

Policy Briefing, September 2011

The London Riots

Background

On 7, 8 and 9 August 2011 riots took place in London and in a few other cities in the UK. The riots started in Tottenham following the death of a local man named Mark Duggan when a demonstration outside a police station spiralled into rioting.

Violence spread from Tottenham to other parts of London as well as to other UK cities including Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Outside of Tottenham, the bulk of rioting focused on breaking into shops to steal merchandise such as mobile phones, electronics and clothing.

In the aftermath of the violence, numerous inquiries and research reports were undertaken. [LVSC](#) provides a useful summary of the Home Affairs Committee inquiry, looking specifically at:

- Police relations with the communities where violence took place before the riots, including similarities with and differences from previous public disorder events;
- The role of social media in spreading disorder and in the response to it;
- The role of organised groups in promoting disorder;
- The role of the IPCC, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, and ACPO/NPIA public order guidance;
- The techniques used by the police to quell the rioting, including: a) Decisions taken over the deployment of police officers (availability of officers, response times), b) The use of standard techniques: containment, dispersal, specialist public order officers, dogs, horses, c) The deployment of non-standard techniques: armoured police cars, baton rounds, water cannon, curfews
- Variations in the responses of different police forces;
- Lessons to be learned from the police response to previous public disorder incidents;

- Training of officers to deal with riots;
- Whether there were any constraints on the police such as limited resources or powers;
- Whether there should be any changes to the legislation regulating normal policing processes during times of major disorder;
- Whether the age of many of the rioters constrained the police in their use of anti-riot technique;
- The application of the Riot (Damages) Act 1886; and
- To revisit relevant recommendations made in previous Home Affairs Committee reports into Policing the G20 protests and Knife crime, and other relevant recommendations, to assess if they have been implemented by successive governments.

The riots in Wandsworth

Clapham Junction was worst affected in Wandsworth, with widespread looting taking place among the shops on Lavender Hill. In addition to vandalism and looting, one shop (the Party Superstore) was set alight and destroyed by fire.

Local people living in the wider Battersea area turned out in large numbers the following morning to clean up the streets around Clapham Junction. See the coverage of the cleanup on the BBC website here

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14472567

Wandsworth Council responded immediately after the riots by sending eviction notices to suspected rioters living in Council owned homes. Read the story in Wandsworth Guardian here:

www.wandsworthguardian.co.uk/news/9193647. [First riot related eviction notice served/](#)

A post riots event called Battersea Buzz was organised to

enable local people who wished to take action to prevent rioting from occurring again to come together to share ideas. Read more about this on Councillor James Cousin's blog <http://jamescousins.com/2011/08/battersea-buzz-ten-days-on/>

The Council also launched an independent review into why and how the riots happened, which can be accessed below.

Pages 78-80 contain the author's key findings and recommendations for action

[:www.wvsda.org.uk/assets/documents/disorder-in-wandsworth-indep%20](http://www.wvsda.org.uk/assets/documents/disorder-in-wandsworth-indep%20)

Implications for the voluntary and community sector

Various social and economic issues have been listed as underlying factors that enabled the riots to take place. The debate has focused on a wide range of issues such as a growing number of disaffected youth, rising unemployment, poverty, general opportunism and a lack of family and social values among rioters to name but a few.

Some of these issues relate directly to the work done by voluntary and community groups to offer alternatives and opportunities to young people, support people into employment, provide advice and information and reduce inequality and poverty. The challenge is partly to understand which of these areas are most relevant and partly how they could be approached in collaboration with other organisations and sectors to prevent the conditions that led to the rioting from reoccurring.

The local voluntary sector in Wandsworth responded in a number of ways in the days following the violence. Organisations like Victim Support has opened its doors to anyone affected by the riots, such as tenants, shop keepers and victims of robbery or assault. Others have focused on finding new ways of working with young people through mentorship schemes, for example the work being led by Future Foundations www.future-foundations.co.uk following the Battersea Buzz event.

Further resources

The Guardian has created a dataset mapping where the riots took place and where the offenders live, to give an overview of who did what and where:

www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/aug/15/riots-map-happened-suspects-addresses

Home Affairs Committee inquiry. Read more here:

www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news/110915-riots/?dm_i=6I8,J0OC,O8YFD,1JPB2,1

