



**LANCASHIRE
YOUTH COMMISSION:**

**FINAL REPORT TO THE
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
& THE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT**

MAY 2022

**LEADERS
UNLOCKED**



**LANCASHIRE
VIOLENCE REDUCTION
NETWORK**



CONTENTS

Contents	4
Introduction	4
About this report	5
About the Lancashire Youth Commission	6
What We Did	7
Recruitment	7
Identifying Priority Issues	7
Creating the Tools for the Lancashire Youth Commission	8
Joint Work in Lancashire	9
Who we've reached:	9
Our Partners	10
Priority 1: Mental Health	13
What We Found	13
Our Recommendations	17
Priority 2: Hate Crime	19
What We Found	19
Our Recommendations	23
Priority 3: Social Media & Online Crime	25
What We Found	25
Our Recommendations	29
Priority 4: Abusive Relationships	31
What We Found	31
Our Recommendations	35
Priority 5: Drugs & Alcohol	37
What We Found	37
Our Recommendations	41
Priority 6: Relationship with the Police	43
What We Found	43
Our Recommendations	47
Conclusion: Taking Things Forward	48
Testimonials	49

INTRODUCTION

The Lancashire Youth Commission (LYC) was established in 2020 with funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (VRN).

The LYC is a peer-led project that is made up of **32 active members from a range of diverse backgrounds and experiences**. The Commission enables young people living in Lancashire aged 14-25 to have a voice on urgent issues around policing and crime.

The key objectives of the Youth Commission were as follows:

- **Recruit young people** from a diverse range of backgrounds and life experiences.
- Work with LYC members to identify **key priority topics** which they wanted to tackle this year.
- Equip the LYC members with the **practical skills training** required for the role.
- **Plan and deliver 2000 conversations** with young people from across Lancashire during the LYC Big Conversation.
- **Present the Youth Commissions' key findings and recommendations** at the Lancashire Youth Commission 'Big Conversation' conference to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the VRN, Lancashire Police, and partner agencies.
- **Work closely with Lancashire Police Force** to provide LYC members opportunities to influence policing strategies and decision making.

The Lancashire 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 and underrepresented groups 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

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is based on evidence collected through extensive engagement workshops – the LYC has exceeded its target by reaching over **2,400 young people** from across Lancashire in the last year. The responses have been gathered in youth-led engagement events and workshops, 1-to-1 interviews, 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 key recommendations 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 LYC 'Big Conversation'. The report is intended to support any future actions by the Police and Crime Commissioner, the VRN, Lancashire Constabulary and relevant partner agencies.



ABOUT THE LANCASHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

The LYC focuses on giving young people a stronger voice on police and crime issues within their local communities. The Youth Commission works closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to **challenge and inform** the work of the PCC and Lancashire Constabulary.

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

A key element of the LYC'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 THIS YEAR

RECRUITMENT

In 2020, Leaders Unlocked carried out a 2-stage recruitment process, which included distributing an easy to access recruitment pack consisting of an application form and information relating to the role. The second stage was to conduct telephone interviews with all 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 LYC members are true representatives of their communities be that by locations, backgrounds or life experiences.

The current member demographics are:

- **47%** Male, 44% Female, 9% Other
- **78%** Aged 18 and Under
- **19%** LGBTQ+
- **13%** Ethnic Minorities
- **16%** Have a Disability
- **91%** In Education
- **6%** Have Experience of the Criminal Justice System

IDENTIFYING PRIORITY ISSUES

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

1. Mental Health,
2. Hate Crime,
3. Social Media & Online Crime,
4. Abusive relationships,
5. Drugs & Alcohol,
6. Relationship with the Police,

CREATING THE TOOLS FOR THE LANCASHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

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

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

The LYC 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 LYC members created **postcards** to help gather responses for their research. The postcards shows each priority that the LYC were 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 were purposefully designed to remain **anonymous to help encourage open and honest responses from young people**.

The LYC also used **social media polls and surveys** to increase the reach of their conversations in Lancashire.



JOINT WORK IN LANCASHIRE

LYC members have contributed to various aspects of Lancashire's communities. An example includes members giving speeches at the opening ceremony for the Knife Angel in Blackburn, a sculpture created from seized knives to inspire change in the community. Members also contributed to changes on the Lancashire Police's social media pages and produced a short animation to be used on the County Lines campaign. The LYC provided the OPCC and VRN with monthly updates regarding their engagements with the community.

As a result of their work in the community, the LYC members were nominated for the Young Citizen Award, a scheme administered by the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime Charity to recognise young people aged 21 and under who have helped their local neighbourhood.

WHO WE'VE REACHED

The LYC have actively engaged with **2,430 young people** across Lancashire. In total, the LYC has delivered **50 events** in a wide range of localities across Lancashire.

This year the LYC focused particularly on engaging with young people from underrepresented and more marginalised backgrounds. 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 are as follows:

Mental Health	556
Hate Crime	316
Social Media & Online Crime	325
Abusive Relationships	418
Drugs & Alcohol	415
Relationships with the Police	400
Total	2,430

OUR PARTNERS

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

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Alcohol Education Trust | Mount Carmel |
| Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council | Ormskirk School & Sixth Form College |
| Blackpool Sixth | Prince's Trust |
| Blackpool Youth Council | Runshaw College |
| Cardinal Newman College | The Smart Fit Effect |
| Edge Hill Queet Society | UCLan Disabled Students Society |
| Lancashire LGBT | UCLan Islamic Society |
| Lancashire Police Cadets | Youth Fed |
| Lancaster University | YPS Online |

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

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Abi Howells | Lewis Grant |
| Amber Jordan | Lydia Pearson |
| Amy Joy Kinnings-Smith | Mark Gregory |
| Bethany Stevens | Maxwell Golder |
| Bradley Thomson | Molly Cartmell |
| Charlotte Clarkson | Muhammed Asif |
| Chloe Elston | Muhammed Bapu |
| Connor Grogan | Natasha Pearson |
| Emily Johnson | Rory Campbell |
| George Phillips-Kirwin | Ruby Cain |
| Jack Corke | Ryan Brown |
| Jayden Begley | Tilly Wilson |
| Jude Ramsden | Tyler-Lee Allen |
| Keziah Harrison | Zara Shahzad |
| Lena Graham | |

A final thank you to this year's coordinator Beau Kennedy for her assistance in bringing the project to fruition.





PRIORITY 1: MENTAL HEALTH



The LYC spoke to **556 young people** in Lancashire about mental health. Our survey findings suggested that a significant amount of young people we spoke to were struggling with their mental health. Young people in Lancashire believe that the stigmas relating to mental health negatively impact people's willingness to seek help – the anonymity of support services varies, which prevents many young people from accessing facilities. The LYC set out to listen to the honest opinions of young people on how mental health provisions need to be designed in order to best suit their needs.

WHAT WE FOUND

Young people in Lancashire believe that mental health issues are a common factor in their community and are not taken seriously. Concerns about poor mental health are often dismissed or undermined by others which strengthens the dynamic where young people will not seek help. This is prevalent for all young people, but it has been raised by young people that this problem is increasingly difficult for men:

"Mental health for adolescents and for adults is overlooked and not treated anywhere near as seriously as physical health."

"There needs to be less of a stigma around mental health, particularly men's/male mental health."

"I think mental health could be taken more seriously from the very beginning rather than often being instantly dismissed."

"Young people don't want to burden other people with things they think are more important."

Young people have suggested that the negative approach to mental health is largely driven by a lack of understanding of the variety of mental health issues. Improvements to mental health provisions in Lancashire should be driven by an education-based approach, ensuring that young people, Lancashire Constabulary, teachers and others in the community have a better understanding of how poor mental health affects daily life:

"If more people knew about the different reasons or ways that people struggle then you wouldn't feel ashamed or like you have to hide it from people."

"I think education for mental health should start in primary schools that way there won't be such a stigma attached to people who have bad mental health."

"So many people preach about mental health when in real fact they are the ones who are abusing others both mentally and physically causing so many teenagers, some even younger, to have mental health disorders."

"The police need to have better training for how to deal with mental health issues and more support within schools so that kids feel comfortable with sharing things."

Young people in Lancashire are often unaware of the different support services available to them. Where young people are aware of the support services, they have argued that access to them is very limited as a result of long waiting lists and parental permissions, preventing anonymity. Steps need to be taken to provide wider-reaching access to these services:

"There aren't enough resources for people to access. There is an increase in bad mental health."

"There are not enough resources for young people with mental health issues. You usually get added to a waiting list and by the time they're going to see you, you've passed the age group."

"Getting given a leaflet is not effective support for someone who is dealing with bad mental health. People should actually get the ball rolling with referrals rather than leaving someone who is in a bad space to deal with it themselves."

"There needs to be more ways to access support anonymously. Not everyone has supportive families and sometimes that's why they're trying to access support so needing their permission to speak to people is silly."

"Propose to the council that more funding should be aimed at creating better support systems around schools/colleges and for CAMHS to allow a larger number of patients."

"I don't think there are that many options to share without letting people around/close to you know."

One of the main concerns with mental health services is the lack of signposting. Schools, colleges and youth organisations need to provide clear information on the resources available to students:

"In schools having a dedicated person you can speak to who knows how to deal with things."

"Better signposting, more talks in schools and colleges."

"More advertising of completely anonymous websites whether in school or other places."

Young people in Lancashire have argued that the police should utilise their social media platforms to promote positive mental health and the approach taken to people suffering from mental health issues. Additional police training should be provided to ensure that their approach to young people with mental health is tailored to the individual:

"Police should provide stuff like different ways of communication because some people struggle to talk to police in real life and would prefer over phone or text."

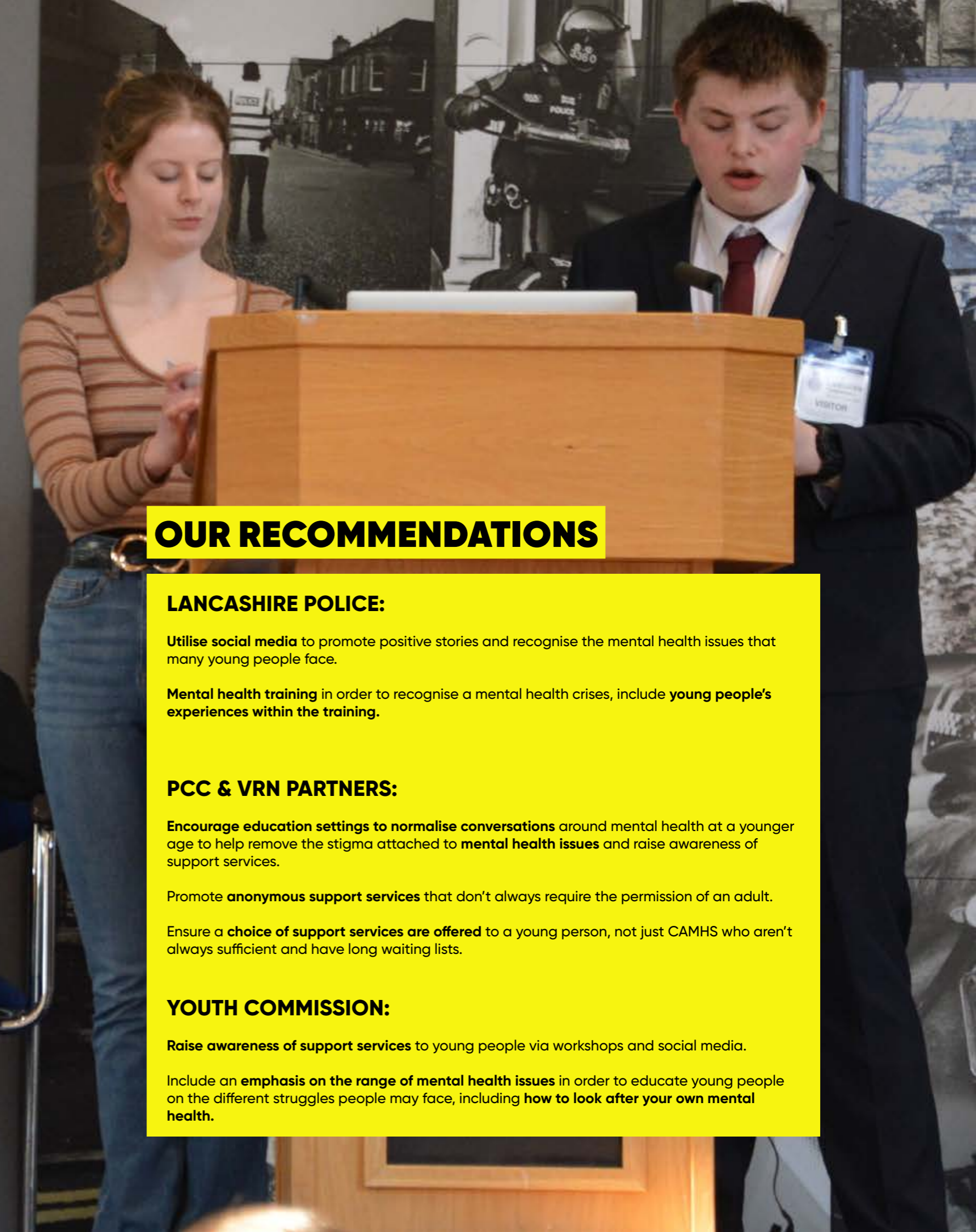
"Be more sensitive and if someone with mental health issues commits a crime the police should find the reason of what has affected them so much to be so irrational to completely resolve the issue and help with things such as therapy no matter how small the crime."

"Police need to appear more human to young people by opening up or using social media to let them know that they are there to keep them safe, this is why most young people are scared of them."

"Treat it seriously and treat it more important as there are actual people dealing with this every day yet they are criminalised and victimised."

"More therapists around Lancashire and more police who understand when someone is going through a mental health crisis."

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OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

LANCASHIRE POLICE:

Utilise **social media** to promote positive stories and recognise the mental health issues that many young people face.

Mental health training in order to recognise a mental health crises, include **young people's** experiences within the training.

PCC & VRN PARTNERS:

Encourage **education settings to normalise conversations** around mental health at a younger age to help remove the stigma attached to **mental health issues** and raise awareness of support services.

Promote **anonymous support services** that don't always require the permission of an adult.

Ensure a **choice of support services are offered** to a young person, not just CAMHS who aren't always sufficient and have long waiting lists.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Raise **awareness of support services** to young people via workshops and social media.

Include an **emphasis on the range of mental health issues** in order to educate young people on the different struggles people may face, including **how to look after your own mental health**.

PRIORITY 2: HATE CRIME



The LYC spoke to **316 young people** in Lancashire about hate crime. Our findings suggested that young people believe that the main issues regarding hate crime surround its definition and reporting issues. Young people recognised hate crime as a multi-faceted issue as different forms of hate crime are tackled at a higher priority than other forms, often leading people to not report instances where they were victimised. The LYC set out to understand how young people in the area would like to see hate crime handled in Lancashire.

WHAT WE FOUND

The main form of hate crime recognised in the area was racism – young people have referenced being verbally attacked based on their race in the area. Cases of racist hate crime have been increasing nationally for a number of years, but since the Covid-19 pandemic young people have referenced the increase in anti-Chinese abuse:

"I'm half chinese and people call me names like 'bat eater, Chinc, Dog eater, skinny eye freak and somtimes blame coronavirus on me."

"I saw some people walking down the street beside me and started laughing and staring at me, kept on shouting racist things to me."

The second key area of hate crime referenced by young people in Lancashire was homophobia. Young people have argued that the abuse of LGBTQ+ individuals is a prevalent issue in the area and is often not recognised as a problem. Young people have increasingly referenced how homophobic hate crimes often are not tackled, which leaves young people feeling unsupported:

"A person who I thought was a friend attacked me because I was gay I reported it and the police took statements but didn't do anything else and then 2 weeks later the same person hit me with a glass bottle which left me with scars, if the police did something the first time round then the second attack wouldn't have happened."

"I was discriminated against at work for my sexuality and nothing happened."

"People aren't aware sometimes that they're being so offensive when making gay jokes like it's not funny and at school it happens to me and my friends all the times and the teachers do nothing."

Young people have suggested that there is a general lack of understanding around what is determined as a hate crime. The nature of its multi-faceted definition can often mean that certain forms of hate crime are less recognisable. This can leave young people feeling unsure if a hate crime had been committed:

"I don't really get the differences between hate crimes and racism it isn't explained to us."

"Teenagers are uneducated on what hate crime is in my area."

"At my school we have only ever had 1 lesson on hate and things and it's just not good enough when it's such a big deal everywhere now."

"I feel like you can get in trouble for saying things and you don't even know that you've done anything wrong."

An area where hate crimes are often experienced is on social media platforms – young people in Lancashire suggest that the majority of cases seen are on social media and that more needs to be done to protect young people online. This makes it harder to escape hate crimes and can negatively affect young people's mental health:

"Hate crime can cause depression in adults and young people so we need more help elsewhere such as banning them on social media and reporting them as an actual hate crime."

"People are always on social media 'making jokes' but they're actually really offensive and no one says anything and nothing gets done even after you report it."

"Social media memes are getting out of hand and people don't even realise how offensive they're being."

Young people have suggested that the police need to update their approach to hate crimes – recommendations include targeted approaches based on frequency, specialised officers and introducing follow up reviews on hate crimes. Young people have suggested that this would make young people more willing to report hate crimes to the police, as currently, it can feel like a lesser crime:

"If a stranger abuses you and you're not going to see them again, why would you report the incident? The police won't do much as they have bigger things to attend to."

"Have separate departments within the police that are able to understand the unique struggle such as trans officer aiding LGBTQ+ victims of crime."

"Identify which hate crimes/incidents occur the most frequently and figure out what tactics should be put in place to stop this, both online and in-person."

"I think they could continue to follow up on any type of hate crime reported because people's mental health can be massively affected and when people are in that vulnerable and emotional state it is important to understand they are very unpredictable and may not be able to say how they feel."

"Had I reported these incidents, I would not have been taken seriously and nothing would have happened."

It has been suggested by young people in Lancashire that support services and reporting methods need to be improved in order to efficiently tackle hate crime. Young people suggest that there is a lack of support services available for victims of hate crimes which means victims often struggle to process what has happened to them. Similarly, young people have suggested that there is a lack of action on reported hate crimes by the police, which leads to a reduction in reporting. In both cases, further guidelines need to be established in order to ensure young people feel supported following a hate crime:

"Create more guidelines protecting people against bullying and targeted hate crime online- monitors."

"A lot of young people think, and convince themselves it's their fault when they get attacked."

"Police need to start taking these reports more seriously they might think it's just bullying in schools but I know someone who killed themselves because the bullying just got too much."

"Police need to take reports more seriously because dealing with it on my own really ruined my mental health."

"All reports should be taken seriously no matter how small because it can be really depressing and lonely when you're the only one affected by something."

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OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

LANCASHIRE POLICE:

Promote officers on social media that young people can relate to, who could be role models to young people from diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ensure reports of hate crimes have **officers that understand** the unique struggles of marginalised communities.

Make sure public are aware of the following up process after receiving reports of hate crime and the emphasise on **taking these reports seriously** in order to strengthen trust in the police.

PCC & VRN PARTNERS:

Provide more in-depth education on what is considered a hate crime and **promote open conversations** around celebrating our differences.

Work towards a safer online space by promoting anonymous reporting tools and support services.

Offer support in toughening censors on social media which would improve young people's safety as a result of online hate crime.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Educate young people on the difference between hate crimes and hate incidents and the effects they have on individuals and the wider community.

Utilise social media to promote appropriate phrases and language and **raise awareness** of the value of a diverse community.

Promote hate crime reporting tools and support services





PRIORITY 3: SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE CRIME,



The LYC spoke to **325 young people** in Lancashire about social media & online crime. Our findings suggested that young people link social media to a variety of deviant behaviours. Despite some benefits of social media and the increased connectivity provided by the internet, these platforms have also provided people with new tools for blackmail, abuse and other criminal activity. Overall, young people have argued that they do not feel protected online. The LYC set out to understand young people's opinions on online safety and how they believed they could feel better protected.

WHAT WE FOUND

Young people have told us that it is common on social media platforms to be contacted for sexually explicit pictures. Young people have argued that this has become a social norm where young women are approached by online sexual predators – in some cases, these requests are made by people close to them who may use these pictures for ulterior motives. Young people have argued that further support measures need to be in place for this issue:

"Nudes are so popular in my school and no one cares or even realises how weird it is."

"When I was 14 I got blackmailed into sending my nudes but I was too scared to report it now that im older I would."

"I was blackmailed by my ex with my own nudes and the police were so rubbish it was a waste of time reporting it because everyone just called me a grass anyway."

"There is sometimes messages from random men saying they'll pay a certain amount of money if we owe a favour or something like that."

"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."

Similarly, young people have stated that cyberbullying has become a prominent issue with social media's rise in popularity. As mentioned in the previous sections, young people have referenced hateful comments being left online and feel that there is a lack of consequences for such actions:

"There's a lot of cyberbullying and a lot of people get hate when they post on things like TikTok and Snapchat."

"A lot of cyberbullying happens to the point where people are scared to post online or report these issues. Also when they are told to stop it still goes on and doesn't stop."

"Commenting hateful things on social media is so popular now and people don't even realise that they are being really offensive and it's so popular now people wouldn't say some of these things in person."

"I don't think enough is being done across the whole of the country to be honest as people my age are turning to alcohol and drugs and also committing offences themselves and self-harm more and more because platforms don't deal with comments."

Young people have also raised concerns over the various uses of social media as a method to sell drugs. This is something that is becoming increasingly popular with the use of short-form videos which expire on platforms like Snapchat and Instagram and exposes young people to drugs from an early age. This is something that young people in Lancashire have found concerning and have argued that steps need to be taken to keep people protected from online drug dealing:

"Snapchat is the main place where people go to buy drugs these days, people advertise it like it's just normal."

"Kids are exposed to drugs at such a young age all because of social media it makes them think its completely normal to be smoking and doing drugs."

"Everyone is always posting drugs on socials and they wouldn't do it in person."

Young people have argued that there needs to be more support available for victims of online crime, as well as further methods of reporting it. An active police presence on social media platforms would act as a sufficient deterrent to certain criminal behaviours according to young people – they have suggested a method of anonymous messaging which can direct the police to criminal behaviours. It has also been argued that the police need to focus on platforms used by younger people such as Tiktok, Snapchat and Instagram:

"There should be an anonymous messaging service where people can text and let the police know about the problem without people knowing who reported it."

"You could have an app where you anonymously report crimes."

"Maybe branching out onto different social media platforms which are used more by the younger generations."

"Post more frequently. Show that you are engaging with their age bracket. Find that more people engage/participate online when it is aimed at their age range and interests."

"Involve Young People in their social media appearance who spread awareness about online crime etc."

Young people have also suggested age limitations on social media platforms and applications. Many social media platforms recommend a minimum age of 13 to use their services, but there are no verification requirements so people below this age are able to provide false details. Young people have argued that the age restrictions should be more effectively policed, and asked for officials in Lancashire to campaign for this:

"More age restrictions on apps and make sure its properly policed."

"All I can say is look more in-depth to those who are not necessarily of age to be on the sites who have managed to get on due to them being vulnerable and easy targets for others since they can be persuaded to join or be involved in other areas they shouldn't be in."

"The restrictions on the age limit should be followed more younger people are too vulnerable and naive and have less of a selfcontrol when it comes to social media and can be very emotionally affected by things within the media."

Young people have argued that there needs to be more education regarding online safety in the classroom to spot the signs of online criminal behaviours. They argue that this would reduce the rates of online victimisation in Lancashire and would help young people to feel safe whilst online:

"Spread awareness of internet safety. people don't understand the actual serious consequences of it. people don't see it as a big deal."

"Promote the effects of Cyberbullying and Online Crime to teenagers so it educates them more."

"Show the amount of scammers, predators and cyberbullies in the world that are still continuing these acts."

"More education for how young girls can stay safe online and how to spot the signs of predators."

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OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

LANCASHIRE POLICE:

Have more content aimed at young people in order to encourage greater interaction of key messages and provide statistics from positive prosecutions of online crimes.

Promote the support provided for victims of online crimes in order to prevent these crimes from going unreported.

PCC & VRN PARTNERS:

Create a positive image on social media by involving police and young people from the area to **spread awareness** of online crimes and support available.

Campaign more openly for more restrictions and tools on social media apps for safe usage.

Educate young people on ways to stay safe online and equip them with the skills to spot the signs of online predators.

Utilise social media regularly to **promote the positive work the VRN and partners are undertaking** to tackle issues online.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Promote anonymous reporting tools and support services for young people who have witnessed or experienced online crimes.

Educate young people through workshops about **the dangers of online crimes** and the consequences they may have.

Work with the PCC & VRN to **create a campaign** focused on ways for young people to stay safe online.





PRIORITY 4: ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS



The LYC spoke to **418 young people** in Lancashire about abusive relationships. Similarly to other areas covered in this report, one of the key issues raised by young people in Lancashire is that they feel that they are not taken seriously when reporting cases of abuse to the police. As a result, our findings suggest that many young people in Lancashire would not report abusive relationships. The LYC set out to understand how young people's approach to abusive relationships could be improved to result in higher reporting rates and the requirements that would need to be met in order to see a change in this area.

WHAT WE FOUND

Young people have argued that defining a relationship as unhealthy or abusive is difficult, primarily as definitions of a healthy relationship are subjective and often not promoted. 'Toxic' relationships have become normality for many young people in Lancashire, meaning in many cases it is unclear to the people in the relationship whether it is damaging:

"When I was in a toxic relationship I was accused of stuff I didn't do and at the time I didn't realise I was in a bad relationship it really affected my mental health."

"I feel like so many people these days are in toxic situations and because there isn't any awareness of good relationships they just don't realise that its bad for them."

"Because the law is always changing around sexual assault, I think that's what leads to confusion and sometimes why things happen and people don't know that what they've done is wrong."

Many young women have argued that they do not feel safe walking home from school or social events as a result of potential abuse. This is reinforced by experiences of catcalling and other inconsiderate behaviours from men which make them feel uncomfortable – it has been argued

by young people in Lancashire that it is increasingly difficult to determine healthy relationships when the streets do not feel safe for women:

"If I have to walk my dog, I make sure that I do it when it's light because otherwise I would be so scared and I always make sure I stay in safe places."

"I walk home from school and most days 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."

"Weirdos always catcalling girls. I believe this is really gross and it shouldn't happen because it undermines girls and makes us really uncomfortable and makes us feel like we are the reason this is happening."

"I don't get scared but definitely uncomfortable having to walk on my own even if it's light there's always someone doing something they shouldn't be and it just puts me on edge because you never know what someone is going to do if they are on drugs or whatever."

Young people have argued that victims of abuse are less likely to report their experiences to the police because they do not feel that the police take their reports seriously. Similar findings were discovered in reference to the education settings, where young people have argued that the level of support provided for victims of abuse is minimal if at all. Young people have argued that the approach to handling cases of abuse from the police and education needs to change in order to see positive results:

"Many victims of abuse tend to not go through with statements or to get done. Most of the time they don't do it due to fear. In my opinion after a number of occasions of incidents the police should just do it themselves without a choice to the victim because it will be more helpful in the long run."

"I think people get stuck in cycles of abuse and unhealthy relationship and if they have reported it once and the police didn't do anything the first time then they will never report it again."

"Don't always help when there is a domestic situation that involves a male victim they don't take it seriously."

"If they began to believe the students reporting abusive relationships. I, myself, have known people to be ignored by school support groups who either say they are overreacting or are simply looking for an excuse for their bad behaviour."

Young people have argued that education has a large part to play in changing how abusive relationships are handled in Lancashire. There is a general lack of understanding regarding what is considered sexual assault, which young people have stated leads to confusion. Education surrounding abusive relationships and sexual assault should start from an early age and should include ways to identify abuse and how to report abuse:

"Sometimes people don't realise they're in an abusive relationship or don't think about telling people so they should be told what's an abusive relationship and how to handle it."

"Do more PSHE lessons so young people can be educated on abusive relationships."

"Make it clear what is healthy and what isn't. So many people think that their relationship is good when really they're just being manipulated."

"In school I was never taught about Claire's law or what healthy and bad relationships looked like. If I was taught about this maybe I could have helped my mum more. Raising awareness and making it something we talk about and not let it be something that's kept behind closed doors. Make people aware of what the police will and can do if they are ever in that situation."

Young people have also suggested that social media would be a useful tool to provide information on spotting abusive relationships. They have suggested that officials in Lancashire should run social media campaigns to highlight the characteristics of abusive behaviours, show information on national abuse statistics and signpost people to support services:

"Social media posting about other people's issues and opening up."

"Show on social media the statistics of domestic abuse cases in the UK, in terms of how prevalent they are."

"More needs to be done on social media because that's what all young people are looking at and if they came out with posts about how to get out of unhealthy relationships it could help a lot of people."



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

LANCASHIRE POLICE:

Aim to **increase police presence** in and around school/college 'hot spots' at finishing times to **ensure young people feel safe** walking home.

Raise awareness of positive stories of young people seeking help, this will promote confidence in the police when it comes to reporting crimes of this nature.

PCC & VRN PARTNERS:

Provide more youth-centred education to young people covering healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Promote safe spaces that young people can access when they are fearing for their safety whilst out in the community.

Create an awareness campaign that highlights how catcalling and misogyny in the community is unacceptable and how to seek help from abusive relationships.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Promote services in the region that help and support young people in or surrounded by abusive relationships.

Support the education of sexual violence and abuse in partnership with education settings.

Offer to work with the PCC & VRN on awareness campaigns focused on catcalling, misogyny and abusive relationships.



PRIORITY 5: DRUGS & ALCOHOL



The LYC spoke to **415 young people** in Lancashire about drugs and alcohol. Our findings suggest that young people in Lancashire connect excessive drug and alcohol use with their relationship with their peers. Technological advances and the ease of access to such substances has created a dynamic in which young people are feeling pressure to drink alcohol and take drugs in order to fit in. The LYC set out to identify how young people felt about drugs and alcohol and to gauge their understanding on substance abuse.

WHAT WE FOUND

Drugs and alcohol have become easily accessible to young people through app purchases in Lancashire. As previously mentioned, Snapchat has been used by drug dealers to sell their products to young people and there is little to no consequence seen by young people. Additionally, legal highs such as nitrous oxide have become increasingly popular as there is no punishment for possession. As a result of the ease of access, many young people initiate in drug-taking as it has become normalised:

"Snapchat is the main place where people go to buy drugs these days, people advertise it like its just normal."

"Littered bottles and those canisters as well as the smell of drugs in everywhere in Lancashire."

"I can't even walk to the corner shop without seeing hundreds of those canister things literally everywhere- its just as unacceptable as any other drugs laying all over the floor."

"Cannabis and cocaine is so easily accessible, online and in person. Everyone knows where they can get it and how easy it is"

Young people have also argued that the method of taking drugs has changed to technology based counterparts – vaping has increased in popularity in recent years, particularly with young people. It has been argued by young people in Lancashire that vaping is treated with more tolerance compared to smoking, despite the fact that both contribute to negative health. Young people have suggested that more education is required relating to the harmful effects of vaping in similar ways to the education provided against smoking:

"At my previous school many people across all year groups vaped or had vapes and no one did anything about it."

"Bare people be doing drugs and kids with the e-cigs."

"It's ridiculous all of the kids who are vaping and nobody does anything but if they were smoking then they would stop them."

"More public information about the harmful affects of vaping whilst young."

"There is alot of drugs available in the streets. They are available very easily. More officers need to look in corporation park. It is available to youngsters and there is dealing going on in the park. Strict rules need to be made on ecigs."

Young people have said that peer pressure has increased the rate of drug and alcohol use in their generation, as it is often seen as a 'requirement' for certain friendship groups. Young people are often mocked for not participating in substance taking, and these behaviours have been replicated when pressuring young people into dealing drugs. Our findings suggest that young people have been threatened with violence for either not taking drugs or not selling drugs:

"Young people think it's cool do drink and take drugs. they think they need to do it to be popular or to get along with a certain friendship group."

"Too many people do drugs and its far too easy to get them. People tell you you're a muppet if you don't do them, it's a joke."

"Many young children are being pulled into selling drugs which is leading to an increase in crime. People are being threatened and assaulted for trying to escape this way of life."

"They show aggressive behaviour towards their friends then their friends decide to do the same thing and it's just a massive circle of behaviour and bad people."

It has been argued by young people in Lancashire that there is not enough support provided to those who struggle with substance abuse, or those who live with someone with a substance addiction. Young people have referenced receiving minimal support where family members struggle with alcoholism and have instead argued that the stigmas surrounding addiction act as a barrier to receiving support in the wider community. Young people have called for more information to be accessible regarding support:

"For young people who have parents with substance issues there is no support or even awareness raised I think more people need to know that there not alone."

"There are no places advertised for people to go and get help and support."

"Help young people to understand all the negative things that come with drugs and alcohol."

"Drugs are impacting young peoples mental health but people ignore it rather than getting to the source of the issue they just tell them to get off the drugs."

It has been noted that drugs are very common in nightclubs and bars across Lancashire. As a result, many young adults are scared of having their drinks spiked whilst in nightclubs and potentially being assaulted by people using drugs. They have suggested that further action needs to be taken by the police and by door staff to prevent drug use in Lancashire, as its effects can harm non-users as much as it can harm those who take substances willingly:

"I personally think that by door men, people should be searched before they enter nightclubs etc. In addition, they should be equipped with a body camera so that they are able to search women too as they could commit the same offense. I also think that the code word 'Angela' should be educated around to people so that they can use it on nights out if needed."

"I think police should be near or inside of clubs to spot suspicious activity I also think that drink sort of lids should be mandatory and that the police should educate people on this topic as many people don't know that this is going on."

"While I am unsure if drink and drug spiking incidents can be completely stopped, I believe that these events could be prevented by increasing the sentence lengths that perpetrators are issued with as a punishment as this could deter some people from carrying out such crimes. I also think that people could be made more aware of the dangers of these spiking incidents which would make them more cautious with their drinks and hopefully lead to them feeling and being more safe."



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

LANCASHIRE POLICE:

More visits to secondary schools and colleges to highlight any trending issues such as spiking.

Share stories via social media to illustrate that drug dealing comes with consequences.

Policing of social media sites and apps to crackdown on the accessibility of these substances available to young people.

PCC & VRN PARTNERS:

Campaign for more thorough searches of people going into bars and clubs and promote self-help tools such as **"Ask for Angela"** to young people.

Create a campaign to educate young people on the dangers of substance misuse and that signposts support services available to them.

Ensure help is offered to family members of those with addiction issues as these young people are often left feeling forgotten.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Educate young people on the negative effects drugs and alcohol can have on friends, family, and the community, including information for young people on vaping.

Signpost young people to support services and provide positive information on social media about self-help.

Support PCC & VRN campaigns aimed at young people.



PRIORITY 6: RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLICE



The LYC spoke to **400 young people** in Lancashire about their relationship with the police. Our findings suggest that young people do not find their interactions with the police to be positive. Many of the young people we spoke to did not fully understand the dynamic between themselves and the police, arguing that the police lack compassion when completing stop and searches. The LYC set out to identify how young people felt the relationship between the police and young people could be improved, and what action would be required in order for this to happen.

WHAT WE FOUND

Many young people stated that they were unaware of their rights during a stop and search. It has been suggested that police in Lancashire were not explaining their rights prior to a stop and search as expected, and receipts were not received following the search. Young people have said that they have often felt targeted by the police as a result of this:

"I'm a black male and I am constantly stopped and search like sometimes I can understand why but it just gets ridiculous I feel like once they've seen you out with the wrong people once they never leave you alone after that."

"I was waiting on my doorstep for my dad to come and pick me up and the police turned up in a riot van and grabbed me by the neck without telling me my rights or why they were even there my dad reported it because he witnessed it from down the road but nothing happened."

"My mum was stopped for a driving offence and they searched her and they were so nice and gave her a receipt, whenever I have been searched ive never been given a receipt and they are horrible with me think its because they expect to find something and they get annoyed when they don't."

It has been suggested by young people that the police lack compassion towards them. This is increasingly prevalent when they are dealing with a person with a mental health concern – young people have referenced how experiences with the police have further damaged their mental health and established a relationship based on fear rather than trust:

"I was strip searched naked in custody and an officer stood on my neck to put me in a suicide prevention suit. I was arrested for trying to kill myself when I was 16 and I just think custody is the last place you want to be when you are going through that."

"The police need more training to either recognise when something is a mental health episode or whether it is actually criminal, one of my friends is bipolar and she is terrified of the police because they have been really rough with her in the past when all she needed was some support to get through a bad episode."

"Just be kinder to teenagers and to those who are emotionally/mentally unstable, also more positive police."

"Have a non-judgemental approach to victims of crime because sometimes they do victim blame and ask what you might have done to make someone act in that way."

It has been argued by young people that the approach taken by the police towards them is dependent on the officer. Young people have suggested that female officers tend to approach interactions in a calmer manner. It has been stated that young people would have more respect for the police if they felt respected by the police:

"I've been stopped and searched loads and it just depends on the officer as to whether or not they explain your rights to you."

"There is a difference between male and female officers in how they deal with certain issues women are much calmer and take it more seriously they are better in mental health crises."

"I value police for keeping us "safe" and helping our community. However, I have experienced otherwise with police always treating me with suspicion I think they only want to keep certain people safe."

"My opinion on the police is they should approach a situation more calmly and that should make a situation better."

"I think the tone in which they speak depending on the situation could help diffuse it with less confrontation meaning the teens and young people don't respect them, if they are spoken to calmly first and explained the situation properly and calmly they could be more open to listening to the police."

Young people have said that their experiences with reporting crimes to the police weren't always positive. Young people in Lancashire have often felt that their reports weren't taken seriously and suggested that there is a lack of support provided following the initial report. It has been suggested that improvements need to be made to the reporting procedure:

"Have the police do their job objectively and have an anonymous line to report police misconduct."

"More anonymous reporting tools would be better especially in school because we just get told to use Kooth but it takes so long and isn't aimed at just our school."

"Everyone talks about online reporting but when I went into the police station to report a crime there wasn't even anyone there and no information on how to get in touch with the station directly."

"Have a non-judgemental approach to victims of crime because sometimes they do victim blame and ask what you might have done to make someone act in that way."

Young people have argued that their relationship with the police could benefit from more informal interactions. This would help to reduce the fear linked to the police by many young people and establish a better working connection between the police and young people:

"I think that the police could spend more of their time talking with young people in Lancashire as this would make the police a more approachable group of people for teenagers to speak to if ever they felt that this was necessary. This would also assure young people that the police are not people to be frightened of but are more there for the safety of everyone as well as will listen to any information that you may hand over despite your age."

"I think one way to improve the relationship is to have off duty officers visit schools and such in order to show young people that they aren't there to hurt us and that they are people just like us who have feelings. Showing us that they are there to help us and the community."

"More young people need to have good chats with the police because we only see them when either something bad has happened or someone is in trouble. Would be good to just say hi on the street or something."



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

LANCASHIRE POLICE:

Promote a **clearer, more consistent approach to Stop and Search** ensuring interactions with young people are open and transparent.

Signpost young people to appropriate support services after they have been involved in a crime and follow up with individuals to improve trust in the police.

Work with others to **promote anonymous online reporting tools** that are easily accessible to young people.

PCC & VRN PARTNERS:

Education settings to **proactively approach Lancashire Constabulary** to ensure police are invited in regularly on an informal basis to speak with young people in small groups or **1-2-1**, not just in assemblies.

Establish a Youth Panel to scrutinise stop and search data and body camera footage in order to address any prejudice, ensuring panel members fairly represent the community's diversity.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Educate young people on their stop and search rights via workshops, social media and campaigns.

Promote positive interactions with the police to bridge the gap between young people and the police, especially between 14-25-year-olds.

CONCLUSION: TAKING THINGS FORWARD



The LYC members have worked extremely hard and we are thankful for all of the dedication they have shown.

Thanks to the continued support shown by our partner agencies, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire, Lancashire Police and the VRN, we are confident that the findings and recommendations included in this report will help to inform and contribute towards future work. We are extremely grateful to all of the partners who have been involved in making this piece of work a huge success.

TESTIMONIALS

"It's been a pleasure to work with the Lancashire Youth Commission. They have done a fantastic job in representing young people from across Lancashire and to share their views on crime and policing with the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Violence Reduction Network, Lancashire Constabulary and our partners. Youth Commission members have shown professionalism and dedication throughout the project. It was great to hear members' views on our campaigns, to get their creative input on engagement with children and young people and to see them identify clear priorities which young people want us and our partners to focus on to ensure our services meet their needs. We were particularly impressed with the support of the Youth Commission at the civic reception event welcoming the Knife Angel to Lancashire, where they shared their views and hopes for the project, speaking eloquently in front of local leaders from across Lancashire."

Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office

"The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (LVRN) implements long term trauma-informed support programmes across Lancashire, and understand that to do that requires an evidence base to reflect that need. Working with the youth commission is an integral part of how we establish the right type of evidence base that in turn supports communities in an appropriate way. Without being able to draw on contributions from the youth commission the voice of young people may not be heard in our work and as we see them as the future it is vital that we don't lose sight of that need. Over the last year their contribution to a violence consultation has resulted in the writing of a preventing youth violence strategy that will help direct front line services in their work. This type of approach and innovation is refreshing, as is the genuine desire of the youth commission to support all members of the community. They are a valued partner and we want them to be part of our future work."

David Olfield, Violence Reduction Network Chief Inspector & Operational Lead

"The Lancashire Youth Commission were crucial in enabling the County Lines Eyes Open Campaign reach more young people through the Commissions ideas and suggestions. Additionally, as a communications professional, they taught me about the current trends in how young people access information and the platforms they use to do so. I'm very proud of the difference and impact they have made through working together."

Zoe Graham, Senior Internal Communications and Change Officer

"I'm Zara and I have been a member of the Lancashire Youth Commission since 2020. I have really enjoyed being a part of the team and helped to do my bit to reduce crime all over Lancashire. I have especially loved meeting new people and working with them as well as being able to give young people a voice and addressing their important views. Along this journey, I have been able to develop my communication skills as well as my confidence. It has been a great experience for me and I hope to take what I have learnt forward with me in my chosen career."

Zara Shahzad, Lancashire Youth Commissioner

"Having been a member of the Lancashire youth commission for over a year, I have been able to see and be a part of the development of the project for a substantial period of time. We started off as a group of young people who wanted to create real change in our communities by voicing the concerns of young people and educating them on issues that are important to them. I am sure I can speak for all of the members when I say I am extremely proud of how far we have come and how well we have achieved these objectives. Over the past year, we have met with many influential individuals working in the field of crime reduction such as chief constable, the police and crime commissioner and the head of the Violence Reduction Network. Through these meetings, we have been able to bring the concerns of young people to influential people in our communities so that changes can be made on the basis of these concerns. As well as educating professionals on the concerns of young people, we also educate young people on the concerns of the police through our regular workshops which take place across Lancashire. In these workshops, we educate young people on issues such as drugs and alcohol, relationships with the police and hate crime so that young people have an awareness of these issues, are able to stay safe and know where to go should they need to report any concerns. On a larger scale we are currently working with Zoe Graham from the police and crime commissioners office to create a short animation on how to identify the signs of grooming and where to go for help. We hope that this will reach thousands of young people in Lancashire and prevent some of them from entering into a life of crime. Our surveys are also an integral part of our aim to represent the voices of the young people of Lancashire. Through our surveys, we have been able to gather the views of over 2,000 young people on a range of important issues, allowing us to identify the concerns of young people and present these concerns in events such as this one. I am very proud to be a member of the Lancashire youth commission on crime reduction and prevention and I can't wait to see this project go from strength to strength in the future, due to the amazing work of the members of the commission, our brilliant project coordinator Beau and the continued support by the whole Leaders Unlocked team."

Muhammed Asif, Lancashire Youth Commissioner

"During my time on the commission, I've gained insight into the different dilemmas and experiences a wide range of diverse young people have gone through. I and the commission members, over the two years we've been working together have had the opportunity to listen to the youths thoughts and opinions in Lancashire and have received over 2,400 responses about our chosen priorities. When I originally joined the commission, I honestly did not think that change was needed in Lancashire. My understanding and perception has changed massively since then, there is a massive need for change and the young people, who we've all talked to agree and so many have an insightful perception and something valid to add. I am beyond grateful that I joined the commission, it has been an incredible learning tool and has allowed me to have an entirely different perception of the impacts our priorities have on young people and the need for young people to be heard and listened to in the community. Without Beau our coordinator, our commission members, the support from the VRN, PCC, Partners and the young people who were strong enough to share their experiences and views- the results gathered wouldn't have been as successful as they are, so a massive thank you to everyone involved."

Emily Johnson, Lancashire Youth Commissioner

"When I joined the Youth Commission, I really didn't know what to expect. I hadn't had any dealings with the Police myself, but after hearing on the news about the public dissatisfaction with the force as a whole I knew I wanted to try to improve things. Our first session was eye-opening, hearing all of the different views on the Police and how we could change things for the better, and especially hearing the wide range of interactions people had with the Police, from highly positive to overtly negative. Our group is full of very different people, and that's exactly what we needed to get a range of ideas. Speaking to the VRN and other members of the Police force was brilliant, it really inspired me to be more bold in my suggestions seeing these people who worked so hard to improve things for people like us. Working on the county lines campaign was especially rewarding as it was one of the first times we got together in person to share ideas and, with the help of Zoe Graham, create a really solid piece of work. Overall, the commission has helped me to see all of the good work the Police do, and how complicated and difficult it is to fix the problems the public have talked to us about. Most of all, though, it's given me a lot more confidence seeing that all these people care about trying to make the world just a little bit better."

Ryan Brown, Lancashire Youth Commissioner



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