

The Street Weapons Commission

Ian Seabridge, Dave Keller, Darren Shenton, Kate McDonald

Fay Selvan

Hello Welcome. We have a number of representatives from Greater Manchester Police. I won't say your titles, I'll just say your names if that's ok cos I've only got abbreviations here. So Ian Seabridge.

Ian Seabridge

Yes, hello.

Fay Selvan

Dave Keller.

Dave Keller

Hello.

Fay Selvan

And Darren Shenton.

Darren Shenton

Hi.

Fay Selvan

And Kate McDonald from Manchester City Council.

Kate McDonald

That's right.

Fay Selvan

Thank you very much for coming today to give evidence. So we'll start Greater Manchester Police. Operation Xcalibre; every city we've been to

seems to have one. What's unique and special about yours? What makes yours work?

Ian Seabridge

It's not the operation. It's far more than that. The operation is a name which we use currently for the activities that we are following. It's going to be reinforced, it's going to change very shortly; a significant reinforcement but the importance for us is that we have historically been the first force, first local authority to recognise particularly a gun and gang related problem and so we've been engaging through a multi agency strategy, MAGS it's commonly referred to, from which we build our operations. So the Xcalibre is essentially the enforcement arm, the intelligence arm of a much broader, longer term, complex operation. A complex operation to deal with a complex problem.

Fay Selvan

I'm interested to hear that you talk about gangs specifically and a number of our witnesses have done and do but there was some evidence that was presented to us in Liverpool that targeting on the known criminals, which is part of what you do through Xcalibre, then leads to guns and knives going down generations, going down to younger people to be looked after and that what that then's contributed is to the rise of more random violence which may be not associated with an organised crime structure. Is that something you recognise?

Ian Seabridge

Not as you paint it. I don't think that's our experience. I think what's important for us is that we know that the firearms spikes that took place last summer were from very senior gang members who were motivating other gang members to take part in various shootings. Our strategy is to enforce and support, through MAGS, very heavily to take out the top offenders and

we've been fantastically successful in that. Our convictions recently have been outstanding. We are taking out the top offenders; we are taking out the second echelon with great success. The key factor though is ensuring that we don't leave a vacuum and that's where our multi agency work, our work with our partners and other stakeholders is so crucial to ensuring that we don't get a crop of younger people coming through. So I think our strategy is designed to actually prevent that potential.

Fay Selvan

Ok. Thank you. Ian did you want to ask something?

Ian Levy

Yes. I've noticed that in London we've got something like the Trident, which is very similar to what you do. Is there any joined up thinking between all the forces throughout the country that may have similar problems and have operations, whether it's called Trident or Xcalibre, is there any joined up thinking between the forces with a view that a gun used in Manchester today can be used in London tomorrow and how do you coordinate that? Is there any joined up thinking between the forces on that?

Ian Seabridge

Yes, there is and it works at different levels. So through the ACPO, the Association of Chief Police Officers, there is the police use of firearms committees. So there's the ability to work at macro level and dealing with shared issues. We are investing, the service is investing very heavily in the National Ballistics Intelligence Service and there will be 3 hubs for that service; 1 in London, 1 in Birmingham and the most advanced one so far is in Manchester where we also have the Forensic Science Services range sited with us in that facility. So we're able to build intelligence pictures of weaponry, we're able to share intelligence and tactics through the ACPO

systems. I think, if I'm going to speak in all honesty, some forces were slow to recognise a gang and gung problem compared to ourselves. I think we recognised in Manchester, pretty much from late last century to turn of the century, that we needed to get a grip of this. Our partners in the city council were supportive of that and we've been working from 1991 onwards through MACS. So, yes there is a system. Could it be better? Yes it could but there is a base system and the [NABIS] National Intelligence System, Ballistics Intelligence System. For example, the only person who's used that system is a region in South Africa and we have poached the person who's worked in that to come and work in the Manchester area. So we are very positive that we will have the best in firearms intelligence system in the world up and running within the next couple of months.

Ian Levy

Yeah but what about the turnaround time of sharing of information? If you come across a gun, for example, is there something shared within the other areas that may pinpoint that that gun was used in another area prior to that and how quickly is that done? Because there's no point in taking one person out when there's somebody down the road who's used that gun before and there's a crime still unsolved. The thing that portrays to young people, because a lot of the young people know some of these people and they see these people on the street on a daily basis and I think that it maybe where a problem comes in with the lack of trust between young people and the police because they know these people carry the guns and they see them on the street daily. So their view is that if they know these people, some of them will even say you know them but you aren't arresting them.

Ian Seabridge

Yeah.

Ian Seabridge

Right, I think that's more of a hypothesis than a question. In terms of speed, NABIS is about delivering speed. We use DNA technology on weaponry so there's a process time to deliver that. The intelligence system means that we can get information about use of weaponry very quickly. In the last 18 months or so we've started to benchmark in Greater Manchester when we recover illegally held weapons how many have been used previously. So we're able to map that and we know the activity relating to any recovered firearms. We will have the ability to share that information much faster within a few months. In terms of tackling offenders, well I reject your point that there's no point in arresting somebody for one offence with a weapon when there's somebody else has previously used it.

Ian Levy

No, I didn't say that.

Ian Seabridge

But it's important that I should say that I think. We would obviously seek to ensure that we have a comprehensive arrest strategy in relation to all uses of firearms but we will not, if you like, turn down the opportunity of arresting somebody who's used it on the one occasion. Do our communities trust us entirely? Well the answer to that is no. Do they trust us particularly in the gang areas, which are often in Manchester afro Caribbean descent, the answer is probably not. Are we improving? Well I think we are. We have invested heavily in an intelligence development, which is both covert and overt. We've invested in our Xcalibre task force. We are getting far more information than we used to. We have put people in court and have used witness evidence, through special measures. The coroners have helped, courts are helping. So we are gaining a level of trust from the confidence, sorry, from the communities. It isn't perfect; don't expect it to be perfect. We

are trying to find ways of developing that. So, for example, all unsolved homicides in Greater Manchester have a review process; we have a special unit that reviews and looks for further evidence opportunities. I met with members of the community who didn't understand that we reviewed killings of young black men in the same way as any other process of homicide. So we've taken that focus from those individuals and in our reinforcement of Xcalibre we will ensure that we involve the community in understanding that we're now reviewing this unsolved murder. So we will continue to take as much opportunity as we can to arrest people for the use of firearms. I would ask you just to look at the recent results. The people that we've put in prison, heavy prison sentences, it's been really a very successful year for us.

Fay Selvan

Thank you. Gus did you want to?

Gus

It may be a tangential matter but I raise it simply because you did. I'm somewhat alarmed that you felt confident poaching someone from South Africa to do this important job given the problems that the South African government has with many more murders than Manchester could ever think about. I mean how do you justify that?

Ian Seabridge

I justify it to get the best service for the people of Manchester, for the people of Greater Manchester, through my police service.

Gus

Irrespective of what happens in South Africa?

Ian Seabridge

Irrespective of what happens if you put it in those terms. I think my duty is to ensure that members of the black community particularly is our experience but other members of our communities that we can, on behalf of this country, cos that is a leading expert for this country, that we can develop the best possible situation for this country. If that means subsequently we can use her to train, use her to develop and provide resources back to South Africa, excellent but I have no doubt in my mind that my primary duty lies to support the people of Greater Manchester and the people of this country.

Gus

I wanna ask you something else. Commander Keller, sitting next to you, and others have devoted a lot of time and energy building relationships with a community of Moss Side, Longside, [RUSHOLME] etc, and particularly after the murder of [JESSE JAMES], the initiative taken by the 2 young women, Nicole [MCLAREN] and [RAGEL PELTIER] in organising the youth event at the Bridgewater Hall at the [INAUDIBLE] recently was considered by everybody, not least of all the adult community within Manchester, as pretty historic. It was therefore very disturbing to learn from young people at community meetings in Moss Side, not dissimilar to the ones after Jesse James' murder, of the event that took place with officers from the Greater Manchester

Police immediately after that Bridgewater Hall event. How do you square those 2 things? The work that you're trying to do, gaining the support of the community in dealing with the scourge of gun crime with the horrendous police activity that took place against young people aged as young as 10 and 11 on that particular evening?

Ian Seabridge

Well I note the tone that you've applied to that. My view is it's sub judice. Greater Manchester Police have asked, they've invited the Independent

Police Complaints Commission to conduct an independent investigation. They have assessed and decided not to act independently but have declared a managed investigation so we are investigating under their control. It is sub judice. The key factor for me is that we are seeing, in our communities, very positive leaders emerging. In the past we've had people who've looked negatively at the issues. If we have an honest and very controlled, supportive community network what we see is people and individuals who look forward. Will there be ups and downs in our relationship? Inevitably, inevitably. How do we deal with that? How do we move forward is the crucial point for us and I think we are seeing in relation to people who are, not just the individuals you mention, but other community leaders in the communities of Moss Side, Longside, South Manchester. We are seeing people who are taking a view which is much more positive and some of that positivity also needs to follow our acceptance that if we've made a mistake and if that independent enquiry, or the managed enquiry, shown us that we done it wrong we will learn from that, we will continue to improve because we wanted that to be looked at independently.

Fay Selvan

Thank you. Mark, do you want to?

Mark

Yeah. My questions are quite basic. There's a few of them. I was thinking about what types of guns do you find on the streets of Manchester? Where would you say that come from? Are they recommissioned or are they sort of brought in from Europe or both? I'd like to sort of get a picture of what that looks like.

Ian Seabridge

Again, I think we've been at the forefront of tackling gun supply and Darren

Shenton has been very much involved in that in some detail so I'm going to ask him to give you that response.

Darren Shenton

I think the assessment that you're making, painting the picture of where do they come from and indicating there's a wide range of avenues into Manchester is very accurate. We see weaponry that comes across the entire spectrum. The weapon that is most prevalent at the moment, and we've managed to identify this because of the very issue that you raised in terms of monitoring and analysing weapons that have been previously used, actually come from the Eastern Block. We've engaged with the Serious and Organised Crime Agency because quite clearly efforts to prevent weapons being brought into the country to be recommissioned, that have previously been deactivated, that have been reactivated both here and also on the continent before they're used and placed into the hands of criminals, not just in Manchester but in the major cities throughout the UK is a real cause for concern. Until the latter part of 2007, actually interdiction in terms of firearms activity coming into the country wasn't part of the Serious and Organised Crime Agency agenda and one of the things that came out of the Tackling Gangs Action Programme, which I understand that you're aware, was to put firearms supply into the UK back onto SOCA's agenda. The consequence of that in Manchester is that we've seen a number of covert upstream operational activities to prevent those guns coming into the country but we see weaponry that's in a really poor state, that people believe is capable of being used, to sub machine guns that have been recovered within the last 6 months. One of the other areas of concern for us and something that came out the Violent Crime Reduction Act was the use of imitation firearms. Those firearms that are so realistic that if you're pointed or you're having one pointed at you on the street as the subject of somebody who's being robbed or the subject of antisocial behaviour and officers get called and

there is a simple response to firearms reported incidents and that is, with a risk assessment process to do with the public, to do with the police and the deployment of armed officers, a real concern because of the number of imitation firearms and not being able to discern what is real and what isn't real was something that caused us such concern that we engaged in quite a significant operation to recover in excess of 4,000 imitation firearms working with Trading Standards that were destined just to be sold in shops, to be used by kids, ostensibly to play cowboys and Indians. Well that's been some of the sort of community feedback. Some of the other difficulty is that those same things, the ball bearing guns that have no discernable difference between that and a real weapon when confronted with an armed officer may well result in ultimately a fatality.

Gus

Can I ask one question? What number of illegal weapons do you actually get through routine stop and search operations or targeted ones for that matter?

Darren Shenton

Ok. It ebbs and flows in terms of the deployment of resources and the policing operations that are taking place. The realistic imitation weapons over 4,000 were recovered. 3,000, late 3,000s, were recovered because of activity with traders. They were just gonna sell them. We had an amnesty across the force and 250 plus were handed in across the force. Significantly, in the south Manchester area, where we find the predominance of real firearms crime, that was the smallest number of realistic imitation weapons that were handed in. Within the last 3 months we've recovered 8 firearms capable of killing people.

Gus

Through stop and search?

Darren Shenton

Through targeted activity. Not just stop and search. Some of that is stop and search but that stop and search is intelligence focused. It's about people with whom we have suspicions of gang activity, it's about intelligence in terms of information that's provided to the police and it's also about community information. Mr Keller may allude to a series of operations we've undertaken within the last 8 months where we have specifically targeted, not just addresses where we know the people associated with gang activity take place, but actually recognise that some of the fears of the community are that these people hide these weapons in their gardens, on the car tyres and if they're confronted by people who come out and say, what are you doing in my garden? They very simply say, we're looking for a ball; does such a body live here? And we undertook a significant operation, executing over 500 warrants, where members of the community in Moss Side were coming out and saying, search my garden, or you don't need a warrant to search this garden, we will let you search the garden, we want you to do it and our response, as part of the operational planning, in recognising that, you know, if we recovered a firearm there and that person didn't know it was there and the police seized it we'd walk away, we'd recover the firearm, we'd possibly interview the people about it and satisfy ourselves that they were innocent members of the public. So the use of a warrant to do that search actually afforded them a great deal of protection.

Dave Keller

If I can just come in here at this point. I've been on the division for over 4 years now. I've been divisional [MANAGER] for nearly 2 years. Operation Xcalibre started off in August 2004 and it was heavily enforcement because we wanted to get on top of the problem. So there's a lot of history behind this operation to where it is now and it's gonna develop into an even better one

but some of the operations that Darren refers to, for example you talk about how many firearms have we intercepted, for example through the Armed Crime Unit in 2006, just before the murder of Jesse James, Gus, Operation [CARBON] actually captured 160 firearms imported from the Eastern European area which were destined for the Manchester area to be reconverted. Great success. We've had a number of operations of that ilk. The operation Darren talks about there, the second one in terms of the warrants, was known as Operation Jug and as Gus will know, and hopefully be able to recall, following the murder of Jesse James I instructed a load of my staff and staff from the Armed Crime Unit and other areas of force to come to a community meeting and we held 5 community meetings in total. My concern, wanting to brief the community about what were doing, was around when we get firearms discharged the police turn up with the blue lights flashing, put up the tape, do some enquiries and then it all just disappears but the community are left there not knowing where that ended up. So after the murder of Jesse James, which was on 9th September 2006, it coincide that I'd already planned to hold these briefings starting in the September and it was just really tragic of Jesse being murdered at that time. We held 5 community briefings and I produced 9 senior investigating officers to account themselves to the public for what their enquiry was about and where the blockages came back and I've been saying, since I've been on the division, that the solution to what is the problem on my area and generally within the Manchester area about volume gun crime is round the police working really effectively with a wide range of partners but also, critically, with the community because parents have a large role to play in this and, you know, we could talk for a long time about the successes that we've had but we are not complacent about the journey that we've yet to follow because this is a massive, complex challenge for us.

Fay Selvan

Thank you for that and you've talked very much about the enforcement and that's what we've asked you questions about so far but you alluded to the fact that what's unique and special about your relationship is the intervention you're trying to do with the next generation potentially of gangs through the MAGS partnership. So, Kate it would probably be useful if you could tell us something about that and I don't want to lose your point there you made around parents and community response cos I think we should pick that up afterwards cos I think there's some very interesting stuff there. So perhaps you'd like to just tell us a bit about what the MAGS involves and why it's successful. Or if it is successful what isn't successful as well would be good.

Kate McDonald

Alright. The teams been in existence several years now and it was the first one in the country I understand to be a specially dedicated, stand alone team focusing entirely on gun and gang crime and it operates with several different areas of responsibility currently. It works individually with adults and young people who have been identified as active gang members and some of them will be on official court orders or actually be serving prison sentences but some of them will be voluntary participation. So that's individual case work. There's also an information service so that people working in a variety of different agencies across Manchester if they want advice, if they want to find out a bit more about a person they're working with, whether there are any gang issues then they can access that through MAGS. There's also a training element providing briefing to a range of agencies working in the relevant communities. It's a big remit for this team. It's also a big prevention and safeguarding remit and that's one of I think the most exciting developments in the last 12 months, 18 months has been the acceptance across all the agencies that work with young people that we're not just talking about people here who are offenders or potential offenders but we're talking about young people who are citizens of Manchester and who are them themselves most

likely to be the victims of firearms discharge and gang activity and the 2 go hand in hand and there's been an acceptance through the Strategic Safeguarding Board and a new protocol drawn up that young people have got particular needs about safeguarding that come into being because they're involved or on the periphery of gang activity and previously Children Services and Social Work Services for families and for children wouldn't necessarily have seen that as a role for them. Now they would see that as a role and one of the things that MAGS does is coordinate a multi agency action planning process around a young person who's been referred in and identified as being somebody who's vulnerable to becoming a victim on the street or in their community.

Fay Selvan

So you identify the young person from a range of different sources and you have a multi agency meeting to talk about what you're gonna do for them. What actual intervention do you offer to presumably divert that young person from getting involved in gun and knife crime?

Kate McDonald

It's one of the, I think, the most important thing to recognise is that each individual young person that comes into this process is different. There are some common themes and there are some characteristics of individuals. I mean for instance mostly male or of families that mean they come to the attention of the team but each person's in a very different situation and so we'll look at all the things that are happening for that young person in their life but, most importantly, involving parents and family and we see this through the Youth Offending Service that I head up that there's really little point in engaging, sorry that's a bit jargon isn't it, but in working with a young person for an hour a week or 2 hours a week if you're not actually looking at what's their life like when they go back home and so one of the things that we'd look

at through the multi agency meeting with the MAGS team would be particularly school and education for that young person because there's a massive link between young people who go off the rails, whether that's into gang activity or whether it's into other types of offending, and people who aren't attaining at school and we know that lots of the people who've, again largely young men, who find themselves in gang activity have often been high achievers at school at primary level and then things have started going wrong for them. It tends to be called transition, you know, the period from when they move from the small primary school to the big high school.

Attendance and attainment can drop off and one of the things we've found is that people who, young men who are active in gangs have got a particularly high level of movement between schools and that that means they're much less likely to fulfil their other potential cos obviously school attainment's very important in terms of the job market but specifically going back to that meeting. So we'd look at bringing in somebody from the school to the meeting. What are the issues for the school in supporting that young person in staying in school? You can imagine, for many head teachers in the past it might have been that the young men we're talking about were actually people who were a nuisance to them. They were a problem, they were disrupting the classroom, they were possibly just seen as a problem and I think there's a much greater acceptance now that these young people are not a problem. They may have some behaviour that creates a problem. They themselves aren't a problem and they actually need support and that Manchester, as a city, recognises that the next generation needs that investment and support if we're not gonna go wrong later. So we'd bring in people from school, people from Social Work Services. We've got a range of prevention services and we're particularly keen now, in Manchester, on looking at parenting and we can do that on a 1-1 level. We can do that through a range of group work programmes that obviously a group of parents do at the same time and we've found those particularly successful so that many parents are going on

themselves to want to become leaders for those type of groups and the feedback that we get from some of the parents, I have to say, is heart-warming. It can be fantastic saying how it's improved their relationship with the young person in the house and we'd work, at the same time, with the young person looking at some very simple things, revisiting some of those. Like how is it ok to behave in this house? What is a reasonable expectation for your mum to expect from you? What time is it ok to come in at? And also to look at individual work with the young person, often providing a mentoring service and that's around not just don't offend, cos that's not a particularly attractive necessarily to a young person, it's about where do you want to be with your life? What would you like to be doing? So diversion, yes, in terms of that very simple equation. If they're out on a fishing expedition say and really going angling then they are not on the street causing trouble or getting themselves in a vulnerable situation but it's not just that simplistic equation. It's about, for us, and this is what young people are telling us when we're asking them about what brought you into gang activity, or what prevented you from getting into gang activity? It's around finding something for that young person that is meaningful to them, that they can feel successful about. They may feel they're not doing very well in school but if they can find an activity and it's not just about sport. Loads of people are keen on sport and it's important to have that. That's available through our youth service and through all sorts of sporting provision in Manchester but it's particularly for girls. That isn't necessarily the thing that's gonna attract them, so we try and do a range of things and I think we also are getting much better at talking to young pe...

Fay Selvan

I've got everyone wanting to ask you question. I'm gonna have to stop you one second else we'll run out of time and not have everyone get their chance to say everything but it's fascinating. Gus?

Gus

Among the people your service targets is prolific offenders, yes?

Kate McDonald

Yes.

Fay Selvan

The Youth Offending Service rather than MAGS would target prolific offenders.

Gus

Right. What success do you have in rehabilitating them and to what extent are they able to work with you in bringing about the kind of change you want to see in their peers who are still offending but outside of your ambit?

Kate McDonald

Ok, can I just clarify the use of the term prolific offenders because we use a jargon term prolific and priority offenders and people who fall into that category are people who've committed a certain number of offences and I'm sure I'm telling you things you know but I just to be sure.

Gus

It's that group that I'm talking about.

Kate McDonald

Ok. We don't see a big overlap between that group of young people and the people who are gang active.

Fay Selvan

You don't?

Kate McDonald

No. So I can tell you about what we do with the prolific and priority offenders if you'd like to know but I just wanted to make clear that that... you'd like me to do that?

Gus

Sure.

Kate McDonald

Ok. We have joint meetings between, it won't surprise you, between the police, the Youth Offending Service and the Probation Service with a list of the named people in that immediate locality that are on the prolific and priority offenders list and we have, we call it a premium service and that's actually across Greater Manchester that each agency has signed up to to say this is what we will do additional for this, whether it's a young person or an adult, and that will mean that the enforcement is quicker, sharper, harsher. So they will be people, if they're people on a court order they will be returned to court very promptly if they don't keep to the conditions but we will also offer enhanced access additional facilities for them to participate in. So, for instance, in the Youth Offending Service part of the City Council where we have group work programmes available, a prolific and priority offender will have an immediate access to programmes which ...

Gus

But do you manage to link back into employment?

Kate McDonald

I don't know that answer off the top of my head. I have to say that's a

particularly challenging area for us. There are some things that we're developing now that I'd hope will make that better in the future. For instance links that connections have taken forward with people who are post school age, so I'm talking about that proportion of the community and are developing apprenticeships so where employers, the City Council's one of them, will recognise that they've got a contribution to make by offering a supported apprenticeship to a young person who might not otherwise be able to access the world of work at that stage and then we've got relationships with people like [MANCAT] and City College, so education providers, and we'll also work with what we call learner mentors to assist young people, and this would work for young adults as well who would be managed within a probation service so that they can make themselves more job worthy and more attractive to a potential employer.

Fay Selvan

I'm interested in just exploring the difference cos you said that your prolific offenders, your prolific and priority offenders, they're not usually your ones who are involved in gang and knife crime; gang, gun and knife crime?

Kate McDonald

Yeah. It's more about property crime.

Fay Selvan

Right, ok, and is that about the characteristics of the people who are involved in ... it's a different type of crime. What is it that makes that...

Kate McDonald

Makes that different?

Fay Selvan

Yeah. Because the assumption would be that people involved in gun and knife crime, and you yourself say you put disruption tactics on to people who are known individuals. You would assume that those people are known individuals cos they're involved in other forms of crime.

Kate McDonald

Yeah.

Ian Seabridge

I don't necessarily follow that hypothesis because what our experience is is the people involved in gun and gang crime tend to be chaotic offenders. So they'll also be offenders, recidivist offenders but it may well be criminal damage, it may well be very low grade crime. They're not offenders who are going out to commit cash in transit robberies to use firearms. I think there's a different category of people who are using firearms for that offence compared to gang related [INAUDIBLE].

Fay Selvan

That's clarified it, thank you. You had a specific question?

Ian

Yes. I noticed in your brief you said you work with a myriad of different agencies. We visited a project this morning and their evidence to us is to the contrary, that they seem to be not been able to get through to work with you and it's not because of a lack of willingness on their part and based on what they've explained to us happens within that community there is scope, wide scope for some sort of joined up work between both the police, Manchester City Council and other agencies and this just doesn't seem to be happening. In fact they say that they couldn't tell the last time they'd seen a police car drive by. Now, is there any reason or you don't see what's happening in that

area as a problem, it's in Wythenshawe?

Dave Keller

Can I just clarify, just to be clear. It's really difficult to answer your question which has been placed in a general form without knowing for example the specific sort of agency you visited cos that agency might be known to me or we may have, you know, and I know there's gonna be some sensitivities around that but if you could give us a bit more clarity around the geographical location...

Ian

Well it's in Wythenshawe and I just want to get a balanced view if you like and my concern was they painted one picture and I wanted to hear what's happening on the other side of the fence.

Fay Selvan

[INAUDIBLE] evidence will be on the website. It's the United Estates of Wythenshawe who were saying that they felt particularly that they weren't included and they felt that they'd put their hand out...

Dave Keller

I think, if I can sort of respond initially to that. I mean I've met Greg, so I know who you're talking about now, so it makes it a lot clear. United Estates of Wythenshawe aren't based on my division so unfortunately I don't have operational contact with them but I know that Greg has had contact from the local police command team in an attempt...and I've been part of initiating that contact cos I've spoken to Greg and he's asked me could I put him in contact. So I've done that and facilitated that contact. Where that relationship goes is down to a number of factors and I think, you know, clearly you've heard Greg and his unit's view of that world. Unfortunately, in terms of

the detailed police view on that, it's something that I can't comment on any further than that really and, you know, there's more than one side to a story I think.

Fay Selvan

I mean one of their views was that they don't conform to a traditional kind of community type organisation and they don't have those structures that you might feel easy to engage with so, I mean that was just something of interest to us cos the key thing they felt they had to offer was that they were leaders in that community and it's about how a statutory agency as you might be able to work with people who are not fitting into the box really.

Kate McDonald

I'm not familiar with that individual agency but I would like to make a more broad response about our work with community groups and I would say that it's only in the more recent times that the City Council, along with partners such as the police, have recognised the very real contribution that communities have got, sorry community groups are able to make and that that is something that we ignore at our peril and I do, through my service and the funds that come into my services, have, you know, contracts. We commission services from a range of community organisations but I don't think we're good enough at it yet and I think one of the things that we're trying to work with is building some of those organisations and supporting them to be more in a position to be businesslike because all our money's public money and we have to account for it and some of that is very, very onerous and some fairly small organisations who could do some great work with young people aren't equipped to meet the sort of standards that we're required to be accountable for with public money but we are developing that and it is something I'd want to look at.

Fay Selvan

Ok. Mark?

Mark

Yeah, mine was going back to before, Kate, what you were talking about with the team meetings seem really expensive.

Kate McDonald

The team meetings, what do you mean?

Mark

The team meetings around identifying individuals who've been in trouble and working with them and it seems really expensive and then you said about you work with prevention but didn't really speak a lot more about that and I was wondering what you thought the benefits of working with the younger age group, the one that the sort of youth offending teams, on your brief it says 10 to 17. What would you see the benefits of working with children younger than that?

Kate McDonald

Well we do work with children younger than that and do some of the services that I'm responsible for.

Mark

What does that look like?

Kate McDonald

The most traditional one that I guess you'll have heard of already is Youth Inclusion Programmes and we've got 5 situated across Manchester and some of those have got sort of junior wings to them and they'll work with from 8 year

olds. So it's a broader range of age but we've also got a really exciting projecting that's just into its second round really, which is working with extended schools and that's with young men, very young men, primary school aged children, so young boys not men, who have been identified as potentially at risk of coming into gang activity in later life and that maybe because there's a family member who's been identified. There's a variety of referral routes and that was a programme that started, I think, just before Christmas and we're just into the second group of young boys on that programme and I've seen the feedback sheets on that and there are comments from... there was one particular mother who sticks in my mind. She says, if there'd been something like this around for my older son I don't think he'd be locked up now and they've been very welcoming of it and I think the approach in Manchester, and it would be the same across all the organisations who work with young people who we say we're in partnership with, is that that's where we need to be focussing our time. I'm not saying it's too late by the time somebody's 17, 18 or older. I still think there are changes that can be made and, you know, as an ex probation officer I'm obviously gonna believe that people can change at whatever stage in their life and I think some people have come round several times before they'll decide that the time's right for them but we very much recognising the prevention approach and in fact one of the things that MAGS do is go into schools in the relevant areas and that's not about identifying individual pupils who have got gang issues or somebody thinks have got gang issues, it's about saying this school is located in an area where there's known gang activity, how are we gonna help these young people make wise decisions about their life? And so they'd work with a whole year group. So there's that sort of broad prevention as well.

Fay Selvan

Thank you very much. Unfortunately we've run out of time but before you

leave, just one thing perhaps from the City Council, one thing from the police. What you like to see happen? What would be the one thing you would do to actually tackle gun and knife crime?

Ian Seabridge

Shall I?

Fay Selvan

Go on, you go first.

Ian Seabridge

Well I think the first thing is we continue to do what we're doing. We're being successful. We've had no gang related firearms discharges for the last 2 months. We are on a long journey. Short term-ism is not allowed. This is a long, complex problem and we need to be optimistic and we need to ...

Fay Selvan

Ok, so you do what you're doing and?

Ian Seabridge

And drive forward with the communities around the optimistic element that we can tackle this together.

Fay Selvan

So get the community on board thinking they can make a difference.

Ian Seabridge

Get the positive elements of the community on board.

Fay Selvan

Ok. Kate?

Kate McDonald

Yeah. Stop giving us short term money. Give us money that's longer term funding.

Fay Selvan

Local authorities and police, you're give them short funding?

Kate McDonald

Say that again?

Fay Selvan

The local authority and police are given short term initiative money?

Kate McDonald

We are and we spend an awful lot of it on bureaucracy in reporting back about particular targets.

Fay Selvan

So cut the bureaucracy and give us long term money.

Kate McDonald

And then we can do much more with the community groups as well.

Fay Selvan

Well, United Estates of Wythenshawe might want to see you about that.

Dave Keller

Can I just come in and add to that one. It's also about sustainable funding for

the various voluntary groups and third sector volunteer groups that are out there because there's a lot of great people out there that try their best and set up something and they don't know, from one month to the next, where they're gonna fall over and they're lucky if they can plan for a year. It's just not the way to do it.

Fay Selvan

Ok. Thank you for that. We're going to hear from some of them. So thank you very much for coming this afternoon.

CUT