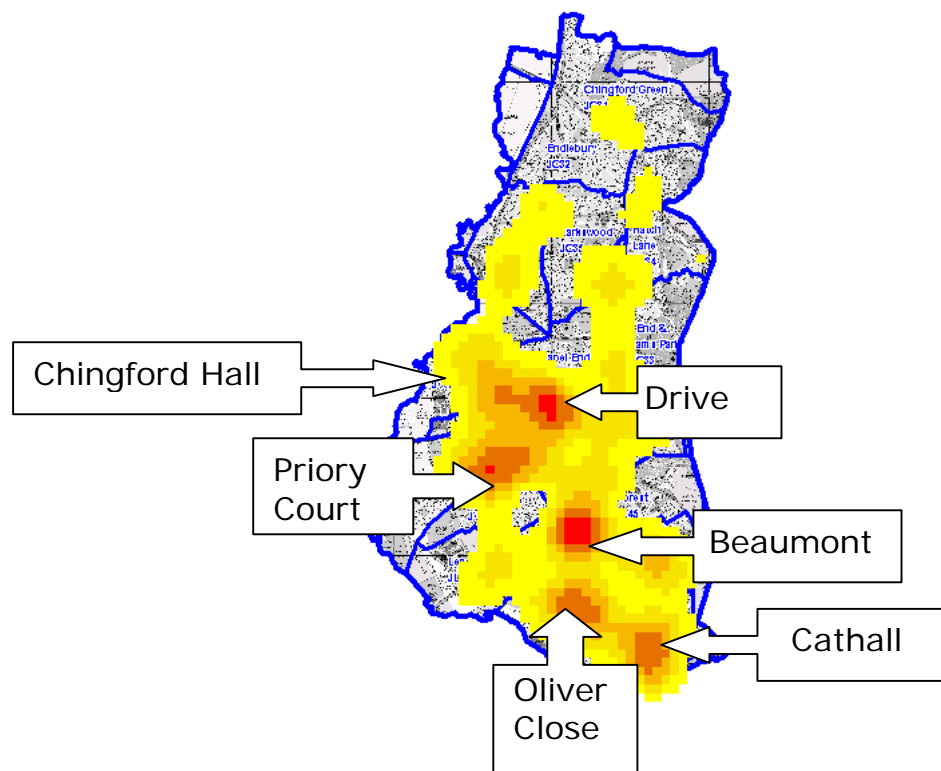
<i>Ages of Victims</i>	<i>Percentage (average)</i>
1-10	19%
11-20	27%
21-30	27%
<i>Ethnicity of Victims</i>	
White Caucasian	39%
Black African Caribbean	31%
Asian	13%
<i>Gender of Victims</i>	
Male	69
Female	30

Caucasian children and young people. Particularly striking is the number of children aged 1-10 and the large number of girls and young women who are victimised in this way.

As figure 6.3 (below) indicates, gun-enabled crime in Waltham Forest is concentrated in certain 'hotspots' which, perhaps unsurprisingly, are in, or adjacent to, the major gang estates in the borough and overlap with street crime and drug-dealing hotspots.

Fig. 6.3:

Gun-Enabled Crime Hotspots in Waltham Forest, 2006



Although it was only in a minority of cases that a gun was actually discharged, the ready availability of real and replica weapons, and the widespread fear of gun crime, has made violent street crime an even more frightening experience. Gun-enabled street crime rose by 10% in Waltham Forest in 2006.

Violent Street Crime

Violent Street Crime is how the *Youngers* or *Soldiers* 'earn their Ps', and while it funds a lifestyle that may involve purchasing drugs, it is not 'drug driven' (May et al, 2004). Street crime may be instrumental, but it is also a means whereby *Youngers* assert their power and authority in the street, in order to gain recognition and respect (KI.07,35, Young, 1999, Sanders 2004, Wright et al, 2006), and this is why so much street crime is perpetrated against members of other gangs or the relatives of gang members.

If *Youngers* commit a 'violation' they may be required to 'go on road' to procure a specified amount of money as compensation for the *Elders*:

If there is a violation, like Youngers don't watch the Elders back properly in a burglary, this is a violation and they have to go on road to do robberies and bring back Ps. to the Elders. If you are 'my boys', you are responsible no matter what, and you must pay.

(KI.24)

Violence and Respect

A recent study of street crime by Richard Wright (et al, 2006) confirms that much of it is primarily concerned with respect and recognition rather than monetary gain, Gang members will sometimes video their offences and post them on websites. While this renders them more vulnerable to prosecution, it also demonstrates their fearlessness and contempt for the law, and while such bravado may, in turn, enable them to become an *Elder*, its other important pay-off is that it serves to consolidate their reputation for toughness and hence, the 'respect' in which they are held.

As gangs grow larger and more powerful, 'respect'-based conflict becomes more common. These incidents may appear trivial and disproportionate yet, 'gangland' is an intensely parochial and inward-looking place with a hyperactive, but not always wholly reliable, grapevine.

I came out of XXXX (Young Offender Institution) and there were these six boys on the XXXX estate who wanted to fight

me because of something I was supposed to have said when I was inside. You have to fight otherwise you'd look scared and it would get worse and they would think they could do what they like with you. They have to know that it won't be easy.
(KI.48)

Respect matters because to be disrespected is to be 'fair game' for anyone who wants to make a name for themselves and, as we suggest below, this is virtually everybody involved with gangs. And this is also why, as Bill Sanders (2006) notes, that in certain neighbourhoods, being 'mugged' is often a prelude to a career of street crime, as young people endeavour to rebuild respect in their social milieu in the wake of an attack. However, being respected in this way has a particularly acute downside:

Respect? Well, it's fear isn't it. You want to be feared, but nobody is untouchable, there is always someone to come after you with a blade or something. There's no way out.
(KI.26)

Intra-gang Conflict

Many gang members appear to have a virtually obsessional preoccupation with status and respect. This is institutionalised into gang culture in the form of an elaborate non-verbal and clothing-based etiquette, the breach of which '*can get you killed*' (KI.07,24,26). Gang members also tend to be highly individualistic and enjoy a very low level of mutual trust. When we add to this the fact that many gang members are, knife and gun-carrying crack-cocaine users, and hence subject to the 'crash', the comedown from crack, characterised by anxiety, depression, irritability, extreme fatigue and paranoia, it is not surprising that interpersonal relationships within the gang are often somewhat fraught (KI.06,07,13,24). These relationships are put under even greater strain when gang members assault or rob friends or relations or, indeed, one another; a not infrequent occurrence (Palmer & Pitts, 2006). And this accounts for the fluidity and volatility of gangs, as evidenced by the recent emergence of *Drive*.

Inter-gang 'Beefs'

Drive, a fast-growing gang, came together around a friendship group of former Warwick School students who 'hang-out' around Atlee Terrace (KI.07,28,47). *Drive* comprises members, many of whom have defected from other gangs as a result of being cheated, robbed, abused or disrespected and, as such, the emergence of *Drive* bears eloquent testimony to the forces making for instability in gangland, and the sometimes random and chaotic nature of gang affiliation.

I had a beef with PC. They was doing street robbery everywhere. They robbed my brother and five of my friends. But I was cool with Beaumont even though they joined up with PC. But then Beaumont robbed my girl cousin so I joined Drive. Drive is just about making money; we're not into that other mad shit.

(KI.28)

Residence as Perceived Affiliation

As the gangs grew larger in the early years of the 21st century, and territorial disputes intensified, the numbers of protagonists increased and it was no longer easy to distinguish who, on any given estate, was or wasn't a gang member. This meant that, in effect, residence became synonymous with affiliation and young people with no prior gang involvement were restricted to their own estates because of the threat posed to them by rival gangs (KI.02, 03,04,07,13,37).

Risk and Self-Protection

In this situation of profound mutual fear and suspicion, generated by the conflict, rumours abounded and respect-related attacks escalated. This increasingly dangerous environment served as a stimulus for many previously unaffiliated young people to join their local gang as a means of self-defence but also to arm themselves with knives and sometimes guns. Yet, such was the threat posed by the gangs that even if young people held out against affiliation, they could easily be pressurised into undertaking illegal, tasks if gang members required them to do so (KI.24,26,27,28,37),

From the summer of 2006, gang affiliation and, often unreported, gang violence, escalated. This is evidenced by the recent 'shoot-out' at the Bakers Arms involving a half a dozen or so youths clad in bulletproof vests (KI.07,13,20,21, 24,38) The summer of 2006 also saw two fatal shootings as the ownership of illicit firearms in the borough rose (KI.07,13,21,20,24,38). One key informant reflecting on the high volume of unreported, but mercifully non-fatal, shooting incidents in the borough remarked:

"If only they were better shots, Waltham Forest would be a Trident borough." (KI.24)

Territorial Violence

The capacity of the *Elders* to instil fear and thereby silence into would-be complainants and witnesses, appears to free the Youngers to commit offences with impunity. A housing officer said:

For five or six years a group of 16 to 18 years olds was terrorising John Walsh and Fredwig Towers. They would wait at the bottom of the lift and take money, mobile phones, clothes that they fancied, even a dog, from the residents. A younger sister also had these terrible parties in the foyer but nobody complained. The Police had been trying to prosecute for years but because of witness intimidation, residents stayed quiet. These kids came to believe they were untouchable. Eventually we achieved an ASBO and a committal to Court, which resulted in a prison sentence, but the residents needed enormous support from the Police and ourselves.

(KI.25)

A Better Neighbourhoods officer said:

*The XXXX Estate is a neutral space and neutral spaces are colonised by gangs because nothing and nobody seems to be able to stop them. So neutral territory becomes gang territory by default. Since the summer, the gang from the YYYY Estate, some of them as young as 12, meet here before they go down to the Beaumont estate. They intimidate the local children and young people. They put messages on **My Space** saying 'we are coming to get you'. They beat them up on the way back from school and they even try to break into their houses to get at them.*

(KI.32)

This raises the question of whether this apparent desire on the part of gang members, to dominate the lives of those around them, flows from the erosion of informal social control and its effects on certain poorly socialised individuals or, more ominously, whether it has become a defining characteristic of youth gang culture in Waltham Forest.

7. Gang Culture

I can't explain it, I love my area, I just love it. (KI.46)

This is very emotional crime (KI.07)

Culture is simultaneously, a distinctive heritage, the means whereby people differentiate themselves from others, a collective response to a changing world and the essence of who we are. Culture is dynamic, not static, it is constantly incorporating new elements and discarding old, and for this reason it is very difficult to pin down exactly what the culture of any given gang at any given time actually is. Nonetheless, listening to key informants, it is possible to develop some understanding of what is distinctive and where this distinctiveness comes from.

Some commentators have suggested that 21st Century UK gangs are a product of the Americanisation, or globalisation, of youth culture, via MTV, films and music (Young, 1999), and this influence is clearly evident amongst Waltham Forest gangs. However their cultural heritage is more complex than this. Some gangs, as we have seen, have a history that stretches back to the last days of the Kray Brothers, and connections that reach into, multi-national, criminal business organisations. However, there is another heritage that appears to have a shaping influence on gang culture in the borough.

In his survey of European gangs, Malcolm Klein (1996) observed that English gangs were distinctive because, unlike their European counterparts, they bore a strong resemblance, in terms of their structure and culture, to 1980s, U.S., crack-dealing gangs. If this is so, it may well be that elements of contemporary Waltham Forest gang culture can be traced back to the 'garrison communities' of Kingston Jamaica in the 1970s (Clarke, 2006) as well as the ghettos of the North American cities and London's East End.

Ghettos, Garrisons and Gun Crime

By the late 1970s, Jamaican politics was becoming remarkably violent, as armed gangs associated with the pro-Cuban PNP (People's National Party) and the pro-US JLP (Jamaican Labour Party) battled for electoral supremacy. In the 1980 Jamaican general election the estimated death toll was around 800 (Silverman, 1994, Figueroa & Sives, 2002, Clarke, 2006).

These gangs had their homes in the 'garrison communities', the ghettos, of Kingston and, in return for their armed support, the political parties channelled overseas aid, in the form of improved housing, sanitation, jobs etc. into these ghettos. These gangs,

known in the UK as *Yardies*, originally made their living from marijuana sales but, in the early 1980s, a successful, US-led, marijuana suppression programme, meant that most gangs switched to the manufacture and sale of Crack, derived from cocaine imported from nearby South America. As a result, incomes rocketed, as did the ferocity and arbitrariness of the associated gang violence..

So violent had these inter-gang struggles become by the late 1980s, and so embattled were these garrison communities, that the PNP and the JLP distanced themselves from the *Yardies*, and the government of Michael Manley ordered a police crack-down that generated many more fatalities. Seeing the 'writing on the wall', many *Yardies*, and most notably the *Shower Posse*, emigrated to areas of Jamaican settlement in the USA, initially becoming street dealers for the South American drug cartels. However, such was their capacity for extreme violence that, very soon, they had sidelined the South Americans and moved into wholesale crack supply; eventually opening-up new markets in towns like Kansas City; previously untouched by the US crack 'epidemic'. However, very soon, the *Yardies* became the focus of the US *War on Drugs* and they moved on once again, to areas of Jamaican settlement in Canada and the UK. In London, from the late 1980s, the *Yardies*, in the guise of the *Renkers* the *Spanglers* and the *Gulleymen* were showing up in Hackney, Harlesden, Lambeth, Southwark and Tottenham (Silverman, 1994, McLagen, 2006).

We are not suggesting that the garrison communities of Kingston, Jamaica, were simply transplanted into the major British cities. Indeed, the *Yardies* attempts to impose themselves upon areas of Caribbean settlement were often resisted by Black/British residents and, as we have noted, they did not secure an operational foothold in Waltham Forest. However, several key informants (KI.37,41,46) suggest that their influence, in terms of gang culture, has been pervasive:

The Posse

In the 1980s and 1990s, before the advent of estate-based crews and gangs, many areas in London developed *Posses*; large, loosely affiliated, groups of, initially, African-Caribbean and Mixed Heritage young people, but latterly White and Asian too. However, the term *Posse* was coined in the Kingston garrisons in the 1970s to describe politically affiliated, armed, drug-dealing, neighbourhood gangs. The word itself has its origins in Clint Eastwood's Spaghetti Westerns, which achieved cult status in Jamaica in the 1970s (Silverman, 1994).

Music

In Kingston, each garrison community has its own 'sound', and gang members are involved in producing 'beats' containing both positive political messages and threats and insults directed against their adversaries. Following the exodus of the Jamaican *Yardies* from the USA, Robert Blackwood (aka Rankin Dread, aka Bowyark) senior gunman with the *Shower Posse* and a successful recording artist, who previously controlled the pro-JLP Rema garrison in Kingston, re-surfaced at the head of a drug-dealing and armed robbery gang in Hackney. Far from detracting from his stature as a recording artist, being so 'bad' apparently served to enhance it. Music is also central to the lives of gang members in Waltham Forest, here too the lyrics carry threats and insults directed against adversaries and, one such beat, said to have 'dissed' a rival gang member, was recently the pretext for a fatal attack on a young man on the Chingford Hall estate (KI.07.31).

'Soldiers'

Youngers in Waltham Forest, and younger gang members who dispense violence on behalf of gangs across London, style themselves *Soldiers*. In the 1980s some *Yardies* were spirited away to Cuba for military training, while the CIA is said to have armed others, and this was why the combatants in the battles between the garrisons became known as *Soldiers*. It was also the practice of *Yardie* gangs in the USA to recruit adolescents from the Kingston ghettos to low-level roles in the drugs business, this was partly because juveniles attracted lesser penalties for drug and gun related crime. Although poorly rewarded for their work, they were held there by the promise of eventual promotion, not unlike the Waltham Forest gang *Soldiers* of today. There is a danger of overstating the cultural connections between Kingston, Jamaica, in the 1980s and present day London, but it is alarming that two gangs in Peckham South London are named the *Shower Posse* and the *Shower Chicks*, and that Billie Cox, the part Thai part White, 15 year old shot dead in Clapham on Valentine's Day 2007, was described by his friends as a *Fallen Soldier* and used the tag *Remer*.

Aggressive Territoriality

Gang membership may change over time but the affiliation to, and affection for, territory; '*my neighbourhood*', '*my area*', '*my estate*' appears to remain constant. But this territory must be protected from outsiders, leading one young key informant (KI.47) to say that he would '*defend anyone in E10*' (a new slant on the postcode lottery.). Life gets even more dangerous however if you leave your territory:

People come up to you and say where are you from and if you say the wrong area they have you – but you don't always know what to say. (KI.46)

This commitment to the defence of territory appears to have its origins in the constraints imposed by the geography of the drugs market. However, increasingly, territory is defined as a postcode, and the antagonisms generated are London-wide, bearing little if any relation to the drugs markets or gang territories. The territorial violence and aggression at this level appears to serve no practical purpose beyond providing an arena in which individuals and groups can demonstrate their physical prowess and courage and, to that extent, it has echoes of the structure of football violence in its heyday. However, the arbitrariness and ferocity of this violence also has strong echoes of the conflicts between various *Yardie* groups in Jamaica and the UK.

Territorial Control

One of the more sinister aspects of gang culture in Waltham Forest is the apparent determination of some gangs and gang members to exert control over the other residents in the territories they claim as their own. What is distinctive about garrison communities is not merely that gang members live there and defend them from other gangs. Nor is it that they are also drugs markets. Their other defining characteristic is that the gangs exert inordinate control over the day-to-day lives of other residents. As we have seen, on some Waltham Forest Estates where gangs operate, unaffiliated young people and adults have been subject to intimidation, harassment, theft, violent assault and rape. In controlling the day-to-day behaviour of residents and tenants living within 'their' territory', controlling who may enter 'their' territory, and driving out those whom they believe should not dwell there, some gangs are transforming the estates where they live into the

... totalitarian social space(s) in which the options of the residents are largely controlled.

Described by Figueroa & Sives (2002) in their discussion of the 'garrison communities' of Kingston, Jamaica. In these circumstances, young people who might otherwise have avoided it, find it very hard to steer clear of gang involvement.

8. Reluctant Gangsters

He said 'When you see us together you think we are all friends, don't you Miss, but we're not'.

(Head teacher, KI.39)

Several YOT workers observed that some of the children and young people coming to the YOT for gang-related crime were distinctive in one particular way (KI.13,17,18,20).

They have no previous record, are good school attendees and have a good attitude. But they are coming into the YOT for 'joint enterprise' because they were present at the scene.

(KI.45)

These young people tend to be either occasional (ambivalent) or reluctant affiliates (see fig.8.1 below), whose gang involvement is essentially pragmatic; a means of securing some degree of protection from their own and other gangs.

Drawing on the data generated by the YOT caseload survey, interviews with gang members, adult professionals and local residents, in figure 8.1 (below) we posit a tentative model of gang structure, the nature of gang affiliation and what we might call the division of labour within gangs. It is evident from this analysis that the gang involvement of around one third of these young people is no wholly voluntary.

Fig.8.1

The Structure of Larger Gangs: Waltham Forest, Autumn 2006

Core Members/Elders/Faces	5 (7%)
Soldiers/Youngers	10 (14%)
'Shotters'/Street drug dealers	10 (14%)
Wannabees/Girlfriends	10 (14%)
Occasional (Ambivalent) Affiliates	20 (28%)
Reluctant Affiliates	10 (14%)

We have already seen that rival gangs perceive residence on an estate controlled by a gang as affiliation. Moreover resistance to, or disaffiliation from, the local gang is often regarded as an indication of disrespect or disloyalty. This situation appears to produce five modes of involuntary affiliation:

(1.) Affiliation because of the risks to oneself and ones family from non-affiliation

One local resident on the Beaumont Estate observed that:

*'To stay out of trouble kids would have to stay at home'.
(Kl.49)*

As figure 8.2 (below) suggests, for some young people, non-affiliation to the gang does not appear to be an option and may have dire consequences for them.

Fig.8.2

What is often ignored however is that the majority of young men in this predicament do not actively seek out gang membership or involvement in gun crime. Furthermore, the image of Black youth who are caught up in these activities presented by high-profile commentators within the black community as cold and ruthless killers is different from that of the second generation respondents. Many are mortified by what they have done and what they often feel they have had to do to survive. Christopher gave an account of how one young person he knew was affected:

They're crouched up in the corner crying because they brought the gun out to protect themselves and they've been challenged so they've pulled the trigger. They haven't wanted to pull the trigger...

In reality, being unable to 'escape' from the neighbourhoods where these crimes are being enacted, they cannot afford to appear resistant or indifferent to the powerful cliques and individuals who are involved. Moreover, gun ownership in a neighbourhood tends to become self-propelling, as those who feel threatened by other young people with firearms, arm themselves in self-defence. However, as a result of the historical legacy of mistrust, seeking help from the police is not an option.

Palmer S. & Pitts J. (2006) Othering the Brothers. Youth and Policy. No.91

Another YOT worker (Kl.50) said:

Some kids say they were made to do things by Elders. Many of them don't necessarily approve of what they are doing. Most kids would rather be doing something else. But gang culture prevents participation. They are frightened to be seen as a 'pussy' or to become a target of violence.

If the local gang asks someone on the estate to do something, like a street robbery, they know they must to do it or suffer the consequences. Another YOT worker said:

There were a brother and a sister; he was 15 and she was 14. Never been in trouble. They told them to do a robbery. But they said no. So they beat him up and raped her. (KI.51)

In these circumstances neutrality or disaffiliation is exceptionally difficult, as another local resident observed:

If you are not with a gang you are at the bottom of the hierarchy and you'd be very vulnerable. (KI.52)

Speaking of a neighbour's son who stood out against gang affiliation one informant, a YOT worker, said:

He's 18 and he won't ever come out of his house. He says it's more than his life's worth. (KI.29)

Even if a young person has the strength to stand out against gang affiliation, the reprisals may be against their family. One local resident said:

So he tells 'em 'fuck off'. Anyway, the next thing he knows, someone's shot-up his mother's flat. There's lots of families round here can't use their front rooms because of this sort of thing." (KI.53)

It is not just young people on the street who are vulnerable to gang coercion. A YOT worker said:

'Single parents are also told to hide guns and drugs.' (KI.45)

(2.) Affiliation for protection from other gangs/crews

As we have already noted, as territorial disputes between estates intensified in the early years of the century, the numbers of protagonists increased and it was no longer easy to distinguish who, on any given estate, was or wasn't a gang member. One gang member said.

People come up to you and say 'where are you from?' and if you say the wrong area they have you – but you don't always know what to say. (KI.28)

In this situation of profound mutual fear and suspicion, generated by the conflict, rumours abound and respect-related attacks escalate. A 16-year-old gang member said:

There was this gossip about some girl and so I was supposed to have a fight with this one boy. But about 10 or 20 of his gang come round from the XXXX with metal poles. So I jumped back in my house and I rung my boys and they come down and we chased them off. (KI.26)

(3.) Affiliation to gain access to educational/recreational resources in gang territory

Non-affiliation may mean that it is dangerous to use certain services or facilities like an FE college or the local park, either located in gang territory or where access is only possible if one traverses gang territory. The young person then has to decide whether to affiliate in order to take advantage of the resources which would be denied them by non-affiliation.

(4.) Affiliation because of lack of access to legitimate opportunity

For some young people, who fall out of education at an early age and have been in trouble with the law, there are few acceptable, legitimate, opportunities available. The problem is not simply that they lack the necessary skills, qualifications and personal credibility, it is also that, in terms of their social class orientation and culturally determined attitudes to the workplace, they are ill-equipped to survive in the few jobs available (see figure 8.3 (below)).

Fig.8.3

Non-union service workers in high-rise office buildings can draw on much the same repertoires of work-site resistance that masses of dominated people from agricultural serfs to apprentice artisans to modern day housekeepers have always engaged in: foot dragging, attitudinal opposition, and petty theft. This kind of purposeful disgruntlement, however, is particularly unacceptable in the new office service sector, where 'attitude' - enthusiasm, initiative, and flexibility often determines who is fired and who is promoted.

Bourgeois P. (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

In these circumstances, gang membership provides one of the few routes to a status-conferring role and a 'decent wage'.

(5) Continued affiliation because of dangers inherent in leaving the gang

Gang members who want to leave the gang not only lose its protection, becoming vulnerable to other gangs with which they have previously had a beef; they may also fall foul of their former associates because of the disrespect or disloyalty implied by their departure.

One gang member said:

If I want to be out of the gang, I must leave this area. No way I could stay round here man. There is always someone to come after you with a blade or something. (KI.27)

While some young people wholeheartedly embrace, and revel in, gang membership, many of the young people interviewed in the course of the present research appeared to be either ambivalent about, or resigned to, gang membership, seeing few, if any, realistic alternatives.

9. The Social Impact of Gangs

'Predatory crime does not merely victimise individuals; it impedes and, in extreme cases, even prevents the formation and maintenance of community. By disrupting the delicate nexus of ties, formal and informal, by which we are linked with our neighbours, crime atomises society and makes of its members mere individual calculators, estimating their own advantage, especially their own chances of survival amidst their fellows.'

James Q. Wilson (1975) Thinking About Crime

Gang Members and their Families

The long-term prospects for core gang members are bleak:

They end up doing a long prison sentence, cracked-out or dead. (KI.24)

While young people on the margins of the gang may, from time to time, talk about the dangers of, and alternatives to, gang involvement, those more heavily involved appear to be 'in denial'.

They seem to have a kind of defence mechanism that prevents them thinking about the likely end point of their gang careers. (KI.29).

Ben Bowling and Coretta Phillips (2006) have written of a lack of hope and a pervasive sense of nihilism amongst poor African-American and Caribbean young people, which flows from being a member of what Detlef Baum (1996), in his study of a Turkish migrant community in Koblenz, Germany, describes as 'discredited populations' (see figure 9.1 below).

Fig. 9.1

Young people sense this discreditation in their own environment, in school or in the cultural or leisure establishments. Through this they experience stigmatisation of their difference, of their actions, and the perceived incompetence of the people they live among. The options for action are limited and possibilities for gaining status-enhancing resources are made more difficult. At some stage the process becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; young people and adults come to think that there must be 'something in it' when their characteristics and ways of behaving are stigmatised, and some become confirmed in this uncertainty. One is no longer in control of defining oneself, one is defined by others.

Baum D. (1996) Can Integration Succeed? Research Into Urban Childhood and Youth in a Deprived Area of Koblenz, *Social Work in Europe*, 3 (3)

Such discreditation generates damage to self-esteem at both an individual and collective level, sometimes precipitating a search for a collective 'solution' to these existential and material deficits. These young people are, as Jock Young (1999) has argued, culturally included, sharing mainstream aspirations but, by dint of their discreditation, economically excluded, lacking access to legitimate means for fulfilling those aspirations.

We have already noted that in the 1980s, the situation of the 'have nots' and, in particular, those in the poorest segment of Britain's BME community, worsened substantially (Palmer & Pitts, 2006). To be socially excluded with the hope of future centrality may generate hope and solidarity (Wacquant, 2003). But to be socially excluded in the expectation of a worsening predicament may, by contrast, generate despair and fragmentation. As Ben Bowling & Coretta Philips (2006) argue, these circumstances tend to generate rage and frustration, emotions compounded by the routine brutalities of the drugs trade and the perception of police injustice. In these circumstances, as James Short (1997) has argued; *wider cultural values become unviable* and these young people come to occupy, a far bleaker, 'alternative cognitive landscape', developing what is sometimes called a 'soldier mentality', characterised by a heightened sensitivity to threat and a constant preparedness for action (Sampson & Lauritson, 1994).

Several key informants suggested that many gang members are emotionally deprived and that their parenting may have been erratic (KI.18,19, 43,44). They also observed that in gang member's families, the 'feeling', if it is done at all, is usually done by parents and siblings, some of whom may act as mediators between these emotionally 'switched-off' and potentially dangerous young people and their adversaries. (KI.07,43).

A psychotherapist (KI.54) working with gang-involved young people in East London describes them as 'emotionally unavailable', and this suspension of feeling appears to be a key feature of what another key informant (KI.07) describes as the 'gang mentality'. The nature of gang territoriality gives a clue to the 'militarised' mind-set of the *Younger/Soldier*:

JP *What happens when you go inside, do they put you with people from your own gang?*

KI.26 *Sort of, but its different inside, its North, South, East and West*

JP *How do you mean?*

KI.26 *Then it's East London boys against South London or West London. And then, if they transfer you to a nick up North, it's London against Manchester or Liverpool. You know what I mean?*

JP *Supposing you made friends inside with someone from another gang or another area, what would happen when you came out?*

KI.26 *Same as before, we'd both know that, that's just how it is.*

Such ardent hierarchical affiliation to the gang, the area and the city is reminiscent of other, more conventional, commitments to, for example, *Walthamstow Avenue, Leyton Orient, West Ham and England*. But in the case of football, for the most part at least, the conflict is symbolic and, for most, affiliation to a football team does not preclude closeness to other human beings in the way that gang membership appears to. And it may be that, in the dangerous world inhabited by gang members, this passionate but disembodied relationship with a place serves to suppress the anxiety and despair that the realistic prospect of the loss of one's own life or that of a close friend or relative might otherwise induce.

Several key informants (KI.18,43,45) suggested that communication between gang-involved young people and their families was often difficult, that parents frequently did not know where their children were and were sometimes unable to exert control over them. For their part, some gang-involved young people felt their parents were worn down by the circumstances of their lives and that they cannot turn to them for support.

I think their parents are too stretched with trying just to make a living. They haven't got time to care.

(KI.26)

A YOT worker echoed this:

Time is scarce in these families; the quality of relationships can suffer because of this, leading to depression. We (professionals) need to devote time to these (gang) issues. We need to encourage conversations within these families.

(KI.54)

Some key informants suggested that, for some BME families, there may be a sense of disappointment and humiliation at the evaporation, or unrealisability, of the 'migrant's dream' of social

mobility. Other parents may feel shame and frustration at being unable to extricate their families from this highly dangerous situation. Others are simply depressed. These parents are all too aware of the widespread perception that the gang problem is ultimately a product of poor parenting and that the solution lies in assuming responsibility for their children. Yet, in this situation, many feel unable either to control or to protect their children. As one key informant put it:

Telling these families to take responsibility for their kids behaviour is like telling them to take their kids into the jungle and take responsibility for them not getting eaten by lions and tigers.

(KI.07)

Whatever their shortcoming, these parents are often victims of what the American criminologist Elliott Currie (1985) calls the *fallacy of autonomy*, the idea that we can separate parenting capacity from the circumstances in which parenting is to be undertaken. Malcolm Gladwell (2000) puts this succinctly when he says that, given the choice, it is far better to come from a troubled family in a good neighbourhood than a good family in a trouble neighbourhood.

In these circumstances parents must calculate whether their child's best interest is served by resisting the gang or joining it. Some parents consequently collude with their child's gang membership because to be in the gang is the safest option. In these circumstance, a YOT worker observed:

... it is crucial not to blame parents for gang phenomenon, they are doing what they can with minimal support in a highly dangerous and complex situation.

(KI.43)

This has strong echoes of North American research which found that gang-involved families require a great deal of support (Hagedorn, 1991). However, part of this support may need to be political, since it appears that gang-affected families don't feel that their concerns are represented, or their predicament understood, by politicians and policy makers.

As far as they are concerned we don't exist, and even if we do, we are just some kind of problem that won't go away. I sometimes think the best thing we could do would be to go out and vote and demand that our politicians listen to what's happening to us.

(KI.35)

Neighbourhoods

Forty per cent of the social housing in the borough consists of flats, many of them located on housing estates. This is changing as a result of regeneration programmes that involve the demolition of tower blocks and the relocation of residents to low-rise accommodation.

It appears that a majority of adult tenants on gang-dominated estates would move if they could. However, all the London boroughs have long housing waiting lists and this, together with the transfer of housing responsibility to a plurality of housing associations, makes it difficult for them to move within, or out of, the borough. Those who are successful have usually negotiated a house-swap, but this is difficult if they live on an estate with a reputation for gang violence. Some tenants have been moved to the North of England where social housing is more plentiful. However, few are willing to countenance such a radical solution (KI.25)

Although a great deal of money has been invested in regeneration, and the new homes are of a high standard, many tenants continue to suffer from low incomes and high unemployment.

One paradoxical outcome of regeneration for gang-involved families has been that relocation, from the far more defensible tower blocks to houses which front onto a street, has rendered them more vulnerable to attack, reprisal and burglary. This means that non-gang-involved neighbours and passers-by are made more vulnerable too.

Residents and tenants, particularly those in single occupancy units, do not come together to find solutions, and are more likely to take their problems to the housing authority. However, as we have already noted, when housing authorities endeavour to formalise complaints, requiring a named complainant and/or witness, these complaints tend to evaporate. Beyond this, getting an ASBO, for example, is a cumbersome process, taking up to two years, by which time its significance for the complainant and its impact on the perpetrator will have been dissipated. The difficulties surrounding the imposition of civil or criminal sanctions means that many people on gang-affected estates come to believe that nobody cares, and so they stop complaining and *just lock their doors* (KI.55).

Some time ago, on the Beaumont Estate, where the 'climate of fear' is said to be most intense, the leader of the TRA did try to stand up to the gangs, but the threat to his safety and that of his family was such that the housing authority and the police persuaded him to move house to a different area (KI.18).

This is not to say that there has been no collective action by tenants and residents. Recently, following a serious assault on the Cathall Estate, parents with the support of the Housing Association, ran a series of meetings on the theme *Reclaiming Our Children Reclaiming our Estate*, part of which involved them in attempting to develop better communication skills in order to be able to talk to their children.

More recently, according to a representative of a housing association (KI.25) and the Chair of a TRA (KI.35), Police *Safer Neighbourhood Teams* have been effective in encouraging people to express their concerns:

When they see the police around constantly they think things are changing. (KI.35)

The presence of *Safer Neighbourhood Teams* also raises hopes that Appropriate Behaviour Contracts and ASBOs will be monitored and enforced. The representative of a housing association (KI.25) believes that *Appropriate Behaviour Contracts*, imposed on younger children and young people, had been effective in reducing low-level damage and disorder and reducing the numbers progressing to more serious offending.

In the case of ASBOs, she felt that the heightened probability of enforcement was likely to be effective, because they are backed-up by the possibility of prosecution. Ascham Homes, a major housing provider in the borough currently has 600 ASBOs in train, most of which are to be imposed on young people aged between 13 and 18. The last resort of a Housing Association confronted with problematic tenants is re-possession. Last year Ascham Homes initiated 100 re-possession actions. However, this is not a popular measure with tenants or professionals since these tenants will return to them via the homelessness route.

Some housing professionals point to a mismatch between available resources, particularly youth provision and policing, on gang-affected estates. This is, they argue, determined by the political clout of particular TRAs, and the extent to which the different housing providers see their responsibility extending beyond the maintenance of the fabric of their properties.

Policing

Policing in Waltham Forest is shaped by nationally determined targets, changing political priorities and local need. However, there are tensions between national priorities, and the targets and penalties that accompany them, and the complexities of local law enforcement.

Police officers, interviewed by Webster in 2004, attributed the low priority accorded to the burgeoning gang-related crack cocaine problem in the borough to the national emphasis on tackling street crime (Waltham Forest CD&D Audit 2004). Waltham Forest was one of 15 local authorities chosen as a pilot area for intensive action against street crime in 2002-3 and one of three chosen in 2003-4. Today, street crime remains a priority but since 2006, terrorism has been the number one policing issue in the borough, and significant resources have been committed to this work. In January 2007 13 people were arrested and 9 charged under the Terrorism Act

This dual emphasis upon terrorism and street crime, both real and pressing problems, has tended to deflect police time and resources from the problem of crack-dealing, armed, youth gangs and, in consequence, Waltham Forest police have yet to attract the kinds of resources that the dimensions of the problem would appear to merit. This is somewhat ironic since, as this report suggests, street crime, particularly where it is gun-enabled, drug dealing, drug use, sexual offending, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime all appear to be inextricably tied up with gang activity.

The police recognise that the 'gang problem' requires a long-term, 'joined-up', strategy involving high-level, multi-agency, strategic leadership. However, it is in the nature of contemporary public services that they tend to be driven by short or medium-term imperatives. Moreover, because senior officers are employed on time-limited contracts and evaluated against rapidly changing, nationally determined, performance indicators, there are 'perverse incentives' within the system that threaten to steer policing away from long-term strategic thinking about local problems (Hallam, 2007).

National priorities and demands upon resources mean that the police gang strategy is fairly tightly focussed, aiming to 'take out' the top tier in each gang and, where possible, to seize their assets. In doing this the police draw upon evidence about gang-involved groups and individuals generated by *Source Units*. However, by removing an entire echelon, the way is cleared for an internal struggle for leadership and an external struggle for market domination, both of which can generate violence. A further

consequence of 'taking out' the *Elders* is that younger, more volatile and hence more dangerous, people are left in charge, without (*and this is very difficult to grasp, although apparently true*), the 'restraining hand' of the *Elders*. Moreover, the eventual return of the *Elders* from prison can spark further violence as they endeavour to take back control of the gang and avenge the 'disrespect' they may have endured during their time inside.

Clearly, the job of the police is to catch people who commit serious crime, but without a parallel intervention that aims to avert some of the unintended consequences of successful police action, this strategy does not contribute as much as it might to the safety and security of residents in gang neighbourhoods. This raises the question of what the police should be doing with these gangs between these periodic 'busts'. One police officer, who has made a point of maintaining close contact with senior gang members, stressed the importance of a high-profile police presence in gang neighbourhoods:

They need to know you and to know that you know them and what they are up to. I think some police officers are reluctant to get involved at that level but otherwise these guys come to believe they are living charmed lives and can get away with anything, they need to know we are there.

The establishment, as of 1st January 2007, of *Safer Neighbourhoods Teams* (SNT) staffed by one Sergeant, two PCs and two PCSOs in all the wards in the borough, is moving some way towards this, and it certainly appears to be encouraging some, previously reluctant, residents to come forward with their concerns about gangs. However, their success relies on the development of trust, which can be undermined by discontinuity and the absence of the interpersonal skills needed to engage with a frightened and distrustful public. A local resident (KI.35) said:

For the first year it (the SNT) was excellent. But then the sergeant who knew everybody left. Then they went down to one PC and one PCSO and it kind of fell apart. You need to see them more. There's a new sergeant now and he's really efficient but he's still got to develop the same people skills to win the trust and confidence of local people if it's going to work.

There is a long history of resistance to a police presence in London schools. Currently there are eight officers placed in Waltham Forest schools and the police would like to place them in all gang-affected schools. Relationships between the police and schools appear to be

improving and requests for advice about knife arches and security wands are increasing.

The robbery squad has recently adopted a strategy of seeking ASBOs on younger repeat-offenders who have previously avoided arrest and prosecution by intimidating witnesses. Because it requires a lower standard of proof and carries a criminal sanction the police believe that ASBOs may be an effective weapon against this type of street crime.

The police are concerned that the criminal justice system often fails to understand the dynamics of the gang problem. Recently, two trials, one involving the *Beaumont Gang* and the other, their archenemy *Oliver Close*, were scheduled in the same Court on the same day. On spotting this, protagonists from both sides 'phoned for reinforcements, in the form of firearms, which were, fortuitously, intercepted by two observant police officers patrolling outside the court, thus averting a bloodbath.

The police are also frustrated by the fact that, because the *Crown Prosecution Service* (CPS) is overly target-driven, prosecutors tend to 'play the odds', only supporting prosecutions that have a very strong chance of success. The police find this approach unsupportive, arguing that if they are to send the right message to gangs, the CPS must become less risk-averse. They argue that public protection relies on the certainty that if someone intimidates complainants or witnesses they will be prosecuted and, if and when convicted, go to jail (KI.31).

Youth work

Youth work in Waltham Forest is provided by the local authority, the voluntary sector and the housing associations. The local authority has some building-based provision and a team of 15 street-based youth workers. Not all of these workers are full-time however and the team operates in only four or five of the borough's wards. Until recently outreach workers operated as three teams, one dedicated to drugs education, one to crime prevention and the other, *Streetwise*, concerned with developing local recreational provision. They are now one team and tend to focus on neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of social deprivation.

The outreach workers see gang-based 'territorialism' as a major problem for youth work in the borough. They argue that gang territories and gang pressures shape what can be done, where it can be done and with whom. A team working on the Avenue Estate to develop recreational opportunities for local children and young people have seen their work confounded by the Cathall *Youngers*

who have intimidated the Avenue young people to the point that they dare not engage in those activities. This also poses a real physical threat to the workers:

I think the danger is that social strategies could be paralysed by territorialism. This is happening in schools and colleges and if it continues we could see the gangs effectively paralysing public services.
(KI,54)

Moreover, because the remainder of statutory youth service provision is building-based, its availability, or not, will be determined by the gang territory into which it falls.

At present the detached team is focussing on young people involved with *Drive*, in the area around Atlee terrace, which is one of the borough's most deprived wards and has long-standing problems of youth violence. The workers found that, in the summer of 2006, it was the girls at Atlee Terrace rather than the boys who were causing problems for local residents. The team is also attempting to develop an intervention on the Cathall Estate where the Cathall *Youngers* are currently asserting themselves.

The team believes that group work with gangs is very difficult and may even be counter-productive (cf Klein, 1969), suggesting that effective intervention with core gang members may need to be done on a one-to-one basis, as is the case with the Waltham Forest Prolific and Priority Offenders programme (cf Marlow, 2007)

As a result, the team's strategy is based on a three-level hierarchical model of intervention that distinguishes between (a) those young people who are heavily involved in gang activity (b) those at risk of such involvement and (c) those who are adversely affected by gangs and may be in danger of involuntary involvement. The team aims to target young people at level (c) and some of those at level (b), leaving level (a) and the heavier end of level (b) to Trident and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) respectively. However, at present, information sharing between the police, the YOT and the youth service tends to be somewhat *ad hoc* (KI,06,09,54) and there is no co-ordinated strategy and, currently, no youth workers are employed by the YOT.

A great deal of youth work and play provision in the borough is provided by housing associations. Asham homes, for example, provide dance, drama and football coaching, although they find that regular attendance is a problem. They also support events run by *Defending the Hood* as a way of opening up communication with

gang-involved young people. However, housing providers vary considerably in their responsiveness to residents' social needs.

For some, housing associations 'guardianship' means first and foremost a focus on the fabric of the buildings rather than the anxieties of tenants and residents. For many housing associations, engagement with gang issues would be a major 'step beyond'.

(KI,32)

As a result, youth provision in the borough is very patchy. But even when the housing provider does make provision for young people, as is the case on the Cathall Estate, gang 'territorialism' means that nobody outside the area demarcated by the gang is able to use that provision.

Residents and professionals see a need for structured opportunities for the various youth work providers to talk to one another, the voluntary sector youth services, housing providers, the police, the YOT and tenants and residents, about the impact of gangs on youth provision in the borough (KI,25,32, 33,34,35). Alongside this, they say, there should be a discussion with the young people on their estates about their social and recreational needs and what would constitute 'cool' provision. Ultimately, they argue, there has to be a shared youth strategy that articulates with those of the other agencies endeavouring to confront the gang problem in Waltham Forest and the adjacent boroughs.

Schools

In some primary schools, children are claiming to be gang members and gang-based fights have occurred. It has also been suggested that some primary school children are carrying knives and drugs for older gang members (KI.23,24). Mobile phones mean that gang fights that start in the primary school quickly attract gang-involved students from secondary schools, and some schools now have a regular police presence at the end of the school day.

Increased gang activity at primary and secondary school level over the past three years finds expression in higher rates of exclusion and several schools have recently cited 'gangs' as the reason for missed targets in their self-assessments. Many of these exclusions have arisen from young people bringing weapons into school, an infraction that triggers automatic exclusion in most schools. But of course, it is often the fear generated by gangs that induces non-gang-affiliated young people to carry weapons (KI,23,38).

Technology; mobile 'phones and texting, exacerbates the gang-related tensions within schools, meaning that there is no respite from rumours, threats and the attendant hysteria which, together, generate a poor learning environment. This means that in some schools, teachers are powerless to shape the environment and attainment levels suffer *across the board* (KI,23,32,38). Teachers in gang-affected school tend to see themselves as an embattled 'thin blue line'. Parents are sometimes unsupportive and far from controlling their children, tend to encourage them to challenge the school. This creates staff retention problems and rapid staff turnover can serve to further destabilise the school (KI,23,39).

In the past, schools have been loath to talk about gang problems for fear of jeopardising their year 7 intake. However, over the past few years, the *Hard to Place Panel* has made headway, generating a collegiate atmosphere by recognising the complexity of the problem; seeing it as belonging to the education authority rather than a particular school or school head. At a practical level, non-gang-affected schools are becoming more willing to lend a hand with the placement of school-excluded, gang-involved, children and young people. (KI,10,23).

Although gangs affect the school in a variety of ways, at secondary school level, there is little evidence of gang conflict inside the schools. The head of a secondary school that draws students from both the Beaumont and Oliver Close estates said:

I think the children are relieved to leave gang culture outside. We have a zero tolerance policy on knives. We use security wands and conduct random searches, we agreed this with the parents. We have rules: No hoods, No hats, No caps and No bandanas. We say to them that the street stays on the street.
(KI.38)

She argued that, in this way, the children are given the option of embracing school values rather than street values because they feel safe inside the school. This allows them to drop the posture and so they are freed from their dilemma about gang loyalty. A young key informant, a gang member, echoed this:

In schools everyone is friendly – you grow up together from years 3 and 4
(KI,46)

Students will talk to staff about some of the things that happen on the estates where they live but will often say, '*I can't tell you what's going on out there*'. Outside school many students feel that they are

physically under threat and they are fearful for themselves and their families.

'They live in the middle of it and cannot see a way out of it.'

(KI.47)

A recently arrived student was badly beaten-up by rival gang members on his way to school. However, suggestions by staff that they should call the police were met with horror. He said:

If they think I did that we (my family) will have to leave the country) we have already moved once because of threats from gangs.

Similarly, a non-gang affiliated boy who had merely witnessed a shooting incident involving a gang-affiliated school mate, had to be transferred to another school because even a slight suspicion that he would 'talk' would have put him and his family in danger.

Schools and their students can become the target of gang crime. In late 2006, a group of *Youngers* from a local gang targeted the year 11s at a secondary school for one week, at lunchtimes, taking mobile phones and cash from them. At one point, a gang member, who was apparently 'cracked out', came into the school and started smashing up its foyer. When a visiting mother objected, the boy pulled a gun on her and demanded her phone. A very brave member of staff intervened and talked the boy out of the building. The boy was arrested on unrelated charges the following week.

The school head praised the more cooperative attitude now being demonstrated by the police, contrasting it with the lack of trust and poor information flow, which had previously made working together very difficult. As a result, although she was initially resistant to the idea of a police presence in schools, she was now warming to the idea.

Further Education Colleges

In September 2006, students attending an ICT course at the CLC College in Billet Road reported that they were being intimidated and told not to use the college by members of the *Chingford Hall* gang. Gang members told us that, unlike schools, further education colleges 'belong' to particular gangs. They claimed that George Monoux is the province of *Chingford Hall* and *Barrier* while Waltham Forest College belongs to *Priory Court*, *Beaumont* and *Boundary* (KI,26,27,46,47). While this ownership does not appear to impinge

upon non-gang-involved students, there have been several incidents of gang violence. In Waltham Forest College, in 2006, two members of *Oliver Close* were said to have been stabbed by members of *Drive* (KI,23) and, in 2005, a boy believed to have been stabbed at George Monoux, staggered into Aveling Park School to use the wash facilities (KI.23). These could be isolated incidents and the young informants could be exaggerating, but several professionals have suggested that FE colleges in the borough may well be sites where gang activity is gaining momentum (KI,07,21,29).

The Youth Offending Team

As we have noted, our caseload survey suggested that at least 42% of the young people supervised by Waltham Forest Youth Offending Team (YOT) are gang involved, and this is probably an underestimate because the more heavily gang-involved young people are the less likely to talk about it (KI.09,19,43,45). One of the problems facing the YOT is that, because of problems of territoriality, young people involved in group work have to be bussed in to avoid crossing, or passing through, territory claimed by rival gangs.

The YOT is, first and foremost, an agency charged with 'effective offender management'. Funding for preventive work exists but this tends to be directed to programmes of work with individual offenders. As currently constituted, however, the YOT does not have the capacity to undertake outreach work.

Residential and Custodial Services

Placement in residential homes and leaving-care provision is inevitably affected by gang territory and gang membership. Staff need to be aware of a young person's gang affiliations in order to avoid placing them in a dangerous situation. Increasingly, YOT staff are liaising with establishments in the secure estate to ensure they have knowledge of an inmate's gang affiliations. For their part, these institutions will usually endeavour to place members of different gangs on different wings to minimise conflict.

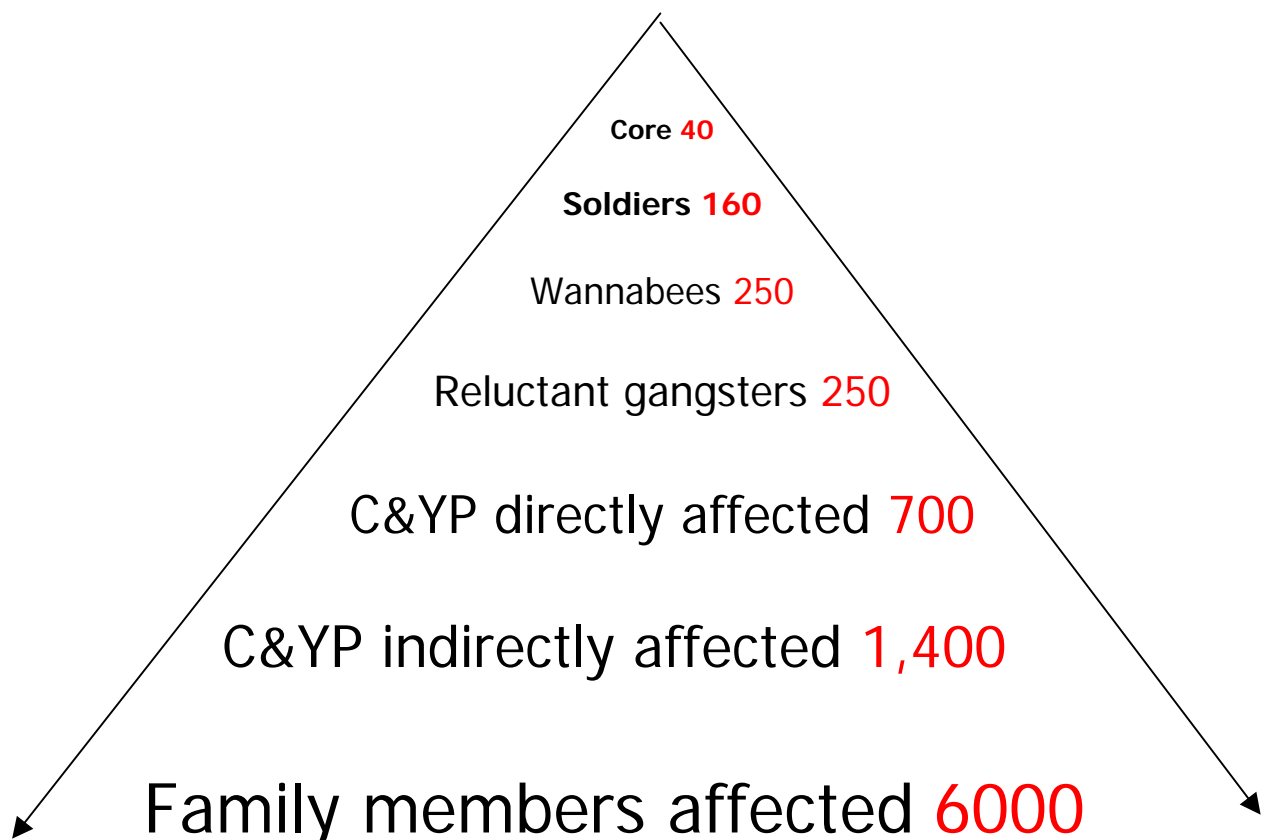
How Many People are Adversely Affected by Gangs?

While it is difficult to calculate exactly, figure 9.2 (below) presents an estimate of the numbers of local citizens who are adversely affected by gangs. In the 2001 census, Waltham Forest had a population of 222,340, of which 30%, (around 70,000 people) fell within the 10-29 age group. If around 700 young people are directly involved in gangs, this represents 1.0% of the age group. We estimate that a further 1% is directly, adversely, affected by gangs and that a further 2% is indirectly, adversely, affected, because

they live in an area or attend a school where gang activity threatens them or limits what they are able to do. If this is so, we can say that gangs adversely affect the day-to-day lives of around 4% of the children and young people in the borough in the 10-29 age group. But these young people also have parents and siblings who are affected by their predicament. We estimate their number to be around 6,000. Thus, in the region of 8,800 people in Waltham Forest (approximately 4% of the total population) would appear to be adversely affected by youth gangs. This calculation does not include the professionals directly and indirectly involved with and affected by gangs.

Fig 9.2

How Many People are Adversely Affected by Gangs in Waltham Forest?



10. A Seven Point Gang Strategy for Waltham Forest

*How many rivers do we have to cross
Before we get to meet the boss?*

Bob Marley

The Policy Context

To be effective, a comprehensive, multi-agency, response to gangs must, as far as possible, articulate with, and build upon, current policies and administrative arrangements. These recommendations are therefore formulated with reference to:

- Every Child Matters
- Social Inclusion Policy
- Social Cohesion Policy
- Local Authority Section 17. (C&DA, 1998) responsibilities
- Policing Policy

Every Child Matters

Every Child Matters marks a 'new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19'. The Government's aim is that every child, whatever their background or circumstances, should have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

This should mean that the organisations involved with providing services to children; schools, social services, the police, YOTs, hospitals etc. will work together to develop services that achieve these five objectives. We have noted the need for supportive interventions with gang-involved and gang affected families, and the emerging multi-agency Children's Trusts, with a capacity to address mental health, welfare and educational issues, could provide the vehicle for such a holistic intervention. As in other policy areas, *Every Child Matters* emphasises the importance of involving children and young people, both individually and collectively, in 'the issues that affect their lives'. Yet, while there is evidence that political participation by disadvantaged children and young people and their parents may serve to reduce crime, violence and victimisation (Pitts, 2003, Crimmens 2004), few opportunities currently exist to link these gang-involved and gang-affected

youngsters and their families, systematically, into the political process.

Social Inclusion

Social exclusion can take many forms; economic, social, cultural or religious, but government policy tends to focus upon people or neighbourhoods which, for whatever reason, are denied access to essential resources and services, or opportunities to participate in everyday aspects of life that most of us take for granted.

As we have noted, there is a particular problem in gang-affected communities where young people are culturally included, sharing mainstream aspirations, but economically excluded because they lack access to relevant legitimate opportunities (Young, 1999) thus generating a heightened sense of frustration. This would suggest that a key element of an effective gang strategy would be to re-introduce gang-involved young people to forms of education, training and employment which 'start where they are' and hold the prospect of status-conferring roles in the legitimate economy.

Social Cohesion

The Government's Strategy Document: *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* (Home Office 2005a), produced in the wake of the disturbances in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in the summer of 2001 states that:

Communities that are strong and inclusive lead to a better quality of life, a stronger sense of identity and belonging, and mutual respect and equality. This is central to the idea of a civil society on which democracy rests.

However, while it deals at length with relationships between 'communities', it has nothing to say about the tensions within 'communities', or that some BME young people may find themselves at odds with both their own communities and the socio-cultural mainstream, thus posing a major threat to social cohesion. Nor does it consider that, ironically, as a result of this, the street gang provides a rare model of inter-ethnic social cohesion. (Bailey, forthcoming). In these circumstances, the cause of social cohesion may be best served by promoting an inter-generational dialogue within communities as well as better communication between them.

Community Safety

Section 17 of the *Crime & Disorder Act* (1998) states that:

It shall be the duty of each authority ... to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of

those functions on, and the need to do all it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area'

This suggests that any initiative designed to tackle gangs and gun crime in Waltham Forest might usefully build upon structures developed within the Waltham Forest *Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership* (CDRP) and the emerging Children's Trusts, to bring together the relevant agencies and organisations in partnership with gang-affected and gang-involved children, young people and their families. As with *Every Child Matters*, the government sees consultation with those most likely to be adversely affected by crime and disorder as central to the success of community safety initiatives.

Policing

We have already noted the tension for the police between responsiveness of local need and pressures to meet centrally prescribed targets. As Judith Mortimore (2007) has argued:

For the police, the key drivers of performance are the targets contained in the National Policing Plan, the crime reduction targets set by central government and the HMIC inspection criteria. None of these include instructions on how to negotiate the policy minefield in respect of children and young people.

This would appear to make it more difficult for the police to contribute to a 'bottom-up', multi-agency, response to the youth gang problem in the borough. However, as this report suggests, the problems of gun and knife crime, street crime, particularly where it is 'gun-enabled', class A. drug-dealing, unreported sexual offences against minors, much anti-social behaviour and fear of crime are closely associated with the gang problem. This being the case, it might well be that national targets could be met as effectively through a comprehensive, multi-agency, assault on the gang problem. This argument is given greater weight by the early success of *Safer Neighbourhood Teams* in terms of public confidence and the consequent improvement in information flow.

A Comprehension Gang Strategy: The Evidence

This chapter outlines seven key elements that could form the basis for a gang strategy for Waltham Forest. In doing so, it draws upon and augments two North American action-research studies, *The US Department of Justice Comprehensive Gang Strategy* and *Operation Ceasefire* in Boston.

The US Department of Justice Comprehensive Gang Strategy

One of the most coherent, and best-evaluated, gang interventions in the recent period is the *Comprehensive Gang Strategy* developed by the *US Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention* (OJJDP) in 1993. The strategy is based on the assumption that gangs become a chronic problem in communities where key organizations are inadequately integrated and sufficient resources are not available to target gang-involved youth. The model identifies five strategies that communities should incorporate into their programmes to achieve success (see fig. 10.1 below).

Fig.10.1

The Comprehensive Gang Model

- 1. Community mobilization.** Local citizens and organizations are involved in a common enterprise. The program consists of local police officers, probation officers, community youth workers, church groups, boys and girls clubs, community organizations, and local residents working as a team to understand the gang structures and provide social intervention and social opportunities whenever they can.
- 2. Social intervention.** The program reaches out to youths unable to connect with legitimate social institutions. The youth, the gang structure, and the environmental resources must be taken into account before the youth is provided with crisis counselling, family counselling, or referral to services such as drug treatment, jobs, training, educational programs, or recreation.
- 3. Provision of social opportunities.** Youths at different points in their lives need different things. Older gang members may be ready to enter the legitimate job field and need training and education to do so. Younger youths at risk of becoming gang members may need alternative schools or family counselling. The program should provide individualized services for each youth based on his or her needs.
- 4. Suppression.** This not only consists of surveillance, arrest, probation, and imprisonment to stop violent behaviour but also involves good communication between agency service providers and control providers. All providers jointly decide what happens to a particular youth when trouble arises or when it is about to.
- 5. Organizational change and development of local agencies and groups.** All workers need to work closely with one another and collaborate. Former gang members working as community youth workers need to be given as much respect as the police officers in the program. Each group can provide important information for the program that the other may not be able to obtain.

In 1994 OJJDP launched a series of four and five-year demonstration projects, testing the model in five different cities. One of the larger programmes, the *Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Project* in Chicago (Spergel & Goldman, 1998) compared outcomes for 195 'program youths', 90 'quasi-program youths', who received some services, and 208 youths who received no services. In their evaluation of *Little Village*, the researchers concluded that

- Targeted gang members experienced fewer arrests for serious gang crimes compared with the control group
- The coordinated project approach, using a combination of social interventions and suppression was more effective for more violent youths
- The sole use of youth workers was more effective for less violent youths.
- The programme was most effective in assisting older youths to reduce their criminal activities (particularly violence) more quickly than if no project services had been provided.
- Residents in target areas reported significantly greater improvement in community conditions, perceptions of gang crime, and police effectiveness.
- In three OJJDP demonstration sites there was no statistically significant change in arrest patterns, which Spergel & Goldman (1998) attribute to 'poor program implementation'. These communities had difficulty establishing successful interagency collaboration and tended to neglect one or more of the five required program elements.

Operation Ceasefire

The OJJDP model, with its emphasis on interagency collaboration, community involvement and social intervention with gang members, was a key point of reference in the development of *Operation Ceasefire*, the influential strategy devised by the *Boston Police Gang Unit*. A modified version of *Operation Ceasefire*, is currently being trialled in Manchester (Tilley & Bullock, 2003). Following the implementation of *Operation Ceasefire* in mid-1996, a rigorous analysis was conducted by the *John F. Kennedy School of Government* at Harvard University (Braga et al, 2001), which concluded that the programme had been responsible for a fall in youth homicides in Boston from an average of 44 per year between 1991 and 1995 to 26 in 1996 and 15 in 1997, a trend that continued through 1998 and 1999.

The objective of *Operation Ceasefire* is simple. It aims to save lives and reduce serious injury. It does not aim to 'smash' gangs, although it appears that defection from gangs may be a side effect of this type of initiative. The strategy has three elements:

1. ***Co-ordinated leverage on gangs*** through highly publicised multi-agency crackdowns that gangs will precipitate by certain specified behaviours i.e. possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults.

2. ***Enhancing community relations*** to get local support for targeted crackdowns, stimulate community 'collective efficacy' in informal social control and the reduction of incivilities
3. ***Engagement with gang members*** to elicit information, to transmit consistent messages about targeted crackdowns and provide diversionary services for members and those on the fringes.

In Manchester three additional elements were added to the *Operation Ceasefire* model:

- (a) An inter-gang mediation service to address long-standing rivalries and emerging tensions that trigger shootings.
- (b) Targeted protection/containment for victims and repeat victims based on the knowledge that those who are attacked will tend to be attacked again and that victims will often retaliate
- (c) Sensitisation of agencies to the implications of their Section 17 (Community Safety) responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) vis-à-vis the threat posed by gangs

As we have noted, these projects have been a key reference points in developing this Seven Point Gang Strategy for Waltham Forest: .

A Seven Point Gang Strategy for Waltham Forest

1. Co-ordinated Leverage

This part of the strategy is designed to supplement rather than replace existing policing strategies. It aims to co-ordinate the activities of all agencies with enforcement responsibilities in gang-affected areas. These enforcement agencies are:

- The Police
- The Probation Service
- Youth Justice
- Housing authorities,
- Social Services,
- Environmental Health
- Trading Standards
- The Educational Welfare Service
- The DVLA
- The TV licensing authority
- The Benefits Agency
- The Crown Prosecution Service
- The Courts

The Boston strategy assumes that if the enforcement efforts of all, or most, enforcement agencies can be brought to bear simultaneously on groups and individuals perpetrating, or suspected of perpetrating, certain proscribed behaviours (possession or use of knives and firearms, harassment and serious assaults) it will serve as a powerful disincentive. For this strategy to be effective, publicity is crucial. Gang members are told in person by the police and youth workers that a crackdown is occurring, leaflets are distributed and the media is briefed. One of the main objectives of sustained enforcement is to create a 'firebreak', a cessation of tit-for-tat conflict whereby the need to carry weapons for self-defence is obviated.

As originally conceived, the Boston strategy appears to be based upon the assumption that certain families and communities are colluding with the gangs, whereas the present study suggests that what may appear to be collusion is in fact a product of fear, intimidation and desperation. Thus, for such a strategy to be effective, it is crucial that only known or suspected perpetrators, not their families, nor their neighbours, are targeted since any perception of injustice, 'victim-blaming' or stereotyping, would discredit the strategy, inducing resistance rather than the cooperation the strategy is designed to foster.

Whether a strategy of co-ordinated leverage is viable in Waltham Forest has yet to be demonstrated. However the enthusiasm of some, at least, of the Waltham Forest housing associations to exert leverage over certain gang-involved individuals and families, a commitment shared by the *Better Neighbourhoods Team*; the recognition within education of the need to be proactive in the struggle to minimise the threat posed by gangs; the close contact, surveillance, and willingness to 'breach', demonstrated by the Waltham Forest *Prolific and Priority Offenders* programme, and the changed focus on 'incivilities' developed by the Waltham Forest robbery squad, utilising ASBO legislation, could suggest that such an approach might be viable in the borough. Moreover, given that for many *Youngers* in the borough, street crime is a *sine qua non* of gang membership, this might usefully be one of the 'behaviours' that would trigger co-ordinated leverage.

2. Enhancing Community Relations

In gang neighbourhoods there is usually a high level of scepticism about, and a mistrust of, official intervention although, as we have noted, in Waltham Forest the advent of *Safer Neighbourhood Teams* has gone some way to countering this. Nonetheless, restoring trust in 'the authorities' and their capacity to take care of local people will

be a long-term endeavour. William Julius Wilson (1989) has shown that one of the consequences of social fragmentation in the poorest neighbourhoods is to undermine residents' capacity to act collectively to draw down much needed resources. In Boston, police officers were often instrumental in galvanising public services in gang communities, and this had the important side effect of generating support for the crackdowns on proscribed behaviours and improving information flow.

For the police in Boston, a longer-term objective was to garner the types of information from the community that would allow them to develop tightly targeted, intelligence-led, interventions. But for this to happen, residents must feel that the authorities can offer them sufficient protection for as long as the threat persists. Thus, good community relations are ultimately predicated on the sustainability of police involvement in such an initiative.

3. Engagement with Gang Members

In Boston, social workers and youth workers utilised outreach methods to make contact with gang members on the street and offer them programmes that targeted their specific needs and created viable routes out of gang membership. These workers were quite explicit, that their efforts were part and parcel of the 'crackdown'.

Malcolm Klein (1969) has, famously, warned against attaching street-based youth or social workers to particular gangs because of the danger of consolidating gang identity. However, as James Short & Fred Strodbeck (1965) have pointed out, detached youth work is not synonymous with gang work and detached youth work remains one of the few means whereby we are able to make contact with hard-to-reach young people (see Crimmens et al, 2004).

MMAGS

In Manchester a special multi-agency team MMAGS was brought into being to achieve this objective (see figure 10.1 below).

MMAGS results so far suggest that effective, multi-agency, gang strategies have the following characteristics:

- They draw upon, or establish links with, existing Crime and Disorder Partnerships
- Their approach is rooted in a thorough and up-to-date, analysis of the problem

Fig. 10.2

Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS)

Launched in 2001, by a partnership of the Police, the Probation Service, the Youth Offending Service, the Education Authority, Housing, Social Services and the Youth Service, the *Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy* (MMAGS), consists of a group of full-time staff seconded from the police, youth service, education and probation, who offer diversionary educational, recreational and vocational activities to young people in, or on the fringes of, youth gangs. They work with up to 75 individuals at any one time, mostly aged between 10 and 25. The project is voluntary, however some youngsters are required to cooperate with MMAGS as a condition of a court order or licence. The project also runs sessions in schools and youth centres on issues such as gang culture, firearms legislation and peer pressure.

MMAGS makes contact with young people through

- Referrals from partner agencies
- Referrals from other agencies
- Outreach by detached youth workers in gang-affected areas
- Youth liaison officers who coordinate school/club programmes
- Self-referral/direct contact with young people.

When a young person enters the programme the team undertakes an initial assessment with them to ascertain the type of diversionary programme that will meet their needs and gain their interest. The ensuing Intervention Action Plan (IAP) might involve several agencies (e.g. schools, social services, housing and the probation service) working together to deliver the programme components.

MMAGS preventative interventions also encompass:

- Detached youth work with young people
- Sessions on gang issues as part of police crime days which present the realities of life in a gang and alternatives to it.
- Work with local businesses to develop job opportunities.

MMAGS is funded by a combination of *Neighbourhood Renewal*, *Building Safer Communities* and *Police Basic Command Unit* grants. Seconded workers are half-funded by their agency. The total cost of running MMAGS, is around £400k annually.

Although MMAGS is a statutory agency it has an *Independent Advisory Group* composed of community members and meets regularly with *Mothers Against Violence*, *CARISMA*, *Victim Support* and several other local voluntary sector organizations

In its first 12 months of operation MMAGS made contact with over 200 young people. It re-introduced several of these to education, with some gaining NVQ in motor mechanics. During this time, only 10 per cent of its "target list" re-offended, suggesting that those who engage with MMAGS are more likely to renounce gang criminality

- They adopt a problem solving approach, which is subject to regular review and revision in the light of fresh intelligence.
- They devise a clear plan and prioritisation of the elements of the problem/s to be targeted, the requisite levels of intervention, the personnel who should intervene, the techniques and strategies they should adopt and the outcomes they will endeavour to achieve
- They establish systems for collecting and sharing information and intelligence between all partners

- They build strong links and regular opportunities for contact with the community and affected populations in order to gain their support for the strategy.
- They encourage partners to review current practice in order to identify those elements that might be contributing to the problem rather than its resolution.
- They employ workers who are able to work in non-traditional ways, who identify with the young people being targeted and who are not intimidated by them. This can be a risky business.

The Lambeth X-it (Gang Desistance) Programme

The Lambeth *X-it* programme provides a useful illustration of how the kinds of multi-agency, developmental, interventions commended by MMAGS can be sequenced to create an escalator out of gang involvement (see fig.10.3 below). *X-it* uses street- and club-based youth work to target both young people who are heavily involved in gangs and those on the margins. Their success rate is impressive. In total, 18 of the 25 participants in the first cohort (72%) desisted from gang involvement and offending during their time with *X-it*, having no new offences recorded against them. This finding, based on Police/YOT data, was corroborated by friends, acquaintances and *X-it* staff. (Pitts, 2006).

The programme aims to promote personal development and open up educational and vocational opportunity through its *Peer Mentoring/Trainee Youth Worker* initiative, as well as other vocational programmes. Uniquely, *X-it* also endeavours to enable participants to become protagonists in the political process. *X-it* graduates meet monthly with representatives from the relevant Lambeth Council committees, to act as advocates for gang-involved and gang-affected young people in the borough. One of its other achievements is that desistance from gang activity via *X-it* appears to be regarded by gang-involved peers as a legitimate exit strategy, meaning that participants do not experience reprisals. This is, no doubt, connected with the fact that the workers maintain close links with gang-involved young people and that the offer of participation remains open to them all.

Fig.10.3

The X-it Programme

Aims

To reduce weapon use and serious crime amongst gang involved young people and those at serious risk of gang involvement

To develop young people's self awareness, sense of identity and capacity to make independent decisions

To develop a core group of young leaders who will inform future work with gang-involved young people at borough and project level

The Programme Components

The programme is designed as a series of modules. Starting with a relatively unstructured youth work approach, it moves on to structured group work sessions, leading eventually to more intensive leadership training. Each module utilises the skills and resources of the partner organisations.

Lambeth Youth and Play Service: provide youth workers already known to the target group and able to retain contact and offer support following completion of the programme.

Lambeth Youth Advocate Programme: runs Lambeth ISSP and provides 1-to-1 mentoring with more challenging **X-it** participants.

In-volve: a voluntary organisation that has developed innovative techniques for helping young people develop a positive sense of identity through cognitive and emotional self-awareness, provides individual and group training sessions

Brathay Hall: in Cumbria offers residential programmes that utilises challenging outdoor activities to promote personal growth.

The Metropolitan Police: provide a police officer who had worked closely with some gang members and their families over many years and is trusted by them. They have also devised an innovative information-sharing protocol with the project

GEL: is a neighbourhood *Community Regeneration Team* that employs a local young person to support other young people's participation in formal and informal education, training and employment. The Brixton GEL team allowed their young person, an ex-gang member, to act as a peer educator.

Lambeth Community Safety Team provided funding for the programme and paid for the evaluation

The Peer Educators

The peer educators played a critical role in the successful recruitment and motivation of the target group. They were ex-gang members involved in part-time youth work

4. Mediation

The Anderlecht Initiative

The *Anderlecht Initiative* is included in this survey of gang interventions because it addresses a problem raised repeatedly by key informants in the present study; namely children and young people who are apparently lost to the education system. As we have seen, it is probably a majority of gang-involved young people who drop out or are formally excluded from school (Pitts, 2006). The *Anderlecht Initiative* was able to re-establish contact with these disenfranchised, gang-involved, young people and to re-introduce them to relevant education, training or employment.

The *Initiative* had its origins in an incident in 1996 in which a Moroccan youth was shot dead by police. This incident triggered violent inter-racial conflict on the streets of Anderlecht and in neighbourhood schools (Pitts & Porteous, 2005). The local authority, fearing that this event would further isolate the Moroccan inhabitants of the commune and lead to 'ghettoisation', initiated the nine-pronged programme outlined in figure 10.4 (below).

Fig. 10.4

The Anderlecht Initiative

- The establishment of a Mission Locale with responsibility for economic and social regeneration
- Environmental improvements to neighbourhood streets and open spaces
- Housing refurbishment,
- Community diversification to attract residents from a broader range of socio-economic backgrounds
- The democratisation of schools through the creation of schools councils for students and greater parental involvement and representation
- A 'social contract' initiative involving street workers, which aimed to defuse potentially violent situations and divert young people to recreational cultural and sporting activities. Street *educateurs* targeted hotspots of violence and accompanied, mainly white, football fans to and from matches at the Anderlecht football stadium in order to avert violence.
- A vocational training initiative that aimed to popularise vocational training by linking closely with local employers. This initiative targeted Moroccan young people and aimed to reduce their high school and college drop-out rate.
- A local 'active labour market' strategy to create primary sector work for young people completing vocational training
- The introduction of 'mediators' in secondary and tertiary education which aimed at preventing violence in schools

The rationale for the introduction of mediators into secondary and tertiary education was that second and third generation Maghrebian children and young people were not only excluded from the socio-cultural, educational and economic mainstream, they were also estranged from their parents and their culture of origin. Thus, there was a need for people who understood these difficulties, and 'had a foot in both camps' to help bridge the gap.

Drawn largely from the Moroccan community, mediators had *a loose accountability to the head teacher*, but were employed by the municipality to vouchsafe their independence. They owed their primary allegiance to the child or young person and their job was to be *liaison agents and communication facilitators between teachers, students and school management*. The mediators also had an important role to fulfil as *intermediaries between the school and any part of the outside world, like the police or potential employers, with which students were likely to come into contact*. As time went by, the list of their duties grew to include individual monitoring of students in difficulty and establishing partnerships and projects in the neighbourhood. The responsibilities cited most often by mediators were:

- Mediating between young people involved in violence,
- Mediating between young people and the school in the case of truancy,
- Facilitating communication between teachers and students,
- Facilitating communication between schools and families,
- Working with the psychological/medical/social services students and families
- Keeping contact with students in conflict with the school
- Handling the individual monitoring of students,
- Keeping contact with students who had dropped out

The *Anderlecht Initiative* has made a significant impact upon violent youth crime in the neighbourhood, dropout rates, educational attainment and employment. Professionals and politicians involved in the *Initiative* attribute its success to the following factors:

- It is holistic. It addresses social, cultural and economic factors simultaneously
- It involves students as partners in developing the initiative
- It engages professionals in a process of change, adaptation and dialogue with students
- It reconfigures professional boundaries in order to ensure that appropriate mixes of skills, knowledge and authority are brought to bear on problems
- It uses mediators to develop partnerships between the key stakeholders and to articulate a range of individuals, services and resources into the 'minimum sufficient network' (Skynner, 1971) necessary to address the complex problems confronted by the children and young people.

While professionally-based gang mediation services do exist in this country, the bulk of this work, where it occurs, is undertaken by local organisations of parents and siblings and trusted community figures or professionals like teachers, youth workers and certain police officers with close ties to the affected communities, as is the case with *Parents Against Violence* and *Defending the Hood* in Waltham Forest. The *Anderlecht Initiative* suggests an elaboration, and a certain 'professionalisation', of mediation, which could offer a useful model for service development in Waltham Forest.

Targeting Gang Members

The interventions developed within the OJJDP *Comprehensive Gang Strategy*, *Operation Ceasefire* in Boston, the *Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy* (MMAGS), the *Lambeth X-it Programme* and the *Anderlecht Initiative* are all tightly targeted, and it appears that accurate targeting holds the key to success. In their study of

interventions with 'hard-to-reach' young people David Crimmens (et al, 2004) identified four main levels of intervention:

- (a) Area-based (universal) intervention: aimed at the generality of young people usually located in a socially disadvantaged area
- (b) Interventions with broadly defined 'at risk' groups: e.g. young people out of education, training or work.
- (c) Interventions with specified at risk groups: e.g. young people excluded from school, using drugs, experiencing sexual health problems or involved in low-level crime.
- (d) Specified 'at risk' individuals: young people subject to statutory supervision or deemed to be at serious risk by dint of their involvement in serious crime and violence. These interventions tended to emanate from Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs) or Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSPs).

The interventions developed within the OJJDP *Comprehensive Gang Strategy*, *Operation Ceasefire* in Boston, the *Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy* (MMAGS), the *Lambeth X-it Programme* and the *Anderlecht Initiative* tended to target children and young people in categories (b), (c) and (d). Nonetheless, it is also clear that, on certain estates and in schools and colleges in the borough, young people in category (a) run formidable risks in terms of involuntary involvement in gangs and victimisation by them and they too need access to those who can offer not only social-educational and recreational activities but protection and support. On this basis we have developed the following four-level model of intervention.

Level 1. Interventions would target gang-involved *Elders and the* most heavily involved *Youngers* known to the Police, PPOs, ISSPs or street-based youth workers, as well as those who, although heavily involved, have evaded apprehension (see figure 12.5 below). The intervention would focus upon enforcement, intensive problem solving, mediation and the development of alternative futures via education, training and employment.

Level 2. A useful vehicle for interventions with *Youngers* and young people, like certain *Wannabees*, at serious risk of heavy involvement with gangs, would be the type of *Youth Inclusion Programme* (YIPs) introduced into 70 high crime neighbourhoods in 1999 by the *Youth Justice Board for England and Wales* (see figure 12.5 below). YIPs target a core group of 50 young people, deemed by a multi-agency panel to be those most 'at risk'. In addition to the core 50, a broader group of up to 150 young people, usually friends

or associates of the core group, is encouraged to participate in YIP activities. As with level 1. interventions, the level 2. intervention would focus upon enforcement, intensive problem solving, mediation and the development of alternative futures via education, training and employment. However, YIPs utilise a broad range of methods including 'street work', counselling, group work, outdoor activities, football tournaments, fashion shows etc, and in doing so, manage to make and sustain contact with what is often a multiply disadvantaged, and 'hard-to-reach' population. As well as enhancing their social lives, YIPs aim to re-introduce these young people to education, training or work (Morgan et al, 2003). As we have noted, however, effective employment opportunities have to play to the cultural strengths of the young people they are aimed at. In Milwaukee, for example, John Hagedorn (1998) developed a website building factory for gang-involved young people who agreed to desist from gang violence. This project played to their interest in the technology, their individualistic orientation and their idiosyncratic timeframes. The factory was open 24 hours a day and they could come and go as they pleased, but were only paid on the basis of what they produced.

Fig.10.5 **A Four level Gang Intervention Model**

	<i>The Intervention</i>	<i>The TargetGroup</i>
Level 1.	PPO/Police/Trident/ISSP This level of work is undertaken by MMAGS and X-it	Targeted intervention with core gang members: <i>Elders/Youngers</i> , enforcement, intensive problem-solving, mediation and the development of alternative futures via education, training and employment
Level 2.	YIP/ Extended School/FE Colleges and Specialist Voluntary Youth Serving Agencies. This level of work is undertaken by MMAGS , X-it and the Anderlecht Initiative	Targeted intervention with <i>Youngers</i> and those seriously 'at risk' of serious gang involvement like some overly enthusiastic <i>Wannabees</i> . Intensive problem-solving and the development of alternative futures via education, training and employment
Level 3.	LA Outreach Team supported by the Police. This level of work is undertaken by the Anderlecht Initiative	Targeted intervention with moderately 'at risk' and gang-affected groups: lower level; <i>Wannabees</i> and <i>Reluctant Gangsters</i> : problem-oriented and social-educational interventions
Level 4.	Housing Associations, Schools/LA Outreach Team/Voluntary Youth Serving Agencies/NGOs/Sports Clubs, supported by the Police. This level of work is currently undertaken by the LA Outreach Team and Housing Assns.	Area-based (universal) social-educational/ recreational youth and community interventions

Level 3. interventions would target those on the periphery of the gang involvement, the lower-level *Wannabees* and *Reluctant Gangsters*, who would be unlikely to find their own way into education, training or employment (see figure 12.5 below). This level of intervention would aim for re-integration into, or support for participation in, mainstream educational, recreational and vocational activity

Level 4. At present area-based (universal) social- educational and recreational youth and community work is being undertaken by Housing Associations and the Local Authority Outreach team (see figure 10.5 below). However, this is not well co-ordinated and is being subverted by the gangs, thus depriving non-gang-affiliated young people of opportunity. This is why police support will be necessary if this type of intervention is to thrive.

5. Targeted Protection/Containment for Victims and Repeat Victims.

The gang-related shooting at Turnmills nightclub in Islington in 2003 marked a watershed in police responses to gangs and gun crime in London and beyond. From this point onwards, the Metropolitan Police adopted a far more robust stance, intervening pre-emptively to forestall violent crime and ensuring better protection for witnesses.

An important motor of gun crime is reprisal shootings, in which a victim wreaks vengeance upon the original perpetrator/s and/or his or her associates, friends and family. This, in turn, often spawns further attacks. In the USA, interventions, sometimes made by mediators, that target victims, in order to dissuade them from reprisal attacks and offer them support in finding alternative housing outside the area and relevant employment, have proved effective in de-escalating gun crime.

6. The Sensitisation of Agencies re: Sect. 17 C&DA (1998) Responsibilities

One of the objectives of the present study, and the dissemination of the results, is 'the sensitisation of agencies to their responsibilities under Sect. 17 C&DA (1998)'. Indeed, in terms of the gang problem, these agencies are already sensitised and most appear eager to play a part in the development of a multi-agency strategy. How this happens will be the responsibility of the group appointed to carry such an initiative through.

7. School-based Gang Initiatives

The evidence gathered in compiling this report suggest that in addition to the other community-based interventions outlined above, there is a need for an initiative to address the effects of gangs upon schools and colleges.

As we have noted, some FE colleges and schools in Waltham Forest have a 'gang problem', in the sense that gang activity and gang conflict occurs within the school. Others, while not having a problem in school, have to deal with the impact of gangs on their students and their student's parents. Others appear to be largely unaffected, but whether a school or college is affected by gangs or not is primarily a matter of geography. However, pressures to maximise year 7. intake and minimise school exclusions may cause gang-affected schools to deny or minimise the impact of gangs. Stover (1986) found that districts unused to gang activity may be reluctant to acknowledge its appearance. He cites Roberto Rivera, director of the *Chicago Intervention Network*, who urged school boards to encourage administrators to be alert for signs of gang activity and assure them that reporting problems won't reflect adversely on them. Gang-affected schools, and their staff, need the support of the education authority, other schools and other agencies if they are to combat the problem and this is beginning to happen in the borough (Kl.23,38).

U.S. research suggests that gang-affected schools and colleges can adopt effective strategies to minimise the impact of gangs (Lal & Lal, 1995, Lal 1996) if, from the outset, they adopt an attitude that mirrors that of the gang, ie:

There is nothing more important than our gang.

V.

There is nothing more important than our school.

The research suggests that an *Operational Team* comprising the head or principal, the school administrator, a school police officer or one linked to the school for the purpose, staff with responsibilities for pastoral care, counselling, home-school liaison etc., parents and representatives from a youth justice agency, be brought into being to create what we might call the 'minimum sufficient network' necessary to address the problem (Skynner 1971). This *Operational Team* would be formally linked into the broader multi-agency gang strategy. The *Operational Team's* job would be to:

- Establish information flow between all parties. Stover (1986) cites the Milwaukee *School Security* chief Jerry Mourning who urges schools to keep abreast of gang rivalries:

You need to know what's happening in the community. What happens over the weekend, we handle on Monday mornings.

In Chicago, the school board receives monthly reports on student assaults from each school to give them an overview of citywide trends (Stover, 1986).

- Analyse the school environment with respect to the extent and intensity of gang activity
- Formulate goals and objectives that are realistic and measurable.
- Devise a strategy
- Monitor and measure its impact
- Revise and refine the strategy in the light of measured impact and the changing nature of the problem

Most US research suggests that schools must be established as neutral ground, a strategy adopted in at least one Waltham Forest secondary school. Anything related to gang membership should be banned: weapons, violence, illegal activity, gang-identified clothing, insignia, and gestures. Graffiti should be painted over immediately. Not only does this signal that school property is not the gang's, it also discourages rival gangs from responding with more graffiti, or worse, defacing their rival's symbols, which can lead to retaliation and violence. Anti-gang policies in Portland, Oregon, for example, included searching students and lockers if there were indications of drugs or weapons, and expelling and referring to juvenile court any student found to possess weapons (McKinney, 1998). This too is a strategy being pursued in the borough.

Staff can expect to be tested constantly by the subtle and changing forms of gang symbols. It is obviously important therefore that schools communicate clear, consistent, standards of discipline and enforce them. A study of Ohio gang activity found that teachers who backed down in confrontations were more likely to be assaulted than teachers who were firm but fair (Bryant, 1989).

Some U.S. school districts split up gangs by transferring disruptive students but, although this may reduce friction, Spergel (1989) warns that new problems sometimes result, particularly if a gang member is transferred to a school dominated by another gang.

Preventive initiatives are also important. Chicago schools offer recreational alternatives to gang activity by staying open for evening extra-curricular activities as the 'extended school' is intended to do in the UK. The city of Paramount, California, has developed an anti-gang curriculum entitled *Alternatives to Gang Membership* (Tursman, 1999). Experts stress the importance of starting prevention programmes in the early elementary grades in order to circumvent gang influence (Bryant, 1989). Spergel (1989) suggests specifically targeting *youth who give a clear indication of gang involvement* as opposed to those identified as generally "at-risk". He writes:

Some warning signs include evidence of child abuse, behaviour and personality changes, gang-identified dress, sudden unexplained wealth, and increased substance abuse

There is a danger however that, in working with gang-involved young people in schools, we adopt only *deficit-oriented* interventions that focus on present negative behaviour rather than *opportunity-oriented* interventions that look to who the young person could become in the future. And this is why the *Waltham Forest Post-16 Strategy*, the *George Mitchell Job Club* the *Aim Higher* initiative and the many other educational and social initiatives going on in the borough are so important because, in Elliott Currie's (1985) term, they hold the prospect of changed lives rather than dull conformity.

Managing the Strategy

Partnership and Leadership

Ideally, an integrated, multi-agency, gang strategy would be led by a 'gang forum', a group of senior decision-makers from the relevant organisations and agencies, mandated to commit the necessary resources. Yet, to remain anchored in day-to-day reality, and to help them resist the siren call of central government targets, it would be important that these top decision-makers are paired with workers 'on the ground' who are actively engaged in the problems the group is charged with solving. Moreover, such a group should have representation from, and ready access to, the young people and adults caught up in the problem (see fig.10.6 below).

Fig.10.6

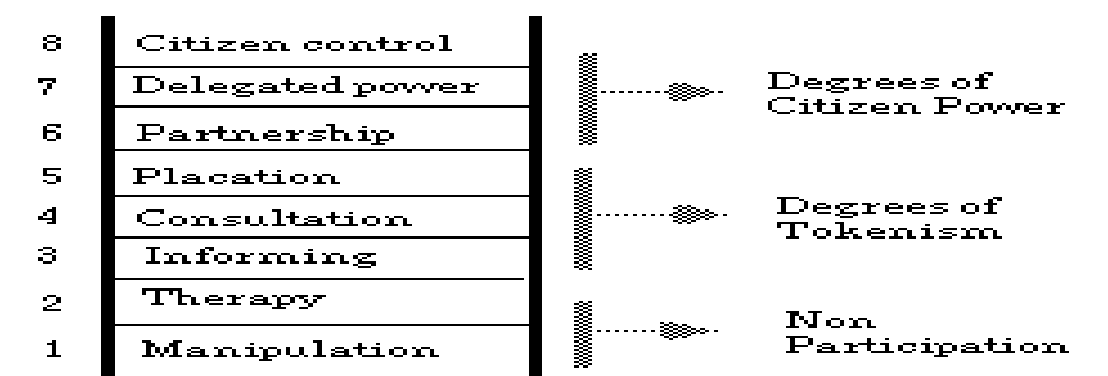
Membership of Proposed Waltham Forest Gang Forum

- **Young People** (via schools, youth clubs and *Defending the 'Hood'*)
- **Parents** (including members of *Parents Against Violence*)
- **The Police:** Senior Officer/PC or Sergeant in Safer Neighbourhood Team
- **The YOT:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker
- **Community Safety:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker
- **Probation:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker
- **Children's Services:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker
- **Education:** Senior Manager or Head Teacher or Principal of an FE College/Classroom Teacher or Lecturer
- **Employment:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker
- **Housing:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker
- **Better Neighbourhoods Team:** Team Member
- **Social Cohesion:** Team Member
- **Relevant Voluntary Sector Agencies:** Senior Manager/Main Grade Worker

However, if it is to work, the involvement of children, young people and their families must be more than mere tokenism since, as we have noted, there is evidence that genuine political participation can serve to reduce crime and violence in the poorest neighbourhoods (Kelling, 2001, Pitts, 2003, Crimmens, 2004. Sherry Arnstein (1969) (figure 10.7 below) provides a salutary 'ladder of citizen participation' against which to measure the degree of participation to be ceded to the subjects of an intervention.

Fig 10.7

A Ladder of Citizen Participation



The forum would need to be flexible because, as we have seen, the problems with which it must deal are constantly changing. It would need to plan on the basis of current intelligence and act, review, evaluate and modify or change its strategy in the light of changing

realities 'on the ground'. It would also need to make a long-term commitment, because the problem of gangs in Waltham Forest is, as we have seen, deeply entrenched and any sustainable solution is likely to take a long time. This said, linking the strategy to the 2012 Olympic Games in some way, calling it *Operation Olympus* or something similar, might give the initiative an identity and a realistic end point for participants to aim at. Moreover, once constituted, a Waltham Forest Gang Forum would have to be prepared to take risks

Risk Aversion

We live, Ulrich Beck (1992) tells us, in a 'risk society' or, perhaps more accurately, a 'risk-averse' society. Yet, as MMAGS and *X-it* suggest, effective work with gangs requires that we take risks. Face to face work with volatile young people, a worker intervening to pre-empt a violent crime, young people given money to start their own business, all involve a risk; to life and limb, to the worker's liberty and the validity of the council's insurance policy or to the local authority's bank balance. Yet without taking risks, albeit calculated ones, effective work with armed youth gangs will be difficult, if not impossible.

Coordination

Figure 10.8 (below) offers a sketch of the structure of a multi-agency gang strategy, and it is very complicated. Given this, it will be important that a person with the requisite skills, experience, credibility and capacity for strategic thinking occupies a co-ordinating role if the strategy is to hold together.

The Structure of the Waltham Forest Gang Strategy

At its base is the *Waltham Forest Gang Forum* composed, as we have seen, of senior managers, relevant professionals, young people and parents, responsible for devising strategy. The strategy would be operationalised by a *Waltham Forest Gang Strategy Team* composed of full- and/or part-time seconded workers from:

- Social Services
- The Youth Service
- The Probation Service
- Connexions
- Education
- The Police
- The YOT
- Housing
- The Community Safety Team
- The Social Cohesion Unit (political participation)

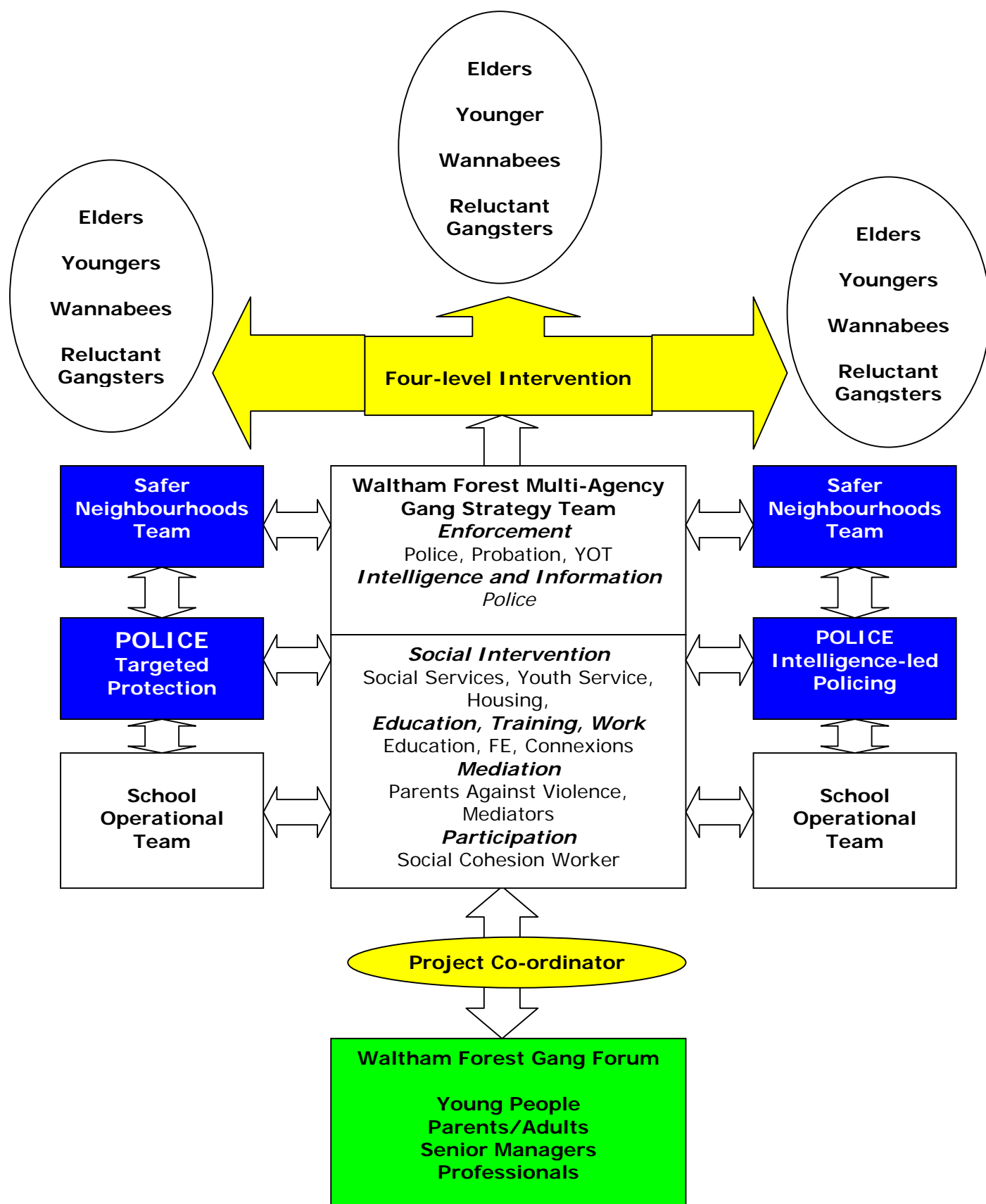
And a mediation team comprising members of *Parents Against Violence* and other mediators recruited because of their local knowledge and special skills.

The team would have structural links with gang-affected schools through membership of their *Operational Teams* and similar links with the relevant *Safer Neighbourhoods Teams* via seconded police personnel. One of the team would be responsible for gathering information and intelligence about gangs and gang members and disseminating it to the *Forum*, the partners and the partner agencies, and managing press and publicity, a crucial part of the leverage strategy. The team would undertake:

- Enforcement/leverage
- Mediation
- Social intervention/child and family protection and support
- Youth work/social educational intervention with groups
- Educational intervention with individuals
- Educational work in schools
- Training and careers work
- Citizenship/political participation work

Fig. 10.1

Waltham Forest Gang Strategy



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Appendix I

Waltham Forest Gang Study – YOT Key Informant Schedule

Name of Respondent.....

Professional Designation.....

Date of Interview.....

1. Are you aware of the existence of 'gangs'/'crews' in Waltham Forest **(Y/N)**
2. If 'Yes' can you describe what you mean by a 'gang'/'crew'?
3. How long have these 'gangs'/'crews' existed in Waltham Forest?
4. How many 'gangs'/'crews' do you think there are in Waltham Forest?
5. Where are these 'gangs'/'crews' located?
6. Do these 'gangs'/'crews' have names – what are they?
7. Can you describe the membership of these 'gangs'/'crews'?
 - *Age-range.*
 - *Ethnicity*
 - *Gender*
 - *Characteristics of members*
8. What kind of structure do these 'gangs'/'crews' have and what, if any, is the relationship between them?
9. Do any of these 'gangs'/'crews' have links with prisons or institutions in the secure estate? If 'Yes', which ones?
10. Do any of these 'gangs'/'crews' have links with other 'gangs'/'crews' in London or other UK cities? If 'Yes', which ones ?
11. What kinds of things do these 'gangs'/'crews' do?
12. Do you work directly with any young people who are involved with, or members of, these 'gangs'/'crews'? **(Y/N/DK)** If 'Yes', how many?
13. Are you working directly with anyone involved with, or a member of, these 'gangs'/'crews' who might be prepared to speak about this in confidence with a member of my research team? **(Y/N)**

Appendix II

Waltham Forest Gang Study – Gang/Group Ranking Chart

1. Name of group/gang

2. Has been in existence:

-1 year 1-2years 2-3 years 3-5 years 5-10 years

(Mark which)

3. Members are aged:

-10 10-12 12-15 15-18 18-21 21-28 28+

(Mark those that apply)

4. How many members does the group/gang have?:

-5 5-10 10-20 20-30 30-40 40-60 60+

(Mark those that apply)

5. The group/gang is involved in:

- (a) Hanging about on the street
- (b) Anti-social behaviour
- (c) Criminal damage (£500-£5000)
- (d) Graffiti/Tagging (Criminal damage)
- (e) Intimidating passers-by in the street
- (f) Disorder/Affray
- (g) Street robbery
- (h) Low level assault (ABH)
- (i) Serious Assault (GBH)
- (j) Handling stolen goods
- (k) Burglary/Theft
- (l) Fraud/money laundering
- (m) Vehicle theft (TWOC)
- (n) Possession/use of drugs
- (o) Supplying drugs (specify type/s)
- (p) Possession/use knives
- (q) Possession/use guns
- (r) Kidnap/Rape
- (s) Murder/Manslaughter

(Tick those that apply)

6. The group/gang is involved in conflict with other groups/gangs (specify name/s of group/s-gang/s)

7. The group/gang has alliances with other groups/gangs (specify name/s of group/s-gang/s)

Appendix III

Waltham Forest Gang Study: YOT Caseload Survey

Gangs are difficult to define but in London, at least, most agencies are using the definition devised by Hallsworth and Young (2005):

'A relatively durable, predominantly street-based groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.'

Bearing this definition in mind, would you please answer the following questions. Please read all the questions before you begin.

Thank you

John Pitts

**Name of
Respondent.....**

—

1. ***How many Children and young people were you supervising on 1st Oct. 2006***
2. **How many of them would you regard as being involved in, or affected by, a gang**

Of those who are involved:

3. **How many would you regard as core members of a gang?**
(Core members plan or decide the activities of the gang and involve other young people in these activities.)
4. **How many would you regard as regular and willing gang members?**
5. **How many do you think elect to have occasional involvement with a gang**
6. **How many do you think are coerced/forced into involvement with a gang**

Appendix IV

Three Gang Typologies Applied to the Waltham Forest Gangs		
The Beaumont Gang	Traditional Gang Street Gang/Criminal Business Organisation Street Gang/Organised Criminal Group	Klein Gordon H&Y
Piff City	Traditional Gang Street Gang/Criminal Business Organisation Street Gang/Organised Criminal Group	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Priory Court Gang	Neo-Traditional Gang Street Gang/Criminal Business Organisation Street Gang/Organised Criminal Group	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Red African Devils	Speciality Gang Criminal Group Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
Drive	Street Gang Collective Gang Street Gang	Gordon Klein H&Y
Boundary/Monserrat	Traditional Gang Street Gang/Criminal Business Organisation Organised Criminal Group/Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Canhall Gang	Traditional Gang Street Gang/Criminal Business Organisation Organised Criminal Group/Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Barrier/Brookcroft Boys	Speciality Gang Wannabees Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Highams Park Gang	Speciality Gang Wannabees Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
New World Order	Speciality Gang Criminal Group Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Asian Auto-Theft to Order Crew	Speciality Gang Criminal Group Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Hackney Overground Commuters	Speciality Gang Criminal Group Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y
The Russian/Lithuanian/ Polish Gang of Leyton	Neo-Traditional Gang Street Gang/Criminal Business Organisation Organised criminal Group/Street Gang	Klein Gordon H&Y

