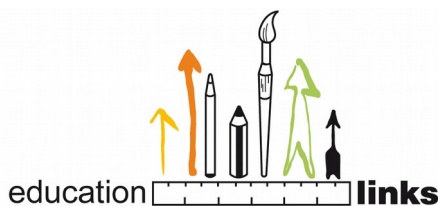
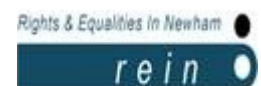





# Newham Civil Society Youth Commission

## Report April 2019



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# The Commissioners

## Commission Co-chairs:

Arfa Butt, Youth Development Consultant  
 Geoff Thompson MBE, Chair of Governors,  
 University of East London  
 Shanea Oldham, Student, St Bonaventure's  
 Andy Lewis, Deputy Headteacher, St Bonaventure's

## Commissioners:

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 Links  
 Karen Jones, Director, Bennu  
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 Bonnell School  
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## The Commission was led by the following organisations:

St Bonaventure's  
 St Antony's Catholic Primary School  
 Shpresa Programme  
 University of East London  
 Newham Sixth Form College (NewVIc)  
 Community Links  
 Education Links  
 Lister community school  
 Bennu  
 Rights and equalities in Newham  
 Research for Action  
 Sarah Bonnell School

## The Commission was supported by the following organisations:

Newham Youth Offending Team  
 Newham HeadStart  
 Wipers Youth  
 Newham Volunteer Police Cadets



Thank you to Detective Superintendent Zena Marshall, Acting Inspector Stuart Handley and Cllr James Beckles, Cabinet Member for Crime and Community Safety for their work on the Commission.



## Need

**Youth violence has spiked throughout London, and particularly in Newham.** The Newham Civil Society Youth Commission grew out of conversations with headteachers across the borough, who voiced concerns around safety. They all faced the same challenge: that they could keep the young people safe inside the walls of their school they were worried about what they could do beyond this to keep young people safe.

Newham has the highest murder rate of all London boroughs<sup>1</sup>. In total, 2018 saw the most homicides in London for a decade, most of them stabbings.<sup>2</sup> Young, black and minority ethnic men are disproportionately affected by knife crime.<sup>3</sup> In Newham, violent crime against person grew by 10.49% in the year up to April 2018, one of the highest increases in London.<sup>4</sup>

**This commission brought together a number of institutions to look at solutions** as a borough. We recognise the causes of youth violence are multi-faceted and the response also has to come from a range of institutions. In the words of Shanea, one of the commissioners and a student at St Bonaventure's:

“We need a holistic solution to youth violence. You can’t police your way out of this problem.”

**The commission has learned from Glasgow, where violence amongst young people was reduced through a public health approach.** In early 2000s, murder rate in the city was three times the average for Scotland. A multi-agency approach was adopted: one that looks at violence as a public health issue and looks at its root causes, involving police but also schools, education institutions, faith institutions, social services, businesses and other actors in solving it. In the ten years up to 2011, there was a 29% reduction in murder, 44% in attempted murder and 33% in serious assault. The public health approach has also been successful in bringing young people who were involved in violence into education, training and employment.

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1 <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/revealed-the-boroughs-with-the-highest-and-lowest-murder-rates-in-london-a3869671.html>

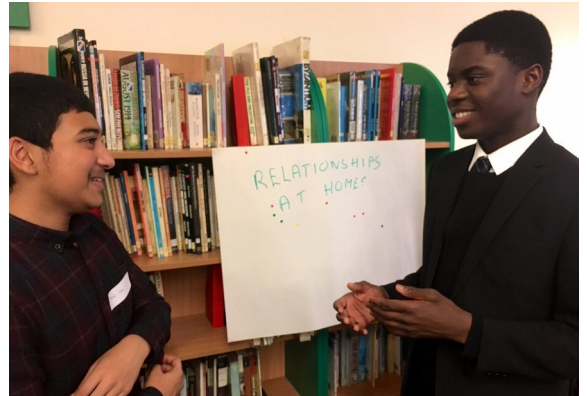
2 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-46540182>

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089>

4 <https://www.lawtonslaw.co.uk/resources/london-borough-crime-rate-map-violence-against-the-person-crime-statistics-infographic/>

## Method

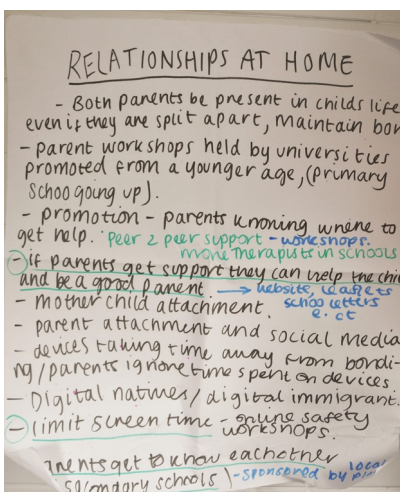
Newham Citizens are part of Citizens UK and use community organising to find solutions to the challenges our communities face. Community organising is about returning power to people.



The method prioritises personal relationships and has a pragmatic approach to influencing people who hold power in government, business or public life. Member institutions are rooted within the community.

Citizens UK works with a diverse group of leaders from schools, universities, hospitals, mosques, churches, synagogues, charities and other community groups. We teach them a method of community organising so they can take power and achieve change on the issues that matter to them.

We believe in people before program. That means finding the issues people care about and working with them to find structural solutions to problems. It was people coming together in this way in East London in 2001 that led to the creation of the Living Wage Campaign, which has put £800m in the pockets of the lowest paid workers in the UK and shifted national policy, but it began with communities right here in Newham getting together to tackle low wages.



In Newham, 21 civil society institutions work together for the common good, working on Housing Campaigns, the Living Wage, CitySafe and Youth Safety through the Newham Civil Society Youth Commission. If you are interested in being part of this powerful alliance of institutions contact: [Alistair.rooms@citizensuk.org](mailto:Alistair.rooms@citizensuk.org).

## Process

**Between December 2018 and March 2019, Newham Citizens engaged over 500 young people** and parents in schools, faith communities and charities to find out how youth violence affected them and what could be done.

**This took the form of a listening campaign in member institutions.** The results of the listening campaign were discussed in hearings organised by the commission. In the three meetings attended by 100 people each time, the community presented their evidence and discussed solutions to the issues raised in their stories.

**At the first commission hearing, we heard the stories of young people** and how they had been affected by youth violence. From parents who found it difficult to have difficult conversations on knife crime with their children to young people who had been stopped and searched over 15 times. These stories have led directly to the recommendations.

**The second commission hearing was focused solely on solutions to the problem** and listening to young people on what these might be. We split into four key areas and searched for solutions together on these areas. These have been written up and decided on by the secretariat and co-chairs to make a final set of recommendations for the report.

**Our work is about action to change Newham for the better.** Off the back of this report we will launch action teams to work on these specific areas who will work to put these things into practice. We aim to work with Newham Police, Newham Council and NHS Trust to make these recommendations happen.

**On 3 October 2019 we will meet again at 5-7pm as a commission to check in** on our progress six months on. Please save the date in your diary.



## Draft recommendations in key areas

### On the Public Health Approach:

1. Newham Council, NHS CCG and Commissioners to work together to implement the public health approach through a local Violence Reduction Unit.

### Recommendations to local Institutions and members of Newham Citizens:

2. First aid, bystander and self-defence training to equip young people to know how to respond effectively to knife crime.

3. Member institutions to promote the 'Youth Charter Social Coach' mentoring programme.

4. Institutions to host workshops for parents on how to have courageous conversations with children on knife crime.

### Recommendations to Newham Police:

5. A day of training for young people to build relationships with Newham Police. Newham Citizens to run the first training day, followed by this being taken on by Newham Council and Newham Police.

6. A review day to investigate Stop and Search in Newham led by young people to look at how we can improve accountability and the process around Stop and Search. Improving accountability to start with all Stop and Searches including a paper receipt as soon as they take place.

7. Young people to sit on the Stop and Search monitoring board. A clear process where young people can report an abuse of Stop and Search to young people on the board.

### Recommendations to Newham Council:

8. Newham Council to host an: 'Exclusions, at what cost?' conversation for schools to investigate the practice of off-rolling in Newham and its impact on our young people.

9. Newham Council to invest in a piece of work raising awareness on grooming.

10. The Commission welcomes Newham Council's £1.2m investment in Youth Services and look forward to seeing this supporting youth clubs to flourish.

### Recommendations to local businesses:

11. Businesses to offer meaningful paid employment opportunities for young people in Newham.

## Our commitments

We want to create meaningful change in the world. These are our public commitments to one another.

We will hold each other accountable and will come together on the 3rd of October 2019 for a commission meeting to check in on our progress.

### Newham Police:

- All Stop and Searches in Newham to include a paper receipts given to the person searched at the end of the search\*. These are already being handed out. 10,000 paper tickets have been ordered by Newham Police.
- Commit to Police officers, Territorial Support Group and frontline staff being trained at:
  - a. A day of training for young people to build relationships with Newham Police, involving young people training the Police on how Stop and Searched could be improved.  
  
Newham Citizens to run the first training day, then to be taken on by the Police.
  - b. A review day to investigate Stop and Search in Newham led by young people to look at how we can improve accountability in the Stop and Search process.
- Young people to sit on the Stop and Search monitoring board. A clear process where young people can report an abuse of Stop and Search to other young people on the board.
- Having heard during the commission that young people afraid to visit parks, a commitment to continue work done during February half-term where Newham Police worked with Volunteer Police Cadets to increase police presence and collect weapons in parks.

- Commit to Police going to schools and youth clubs to build relationships with young people.

\*This is part of the official process but in the past because of circumstances the police are dealing with, our young people have received no record of the searches that have taken place.

### Newham Citizens:

- Work to hold all parties accountable for what they have committed to.
- Facilitate some of the initial conversations on the key areas identified by the commission: the Public Health Approach, Safety Walking Home, Exclusions, Relationships with the Police, Relationships at Home.



### **Education Links:**

- Commit to being part of the CitySafe campaign in the Stratford Centre.

### **New Vic College:**

- Commit to holding first aid and self defence training for students. Training will be for as many students as it is possible to organise for.
- Commit to building meaningful relationships between young people and Newham Police. We will increase police presence on campus and outside to build trust and help safeguard our young people.

### **University of East London Public Engagement Team + Chair of Governors:**

- Commit to developing a parents' network to support mothers to equip them to have courageous conversations with their children on knife crime.
- Commit to working with Youth Charter social coach mentoring programme to offer mentoring and leadership and supporting young people in the borough.
- Youth Charter to aim to train Newham Police in the Social Coach Leadership Program
- UEL to work with a range of different partners on the Public Health Approach.

### **Shpresa Programme:**

- Commit to being part of the CitySafe campaign in the Stratford Centre.
- Will participate in Stop and Search Accountability.

### **Sarah Bonnell school:**

- Commit to becoming part of CitySafe campaign in the Stratford Centre.
- Commit to working with a basketball club to develop a safe space and meaningful activity specifically for girls.

### **St Bonaventure's School:**

- Commit to being part of the CitySafe Campaign in the Stratford Centre.

## Community Links:

- Continue to deliver Community Links mentoring and Community Advocates programmes across East London to develop emotional resilience in young people. Will also seek to expand our Community Advocates programme to support all members of the community to have more courageous conversations with young people.
- Will co-ordinate corporate partners to encourage greater investment to tackle youth violence in Newham.
- In support of the work done by Citizens and the NCSYC, will continue to advise London Borough of Newham, the Greater London Authority, the London Violence Reduction Unit and the Home Office on what should be included in a public health approach, based on our previous social listening through Community Conversations.



## Recommendations in depth



### Public Health Approach

Shanea, Co-Chair of the Youth Commission, St Bonaventure's:

*"It's clear that there are no easy solutions to solve youth violence, there's no one solution to stop what's going on and we can't police our way out of this problem. What we need is holistic long-term solutions, like mentoring for young people, job opportunities for young people, better relationships with the police, and an approach which sees our young people not as criminals but as victims."*

#### What is the Public Health Approach?

The central ethos is that good people can make mistakes and rehabilitate with the right support.

In this model, a central unit is responsible for receiving cases and developing a tailored package of support to aid rehabilitation. Cases can be received from public agencies, but also members of the public, charities and public services like schools. Each partner in the model is expected to fill a practical need for service users.

The police plays an important role in maximising rehabilitation by (1) diverting as many cases as possible away from prosecution or long-term criminal sanction; and (2) being 'assertive' with people who refuse to cooperate with rehabilitation. Similar to mental health outreach teams, the central hub can request that police officers 'recall' service users who do not comply with care package, under threat. All other agencies and partners will alleviate pressure from police by taking on cases and providing tailored support identified by the central hub.

Central hub (caseworkers) are monitored by a steering group of all agencies, expert advisors and members of the public.

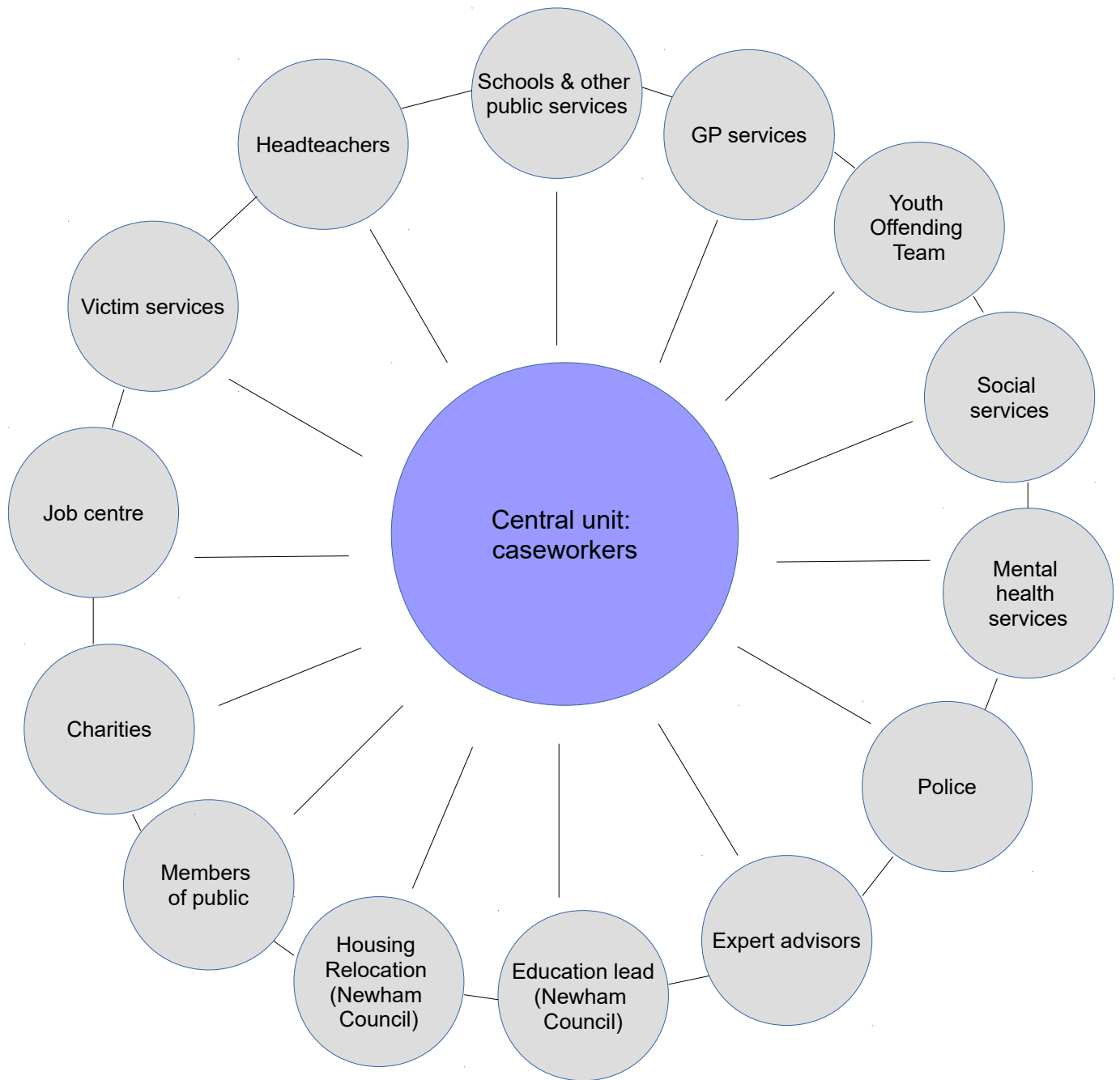


Figure: Different agencies work together in the Public Health Approach

The commission heard several times that poor communication channels between local agencies often affected young people. A public health approach would allow for better communication across agencies.



## Safety Walking Home

### Why do we need to act?

*"A member of our team went to a shop to buy crisps for 99p, but he only had 50p. A man offered five pounds to the boy if he would return to do him a favour the next day. We know this is how grooming starts, it can start with something as innocent as a bag of crisps. We know it happens at chicken shops in Newham." (St Bonaventure's)*

*"I feel as if something bad is going to happen to me. I always look around and loud noises scare me. I stay after school for many activities, but when I go home I start to get panicky. I make sure all my possessions are close. I try to walk behind or next to someone so it looks like I'm with them." (Sarah Bonnell School)*

*"Most students who responded are worried about being attacked or stabbed, especially if they travel alone, and worry about who may be carrying a knife." (Education Links)*

*"I was in my kitchen, but before I could even put my bags down, I was beckoned outside by a ruckus I could hear from my kitchen. I was the first on the scene to see a young, vulnerable, friend from my neighbourhood laying on the curb fighting for his life. All I had was my phone, I made an unanswered call to 999. In that moment I felt helpless. All I could do was hold his hand and try desperately to keep him awake. Luckily that individual didn't die, thankfully he didn't." (St Bonaventure's)*

Time and again the commission heard from young people who felt unsafe simply walking home from school. Some were not allowed to play in the park because their parents were afraid of dangers there, others were afraid of being groomed on their route home. This drew out evidence around the lack of safe, 'third spaces' for young people to spend time that were not school or home. Therefore the investment in youth services is vital.

The commission heard a number of times about the 'chicken shop grooming' that goes on in Newham, described above. This starts with vulnerable young people and children being offered a meal which slowly moves them into a position of reliance. Our evidence suggests this happens at several chicken shops and fast food restaurants in the borough. The commission also found when children move from primary school to secondary school they are most vulnerable to this kind of grooming and that gangs operate knowing this. The commission recognises the need to equip parents and young people to be vigilant against grooming.

The listening drew out several stories of young people being slapped, spat at, mugged and followed in the Stratford Centre with nowhere to go. Therefore Newham Citizens will be running a 'CitySafe Campaign' in the Stratford Centre to ensure young people can reclaim the space as one they feel safe in.

Finally, the commission heard from young people who had either been first on the scene of a stabbing or witnessed a stabbing but hadn't known how to help. Young people repeatedly called for support to know what to do if they come across someone who has been stabbed.

### **What will we do?**

The Commission welcomes Newham Council's £1.2m investment in Youth Services and looks forward to seeing this supporting youth clubs to flourish.

Newham Council to invest in a piece of work raising awareness on the dangers of grooming in Newham.

First aid, bystander and self-defence training to equip young people to know how to respond effectively to knife crime.

## **Relationships at Home**

### **Why do we need to act?**

*"My son was stabbed. When I heard, my legs turned jelly as a mother. I found out he had a knife. You can buy a large knife for a few pounds. My experience as an adult is completely different from young people. They feel so unsafe they feel they need to protect themselves." (UEL)*

*"One parent I know found a big knife in her son's room, but didn't know what to do with this information, who does she turn to? She didn't feel able to discuss it with him." (UEL)*

*"Parents have a strong connection to primary school but that changes in secondary school. Parents don't know teachers or their children's friends' families. More social events are needed at secondary school so parents can get together share concerns." (Newham Muslim Women's Association)*

*"Once children go into meaningful paid employment, they calm down and the violence stops. But this doesn't mean three pounds an hour flipping burgers or stacking shop shelves. Working in low paid jobs without hope of promotion is not helpful." (Newham Muslim Women's Association)*

The evidence from parents shows that they want to understand what is going on in their children's lives. The commission found parents wanted to have difficult discussions on youth safety with their young people but often did not know how. Newham Citizens will look for funding to facilitate a parents' movement to encourage parents to watch out for signs of knife crime and have courageous conversations with engage with their children on youth safety.

Parents, such as the women from Newham Muslim Women's Association above, suggested that when young people enter meaningful paid employment the cycle of violence often stops. This is known anecdotally from Newham Citizens' work in the borough in the aftermath of the London riots: Westfield shopping centre had just opened and many of the young people who could have been involved in trouble were in paid employment. The riots' impact in Newham was relatively small in comparison to other neighbourhoods in London. The Commission recommends local businesses create meaningful paid employment opportunities for our young people.

### **What will we do?**

Institutions to host workshops for parents on how to have courageous conversations with children on knife crime.

Businesses to offer meaningful paid employment opportunities for young people in Newham.

## **Inclusion in Education**

### **Why do we need to act?**

*"I was excluded in Year 11. The situation at home was bad, I cared for my Mum and watched her cry all the time. When children misbehave, teachers should try to understand, not send us away."*

*"I'm 22 years old. I was a smart kid. But when you're constantly told you're not good enough, you break. They didn't know how to manage me at school and it wasn't safe. In the end I left with 11 GCSEs. I shouldn't ever have been excluded. I wanted to be engineer but I didn't have a role model who looked like me. I had no role model to teach me about hygiene, how to care for myself and others. Now I want to be good for my daughter, I wish more men would be taught how to be better parents."*

The evidence from our listening campaigns suggests that young people need mentoring and positive role models to invest in their lives and believe in them. Young people said that when they had more people encouraging them, it got them out of challenging situations. Youth Charter aim to train 10,000 social coach mentors across East London, and Newham Citizens member institutions are set to promote the programme to help do this.

Young people who had been excluded themselves had a number of ideas about how to make education more inclusive. Young people expressed preference for alternative measures instead of exclusion such as managed moves. They asked for mainstream schools to offer early assessment and positive intervention instead of exclusion, and not exclude students based on factors external to school. These interventions could involve mentoring, anger management support, and input from a Young Persons' Committee at school. They also named the fact that there was no effective space for a young person to

appeal when they felt they been excluded unjustly.

Commissioners decided a slow strategic piece of work was needed to be led by the Council to work collectively across schools to reduce exclusions in Newham.

### **What will we do?**

Newham Council to host an 'Exclusions at what cost?' conversation for schools on off-rolling and its impact on young people.

Member institutions to promote the 'Youth Charter Social Coach' mentoring programme.

## **Relationships Between the Police and Young People**

### **Why do we need to act?**

*"I'm 18, I've been searched 20 times in the last five years. Every time for no reason. Imagine yourself in my shoes. When people stop and search me, I wonder why. Is it what I'm wearing, how I'm walking? It makes me feel like a criminal, a bad person. The way people look at you. Imagine this happening and all the time you think: why is this happening to me? I'm never worried because I know for sure I haven't done anything wrong, but it still puts me down and needs to change." (Shpresa Programme)*

*"I'm 16. I have been stopped and searched several times, it feels they do it because you look a certain way. Once I was stopped I felt so embarrassed, everyone on the street was staring, police treated me with no respect. The police said that I matched description of someone selling drugs in the area." (Shpresa Programme)*

*"A teacher told us he had been stopped and searched around 10 times. He is regularly pulled over when driving his car and the police search him and his car. In one day, he was searched three times. He is a professional who works in a school but was treated with deep suspicion." (Lister Community School)*

*"We have heard time and time again that the relationships between young people and the police in this borough are broken. We need both police and young people to take action on the issue to rebuild this relationship and make sure that our young people can begin to trust the police. An important part of that is young people receiving these paper receipts and us checking in with our young people in six months time to check if they have been given them. Stop and Search isn't going away any time soon, in fact new powers have just been announced, so we need to improve the process for our young people so they stay safe." (Andy Lewis, Deputy Headteacher, St Bonaventure's School)*

*"The police in Newham are committed to tackling knife crime and keep the Borough a safer place for everyone. Stop and Search is one of many tactics that the Police use to tackle knife crime. We are*



*committed to listening to and working with young people to ensure that this tactic is used effectively and proportionately.” (Detective Superintendent Zena Marshall)*

### **What will we do?**

A day of training for young people to build relationships with Newham Police. Newham Citizens to run the first training day, followed by this being taken on by Newham Council and Newham Police.

A review day to investigate Stop and Search in Newham led by young people to look at how we can improve accountability and the process around Stop and Search. Improving accountability to start with all Stop and Searches including a paper receipt as soon as they take place.

Young people to sit on the Stop and Search monitoring board. A clear process where young people can report an abuse of Stop and Search to young people on the board.

The commission learned that relationships between young people and the Police had completely broken down with deep distrust on both sides. There was a lack of humanity in interactions between the police and young people. Evidence we heard, for example from Shpresa Programme above, shows that young people can feel a sense of powerlessness and injustice when they are searched.

The commission will be taking a three-pronged approach to this. Firstly, by young people and the Police working together over the next six months to develop relationships inside institutions and at Newham-wide events. Secondly, focusing on reviewing the Stop and Search process and finally, focusing on ensuring accountability in the process for Police officers and young people.

### **Process:**

Newham Citizens will run a day of training for young people to build relationships with Newham Police, followed by this being taken on by Newham Council and Newham Police. The day to include: young people modelling a fair way to do Stop and Search; young people and the Police to discuss a set of principles they would like to see during Stop and Search, including respectful language; the Police to demonstrate the complexity of the Stop and Search process from their side; and a "Know Your Rights" training for young people to stay safe during Stop and Search.

### **Accountability:**

The other way to ensure Stop and Search is used as an effective tool by the Police is to ensure there is proper accountability by having young people on the monitoring panels. Newham Citizens will run a young people led review day to investigate Stop and Search in Newham to look at how we can improve accountability and the process around Stop and Search and how young people can report to other young people on the board.

The first step on accountability is that all Stop and Searches from 3 April 2019 will include a dated paper receipt as soon as they take place.