The text is in your St's B pages 56-57.

4 Read the article again and answer the questions.

1. What problems did Joshua's family have when he was young?
2. What didn't he like about the gang?
3. How did Joshua's gang send warnings to other gangs?
4. Why was Joshua attacked?
5. How did his mum feel when she saw him? Why?
6. In what ways was Ben similar to Joshua?
7. How did the Youth Inclusion Project help Joshua?

Write your answers here:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Write your own questions after reading the text:

1.
2.
3.

3 Study the underlined reference words in A–F. Who or what do you think they refer to? Complete the article with sentences A–F. There is one sentence that you do not need.

A He was shot in the arm, but luckily he survived.
B There are 169 gangs there, with more than 5,000 members.
C They were easy to get and easy to use.
D His father left home when he was a baby, and Joshua and his sisters were brought up by their mother.
E Its members had code names like P-Man or Stepz, and they looked after each other.
F That's when he met Ben.

The choice

'They were my family, you know, they were good to me,' says Joshua Blake, looking down at the floor, 'but they weren't good to other people. That was the problem ... , but I was too scared to leave – once you were in, you were in. I didn't think I had a choice.'

14-year-old Joshua was born on a council estate* in South London. Like many of his peers, Joshua experienced hard times and misfortune in his early life. [1] ..... The family lived in a one-bedroomed flat and his mother struggled to pay the bills. She worked long hours as a nurse, so after school Joshua hung out with other boys on the estate. 'There was nothing to do,' he remembers. 'They closed down the youth club years ago, so there was nowhere to go except the streets.' Joshua became part of a gang with its own rules, its own codes and its own hierarchy. [2] ..... Belonging made him feel safe and gave him a sense of identity. But the crime worried him. 'There was a lot of mugging and shoplifting, but it was the guns that really scared me. [3] .....' The older boys in Joshua's gang got into armed robbery. Suddenly a lot of money was involved and the gang became very territorial. There was a lot of vandalism – graffiti appeared on buildings and signs were sprayed on shop doors, so people knew the names of the gangs who controlled each area. Knives and guns were used to keep out other gangs. Things were getting out of control.

Then, one day, something changed. 'I was walking home from school when a boy rode past on a bike,' says Josh. 'I didn't recognize him, but he called out my name and when I looked round, he pulled out a gun.' Joshua was the victim of a revenge shooting. [4] ..... The boy on the bike was from a rival gang, whose leader had been attacked the day before. 'My mum was devastated when she found out,' says Joshua. 'She knew about my misbehaviour at school, but she had no idea about the gang. She just looked at me in disbelief, she couldn't stop crying.'

Three weeks in hospital gave Joshua time to reflect on the choices he had made. He decided he wanted a different life, he wanted to change. [5] .....

Ben Magoro is a mentor* at a Youth Inclusion Project, a programme which helps kids escape from gang culture and get back into education. Ben, like many mentors, was a gang member himself. He was involved in car theft and he'd been sent to prison for the offence. Ben understood 'gang mentality'. 'It is like a family,' says Ben, 'it's a family where the mistreatment of "outsiders" is OK, but show a gang member disrespect and you'll be seriously hurt. It's a family where crime and dishonesty are OK and any disagreement is solved with a gun. It's a family that thinks committing crime is an acceptable way to make a living, but belonging to that family is a big mistake – all it does is destroy your life.'

The Youth Inclusion Project offered Joshua a way out and gave him the courage to turn his life around. Projects focus on teenagers' interests, such as music, sport or fashion. Mentors help them to express themselves, reflect upon their past and make better life choices. 'In the gang my choice was either die young or go to jail,' says Joshua, 'But now I can choose to get an education, I can choose a future ... I can choose life.'