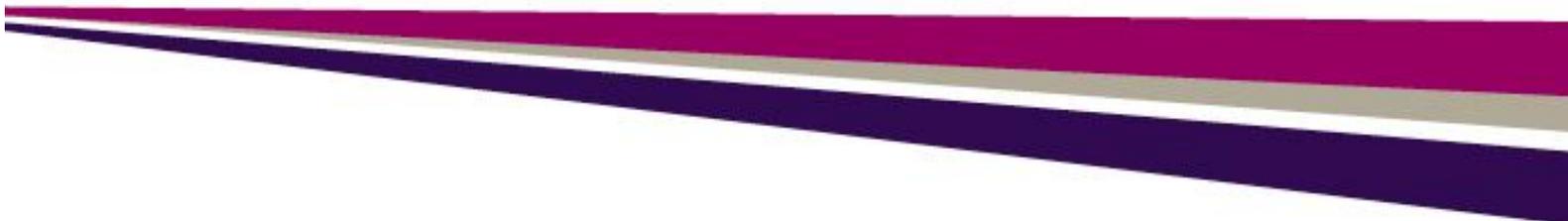


After the riots

Evidence from the Voluntary and Community Sector
on the causes of the 2011 riots and next steps for
policy and practice

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NCVO Policy, Research and Foresight
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Preface

This summer we saw our country at its worst and at its best. At its worst, we witnessed several days of serious social disorder and criminal activity. We saw people who felt they had no stake in society and so little to lose that they became motivated to riot. We saw communities suffering as their own shops, homes and hubs of community activity were destroyed amidst scenes of looting and criminal activity.

We also, however, saw much of what is best about our country. Our resilience, our determination to rebuild and to not be beaten, was much in evidence. The memory that will endure for me is not the scenes of destruction in Croydon, Tottenham, Manchester or Birmingham or indeed anywhere else, but the vision of people coming together, with brooms held aloft to clean up the damage, rebuild and get back to normal as quickly as possible. Voluntary action is alive and well in the towns and cities of Britain.

August 2011 already may seem a long time ago, but I believe that we must not forget. I am proud of the vital role that voluntary and community organisations and voluntary action played: whether formalised or spontaneous, people were there in the immediate aftermath of the disturbances. Many of those same people have been doing good work in their communities up and down this country day in, day out long before the riots. New faces have subsequently swelled their ranks. Voluntary and community organisations continue to bring communities together, to work with the public sector, the police, business and a whole range of people and organisations to make this a better country and to change lives.

This report brings together thoughts and examples from across the sector in response to the riots. It is part of the voluntary and community sector's contribution to the post-riots debate: it does not attempt to be an exhaustive account of the full range of causes nor the potential solutions. Indeed, the recommendations it offers to the sector, to government and to the media are intended as a starting point in addressing what we must remember was a complex series of events in areas often beset by longstanding social and economic problems. I hope that this report will prove a valuable contribution to the debate on the role our sector can play in rebuilding, reinvigorating and re-engaging people and communities across the country.

Sir Stuart Etherington
Chief Executive, NCVO



1. Context: the riots August 2011

Sparked by a police shooting in Tottenham on Saturday 6th August, England saw four consecutive nights of civil unrest.¹ The first three nights of rioting spread steadily throughout London, with the capital seeing minimal disturbance on the fourth night. Cities such as Manchester and Birmingham experienced civil unrest on Tuesday 9th August.

In response to the riots, an abundance of accounts of the disturbances have emerged. On 11th August, the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Home Secretary, said:

'Violence, arson and looting in several of our towns and cities has destroyed homes, ruined livelihoods and taken lives. As long as we wish to call ourselves a civilised society, such disorder has no place in Britain.'

It is important to note that there is disagreement over whether the civil unrest was 'rioting': putting aside the legal definition of a riot², a range of terms have been used by politicians and the media including disturbances, civil unrest and violence/looting. The latter appear to have been used to imply criminal, rather than political, motives.

Disagreements over the causes (both short and long-term), participants and solutions have characterised much of the subsequent debate.³ There has been a particular focus on young people, a not uncommon reaction to such events according to social scientists.⁴

A number of enquiries are now taking place. The government has established its own enquiry, the Independent Riots Communities and Victims Panel⁵. This is not a full public enquiry, despite some calls for the latter⁶. The London School of Economics, supported by *The Guardian* newspaper and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, also has established an independent panel to investigate the causes.⁷

¹ For an overview and links to various sources see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_England_riots

² See <http://www.farleys.com/blog/rioting-and-the-law-the-legal-definition-and-associated-penalties>

³ For example, See David Allen Green's blog on causes of the riots: <http://jackofkent.blogspot.com/2011/08/riots-and-lawlessness.html> and this excellent article from Francis FitzGibbon that compares the riots with the Brixton riots of 1981: <http://ffggc.wordpress.com/2011/09/01/the-scarman-report-30-years-on/> An excellent collection of different perspectives from IPPR's Nick Pearce is at http://www.ippr.org/?p=504&option=com_wordpress&Itemid=17

⁴ See <http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2011/10/the-riots-of-summer-2011-just-criminals/>

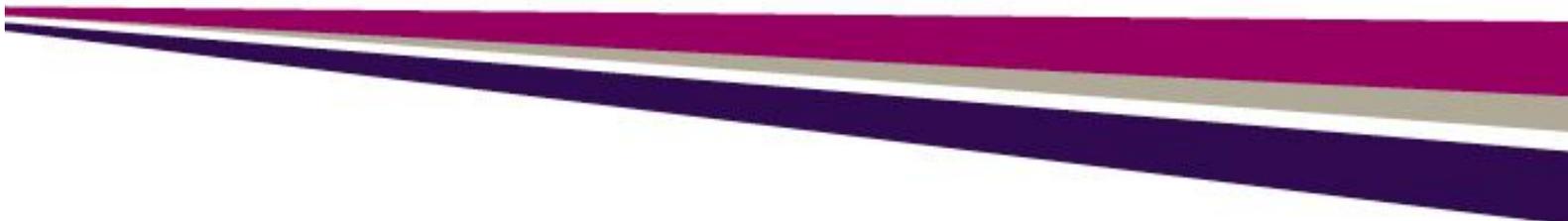
⁵ See <http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/>

⁶ Simon Burall of Involve discusses the pros and cons of the enquiry: <http://www.involve.org.uk/is-a-public-inquiry-into-the-riots-a-good-thing/>

⁷ See <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/2011/09/06/reading-the-riots/>

NCVO's concern has been that those voluntary organisations working on the frontline, in and with the communities affected, have been marginalised in the debate. We contend that they have knowledge and experience of the causes of the riots. Secondly, we believe that these voluntary organisations, and the spontaneous voluntary action of citizens, make our communities more resilient, but that this role is often unnoticed. Finally, NCVO's experience is that organisations working on the frontline can help to design and test potential short and long-term policy and practice solutions, but too often such solutions are not developed by the communities expected to implement them.

This report is the collation of views gathered in the aftermath of the riots. It is based on a large event for frontline and support bodies convened in September 2011, together with ongoing engagement with voluntary and community organisations. It aims to amplify the voice of those with frontline experience who might help current and future enquiries understand the causes. It secondly highlights the work undertaken by voluntary organisations in the aftermath of the riots, and the role of voluntary action, as a reminder of the breadth and value of work that helped communities get back on their feet and public bodies to respond effectively. Finally, it suggests ways forward for different stakeholder groups, based upon the feedback we have gathered from organisations in the affected areas.



2. Reflections: what caused the riots?

2.1 Introduction

A wide range of organisations have contributed evidence and perspective on the causes of the riots, whether in person at our September event or via other channels. It is unsurprising that views are conflicting; causes are contested. There is no one voice of the voluntary and community sector on the matter, whilst in the short term it is clearly difficult for organisations to bring robust evidence to bear. This does not however make the breadth or character of their perspectives irrelevant.

This section of the report aims to synthesise and reflect the points organisations have raised. In doing so it aims to raise issues that current enquiries need to investigate and prove or discount with robust lines of investigation.

2.2 Deprivation and inequality: root cause or context?

Many of the contextual and causal factors discussed at the event, in this report and more widely relate to social conditions and economic challenges that are long term in and structural. These pre-date the current government by many years and, in some cases, decades. There was a widely held sense that social exclusion, poverty and unemployment contribute, amongst others, to a context where riots and disorder are more likely.⁸ In a recent briefing, Julia Unwin of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁹ argued:

'it is clear something has, and is, going wrong in our communities. Through our research, we know that people in some places feel absolutely powerless. And we know that many feel little loyalty to or involvement in their communities. We know that they believe their aspirations are frustrated and that whatever their effort they will not be recognised. People are worried about living in a culture that has increasingly defined status through material possessions and the accumulation of possessions as worthy in its own right. We know about the devastating effects of recession on communities – with some never coming out of recession. None of this excuses or even explains rioting, and it certainly does not give us a clear direction for preventing riots in the future – but it does emphasise the urgent need to tackle these social problems head-on.'

⁸ For example see IPPR analysis: <http://www.ippr.org/articles/56/7857/exploring-the-relationship-between-riot-areas-and-deprivation--an-ippr-analysis>

⁹ The riots: what are the lessons from the JRF's work in communities? <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/riots-community-lessons-summary.pdf>

We rarely encountered arguments that such conditions are either a cause or an excuse for the riots. Nevertheless, such arguments do exist in the communities within which voluntary organisations are working. These arguments will shape the response to policy and practice solutions and as such they need to be addressed.

2.3 The perception of government and politics

Some attendees commented that politics holds little meaning for young people. Some went further to suggest that there has been a slow moral decline of political and economic institutions. They suggested that events such as the MPs' expenses scandal, risk-taking bankers and the phone hacking scandal have cumulatively led to a lack of moral compass and role models for young people.¹⁰ As one organisation noted in a written response:

Many young people spoke of their hopeless position (loss of facilities, no opportunity, loss of things like EMA) and put this alongside things like MPs expenses, bankers bonuses: all adding up to a feeling of massive unfairness and that they were in some ways glad to see people getting their own back.

Others commented that there has been deep disappointment about the government's lack of serious commitment to address youth unemployment.¹¹ Many noted that this was coupled with the harsh effects of funding cuts, which they said have often affected the most marginalised and disadvantaged communities, with even the smallest pinches felt deeply.

A lack of government trust in communities and the negligence towards an effective Race and Equality strategy were also cited as contributing factors.¹²

2.4 Relationships with the police

Some participants at the event felt that the stop and search techniques used by the police often alienated young people, creating a 'them and us' culture. In particular, race was also identified as an issue, with stop and searches seemingly disproportionately targeted at young black men. According to some representatives, there is a lack of understanding between the police, young

¹⁰ Indicative of views on role models is Toby Blume's argument against the notion of a 'feral underclass': <http://tobyblume.posterous.com/69042056>

¹¹ Eg see NCVYS/Young Foundation (2011) Youth Unemployment: A Policy Briefing. http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Catalyst_Briefing_on_Youth_Unemployment.pdf

¹² Voice4Change's Chair noted that whilst race may be an issue, a broader current of disaffection was perhaps more critical: <http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk/content/london-riots-real-price-cuts>

people and deprived communities, which has escalated into a severe breakdown in community relations.¹³

According to participants of our event, in some areas, police aggravated young people, which exacerbated the situation and caused it to spiral out of control. The disproportionate police levels compared to the impact was also remarked upon.

Some people also felt that, in general, there is a distinct lack of consistency from the police in their level and quality of engagement with young people and the community. There was a consensus that the police could do more in general, though there clearly significant variations in the relationship the police.

2.5 Young people in society

It was suggested that many young people feel outside, or in some cases 'above' society and that they do not see social codes of conduct as relevant. Furthermore, young people feel that they have no say and no power. There were a number of reasons for such a strong sentiment.

One was identified in the phenomenon of latchkey children, which has led to young people forming social relationships outside the family, often in gangs. Spokespersons from frontline organisations working in areas affected shared that some known gangs in the areas united during this short period due to a vision of collective causes and hatred of the police. One delegate quoted a young person, who had justified their involvement in the riots with the statement: *'I've got nothing to lose'*.¹⁴

Another lay in the reduction of opportunities for young people, causing a notably widespread sense of alienation. This focused on the high levels of youth unemployment, as well as the lack of community and social spaces, particularly for young people. Regeneration projects are often seen as exclusive forms of development, which do not always involve the entire community and can lead to certain members of the community feeling disconnected.

A perhaps deeper-set observation made by some representatives was that some young people have never been told that they are valued, which has resulted in many suffering from low levels of self-esteem. This can trigger behavioural issues linked to boredom, disenfranchisement and poverty. For many, this was also linked to poor parenting, which many noted had often spanned generations.

¹³ The overrepresentation of young black people in the criminal justice system, and the role of voluntary organisations in addressing this, has been investigated by the Home Affairs Select Committee:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmhaff/181/181i.pdf>

¹⁴ Caution over the role of gangs is, nevertheless, required: 1 in 10 of those arrested were found to be gang members. of Justice, *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 9th to 9th August 2011*

2.6 Young people and media stereotyping

In addition to the above comments, many participants noted that the way that the majority of the media reported the disturbances, in particular the ages of the rioters, has been at odds with official government figures. Their feedback was that this was typical of negative stereotyping of young people by the media.¹⁵

Many at our event claimed that data used by politicians and the media were confusing and contradictory. A common element to the feedback we received was a high proportion of the rioters were in fact young adults, not 'youth'. Official Government statistics confirmed that in reality the age distribution of rioters was more complex than initial media reporting suggested. Approximately 21% of rioters were under the age of 18¹⁶; around half (52%) of the suspected rioters brought before the courts were under the age of 21¹⁷.

Many voluntary organisations argued that young people were being disproportionately blamed and this was creating a 'halo effect': a perception that such behaviour was widespread amongst young people. It was argued that the mainstream media attention focused almost exclusively on those who participated in the riots and took no notice of those who did not get involved. In fact, there were examples of known "trouble makers" not getting involved in the riots. The media seemingly neglected to report any successful youth projects that had actively stopped people getting involved, either spontaneously during early August or as a result of sustained preventative work.

It is worth noting that according to first-hand reports of organisations working with young people, there was a distinct lack of sympathy emerging from young people who had chosen not to participate in the riots, towards those who had.

2.7 Conclusion

The above themes reflect intense, conflicting viewpoints from the sector. They arguably fail to reflect the sense of anger and powerlessness felt by representatives from some organisations. The depth of argument only serves to highlight that there are no simple answers or slogans in relation to the causes of the riots.

¹⁵ Feedback from CSV and the National Children's Bureau strongly emphasised this issue: for example, see <http://blog.ncb.org.uk/?p=204> and <http://blog.ncb.org.uk/?p=211>

¹⁶ Ministry of Justice, *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 9th to 9th August 2011*, 15 September 2011, page 5. <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/mojstats/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin.pdf>

¹⁷ Ministry of Justice, *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 9th to 9th August 2011*, 15 September 2011, page 5. <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/mojstats/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin.pdf>

The differing experiences brought by organisations also highlighted that place mattered: the riots had different contextual drivers and specific triggers in different areas and in some cases neighbourhoods. Moreover, many places scarred by deprivation did not experience riots, possibly highlighting the role of community groups in resilience.¹⁸ The first-hand experiences of many front-line voluntary organisations, however, should still be seen as useful in formulating policy and practice responses to the riots.

Finally, it is worth noting that where other organisations have sought to synthesise the views and evidence of communities, or those working directly with communities, similar themes emerge from those studies: poverty, hopelessness and despair, relationships with the police and stereotyping of young people.¹⁹

¹⁸ For example, see Alex Sobel's blog on Chapeltown, Leeds: <http://locality.org.uk/resources/chapeltown-riots/> This point was made in relation to Toxteth at our September event.

¹⁹ For example, see Locality (2011) A community response to the riots: <http://locality.org.uk/resources/community-response-riots/>;

3. Responses: after the riots

3.1 Introduction

The immediate aftermath of the riots saw spontaneous clean-ups in the affected areas by self-organising volunteers, the epitome of resilient communities. For many people, the images of brooms aloft were what voluntary action is all about.



But what has become apparent in the weeks and months after the event is that people in all walks of life have tried to do something: sometimes this has been self organised; in other cases, voluntary and community organisations have been the vehicles through which people have instigated their effort. Effort has been both online and offline; giving time and money; spontaneous and planned. For example, the Community Foundation Network estimates £400,000 was donated to community foundations in London, Manchester, Nottingham and Birmingham following the riots. This has been and is being granted to community groups and individuals in the affected areas.

Responses have also ranged from those in the immediate, such as taking preventative action on the night, through to the aftermath – the clean up – to the longer term, including campaigning to address the causes of the riots. Much of the media focus has been on the victims – but voluntary organisations will also be working with those involved in the riots, whether as advocates or helping to rehabilitate them into society. In short, the work of voluntary and community organisations in relation to the riots spreads almost as far as the sector itself. This section highlights some of the responses to the riots.²⁰

3.2 Retail Trust

Immediately following the start of the riots, [Retail Trust](#) contacted retailers affected to offer support. The charity then launched a Twitter campaign, using the hashtag [#highstheroes](#), to raise funds for affected retail staff, shopkeepers and their families and awareness of the Retail Trust Helpline 0808 801 0808. This campaign led to numerous companies and members of the public pledging their support in various ways, including [Riot Raffle](#), which organised a raffle offering prizes donated by independent businesses and raised over £1,200 for Retail Trust. Within a week, there were

²⁰ See also UnLtd's report on the responses of social entrepreneurs:
http://www.unltd.org.uk/download/UnLtd_Riots_Roundtable_Report.pdf

benefit club nights and [comedy shows](#) being organised, as well as [six companies selling t-shirts](#) in aid of the #highstheroes campaign.

During the riots and in the aftermath, Retail Trust saw a fourfold increase in calls to its helpline and visitors to its website increased tenfold. The Trust set aside £50,000 from its reserves to start delivering help. This fund was subsequently boosted by significant donations from software supplier [Intuit](#) and the [John Lewis Partnership](#). The charity allocated grants of £250 to help relieve retail people of immediate difficulties they were experiencing as a result of the riots.

One week after the riots began, [nine Retail Trust staff travelled to Tottenham](#) to hand out helpline cards, posters and information to local retailers. Information was also distributed to the councils of all the areas affected by the riots, and counselling and critical incident support were offered to retailers. This led to London Mayor Boris Johnson to pledge his support for the [#highstheroes campaign](#).



In addition to the damage inflicted and traumatic experiences suffered by numerous retail staff, the riots also resulted in job losses as retailers were forced to permanently close stores. In response to this the Trust launched [ReWork on Tour](#), developing its existing [ReWork programme](#), which offers free support and advice for retail staff who have been made redundant, helping them to identify a career path and get back into work. Throughout the month of October free ReWork on Tour events took place in Tottenham, Croydon, Manchester and Liverpool.

'Although the visible impact of the riots is clear through the damage done to shops, the story that doesn't always come through is the deeper impact on those affected below the surface, emotionally, but also practically in terms of how everyday life needs to continue.'

The #highstheroes campaign was created to benefit the people from retail affected, rather than the property. That's where Retail Trust's expertise lies and where we firmly believe focus must not be lost.'

Retail Trust CEO Nigel J L Rothband

3.3 LawWorks

[LawWorks](#), a charity providing pro bono legal help, launched [Riot Help](#), a support line for victims of the disturbances and who need advice and legal help to rebuild their lives. Riot Help facilitates the provision of legal advice to those unable to access legal aid and unable to afford legal representation. It aims to work not only with individuals affected by the riots but also with small businesses and charities. It is hoped that this will provide a more cohesive and integrated form of support to the communities concerned.



Riot Help's core principle is to assist communities that have been affected by the disturbances in August. It reaches out to those who have experienced damage to their property, business premises or contents, as well as those who are facing bankruptcy, insolvency or a legal dispute as a result of the riots. People who have had problems with their insurance, employment or finances or help with debts, welfare and benefits or housing as a result of the unrest, can also make use of this service.

So far, most applications for assistance have come from small businesses, although the helpline has seen a number of cases from individuals. In accordance, the most common areas of law for which advice is requested are for insurance, property and landlord and tenant.

The project has been supported by a number of large donations from private law firms, which have enabled the remit of the project to widen. An example of this is through the recognition of the key role community groups will play in rebuilding affected communities, which has meant that Riot Help will now offer assistance to charities and not-for-profits in affected areas regardless as to whether they were directly affected by the riots. Donations also have provided Riot Help with the capacity to help affected communities two months on.

The project offers help to victims of the riots all across the country including: Tottenham, Croydon, Peckham, Islington, Hackney, Greenwich, Lambeth, Ealing, Greater London, Birmingham, Nottingham and Liverpool. Riot Help has been up and running for just over two months and LawWorks intends the service to be available for a year.

3.4 CalibreMinds

Based in East London, [CalibreMinds](#) is a social enterprise working with young people aged 8-18 and 19-30. They work mainly with young people who are seen as at risk, disadvantaged or disengaged from the community or society. The aim of CalibreMinds is to increase the quality of life through engagement, guidance and inspiration for young people from all backgrounds.

On the day of the peaceful protests in Tottenham, youth workers noticed a nervous atmosphere amongst many of their attendees, with many making excuses to leave the Saturday youth group earlier than normal. When youth workers got wind of the situation, they managed to keep hold of 85% of their attendees by telling them they were not welcome back if they participated. Since the riots occurred, the organisation has seen its volunteer base double.



Before, during and after the disturbances, the organisation continues to run positive activities in a fun and safe environment for the young people that they support. Some activities focus on creativity, such as arts, drama, photography and writing, with others providing new opportunities for young people. This includes trips and excursions to places that they not ordinarily have the opportunity to experience. They also offer more physical engagement activities such as sport, dance and martial arts.

They also offer guidance in the form of bespoke workshops focused on raising awareness and skill enhancement, to tackle key issues faced by young people. These issues include crime awareness (including drugs and gang culture), employment, sexual awareness and relationships, education, careers and business and finance. They also offer basic life skills training called 'Preparation for Life', which is tailored to help young people advance through life, by developing their employability and life skills. Inspiration workshops are also on offer, which focus on empowerment, motivation and self-development. They aim to improve self-esteem through self-development and mentoring, as well as specialist services offering advice and guidance on social issues that are relevant to young people.

CalibreMinds is governed by a committee of seven, with 70 members and 20 volunteers, who advise and guide CalibreMinds on its vision and goals. These members are purposefully a mix of local people and professionals from the local community.

3.5 Business in the Community (BITC)

One of the very practical ways in which [Business in the Community](#) is working with its members is through their new [Business Connector](#) initiative – this will see secondments from businesses



working in local communities of particular need to assess and address specific community need with local business resource. They believe that having Business Connectors in every area could have a profound impact in building the strong, prosperous communities.

'Beyond the practical recovery, businesses also have a key role to play in building trust and cohesion within communities. Our experience compellingly shows that high streets can only prosper when our communities are prosperous and responsible business must play a pivotal role within the communities most in need.'

Stephen Howard, CEO, BitC

3.6 Operation Cup of Tea

[Operation Cup of Tea](#), an anti-rioting campaign was launched using [twitter](#) and facebook during the riots as a novelty campaign for everyone to stay in and have a cup of tea. It asked everyone to take a photo of themselves tea-drinking and post it to Facebook to show solidarity. The facebook site now has over 300,000 friends. It has been linked to the riot-clean up efforts, which saw hundreds of people taking to the streets to clean-up in the aftermath of the disturbances. In Kensington * Chelsea, the idea has been [taken forward by the Volunteer](#) Centre to encourage neighbourliness in the Borough.



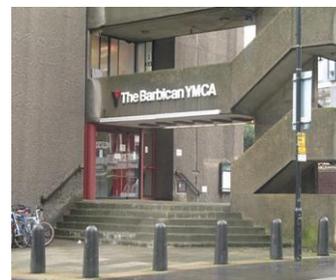
3.7 The Prince's Trust



[The Prince's Trust](#) plans to double its support for young people across five of the areas hardest hit by the England riots, including Manchester, Birmingham and the London communities of Hackney, Tottenham and Croydon. The Trust is putting a [£2.5 million investment](#) in these areas, giving disadvantaged young people positive opportunities to keep their lives on track. As well as committing £1 million from funds already raised, the charity is calling on the business community to back a £1.5 million fundraising drive to raise the rest of the cash.

3.8 City YMCA

On some of the evenings when riots took place, as well as in the weeks that followed, [City YMCA](#) worked with young people, supporting and listening to them and giving them a voice. They were one of the few youth organisations that remained open during the disturbances. On Tuesday 9th August City YMCA held an emergency meeting to discuss the ongoing riots and gauge young people's reaction to the unravelling events. The event encouraged young people to think about positive solutions that could be implemented at community level and through existing programmes and structures.



Although many organisations were closed for that night, we felt it was important to show our young people that we cared enough to stay open, when others weren't, but more importantly, to show the rest of society how the sensible majority of young people felt and behaved during this time.

Ian Boyd, Youth Projects Manager, City YMCA

More recently, in September a group of young people held a debate with police officers to look at local news reports of recent crimes and to discuss solutions. This was part of a new initiative organised by youth workers from the City YMCA and commissioned by the Islington Police and Islington Community Safety Board (ICSB).

3.9 Leap Confronting Conflict

Leap Confronting Conflict is a charity that works nationally with young people aged 11-25 and professionals that want to address issues of conflict in their lives. Their training helps individuals to understand, manage and resolve the everyday conflict in their lives, empowering them to become role models and leaders of positive change. In particular, Leap Confronting Conflict works with young people who are 'NEET', excluded, or involved with gang activity, anti-social behaviour or crime.

Leap Confronting Conflict have undertaken [a range of activities](#) following the riots, most notably the development of a consortium of 27 youth charities to address how post-conflict work in the affected areas might be developed, including development of violence prevention programmes in schools and the creation of community-led Rapid Response Networks that quickly can deal with emerging problems. The meeting resulted in several policy recommendations, which have since been the subject of a youth consultation event. Further information on these recommendations can be found



National Council for Voluntary Organisations
giving voice and support to civil society



on their [website](#) or by contacting the organisation directly.



3.10 National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)



NCVYS started a campaign using Facebook and Twitter to gather photos from young people who took no part in the riots. The aim is to combat the negative stereotypes that were widespread in the media, and also to give voice to those who disagreed with the rioters.

Each young person is holding up a sign that says [#notinmyname](#) and they posted the photos as they came in on a [Facebook album](#).

4. Recommendations

In what is an ongoing debate, these 'recommendations' are more early thoughts to help shape discussion around public policy and, crucially to influence the approach of both the VCS itself and the media. These recommendations are of varying levels of complexity and would take different amounts of time and investment to implement.

An over-arching recommendation is to recognise the complex, long term nature of the causes of the riots. Three nights of disorder did not represent isolated, spontaneous criminality but should be seen as part of a wider set of social, economic and policy issues. It is important that these incidents are not seen as an entirely separate problem to 'solve' but should be viewed as part of a range of co-ordinated policy responses.

4.1 Recommendations to government and the public sector²¹

1. Framing the debate: language and the use of evidence

- The language used by government is important as it sets the tone of much of the debate. Delegates identified a number of concerns, where it was felt that language such as 'feral youths' and 'Broken Britain' is provocative and unhelpful. Government should therefore consider carefully the impact of the language and tone that it uses in public debates.
 - Many delegates felt that government should respond to such events with a greater degree of nuance and sensitivity. This related largely, but not exclusively to race equality issues.
- Communities and Victims Panel: delegates were positive that government was committing to developing an evidence base. However, there were concerns around the composition of the panel, the speed with which it had been set up and the need to ensure that the panel's work is inclusive and reflective of all members of communities.
- Accuracy and evidence: a number of statistics have been quoted and implications and policy decisions drawn from this. It is essential that government has a full and accurate picture of the available evidence, including that drawn from its own governmental sources. This is both to inform policy making and to ensure that appropriate messages are conveyed in public statements.
 - For example, much of the debate around the riots has implied that these were a 'youth' issue. However, this neglects to point out that 48% of those brought before the courts were over 21²² and are therefore classed as adults. What is more, there were many young people who did not get involved in the riots: it was a very small number of young people who actually participated.

²¹ Including central government, local government, public bodies and agencies and the wider public.

²² Ministry of Justice, *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 9th to 9th August 2011*, 15 September 2011, page 5.
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/mojstats/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin.pdf>

- There is also a strong correlation between past offences and involvement in the riots, with 73% of those who have appeared before the courts for the disorder having a previous caution or conviction and 15.4% committing between 15-49 previous offences²³. This clearly demonstrates the need to find solutions to prevent a further cycle of re-offending.

2. Structural factors: addressing youth unemployment

- Unemployment, including youth unemployment, was identified as a significant causal factor in creating the social conditions where disorder is more likely (this report is not claiming that unemployment is a direct cause). Government should, therefore, invest in a range of initiatives to promote and sustain meaningful opportunities which may include voluntary and training platforms. This should include:
 - Structured job creation programmes, particularly for young people and apprenticeships, working with employers to fund, or match fund, placements or offer a range of other incentives including tax breaks as appropriate
 - Concerns were identified around the Work Programme, particularly in relation to the currently disappointing levels of involvement for the VCS and other smaller, specialist providers. Targeted, intensive interventions will be required to move the most excluded closer to the job market and to enable them to remain in work.

3. Structural factors: the government's deficit reduction programme

- JRF research²⁴ has identified the fragility of the most deprived neighbourhoods and the need to target scarce resources at them. It has also identified that community organisations and strong community leadership can make a difference. The examples in this report have similarly highlighted that voluntary organisations can lever-in resources.
- Yes funding reductions are having an impact on the ability of the sector to deliver locally. The point was also made that government must make a full assessment of the impact of overall cuts – for example in the case of youth services, it is not only specific cuts to those services that impact but also cuts as they impact on other family members, education and other parts of the community.
- NCVO would reiterate our calls for spending cuts, where absolutely necessary, to be introduced sensitively and strategically with the impact of cuts mitigated as far as possible.
- Funding for 'youth' services beyond 13-19: a 'cliff edge' approach to funding, where often vulnerable and marginalised people suddenly find themselves without help and support is not helpful and can lead to further social exclusion.
- Local authorities are the principal source of contact that many community groups have with the public sector.

²³ Ministry of Justice, *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 9th to 9th August 2011*, 15 September 2011, page 5.
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/mojstats/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin.pdf>

²⁴ See <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/riots-community-lessons-summary.pdf>

- Cuts: local authorities have mixed practice in terms of the implementation of cuts. Whilst many have taken strategic, partnership approaches where community groups are involved in decisions, this is not universal.

4. Trigger factors: relationships with the police

Relationships with the police are crucial to help communities function. Community groups play a vital role in helping to build and facilitate relationships between the police and the community. Where good relationships with the police exist, then disorder is less likely and is also easier to minimise and contain where it does occur.

- Attendees reported that where there were good relationships between the community and the police, elements of disorder were prevented and that the clean up operations were more efficient and effective. The Police should identify where excellent community relations played a role and share learning across the country.
- Community policing is an important function and visible, named officers should continue to work closely with communities. These initiatives must continue to be supported.
- Collaboration between the police and community groups can be of huge assistance to avoiding community problems. Interestingly, some delegates identified a potential role in 'early warning' where community groups could help the Police identify potential trouble spots. This is clearly more likely to happen where relationships are functioning and both sides engage in the spirit of equal partnership.
- Consistency: there is a perception that between and within different areas of the country, the police approached these issues in distinct ways. This can create a perception of unfairness.
- Communication between senior and frontline police – issues were identified in parts of London where senior police officers had given approval to community groups actively being involved in attempting to persuade potential participants in disorder to disperse and remain home. Permission to do this was then not forthcoming from frontline officers.

4. 2 Recommendations to the Voluntary and Community Sector

- The VCS has multiple roles and should think creatively about how it can make a contribution in a wide range of areas. These include service delivery, providing voice to a range of groups and campaigning. These multiple roles should also include:
 - Mentoring
 - Mediation
 - Bridging – building relationships between the community, public and private sectors.
- Collaboration: community and voluntary groups should think carefully about how collaborative working – both within the sector and across other sectors -- can make a



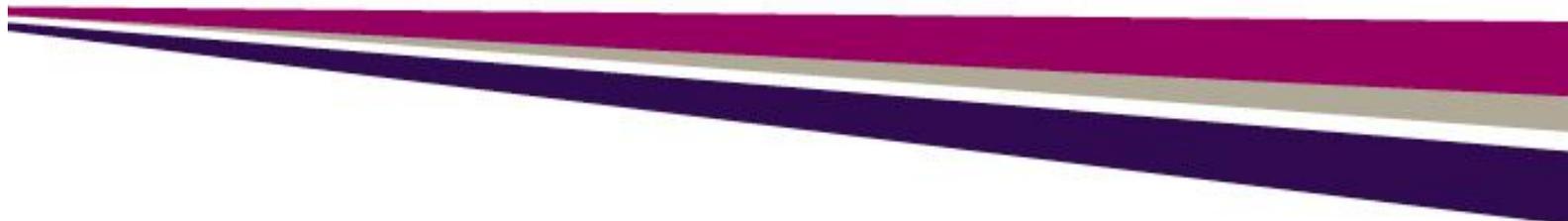
contribution. Where collaboration is in the interests of beneficiaries, then groups should move to work more closely together.

- Many delegates identified the important role in speaking out and constructively challenging decisions and practices, including those of government, the wider public sector and within the VCS itself (including national infrastructure bodies)
- Relationship with the police: this must be a two way process. Voluntary and community organisations have a wider responsibility to build links with the police and educate users

4.3 Recommendations to the media

Many participants felt that the media had played a role in making the riots worse. Key recommendations to the media include:

- Accuracy, proportionality and balance – ensure that the media is accurately reporting events. Insinuations about those involved in disorder that are not based on robust information can be very damaging.
- Reporting the full facts and positive news stories – NCVO Chair Martyn Lewis has long argued that the media should feel a sense of obligation when reporting on negative news stories to also carry/report on the work that community groups are doing to attempt to alleviate these problems
- Whilst elements of the media did carry stories on the role of community groups in preventing disorder and in helping the recovery (particularly the Evening Standard), these were often fairly selective stories with a perception that the clean up would be seen as an entirely middle class effort.



7. Acknowledgements

NCVO would like to thank all of the organisations who made invaluable contributions to the event in September 2011 and to this report.

Attendees at the riot event:

Arsenal community project, ACEVO, Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Service, Big Lottery Fund, Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau, Birmingham Friends of the Earth, Black Training and Enterprise Group, British Red Cross, Business in the Community (BITC), Cabinet Office, Calibre minds youth project, Charnwood Twenty Twenty, Civil Exchange, Common Ground – East London Mediation, Communities and Victims Panel, Community Foundations, Community Matters, Community Service Volunteers, Council of Black Led Churches, D-Fuse, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions, Dragon Hall Community Centre, Enfield Voluntary Action, Euclid, Family Action, Friendship Works, Greenwich Action for Voluntary Service (GAVS), Hackney CVS, Haringey Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations (HAVCO), Haringey Women’s Forum, Hold it Down, Home Office, Just for Kids Law, Leap Confronting Conflict, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services, Locality, Media Trust, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, Merton Voluntary Service Council, Millwall Community Scheme, Ministry of Justice, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), National Children’s Bureau, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), Nick Hurd MP Minister for Civil Society, North London Muslim Community Centre (NLMCC), Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service, Office for Public Management (OPM), Peckham Voluntary Sector Forum, Spitalfields City Farm, Springboard, Switch ID, The Crib youth project, The Runnymede Trust, The Winch, Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service, Trust for London, UK Youth, Unity Community Association, UnLtd, Urban Forum, Victim Support, Voice4Change, Voluntary Sector Partnership Board, Volunteering England, We Make a Change, Workers’ Educational Association (WEA), World of Hope, Youth A.I.D Lewisham and Youth Mediation Project in Southwark Mediation Centre.

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Other contributors

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National Council for Voluntary Organisations
giving voice and support to civil society



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Many of these contributions can be found at <http://reviewrenew.posterous.com>

