



# **CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

**FINAL REPORT TO THE**

**POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

**NOVEMBER 2021**

**LEADERS  
UNLOCKED**





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# INTRODUCTION

The Cheshire Youth Commission (CYC) was established in 2016 with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), John Dwyer.

The CYC is a peer-led project that is made up of **28 active members from a range of diverse backgrounds and experiences**. The Commission enables young people living in Cheshire aged 14–25 to have a voice and influence on urgent issues around policing and crime.

The key objectives of the Commission were as follows:

- Recruit young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and life experiences.
- Work with CYC members to identify the **key priority topics** they wanted to tackle this year.
- Equip the CYC members with the **practical skills training** required for the role.
- **Plan and deliver 2,000 conversations** with young people from across Cheshire during the CYC Big Conversation.
- **CYC members will present their findings and recommendations** at the Cheshire Youth Commission 'Big Conversation' conference to the PCC, Constabulary and partner agencies.
- **Work closely with Cheshire Constabulary** to provide CYC members opportunities to influence police strategies and decision making.

The Cheshire Youth Commission is facilitated by **Leaders Unlocked**, a social enterprise that has successfully delivered the Youth Commission peer-led model across 14 other PCC regions in England and Wales and is planning to expand further in the years ahead.

**Leaders Unlocked** exists to allow young people across the UK to have a stronger voice in their communities on issues that affect them. Accountability and fairness are paramount in helping organisations to adopt new ways of working with young people and the communities they serve. You can find out more by visiting [www.leaders-unlocked.org](http://www.leaders-unlocked.org)

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is based on evidence that has been collected by delivering extensive engagement workshops – the CYC has exceeded its target by reaching **2400** from across Cheshire in the last year. The responses have been gathered in youth-led engagement events and workshops, targeted surveys and social media campaigns.

The report allocates each priority its own section, which consists of a comprehensive analysis of young people's opinions using exact quotes from individual participants, and the key recommendation based on the findings of the Youth Commission.

This report is intended to be a genuine, independent record of what young people have told us through the CYC 'Big Conversation'. The report is intended to be the basis for future actions by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Constabulary and relevant partner agencies.



## ABOUT THE CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

The CYC focuses on giving young people a stronger voice in raising policing and crime issues within their local communities. The CYC works closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to **challenge and inform** the work of the PCC and Cheshire Constabulary.

The CYC engages with young people through **peer-led workshops** that provide young people with a space to comfortably and confidently speak to their peers. All the responses gathered during the Big Conversation are analysed by the CYC members to create the key findings and recommendations. This is then presented to the PCC, the Police and local partners in this report.

A key element of the CYC's role is to gather the views of young people through peer-to-peer engagement. This is a strength of the project, as it provides young people with a safe environment to talk to their peers about issues in their communities. This approach allows for more honest information to be collected.

## WHAT WE DID

### RECRUITMENT

In 2021, Leaders Unlocked carried out a 2-stage recruitment process. This included distributing an easy to access recruitment pack which included an application form and information relating to the role. The second stage was to conduct telephone interviews with all the applicants. This process has been made possible by working proactively with local organisations from education settings, youth organisations and the voluntary sector. Our aim is to ensure that the CYC members are true representatives of their communities be that by locations, backgrounds or life experiences.

Of the current members:

- **54% identify as female, 39% male, 4% non-binary, 4% gender-fluid**
- **54% are under 18 years old**
- **29% identify as having a disability**
- **18% identify as from BAME communities**
- **93% are in Education**
- **11% have experience with the CJS**
- **10% are looked after children**

## IDENTIFYING PRIORITY ISSUES

The CYC's inaugural meeting focused on members discussing **key issues and research ideas** for the next phase of the project. CYC members decided to focus on the following key priorities:

- **Online Safety and Social Media**
- **Confidence in Policing**
- **Violence and Abuse**
- **Grooming and Exploitation**
- **Discrimination and Equalities**

## CREATING THE TOOLS FOR THE CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

During members' meetings, **CYC members co-designed workshops** and took an active lead in running activities on the day. This included **team-building exercises, interactive workshops and presenting their plans**. This meeting gave the members the opportunity to:

- **Develop Big Conversation workshops**
- **Design materials for the workshops**
- **Practice presentation skills**
- **Identify key organisations where the Big Conversation should go**
- **Learn new leadership skills**
- **Become a cohesive team of young leaders**

The CYC members have **received training for their role** and have developed their **active listening techniques, facilitation, and leadership skills** throughout the project.

For the purpose of data collection, the CYC members created **postcards** to collate the relevant information for their research. The postcard shows each priority that the CYC was collecting responses on, allowing young people to provide their opinions on all priorities regardless of the workshop they were attending. The postcards have highlighted real-life opinions and experiences that young people have faced but may feel uncomfortable discussing – the postcards are designed so that **they remain anonymous**, with the name of the individual not requested.

## JOINT WORK WITH CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY

This year the CYC has worked with Cheshire Constabulary to further develop and embed their close relationship. This includes the continuation of our successful Youth Advisory Group (YAG) during which CYC members develop their understanding of policing and support services across the region. This year's YAG has included the following organisations:

- **County Lines Police Team**
- **Crown Prosecution Service**
- **Chief Crown Prosecutor**
- **PCC John Dwyer**
- **RASASC**



## AWARDS, ACHIEVEMENTS & PARTNERSHIPS

The CYC has continued to work as part of the Policing and Young People Task Force, which highlights current areas of concern for young people to Constabulary leads. This has largely been completed through data and trends via the 'Big Conversation' tour.

The CYC has created an **educational animation around sexual assault**, providing statistics and contact information for those who have been sexually assaulted including the importance of reporting such crimes. This has been distributed to organisations throughout Cheshire through social media promotions, as well as through key stakeholders such as Chester University and the surrounding Colleges.

The group were also nominated for an **ACE Award**. One of the highest accolades within Policing in recognition for their continued work and achievements.





# WHO WE'VE REACHED

The CYC has actively engaged with **2400 young people** across Cheshire. In total, the CYC ran **17 events** in a wide range of localities across the city and Cheshire county.

This year the CYC focused particularly on engaging with underrepresented and more marginalised groups of young people. To achieve this the members conducted **targeted workshops and 1-to-1 interviews** with young people from supported living accommodations, alternative education, young people with experience of the criminal justice system and young people with disabilities.

The breakdown for each priority is as follows:

Priority	Responses
Violence and Abuse	697
Confidence in Policing	525
Discrimination and Equalities	460
Online Safety and Social Media	394
Grooming and Exploitation	324
Grand Total	2400

Further to this, the CYC ran successful social media campaigns, which has seen the following interactions:

Method of Engagement	Responses
Animation Views	175
Instagram Poll Votes	1061
Instagram Story Views	1483
Grand Total	2719

# OUR PARTNERS

CYC members are very grateful to everyone who has supported us by allowing the members into their organisations, and would like to **say a very big thank you to the following organisations:**

Alcohol Education Trust	NCS	Warrington Vale Royal College
Chester Pride	Queensberry AP	Warrington Youth Club
Chester University	RASASC	Winsford Vale Royal College
Congleton Pride	Sandbach High School	YMCA
Crown Prosecution Service Cheshire & Merseyside	South and West Cheshire College	Youth Justice Service

A special thanks to the individual Youth Commission Members who have offered their time and efforts into making this project a success:

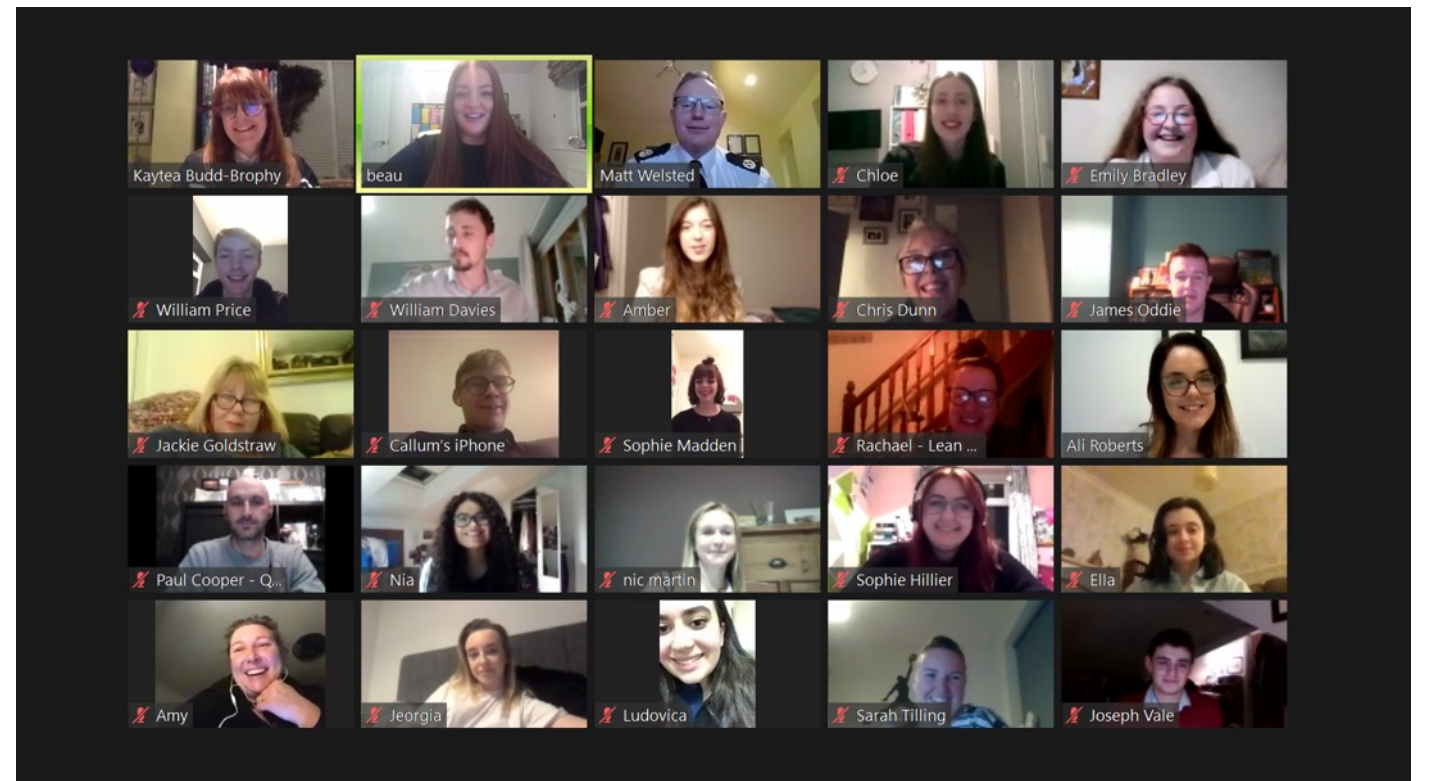
Adrien Astre	Iona Young	Olivia Fowler
Alfie Byrne	James Barber	Ruby-Ellen Humphrey
Amber Farrell	James Oddie	Sally Fitzsimmons
Chloe Roberts	Jayden Mulville	Sammi El Dabba
Callum May	Jen Gibbs	Sarah Burgess
Ella Redmond	Josh Bennion	Sumaya Saleem
Emily Bradley	Leah Priestley-Black	William Davies
Ethan McDonald	Lujean Elfituri	Will Price
Ewan Ashcroft	Mathew Murphy	
Harriet Roylance	Nia Gloudin	

A special thank you also goes to the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and Cheshire Constabulary, who have worked closely with the CYC throughout this project.

A final thanks to this year's Co-ordinator Beau Kennedy who was instrumental in bringing the project to fruition.



# PRIORITY 1: ONLINE SAFETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA



The CYC has spoken to **394 young people** in Cheshire relating to online safety and social media. Social media platforms have made it easier for people to voice their opinions compared to face-to-face interactions. With this ease also comes negative comments and hate speech. The CYC set out to understand how safe young people felt whilst online and to recommend actions that could be taken by Cheshire Constabulary to increase young people's feeling of safety.

## WHAT WE FOUND

Young people in Cheshire have stated that they are often harassed by other people online for various reasons – one of the main areas of concern relates to sexually explicit pictures. Young people have argued that it has become a social norm to receive and be asked for 'nudes' and it makes them feel uncomfortable and unsafe online:

*"I have been sent nudes, blackmailed and threatened online."*

*"I received an inappropriate image from someone online- they're not stupid and they know how uncomfortable we will feel so we don't report it."*



**"I think that men/boys asking for nudes, pressuring us into something we don't want to do is a common issue that happens daily. For example on Instagram etc. I got a message saying inappropriate things and kept receiving the message over and over."**

**"Getting sent nudes and being told that "your body makes you look older" etc. shouldn't be normalised."**

Similarly, young people have noted that racism is commonplace on social media platforms – these comments would not be said in a face-to-face interaction and young people feel there is little or no consequence to racist language online. Young people feel like this behaviour is not penalised and would like to see more action taken against online racism:

**"I had some hate crime online and when I went to the police, they didn't do anything. Said it was because they couldn't prove who did it, but they can hack into your phone?"**

**"I believe this is a prominent issue especially after the final euro match where 3 footballers have been targeted online receiving racist and derogatory abuse across their social media. It shows the current methods to prevent online abuse on social media is not good enough... Something that saddened me was that one of the footballers said that they knew the abuse they would receive online and social media after the match."**

**"Sick of people thinking they can just say what they want because it's not to someone's face- I have seen people using the N word on socials and they struggled to remove the comment."**

A lot of the young people we spoke to have felt let down by the bullying countermeasures provided by social media platforms. They said they felt the measures are ineffective, lack regulation and are easy to evade to post hateful commentary. Young people would like to see better forms of online policing measures implemented to increase the deterrent of hateful speech and exploitation:

**"I didn't know the police had a social media presence so they need to use this more and reach more people with it."**

**"Online police to help online issues."**

**"Age restrictions that are actually policed - having to prove age before setting up an account."**

**"Track perpetrators more and be less dismissive of smaller attacks."**

**"Have tags on people who have posted hateful comments and stuff before, like a register of people who have committed an online crime before."**

**"The police need to make more arrests of peados."**

**"The police could speak to young people or anyone of any age on social media to show that they are easy to talk to."**

Young people have also argued that the consequences of online harassment are not widely acknowledged, and so there needs to be more campaigns focusing on the negative impacts on victims which steer away from victim blaming. These campaigns should highlight how to report online harassment and criminal behaviors:

**"Make videos of people who have personally experienced online crimes as this could help people understand the impacts and how bad it can actually be."**

**"Make an eye catching advert to draw the attention of young people to this problem."**

**"Online crime can be quite solitary as you usually experience at home when you're alone. I think if people knew that more people go through it then it would make such a difference to victims."**

**"Make it easier to report online crimes."**

**"People should get put on the sex offenders register for sending pictures to underage girls."**

There is an immediate need for more effective support for victims of online harassment according to young people. They would like to see support tailored towards the audience, as all forms of harassment have a different impact on the victim:

**"It's too awkward to go to the police and show them an explicit picture, there is also the shame element that you may have sent nudes and they're being spread so I think the police need to campaign more that they don't judge you when you go to them."**

**"Having more support for victims of online crimes whether its grooming or fraud, its' all still illegal and all have actual victims."**

**"Having support tailored to young girls who have had their pictures exposed online."**

**"Sometimes hearing that someone else going through it helps so the police should promote different services."**





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE SAFETY & SOCIAL MEDIA

### CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Officers should build better relationships with young people by offering an online or social media function where young people are able to ask questions.

To help get key messages out there, make content on social media more **engaging to younger audiences** and encourage interaction.

### PCC & PARTNERS:

Promote and create services that allow **victims of online crime** to link with other victims to help break down feelings of isolation.

**Promote anonymous reporting tools** for people who have been affected by an **online crime**.

### YOUTH COMMISSION:

Create a campaign with the PCC to **raise awareness** of online safety and promote it through YC workshops and social media platforms.

Use social media to create '**day in the life**' vlogs on the PCC or Police to strengthen relationships between young people, the PCC, and Police





## PRIORITY 2: CONFIDENCE IN POLICING



The CYC has spoken to **525 young people** in Cheshire relating to confidence in policing. Young people have raised concerns about how policing in Cheshire could be managed in a more effective way. Young people argued that without changes, young people will continue to feel unsafe across the region. The CYC set out to collect constructive feedback that can be used to strengthen the relationship between young people and the police.

### WHAT WE FOUND

Young people feel that there is a lack of a visible police presence in Cheshire. Many of the young people that we spoke to would like to see more police officers on the streets, specifically during the evenings. This would make it easier to report criminal activity and make young people feel safer walking alone at night:

*"Proper lack of policing, can't even think of seeing any police just shows the lack of police around Chester."*

*"Not enough police outside clubs, my friend was attacked outside a club by a drunk clubber."*

*"As a young woman walking home through Chester there is no police presence and it's scary."*

*"More police need to be around to be able to report stuff easier. People always around my street drug dealing and they do nothing."*



There is a lack of knowledge around Stop and Search rights amongst young people in Cheshire. Young people that we spoke to have stated that they often feel a sense of prejudice from the police. This could be improved by the police promoting clear information around young people's rights:

**"Only been made aware of my rights once and I've lost count of the amount of times I've been stopped and searched."**

**"None of me or my friends feel like we know our rights and we get stopped all the time."**

**"I never get stopped when I'm out of my area which just proves how corrupt they are."**

**"Police never treat me or my friends with respect when they stop us on the street."**

**"I was stopped in the park and police were very disrespectful they approached me with suspicion, and they took my ID without asking."**

Young people have argued that certain groups are more likely to be stopped by the police than others. They felt factors such as race, age, gender, and sexuality played a large part in why someone is stopped by the police. Young people argue that this discrimination is counterproductive to effective policing and makes young people defensive:

**"The police have a long history of discrimination against the LGBTQ community having uniformed police at pride is incredibly disrespectful and makes many queer people feel unsafe."**

**"I was constantly targeted because I had a previous criminal record."**

**"Got arrested for nothing and they let me go afterwards because they wouldn't listen to me because I was foreign."**

Young people have also claimed that the attitude of the police towards sexual assault and harassment is negative and lacks impact. Young people that we spoke to have claimed that the police don't take sexual assault seriously, and on occasion, young people have felt uncomfortable with how the police have approached them. Immediate action is required to rectify this:

**"Police officers sexualising citizens and taking advantage of their authority. I personally was patted down by a male officer at 14. No one else was patted down, I was alone, and I was at a children's fair. I feel like this was totally unnecessary and I feel that this had ill-intent and it made me very uncomfortable."**

**"Girls from my school responded in a survey sent out about sexual harassment with stories and some of them were first sexually harassed on the streets in their primary school uniform. It's disgusting and the perpetrators, who are usually men, must be stopped. They make me feel unsafe to walk home."**

**"Sexual harassment is taken far too lightly by the police. Just because it isn't sexual assault doesn't mean it isn't a serious crime. The police force should be taking more active steps towards stopping sexual harassment and treat it with more severity."**

There is an overwhelming opinion from young people that the police in Cheshire need to do more to make the public feel safe. The police need to be more accessible, more visible and more approachable:

**"If police were more friendly with us then we would be more friendly with them."**

**"More awareness spreading that comes from the police, we always get the "ask for.." on emails from Uni but absolutely nothing from the police."**

**"Patrols past certain times to check people get home ok."**

**"Apps to link the police and the support services that they are involved with so its all coming from the same place."**

**"Make an easy reporting system that would warn girls of unsafe places i.e. an app."**

Young people would like to see more youth-focused training for police officers. Additional training on gender identities, racial diversity and mental health concerns should be a requirement for all police officers in the county. Alternative methods of communication should also be considered in order to appeal to young people:

**"More training on racial disparities for police."**

**"I think they need to be made more aware of mental health crisis' and know where to take people who are suffering rather than a cell because that just makes everything worse."**

**"Take abuse based on disability/gender/orientation as serious as bullying complaints even if its online."**

**"Officers could find a new way to communicate with young people, for example through online chats."**

**"Maybe have some younger officers available for younger people to speak to so they feel a bit more comfortable talking to someone of a similar age."**



A photograph of three young people standing in front of a brick wall. On the left is a young man with a beard and short brown hair, wearing a dark grey hoodie. In the center is a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue patterned top. On the right is a young woman with short blonde hair and glasses, wearing a dark jacket. The background is a brick wall with a building visible in the distance on the left.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONFIDENCE IN POLICING

### CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Work with the Youth Commission to create a campaign that helps make young people **aware** of their Stop and search rights

Ensure **clearer messaging to the public** as to whether officers give out receipts when individuals are stopped and searched.

Work on **relaying information** to victims of crimes during ongoing cases and refer victims to appropriate support services.

### PCC & PARTNERS:

Evaluate **Stop & Search** data and address any prejudice.

Work with education settings to ensure police are **invited in regularly** to speak with young people on a **one-to-one basis and small groups**, not just assemblies.

### YOUTH COMMISSION:

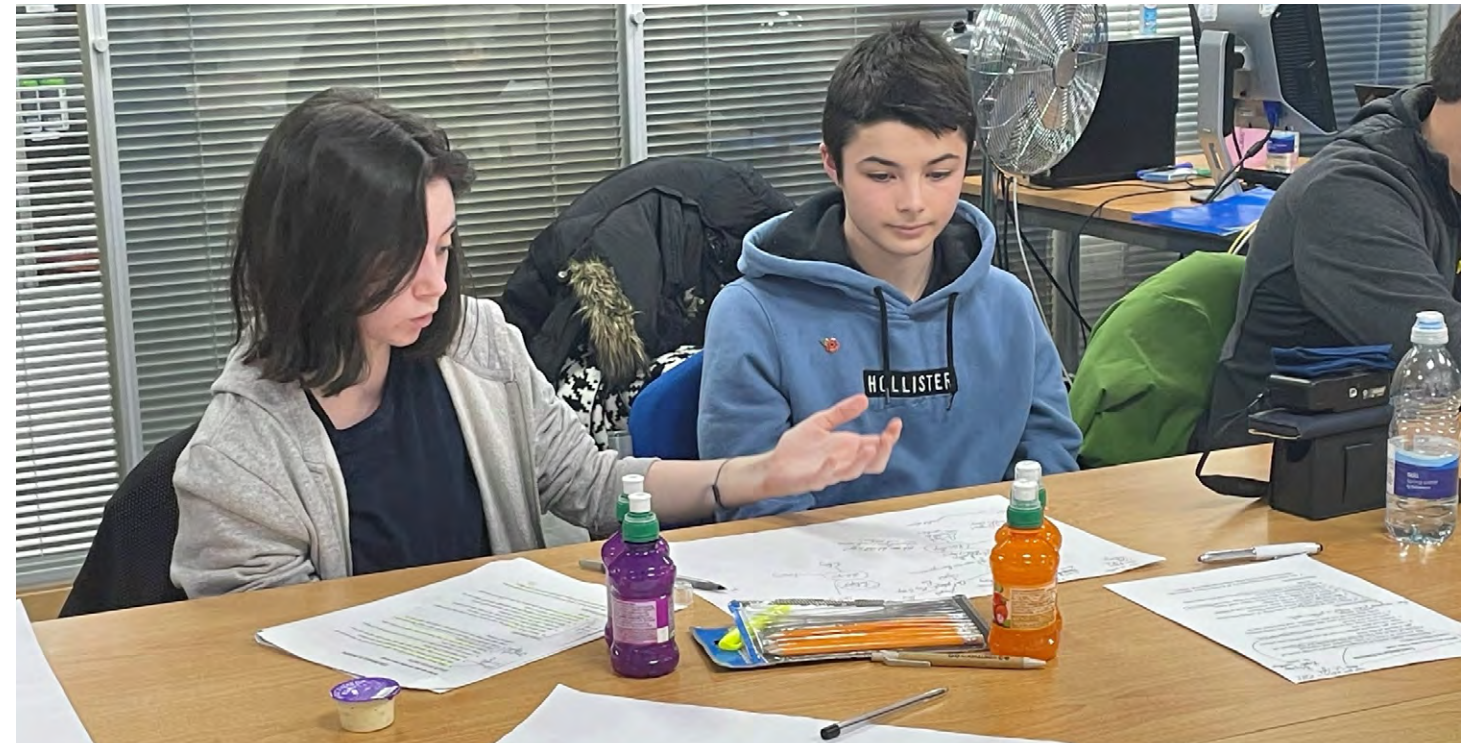
**Continue** our Young People and Policing Task Force which offers a sounding board for CYC members around current issues.

**Educate** young people on **their rights** via workshops, social media and joint campaigns.





## PRIORITY 3: VIOLENCE AND ABUSE



The CYC has spoken to **697 young people** in Cheshire relating to violence and abuse. An overwhelming number of young people are fearful of harm in public and social settings, with a large percentage of those in fear being young women. The CYC set out to identify the causes of violence and abuse against young people and provide positive solutions to the issue.

## WHAT WE FOUND

Young people have noted that the fear of violence and abuse predominantly relates to the fear of sexual assault. Young women have expressed concerns for their safety while walking home from school in uniforms or in their communities:

*"I feel like I can't go out by myself like walking my dog or jogging. Even if I know nothing is going to happen, I still feel like I have to be careful and look behind me to make sure no one's there."*

*"I know so many people who have been made to feel extremely uncomfortable and threatened by men shouting, commenting, honking, threatening and touching them. This issue is so often belittled and dismissed, but this has a huge impact on the lives of women and marginalised genders."*

*"I walk home from school and most day I feel like I can't walk without fear of being shouted at or stared at by men. I know lots of girls and women who can't leave their house without experiencing some kind of public sexual harassment."*

*"As a student rep/promoter being sexually harassed for free tickets to events and stuff."*



Examples of sexual harassment mentioned by young people include catcalling and honking car horns, groping and unwanted advances – young people have argued that reports of sexual violence are widely ignored or played down. Young people would like to see reporting taken more seriously by the police and the education system:

***"I feel that sexual harassment isn't sufficiently recognised as criminal behaviour, but more of an unfortunate social norm. This makes victims feel as though reporting isn't an appropriate response, and largely eliminates the element of deterrent that comes from legal action as people don't expect to be reported... this influences my behaviour (in terms of what I wear, where I go, when I go, and how I interact with people), and makes me anxious in certain situations."***

***"People don't think sexual harassment is serious. Personally, I have experiences of sexual harassment and misogyny and I know many people that have as well. This shouldn't be normal for girls of our age."***

***"Over the past year, I have become more aware of this issue and I have little faith in the police anymore. Girls from my school responded in a survey sent out about sexual harassment with stories and some of them were first sexually abused when they were 11."***

Young people have stated that in order to change the public perception of abuse, the public would need to increase their understanding of the problem – without sufficient education, there is no opportunity for change. Young people in Cheshire have recommended awareness campaigns and education at an early age:

***"Develop a sexual assault awareness campaign which educates people as to what constitutes as sexual assault, why reporting sexual assault is important and how to do it and promoting being an active bystander. All of these concepts are important in changing attitudes towards sexual assault."***

***"Educate people on what sexual harassment is and that they shouldn't do it. We need to start this education early. It would also be great if there was a well-known way to report this type of behaviour. If there already is it needs to be advertised more."***

***"To make people aware of this issue that girls feel scared to walk alone and tell people that if they see sexual assault or harassment or someone in danger, what they can do to help."***

***"To teach them about it and if a girl experiences it, to be able to tell a teacher. The boys need to be told from a young age that it is wrong and no girl wants it to happen to them."***

As mentioned in previous sections, young people would like to see more police visibility.

Young people have expressed a strong desire for this with regards to violence and abuse. Following events such as the tragic murder of Sarah Everard in London, young women do not feel protected by the police from violence. The police need to make positive steps in rebuilding their relationship with the public across the country for young people to feel safe:

***"Police should make an effort to promote support services to young women and girls and then they may feel more supported by them."***

***"Take reports seriously and stop victim blaming."***

***"PCSOs and undercover police to patrol bars and clubs."***

***"Personally, I believe violence and abuse isn't taken as seriously as it should be being a victim of several unprovoked attacks, too many people get away with it."***

Young people would like to see support services promoted on a wider scale and via platforms that attract a younger audience. Young people claim that social media platforms and mobile apps would have a greater effect on reporting as an alternative to direct reports to the police via 999/101. Young people would also like to see approaches to tackle abuse move away from recommendations to the victim, but rather address the perpetrator's actions:

***"Have map routes. Phone numbers to call when you feel unsafe not 999 or 101. Websites with safety advice, from the police. Show and consider teaching people where it happens the most."***

***"Make easier reporting tools, such as an app. This is how most young people get access to information and communicate now."***

***"A solution to this would be to ban school uniforms in sex shops. It is simply disappointing to see the authorities disagree with a whole group of people's safety."***

***"This judgement and prejudice against women may start off small and seemingly insignificant but this form of "microaggression" can lead to much more serious issues like violence against women, sexual harassment, rape and murder which is obviously terrible and needs to be tackled and by tackling misogyny we can reduce these incidents."***

***"When I was out with a friend she was inappropriately touched several times by a guy who wouldn't stop. It may not have happened if there were better punishments to him before."***





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIOLENCE & ABUSE

### CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Continue to **work with the CYC** to further develop and promote **sexual assault awareness campaigns** - aimed at the importance of reporting.

More **police presence** in and around school/college finish times, and in town centres on busy evenings.

### PCC & PARTNERS:

Promote **safe places** for members of the public to access when they are fearing for their safety.

**Work with the YC to produce an education campaign** around what constitutes sexual harassment and the consequences.

**Raise awareness** of anonymous and **more simple** reporting tools to victims including **how individuals can help or support victims** of sexual assault and violence.

### YOUTH COMMISSION:

**Continue** to promote the YC new animation film that emphasises the importance of reporting sexual assault.

**Support** education on sexual violence and abuse in partnership with the police, PCC and Partners.





## PRIORITY 4: GROOMING & EXPLOITATION



The CYC has spoken to **324 young people** in Cheshire relating to grooming and exploitation. Young people have raised concerns around the increased sexuality of young women online. Groomers utilise messaging apps to coax vulnerable people into intimate relationships with older people – young people that we spoke to have argued that this is a topic that is not discussed openly in Cheshire and as a result increases the threat of danger to young people.

### WHAT WE FOUND

Young people feel that exploitation occurs both in-person and online but overall, there is a lack of support for victims. Young people have argued that reports of grooming are not taken seriously by educational settings or the police:

*"I've actually been told I was attention seeking by a police officer when there was a man online stalking me."*

*"Lots of young women being exploited online."*

*"Grooming freshers through nights out- "babies night"*



It has been noted that young people are less likely to report instances of grooming due to the lack of action taken. Young people have said they were given leaflets as a response to reporting grooming to the police, which takes away the human understanding that victims desperately need. As a result, young people have requested alternative methods of reporting exploitation:

*"When you report something like this to the police, they just hand you leaflets or tell you about a website, it would be nice if they actually checked in with you afterwards."*

*"Have more understanding of young people today, we don't want to go to the station so make something like an app, everyone uses the NHS one, there should be a police one."*

*"Having somewhere separate for them to go to report the incident instead of the police station and officers in plain clothes so people feel more calm and relaxed and perhaps younger officers used so young victims feel like they're talking to a friend instead of an officer at first."*

Action needs to be taken to tackle the stigma surrounding victims of exploitation and grooming – young people have noted that many people don't want to report their experiences due to the fear of being judged by others. Through more effective education, young people believe that the stigma surrounding grooming and exploitation can be reduced. This would reduce a major barrier to reporting:

*"Work towards removing the stigmas attached to the acts. A lot of people feel embarrassed even though they were the victim."*

*"By being more open and holding sessions within schools so they are more likely to spot the signs of grooming and exploitation which will make them more inclined to report."*

*"Teaching young people about the risks and signs of grooming and exploitation within schools and other educational settings."*

Young people also felt that organisations need to work more closely together. Many young people felt there was a disconnect between services, and that positive intervention organisations were not well utilised. Schools and colleges, as well as the police need to listen more closely to what young people are saying about grooming and exploitation online and across the region. Many of the young people we spoke to have said they have felt isolated within the community, which makes them easier targets for grooming and exploitation. Recommendations made by young people include police monitoring online platforms and educating people on the signs of grooming and how to avoid it:

*"Monitor online grooming and the methods these people use to raise awareness to young people."*

*"The police could help by being more open and holding sessions within schools so they are more likely to spot the signs of grooming and exploitation which will make them more inclined to report."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROOMING & EXPLOITATION

### CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Have a **clear, non-judgemental approach** to victims when reporting crimes of this nature.

Work closely with **stakeholders** around obtaining a clear overview of the issue in the area.

Promote **reporting tools** outside of the police station and on social media, signposting victims to where they can get **intervention support**.

### PCC & PARTNERS:

Work alongside **local organisations and businesses** to create safe spaces for young people when they feel uncomfortable on the streets.

**Promote alternative methods** of reporting crimes including social media and display statistics on **successful prosecutions**.

**Promote and support intervention work** and highlight how to **identify** possible victims of grooming and exploitation.

### YOUTH COMMISSION:

Work in educational settings to promote the **signs of grooming & exploitation in others and where to get support**.

**Work closely with the PCC** to be advocates for young people and promote how to stay safe from exploitation.





# PRIORITY 5: DISCRIMINATION & EQUALITIES



The CYC has spoken to **460 young people** in Cheshire regarding discrimination and equality. Young people have argued that hate crimes are not viewed with the same scrutiny as other crimes in Cheshire. Young people have acknowledged the rise in discrimination against people of different races, gender identities, sexual orientations and disabilities. The CYC set out to understand how discrimination impacts young people in Cheshire and recommend how to tackle hate speech.

## WHAT WE FOUND

The feedback received from young people suggests that those in minority groups lack confidence in the police due to increasingly negative interactions with them. Young people of minority groups feel targeted by the police which makes them less likely to report hate crimes. They feel like the police do not represent them as a community as the diversity in the force is not well promoted:

*"I don't see the point in reporting anything to the police... they don't care if you've been treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic."*

*"I was always segregated as a bad person for how I looked, and I'm always asked to prove my innocence. This happens to me often with or without reason or legality."*

*"I have had trouble with the police in my area since I was 14 it started because I was hanging around with people with criminal records, but I never did nothing wrong until they started accusing me so then I did because I was already being accused of it."*



*"I applied for a job in the police a few months ago and the options for identity were weird."*

The most common forms of discrimination discussed by young people in Cheshire were racism and anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination. Young people spoke openly about how they have been treated differently based on these factors by the police, as well as trusted adults such as parents and teachers:

*"I witnessed a teacher at my school in Sandbach use a racial slur. I also heard a teacher in my school suggest a straight pride."*

*"My dad is pulled over all the time on the way home from work by Cheshire Constabulary and they ask him if his car is really his!"*

Young people said that reports of hate crimes need to be treated with the same severity as other crimes and **dealt with in a more time-sensitive manner**. As previously mentioned, the implications of long-term harassment and violence are harmful to the victim. As a result, young people would like to see discrimination cases handled with a greater sense of urgency. It was also suggested that the protected characteristics be updated to include hate based on gender:

*"I've had many issues with hate crime there's a serious lack of support services and police don't take you serious."*

*"LGBTQ+ community, racism, gender reassignment, disability, lifestyle. These are all examples of things a part of the Equality Act. But girls aged 9,10,11,12,14,18,26 and every other age can be legally shouted at just for being a woman."*

*"I strongly believe that misogyny should be considered a hate crime, as women are vulnerable against the society and if we allow this to continue it would increase crime in the community."*

*"React more seriously to reports to the police when it comes to assaults/hate crimes."*

LGBTQ+ groups have reported being harassed and experiencing hate comments on a regular basis. An example of this can be seen in the education sector where opposite-sex relationships are the only sexual relationships discussed within the curriculum, with other sexual identities being discussed as a taboo subject. Young people have recommended that the police should attend schools and discuss the different forms of discrimination present in the community, using real stories and outcomes so the criminal aspect is understood:

*"Have police come out and speak about their experiences and then maybe young people would feel more supported."*

*"Officers should be more approachable and friendly and less discriminatory."*

*"There is a large amount of homophobia and overt racism in the Sandbach area of Cheshire which I have witnessed."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCRIMINATION & EQUALITIES

### CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

**Promote** police officers from minority backgrounds on social media to connect with people in the community who lack confidence in the police.

**Take all reports of hate crime seriously** and communicate with victims regularly explaining fully why a case may not be progressed.

**Communicate the outcomes** of criminal hate crime cases to the public.

### PCC & PARTNERS:

Encourage education settings to **broaden their sexual education** to include all relationships and encourage safe sex messages.

Promote your support for a **change in legislation** that considers making misogyny a hate crime.

### YOUTH COMMISSION:

Promote **alternative methods of reporting** and aim to remove the stigma attached to reporting crimes.

In education settings discuss equality & discrimination and promote the **value of difference** in the community.



# CONCLUSION: TAKING THINGS FORWARD



The CYC members have worked extremely hard, and we are thankful for all of the dedication they have shown. We are also extremely grateful to all of the local partners who have been involved in making this piece of work a success.

We are grateful to have received funding to continue the Cheshire Youth Commission for a further 3 years. This will enable more young people across the region to have their voices heard on issues that affect them, as well as enabling positive relationships to continue with Cheshire Constabulary and the PCC John Dwyer.

The CYC members will also be a critical element in developing the recommendations that have been set out in this report.

# CONCLUSION: TAKING THINGS FORWARD

"I have been a member of the Commission for over 5 years. To me the importance of the Commission is that it gives young people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity of having their voice heard. It also gives Cheshire Police a valuable asset as it is difficult to find out what young people think about the issues we cover. They are much more likely to talk about the issues with their peers. From a personal point of view it has helped me with my confidence. I really enjoy sharing what we have talked about with others who have learning difficulties. I feel very important. I enjoy working in teams with other young people and not always being grouped with other young people with learning difficulties. I think it is very important for young people to have experience of being in the company of those with diverse needs and backgrounds as it helps with tolerance. I enjoy very much the feeling that I have made a contribution"

**James Oddie, Cheshire Youth Commission member**

"I joined the Cheshire Youth Commission towards the end of lockdown. At the time, I was in my first year of undergraduate study. I am currently a Law student at the University of Chester. The Youth Commission was a great opportunity to meet new people, gain new skills and training accomplishments whilst also opening doors to career opportunities for myself.

The Youth Commission has given me a valuable insight to policing in Cheshire and I have also been able to voice my opinions on practices, something that I wouldn't have been able to do before.

Throughout the year, I have felt guided and supported by my peers and colleagues in order to speak at workshops and other meetings, really enhancing my CV at the same time, such as attending Hydra training with the police. All offers for extra curricular training have been of a very high standard and I look forward to what the project may achieve in the future".

**Sammy El Dabba, Cheshire Youth Commission member**

"I am Sumaya Saleem, I have been a part of the Youth Commission for about a year now. During my time with the Youth Commission, I have experience loads of interesting things, as we attended a lot of meetings. But what I thought was the most interesting out of all, was the one with the Chief Crown Prosecutor, as we got to openly discuss with him about our priorities; women's safety, youth stigma, online crime and confidence on the police. We also got to look around the Chester police station, police cars and custody suites, which I think, I wouldn't have experienced without being a member of the Youth Commission.

Furthermore, the commission has given me more than just entertainment and special opportunities, as I got to meet loads of new people, from different backgrounds and professions, but with similar ambition and motives to mine, and got to learn from their experiences and shared mine openly at the same time. This made me more confident than I was, and enhanced my own knowledge at the same time.

As a new comer to the UK I was a bit hesitant of the police and their role with society, but being part of the Youth Commission emphasized my viewpoint on the police and created the trust that I never thought I would have. And in the future, I would hope if I could deliver more of my knowledge and understanding of the police role to my community by continuing to be part of the Youth Commission."

**Sumaya Saleem, Cheshire Youth Commission Member**



"I am a long time member of the Youth Commission and have enjoyed my experience immensely so far. We receive a vast amount of opportunities and I feel privileged to hear the views of young people and be able to use those to create change in my community. I think the Youth Commission is vital to reach some of the most underrepresented people in Cheshire and give them a chance to improve their area for their future and ours".

**Ella Redmond, Cheshire Youth Commission member**

"As Youth Engagement Co-ordinator for Cheshire Constabulary I have found the work of the Youth Commission invaluable in understanding the issues hindering the relationship between police and young people and how we can work to break down the barriers to build a relationship based on trust and understanding. Through regular policing and young people task force group meetings we have discussed key issues, incidents or events and been able to understand how young people perceive the police and learn how to reach out, communicate and engage going forwards. I am excited to continue working with the CYC to continue and expand upon the fantastic work that has already been done".

**Sergeant Hannah Munelly, Cheshire Constabulary.**

"It has been an exciting year for the youth commission and youth engagement team as they have collaborated on a number of topics to increase the confidence young people have in policing. One area that was looked at was stop and search, understanding the complexities around these encounter , which has led to creation heavily influenced by the youth commissions members giving clear infographics of the stop search data of young people in Cheshire. The journey to produce this product, has increased the youth commission members understanding of this police power together with the transparency of this information has led to increase confidence that this power is being used appropriately. Further to this, youth engagement officers, Gareth Gill and Mel Marsh-croft have worked with the youth commission, to support their work adding valuable ideas to showcase with the national digital programme on the police UK Instagram social media platform".

**Chief Inspector Lindsay Dixon, Cheshire Constabulary.**

"The Youth Justice Service value their relationship with the Youth Commission and have encouraged many young people to participate in healthy discussions over the past 12 months. We feel that it is vital that young people who have been involved in our service have a voice and the Youth Commission has ensured that they are heard.

It was fantastic that two nominated young people from the Youth Justice Service became Youth Commissioners this year. Their contributions provided real life experiences, but as a result of their involvement they gained so much in building confidence and self-worth. Well done everyone and keep up the good work!"

**Chris Dunn, Manager YJS Cheshire.**

"For a second year, we have all been faced with unprecedented challenge and restrictions relating to the Coronavirus pandemic but the youth commission members have worked tirelessly to ensure young people still have a voice in policing. They have shown great strength, resilience and increased levels of dedication to ensure I understand their needs for the future. Their continued efforts have ensured they have captured the views of a diverse range of young people from across our communities, in new ways. The conversations they continue to have with their peers ensure the decisions I make on policing and crime, reflect their views and opinions and consider the recommendations they make. I had the pleasure of starting the very first Cheshire Youth Commission during my first term in office and I am delighted to see they have continued to develop and grow over the last five years. I am happy we will continue to work together throughout the next three years, following my recent commitment to help them to continue their conversations. I look forward to the years that lie ahead, where we will work collaboratively to build on the achievements to date and implement the recommendations which have been made. In doing so, I hope the service that Cheshire Police provides, will be relevant and accessible to all young people regardless of where they live in Cheshire and ensure young people feel safe and valued in our community."

**John Dwyer, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire**



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