**YouTurn launch, February 2017**

**Q&A for project team / media**

**What is YouTurn?**

The YouTurn project works with young people aged 11-19 addressing experiences of gangs and serious youth violence. We also provide specific support to young women experiencing some of these issues, with a focus on reducing risk of exploitation.

Our experienced, specialist team designs and delivers early intervention, prevention and intervention programmes. We work with young people in the London boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth and Croydon who are involved or at risk of involvement in gangs, serious youth violence and exploitation.

**Why are you launching this project?**

This project follows on from a successful YouTurn pilot which was run by Barnardo’s in Southwark and Lambeth from 2012 to 2015, which carried out group work sessions with more than 300 young people in schools and in the community and provided intensive one-to-one support for 31 at-risk young people. Nine out of ten of those supported were from black and minority ethnic communities.

The new three-year initiative is funded through a £360,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund’s Reaching Communities programme, and it will extend the work into Croydon for the first time, following evidence of a growing need for our services in this borough. In the years 2013-2014 records show that there were 176 offences of violence against the person committed by young people aged 10-18 years (taken from central government statistics on disposals by region). In Croydon there was an overall increase in the number of offences committed by young people (resulting in a disposal) of 31% between 2012 and 2014.

In addition, evidence indicates that there was an increase in offences committed by young females between the years 2012-2014 in the boroughs of Croydon (a rise of 32%) and Lambeth (a rise of 51%).

**Who are you going to be working with, and where?**

Pre-teens and teenagers in Lambeth, Southwark and Croydon will be supported by Barnardo’s YouTurn project workers, who will work directly with schools, community groups and families to help young people make better life choices, including girls and young women.

We’ll offer awareness raising workshops to parents and carers of young people affected by gangs, to help them better understand concerns and identify the protective factors needed to improve safety.

We’ll offer an early intervention education programme in schools, working with groups of young women and young men at risk of harm or experiencing harm because of their association with gangs and, or other forms of serious youth violence.

Our whole-school approach provides young people with wraparound support, ensuring that all professionals, parents & carers and the wider school community have the skills and resources to identify, challenge and respond to the needs of young people at risk of or, and experiencing harm with a focus on those affected by gangs and serious youth violence.

Targeted group work involves working closely with schools to identify and refer young people on to a 6 week programme focusing topics like self-esteem and confidence, gender and identity, self-care, risks and consequences, healthy relationships and consent.

Workshops will also be delivered to assemblies and whole year groups, focusing on specific topics and issues identified by the schools / education providers.

We will also offer intensive one-to-one support to identify and respond to young people’s needs, by creating a holistic assessment that will best support their progression and enable them to make the changes they need to live safely and fulfil their potential. The intervention is designed to last around six months, depending on need and risk levels. Contact is weekly.

Volunteers will be recruited to help deliver group sessions in schools and provide ongoing one-to-one support, as well as acting as mentors to young people who have completed the intensive six-month programme.

**How big is the problem of young people being drawn into gangs in south London?**

We know through years of experience of working with young people and families in London that many young people find themselves being pressured into situations involving gangs and violence. We know it’s all too easy for teenagers and even younger children to become embroiled in activity which puts themselves and others at risk. Just a few poor decisions or lack of knowledge can lead to a chain of events from which both boys and girls find it very hard to escape.

**How many young people are you going to support?**

We have clear targets for the number of young people, parents and carers we plan to support. We aim for 1200 young people to complete the group work programme; 90 parents/carers to demonstrate reduced parental isolation, increased resilience, awareness and understanding to build stronger communities; 90 young people to complete intensive support programme, demonstrating reduced association with risky peer groups or engagement in education, employment or training; and 300 young women to demonstrate increased resilience and demonstrate reduced risk of exploitation through group work and intensive support.

**What impact do you think this project will have?**

We expect that young people who have engaged in group work sessions will demonstrate increased self-esteem and confidence, improve their attendance in education, training or employment, and be more aware of issues around exploitation and therefore able to make more informed choices.

Parents and carers will report improved relationships with the young people they are parenting, will have improved their skills as parents and will demonstrate a willingness to develop and sustain stronger, safer communities.

Our aim is for young people who receive intensive support to engage in diversionary activities, reduce their contact with risky peer groups and demonstrate improved capacity to stay safe.

The YouTurn project team will be based at The Hub in Stepney Green, a Barnardo’s centre which supports at-risk young people. Space for family and community forums will be available at The Triangle in Crystal Palace.

**What about young people in other parts of London and outside London?**

We know that gangs and serious violence are issues that affect children, young people and families in all parts of London and elsewhere in the UK. Barnardo’s would like to expand our work into other areas and would welcome the opportunity to work with any local authority which might benefit from the expertise we have developed through YouTurn.

**How much do you know about gangs operating across county lines?**

We know from talking to young people that this is a real situation that they may feel at risk of being drawn into.

**What experience does the team have to draw upon in dealing with gang-related issues?**

* **I have sent the Bio- which could be used?**

**If young people want your help, what should they do?**

Any young person can be referred to our project by any person, parents, schools, police, and statutory agencies. Criteria can vary, for example with reference to gang associations, gender, or the level of risk, however the general criteria is young people aged 11 to 19 who are at risk of harm because of their association with risky peer groups.

To speak to a member of the team about delivering sessions in Southwark, Lambeth or Croydon please call 020 7790 4621.

**Why did YouTurn achieve last time around in Lambeth and Southwark? Why did it finish?**

An independent evaluation of YouTurn in May 2015 by York Consulting said: “A number of stakeholders were interviewed as part of the evaluation and the evidence generated from their interviews revealed the need for, and overwhelming support of, YouTurn in the Lambeth and Southwark areas.”

Data from our own evaluation forms completed by service users of YouTurn indicated that 81% of young men believed that the topics covered during our group work sessions were useful to them. In addition 76% of respondents stated that they had more knowledge of relevant issues than they had prior to working with us, whilst 81% of respondents said that they were thinking more carefully about the company they kept as a result of our sessions.

Of the parents who were surveyed 91% said they felt they had an improved knowledge of parenting as a result of their involvement in our support sessions. Nearly all of the parents surveyed reported having a better understanding of the challenges that their children faced as a result of the work they had done with us.

The programme came to end as the initial funding was for a three-year fixed period which ended in August 2015.