

4 April 2019

Victoria Atkins MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
Marsham St
London, SW1P 2DF



Dear Minister

I wanted to write to thank you for the invitation to attend the roundtable meeting on Tuesday 2 April as part of the Prime Ministers Summit on Serious Youth Violence.

It was really humbling to be at the Summit and to hear at graphic first-hand the reality of what young people face; some of the accounts from colleagues around the table were truly heart-breaking. However, the work that many there do through faith groups, or charities or just as individuals was inspiring and you could see and hear the passion they had.

I was so pleased that as a business leader I was there because as I said in our discussion it is clear to me that businesses have a role to play and a real contribution to make in helping give these young people different choices. As businesses we have assets – finance, employment opportunities, professional skills and suppliers who we work with – which can do more than just make us a successful business, they can help communities become stronger.

The insight we have from the experiences of pupils in our Co-operative Academies Trust make very clear to us the challenges many face. However, the Co-op has seen what a difference businesses can make when we use our assets to support groups and individuals facing such challenges:

- we know we can provide employment and career opportunities for young people especially through our apprenticeship programme with more than 1,000 colleagues in either our Funeralcare or our Food business;
- we have seen that financial support can make a difference and the £10m we have provided through the Co-op's Local Community Fund to more than 4,000 projects supporting young people in communities across the UK including causes directly tackling crime/violence makes a real difference:
 - £3,500 for Streetsport in Aberdeen to deliver free of charge activity sessions for young people across Aberdeen. By deploying mobile activity arenas and operating during peak times of anti-social behaviour
 - £3,000 for the Violence Interruption Project in Leyton to fund resettlement support services, enabling young people in prison to achieve positive outcomes in their lives
 - £3,000 for Redthread in South Hackney to embed a team of youth workers in Homerton Hospital to meet young people who come to A&E as victims of violence, crime and abuse
- we believe our new partnership with the Damilola Taylor Trust will provide a model for how business can support experts on the ground where, in addition to the £4,000 funding already provided through the Local Community Fund, the Co-op will be providing:

Registered Office: Co-operative Group Limited
1 Angel Square, Manchester, M60 0AG. Reg No 525R

coop.co.uk

- £25,000 funding for the next cohort of young people (aged 17-24) to go through the successful Career Search and Skills Development programme to help participants be confident and successful in securing employment
- Pro-bono support for the Career Search and Skills Development programme through our expert HR function including mentors and coaches for those on the programme
- Providing the possibility of apprenticeship opportunities for participants in the Career Search and Skills Development programme in the Co-op
- Fund-raising in almost 100 stores across London for the Trust engaging thousands of colleagues in supporting the Trust and their work
- Exploring with our suppliers – especially those in construction – about how we can leverage those relationships to provide support for the Damilola Taylor Centre in Peckham

We really believe that all businesses we can do much more than provide funding. We can really engage with these expert groups and provide support of all kinds to them to help them make the difference.

I hope our passion on this issue is clear - as a member-owned co-operative, this issue is important to all our millions of members and their communities across the country.

We are keen to support the Government in tackling this horror and would be happy to explore with your officials how the Co-op can act as catalyst and convenor to bring other businesses together so we can use all our assets to help individuals and communities.

CHRIS WHITFIELD
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
CO-OP RETAIL

(by email)

Registered Office: Co-operative Group Limited,
1 Angel Square, Manchester, M60 0AG. Reg No 525R