



CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION:

FINAL REPORT TO THE

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

FEBRUARY 2023

**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 **39 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 on emerging 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 at least 2,000 conversations** with young people from across Cheshire during the CYC 'Big Conversation'.
- **Present the CYC 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 which has successfully delivered the Youth Commission peer-led model across 15 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

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is based on evidence which has been collected by delivering extensive engagement workshops. The CYC has exceeded its target by reaching over **2000 young people** 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 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 CYC 'Big Conversation'. The report is intended to support any 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 in 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 2022, Leaders Unlocked carried out a 2-stage recruitment process, which included distributing an easy-to-access recruitment pack which consisted of 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, by locations, backgrounds and life experiences.

Of the current members:

- **64% identify as female**
- **28% identify as male**
- **8% identify as non-binary/transgender**
- **51% are under 18 years old**
- **38% are part of the LGBTQ+ community**
- **25% identify as having a disability**
- **0% identify as from BAME communities**
- **12% have experience with the CJS**
- **42% are victims of crime**

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:

- 1. **Hate Crime**
- 2. **Safer Communities**
- 3. **Relationship with the Police**
- 4. **Violence and Abuse**

CREATING THE TOOLS FOR THE CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

During the second members’ meeting, **CYC 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 materials for the workshops**
- **Practice presentation skills**
- **Identify key organisations where the Big Conversation could take place**
- **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 collect relevant information for their research. The postcard shows each priority that the CYC collected 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 openly discussing. They are designed so that participants remain anonymous.

JOINT WORK WITH CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY

This year the CYC has worked with Cheshire Constabulary to further develop and embed their close relationship. This has included 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’s have included the following guests:

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

The CYC members also attended their first highly successful **Police HQ ‘Takeover Days’**.These initiatives allow young people to learn about the work of the OPCC and Cheshire Constabulary, and what is required to run them day to day. In addition to this, CYC members have been designated as **Youth Ambassadors** and have been established in each region of Cheshire to begin their working relationship with local policing units.

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.We have shared key data and trends established in the Big Conversation.

WHO WE’VE REACHED

The CYC has engaged with **2016 young people** across Cheshire. In total the CYC has delivered **22 events** in a wide range of young peoples settings across the city and Cheshire county.

This year the CYC focused particularly on engaging with traditionally underrepresented groups all aged 14–25 years. 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, young carers and young people with disabilities.

Priority	Responses
Violence and Abuse	483
Relationship with the Police	566
Safer Communities	604
Hate Crimes	363
Grand Total	2016

OUR PARTNERS

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

Cheshire College South & West	Reaseheath College	YMCA Crewe
Cheshire West and Chester Council	Sandbach High School and Sixth Form	YouthFed
Cheshire Young Carers	The Fallibroome Academy	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Chester Pride	University of Chester	
Mid Cheshire College	Warrington and Vale Royal College	
NHS Cheshire	Warrington Youth Club	
Queensberry AP		

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

Adele Keane	Emily Bradley	Lola Eaton
Alfie Byrne	Ethan McDonald	Lujean Elfituri
Amber Farrell	Harriet Samantha Roylance	Madeline Yates
Amy Mules	Isabella Permberton	Max Crompton
Anna Taylor	Jade-Louise Regan	Molly Sharkey
Bailey Hillson	James Oddie	Sammy El Dabba
Bella Mulcock	Jazmine Wicks	Sarah Ann May Burgess
Callum May	Jen Gibbs	Shelby Lea Jones
Charlene Wilkins	Jessica Whittaker	Sumaya Saleem
Chloe Roberts	Jess Crossett	Tyler Lawton
Chelsea Cromwell	Kai Carus	William Davies
Clarissa Rigby	Lais De Oliveira Llobet	William Price
Ella Redmond	Leah Priestley Black	
Ellis Taylor-Golden	Lewis Turner	

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



PRIORITY 1: HATE CRIMES



The CYC spoke to **363 young people** in Cheshire relating to hate crimes. Social media platforms have made it easier for people to voice their opinions anonymously, which has led to increased levels of hate speech. Young people in Cheshire have reported feeling unsafe when seen as 'different'. This fear is reinforced by a lack of support from Cheshire Police for victims, which young people have referred to as an 'impersonalised blanket approach'. The CYC set out to understand how hate crime has affected young people in Cheshire and to recommend actions that could be taken by Cheshire Constabulary to address young people's concerns.

WHAT WE FOUND

Many young people have provided the CYC with numerous instances where they have been a victim of hate based on a protected characteristic. Each instance has a detrimental effect on young people, who have argued that they do not feel safe to be themselves:

"I frequently experience hate crimes and bullying because of my gender/sexuality."

"I got spat on and kicked by people younger than me for the way I dress and my identity."

"People using racial, homophobic and ableist slurs without much consequence."

"Me and my mate got jumped for being homosexual and the police didn't handle it properly."

Such examples demonstrate how young people have been targeted for being different. Recent campaigns have encouraged people to stand up against hate crime but young people have suggested that whilst bystander intervention is encouraged, it is often seen as too risky for others to get involved:

"Hate crime is a big issue in Warrington I have heard people shout things at women in hijabs but I'm too scared to say anything back as the people frighten me."

"I witnessed someone say some slurs and bad words to a group of people and it made me feel upset and sad because the world is mean and stupid."

"People making LGBTQ+ members not feel safe in schools to be themselves."

Young people have argued that in education settings, teachers often refuse to get involved with hate crimes. They have suggested that this is down to a perceived 'reputational risk'. Young people would like to see education settings tackling hate crime more efficiently and not being afraid to involve the police if required:

"Education isn't good enough in this area. I think teachers are worried as it's a bit taboo."

"Colleges and schools don't want to report to police because of their reputation."

"Any sort of hate crime that has been reported should go from school to the police, also regular education and harsher punishments."

"Teachers need to take more action when an issue is raised. Many times it's ignored. Add more LGBTQ+ education in schools."

"Teachers are scared to address it."

"Schools should be held accountable for not reporting."

Young people have suggested that education settings also fall short on teaching about the effects and consequences of hate crime. There is a significant lack of understanding of the effects of hate crime on both the victim and the perpetrator, and young people have argued that increased awareness would reduce the frequency of abuse:

"Education around it isn't up to speed."

"Lots of labelling and people feeling unsure what to say or say the wrong thing."

"Education on oppression and slurs, harsher consequences for those using/acting racist etc."

"Maybe a lesson on bullying, homophobia, transphobia and catcalling or more people calling out these people."

"Young people need to be reminded of what hate crime is and how it hurts people."

Young people told us they feel police need to improve the way they handle hate crime. It has been suggested that the police suffer from an internalised and unconscious bias towards certain characteristics and until this is dealt with, the likelihood of young people turning to the police for help with hate crimes is low.

"Police still have lots of internalised racism and sexism in the force and until that's addressed and dealt with putting more police on the street won't help everyone."

"The police think bad of all groups of teens they see when most likely they aren't doing anything wrong. Everyone should feel safer, especially women who I see being catcalled on daily."

"Test the police to see if they are discriminating and more training to help communities who may have not have the same backgrounds as an officer."

Young people have suggested that follow-ups to reported hate crimes need to be more personalised, and there should be consequences for police who knowingly discriminate:

"Add more consequences from the police."

"Always send at least one female officer to an abuse case that the female can relate to in a way. Make sure guidance is available about the next steps at every stage of the investigation as it can lead to extreme worrying that is what is already a difficult time for them."

A young man with dark hair, wearing a red jacket, is shown in profile, looking down. He is standing in front of a brick wall. In the background, other people are visible, including a man with glasses and a woman, but they are out of focus. The scene is outdoors, possibly on a street or in a public area.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Officers to encourage **alternative routes** of reporting such as online, via email and anonymously via Crimestoppers.

Recruit a more **diverse police force** to fairly represent the diverse communities around Cheshire.

PCC & PARTNERS:

Offer **clear messaging** to schools & colleges about taking more **responsibility** for reporting hate crime to the police and asking police for **education packages** in a timely manner following any reports.

Educate young people on the **lasting effect** hate crimes can have on others, as well as the **consequences** for perpetrators.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Promote the ability to omit **offensive words** on social media during our workshops.

Use social media platforms to **raise awareness** of different hate crimes, their consequences and their impact on victims.

Work with the OPCC and the police to **promote** reporting tools.

PRIORITY 2: RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLICE



The CYC has spoken to **566 young people** in Cheshire relating to their relationship with the police. Young people have raised ideas about how policing in Cheshire could be managed in a more effective way. Young people argued that without changes to how the police approach the younger generation, collaboration will be difficult. 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

We have spoken to a variety of young people about their experiences with the police, and have received a number of positive responses. Young people have suggested that the police deserve respect for the job that they do but recognise that there are a number of factors which need to be considered in order to grow trust. They have acknowledged that building an effective working relationship will take time:

"So friendly! I like them and they are always very approachable."

"When reporting a theft, they were very understanding, but the website to report was inefficient and did not end up working."

"I personally am happy with the police however the reputation of the police among people my age tends to be negative and they seem to lack respect for the police."



"I have had bad experiences with the police but recently they were alright and dealt with a stop and search ok – explained it properly and thanked me for my time at the end."

Young people have raised issues with the use of Stop and Search in Cheshire. Some perceive it to be a way for police to exercise their control and authority unreasonably, and as such, it can be detrimental to building trust between the police and young people.

Its use causes tension in Cheshire and therefore young people want to see Stop and Search approaches improve:

"Stop and Search is a control tool for police. It isn't effective and causes tension."

"They didn't explain to me why I was stopped. Just said a load of sections and I didn't understand what it was about. They also didn't apologise when nothing was found."

"Stopping young lads for no reason other than being in a group isn't right. It's bang out of order."

"They don't give receipts and don't have a good reason to stop and search you."

"Police target young lads in dark clothes for stop and search."

Young people feel that the police need to be more aware of mental health and disabilities, and the effects of being a victim of crime on mental health. Police should have more mental health considerations, and ensure they understand and recognise the difference between a mental health crisis and criminal behaviour.

"Police make me scared of them because they accused me of being on drugs when I was having a meltdown."

"More training and come to events at schools so that they have more knowledge and understanding of autistic people."

"Make sure officers are trained with real teenagers so we can tell you how we feel in a situation and how your voice or way you are saying things might make us confused or stressed."

Young female victims of crime mentioned they were initially visited by a male officer leaving them feeling uncomfortable and unable to speak openly. Young people have argued that any abuse cases should have at least one officer of the same gender present to make communication easier for victims:

"The police have no idea about how to handle sexual abuse cases they don't tell you any information about what is going on with the case and they sent out male officers for a sexual abuse case with a girl. This means that they are less likely to talk to the police about what has happened if the offender is male."

"Always send at least one female officer to an abuse case that the female can relate to in a way. Make sure guidance is available about the next steps at every stage of the investigation as it can lead to extreme worrying in what is already a difficult time for them."

Victims of crime felt police are too overworked and under pressure to deal with them properly, leaving victims feeling forgotten and their cases rushed. Young people felt police could use their time more effectively as they currently seem target-driven rather than focused on helping others. Young people have suggested that part of their focus should be directed at community outreach and follow-ups:

"Have an increase in community engagement with the police, like police open days and more awareness of how they engage with society."

"Not following up with victims after reports of crimes. When people report an issue the police don't always follow up on the victim and spiking is a massive issue."

"When an incident happens they take a long time to get to the scene They take a very long time to arrive to an incident- they took 4 hours to arrive to an incident here."

"Police are too slow - my friend reported rape and they are taking too long to solve it, they are not showing any signs of action just talking to the victim."

"Open your doors to more school days out or information days as school trips. Let us come to you."



RECOMMENDATIONS

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Work with all types of education settings to offer '**Takeover Days**' to young people so they can understand more about local policing and police roles.

Send at least **one female officer** for female victims of crime and take more time to update victims on cases.

PCC & PARTNERS:

Evaluate **Stop & Search** data with YAGs and address any disproportionalities, ensuring it is being used effectively and for the correct reasons.

Ensure police training includes **Youth Mental Health First Aid** to effectively support and manage crises.

Ensure education settings and local authorities **positively engage** with the police force as a whole, inviting them in on a regular basis.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Continue **Youth Ambassador** work within each LPU, feeding back current findings from each area to the force.

Promote **positive tools** such as 'GoodSam' and the new Youth Zone website to young people across Cheshire.

Work with OPCC and Police to promote policing **good news** stories.



PRIORITY 3: VIOLENCE AND ABUSE



The CYC has spoken to **483 young people** in Cheshire relating to violence and abuse. Young people highlighted that violence and abuse can be hard to escape, as it can be in person or online. Abuse comes in many forms but young people have suggested that the same barriers are in place for reporting abuse. 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 catcalling is an example of abuse in the region and is experienced in all areas of young women's lives. Young people in Cheshire have detailed how they experience catcalling outside of their schools regularly. Young people have stated that they often do not feel that these issues are worth reporting:

"Feels like catcalling is something that we recognise is wrong but are told that we have to accept."

"I've had numerous catcalls and sexual harassment in my workplace from customers. It's disgusting to hear from someone who is old enough to be my dad/grandad."

"Men shouting 'show us your tits' when I'm 14 and they are older than my dad."

"The message we get from schools and college is to kind of accept or brush off catcalling and it feels too much of a small issue to report it to the police."

"I'm not sure about catcalling as it happens outside school or on the way home and it seems stupid to tell the police but then it happens all the time."

"When school turns a blind eye to harassment by boys why would we ever feel we can go to them for help about serious issues like assault or issues at home."

It has been suggested by young people that there is currently not enough action taken to tackle abuse online. Examples of online abuse provided to us by young people in Cheshire include bullying in group chats and sharing of nude photographs, as well as online hate crimes:

"Too much hate online causing people to take posts down."

"People creating groups then inviting people and just being really nasty."

"Filming bullying and sharing it online – this needs to be stopped!"

"Some people are so nasty in WhatsApp groups or on snap and share stuff. It's bad."

"Can something be done about the amount of nudes sent around? It's turned into a normal thing when it's not and police need to take it more seriously as it's basically sharing pictures of a naked child."

Similarly to other priorities, one of the recurring concerns with abuse is education. Young people have argued that topics such as consent are not discussed enough in education settings, and would be of particular benefit in PSHE lessons. An additional concern for abuse victims is that there is a gap of knowledge for parents and teachers as well, which young people believe needs to be addressed:

"Consent isn't just about sex it's about being in your space and I don't think this is spoken about enough."

"Consent isn't clear and causes confusion."

"Parents need educating about it and people need to be more aware of what counts as abuse, more helplines around the community."

"Teach teachers about this issue, so the issue will be stopped from a young age. Teaching age-appropriate lessons on consent will help people understand boundaries (their own and others)."

Young people have stated that because of the high risk of abuse, they continue to feel unsafe at night, fearing sexual assaults, and being attacked. As a result of this, many have resorted to carrying weapons for their own protection. Spiking was also a notable area of concern for young women in Cheshire with many reporting being spiked and feeling police had let them down or they weren't taken seriously. Young people do not believe that this should be happening and would like to see action taken to make the streets safer at night.

"It isn't fully safe at night and you never know what is around the corner."

"Scared walking home, have to carry weapons to protect myself."

"Violence is an issue in certain communities. Not just sexual violence but lads jumping other lads, kick-offs all the time."

"Jumping and fights with weapons at night as it is harder to record on CCTV."

"Sexual assaults walking home after nights out and it's happening more."

"I was spiked and the police said I was just on drugs and dismissed the issue completely. It left me feeling ashamed."

"When are the police going to do something about spiking? It keeps happening and there is a lot of victim-blaming."

Young people recommend that the police's approach to reducing violence and abuse in Cheshire should be driven by victims' voices and detail the consequences. Further emphasis should be put on the negative impacts on people's mental and physical well-being, and the implications for offenders:

"The CPS and Police rules fail victims and their voices are forgotten. Make more time to listen to them properly."

"Why is a perpetrator given more air time than a victim? This isn't fair and needs to be looked at closely."

"Maybe the police can make everyone go to classes to help them understand what it feels like."

"Meet with the police in a safe space and have active conversations about public sexual harassment, more policing in common areas. Education from younger ages in school- not just a lecture to boys and girls but explaining why it is unacceptable and how it affects lives."

"Police to share more about local harassment and what they are doing about it."



RECOMMENDATIONS

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

More information about **spiking** needs to be shared, with a focus on the importance of reporting, monitoring trends and publicly **bringing offenders to justice**.

Monitor and act on harassment and catcalling outside of schools and ensure the results are shared with students.

Work closely with education settings on 'turf wars' and inform best ways to report.

PCC & PARTNERS:

Independent education providers, outside of police and schools, should be working with young people on the **impact & consequences** of violence and drug crime.

Follow up with and listen to victims of abuse and violence to ensure they feel their case has been effectively managed. This should be done by individuals not associated with the police to gain trust and encourage honesty.

Raise awareness of the impact of carrying a weapon for protection.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Raise awareness of '**GoodSam**' and how this can keep young people safe.

Continue to promote our **consent** film along with effective support services.

Work with the OPCC and partners on a campaign promoting the **impact & consequences** of violence and drug crime.



PRIORITY 4: SAFER COMMUNITIES



The CYC has spoken to **604 young people** in Cheshire about the safety of their communities. Young people have raised concerns about a lack of safety, lack of recreational engagement and high crime rates in Cheshire communities. The CYC set out to identify what action young people feel needs to be taken in order to improve the safety of their communities.

WHAT WE FOUND

Young people have felt that Cheshire and other areas have seen an increased number of stabbings, primarily involving young men being jumped and youth violence involving knives. Young people have noted that there is often no way to identify perpetrators in these areas due to a lack of CCTV or lighting. As a result, young people are often frightened by the risk of being attacked and would like to see more done to tackle the growing issue:

"Multiple stabbings and victims in my area."

"Lots of people getting stabbed, e.g. Hope Farm shops and Westminster."

"Having to avoid certain areas and places due to lack of CCTV and street lights."

"Plenty of different crimes going on in the area but there's never any cameras around to catch these crimes, therefore nothing gets sorted."

"Don't have police talk to us about knives and gangs as they don't understand it. Have other people talk to us. Maybe people who have experienced it."

Young people have repeatedly stated that there are not enough activities for them to do in their area and young women in particular have reiterated that the safety implications of walking to and from places and activities are too high of a risk for them. Young people have pointed to Halloween as an example, where harassment and the objectification of young women by older men prevent them from enjoying themselves. Similar examples have also been provided where young women are in their school uniforms:

"There are not enough activities for young people to do. More street lights as I feel scared walking home. Not enough police on the streets."

"Young people get judged for being in "gangs" around town or sitting in groups in certain areas but there is nowhere for young people to go in the area."

"Harassment of young women over Halloween. Catcalling and physical harassment much more frequent over Halloween and the weeks heading up to it."

"I walk to school meaning I'm usually targeted by men. They shout things through car windows, beep at me and all around make me feel uncomfortable and unsafe when I'm walking to school."

"Provide more clubs/ areas for younger children to go to prevent them from becoming violent when they are older or someone to offer them the knowledge that they care about them."

Young people have stated that they do not feel safe at night, particularly when leaving clubs or bars and walking home. Concerns with this are similar to concerns around stabbings, in that large parts of their routes are poorly lit and are considered high crime areas. Young people have argued that they should feel safe walking home at night. Also, young people feel that this isn't always a gendered issue:

"Lads being jumped on nights out and this isn't seen as a problem. It's all about female safety."

"Not feeling safe walking home after a night out. Lads harassing us. Nowhere to go to feel safe."

"Walking home after nights out to digs and street lighting is poor near some uni digs."

"Groups shouting across at you when walking alone home. I shouldn't have to feel like I should walk home with other people. Target the problem."

Young people have noted that their online communities are equally unsafe. Young people are at risk of online bullying and many have stated that this impacts them on a daily basis. Examples including hate speech, sharing of images and group chat harassment. Young people spoke of 'incels' and have said that this is not taken seriously by the police or authority figures:

"We need to make incels more well known-online. They teach men to violently hate women and this needs to be addressed and recognised."

"Online bullying. I have lost a lot of friends because of online bullying. However my school did deal with it really well."

"Online bullying- people think it's acceptable to be horrible when it's not face-to-face but it's not okay."

"Negative and hate comments online but people do nothing about it."

Young people told us that drug use and sales among their peers are increasing in certain areas such as Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Macclesfield, only supported by the glamorisation of 'gang life'. In some instances, young people are being sold drugs via social media platforms like Snapchat. Young people believe that action needs to be taken to prevent access to gateway drugs and discourage young people from using and selling drugs:

"I am disappointed at the repeated incidents of drug and alcohol abuse in my area especially as this may lead to unemployment and poverty."

"Lots of substance abuse in Winsford. This is a real problem because it can cause people to become addicted."

"More children are gaining access to gateway drugs and endangering their future."

"Teenagers are vaping under 16 and nothing is done to stop them."

"Drugs are so accessible and people think it's really smart to sell them and get caught up in it. It happens all the time and is so easy to sell because of Snapchat. School turns a blind eye. They know who is bang at it."

"Further express the negative impacts of drugs and their consequences."

"Teach the negative effects of drugs in schools. Educate people."



RECOMMENDATIONS

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY:

Engage with the **adult community**, openly discussing harassment and unacceptable behaviour.

Ensure children under 18 involved in drug crimes are treated as **victims of exploitation** and are provided with appropriate education & intervention.

Continue to work with local bars and clubs to ensure safety is a top priority at all times and **publicly promote** this work.

PCC & PARTNERS:

Publicly **show support** for Sandbach High School's campaign and petition to ban school uniforms in sex shops and pornography.

Identify and work with **vulnerable young people** providing effective intervention tools such as **real-life stories** and guest speakers sharing the reality of criminal activity.

YOUTH COMMISSION:

Provide a continuous **sounding board** to the new 'Youth Zone' website and help it become a 'one directory' for young people in Cheshire.

Work with the OPCC and Police on raising awareness of **key messages** around going out safely and what to do if you find yourself or others in a difficult situation.

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.

Over the next 12 months, we will continue our 'Big Conversation' with young people across Cheshire as well as further developing our Youth Ambassador roles and our close working relationship with Cheshire Constabulary. CYC will continue to give young people a voice on the issues that affect them.

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

TESTIMONIALS

I have really enjoyed my first year with the CYC. I have enjoyed meeting lots of different types of people and hearing about different lives and experiences. My absolute favourite thing about CYC this year was when we spent a few days at Winsford Police Headquarters. I loved everything about the experience!!! I had always considered the Police as a career choice but after my time spent at Winsford, I am now 100% sure that this is the correct path for me. From this experience, I have now applied and been accepted to start a 6th Form Public Services course in September. So I guess CYC has opened my eyes to this.

Next year I am looking forward to having more time to be involved with CYC after my GCSE studies are complete. I will then have more time to give. CYC is important to me because I feel that I am doing something worthwhile and meaningful while learning valuable skills for the future.

Max 16

Because of all the wonderful chances I had this year, I loved serving on the Youth Commission. We spent two fascinating and educational days occupying the Winsford Police Headquarters. In these days, we learned about dog handlers, call centres, cyber security, and armed police. The final meeting at police headquarters this year, where we presented our results to a large number of individuals from various departments within the police force and the community, was a new experience for me that I really enjoyed. I had a lot of fun speaking with people one-on-one about my role on the commission and my opinions on various subjects brought up within our presentation. Next year I'm really looking forward to coming up with our aims and priorities as I feel like this sets us up for the year and I really enjoy hearing different people's ideas on what they feel like needs to be prioritised for young people of Cheshire in the coming months. I think CYC is important as it allows people to be a part of an amazing group of diverse individuals where you feel heard and respected. It also broadens your knowledge in so many different ways, from knowing about your rights to learning how to train as a police officer in firearms. It really is an incredible group that I'm so lucky to be a part of.

Bella, 15.

Hello, my name is Sumaya and I have been a member of the CYC for 2 years now. For me the CYC is very important as it deals with young people's concerns very seriously and effectively, as we are a very diverse group of young people with different opinions and experiences, and the thing we have in common is our passion to improve our community, making it safer and more inclusive. During my time with the CYC this year, I have experienced very enjoyable and informative moments, some included the final Conference, presenting our priorities in front of different guest speakers, allowing us to get networking and gather feedback about our work. Also, the takeover days, which we had 2 full days looking around different police departments and roles, and at that time we were introduced to the goodSAM app that I believe was one of the biggest steps that were taken by the police to improve safety on streets (especially that of women's and young girls), and this is something that I am very impressed by. As for next year, I hope that both the CYC and the police will continue to work together to establish safer communities and advocate young people's problems and concerns, and hopefully help people feel even more safe and secure.

Sumaya, 17

The Youth Commission provides me with lots of opportunities to hold Police and Crime Commissioners to account. We are given the opportunity to take part in Youth Advisory Groups(YAGs) where we are able to voice our opinions around particular matters, for example a recent YAG was around child-centered policing. This was a chance for us to voice our opinions around policies which the Police and Crime Commissioners implement for young people and whether this is/will be effective or not. Alongside this, we regularly work with the police for things such as creating a section of their website that young people can access which isn't as overwhelming for young people to read to know their rights. We were able to decide everything from the colour palette to the content of the website and what areas they need to inform young people on. As a result of this, we created a stop-and-search video to upload to their website. The CYC is vital to promote change and improve relationships between young people and police officers by bridging that gap of people who may often feel like they are not included into the conversation when crime affects them everyday and more and more young people are falling into crime or becoming victims. The opportunity to act as a voice for young people is so rewarding for me and it really makes me feel like I am making a difference, for example thanks to our findings the police made GoodSAM, a way for people to be tracked to their exact location by simply accessing the victims camera to ensure they feel safer when walking through the streets. This demonstrates our ability to incite change through our findings and raise awareness of issues which police may have not previously considered. I also thoroughly enjoy going to schools and colleges and teaching workshops about various topics such as healthy relationships and stop and search. It is great to have the opportunity to provide this information to young people and we always aim to provide young people with information on how to report a crime if they ever need to. This is amazing as it helps to strengthen relationships between young people and the police as it ensures young people feel heard and it enables police officers to do their job. I am really looking forward to doing these next year as I do really love sharing my knowledge to encourage crime prevention and I hope that I am able to make a difference to these young peoples lives, for example raising awareness of the signs of abuse to ensure that young people are able to keep themselves safe. I absolutely love being a part of the Youth Commission and I'm looking forward to taking part again in the following years.

Chelsea, 20

In 2022 I enjoyed the Youth Commission takeover days at police headquarters. It gave me a real insight into the work carried out by the police. Next year I am looking forward to having more face to face meetings with the team now that Covid restrictions are lifting. I think the Youth Commission is important because it helps get young people's points across to the Police and the Police commissioner.

James, 24

This year I have enjoyed the different opportunities that the Youth Commission has to offer, these have helped to widen my spectrum of understanding around topics that are relevant to day to day life. I look forward to next year as these opportunities change each year and generally get better than the previous year's. I also hope to further widen my spectrum of understanding to provide better solutions for problems that are brought to us by young people.

Alfie, 16

"Over the past year it has been great to see the Cheshire Youth Commission continue their work and ensure that young people in our county have a voice in policing. At a time when policing is increasingly under the microscope and the need to engage with everyone in our communities has never been greater, they have provided invaluable insights into what young people want to see from their police service.

Seeing how the Cheshire Youth Commission has grown over the years has given me a renewed optimism that through working together we can increase public confidence in policing among young people. The recommendations they make to me and the Constabulary ensure that our decisions and our areas of focus take the needs of young people into account.

Through working closely with my office and the Constabulary and holding events such as their annual conference, as well as a HQ takeover, Youth Commission members have been able to gain a real insight into the impact their work has had.

Thanks to the Cheshire Youth Commission, real progress has been made in ensuring that policing is more accessible and relevant to young people. But there is always more to do, and I'm looking forward to working with members over the next year to ensure that young people's priorities are reflected in our mission to make Cheshire an even safer place to live, work and visit."

John Dwyer – Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire

It has been a pleasure to work and develop Cheshire Constabulary's relationship with the Cheshire Youth Commission (CYC), helping to promote the interests and safety of young people across Cheshire. Building and maintaining this effective relationship with them can only improve confidence and satisfaction in Cheshire Constabulary amongst young people, who are often wary and mistrustful of the Police Service.

Activities organised throughout this period have included the CYC Takeover Event at HQ, when the majority of the CYC Committee spent two days at HQ visiting Departments and discussing the issues facing young people with staff from across Cheshire Constabulary. The Takeover Event was deemed an outstanding success by all involved. Additional activities have involved engagement with children from hard to reach communities such as the Gypsy, Romany & Traveller communities and amendments to how Cheshire Constabulary Communications & Marketing actually present stories and appeals, so that they better reach younger age groups.

This amazing opportunity has made it clear that the nature and circumstances of contact with the police can have a significant and lasting impression on a young person. The Constabulary and PCC have acknowledged the work with the CYC and recognised the positive impact it is having in building trust and confidence in policing with the young people of this county. The Chief officers have also been impressed by their outstanding involvement and are looking forward to working closely for years to come

Personally I have learned a significant amount about how Young People view the police and thoroughly enjoyed working closely with them to start to make changes in the Constabulary, Thank You for helping us to understand and help you.

Sergeant Zoe Bowden – Staff Officer to Deputy Chief Constable Chris Armitt OBE QPM

"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

The work Cheshire Youth Commission undertakes is used to inform our work with learners in their tutorial sessions. We value the feedback we get from CYC which enables to focus on the priorities that are important to young people, such as knife crime, mental health, online safety and relationships with the Police. Using these topics as a starting point enables us to have open and effective discussions with learners about the challenges they face and provide them with the skills and knowledge to make positive choices and keep themselves safe. Our learners welcome the opportunity to feedback their opinions to CYC as part of their Student Voice.

Fiona Whiteway, Personal Development Tutor Team Leader, Cheshire College South & West

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