



North Yorkshire Youth Commission:

Final Report

April 2016

**LEADERS
UNLOCKED**

YC:UK
YOUTH COMMISSION

Police and Crime
Commissioner
North Yorkshire 

Introduction

North Yorkshire Youth Commission was established in July 2015 with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Fund.

The project aimed to enable young people aged 14-25 to inform decisions about policing and crime prevention in North Yorkshire, working in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner) and North Yorkshire Police (NYP).

The key objectives of the project were to:

- Recruit a diverse group of 25-30 young people from across North Yorkshire to join the Youth Commission. We aimed to secure representation from an appropriate mix of localities, ages, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Work with Youth Commission members to identify the key priority topics they want to tackle during the project.
- Provide Youth Commission members with the practical skills training they need for their role.
- Plan and deliver a 'Big Conversation' to enable the Youth Commission to gather meaningful views from 1,500 young people across North Yorkshire.
- Support the Youth Commission to turn these views into key findings and recommendations, to be disseminated at a final conference with the Commissioner, NYP colleagues and partner agencies.

Through this project, a group of 30 young people from across North Yorkshire have been working in partnership with the Commissioner and NYP to address urgent issues in their areas. Their chosen priorities for this first year have been:

- 1 **Legal Highs and Drug Abuse**
- 2 **Cyber-bullying and Internet Safety**
- 3 **Hate Crime**
- 4 **Vulnerable Young People**
- 5 **Preventing Youth Crime**
- 6 **Relationship with the Police**

The Youth Commission was delivered by Leaders Unlocked, a social enterprise that aims to enable young people to have a stronger say on the decisions that affect their lives. Leaders Unlocked has established Youth Commissions working with Commissioners in 5 other regions, and is planning to further expand the model in 2016. For more information about Leaders Unlocked please see www.leaders-unlocked.org

About this report

This report is grounded in an evidence base of over **1,600 conversations** with young people, which have been recorded using a range of methods including Youth Commission postcards, the Youth Commission website, and through detailed notes from interviews and workshops.

The report is structured into 6 key sections that outline what the Youth Commission has found about each of its priority issues. Each section features comprehensive analysis of young people's responses, verbatim quotes from individual respondents and the key recommendations that have been put forward by the Youth Commission as a result of their findings.

This report is intended to act as an honest, independent record of what young people have told us through this 'Big Conversation' process. It is also intended to be a basis for further action on the part of the Commissioner, NYP and relevant partner agencies.

About the Youth Commission

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission aimed to give young people across North Yorkshire a real partnership role in shaping the future of policing and crime reduction.

The purpose of the Youth Commission is to support, challenge and inform the work of the Commissioner and NYP.

The Youth Commission goes beyond traditional models of consultation; it is driven by young people and allows them to put forward solutions to the problems they identify in their own communities.

A key part of the Youth Commission's role was to run a 'Big Conversation' to gather the views of at least 1,500 other young people. This process creates a safe environment for young people to talk to their peers about the issues. The views gathered from young people were then used by the Youth Commission to create a set of recommendations to present back to the Commissioner, North Yorkshire Police and partner agencies.



Members of the North Yorkshire Youth Commission: Luke Oliver-Tyas, Samantha Burns, Sarah McMullen, Hannah Ward, Fay Wileman, Natalie White, Ida Sadlowska, Will Holbrook, Jordan Henry, Lydia Collier, James Batchelor, Courtney Wilson-Moss, Alasdair Pennington, Bethany Doughty, Chloe Smallwood, Ella Walton, Holly Davis, Oliver Rivett-Jones, Annie Thompson, Alex Cookland, Angus Gutus, David Brookshaw, Alexander Galt, Enya Lee, Amy Collingwood, Carla-Jade Burrett, Georgia Patterson, Ed Lee, Jake Longhorn.

4. What we did

Recruiting the members:

Leaders Unlocked carried out a rigorous two-part recruitment process, including an accessible application form and a second-stage telephone interview, to select a group of young people to join the North Yorkshire Youth Commission. We worked proactively with local organisations from the education, youth and voluntary sectors to ensure that the opportunity was widely distributed, both within mainstream educational settings and within grassroots community settings.

Identifying priority issues:

At their inaugural meeting on 11th July 2015, the Youth Commission identified 6 priority issues that affected their peer groups and communities. The issues they chose to focus on were:

1. Legal Highs and Drug Abuse
2. Cyber-bullying and Internet Safety
3. Hate Crime
4. Vulnerable Young People
5. Preventing Youth Crime
6. Relationship with the Police

Skills training:

Leaders Unlocked provided Youth Commission members with training in the key skills needed for their role – including effective communication, interviewing, workshop skills and public speaking. These skills were further developed through practical experience throughout the project.

Creating the tools for the Youth Commission:

We developed a North Yorkshire Youth Commission postcard depicting the 6 priorities and providing young people with a space to record their views and suggested solutions. We also added a North Yorkshire page to the Youth Commission website at www.youthcommission.co.uk to enable young people to post comments online via mobile, tablet or PC.

Working with NYP:

Working with NYP, the Youth Commission got involved in advisory activity to inform police strategies affecting young people. A workshop was held with a subgroup of the Youth Commission to discuss the plans for the future of neighbourhood policing. Youth Commission members also gave feedback to NYP to inform their plans for primary school education on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Running the 'Big Conversation':

Reaching out to a wide variety of local community organisations and education institutions, the Youth Commission were able to talk to over 1,600 other young people about their priority topics.

Recommendations for change:

In the final stages of the project, the Youth Commission hosted their own conference at York CVS, at which they presented their final conclusions and recommendations for change. The Commissioner, Deputy Chief Constable, and a range of partner agencies and organisations attended the conference.

5. Who we reached

Between August 2015 and January 2016, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission spoke to over **1,600** young people across North Yorkshire. This was done by carrying out a wide range of different events and outreach activity – including workshops, larger consultation events with students, and hosting stands on school and college campuses.

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission put particular effort and energy into engaging with harder-to-reach groups of young people, in order to gather insights into sensitive issues such as vulnerability and youth offending. The Youth Commission carried out workshops and interviews with specific groups of looked-after children, young carers, and young offenders.



The table below gives a breakdown of the sample reached:

Young people from harder to reach groups including: children in care, young carers, young offenders, and young people at risk.	344
Students at Further Education Colleges	379
University students	249
Students at schools	337
Young people in youth clubs	277
Peer outreach carried out by NYYC members	75
TOTAL	1,661

6. Our partners

We are grateful for the support of a wide range of local partners who have allowed the Youth Commission to consult with the young people in their organisations. Thanks go to:

- Action for Children Selby
- Askham Bryan College
- Children in Care
- Craven Young Carers
- Fairfax Youth Club
- Flying Futures and National Citizen Service York and Harrogate
- Girl Guides
- Harrogate College
- Harrogate Sea Cadets
- Jennyfields Youth Club
- NYP Cadets
- North Yorkshire Youth Council
- North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service
- Selby College
- The Clock Thirsk
- Thirsk School
- York St John University
- York College
- York Young Adult Carers
- University Of Hull Scarborough Campus
- University of York

A special thank you also goes to NYP, who have collaborated closely with the Youth Commission throughout the project. Senior officers have devoted time and energy to support the Youth Commission, given constructive feedback on their research, and offered opportunities for the Commission to inform police initiatives.

We would also like to give a special mention to Flying Futures for all their support of the Youth Commission. Flying Futures is a social enterprise that supports young people to 'get on' in society and manages a number of programmes across Yorkshire, including the National Citizen Service (NCS) in York and Harrogate. Not only did they help us to arrange a number of workshops, they also arranged for the participants on the NCS programme to conduct a peer survey on the topic of Youth Vulnerability which attracted over 110 responses.

Priority 1: Legal Highs and Drug Abuse



What we did

The Youth Commission set out to understand young people's experiences of legal highs and drug abuse, and raise awareness of the effects of legal highs and drugs. In addition, the Youth Commission aimed to inform NYP about how and why young people are accessing these substances.

To address this issue, the Youth Commission carried out workshops and outreach events with young people from a range of organisations including: University of York, York College, Harrogate College, Selby College, Askham Bryan College, Youth Voice Summit, North Yorkshire Police Cadets, Thirsk School, the National Citizen Service, and Hull University in Scarborough.

The Youth Commission spoke to over **250 young people** about this topic.

What we found

Through the 'Big Conversation' young people have shared many of their first-hand experiences with drugs and legal highs. The young people we spoke to have had a variety of experiences with these substances. Many of their stories were shocking examples of the dangers and risks associated with so-called 'legal highs' and drug abuse. For instance, young people have described their experiences of panic attacks, hallucinations, collapsing, and hospitalisation.

"Can buy legal highs far too easily. I have done it myself and I had to go to hospital because my body reacted badly to it."

"The first time I took Spice, I was left in the middle of the road by my friends. My heart was pounding, my adrenaline was rushing and I felt scared. I ran home in 7 minutes. It should have taken 20!"

"I've had a fit on Spice, it was only my 2nd time. I was tricked into taking it because I thought it was weed."

"I had a friend that took MKAT and he collapsed during cross country. It was a horrible situation to witness. Unfortunately he didn't learn from the experience, he couldn't see how dangerous it was so we stopped being friends."

A key message from our research is that it is far too easy for young people to access legal highs and drugs. They are widely available and many substances are affordable for young people. Young people can access drugs and legal highs through friends, in places of education, via the internet. The widespread availability of these substances to young people indicates that society is somehow seeing this as acceptable.

“Easy to get hold of - would know exactly where to go.”

“I worry about how easy it is to find drugs. There have been times when people have been near the school gates offering things. It makes me scared to see that people are willingly targeting young people.”

Through talking to young people, we found that they do not have the knowledge they need about the long-term effects of taking drugs and legal highs. In particular, they do not grasp the long-term psychological effects. They tend to understand how substances can affect your body more than they understand the effects on the mind. One of our conclusions is that the current efforts to provide education on this topic are far too general. We believe more precise education is needed; so young people can make more informed choices.

“I used to smoke Spice on and off for a year. Then I became addicted for 4 months I’d smoke it every day. I didn’t realise how much of a problem I had or how addictive it was. I haven’t taken it in over 3 months, I’d like to think I’ll never do it again.”

“I feel only the basics are shown in school and not actually what happens if you are caught and what could happen to you.”

“Not enough people are educated about the dangers of legal highs. We really don’t know much about them.”

Many young people spoke to the Youth Commission about the pressures and social expectations that trigger them to start using substances. In particular, young people highlighted the dominant ‘lad culture’ in which groups of young men take drugs and drink socially. Many young people felt that there should be more support to help people to deal with this culture and say no to legal highs and drugs.

“Drug abuse is too commonly pressured on students by expectations.”

“Lad culture - get high, get drunk. Tried MKAT, Weed, Pills at a house party.”

“Take Pills and MD every weekend. Take weed everyday. Parties and festival can access class A drugs. Started taking drugs because of friends. I get it when I can afford it. Drugs is usually a phase, it loses its novelty.”

“I feel like people my age turn to drugs because of peer pressure and personal problems. They think that it’s something that’ll help them but they don’t really know the effects and consequences of taking drugs. They just don’t know how to deal with these problems.”

Finally, young people felt they were instantly labelled if they were suspected, caught or convicted for having drugs. Young people perceived North Yorkshire Police to be too judgemental of drug users. They felt that this was a major barrier to reporting, as young people are reluctant to talk to North Yorkshire Police about drug-related issues and incidents because they fear they will be judged and labelled.

“A lot of my friends take class A drugs, and there isn’t an easy way to tell the police of a dealers address or details without rising suspicion to my friends”

“I think police are judgemental of young people who use drugs. They automatically label them negatively and assume they’re bad. They just try to punish people and not help them.”

“Legal highs are difficult to tackle due to the lack of communication and trust in the relationship between the police and young people.”

“Police are too judgemental, doing drugs doesn’t mean they’re less of a person, they need help not judgment.”

The Youth Commission’s key recommendations

1. **Awareness:** North Yorkshire Police should carry out training and/or an awareness-raising campaign to encourage officers to display a less judgemental attitude towards drug users.
2. **Reporting mechanisms:** There should be anonymous mechanisms to enable young people to report issues and incidents without fear or judgement or reprisals. We suggest providing a ‘text-in’ service or app for people to report concerns anonymously.
3. **Education:** There needs to be more precise and realistic education for young people about the effects of drugs and legal highs. We suggest that the Youth Commission should work in partnership with other agencies to deliver peer education campaigns to raise awareness of the effects from an early age.

For support services for substance misuse:

North Yorkshire / Adults only:

North Yorkshire Horizons

www.nyhorizons.org.uk

01723 330730

North Yorkshire / Young People:

Compass Reach

www.compass-uk.org/compass-reach

01904636374

City of York Adults and Young People:

Lifeline Project

www.lifeline.org.uk

01904 464680

For information from North Yorkshire Police on drugs and alcohol:

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/7002

You can find out more about how to report crime via Crimestoppers at:

www.crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/how-to-give-information



Priority 2: Cyber-bullying and Internet Safety



What we did

The Youth Commission set out to understand young people's experiences of cyber-bullying and internet safety, and raise awareness of the how to manage the risks associated with internet use. Longer-term, the Youth Commission hoped to help inform North Yorkshire Police, other authorities and parents about the online world.

To address this issue, the Youth Commission carried out workshops and outreach events with young people from a range of organisations including: York Carers, Askham Bryan College, York University, York College, Hull University (Scarborough campus), Thirsk School, Fairfax Youth Club, Youth Voice Summit, Selby College, The Clock, Girl Guides, North Yorkshire Police Cadets, Children in Care, Action for Children and Harrogate Sea Cadets.

The Youth Commission spoke to over **300 young people** about this topic.

What we found

Through the Big Conversation, we found that young people are deeply concerned about the serious consequences for those affected by cyber-bullying, online harassment and other online crime. They recognise there are strong links to wider issues such as mental health, self-harming, social isolation, and serious crimes such as exploitation. Our findings indicate that young people feel this is a growing problem and there is a real lack of understanding about the issues facing young people online.

"Threatening messages on Facebook. I stopped going to school. Personal comments, taunted at school. Police involved, found the people on Ask.fm."¹

"My ex told me to go die and sent me abuse on Snapchat and other services."

"I used to talk to a guy who was always asking me to do things, he sent me things I didn't want to see. I told my parents. He kept calling, texting, facebooking. He was brainwashing me, I want to help people who went through what I did."

"I was sent inappropriate pictures over Facebook and Snapchat. I was stupid enough to respond back with pictures. I shouldn't have."

Cyber-bullying and online harassment takes place on a number of different platforms and through a variety of different media, making it difficult for young people to tackle it by themselves. Young people told us that 'blocking' the perpetrators is only a short-term fix, as they can simply set up new accounts or move to a different platform to continue the abuse.

"I was being groomed by sex offender (I didn't know he was one). I wasn't the first, there were others. I told the police. They took my phone and laptop for my emails. I met him on Facebook, I thought my settings were private, but they had reset."

"Blocking just doesn't work. They will find ways to get you one way or another. It is physically and mentally painful. It destroys your mind."

"The means [to do it] is everywhere. Block is a short-term solution. People scared to ask about it - Admit it."

One of the main problems we identified was anonymity. The fact that people can be anonymous online means that the perpetrators can become detached from their actions and the abuse can often be more intimidating for the victim. Anonymity also gives rise to the problem of 'cat fishing', whereby online identities are fabricated in order to trick victims into relationships or transactions.

"Cat fishing is a problem as setting up a false profile on social media and being in an online relationship. Friends I know have been hurt."

"I was talking to someone on Facebook who was pretending to be 19. He was much older. You don't always know who you're talking to."

Another key issue is around reporting. Many young people are unaware what constitutes a crime online, and whose responsibility it is to deal with these issues. This means that incidents are severely under-reported and continue to go unchallenged. Many young people are reluctant to enter into a formal or legal process, and they perceive that this choice will be taken out of their hands if they do approach North Yorkshire Police.

Sometimes, the problems facing young people online seem so pervasive and out of control that we feel helpless to do anything about it. Often, NYP and other agencies do not seem to have the technological literacy to respond effectively. Despite the many efforts to increase education on this topic, the current approach to education is not effective or joined-up enough. The Youth Commission believes that it is critical to grasp these problems and take positive steps to address them at a local level.

The Youth Commission's key recommendations

1. **Tech literacy:** We suggest that action should be taken to improve the technological literacy of North Yorkshire Police at all levels. In particular, NYP need to become more informed about the cultural environment of the Internet which young people are exposed to.
2. **Safe space:** We suggest the development of a 'safe space' online where young people can raise and discuss issues informally and anonymously with experts from NYP. This would create a platform for young people to gain advice and could also lead to formal reporting.
3. **Youth advice:** NYYC to inform NYP policies and strategies in this area from a youth perspective.
4. **Consistent education on legality:** NYP and partners to work together to carry out consistent educational campaigns with clear information about the law.

For support services for cyber-bullying and internet safety:



Childline:

Childline offers help and advice for those facing bullying online. Please see:
www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Bullying/Pages/online-bullying.aspx

CEOP:

CEOP helps children stay safe online. If someone acted inappropriately towards you online, or to someone you know, you can report it to CEOP at:
www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

For information from North Yorkshire Police on cyber-bullying and cyber crime:

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/cyberbullying

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/cybercrime

Priority 3: Hate Crime



What we did

The Youth Commission set out to understand young people's experiences of hate crime across different groups and local areas, and raise awareness of the how to manage the risks associated with internet use. In addition, the Youth Commission aimed to understand what can be done to increase reporting of hate crime among young people.

To address this issue, the Youth Commission carried out workshops and outreach events with young people from a range of organisations including: National Citizen Service, University of Hull (Scarborough), York College, Thirsk School York St John University, Askham Bryan College, Youth Voice Summit, North Yorkshire Police Cadets, Action for Children, York Young Adult Carers, York University.

The Youth Commission spoke to over **120 young people** about this topic.

What we found

Through the Big Conversation the Youth Commission has spoken to young people about hate crime and how it affects them. Overall, we have found that hate crime is more widespread and damaging than people might assume. Young people feel that hate crime is increasing rather than decreasing. This is partly seen to be due to global events. Young people have also told us that they feel many people incorrectly assume that society has become more tolerant as a result of increase freedoms in law such as gay marriage.

We have heard from many young people across North Yorkshire that hate crime remains a big issue for them today. Despite national advances in equalities, at the local level and in peer groups young people are being targeted due to their ethnicity, faith and sexuality.

*"My step brother is Jamaican and he was walking down the street and got apples thrown at him and got called n****r."*

"My brothers are constantly being targeted for being black and even I get attacked sometimes just for being with them."

¹ A long-standing Q&A platform aimed at teens and millenials

During the Big Conversation, young people have told us they are particularly concerned about increasing hate crime based on sexuality. Young people in schools, peer groups and communities are being targeted on the basis of their sexual orientation, both through verbal abuse and sometimes also physical assault.

"Bullying is a huge issue at school. If someone is different, like being gay, they can be bullied through name calling or violence."

"I'm a lesbian and I received really hateful messages and threats from my neighbours when I finally 'came out'. They always used to call me a dyke even before then but it got worse. We moved away."

"I've been threatened in person by someone who used to be my friend until they found out I was gay. He was very aggressive and tried to turn friends against me."

Verbal abuse is a common problem, with young people using language that can be offensive or divisive. It has more of a psychological effect than a physical effect, although it does have the potential to escalate to become physical abuse. This issue can be further exacerbated by the negative use of social media by young people. Most do not have an awareness of when words they use move from being harmless banter to being considered verbal abuse.

Sadly, young people feel that hate crime is not being addressed, and there is a widespread ignorance about the issue. Many people do not know what hate crime is, how to recognise it when it occurs, the effects of hate crime, and what to do in case of an incident. Furthermore, young people do not understand what constitutes a hate crime in legal terms.

"People do not know what to do when they have been a victim of hate crime."

"People are not aware of the effects of hate crime."

"There is a lack of support groups and awareness of local support for LGBT people."

Young people have given us a clear message that not enough is being done to address hate crime. They perceive that North Yorkshire Police, schools, and other authorities do not take the issues seriously enough, either because of ignorance or because of apathy. Many young people feel there is little point reporting hate incidents and hate crime. They lack confidence to approach North Yorkshire Police because they feel NYP don't understand how hate crime can affect people, e.g. faith communities and the LGBT community. Some young people question whether North Yorkshire Police have the knowledge they need.

"Muslim community are being ignored by police when they report hate crimes."

"Need to talk more about hate crime with the police."

"Brick through window at 6:15am - no police came and didn't seem bothered or care. Also friends had people throwing things at their house but the police did nothing - too scared to leave their house."

"LGBT - I don't think the police are trained enough in this area."

The Youth Commission's key recommendations

1. **Advocates:** We suggest that young victims of hate crime should be able to speak to an independent advocate who is not a police officer in the first instance. This could be a counsellor or a trained advocate with knowledge about hate crime.
2. **Police training:** We suggest NYP should undertake more training and/or awareness campaigns with officers to increase their knowledge about how hate crime affects individuals and minority communities. This should be promoted so that young people have greater faith in North Yorkshire Police and feel more able to approach them.
3. **Informal spaces:** We would like to see more informal spaces (offline and online) where young people can access support and talk to others about issues with hate crime. We feel this would remove the stigma attached to more formal support services.
4. **Legal awareness:** We suggest North Yorkshire Police should raise awareness of the legalities of hate crime and highlight successful prosecutions, to make the point that hate crime will not be tolerated and to prove that action is being taken.

For support services for hate crime:

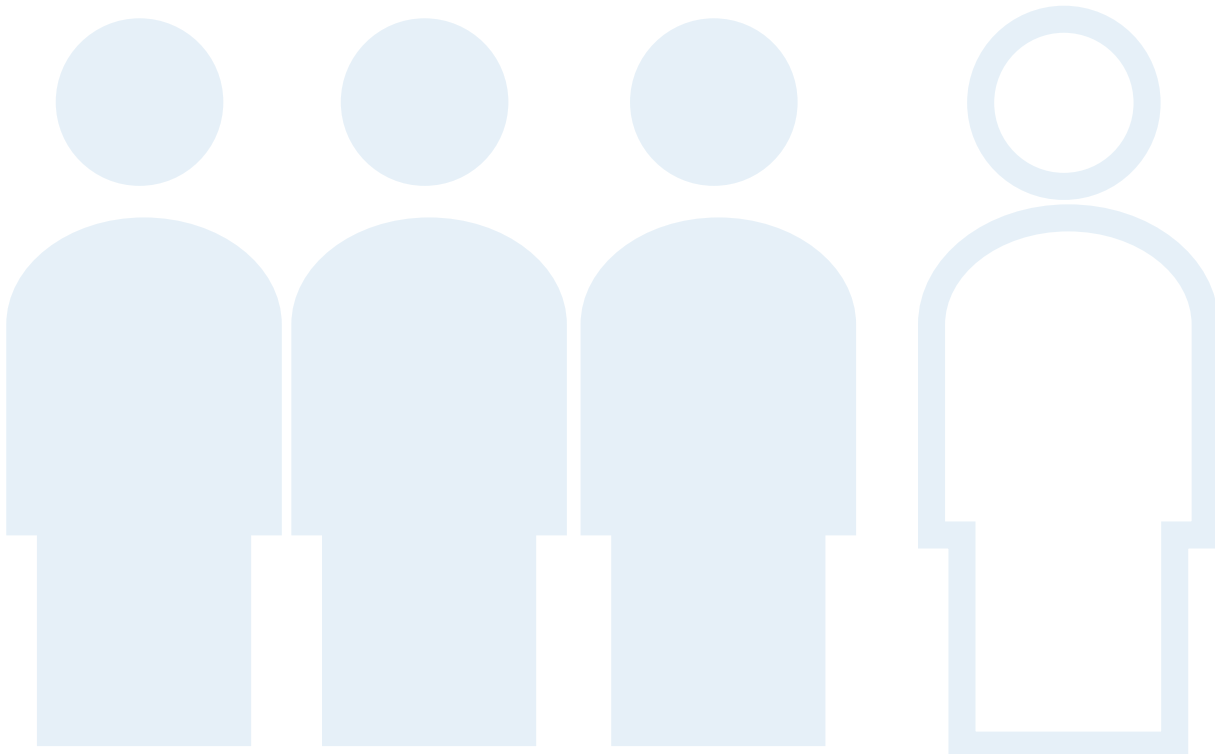
The Stop Hate service:

The Stop Hate service is a source of non-police support for those facing hate crime:

www.stophateuk.org/north-yorkshire

For information from North Yorkshire Police on hate crime:

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/hatecrime



Priority 4: Vulnerable Young People



What we did

The Youth Commission set out to explore the issues and problems affecting vulnerable young people, including those who are homeless. In addition, the Youth Commission sought to identify the gaps in services for vulnerable young people and look at how they can be better supported in the future.

To address this issue, the Youth Commission carried out workshops and outreach events with young people from a range of organisations including: Children in Care, York Young Adult Carers, National Citizen Service, Askham Bryan College, York University, York College, York St John University, Hull University (Scarborough campus), Youth Voice Summit, Thirsk School, Jennyfields Youth Club, Fairfax Youth Club and the Youth Commission website.

The Youth Commission spoke to **over 250 young people** about this topic.

What we found

Throughout the Big Conversation, we found that many young people were keen to talk about vulnerability with the Youth Commission. By picking vulnerability as a topic, we seemed to unearth a great deal of very important but difficult findings based on young people's real-life experiences.

Mental health was a key concern for many young people, and this theme cut across many of our conversations. Mental health issues appear to be increasing among young people, manifesting in complex problems such as depression, anxiety, self-harming, and eating disorders. Many people told us that they feel that mental health conditions are not being diagnosed effectively or early enough.

"More should be done to support vulnerable young people, I have self harmed and felt like no one would help me because of my home situation."

"Diagnosing young people with mental illnesses is not done effectively. As a result, when leaving care, vulnerable people become more vulnerable than before."

"People with mental health problems such as anxiety find it hard in social situations and the social norms expected by young people."

"My brother used to try to OD, he has ADHD. He used to sell his ritalin on as it helps people to concentrate more. They get a buzz. My brother is very suicidal and is always trying to commit suicide. He's tried this week again."

Furthermore, we also heard from many young people who have had personal experiences of domestic abuse, sexual assaults, grooming, stalking and sexual harassment. Often, these young people feel they cannot talk about it, as they are afraid they will not be believed or taken seriously. Therefore they bottle their feelings up inside and suffer the multiple negative effects in silence.

"Being inappropriately approached, catcalled, feeling threatened. Especially when walking alone."

"Sister sexually harassed (verbally) at night and followed. She didn't report it."

"I have been sexually assaulted. I was 14 when it happened. I don't think anyone realises how much it has affected me. I don't feel I can talk about it or that I'd be listened to. I did report it."

For young people who go missing from home, this can be the trigger for becoming locked into a lifestyle of crime and vulnerability. When people run away from home, it is easy to get trapped in a cycle of crime. Sometimes no one asks the reason why the young person ran away.

"I used to run away a lot from home. Sometimes all my problems at home got too much and I just wanted to get away from it."

"When you run away, you take anything to keep you going. You're not eating unless you rob something. Anything available you take it."

Throughout these conversations we have found that young victims (and witnesses) are often reluctant to report crimes to North Yorkshire Police and they do not know who to turn to. Young people have told us that there is a lack of joined-up support from North Yorkshire Police and other agencies. The organisations they interact with do not seem to talk to each other effectively. As a result, serious crimes experienced by young people are going unreported and young victims are not getting the support they need.

"4 years to deal with grooming experience. Was not kept updated. Not nice and felt ignored."

"Police tend to belittle any responsibility young people have in emergencies and have little time for what young people have to say if they have to report or talk about something."

However, it is important to note that we have also heard some positive testimonies from young victims and witnesses who were happy with the way North Yorkshire Police responded. These positive experiences need to become the norm, and they need to be promoted to increase trust and confidence and encourage more victims to come forward.

"A girl at the university was recently raped. The police were really good. They made sure that not only the victim but also that all the rest of the students were okay. It made me feel safe knowing they were there."

"Having experienced the domestic abuse of my mother, and lived in the household as a young person, all throughout the police were able to... provide safety to the home. I feel they were very understanding and aware of the mental aftermath this had."

The Youth Commission's key recommendations

1. **Empathy:** More focus on empathy and support from North Yorkshire Police for young victims.
2. **De-briefing:** Improved 'de-briefing' with young people who run away or who are victims, to listen to their experiences and find out the reason behind their behaviour.
3. **Neighbourhood Watch:** A new Neighbourhood Watch to be designed for young people.
4. **Awareness:** Raise awareness of the support available and what young people can do in certain situations. NYYC to be involved in peer education.

For support services for vulnerable young people:



IDAS:

IDAS has a free and confidential helpline for people facing any sexual or domestic abuse issues:

www.idas.org.uk 03000 110110

and has a 24 hour national helpline 0808 2000 247

The North Yorkshire specific service for support given to victims of crime (whether reported to NYP or otherwise) is:

www.supportingvictims.org

01904 669276

For information from North Yorkshire Police on victims of crime and CSE:

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/victim

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/cse



Priority 5: Preventing Youth Crime



What we did

The Youth Commission set out to explore the root causes of youth crime, explore how to prevent young people from getting involved in crime, and look at how existing support services could be improved.

To address this issue, the Youth Commission carried out workshops and outreach events with young people from a range of organisations including: Children in Care, University of York, Harrogate College, York Young Adult Carers, Askham Bryan College, York College, Selby College, Hull University (Scarborough campus), Youth Voice Summit, Thirsk School, Jennyfields Youth Club, Fairfax Youth Club, Selby College, and Police Cadets.

In addition to these events, Youth Commission members carried out in-depth one-to-one interviews with 3 young offenders from the North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service.

The Youth Commission spoke to over **150 young people** about this topic.

What we found

Over the course of the Big Conversation, we have spoken to a diverse range of young people about this topic, including some who are ex-offenders themselves.

"I have a criminal record. I've been done for under-age drinking, theft, trespassing, assaulting a police officer. I just fell into the wrong crowd."

One of the key messages arising from our conversations is that if the benefits of crime seem greater than the consequences of getting caught, young people will continue to commit crime. We found young people perceived that if they committed petty crimes they were unlikely to be charged, and would instead be warned or cautioned. For many, this means they are not deterred. For them, the benefits of committing the crime – for example fun, peer group status, getting a buzz, or acquiring new possessions – were greater than the consequences of getting caught, then they saw no logical reason why they would not do it again.

"To show off, brag about it, fit in, and it's impressive being able to boss youngsters about."

Young offenders told us that they were not aware of the consequences of their actions when they first started to offend. It was clear that, when asked, many young people were unaware of the damaging effect that committing a crime would have upon their futures, and the lives of people affected by their actions. The long-term consequences of getting a criminal record, such as employment barriers and travel restrictions, were not clear to them until it was too late. As a result, they saw their future as being limited, or they did not consider their future at all. Simply put, they become trapped in a cycle of limited opportunities.

"More awareness that crimes are on your record permanently. It will follow me everywhere."

"I didn't realise that some of the things I'd been doing were crimes. I think we need to be taught about the law more."

"Educate kids on the effect of their criminal record - what jobs can we still do to give us some sort of direction. Careers day with clear salary brackets to give us a sense of money. Not just money we can make on the road."

An important finding from our research is that the underlying causes of youth crime are not being tackled early enough. As we have heard elsewhere in this report, vulnerability, anger, peer pressure and drug abuse are all issues affecting young people. When we interviewed young offenders from the North Yorkshire Youth Justice service, they told us that the inability to manage anger was one of the biggest root causes they faced, linked to volatile home and family environments. They also talked about the damaging effects of peer pressure and the difficulty of getting away from the group they belong to.

"When we get angry we can just lose it and we don't know what we're doing. Anything can make you angry, like bullying or being told what to do."

"Boredom and Peer Pressure. Nothing else to do, and it's hard to get a job doing what you like at a young age. Hanging out with the wrong groups of people make you get roped into doing bad things. The groups can be intimidating, or just cool to join. Once you're in there's no getting out."

We heard mixed feedback about the current support services working with young offenders and those at risk of offending. Some young offenders told us the agencies they interact with are not effective because they are not sufficiently joined up with one another and they don't have the background information they need to understand the individual's needs. Some also said their interactions with NYP were hostile and they felt disproportionately targeted by police officers on the basis of their reputation or appearance.

"Young offenders team, social workers, family outreach, child protection, youth justice support workers, community PCSOs, I've been involved with them all, and they've not helped. There's too quick a change over. They don't know what they're supposed to do."

"[Support agencies should] Be more aware of the young people's case. Address the real issues of what the young person needs."

However, we did receive some very positive feedback about the North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service, with young offenders telling us how much they appreciate the activities they can access and the tailored support given to them by individual professionals.

"Youth offending service is good. They give you things to do and are relaxed about it. All advice is tailored to you."

"Youth offending services do a good job I appreciate them."

We also received very positive feedback about the role played by PCSOs and how they can help young offenders to stay on the right path by building positive relationships with individual young people.

“Good PCSO’s make you not want to be bad to let them down if they are genuinely looking out for you as they know the young people better than the police.”

“PCSO’s are better because they actually know you.”

Overall, we believe that the solutions to youth crime need to tackle the sources of youth offending at an early stage, and highlight the long-term consequences of crime for both offenders and victims.

The Youth Commission’s key recommendations

1. **Awareness of consequences:** We suggest there should be campaigns and education to target young people to raise their awareness of the consequences of crime for victims and offenders. More must be done to teach young people about the law from an early age and educate them about the effects of a criminal record.
2. **Mentoring for young people at risk:** Based on our conversations with offenders, we suggest there is a need to develop mentoring schemes for younger children who may be at risk, to give them have someone a bit older to look up to, thereby counteracting negative peer influences, e.g. linking 11 year olds to 16 year olds.
3. **Work with families:** Help parents with coping strategies and advice for educating their children. Raise awareness of the services available to them which may help prevent their children from getting involved in crime.
4. **Listen to offenders:** Listen more to young offenders and understand what would make a difference to them. Expand the work of the Youth Commission to allow young offenders to have a stronger voice.

For support services for preventing youth crime:

Crimestoppers:

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Neighbourhood Watch:

www.ourwatch.org.uk/knowledge-base-category/crime-prevention

North Yorkshire Police:

www.northyorkshire.police.uk



Priority 6: Relationship with the Police



What we did

The Youth Commission set out to explore how North Yorkshire Police currently engage with young people and examine ways to build better relationships between young people and North Yorkshire Police. We also aimed to understand why young people don't report crime and inform them about how to report anonymously.

To address this issue, the Youth Commission carried out workshops and outreach events with young people from a range of organisations including: NCS workshops, York College, Askham Bryan College, University of York, York St John University, York Young Adult Carers, Hull University (Scarborough campus), Youth Voice Summit, Selby College, Harrogate College, Jennyfields Youth Club, and Fairfax Youth Club.

The Youth Commission spoke to over **350 young people** about this topic.

What we found

Through the Big Conversation, we wanted to understand how to improve the relationship between young people and North Yorkshire Police. Overall, we found that young people want to develop a better relationship with North Yorkshire Police, and they feel this will help reduce offending and increase reporting.

During our research, we gathered much positive feedback from young people about North Yorkshire Police. In particular, young people have commented that they feel protected by NYP on nights out, particularly young women who might otherwise be vulnerable. NYP have a good presence in night time venues, which is felt to combat drug abuse, the spiking of drinks, and anti-social behaviour.

"I think that the police are really good. They have a good police presence on nights out which helps to prevent ASB. I always see them and I feel safer on the street."

"Always about on a night out, feel much safer on a night out, especially us girls."

"Always out on nights out. Pretty good response. Arrested quickly when got punched. Feel safe around town because of them."

Many young people have also commented that there is a positive police presence on the university campuses. For example, the PCSOs on campus are seen to be friendly and they get on well with the students. The informal

nature of interactions is felt to be very helpful, with PCSOs and students bonding through making jokes and taking 'selfies'. University students have also commented that they have attended seminars with North Yorkshire Police which have been very useful and provided open forums for honest discussion.

"The police around here are great. The PCSOs especially. They're friendly, helpful and know how to have a joke with students. I feel like I could go to them if I need help."

"We recently had a seminar with the police. They were really good to talk to. They were open and honest which made us respect them."

However, through the Big Conversation, young people have highlighted a number of issues and problems about the way NYP engage with them. Many young people feel North Yorkshire Police make judgements about them on the basis of what they wear, where they live, and who their friends are. Many feel they are singled out for no reason and unfairly targeted by North Yorkshire Police. As a result, they feel intimidated and judged when they are around North Yorkshire Police. This is exacerbated when young people hang around together on streets or in cars, because they have nowhere else to go, which makes them more likely to be approached and moved on by police, leading to greater tension and hostility.

"Young people are misunderstood and targeted as criminals."

"Negatively stereotyped by police. Judged by where you live, what you wear and who your friends are."

"I think the police don't understand young people in the modern society. I don't think they want to understand. Sometimes you'll get one or two that is good but mostly I find officers don't really like us."

Young people have also commented that these negative stereotypes work both ways. There is a tendency for young people to have negative stereotypes of North Yorkshire Police, based on the influences of the media, older people, and peers. Taken together, these influences combine to create a mistrust and fear of North Yorkshire Police, which is fairly entrenched. Young people recognise that this also needs to change.

"I think the police do a really good job, but are given a lot of stick due to how people and the media portray them. Its not an easy job to have and they should be respected."

"Young people believe in stereotypes more than they believe in the police service. Young people draw the basis of their opinions from their and older people's experiences with the police."

Another key message from the Big Conversation was about the need to improve stop and search processes. We found that many young people do not understand the reasons behind stop and search, and they do not know their rights and what they can expect. Some young people feel they are being made a target for stop and search because of their age and lack of status in society. In some instances, young people told us that they had been treated poorly by North Yorkshire Police during stop and search procedures.

"Police stop and search just because they are young and they don't know their stop and search rights."

"Stopped and searched, presumed to have stolen a bike. Stereotypes of young people. Wrongly accused."

"Horrible treatment during stop and search."

Many young people told us that they do not have any relationship with North Yorkshire Police at all. There is a lack of engagement and young people have commented that North Yorkshire Police do not interact with them 'day to day'. In this way, North Yorkshire Police do not have a 'bond' with young people. A lot of young people do not know who their local PCSOs and neighbourhood officers are. Many people we spoke to want to see a better relationship with North Yorkshire Police and they want to know their local PCSOs better.

When young people are victims and witnesses of crime, they often lack confidence to approach North Yorkshire Police. Many young people feel unsafe or uncomfortable going to police stations and approaching officers. Some have commented that they would rather talk to local people before going to a police officer with a problem. Others have said that would not know how to get hold of North Yorkshire Police in a non-emergency situation.

In addition, many young people believe that they will not be believed or taken seriously by North Yorkshire Police. They feel North Yorkshire Police won't listen to them or act on their concerns. They perceive that officers will be dismissive, condescending and judgmental towards them. Young witnesses and victims often feel ignored and disregarded by North Yorkshire Police when they do try to report incidents, which means that they are less likely to report issues and incidents in the future.

*"Waste of time. Many incidents of civil disputes. Have evidence but nothing was done.
No respect of the police. "*

The Youth Commission's key recommendations

1. **Connection with PCSOs:** We suggest that North Yorkshire Police should make sure young people can get to know their local officers and PCSOs better by name. This would be facilitated if PCSOs were assigned to schools and colleges in a consistent way to build trust with young people.
2. **Police to be a positive face:** We suggest that NYP should make it a priority to present a positive face when engaging with young people. Simply put, we want North Yorkshire Police to be more positive when they are out and in their interactions with young people.
3. **Stop and search rights:** We believe that more must be done to ensure young people know their rights in relation to stop and search. This could be achieved through the development of an accessible card outlining young people's rights to be given out in schools or at the point of a stop and search.
4. **Youth surgeries:** We suggest that the Youth Commission should continue to hear young people's views on North Yorkshire Police. A good way to do this would be to hold informal surgeries with young people to gather feedback on North Yorkshire Police and give out information about their rights.

For support services for relationship with the police:

You can find out more about your stop & search rights at:
www.gov.uk/police-powers-to-stop-and-search-your-rights

For information about the surgeries held by the
Police and Crime Commissioner, please see:
www.northyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/have-your-say/surgeries

For information from North Yorkshire Police on Stop and Search:
www.northyorkshire.police.uk/stopsearch



Conclusion

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission has made a significant contribution to the work of the Commissioner and NYP through the findings and recommendations contained in this report.

For NYP, this report is very timely. It will help NYP to review its Children & Young People strategy, with a view to making it more meaningful and reflective of the feedback from young people across North Yorkshire.

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission has also demonstrated the value of this method of engaging young people. The Commissioner and NYP believe this signifies the need to move into a new and exciting phase of the project, which will continue to engage a core group of Youth Commissioners to speak further with young people across the county.

Subject to final decisions about the future of the project, we anticipate that the Youth Commission will be further developed as a means for young people to influence both NYP and the Commissioner in relation to young people's issues. The Youth Commission can help evaluate initiatives and services that have not yet been subject to young people's scrutiny. They can provide youth-centred advice to NYP on a range of policing and crime matters affecting young people. They also have an important role to play in the development and evaluation of the recommendations they have set out in this report.

Furthermore, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission will play an active role in the growing Youth Commission movement across the country, in partnership with Leaders Unlocked. This will enable us to work together to influence national policy developments, and to open up invaluable personal development opportunities for our North Yorkshire Youth Commissioners. We are looking forward to being a part of these exciting developments across the country.

Testimonials

Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner

"I instigated the Youth Commission because it was clear from my work in drawing up North Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan that the views of children and young people were not being heard as they should be. The members of the Commission are all volunteers and I thank them wholeheartedly for the great job they have done in developing this report which reflects the views of so many young people.

The Commission's report is a first for North Yorkshire. Never before have we heard the views of over 1,500 young people in relation to policing and personal safety. As a consequence, NYP's strategy for young people will be reviewed and updated. The report also comes at a very pertinent time, when NYP is preparing to increase the money dedicated to protecting children and vulnerable people. This means North Yorkshire Police will have more resources available to act on the recommendations made by the Commission. I fully expect them to do so."

Tim Madgwick, Deputy Chief Constable, NYP

"Listening to the views of young people and engaging with them is immensely important to us as a public service. Young people represent a sizable and significant sector that use our services. Children and young people aged between 11 and 20 years account for the highest number of missing person occurrences in our county and young people aged 16 to 24 are four times more likely to be a victim of crime than elderly people. Some are also amongst the most vulnerable and at risk within our communities with the growing menace of Child Sexual Exploitation, grooming and cyber bullying. Many of the developing technologies they embrace on a daily basis are struggled with by the older generations. It is therefore vital that we listen to them about how effective our services actually are for young people, and through their knowledge seek their ideas about how issues could be tackled in ways that are engaging to young people. Who can be better placed to have those conversations and obtain genuinely felt answers than young people themselves, peer to peer.

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission has provided NYP with the opportunity to have those conversations, with the young commissioners identifying key issue areas and going out to speak face to face with young people across the county. It has resulted in probably the most comprehensive consultation ever undertaken with young people about policing in North Yorkshire.

The NYP Children and Young Persons Strategy is due to be re-written this spring. The Youth Commissions report will undoubtedly stimulate ideas and informed discussion as that new strategy is developed. I would like to look towards some of the Young Commissioners to become involved in that process and beyond."

Inspector Martin McLachlan, NYP

"I have had the pleasure of working with the North Yorkshire Youth Commission from the outset. Throughout I have been impressed with the enthusiasm, energy, commitment and ideas which these young people have brought to the project. They have worked tirelessly in order to reach out across North Yorkshire to undertake a comprehensive 'Big Conversation' to canvas the views on policing of young people across the county. They have brought together and consolidated those conversations, picked out the main themes and drawn from them recommendations and ideas.

When we wrote our Children and Young Person's Strategy over a year ago we realised then that the missing piece of the jigsaw was that we didn't really have any consultative mechanism to include young people's ideas and views. Their 'Big Conversation' now represents that missing jigsaw piece. I look forward to taking on some of those ideas and weaving them into the fabric of our service to young people."

Samantha Pariser, Commissioning and Partnership Manager, NYP

"It has been a real pleasure overseeing this Leaders Unlocked project, linking with Police colleagues and our partners throughout North Yorkshire, gaining the views of young people on the key topics they have identified as being important to them. Most rewarding has been watching our Youth Commissioner group form, gain confidence, learn new skills and help shape a new approach of consultation in the world of crime and policing.

Throughout the process it has become evident that the voice of the younger population of our county is often unheard. There are limited opportunities for our children and young people to speak openly to their peers on topics that cause them concern, or worry people close to them.

Our Youth Commissioners gathered the views of over 1,600 young people on issues such as hate crime and cyber bullying. These views provide decision makers a valuable insight into the impact of such negative activities in a way that is otherwise unachievable. Many of these topics are new to us and as a result we are not yet fully equipped to identify solutions to the problems that cause distress, vulnerability and instability in young lives.

Following on from this engagement process we now have the responsibility to take action; to consider carefully what we have been told and seek ways to minimise the impact of the issues in ways that work for the children and young people of North Yorkshire.

I very much look forward to working further with our Youth Commissioners, colleagues and partners to do just that."

Fay Wileman, Youth Commission member

"As a Criminology student, I really want to get involved as I believe in general young people find it hard to get their voices heard.

In the first two meetings we got to meet all the commission members. It was great to see passion from everyone and the debate that occurred around the importance of each topic debate. As young people it was great to be able to choose what we focused on and not be told. Through the months after I worked on a range of fresher's fairs around North Yorkshire, gaining people's views. It was interesting to see the diverse views we got from good to bad. I also help run workshops on all the topic areas. It was great to see the realisation from young people finding out what made up certain drugs and the effects hate crime can have on a person. These workshops gave young people a good safe space to be able to tell us their views, and I personally feel we would not have got some of the good responses because of it. Finally the conference in January made me feel so proud of all the work we had done and believed we have helped change policing around young people.

Personally it has changed my outlook on life as it made me realise the lack of chances young people get to speak about their issues and experiences. Also it has shown me the lack of education around the issues we looked at, and what education is there needs improving. The Youth commission has also allowed me to make some friends for life, as it was most supportive group I think i have worked with. I hope the Youth Commission can carry on working in partnership with North Yorkshire Police and the crime commissioner to help young people have a voice."

Luke Oliver-Tyas, Youth Commission member

"My name is Luke Oliver-Tyas, I am 21 years old and live in Thirsk. I currently work as a Youth Support worker for a charity called The Clock based In Thirsk. I got involved with the Youth Commission because I felt it would be a good way of improving my understanding of the issues young people face around the whole of North Yorkshire, I also felt it gave me the opportunity to help young people to get their opinions across and make them feel like their views/opinions are needed and wanted. I thoroughly enjoyed my work with the Youth Commission because it involved talking to a range of different people around the county, discussing with them the issues that they face and their own experiences. I feel I gained a whole new perspective on the issues that young people face as well as developing my skills as a youth support worker."

Police Sergeant Ben Bowles, NYP

"Having responsibility for the Youth Portfolio I welcomed the news that the Commissioner had signed up to the Youth Commission project. The Youth Commission concept is somewhat revolutionary and with the promise of hearing the voices of over 1500 young people from a cross-section of North Yorkshire it was an opportunity that held great prospects.

In terms of youth engagement this is the largest piece of work ever to be undertaken in North Yorkshire. Young people are often disproportionately affected by crime and it makes sense that they should be consulted on ways to tackle crime and also support and improve policing.

The Youth Commission meetings were certainly eye opening as it became perfectly clear that a significant number of young people throughout North Yorkshire held passionate views regarding various aspects of crime and policing. The six key priority areas identified by the Youth Commission are well considered and touch on deep-rooted problems as well as emerging trends. The recommendations hold real substance and I look forward to being part of the further work to realise and implement changes as we move forward.

I would like to thank the Youth Commission for their dedication, professionalism and hard work in driving forward this valuable piece of work."

Get in touch



@NorthYorksYC



info@northyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk



@leadersunlocked



info@leaders-unlocked.org