

# include YOUTH

**Include Youth engagement with young people on the Local  
Policing Review**

November 2018

**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 have a background in offending. We offer a range of tailored programmes including

- Core - for young people referred to us through the Health Trusts
- Strive - a collaborative partnership programme with Youth Initiatives, Newstart Education Centre, NI Alternatives and Lifford Clonleigh Resource Centre.
- 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
- Meant to Work – a one to one mentoring service for young people in Greater Belfast

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

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.

Include Youth welcome the opportunity to support the engagement of young people with the Local Policing Review. We encouraged all the young people from across our programmes to complete the online priority simulator and asked our staff to promote the consultation across the range of sectors and stakeholders that they work with on a daily basis.

A number of our staff attended one of the first public meetings which was held in Policing Board's offices and we were concerned that the format of the meetings would not be conducive to our young people participating. On speaking to the Policing Board's Engagement Manager, we were encouraged by their willingness and enthusiasm to arrange a separate consultation event for young people.

As well as attending the youth consultation event on 30<sup>th</sup> October and bringing along young people from Include Youth to participate, we also consulted with young people in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. We also distributed a questionnaire to staff in each of our offices and asked them to encourage young people on our programme to complete them. We received 12 completed questionnaires.

The content of our response details the feedback from the sessions in Woodlands, the event at Girdwood on 30<sup>th</sup> October and the questionnaire responses.

### **Juvenile Justice Centre Woodlands: 10.10.18**

We consulted with three groups of young people within Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre on their views of local policing within Northern Ireland. The first group we met with consisted of three young men, the second was a one to one discussion with a young female and the third session was with a young male and young female.

With each group, we lay out a number of sheets in front of them, each with a word that defined some of the branches and roles and duties that the police carry out. These included: domestic violence, child abuse, missing Persons, terrorism, drugs, crimes against vulnerable people, cybercrime, emergency calls, anti-social behaviour, road traffic incidents, historical crimes, foot patrols and investigative crimes. We asked the young people which of these areas they believed to be most important for the police in their local areas to invest resources in and which areas, if needed be, should the police remove some resources from. While we understand that the online priority simulator has 24 categories, we believed these 13 categories were enough to give the young people an overview of the main areas of police work.

#### **Session One:**

Within the first group, there was consensus that child abuse was the most important issue and they believed that not only should the police continue to invest their resources in this area but could also invest more. This issue fell alongside the issue of domestic abuse which they felt went hand-in-hand. This was followed by their

desire for resources to be put into looking for missing persons but also noted that in children's homes, the procedure around categorising young people as missing persons is stupid and a waste of police time.

*"They don't even give you a chance to come home before they are on to the police and then the police treat you as a missing person."*

The next area that these young men felt was an issue in their local communities was terrorism, and more specifically the impact and actions of paramilitaries. They 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 above issues were those that these three young men felt their communities would most benefit from police resources being dedicated to. However, they were less sure of police resources being dedicated to other areas. As such, they believed that police resources being put into investigating historical crimes was a waste of resources, believing that cases like that should be forgotten about instead of constantly being brought back up. They believed that spending time and resources on these cases on was just giving people an excuse to act on their sectarian opinions.

In terms of emergency calls and investigative crime, 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."*

One young male also commented on the road offences area, stating that he found it funny that police are constantly stopping people for not having their seatbelts on but

that he has been arrested a number of times and not once was his seatbelt put on while he was in the police car.

Finally, in terms of anti-social behaviour, they felt that if money and resources were put into giving young people something to do in their communities, police resources for tackling this issue would not be needed.

### **Session Two:**

The young girl in the next consultation session had different opinions than that of the first three males we spoke to on what issues she believed were important for police to devote resources to. While she agreed that child abuse should be a main priority for the police, she felt stronger than the young males that emergency calls should also be a major priority for policing. While she quoted a negative story of a time when the police did not respond to an emergency call adequately, she also stated that she knew that this was not the fault of the police and argued that the government need to give the police more resources so that they are able to get better at responding to these types of calls. The young girl then went on to talk about the work that the police do to locate missing persons and how she felt that this area of work would not need as many resources allocated to it if the care system was better equipped to deal with young people and the challenges that they face. She believed that if she went out past a certain time but lived with her parents that it would not be an issue. She then went on to state:

*“I was in a care home and I didn’t want to talk to the police. I went out to let my dog in one night ‘cos it was crying and when I opened the door the police put me to the ground and started to hit me. The care staff witnessed it and all but I didn’t bother putting a complaint in cause they are on each other’s side. And plus, I am just used to getting hit in the foster homes and stuff so it didn’t bother me.”*

When we asked what could be changed to make policing better, 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.”*

### **Session Three:**

The findings from the third group were similar to that of the first. They believed putting resources into preventing paramilitary activity is important for their communities. They agreed with the perceptions of the young males in the first group 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.

### **Overview of the ranking:**

<b>Group One</b>	<b>Group Two</b>	<b>Group Three</b>
Child Abuse	Child Abuse	Terrorism
Missing Persons	Emergency Calls	Child Abuse
Domestic Abuse	Domestic Abuse	Domestic Abuse
Terrorism	Missing Persons	Crimes against Vulnerable People
Drugs	Crimes against Vulnerable People	Investigative Crime
Crimes against Vulnerable People	Investigative Crime	Emergency Calls
Cyber Crime	Foot Patrols	Road Traffic Offences
Emergency Calls	Anti-Social Behaviour	Anti-Social Behaviour
Investigative Crimes	Road Traffic Offences	Cyber Crime
Anti-Social Behaviour	Terrorism	Missing Persons
Historical Crimes	Drugs	Historical Crimes
Road Traffic Incidents	Historic Crimes	Drugs
Foot Patrols	Cyber Crime	Foot Patrols

### **Girdwood Youth Consultation event by Policing Board 30.10.18**

Young people raised a number of relevant issues at the Policing Board’s young person’s consultation event that was held in Girdwood Community hub. Nine young people from Include Youth attended this event coming from a range of our programmes including Meant to Work, Transitions and Give and Take (Belfast and Newtownards). The young people at this event were asked what parts of policing were important to them and how they believe policing could be improved.

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."*

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

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 present 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 young people also said that they thought the police should do more to ensure that children and young people are aware of their rights re: Stop and Search.

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.

The final thing that young people thought the police could do better was 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”.*

### **Questionnaire Responses:**

Within our own organisation, we asked our young people what elements of policing were important to them and what areas that they thought the police could improve on. In order to ascertain which areas of policing were important we used a similar exercise to the one we used in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre, in which we asked the young people to label the areas of policing from 1-13, with 1 being the most important to them and 13 being the least important. 12 questionnaire responses were completed and the results were coded with a ranking of 1-6 being considered important and a ranking of 7-13 being considered as not important to that young person. The chart below demonstrates the findings of these questionnaires:



## Areas of Priority



In the comments that followed the ranking of these priority areas, a number of respondents reported the difficulty they had prioritising the various areas: *“I felt that this was hard because I feel some areas are just as important as others”* and some felt that all areas were important. When asked what areas the young people thought police could improve on in their local communities, some responses were quite harsh as many of the young people have a negative relationship with police and do not want them in their communities, as demonstrated in the low number of respondents who believed foot patrols were not an important part of policing. Those who did give a more positive response cited the importance of responding to mental health incidents within the community and the need for police officers to be educated and trained in dealing with these types of incidents.

### **Concluding Comments**

We are happy to give further detail on any of the issues raised. We are also keen to be kept informed of the future plans regarding local policing and in particular to receive details of the analysis of the findings of the consultation. We would be interested to hear how the PSNI will respond to some of the issues raised by young people through the local policing review.