

<b>Institution:</b> The Open University (OU)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C20 Social Policy and Social Work		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Advancing and implementing a public health approach to reducing serious youth violence		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2017-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Keir Irwin-Rogers	Lecturer in criminology	2017-ongoing
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2017-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Dr <b>Irwin-Rogers'</b> research on youth violence, particularly for the cross-party Youth Violence Commission (YVC), has played a pivotal role in driving major changes to public, private and third sector policies and practices on youth violence. <b>Irwin-Rogers'</b> work for the YVC led to the establishment of regional Violence Reduction Units in England and Wales and has been central in shaping the on-going work of these units. In addition, acting on <b>Irwin-Rogers'</b> recommendations, Google and the London Violence Reduction Unit have provided grants totalling GBP800,000 to fund <i>The Social Switch Project</i>, the primary aim of which is to reduce violence in young people's lives. This innovative project has delivered safeguarding workshops to over 500 practitioners and provided work experience and skills training in the digital sector to over 40 young people. <b>Irwin-Rogers'</b> research has also had a significant and direct influence on the funding priorities and work of the on-going GBP200million Youth Endowment Fund.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Since taking up his post with The Open University in January 2017, <b>Irwin-Rogers</b> has conducted research into youth violence reduction primarily in England and Wales, focusing in particular on the potential benefits and feasibility of a public health approach. A key strand of <b>Irwin-Rogers'</b> work has been his role as the lead academic for the cross-party Youth Violence Commission (YVC), conducting research alongside economists from the University of Warwick's Policy Lab. The YVC was established by a cross-party group of MPs to identify and promote evidence-based policies aimed at reversing the rising trend in knife crime and serious violence between young people. <b>Irwin-Rogers'</b> research for the YVC has consisted of three main strands:</p>		
<p>1. <u>Interviews and Observations with the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit</u></p>		
<p>The Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) is widely acclaimed for its work in reducing levels of serious violence in major cities such as Glasgow. Between 2017-18, <b>Irwin-Rogers</b> conducted interviews and observations with senior members of the SVRU, including its Co-Director and its Co-Deputy Director. The research indicated that one of the key factors in reducing violence in Glasgow had been a move away from narrow, suppression and enforcement-based strategies and their replacement with public health approaches, which involve identifying and adopting evidence-based policies and practices across a wide range of social policy areas including health, education and youth services, driven and coordinated by teams of professionals such as the SVRU [O2, O3].</p>		
<p>2. <u>National 'Safer Lives' Survey on Youth Violence</u></p>		
<p>To address a lack of evidence on the levels of serious violence in young people's lives, the YVC implemented a national youth survey in January 2018. Designed by <b>Irwin-Rogers</b>, the <i>Safer Lives</i> survey gathered evidence on the nature and scope of violence affecting a diverse sample of over 2,000 young people in England and Scotland [O2, O3, O6]. The data revealed the high rate of violence in the lives of young people below the age of 16, and found that two thirds of</p>		

respondents had been exposed to serious violence over social media, a finding that both confirmed the significance of social media that **Irwin-Rogers** had highlighted in previous research [O4] and informed subsequent YVC recommendations and consequent policy and practice-based initiatives such as *The Social Switch Project* [O2, O5].

### 3. Expert Evidence Sessions

Between October 2017 and May 2018, **Irwin-Rogers** played a central role in designing, organizing, and conducting six expert evidence sessions on the Parliamentary Estate. **Irwin-Rogers** sat on panels taking evidence at four of the six sessions, each of which focused on a topic associated with the public health approach to violence reduction. Data was gathered from senior professionals and experts including the Head of the National Crime Agency, a Metropolitan Police Management Board representative, and the editor-at-large for The Guardian newspaper. Discussions from each evidence session were fully transcribed and analysed by **Irwin-Rogers** and used to inform subsequent academic publications [O1, O5, O6], as well as the YVC's interim and final reports [O2, O3]. The evidence sessions further exposed the limitations of narrow policing-based approaches to reducing youth violence and highlighted, for example, the importance of nurturing inclusive school environments under the broad scope of holistic public health approaches to violence reduction, overseen and coordinated by regional Violence Reduction Units.

### Taking the research forward

**Irwin-Rogers'** research for the YVC fed into an Open Grant application to the ESRC to build on and enhance some of the YVC's research, engagement and impact activities. The application was successful, and **Irwin-Rogers** is now part of a team of researchers (led by Dr. Alistair Fraser, University of Glasgow) who have secured GBP870,954.39 for a three-year project on youth violence reduction which began in December 2020 [G1]. **Irwin-Rogers** is leading on the London-based component of this research, examining policy transfer between jurisdictions and informing the development of effective violence reduction strategies, policies and practices.

### 3. References to the research

- O1. Irwin-Rogers, K., De Lappe, J., and Phoenix, J. (2020) Anti-social shifts in social policy and serious violence between young people: evidence from the cross-party Youth Violence Commission. *British Journal of Community Justice*. 16(2): 4-27.
- O2. Irwin-Rogers, K., Muthoo, A., and Billingham, L. (2020) Youth Violence Commission Final Report. Available at: <http://yvcommission.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/YVC-Final-Report-July-2020.pdf>
- O3. Youth Violence Commission (2018) Interim Report. Available at: <http://yvcommission.com/interim-report/>
- O4. Irwin-Rogers, K. and Pinkney, C. (2017) Social Media as a Catalyst and Trigger for Youth Violence. Catch22: London. <https://cdn.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Social-Media-as-a-Catalyst-and-Trigger-for-Youth-Violence.pdf>, cited in <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy> (see reference numbers 63, 66 and 67 in the report's Endnotes for details).
- O5. Irwin-Rogers, K. (2019) Illicit Drug Markets, Consumer Capitalism, and the Rise of Social Media: A Toxic Trap for Young People. *Critical Criminology*. 27(4): 591-610. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-019-09476-2>
- O6. Billingham, L. and Irwin-Rogers, K. (Accepted, special issue delayed due to COVID) The terrifying abyss of insignificance: Marginalisation, mattering and violence between young people. *Onati Socio-Legal Series* [<http://oro.open.ac.uk/74339/>]
- G1. ESRC Grant: ES/T005793/1 "What Worked? Policy Mobility and the Public Health Approach to Youth Violence". December 2020-December 2023; Principal Investigator: Dr. Alistair Fraser; GBP243,564.

#### 4. Details of the impact

**Irwin-Rogers** has supported the Youth Violence Commission as lead academic, playing a central role in each component of its research, outputs, and impact and engagement activities [C1]. YVC research and reports have played a pivotal role in shaping public, private and third sector policy and practice through numerous channels.

##### Impact at a National Level

Through a series of meetings with key Government Ministers and other senior officials and debates and questions in the House of Commons, and the YVC has played a central role in shaping national Government policy on reducing violence between young people.

On 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018, **Irwin-Rogers** met with the Prime Minister's Special Advisor on Home Affairs and Justice at Number 10 Downing Street to discuss the YVC's interim findings and recommendations [C2]. Among other things, **Irwin-Rogers** made the case for tackling high rates of school exclusion and adopting a holistic public health approach to reducing youth violence, overseen and coordinated by regional Violence Reduction Units. In the House of Commons on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018, the Home Secretary responded to a question from the Chair of the YVC, stating that he would make "*a commitment to work with the all-party Parliamentary group*" [C3]. Within three months, the Home Secretary announced '*new measures*' to build on the Government's Serious Violence Strategy, pledging his support for a public health approach to tackling youth violence [C4].

Subsequently, the Chair of the YVC and **Irwin-Rogers** met with senior government officials including the Minister for London and Policing (18<sup>th</sup> March 2019), the Prime Minister (28<sup>th</sup> March 2019), the Home Office Minister (10<sup>th</sup> January 2019), and the Minister for Schools (10<sup>th</sup> July 2019) to obtain high-level commitment to implementing the YVC's recommendations [C1]. In June 2019 the Home Secretary announced GBP35,000,000 funding for the establishment of 18 regional Violence Reduction Units [C5].

MPs and Lords have formally recognised the work of the YVC and **Irwin-Rogers'** research 72 times in the two Houses of Parliament [C6].

##### Impact at a Regional Level

The YVC negotiated an exclusive campaign with the London Evening Standard to promote the recommendations of its interim report. Describing the publication as a '*landmark report*', the paper ran a front-page article on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 aimed at persuading the London Mayor to adopt a holistic public health approach to reducing serious youth violence [C7]. In the same article, the Chair of the YVC called on the Mayor of London to create a London VRU to oversee the proposed public health approach. In response, the Mayor of London arranged a meeting with the Chair of the YVC on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018 [C8a], before releasing a press release on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018 announcing his plans to develop and implement an "*innovative public health approach to tackling violent crime*" [C8b]. In September 2020, in his 44<sup>th</sup> Report to the London Assembly, the Mayor of London welcomed the "*many compelling recommendations*" of the YVC final report, and acknowledged that along with the then Home Secretary, he had endorsed and acted on the YVC's recommended public health approach by establishing the London VRU [C9]. The YVC has worked closely with the London VRU since its inception and shaped its ongoing work and priorities. The Director of the London VRU said "*the evidence of the report galvanised the policy agenda around the key wider issues from the role of schools to the importance of the health sector in playing its part. One of the key policies asked from the report was the establishment and long term support for violence reduction units across England and Wales; the Commission was a powerful advocate and used the parliamentary process to argue strongly and successfully*" [C10].

##### Impact on private and third sector policies and practices

Following the publication of a research report on social media and serious violence [O4], **Irwin-Rogers** has participated in numerous private meetings with Facebook (online) and Google/YouTube (London Headquarters) during the period 2018-2020 [C11]. During these meetings, **Irwin-Rogers** advised on the development and refinement of the platforms' monitoring and safeguarding policies. **Irwin-Rogers** also recommended that Google/YouTube should take the lead in establishing social media safeguarding training for professionals working with young people.

In December 2018, based on these meetings and **Irwin-Rogers'** research, Google announced a grant of GBP600,000 to fund the *Social Switch Project* [C11]. **Irwin-Rogers** was invited to act as an Advisory Board member for the project and in this capacity has continued to inform its content and delivery [C11]. The project has three main strands: a series of social media training workshops for frontline professionals working with young people; a programme of work experience in the digital sector for disadvantaged young people; and direct funding to grassroots organisations working with young people. Interim evaluations have shown that the project has delivered highly-rated social media safeguarding workshops to over 500 practitioners and provided digital skills training and work experience to over 40 young people [C12]. Among some of the most encouraging findings from an interim evaluation of the project, three young people have subsequently gained employment, two have secured apprenticeships, two have completed internships, seven have completed work experience placements, and another seven have set up their own social media platforms. As a consequence of its positive impact, the London Violence Reduction Unit has allocated an additional GBP200,000 to further support and extend the work of the *Social Switch Project* [C11].

In October 2018, the then Home Secretary, announced the creation of a new ten-year, GBP200,000,000 initiative known as the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), the purpose of which is build up an evidence base for effective early interventions, and to fund programmes to steer young people away from crime and violence. The YVC has exerted a significant influence over the YEF's work since its inception, with the YEF's Executive Director acknowledging three specific forms of YVC influence and support: i) the building up of a strong coalition of delivery organisations and politicians with whom the YEF will engage throughout its life cycle; ii) the identification of key priority areas such as schooling, which will now receive GBP5-GBP10million of YEF funding; and iii) the development of a research and practice model that will "*impact the spend of our entire GBP200m endowment*". The YEF Executive Director acknowledged the wider impact of the YVC with "*thanks and acknowledgement of the work that has been done, the direct impact it has on wider society, the youth violence sector, government and the lives of young people*" [C13].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- C1.** Testimonial from an MP outlining Irwin-Rogers' contribution to the cross-party Youth Violence Commission (pdf). (2017-18).
- C2.** Invitation to Number 10 Downing Street to meet with the Prime Minister's Special Advisor on Home Affairs and Justice (pdf). (2018).
- C3.** HC Deb 16 July 2018, vol 645, No. 172 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/pdf/commons/2018-07-16> (pdf).
- C4.** Government news story: Home Secretary Announces New Measures to Tackle Serious Violence (pdf). (2018).
- C5.** Government news story: Home Office allocates GBP35 million to police forces for violence reduction units (pdf). (2019).
- C6.** Acknowledgement of the Youth Violence Commission's work in the Houses of Parliament (pdf). (2017-18).
- C7.** Cohen, D. (2018) Violent London: Treat Crimewave like public health emergency, experts say. The Evening Standard. Wednesday 18 July 2018 (pdf).
- C8.** Evidence of Mayor of London's support for and acting on YVC's research and recommendations (pdf). a) record of meeting b) press release. (2018).
- C9.** Mayor of London (2020) 44th Mayor's Report to the Assembly (pdf).

- C10.** Testimony from Director of the London Violence Reduction Unit (pdf). (2017-18).
- C11.** Evidence of Irwin-Rogers' engagement activities with social media companies and funding for associated projects (pdf). (2018-20).
- C12.** Social Switch Project interim impact report (pdf). (2020).
- C13.** Testimonial from the Executive Director, Youth Endowment Fund (pdf). (2019-20).