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Connect Series Round-Up: Working alongside young people to reduce Serious Youth Violence

London will achieve nothing in its attempts to reduce serious youth violence unless it works more closely alongside young people warned Director of the Violence Reduction Unit Lib Peck last night.

Peck was speaking at the inaugural [Connect Series](#) event held by London Sport on Tuesday (9 July) which was attended by decision makers from across policy, local government and the sport sector.

The event was the first in a new series by London Sport looking at how to tackle some of the biggest issues facing the capital and the role which the physical activity and sport sector can play.

Peck said: “What we see is the power of sport to transform peoples’ lives. It’s everyone’s role to shape the society that they live in.

“We can aim to reduce violence, we can work hard to increase the feeling of safety, but we are not going to be able to achieve anything without working with young people.

“That’s what I have been trying to do, get out and meet Londoners. I feel extremely passionate about what we can do as [Violence Reduction Unit](#), how we can use the mayor’s office better.”

Peck was followed up on stage at House of Sport by Justin Finlayson, founder of [United Borders](#), who delivered a moving message around his own personal experiences of violence in the capital.

Finlayson founded United Borders after a 22-year-old neighbour was killed in front of his mother’s house while his own son, Rico, was stabbed multiple times before making a miraculous recovery.

United Borders continues to work with high-risk and vulnerable people, running a music production programme and youth violence reduction methods on a double-decker bus.

Finlayson knows the importance of getting young people involved to tackle serious youth violence and highlighted the need to build safe spaces for them to bring their ideas forward.



“Young people respond best when they have the willingness to express themselves. The first job for us is to create safe place to build trust, only through trust can you make changes,” he said.

“Sometimes, for a 14 or 16-year-old, it’s the first time they have trusted an adult, if we don’t build relationships we cannot make attitude shifts. Music and sport are powerful tools for this.

“I grew up learning that the most powerful thing a community could do was help each other. We also had a lot of access to numerous young services which came together across the borough.

“This allowed us to help us feel safe, break down barriers and it united us.”

The audience also heard from Rory Geoghegan from the [Centre for Social Justice](#) and put their questions to a panel discussion involving [Snow Camp](#) , [Black Prince Trust](#) and [The Running Charity](#).



The discussion covered funding for sport-related projects as well as the necessity to collaborate to achieve joint objectives with the power of sport to positively impact lives shining through.

Viven Taylor, who chaired the panel, leads on [Sport England](#)'s work around Serious Youth Violence and noted how significant work is being done to ensure their investment reaches the right sporting projects and organisations.

The [Connect Series](#) will return in November as London Sport looks to create a community within the capital striving to tackle some of the biggest issues facing London.

Sign up [here](#) to be the first to learn more about future Connect Series events.

About London Sport

London Sport aims to make London the most physically active city in the world. Supported by the Mayor of London and Sport England, our target is to get Londoners more physically active.

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