



**Response to Draft Northern Ireland
Policing Plan Consultation 2020-2025
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Include Youth

Include Youth is an independent non-governmental organisation that actively promotes the rights, best interests of and best practice with disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people.

The young people we work with and for include those from socially disadvantaged areas, those who have had poor educational experiences, those from a care background, young people who have committed or are at risk of committing crime, misusing drugs and/or alcohol, engaging in unsafe or harmful sexual behaviour, or at risk of being harmed themselves. We provide a range of tailored employability programmes for these young people, including programmes in partnership with community based organisations.

Our Give & Take Scheme adopts a youth work approach to improving the employability and increasing the self-esteem and confidence of young people aged 16 to 24 who are not yet ready to participate in mainstream training.

Many of these young people have experienced social exclusion, poverty or have other complex challenges in their lives and therefore need additional support to overcome these barriers and positively progress their education, training or employment needs. Seventy-five per cent of young people on the Scheme are care experienced, while over a third has a background in offending. We offer a range of tailored programmes including

- Core - for young people referred to us through the Health Trusts
- Start Programme – a collaborative partnership programme with community based organisations, targeted at young people in the North Down, Ards and Belfast areas
- Outreach - for groups or organisations throughout Northern Ireland
- One to One - for young people at risk of child sexual exploitation
- Transitional support - for those moving on from our Scheme and into mainstream education, training or employment
- Strive – a cross community, cross cultural, and cross border programme that engages young people in good relations, person development and citizenship.

Our main offices are in Belfast, Armagh, Ballymena, Derry, Enniskillen, Newtownards and Omagh.

Include Youth also delivers an Employability Service on behalf of two of the five Health Trusts for young people aged 16 + who have had experience of the care system. This service is designed to offer tangible and concrete opportunities to assist young people leaving care to prepare for, and engage in work.

Include Youth also engages in policy advocacy work in the areas of employability, youth justice and policing. This work is informed by relevant international human rights and children's rights standards, is evidence based, including that provided by young people and practitioners and is based on high quality, critical analysis.

Comments

Consultation process:

Include Youth welcome the opportunity to comment on the Draft NI Policing Plan consultation 2020-2025.

We have previously made comments on our concerns around the consultation process and of the importance of consulting directly with young people to inform aspects of the plan. We welcomed the invitation from Policing Board staff to come out and speak to young people involved in our organisation. We have conducted a number of consultations with young people over the previous months on a range of issues related to policing and felt that we had already a clear picture of young people's experiences and views on policing to inform our response to the present consultation.

We are keen to hear how the NIPB and PSNI carried out direct consultation with children and young people on this draft plan. We would draw attention to the NIPB's obligations with regard to Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Article 12 of the UNCRC.

Include Youth have consistently called for the PSNI and PBNI to comply with statutory obligations in relation to the development of the Policing Plan by screening the plan and by carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). An EQIA should be conducted in accordance with Equality Commission recommended practice and we would recommend that guidance is sought from the Commission on how to go about this in the most effective way.

Clearly, children and young people will be affected by the Policing Plan and as such they should be consulted with in a method and format which enables them to participate fully.

While we acknowledge that a young person's version of the consultation was provided in Appendix 1 of the main consultation document, we would like to have seen separate documents produced and designed specifically for a younger audience and subsequently disseminated through a range of youth networks or education networks. A document aimed at primary school children will read quite differently to that provided for teenagers and young adults and as such we would

have recommended the document be provided in a range of age appropriate formats.

As the plan is extremely high level and generic in nature we anticipate that we will engage at a deeper level in the next critical stage of the plan when measurements are drawn up. We would also anticipate the next stage being a critical one in terms of the PSNI and the Policing Board securing the involvement of children and young people and would strongly recommend a co-design approach with children and young people in the development of measurements and ongoing monitoring of the outcomes of the plan.

While we acknowledge that the plan is a high level document we would have liked to have seen more specific reference within the plan to issues relating to the policing of children and young people, such as the use of stop and search powers, diversionary measures and the importance of building young people's confidence in the police.

Relevant Documents:

We welcome the mention of other significant and relevant plans and reports such as the Local Policing Review Consultation response and Human Rights Monitoring Reports. We would like to see reference to the commitment to deliver on relevant recommendations from existing reports. Include Youth would welcome a specific commitment within the plan to deliver on the recommendations from the Thematic Report and updated Thematic Report on Children and Young People and the Thematic Review on CSE.

We welcome the inclusion within the plan of the commitment to adopt a rights based approach to policing. We firmly agree that having a rights based policing service is key is critical to building confidence in policing and that human rights principles must be embedded into day to day policing.

The Plan should also make reference to and include a commitment to address the most recent recommendations and concluding observations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child with regard to UK Government's compliance with the UNCRC. There are a number of recommendations which are directly relevant to the Policing Plan and as such be included within it:

37 (a) Prohibit the use in public spaces of acoustic devices used to disperse gatherings of young people (so-called "mosquito devices");

(b) Collect data on measures used against children, including children aged 10-11 years, to deal with antisocial behaviours and for the dispersal of crowds, and monitor the criteria and proportionality of their use.

38 (a) *Prohibit the use of non-statutory stop-and-search checks against children;*

(b) *Ensure that the statutory use of the stop-and-search checks is proportionate, taking into consideration the age and maturity of the child, and non-discriminatory;*

(c) *Regularly collect, analyse and publish data relating to the use of stop-and-search checks on children, disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin and socioeconomic background.*

40 (a) *Prohibit the use on children of electrical discharge weapons, such as Tasers, attenuating energy projectiles (in Northern Ireland) and any other harmful devices and systematically collect and publish age-disaggregated data on their use in order to monitor the implementation of such prohibition;*

(b) *Abolish all methods of restraint against children for disciplinary purposes in all institutional settings, both residential and non-residential, and ban the use of any technique designed to inflict pain on children;*

(c) *Ensure that restraint is used against children exclusively to prevent harm to the child or others and only as a last resort;*

(d) *Systematically and regularly collect and publish disaggregated data on the use of restraint and other restrictive interventions on children in order to monitor the appropriateness of discipline and behaviour management for children in all settings, including in education, custody, mental health, welfare and immigration settings.*

45 (c) *Implement the recommendations of the Marshall Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland;*

(e) *Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement authorities and the judiciary to detect and prosecute child sexual exploitation and abuse, and grant effective remedies to the child victims;*

49. (c) *Take immediate and effective measures to protect children from violence by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks and from recruitment by such actors into violent activities, including through measures relating to transitional and criminal justice.*

79 (b) *Ensure that children in conflict with the law are always dealt with within the juvenile justice system up to the age of 18 years, and that diversion measures do not appear in children's criminal*

(d) *Establish the statutory principle that detention should be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and ensure that detention is not used discriminatorily against certain groups of children;*

(e) *Ensure that child detainees are separated from adults in all detention settings;*

(f) Immediately remove all children from solitary confinement, prohibit the use of solitary confinement in all circumstances and regularly inspect the use of segregation and isolation in child detention facilities.

Policing Plan Outcome 1- We have a safe community

We welcome the outcome to provide a safe community for all and in particular the emphasis on the role of the PSNI to support and protect those in our communities who are the most vulnerable or are at greater risk of being victimised. We know that children and young people are amongst our most vulnerable in the community and are more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators. Research however has shown that the crime rates against young people may be higher than official statistics suggest due to under reporting of crime from young people. It is paramount that children and young people feel safe in their communities and they are able to feel confident that the PSNI are central actors in being able to keep them safe. A measurement should be included to monitor how safe young people feel.

We welcome the reference within the plan to tackling and raising awareness about the escalation of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, to increase reporting to police. This is especially relevant given that the number of sexual offences recorded where the victim was under 18 at the time the offence was committed more than doubled between 2007/08 and 2018/19 and that 94% of victims who were under 18 at the time the offence occurred were victims of violence against the person or a sexual offence.¹

We agree that a collaborative approach is most likely to succeed when seeking to reduce the number of victims and offenders. While we concur that early intervention is central to this aim we would emphasize the importance of involving the community and voluntary sector in this work, particularly when it comes to working with young people.

It is important that any attempt to identify young people at risk to participate in early intervention programmes does not result in some young people being labelled and stigmatised. We believe it is the work of welfare professionals, whether in the statutory, non statutory, community and voluntary sectors, to work with at risk young people. These professionals are best placed to offer appropriate support and intervention, in a non criminalising manner, by the very fact that they are not within the justice sector.

There is a significant body of evidence which demonstrates the deeply damaging impact contact with any statutory criminal justice agencies, including the police, has

¹ PSNI Trends in Police Recorded Crime in NI 1998/99 to 2018/2019, Annual Bulletin published 8 November 2019.

on the lives of young people. In light of this the PSNI needs to ensure that non-stigmatisation and non-criminalisation are the cornerstones of any effective diversionary approaches to youth offending which are undertaken in partnership with communities.

Policing Plan Outcome 2 – We have confidence in policing

Include Youth welcome the specific commitment within the plan to improve public confidence in policing and the acknowledgement that more needs to be done to increase trust in those communities where confidence is lowest. We note that in the previous plan there was a specific commitment to build young people's confidence in policing (1.1.4 - Increase young people's confidence in policing in areas where it was identified as being lower through initiatives carried out in collaboration with local communities, partner agencies and PCSPs) and we would like to see this commitment restated within the current draft plan.

While we welcome the measurements listed within the plan to demonstrate that communities have confidence in policing we would like to see a specific measurement to identify an improvement in young people's confidence and satisfaction in policing. It would be beneficial if a wider data collection on young people's confidence in policing could be disaggregated by geographical location, religion, race etc. Only through this disaggregation can we ensure that problems are identified and tailored solutions are developed. Specific targets should be included to ensure that young people's confidence in policing is improving over a period of time and in response to relevant initiatives.

We would also like to recommend that when designing any measurement to gain information about children and young people's confidence in the police, the Board and PSNI involve children and young people in the design of the tool. If surveys are being used we would like to see a children and young person's advisory group established to inform the design of the survey. While it is important to gather quantitative data on the levels of children and young people's confidence on the police it would also be beneficial to gather qualitative information also as this will allow the PSNI to look behind the statistics to more fully understand why young people hold certain views about the police and more importantly to gauge what steps they can take to improve relations. Focus groups with children and young people, especially with those young people who are more likely to have had negative experiences with the police will deliver more in depth information.

Include Youth remain concerned about the low level of confidence that the young people we work with display in relation to the PSNI. To inform our response to the recent local policing review consultation we consulted a number of young people to ascertain their views on policing in general. A number of the young people talked

about how they felt that the police did not work to keep young people safe and that previous experiences had dented their confidence in the ability of the PSNI to respond to the needs of young people.

In terms of emergency calls and investigative crime that the PSNI were engaged in, they saw the benefit for wider society but could not apply this to themselves as they do not feel the police work for them or are interested in investigating their experiences of being a victim of crime.

“I got burgled before and they did nothing about it because they don’t like me or my brother so didn’t want to help us.”

“Even if was shot, the police wouldn’t help me. They would think I deserve it because I’m a criminal.”

In terms of what was important to them, there was a call for more police presence in communities and they believed this presence was especially important in areas which they regarded as being more prone to ‘anti-social behaviour’.

“in my area there are no police, there are no police walking about, there should be one police officer that everyone knows, like police in the community.”

“I’m lucky if I see a police officer once in a blue moon.”

Others were concerned for particular sections of their communities as they believed that the police could do more to support vulnerable and elderly people. They also expressed the view that the police do not do enough to protect children.

There was frustration expressed at the time it took the police to respond to calls.

“people think that even if you phone the police they won’t come in time, that even if you call them they don’t even come.”

“going to the police would be a last resort because by the time they come out it would already have been dealt with.”

Interaction with care experienced young people:

Include Youth have highlighted our concerns on numerous occasions about the over-representation of looked after children in the youth justice system. We remain concerned about the inappropriate use of custody for children and young people, and in particular the use of remand under PACE. Clearly this runs contrary to international children’s rights standards. Whilst we recognise that responsibility in this area includes but is not exclusive to the Police Service, and that much work has and continues to be done to solve this significant problem, we believe that the Plan

and associated measurements should contain reference to the need to address relationships between police young people and other agencies (e.g. residential care homes) which will ensure that vulnerable children and young people are no longer inappropriately placed in custody by allowing for more creative responses to dealing with children who present behavioural challenges.

“I got 25 convictions in 2 months in a care home... my solicitor said they were too quick to lift the phone and call the police. I got booked for throwing a cup at the wall, and they phoned the cops and I got done for criminal damage.”

“I never got convictions ‘til I went into care ... I got 66 convictions in 2 years... wouldn’t have been in here only I was in care. Even if we went into the staff office (in care home) to wind them up, they would threaten to phone the police.”

Many of the young people we work with believe that the police treat them differently because they are from a care background. They sense that the police treat them with suspicion and they are often more likely to be stopped and questioned. The view from young people that looked after children are more likely to be brought into the justice system where those not in care would not have been is extremely common and expressed to us on a regular basis.

Young people we talked to thought that the police could do better to understand the experiences and upbringing of children in care.

“They should talk to young people instead of fighting with them and then they end up lashing out”.

“Officers need to be more aware of the trauma and the needs of looked after children and should try to breakdown these barriers”.

When we asked what could be changed to make policing better, one young woman said she believed that changing police attitudes was the solution. She believed that young people in care needed the most support as they have traumatic and difficult upbringings but felt that the police either didn’t understand that or if they did, they didn’t care. However, she did say that she wouldn’t phone the police if she was a victim of crime.

“Because of the experience I have had with them, I don’t think they would help.”

We would like to see a commitment to the continued development of specific training modules for officers on issues which are relevant to children and young people. We are aware that new recruit training includes a module on children and young people and we would like to see this module extended and also repeated for officers who have been in post for some time. It would also be beneficial to involve young people in the delivery of this training.

There are a number of other key issues which impact on the levels of young people's confidence in the police.

Paramilitary Style Assaults:

How young people perceive the police dealing with paramilitaries impacts their feelings of confidence in the police service. The young people we spoke to in relation to the local policing review believed that putting resources into preventing paramilitary activity is important for their communities. A number of young people discussed their perception that the police were working alongside paramilitary groups.

"They know fine rightly who they are and so if they really wanted to, they would arrest them."

They stated that they believe the police are working with these groups for money purposes. They also stated that they would not turn to the police when they were in trouble and instead, they would go to the paramilitaries as they do not trust the police. In general, they felt that young people from protestant communities were shown more leniency by the police. Interestingly, they did not believe that resources should be invested in tackling drug misuse. For these particular young people, drugs were a coping mechanism and so they believed that money and resources would be better spent in tackling the reasons why they need to take drugs, rather than cracking down on the availability of drugs themselves.

Young people wanted the police to do more to address the actions of paramilitaries, especially in relation to so called punishment attacks on children and young people. They believed this issue was closely linked with drugs.

"Why if when one of us goes out and shoots someone we would get put in here but when paramilitaries shoot someone they get away with it. I think the police are working with them, that's what I think."

"Yea, because when we get out of here, the paramilitaries know our addresses."

They also said that they were fearful of the punishment beatings that they would get from paramilitaries if they phoned the police and that they would rather turn to the paramilitaries for help instead of the police. When asked what could change to solve this issue, they were not convinced that there was a solution.

"Nothing will change as long as paramilitaries are around."

The Policing Plan must address how the police will respond to PSAs against children and young people, in order to increase young people's confidence. This issue is very relevant for many of the young people Include Youth has contact with.

Stop and Search:

Include Youth remain concerned about the high numbers of children and young people subject to stop and search and questioning. As the NIPB update on the thematic review of policing of children and young people stated, we are also concerned that there is a possibility that stop and search powers are being used inappropriately.

Over the years we have conducted a number of consultations with children and young people on issues of policing. Almost of all of the young people we spoke to had negative experiences of being stopped and searched, more often than not this was on a consistent basis and was itself a factor in the level of confidence they held in the police. In some cases it was reported that negative stop and search incidents had led to additional charges for young people. Include Youth consistently raise the issue of 'stop and search' and point out that young people feel targeted and victimised as a result of the use of 'stop and search' powers. They also report inconsistent experience of Officers' communication when it comes to providing a rationale for the 'stop and search' and their rights within that process. Young people also believe that 'stop and search' powers are used against them at a much higher rate than against adults. Include Youth are concerned about the extensive use against young people and also the experiences of those young people when they are stopped.

Include Youth would like to see the effectiveness of 'stop and search' assessed. The experiences of young people suggest that not only does the excessive use of 'stop and search' damage relationships but also subsumes substantial police resources, with this in mind an analysis of the data and the effectiveness of this practice would be extremely useful. All powers to stop and search children should be exercised in compliance with human rights and in particular with key provisions on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Article 2 (non-discrimination) and Article 3 (best interests). The use of stop and search powers should also comply with the PSNI's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

"They stop and search me all the time."

"They stop you just because you are young."

"They stop you depending on how you are dressed."

"They use the terrorism law to stop and search us, not allowed to do this but because we are young they get away with it."

"There has to be an actual reason to stop you - but there never is."

“They don’t give you a reason for stopping you, they just say it’s about drugs or weapons, but they don’t give an actual reason.”

“I have asked for a stop slip before, they just laughed at me and said there were none.”

“They harass young people; I get stopped all the time.”

Young people tell us they feel targeted and demonised by the PSNI and it is clear this has an associated negative impact on their level of confidence in the police service. Almost unanimously the young people within focus groups felt their age, appearance, location and family history meant they were demonised and specifically targeted by the Officers. They believe this manifested itself as extra attention, excessive use of ‘stop and search’, constantly being viewed with suspicion, being looked down on by officers, being forced to disperse from public spaces and in many cases incivility. They believed the attention they receive from the police, including being questioned or searched on the street had a knock on effect on how young people are viewed by the communities in which they live.

“They treat young people differently, we are branded.”

“They make assumptions and judgements about young people.”

“You are more likely to be stopped because of what you are wearing.”

“They always stop you if you are wearing a hoodie.”

“They treat you worse if you are from a worse area.”

“The PSNI harass young people.”

“Young people are treated differently.”

There is a body of evidence which suggests that stop and search powers could be being used inappropriately against children and young people and that the overuse of this power is having a detrimental impact on police relations with children and young people. There have been a number of calls for change. The evidence on the damaging impact of the use of stop and search on children and young people and the calls for change comes from a number of quarters.

The recently published ARK Young Life and Times Survey showed that over two thirds of young people were not given a reason when they were stopped and that 90% were not given a receipt or reference, even though in 57% of cases the name and/or address of the young person were recorded in the officer’s notebook. The ARK Young Life and Times survey results certainly raise a number of issues concerning the socio-economic background of young people being stopped and how

young people understand their rights under these powers. It is worrying that 69% of those stopped and searched said they were given no clear reason why. The ARK report concludes that based on the significant majority of responses from 16 year olds, the procedural and legal propriety with which PSNI are using Stop and Search powers has been called into question and it calls for greater levels of monitoring and oversight. ²

Within the Statement on Children's Rights in 2017 the Commissioner for Children and Young People called for the PSNI to demonstrate the purpose and outcomes of all Stop and Search operations involving children and young people, and to improve the quality of engagement with young people.³ Speaking about the use of Stop and Search on children and young people, at the launch of the Statement on Children's Rights on 21st June 2018 the Commissioner said:

*"This is the biggest issue of contention for young people when it comes to policing and they describe feeling discriminated against and labelled. 12% of all stop and search operations involve young people with only 8.5% of operations resulting in arrest. That is not a good return and until we have greater clarity on the purpose and intended outcomes of these powers, it will always be viewed as a blunt instrument when it comes to the policing of young people."*⁴

Dr John Topping's research has repeatedly stated that children (17 and under) remain a significant focus of the stop and search powers. He states that between 2010/11 – 2017/2018, 33,000 children have been subject to stop and search, with 15-17-year-old males five times more likely to be stopped proportional to numbers in the population.⁵ He goes on to say that children (under 18) comprised 17% of all PSNI stop/searches under PACE-type powers in 2016/17, and based on current population estimates young males aged 15-17 are being stopped at a rate of approximately 82 per 1000 of population, with, for example, 40% of children in North Belfast claiming to have been stopped by PSNI 'for no reason', and 38% of children more generally in the country reporting 'disrespectful' behaviour when encountering the police.

² ARK Research Update, "The 'Usual Suspects'? Young people's experiences of police stop and search powers in NI", John Topping and Dirk Shubotz.

³ Statement on Children's Rights on Northern Ireland in 2017, NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2018.

⁴ Presentation by Koulla Yiasouma, NI Children's Commissioner at the launch of the Statement on Children's Rights, 21st June 2018.

⁵ KESS Knowledge Exchange Seminar, May 2018, Policy Briefing.

The Independent Reviewer of the Justice and Security Act in his latest report⁶ noted how in his discussions with a range of stakeholders and analysis of various surveys on young people's concerns and experiences of stop and search, he heard a number of issues of concern repeatedly raised:

"The concerns expressed by and on behalf of young people were that young people were stopped and searched in disproportionately high numbers; vulnerable and marginalised children were being targeted; the police were often patronizing, rude and disrespectful during the encounter; some senior PSNI officers understand this problem but that concern has not filtered down to officers at street level."

We welcomed the focus that the Policing Board Performance Committee gave to the issue of the use of Stop and Search powers in their review which was published in June 2019.⁷ We would encourage the Board to maintain a focus on the issue and to act on their commitment to addressing PSNI's communication regarding stop and search, especially with young people, and their approach to record keeping. We would also encourage members of the Committee to follow through on seeking a conclusion to the outstanding recommendation from the Human Rights thematic review in respect of the recording of community background information of those stopped and searched.

Include Youth would like to see a commitment to ensure that every young person who is stopped and searched receives the necessary documentation and there are monitoring measures in place to ensure that all young people who are subject to a stop and search know why they have been stopped and have received a Stop and Search card.

We welcome the commitment within the PSNI Children and Young People's Strategy to construct searches in a way which respects rights and to ensure the powers are not abused but are keen to know how PSNI will measure that these principles are being carried forward into practice. We hope to see this commitment carried through within the overall Policing Plan and the associated measurements.

We also welcome the commitment in the Children and Young People's Strategy to provide robust data about stop and search. We would like to see information being provided on the impact and effectiveness of stop and search and evidence provided on the justification of the use of stop and search powers with children and young people. We would welcome a commitment to ensure 'independent' scrutiny of the use of Stop and Search powers. We hope to see this commitment demonstrated in the outworking of the overall Policing Plan.

⁶ Eleventh Report of the Independent Reviewer of the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007, March 2019.

⁷ NI Policing Board, Performance Committee Review of Use of Stop and Search Powers, June 2019.

Representativeness of the police service:

We welcome the measurement which includes examining the representativeness of the police service and would like to see an increase in the numbers of officers coming from a younger age group and from communities which experience social and economic disadvantage.

Policing Plan Outcome 3 – We have engaged and supportive communities

We welcome the commitment to develop real and meaningful engagement between communities and the PSNI and the recognition that locally recognised and visible officers are an essential building block to partnership working. Maintaining a sustainable police presence within communities is critical to achieving this level of support and engagement.

Through our consultation on the local policing review we sought the views of young people on what they regarded as the priorities of local policing and what aspects of policing they thought could be improved to increase support for the service.

Three main issues arose when the young people were asked what the police could do better: police visibility, police engagement and improved police understanding of issues facing young people.

Some of the quotes in relation to police visibility included:

“By being there.”

“So many of the stations are closed.”

“There needs to be a community presence where there is anti-social behaviour.”

“There should be more police in all areas.”

“I want police in my community – there are none.”

The young people also believed that the police should be more involved in community engagement and with this increase in community engagement young people would change their opinion of the officers. However, one youth worker present did also recognise the difficulty that there can be with inviting police officers into certain areas

“In Poleglass we had the PSNI come and talk to young people and that night the windows got put in, so not everyone in the community want more police in.”

A young person stated that:

“When police are in my estate they can be at risk because you have called them out and you could get burnt out if you call them.”

Some young people believed that relations between the police and young people could be improved if the police were to adopt a less intimidating approach, such as removal of official uniforms and meeting the young people in a space that is familiar and comfortable for them, rather than on the streets at night.

“When you talk to them in normal clothes, it makes it better for the young person”.

“When they are in uniform, they think they are everything, trying to be the bigger person.”

“You could improve policing by being less intimidating.”

“you should actually go up and talk to young people.”

Some also believed that there should be more engagement with young people through the use of events and meetings. A number of participants voiced their frustration about the lack of accessibility for young people of forums like the PCSPs and in particular they are disappointed that under 18 year olds are not permitted to apply to be members of PCSPs.

We note the important role given to PCSPs in developing engaged and supportive communities and would stress the need to ensure that PCSPs are fully accessible and welcoming to young people.

We welcome the reference within the Policing Plan to the role that statutory, community and voluntary organisations have in assisting the police to reach out to communities and would encourage the police to involve local youth and community groups in developing local solutions to local problems.

Concluding Comments

Include Youth welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft NI Policing Plan 2020-2025 and are happy to engage further or expand on any of the issues raised, if that would be helpful.