

[jobs](#) [property](#) [motors](#) [business search](#)**NEWS**.scotsman.com Site Web[Search](#)

Friday, 8th January 2010

Police copy US tactics to cut scourge of gang violence in half

Published Date: 17 December 2009

By MARTYN McLAUGHLIN

A PIONEERING scheme to tackle the notorious gang culture in Glasgow has dramatically reduced youth violence.

The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) has resulted in a 49.2 per cent reduction in offending among Glasgow gang members who have engaged with the project.

Since launching a year ago, 368 young men in the East End of the city –
ADVERTISEMENT

about half of all those involved with violent gangs – have signed up to change their lives. The results also show an 18.5 per cent drop in recorded violent activity among those gang members who did not engage with CIRV.

The scheme, modelled on the Boston Ceasefire project in the United States, challenges the behaviour of gang members. Meetings are arranged with reformed criminals, the mothers of victims of violence and surgeons who make graphically clear the consequences of knife crime.

The achievements of CIRV were described as "excellent" yesterday by justice minister Kenny MacAskill. But given that some families in the area have ties with gangs going back three generations, those behind the project warned they could not afford to lose impetus in rooting out violence.

Chief Inspector Robert Stevenson of Strathclyde Police, who heads CIRV on behalf of the Violence Reduction Unit, said the achievements could easily be undone unless the £5 million initiative redoubled its efforts. "This isn't the end, it's just the beginning. Gang violence hasn't stopped. This simply shows we have made some headway in reducing the problem."

He said the US scheme registered similar results in its first year, but the impetus slowed, so gang violence rose the following year. It is a trend he is determined Glasgow will not follow.

"The lesson we must draw from this is that while these figures are good news, we cannot reduce our efforts now," he said. "Rather, we must redouble them. Gang violence has been with us for many, many years and we will not change that culture overnight."

At the sessions, gangs meet a senior police officer, an accident and emergency consultant, members of their community and the parent of a victim. They are told that if any of them, including members not present, commit a serious offence, police will pursue the whole group and not just the individual.

Gang members can call a central number to receive education and health services, careers advice and social services. Some 222 gang members have attended sessions and 368 have engaged with CIRV. More than 100

have been routed into either full-time employment, work placements or education. Those taking part are aged from 14 through to their early twenties.

Mr MacAskill said: "We must continue to steer young people away from the acts of violence that will inevitably see them jailed."

'I was a one-man army by the age of 16 with shotguns and a handgun'

PAUL is 22. He spent five years in a notorious Glasgow gang and started carrying knives when he was just 14, soon becoming one of the gang leaders.

"When I got to 14, I wasn't stood at the back watching any more. I was at the front, looking to do damage and not caring. By 15, I was selling drugs and taking cocaine, Valium and Ecstasy.

"My parents had serious addiction problems and they found it difficult to provide for me and my brother.

"Your gang becomes your family. You can rely on them. One of the rules is, 'Don't leave anybody behind'. You're taught, 'This is right, it's not wrong'."

At 15, Paul was expelled from school for violence against a teacher. It was at that point that guns came into his life.

He became involved in a gang feud on his housing scheme and, before long, had two shotguns and a handgun – "If you've got the money, you can get them."

The feud led to a fall-out with friends in his own gang.

"I became violent with my pals and turned into a one-man army. I thought, 'I have to do this to provide for me and my brother'."

By 17, he was in prison for a firearms charge and served three and a half years. In the first year, he was fighting and still involved in drugs, but his attitude began to change.

He undertook courses on anger management and drug use, but the main thing was getting to play football.

Football made him feel valued and helped him to change. On his release, Paul went to the Bambury Centre in the East End and asked if there were any football opportunities. He became involved in its coaching programme, working with more than 80 local children and youths on a weekly basis.

Paul heard about the CIRV East End Football League and encouraged youths from Barrowfield to enter a team. This proved successful and Paul started to deliver training workshops aimed at helping locals to break away from gangs.

Six months on, he is now a valued member of the CIRV team, employed with the Bambury as a peer advocate to work with gang members on a daily basis.

"The future's looking pretty bright now. I'm training an amateur football side, I've got a baby boy and I don't touch drugs.

If I can do it so can these guys."

Page 1 of 1

- **Last Updated:** 16 December 2009 11:50 PM
- **Source:** The Scotsman
- **Location:** Edinburgh

[Search For Jobs Online](#)

1000s Of Online Listings For All Areas. Get Ahead & Prepare Now!

www.Job.com

[Executive Level Jobs](#)

Search 45,000 Jobs that Pay Over \$100,000. Start Searching Now.

www.TheLadders.com/jobs

[Scottish Kilts](#)

Traditionally Made Kilts in 4500+ Tartans. Great Prices!

www.HeritageOfScotland.com

[Flights Jersey To Glasgow](#)

Fares Just Dropped! Flights Starting at \$49*

LowFares.com/Cheap-Flights



This website and its associated newspaper adheres to the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice. If you have a complaint about editorial content which relates to inaccuracy or intrusion, then contact the Editor by clicking [here](#).

If you remain dissatisfied with the response provided then you can contact the PCC by clicking [here](#).