Twitter Thread by Terry Ellis



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The solution to knife crime is not a quick fix and it isn't something that is going to come cheaply, I have been involved in local task forces discussions with MP's and been on countless marches but the problem is no one listens to the people on the ground;

millions of pounds get wasted producing white papers;
that never get anything done.

The current Government rhetoric about being tough on crime ; is all well and good but being tough is not a deterrent,

nowhere in the world is there any evidence that supports the theory that harsher sentences reduce crime,
giving a bigger sentence for using, only deals with problem after the event;
what needs to happen is much early intervention and a deeper look at the
problems in society

It is no secret that crime and poverty are linked if you have more poverty you have more crime, if the environment that people live in is run down and uncared for, then you have more crime

There is also a link between crime, care, and school exclusions. The current figures show that you are 12 times more likely to end up in prison if you are excluded; and in UK prisons it shows that around 63% of prisoners had some form of school exclusion

Then if you look at people from the care system, they make up 27% of the prison population, that figure is disproportionate to the number of people who enter the care system which is around 1percent

Take my own story, I suffered from dyslexia my whole life, this was undiagnosed at school and my own feelings of embarrassment and shame from feeling less intelligent than my peers manifested itself in disruptive behaviour, I was in and out of school from various exclusions .

and that meant I felt disenfranchised from it and never fully applied myself. I also grew up in a fairly poor family, at the time there wasn't a huge drug problem like we see today so there weren't the drug gangs recruiting younger guys like me but I soon worked out I could make

money by taking things.
I remember the first time I brought home a few pounds from robbing parking meters, I gave it to my mum and I felt an enormous sense of pride that I was able to contribute to the house upkeep, I felt like a man - I was 9-years old!

This is the same thought process going through a lot of these kids that are caught up in gangs now; have been brought up in crowded houses, in poverty and they, see drugs as a quick fix and easy way to make good money and they use that to help with spiralling living costs

The problem is though is that with drugs and terrority to sell comes violence and most of the time it isn't the top guys that fight for that, it is the younger kids that do the street deals. I ended up in care as well, I was the statistical poster boy for someone that would end

up in prison.
It wasn't until I went to HMP Grendon and took part in their therapy that I finally realised how to deal with my emotions and to actually speak about my past. It changed my life and showed me how I could turn around my

I wrote a book about my experience in Grendon called Living amongst the beasts, it details the therapy I went through and why it was important for me to go through it.
I left prison in 2017 and since leaving I have tried to get my message across to people

I see locally that are involved in crime, but my story doesn't address their current situation, it doesn't pay their bills and that is a problem. These kids now can't see a viable way to get on the property ladder because social housing has been eroded away and that has led to

rivate landlords which in turn has led to spiralling costs for buying.
There is a distinct lack of jobs that paying a real living wage, a wage that you can comfortably live off and not have to have 7 people living in a house that was built for 2 or 3

I see plenty of people tell me that youth centers are the answer, they aren't. Let's be very clear youth centers were around when I grew up and I didn't go; you can't make money at the youth center and if you are living in poverty you are unlikely to go because you won't have

won't have the latest clothing or trainers and they become somewhere where your peers can highlight that

Youth centers are a good place for the kids that already want to steer clear of the drugs and violence, so they are important for that reason but reopening them isn't going to magically fix the rising knife pandemic

In order to solve the problem, we have to raise the standard of living for the most vulnerable in society, we need to make a real effort to address the social housing shortfall and improve the opportunities available to young men and women to be able to earn real wages

Addressing poverty is only one part of the solution though, we have to look at teaching things in schools that are valuable life skills. We have to look at emotional development

Our children some are some of the most tested in the world and it does nothing to prepare them for the world they will step into

I didn't know how to deal with my emotions and that led to frustration, as a kid I didn't understand that but I look back now and applying some of the techniques I learned in Grendon would have served me well in school

I am currently writing a book that details how important emotional development from primary school right through the education system.
We need to teach children how to express themselves and how to talk about their feelings

Beyond that, we need to actually teach life skills in school, we need to teach children about functional things like mortgages, budgeting, cooking, being self-sufficient. The argument I am met with when I suggest this is that, that is the role of the parents,

are really only kids themselves in many cases and if they were never taught, which in most cases they weren't, how are they supposed to teach it?
We need to teach conflict resolution and we need to make people understand that emotion, any emotion even anger,

is to be talked about and dealt with appropriately.
The harsh reality of this though is that it is far too long-term for any government to take on board, they want a short-sighted headline grabbing solutions and they outsource the money to men in suits who have no idea what

what it is like for these people.
Do you want to solve knife crime? Start employing the people that have real lived experience and know what it is like to walk in the shoes of people that know real poverty

Terry Ellis