

# Cumbria Youth Commission



## First Year Report to the Police and Crime Commissioner

December 2017



# Introduction

Cumbria Youth Commission was established in April 2017 using funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria after extensive recruitment.

The project will enable young people aged 14-25 to inform decisions about policing and crime prevention in Cumbria, working in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cumbria Police.

The key objectives of this project are to:

- Allow young people aged 14 to 25 to have their say about policing and crime in Cumbria.
- Identify and address the most urgent priorities effecting young people in Cumbria.
- Enhance the county's response to matters relating to policing and crime, and how these impact young people.
- Build on young people's knowledge and experience to help them identify and design solutions
- Train peer educators and researcher to provide peer education to young people on the priority areas and to gain their views on issues.
- Work alongside the Police and Crime Commissioner to help develop the response and approach to young people for the Police and Crime Plan and advise on the commissioning of services aimed at children and young people
- To bring together learning from existing work within the county on the priority issues to enhance the working knowledge of the Youth Commission
- To support and challenge the work of the Police Crime Commissioner.

Within the first year, a group of thirty-two young people from across Cumbria have been working in partnership with the Police Crime Commissioner to address urgent issues in their area. Their chosen priorities for the year have been:

1. Hate Crime
2. Underage Drinking
3. Bullying
4. Mental Health

The Youth Commission is being delivered by Young Cumbria; an organisation that aims to create positive and lasting change in the lives of young people in Cumbria and particularly to make a significant difference in outcomes for those young people most disadvantaged. For more information about Young Cumbria, contact [admin@youngcumbria.org.uk](mailto:admin@youngcumbria.org.uk)

## About This Report

This report is a summary of the first year of work undertaken by the Youth Commission. The report is grounded in evidence gathered from over 3,000 young people across Cumbria. This evidence has been recorded using a range of methods including 'Youth Commission Postcards', questionnaires and focus groups.

The report is structured into 6 key sections. The first section will explore young people's opinions of the police and policing in Cumbria. The following four sections will then outline what the Youth Commission has found about each of their first year priority issues. These sections will feature comprehensive analysis of young people's responses, verbatim quotes from individual respondents and key recommendations that have been put forward by the Youth Commission as a result of their findings. The final section will then present the Youth Commissions plans going forward.

This report is an independent record of young people's experiences, objectively gathered and analysed throughout the first year of the Cumbria Youth Commission. It is intended to be used to provide evidence of gaps in provisions and services for young people, develop recommendations for the PCC, Youth Commissioners and other agencies to follow and consider further lines of work for year two.

## About the Youth Commission

The Cumbria Youth Commission was established by Young Cumbria in April 2017 with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria, who pledged within his manifesto to work in conjunction with young people in the county to help keep communities safe.

The Youth Commission was established to support, challenge and inform the work of the Commissioner and Cumbria Police, giving young people a role in shaping the future of policing and crime reduction in the area. Whilst doing so, the project also aims to help the young people involved develop essential interpersonal and life skills to enhance their future opportunities.

The Youth Commission has been designed in such a way as to ensure sustainability and efficacy of the project and, importantly, to ensure the legacy of the Commission by developing skills and resources that can be used beyond the scope of the project.

# What we did

## Recruitment:

In order to engage young people with the Youth Commission, initially we delivered an introductory presentation in thirty-three establishments across the county. These included schools, colleges, alternative education providers and youth provisions.

These sessions reached over 3000 young people, most of whom offered some form of feedback on policing and crime in Cumbria.

Overall we recruited 32 Youth Commissioners in the first year, with more recruitment drives planned going forward.

## Identifying key issues:

Following the initial recruitment process, the Youth Commissioners worked to establish their priority issues for the first phase of the project.

Regular meetings were held with commissioners in Allerdale, Barrow, Copeland, Carlisle, Eden and South Lakes to ensure that each consistency was represented within the commission.

Drawing upon conversations held during recruitment drives, Youth Commissioner's own personal experiences and feedback from practitioners, the Youth Commission decided to focus on the following key issues;

1. Hate Crime
2. Underage Drinking
3. Bullying
4. Mental Health

## Questionnaires:

After identifying the four priority issues, 26 of the Youth Commissioners were trained as researchers over a series of workshops county wide. Utilising this training, these commissioners designed and implemented questionnaires to explore each of the priority issues.

These questionnaires were developed in order to inform initial suggestions from the Youth Commission, and to act as a sounding board for further research and enquiry.

Once the Youth Commissioners had created their questionnaires, they disseminated them within schools and other places young people frequent. Each questionnaire received over 2,000 responses.

Once the questionnaires were collected, the data was collated and subject to a quantitative analysis.

## Youth Commission Post Cards:

In addition to the questionnaires, Youth Commission 'post cards' were also used to gather young people's opinions about the police and policing within Cumbria.

All those who attended an introductory presentation were asked to write their comments about Cumbria Police on a post card. These comments were subject to a thematic analysis.

In total over 3,000 young people made a comment about the police in this way.

## Focus Group Exercises:

In order to supplement the data gathered through the questionnaires, the Youth Commissioners also facilitated a focus group style exercise with young people attending an NCS event. During this event, the Youth Commissioners gathered young people's opinions on; hate crime, underage drinking, bullying and mental health.

Youth Commissioners took part in regular focus group exercises facilitated by Young Cumbria staff. This was used as another way to canvass young people's opinions on the four priority areas.

## Youth Commission Service Directory

Initial analysis of the questionnaires showed that generally, young people did not know where to go for advice and support about hate crime, underage drinking, bullying and mental health.

Therefore the Youth Commissioners began their own online research into existing support and advice services. Beginning with national services and moving on to local provisions, the Youth Commission evaluated how accessible services were to young people.

This sparked the beginning of the 'Cumbria Youth Commission Directory', a directory of services assessed and approved by the Youth Commission as being 'young person friendly'.

This piece of work is currently in progress and will be completed over the coming months. However, we have featured some Youth Commission 'approved' services throughout this report.

## Residential & Recommendations

Once all of the data had been collated and analysed by the Youth Commission in their respective locations, the geographically dispersed group came together to formulate recommendations based on their research. This took place on a three day residential at Isthmus Cottage in Keswick.

This was the first time Youth Commission groups from different constituencies had come together. This allowed young people from different locations and backgrounds to share their ideas on the four priority areas, and come up with cohesive recommendations and suggestions for the project going forward.

The research and suggestions were compiled in to a PowerPoint presentation.

## Meeting at Drop Zone

The presentation created on the residential was delivered by the Youth Commissioners to the Police Crime Commissioner at a preliminary meeting at DropZone in Barrow on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2017.

This was the first opportunity the Youth Commission were given to meet with the Police and Crime Commissioner. During this meeting they shared their findings from the first year of the project and sought feedback on work undertaken. This meeting was also attended by representatives from Cumbria Constabulary.

## Manchester Fact Finding Visit

In November 2017, members of the Cumbria Youth Commission undertook an overnight visit to Manchester to meet with young people from the Cheshire Youth Commission.

This trip gave our young people the opportunity to; network with likeminded young people, learn from the success of another commission, and develop ideas for more collaborative working with the Cumbria Police and the Police Crime Commissioner.

## WHO WE REACHED

Between April 2017 and December 2017, the Cumbria Youth Commission engaged with over 3,000 young people across Cumbria. This was achieved by carrying out a wide range of recruitment events in schools, alternative education providers and youth provisions.

In total over 2,000 young people completed questionnaires focusing on the four priority areas, and over 3,000 young people made individual comments about the police and policing in Cumbria using our Youth Commission Post Cards.

The Cumbria Youth Commission engaged with a variety of hard-to-reach groups, including young people from; LGBTQ+ specific groups, housing associations, youth offending services, NEET targeted services, and pupil referral units. This was in order to gather insights from the most vulnerable young people in our county.

# Youth commission post cards

## What we did:

In order to foster maximum engagement in the project, every young person who attended a recruitment event was asked to share their opinions about Cumbria Police. This was done using 'Youth Commission Post Cards'.

In total we received over 3000 comments from young people across the county. These comments were subject to a thematic analysis and separated in to three main themes; positive, negative and neutral. These themes were then separated in to sub-themes in order to give us a more in-depth understanding of young people's opinions of Cumbria Police.

## What we found:

In total, 50% of the comments made about Cumbria Police were positive. These comments described the police as; doing a good job and as being friendly and approachable.

*"They do a thorough job and provide a good service to the community"*

*"I think they are a great help in the community and overall they are very helpful"*

*"I think that they are a good police force and do their job well"*

In contrast, 32% of the comments made were negative. These comments described the police as; doing a bad job, being absent in local communities, unfairly targeting young people, being unfriendly and intimidating, and as having the wrong priorities.

*"In Cumbria I've rarely seen the police officers and don't think they do much"*

*"They randomly pull over young people more than older people which is unfair"*

*"When I see them patrolling the street, I don't feel safer. I feel more intimidated and like I'm being watched"*

Finally, 12% of the comments about Cumbria Police were neither positive nor negative, and were classified as neutral. Interestingly however, a large proportion of these young people cited their lack of knowledge about/experience of Cumbria Police as the reason for their impartiality.

*“I have no opinion of the police in Cumbria – don’t know anything about them”*

*“I don’t know enough about Cumbria’s Police to know if they do a good job”*

These findings reflect the general impression we got from young people throughout the first year of this project, and highlight the mixed opinions young people have of Cumbria Police.

In light of these findings, the Youth Commissioners feel that more could still be done to improve relationships between the police and young people in Cumbria. It is their belief that working in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner, alongside the recommendations put forward within this report, will go some way to further improving opinions about Cumbria Police.

\* 4% of comments in this category were defined as miscellaneous.

# KEY ISSUE 1: HATE CRIME

*“We need more information on where to find advice and support about hate crime incidents”*

*“Teachers need to do more to stop hate crime instead of waiting until one has happened to do something”*

*“We need education on what a hate crime is using examples”*

## What we did:

After identifying Hate Crime as a main priority area, the Youth Commission designed a questionnaire to research the topic.

The Youth Commission were interested in the prevalence and types of hate crime witnessed/experienced by young people, where these hate crimes took place and where young people were likely to go for advice and support on the issue.

The Youth Commission disseminated these questionnaires in schools, colleges and other places frequented by young people. The results were then recorded and analysed.

Multiple discussions, including focus group exercises, were also held with young people throughout the project about hate crime. This allowed us to get a general feel about this issue and its relationship to young people across the county.

Finally, additional research was undertaken for the Youth Commission Directory. This allowed the young people to explore existing local and national services for hate crime, and their accessibility to young people.

## What we found:

In total, 2436 young people between the ages of 13 and 21 completed the Youth Commission’s questionnaire about hate crime.

80% of these young people had witnessed a hate crime. Young people had seen individuals and groups being targeted because of their race, faith, sexuality and disability. Young people mostly witnessed individuals/groups being targeted at School or on the Internet. However it was also identified to be an issue within communities.

Over half of the young people surveyed disclosed that they had felt pressured to be biased against a specific group of people. When asked where they had felt this pressure from, young people identified the media and school as the main sources.

Only 53% of young people said that they knew where to go to get support/advice about hate crimes, and despite most hate crimes being witnessed at school, only 12% of young people were likely to go to a teacher for support or advice.

Through conversations with Youth Commissioners and those we spoke to at recruitment drives and the canvassing event, it became apparent that young people

felt Schools and Colleges took a 'reactionary' approach to hate crime incidents. They told us that the topic of hate crime was generally only broached once an incident had occurred.

The general consensus among young people was that the Police, Schools, Colleges, Alternative Education Providers and Youth Services need to take a more preventative approach to hate crime incidents, advocating for regular awareness training to be delivered in schools. Young people also wanted easy access to a local hate crime service where they could go for advice and support when needed.

Finally, whilst researching national and local services on hate crime for the Directory, the Youth Commissioners found that there were local support services available for hate crime in Cumbria, however they the accessibility was limited and was lacking a online presence.

## What we recommend:

**Awareness Workshops:** Regular awareness raising workshops to be delivered in schools, youth clubs and any organisations that works with young people.

**Drop-In Services:** To accompany the awareness workshops, a regular drop-in service based in schools, youth clubs and any organisations that work with young people, where young people and practitioners can go for up to date support and advice.

**Accessible Local Provision:** A county-wide service that is accessible for young people, parents and practitioners. That deals with all types of Hate Crime and has a strong online presence.

## KEY ISSUES 2: MENTAL HEALTH

*“I believe that mental health is a vital topic to cover due to the rise in coverage throughout the media in recent times and for those suffering with any particular issues to be supported and not stigmatised by those around them”*

*“There needs to be more done in schools to raise awareness among students to help each other, and others, with mental health problems”*

*“We need more information on existing services for mental health”*

## **What we did:**

After identifying Mental Health as a main priority area, the Youth Commission designed a questionnaire to research the topic. They were interested in young people's knowledge about the issues facing those with mental health problems, and their awareness of where to seek advice and support.

The Youth Commission disseminated these questionnaires in schools, colleges and other places frequented by young people. The results were then recorded and analysed.

Multiple discussions, including focus group exercises, were also held with young people throughout the project about mental health. This allowed us to get a general feel about this issue and its relationship to young people across the county.

Finally, additional research was undertaken for the Youth Commission Directory. This allowed the young people to explore existing local and national services for mental health, and their accessibility to young people.

## **What we found:**

2486 young people between the ages of 13 and 22 completed our questionnaire about mental health.

The majority of respondents showed a lack of awareness about the issues surrounding those with mental health problems. Over half of the young people surveyed did not know how to support a friend who was experiencing a mental health issue. Similarly, almost half of respondents did not know where to go for advice and support about mental health.

These findings were also echoed within conversations with Youth Commissioners, and by those we spoke to at recruitment drives and the canvassing event.

Overall, young people felt like more needed to be done in Cumbria to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health. Young people advocated for more awareness raising workshops among their peers and for more support for young people who are suffering from mental health problems. Young people also told us that they lacked knowledge about existing mental health services for young people in Cumbria, and requested that information about these was more readily available.

The Youth Commissioner's research for the Directory also echoed these findings. Overall they found an absence of accessible local services in Cumbria, specifically

those available to young people. They also felt like the online and offline advertisement of services was some times intimidating, not age-appropriate, and details about long waiting times and referral processes could be off-putting to some young people.

### **What we recommend:**

**Promotion:** Age-appropriate advertising of existing services that is delivered to young people via appropriate means.

**Training:** Free, regular mental health training for those who work with young people, so they are aware of the signs of mental health problems and where to direct people for help/support.

**Workshops:** Workshops for young people from trained professionals (assisted by young people) on how to manage their own mental health.

## **KEY ISSUES 3: BULLYING**

*“We need to have actual support for the bully to understand what is going on with them”*

*“We need to make people more aware of the types of bullying as most people don’t realise they’re being bullied when they are”*

*“There needs to be more awareness on the long lasting affects of emotional and physical bullying”.*

## **What we did:**

After identifying Bullying as a main priority area, the Youth Commission designed a questionnaire to research the topic. They were interested in young people’s definitions of bullying, the types of bullying young people witnessed/experienced, and where bullying is likely to take place.

The Youth Commission disseminated these questionnaires in schools, colleges and other places frequented by young people. The results were then recorded and analysed.

Multiple discussions, including focus group exercises, were also held with young people throughout the project about bullying. This allowed us to get a general feel about this issue and its relationship to young people across the county.

Finally, additional research was undertaken for the Youth Commission Directory. This allowed the young people to explore existing local and national services for bullying, and their accessibility to young people.

## **What we found:**

In total, 2533 young people between the ages of 13 and 21 completed this questionnaire.

Almost one fifth of young people surveyed were unable to provide a definition of bullying. Those who were able to define the term tended to describe it as targeting a specific individual by being repeatedly mean and unpleasant.

Of all forms of bullying, young people were most likely to have witnessed/experienced verbal (83%) and cyber bullying (67%). However, witnessing/experiencing emotional (56%) and physical (59%) bullying was also prevalent among the young people.

Bullying was mostly witnessed/experienced in schools (82%) and the internet (66%), but was also an issue within communities (39%) and at home (4%) for some young people.

During our discussions about bullying with young people, we found that they were most interested in education and support.

Young people felt like more needed to be done to educate their peers on the different types of bullying and its consequences. They also advocated for increased support for both the victims and perpetrators of bullying.

Whilst researching local and national services that exclusively deal with the issue of bullying, the Youth Commission found a lack of local support services. When they were able to access information through the Cumbria Police website, there was no clear information on when bullying became a crime. They felt this made it difficult to use the Police's online reporting tool, as it was unclear as to when a bullying issue became a police matter.

### What we recommend:

**Cyber Bullying Reporting Tool:** Third-party online support service that monitors cyber bullying on social media, and can review cases online before they are referred to the police or another service.

**Increased Support/Training:** Increased, regular training for practitioners to support the victims and *perpetrators* of bullying within schools

**Update Police Website:** Feature up-to-date information about local services on the police website and provide clear information about bullying including when it becomes a crime and young person friendly reporting tool.

## KEY ISSUES 4: UNDERAGE DRINKING

*“We need continuous teaching on underage drinking, not just a one off assembly”*

*“Knowing when to stop drinking needs to be highlighted more in schools”*

*“There should be more information on where to go if you or a friend has a problem.”*

## **What we did:**

After identifying Underage Drinking as a main priority area, the Youth Commission designed a questionnaire to research the topic. They were interested in the prevalence of underage drinking among young people, the reasons they drank underage, their understanding of the risks and effects of underage drinking, and their knowledge of where to go for advice and support.

The Youth Commission disseminated these questionnaires in schools, colleges and other places frequented by young people. The results were then recorded and analysed.

Multiple discussions, including focus group exercises, were also held with young people throughout the project about underage drinking. This allowed us to get a general feel about this issue and its relationship to young people across the county.

Finally, additional research was undertaken for the Youth Commission Directory. This allowed the young people to explore existing local and national services for underage drinking, and their accessibility to young people.

## **What we found:**

In total, 2380 young people completed a questionnaire on underage drinking. 88% of these young people had drunk underage.

54% of these young people drank for the first time between the ages of 13 and 14, with almost 80% beginning between the ages of 12 and 15.

The majority of young people who had drunk underage, said they did so because their family allowed it. However, almost a one quarter of those who had drunk underage also listed boredom as a reason.

When asked where they would go for support if their own, or a friend's drinking got out of hand, 35% did not know. However, the majority of those who did provide an answer said they would go to a parent or family member. Only 57% of the young people surveyed were able to tell us the effects and risks of drinking too much.

The young people we spoke to about underage drinking told us that the information they received from schools was scarce and often delivered when they were too young. As a result, they suggested that there should be more frequent education on the risks and effects of underage drinking, which got more hard-hitting as they got older. Young people also wanted clearer and more readily available information on where to go for help and support on underage drinking.

Whilst researching local and national services for the Directory, the Youth Commission felt that local services for substance and alcohol misuse were targeted towards adults, or those who suffer from addiction. As a consequence they felt like these services were intimidating for young people and therefore not approachable.

## What we recommend:

**Education For Young People:** Continuous, up-to-date, information given throughout school on the effects and risks of drinking alcohol. This should be more hard-hitting the older you get.

**Accessible Local Service with Strong Online Presence:** A local service that can provide advice, support and guidance for practitioners, parents and young people. This should have a strong online presence that is accessible to young people.

**Street Safe:** An independent service that provides support for young people who have been drinking; hot food/drink, get them home safely (a safety bus).

## WHAT'S NEXT

Over the next 12 months we will work in close conjunction with the Police Crime Commissioner, Cumbria Police and other external agencies to look at ways of developing and implementing the suggestions laid out within this report. Provisional outlines of the Youth Commissions second year plans are outlined below.

## **Youth Commission Service Directory:**

Over the next year, the Youth Commission will continue to research and assess existing local and national services to create the living 'Youth Commission Directory'.

The Directory will be distributed to schools, colleges, alternative education establishments and youth services across the county.

## **Recruitment:**

We are currently undertaking another round of recruitment for the Youth Commission. This will be continuous over the next 12 months to ensure a steady flow of new young people and ideas in to the Youth Commission.

## **Partnership Building:**

Over the next six month we will build on the relationships we have already created and further develop other partnerships. This is to ensure our recommendations are achievable and sustainable, and to create further opportunities for Youth Commissioners to inform and influence policy.

We have already begun talks with Cumbria County Council, Cumbria constabulary, Youth offending service and have meetings arranged with Head Teachers and Pastoral Staff to canvas their views.

## **Re-Evaluating Priority Issues:**

Drawing upon our findings from the first year of this project, we now plan to reassess and adjust our priority areas.

This will allow us to focus more on specific elements of priority areas and introduce new topics where necessary.

## **Researcher and Peer Educator Training:**

As new young people join the Commission over the next 12 month, we will provide more research and peer education training. Young people have showed a particular interest in peer education throughout year one, and it is something they would like to continue.

## **Research Development and Implementation:**

Once our new priority issues for year two have been established, we will plan, develop and implement more research to explore these.

## **Events**

Going forward, the Cumbria Youth Commission aim to have a stronger presence at local events and use this as an opportunity to promote their work.

# Acknowledgements

## OUR PARTNERS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the individuals and organisations that have helped support the work of the Youth Commission over the last year. Including;

The many young people who have given their time and opinions to help inform the work

The Youth Commissioners for their dedication and commitment to the project

The Police and Crime Commissioner and his Office for supporting the work

All the schools have we visited, all of whom have been helpful and accommodating

We look forward to working with you, and others, to improve services for young people across Cumbria.