

Case Study: Ashley Dixon

Ashley Dixon is of African Caribbean origin. He and his family knew little of life outside their home on the council estate where he grew up. Ashley's parents were hard working folk. His father, Marcus, was the deputy store manager of a designer clothing outlet and his mother, Bethel, was a nurse. Ashley remembers being 9 years old and asking why his father always went to meet his mum at the bus stop whenever she was returning home and it was dark, even if it was early. That was when he heard that a black young man who lived on the estate was kicked to death in what was considered to be a racist incident. Marcus and Bethel felt no need to protect Ashley from their horror stories. They considered that they were protecting him by letting him know how things were and they dribbled stories of their experiences of unfair treatment and hurt feelings and disadvantage. As Ashley grew up he continued his attentiveness to academia and was achieving 'Bs' and even 'As' in some subjects.

During an inter-school football match Ashley took a shot at the opponent's goal. It was two minutes before full time and the teams had three goals each. When he missed his chance to score, Ashley heard a trusted friend shout '*Ashley, you black c*%!, that's it now, we've lost*'. Ashley began withdrawing from his friendships off the football pitch. It was also at this age that he was held at knife point by a group of white lads, who pressed a knife to his face repeatedly and called him 'a pussy'. He ran off without being physically harmed but was deeply affected by the incident.

Ashley decided to turn his hair into dreadlocks and this caused his parents distress. They told him life was hard enough. Ashley began swearing, smoking the ends of his friend's cigarettes and shoplifting for the odd item of designer clothes.

Ashley's teenage rebellion took on a new turn when he stole a chain with a gun pendant (a *glock* gun) and shortly after chose to go by the name of 'A-Glock'. A-Glock was proud of his academic performance, which continued to be strong but he began to spend time with some of the youngsters on the estate who knew the drug dealers and street robbers. As his voice became deeper and his dreadlocks longer, A-Glock noticed that white people appeared to be intimidated - if for example he walked through the estate in the evening, when it was dark. As well as anger, it also made him feel trapped in a stereotype that he hated. His relationship with the world worsened, as did it with his parents. Their arguments about his newfound attitude often ended with their pet phrase '*we brought a son into this world and raised a thug*'.

In an evening of very low mood A-Glock sat on his bed with his army knife and put the blade against his forearm, trembling wishing he could kill himself. He never mentioned it to anyone. Ashley remained proud of his success at school and was keen to keep the façade of compliance. He would however arrange nights out in the adjacent town, where he would get drunk with his 16-year-old friend and walk the streets intimidating people, usually white people. He vowed never to cause physical harm but he enjoyed seeing people flee with fear in their eyes. One night on one of his escapades a young man pulled a knife, put it to his throat then swept his feet so he fell hard to the ground. The man motioned as if he were going to stamp on A-Glock's head but didn't. The man called him some racist names and left the scene. After this incident, which was unknown to A-Glock's parents, he became even more short tempered.

A-Glock had regular dreams that he was turning the key in his front door and was shot in the back. He became nervous about going out and felt that until he had a gun he was not safe. He had fantasies of shooting and cutting people but still he told no one. The friends that A-Glock had made on the estate had access to guns and he became preoccupied with wanting his own. He could not afford one and began stealing goods that were easy taking – a handbag left unattended or jewellery snatched off someone's neck.

By the time A-Glock was ready to take his exams at aged 18 he had more or less stopped attending school. He had put on a lot of weight and spent a lot of time in his room. A-Glock on two occasions attacked his room with a hard object, which he used to break his windows, picture frames and his tv screen. He made dents in the walls and door. He could be heard talking and shouting but was on his own and not on the phone. On the third occasion the police were called and he was taken to the police station. When in the cells he heard an officer say *'them lot are always like this'* and *'I bet he's been on it'* (gesturing as if smoking). When the doctor came to assess A-Glock he became very angry. He complained about their comments, which he had overheard and he made statements that he was going to shoot the police. When the doctor insisted on calling him 'Ashley' he said that he would shoot him too. He said he was not called A-Glock for nothing. Following a further series of assessments an application was made under the Mental Health Act and A-Glock had his first admission for a psychotic breakdown.

Case study task

In the session you will be asked to tell A Glock's story from the point of view of one of the following:

The Police

The Parents

The Psychiatrist

'A-Glock'