



North Yorkshire Youth Commission:

Final Report to the Police & Crime Commissioner

June 2018

**LEADERS
UNLOCKED**

YC:UK
YOUTH COMMISSION

Police and Crime
Commissioner
North Yorkshire



Introduction

North Yorkshire Youth Commission was established in 2015 with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Julia Mulligan. The Youth Commission aims to enable young people aged 14-25 to inform decisions about policing and crime prevention in North Yorkshire, working in partnership with the PCC and North Yorkshire Police (NYP).

Following a successful pilot year, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission (NYYC) has been further developed and embedded over the period 2016-18.

Our aims for this period were:

- Recruit and maintain an active, diverse membership of 25-30 young people from across North Yorkshire.
- Work with Youth Commission members to identify the key priority topics to tackle during the project.
- Provide Youth Commission members with the practical skills training they need for their role, and continually support their personal development throughout the process.
- Plan and deliver a 'Big Conversation' to enable the Youth Commission to undertake high quality research to gather meaningful views from up to 4,000 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 PCC, NYP and partner agencies, and then published in a final report.
- Work collaboratively with NYP and the PCC to ensure that young people's views are actively used to inform NYP decision-making through thematic subgroups linked to the NYYC priorities.

The Youth Commission is facilitated by Leaders Unlocked, a social enterprise which 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 PCCs in 7 other regions, and is planning to further expand the model in 2018-19. For more information about Leaders Unlocked please see www.leaders-unlocked.org

About the North Yorkshire Youth Commission

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission (NYYC) aims to give young people across North Yorkshire a voice on police and crime. NYYC supports, challenges and informs the work of the Police & Crime Commissioner and North Yorkshire Police.

A key part of NYYC's role is to gather the views of other young people through peer-to-peer research. This peer research process provides a safe environment for young people to talk to their peers about the issues. The views gathered from young people are analysed by the Youth Commission in order to create a set of recommendations to present back to the PCC, NYP and partners.

For more information about NYYC please see:

www.northyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/for-you/young-people/youth/ and go to @NorthYorksYC on Twitter

About this report

This report is grounded in an extensive evidence base of over 3,300 conversations with young people across North Yorkshire during 2017-18. 2,708 of these conversations were conducted face-to-face, and a further 654 responses were captured using an online quantitative survey. The findings from these conversations have been recorded using a range of methods including Youth Commission postcards, an online quantitative survey, and through detailed notes from interviews and workshops.

The report is structured into 6 key sections that outline what the North Yorkshire Youth Commission has found about each of its priority issues. Each section features comprehensive analysis of young people's responses, verbatim quotes from individual participants, 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 Police & Crime Commissioner, NYP and relevant partner agencies.

What we did

Established a Research Advisory Group (RAG):

In the early stages of the project, we established a Research Advisory Group (RAG) including key academic experts from the University of York, Local Authority leads, NYP and OPCC. The RAG's role was to ensure the project adhered to best practice in relation to ethics and safeguarding. The RAG worked to develop an 'Ethical Framework' to guide the project and the peer research approach taken. As the project progressed, the RAG were involved in reviewing the research tools and monitoring the quality of the research data being gathered.

Recruited NYYC members:

In each year of the project, Leaders Unlocked carried out a rigorous two-part recruitment process, including an accessible application form and a second-stage telephone interview, to select a diverse group of young people to join the North Yorkshire Youth Commission. We worked proactively with local organisations from the education, statutory, youth and voluntary sectors across the region to ensure that the opportunity was widely distributed, both within mainstream educational settings and within grassroots community settings. In this way, we were able to ensure that NYYC members came from a diverse range of localities, backgrounds and life experiences.

Since the start of the project, we have recruited 49 NYYC members, including 11 members who were retained from the original pilot cohort.

Identified priority issues:

At their inaugural meeting, the Youth Commission worked together to draw on the findings from the pilot phase and identify 6 priority issues they wanted to tackle through the project. The priorities they chose to focus on were:

- 1) Mental Health & Vulnerable Young People
- 2) Abusive Relationships
- 3) Hate Crime
- 4) The Relationship between Young People, Police & Authorities
- 5) Drug & Alcohol Abuse
- 6) Missing Young People & Exploitation

Skills training:

NYYC members took part in practical training sessions to acquire the key skills and knowledge needed for their role. This training included active listening, interview skills, communication and public speaking. It also included a briefing on the Ethical Framework and safeguarding, and a training input from NYP on Vulnerability. These skills were further developed through practical experience throughout the project.

Created the tools for the Youth Commission:

NYYC members were actively involved in creating the tools they would use for their peer research. They co-designed **workshop plans** to address each of their 6 priorities, which were reviewed by NYP leads and academic experts from the Research Advisory Group (RAG) to ensure relevance and validity.

To capture young people's responses, we developed a Youth Commission **postcard** depicting the 6 priorities and providing young people with a structure to record their views and suggested solutions on an anonymous. We also developed an **online survey** to gather quantitative feedback from young people in relation to the 6 priorities.

Please see Appendix 1 for the postcard design.

Joint work with North Yorkshire Police (NYP):

Over this period NYYC worked closely with North Yorkshire Police to inform decision-making and strategies affecting young people.

Working together, we developed a 'Subgroup' model to allow groups of NYYC members to come together with NYP specialists and key partner agencies, to have focused discussions in relation to NYYC's priority topics. In total, we delivered **6 subgroups** to address different priorities: Stop and Search; Hate Crime; Abusive Relationships; Mental Health; Drug & Alcohol Abuse; and Missing from Home.

These subgroups have already resulted in tangible changes made by NYP. For instance:

- **The Stop and Search subgroup** NYP to make changes to the design of the forms used for Stop and Search - adapting the language, making it more user-friendly, and adding signposting information.
- **The Mental Health subgroup** led to NYYC members being involved in a training video for all NYP personnel in collaboration with the 'Connect Project' and the University of York.
- **The Hate Crime subgroup** led to NYYC actively influencing NYP's decision to add Misogyny as a hate crime category.

In addition, NYYC has played an influential role in the formulation of NYP's Youth Strategy 2018-20, including shaping the priorities and developing the Foreword.

Running the 'Big Conversation':

To tackle these 6 priorities, Youth Commission members delivered a range of peer-led workshops and outreach stands with young people across North Yorkshire. This 'Big Conversation' was taken out to a wide range of local voluntary organisations, education institutions and statutory partners across the county, and as a result NYYC was able to talk to over 3,300 other young people about its priorities.

Partnerships:

Throughout this period, NYYC participated in a range of relevant partnership forums to develop relationships and actively promote NYYC. These forums included: Community Safety Partnerships, Youth Engagement Group, PCSOs Conference' and NYP Women in Policing Conference.

Films:

During the project, NYYC members developed a total of seven films aiming to raise awareness of the project and each of the 6 NYYC priorities. These films will form part of the legacy of the project and can be used to communicate with both young people and partners going forward.

Final conference and recommendations:

In the final stages of the project, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission hosted its final conference at the Cedar Court Hotel in Harrogate on 23rd April 2018, at which members presented their final conclusions and recommendations for change. The Police & Crime Commissioner, Assistant Chief Constable, and a range of partner agencies and organisations attended the conference.

Who we reached

Between February 2017 and February 2018, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission gathered views from **over 3,300 young people aged 14-25** across North Yorkshire.

This was achieved by carrying out a range of different peer-led consultation events and activities – including small-scale workshops, larger consultation events, and outreach stands on college and university campuses. In total, NYYC delivered **68 consultation events in a wide range of localities** across the breadth of the county.

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission put particular effort and energy into engaging with harder-to-reach groups of young people; in order to gather vital insights from those who are most affected by some of the priority topics. The Youth Commission carried out workshops and interviews with target groups including looked-after children, young people in supported housing, young carers, and young people involved in offending behaviour. We are pleased that NYYC has succeeded in engaging those from underrepresented and minority groups.

The table below gives a breakdown of the sample reached:

Cohort of young people	Numbers reached
Young people from harder-to-reach and minority groups e.g: children in care, those in supported housing, 'young people involved in offending behaviour.	282
Students at Further Education Colleges and Sixth Forms	1160
Students at Secondary Schools	340
Students at Universities	320
Young people at youth clubs, youth centres, Police, army and RAF cadets, and those taking part in the National Citizens' Service scheme	606
Online survey responses	654
TOTAL	3,362

6. Acknowledgements

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:

- Askham Bryan College
- Brompton Hall Special School
- Craven College
- Colburn Prevention Service
- Door 84 Youth Club
- Dovedale Children's Home
- Eastfield Youth Club
- Foundation Housing
- Futureworks
- Harrogate High
- Harrogate Young Carers
- LGBTQ Youth Voice
- Malton High School
- NCS North Yorkshire (National Citizens Service)
- North Yorkshire Police Cadets
- North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service
- Rossett School
- SASH Scarborough
- SASH York
- Selby College
- Skipton College
- Skipton Girls School
- Show me that I matter York
- Thirsk Sixth Form
- York College
- Yorkshire Coast College
- York RAF Cadets
- York St John University
- York Theatre Royal
- University of York

Priority 1: Mental Health & Vulnerable Young People



What we did

Through the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission set out to raise awareness and tackle the stigma around mental health. We also aimed to help NYP and other agencies to respond effectively with young people in vulnerable situations.

The Youth Commission gathered a total of **506 postcard responses** about this topic.

NYC members carried out workshops and outreach stands in the following places: Askham Bryan College, Colburn Prevention Service, Craven College, Eastfield Youth Club, Harrogate High, Harrogate Young Carers, NCS, Police Cadets, Rossett School, SASH York, Selby College, Skipton Girls School, Skipton College, Thirsk Sixth Form, York College, York St John University, and the University of York.

What we found

84% of young people felt Mental Health and Vulnerable Young people was important or very important

45% of young people said that Mental Health and Vulnerable Young People was the most important priority to them

During the Big Conversation, we heard from many young people across North Yorkshire who have been affected by mental health issues including **anxiety, eating disorders, stress, panic attacks, depression, ADHD, and loneliness**. Some said they felt unwanted and alone. Some said they struggle every day with basic tasks. Some expressed the view that young people are suffering 'behind closed doors.'

"I currently struggle with an eating disorder and have for quite a while. I feel like there isn't enough info on this topic and we aren't educated enough. This has caused me to wake up everyday and struggle even with the everyday basics like taking a shower."

"A lot of people my age are dealing with depression but nobody knows because they don't want to talk to anyone."

Young people also told us that they **struggle to offer support to their friends and peers** with mental health issues. Several people told us they had to support friends and flat mates through self-harming. One individual even said their friend used to call her on FaceTime while she was cutting herself. Simply put, young people do not know how to help their friends in these situations.

"I had to stop my friend from killing herself. She used to Facetime me cutting herself. It got so bad, she went to hospital."

Young people told us that **bullying can trigger mental health issues**. Several people commented that bullying could lead to eating disorders, self-harm, and even suicide. Even when bullying was reported, some felt that no one took it seriously until it became out of control. They commented that there is not enough support for victims of bullying, which means that problems can escalate.

"I had an eating disorder and was badly bullied. I reported it and nobody too it seriously until it got out of control."

"I got bullied because of my size and have self harmed and thought about ending my life."

Many young people highlighted that **schools are not effective at addressing mental health**. Some said teachers lack experience and understanding of mental health, which can make them hard to approach and talk to. In particular, young people felt that teachers needed more knowledge of the signs and symptoms of mental health. Within the school environment, young people also face **pressure and stress around exam periods**, and this can be even more challenging for vulnerable young people.

"Teachers in schools aren't as educated as they could be."

"There is also a lack of support in schools for students suffering from mental health disorders."

"Some teachers need more experience in how to spot and deal with students."

"Teachers aren't approachable and I feel like I can't talk to them."

We also found that mental health is a **big issue for young people at university**. University students told us there are lots of pressures facing young people at university; they explained that students coming to a new city can be vulnerable, especially when exposed to a culture of drugs and alcohol. It was felt that university students were often not getting the support they need, and some felt mental health was not taken seriously enough on campus.

"In a university setting support is vital. In a new city people are vulnerable, think is also linked to drug and alcohol abuse. No one informed me of where help can be found."

"A lot of people don't get the support early on in University and feel very vulnerable and are often tempted to drop out."

"There are problems with mental health support on campus for students who need it."

"Not enough taken seriously by nurses on campus."

Many expressed the view that there is **not enough information and education** around mental health and how to spot the signs. They commented that mental health is not recognised or talked about enough. Some said they wanted professionals to talk to them more about mental health. Currently, some feel that front-line professionals

such as GPs, university nurses, and school staff don't always have enough knowledge of mental health.

"Mental health is a big issue and shouldn't be taken lightly. It should be talked about throughout the county to warn people that it is a serious issue."

"GPs don't seem to have enough knowledge/awareness."

We heard from young people that **stereotypes and stigma about mental health** are still very prevalent. Many people would not feel comfortable to ask for help, as they fear they will be judged and not taken seriously. Some commented that people with mental health issues are seen as 'attention seeking' or 'drama queens.' Some said their friends and family are dismissive of the issues. Some young males felt their vulnerability is less well recognised; we heard from several young men who felt they couldn't speak out because they would be viewed as weak.

"It is hard for peoples' health to be taken seriously as they are often seen as attention seeking."

"Suffering from depression as a guy is something that is seen as weak or vulnerable and I've had a lot of negative experiences."

Young people highlighted a lack of support available, with **long waiting lists and long distances to access support in some areas**. In relation to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), many commented on the long waiting times for support. Some young people who were referred to CAMHS told us they had to wait too long to be contacted after their referral. Some said it could take months to get a counselling appointment. Young people argued that such long waiting times can lead to deterioration, making the individual's problems worse. Some said they wouldn't know where to go or who to contact, as not much support is advertised.

"There are places and people to go to however I feel as though a lot of people don't feel comfortable to ask for help."

"I have anxiety and depression but my parents are dismissive. I'm scared of going to the doctor in case nothing is wrong and then being embarrassed."

"I don't know where to go when I personally struggle with self harm and suicidal thoughts. I fear I will be judged and potentially not taken seriously. I don't know who to contact when I need it."

When we talked to some young people who had accessed support, they felt **the help they received was limited**. Some said they didn't get any real help for issues like anxiety and depression, instead being made to 'look at websites all the time.' Some said mental health support could be very expensive, e.g. counsellors are too costly to afford. Others commented that hospitals discharge people too soon before they are stable.

"From my own experience of counselling, there was no real help for dealing with my anxiety or depression. I was made to look at websites every time."

"When I went to a GP appointment and was referred to the local CAMHS service I was told that it could take 6 weeks before anyone contact me which is a long time to wait when your condition can deteriorate."

"After struggling with family I was sent to a counsellor who didn't help. It made it worse, then I had to deal with it myself."

Some perceive the **police do not fully understand or consider** mental health when communicating with young people. Some felt that the police might not notice if a young person is vulnerable, as they may not be equipped to see the symptoms of poor mental health. Several people expressed the view that the police should be more aware of mental health issues of all types.

“Police don’t tend to notice if a young person is vulnerable it is ignored.”

“Police do not address mental health and treat everyone the same - do not consider those with anxiety police are usually shouting and not talking to them in a calm manner.”

“I think the police should be more aware of mental health issues and all the types.”

Some young people told us they had **negative experiences of interacting with the police during times of poor mental health**. One young person said that, when they were in crisis, the police misinterpreted their behaviour as ‘messaging around.’ Another commented that the police do not always consider anxiety issues and may raise their voices too much, instead of being calm. One person said that when the police are called for incidents like suicide attempts, they do not always signpost individuals to support services. Another said that when they were sectioned, the police did not tell them what it meant and they felt they were taken to a ward that was inappropriate for their age group.

“No empathy from police for young people with mental health illnesses. I was sectioned under 136 but no one told me what it meant. They took me to an adult ward even though I am 15.”

“Lack of understanding of mental disorders by police officers. I was in mental health crisis and was told to ‘stop messaging around’ when I think they should have tried to help get help.”

On the other hand, we also heard a **number of positive comments** about the way the police are responding to mental health. Several people told us the police are doing ‘the best they can’ with limited resources. We heard a number of positive examples. One young person told us when their family member experienced psychosis they had to be detained several times and the police were friendly and informative. Another person told us that when their friend went missing the police were friendly, caring and sensitive. Some said the police were very good at handling mental health in a compassionate way.

“Friend who has experienced psychosis had to be detained by the police on a number of occasions. They were very friendly and informed us of what might happen next.”

“The police are doing the best they can with handling ill mental health but they are not teaching us on how to deal with those who have mental health issues.”

The solutions suggested by young people included awareness campaigns; more work with education institutions and youth groups; increased accessibility of services; support groups and peer support; police and community engagement; multi-agency working; police training to spot the signs; work with parents and families; and more advertisement of the 101 number.

Our key recommendations:

For North Yorkshire Police:

- Hold mental health outreach stands in partnership with local organisations, particularly targeting young males and LGBT+ young people.
- Increase officer training on the effects of mental health for young people.
- Advertise the 101 number, and let people know this can be used for mental health crisis.

For the PCC and partners:

- PCC to include young people in the planning and development of future policies.
- Increase multi-agency working, including mental health staff working alongside NYP on home visits.
- Promote online support available for young people in rural areas or when dealing with long waiting lists.
- Develop male support groups and awareness days.

For NYYC:

- Continue raising awareness, but add a focus on young males.
- Continue to work with schools and colleges on raising awareness of the signs of mental health and reduce stigma.
- Work with partners to develop peer training.

For support services for Mental Health & Vulnerable Young People:



CAMHS Crisis Line:

York & Selby 01904 615348; Scarborough 01723 346035; Harrogate 01423 726921

Compass Buzz:

New confidential service for young people aged 11 - 18 years old. You can text a Wellbeing Worker at your standard rate to ask for help, information or advice about Mental Health and Wellbeing. The number to text is **07520631168**

Changing Lives-York:

Offers support for people with substance misuse and/or alcohol issues
01904 464680 yorkinfo@changing-lives.org.uk

Supporting Victims:

The North Yorkshire specific service for support given to victims of crime (whether reported to NYP or otherwise) is: www.supportingvictims.org **01609 643 100**

In an emergency, dial 999, non-emergency dial 101

Priority 2: Abusive Relationships



What we did

Through the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission set out to raise awareness of the different types of abusive relationships and challenge misconceptions. We aimed to address a wide range of different types of abuse including cyber-bullying and honour-based violence. We also wanted to explore how to improve the police response and support for victims.

The Youth Commission gathered a total of **219 postcard** responses about this topic.

NYYC members carried out workshops and outreach stands in the following places: Askham Bryan College, Brompton Hall Special School, Craven College, Eastfield Youth Club, NCS, Police Cadets, SASH Scarborough, Selby College, Skipton College, York College, York RAF Cadets, York St John University, Yorkshire Coast College, and the University of York.

What we found

79% of young people felt Abusive Relationships was important or very important

14% of young people said that Abusive Relationships was the most important priority to them

During the Big Conversation, young people told us about varied **experiences of abusive relationships**. Some had been abused and manipulated in romantic relationships. Some had been in controlling relationships with older partners and some had faced emotional abuse in same-sex relationships. Some had experienced verbal and physical abuse from partners who were addicted to substances.

Several people said they had been abused by people in their peer groups, such as their university housemates or 'friends' wanting to control them through phone passwords.

"I was controlled and manipulated in a romantic relationship. I wasn't aware of how unhealthy the relationship was until I spoke to a close friend at the age of 17 after being in the relationship for a year."

"My friend was abusing me, it took me a long time to realise. He always wanted to know who I was texting and had my phone passwords."

In addition, many young people have experienced their **friends and family being in abusive relationships**. We heard that young people in these situations often don't know what to do or how to help. Some said they had experienced their parents being in abusive relationships or had witnessed abuse in the home. Numerous people said their friends were in controlling or abusive relationships. One person said their friend had been forced into a marriage and they did not know how to help them.

We found these experiences **affect young people negatively and can be very damaging**. Young people commented that abuse can destroy a person and have a 'ripple effect' on friends and family. For some, it can be very distressing when families are split up as a result.

"I experienced abusive relationships through my parents when I was younger. The police took me out of the situation and away from my dad. At the time this was very distressing."

During the Big Conversation, we also heard that young people **are facing a great deal of abuse online**. Young people told us that cyber-bullying is widespread and can be very hard to get away from. This can make young people feel very lonely and it can cause serious harm to their mental state. Other forms of online abuse that were highlighted included grooming, being forced to send sexual images, and cat-fishing. Even when people report and block others, some said the abuse could still continue with the perpetrators creating new accounts. Many young people do not feel they would be taken seriously when reporting online abuse.

"I was cyber bullied and I followed the instructions of reporting and blocking. Sadly, after I blocked a few people, they created new accounts and it continued."

"People feel lonely and like they have no one. It can cause harm to the person's mental state making them not want to go to school."

We found that young people might be **reluctant or scared to report abuse** in relationships. Some commented that young people find it hard to escape abusive relationships and feel trapped, due to a fear of getting hurt or making it worse. Others said that young people don't always know what constitutes abuse, and many **do not recognise an unhealthy relationship** until much later or at crisis point. We heard that sometimes the victim reaches a crisis point, such as going to hospital, before they speak out.

"People find it hard to reach out or escape abusive relationships and feel trapped. They feel like they can't open up."

"It's hard to tell people if things have happened to you. Sometimes you don't understand what is happening."

During our workshops, some people told us that **males find it even more difficult to admit** they are being abused in a relationship. Men, they said, face barriers to reporting abuse because they may feel embarrassed or weak if they ask for help. Many expressed the view that there is not enough awareness of men being abused.

"Men are much more sensitive at the thought of admitting they are being abused in a relationship."

"Men are not reporting abuse because they feel embarrassed and there are stereotypes."

Many young people we spoke to felt that abuse **was not discussed widely enough**. They commented that it is not talked about enough in schools, colleges and other places. Therefore, they felt many young people would not know how to spot the signs of an abusive relationship or where to go for help. Many people told us that mental abuse is not as well recognised as physical abuse. Some said that certain types of abuse, such as forced marriages, should to be focused on more.

“It is not a topic that is talked about enough like in schools, like when to spot an abusive relationship or if you’re in one.”

Many young people expressed a **lack of confidence** that the police and other agencies would respond effectively to reports of abuse. Several said the police don’t seem to take abuse seriously enough. Some expressed concern that abusive relationships could be dismissed due to lack of evidence. Several were concerned that the offender is able to return to the family they have abused. Other people said the Police don’t always demonstrate enough understanding of the different forms of abuse, e.g. emotional abuse, forced marriages, and sibling abuse.

“A friend in an abusive relationship - because it happened months before, the police didn’t do anything about it, even though she had pictures.”

“Youths being victims of forced marriages organised by family members.”

“Police tend to ignore arguments and quarrels that happen between siblings as it is known to be natural however at times it can be more serious.”

We heard from a number of young people **who were disappointed with the way the police responded to reports of abuse**. Some highlighted poor communication and incidents not being followed up. One person felt they had been pressured to give a statement.

Another concern among young people we spoke to is the **perceived lack of support for victims**. Some young people perceive that there is not enough support available for those who are affected by abuse. We heard from a young person who had been a victim of abuse and told us that, whilst the initial support helped them to some extent, it then felt like they were ‘forgotten about’ and the support stopped. Another young person commented that they were never offered counseling to help them cope with what happened.

“The support I received helped to an extent, however once you’re seen by someone it seems like you’re forgotten about.”

The solutions suggested by young people included: new ways of reporting; more follow-up and communication between victims and police; more work in schools to raise awareness of acceptable behaviours and healthy relationships; campaigns to encourage people to come forward without fear; campaigns targeted at men specifically; better signposting of support; and more support groups including peer support.

Our key recommendations:

For North Yorkshire Police:

- Increase interaction with secondary schools, with a physical presence to make young people feel safe.
- Improve communication between the police and victims throughout the victim's journey and highlight the support that is available and how to access it.
- Take young people's complaints seriously and listen to them.

For the PCC and partners:

- More education to support understanding of healthy relationships and the range of different types of abuse.
- More peer support groups, working with young people to develop these groups.
- More events/campaigns to raise awareness of male victims.
- Promote better access to support and counselling in schools and youth services.

For NYYC:

- Continue to raise awareness using the film and workshops, and promoting these with partners. Working with partners to develop campaigns/peer support as above.
- Continue to have positive communication with NYP and relevant services.
- NYYC to support in promoting online safety.

For support services for Abusive Relationships:

IDAS:

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

Supporting Victims:

The North Yorkshire specific service for support (including counselling) given to victims of crime (whether reported to NYP or otherwise) is: www.supportingvictims.org 01904 669276

North Yorkshire Police:

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

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/victim

www.northyorkshire.police.uk/cse



Priority 3: Hate Crime



What we did

Through the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission set out to raise awareness of hate crime definitions and consequences. We aimed to consult with young people with personal experiences of hate crime. We also wanted to work with NYP and other agencies to encourage more victims to come forward.

The Youth Commission gathered a total of **324 postcard** responses about this topic.

NYYC members carried out workshops and outreach stands in the following places: Askham Bryan College, Brompton Hall Special School, Craven College, Colburn Prevention Service, Eastfield Youth Club, LGBTQ Youth Voice, NCS, SASH York, Selby College, Skipton College, Thirsk Sixth Form, York College, Yorkshire Coast College, York RAF Cadets, York St John University, York Theatre Group, and the University of York.

What we found

69% of young people felt Hate Crime was important or very important

14% of young people said that Hate Crime was the most important priority to them

During the Big Conversation, many people told us **hate crime is a big concern** for them. Communities are becoming more diverse, however there is a lack of understanding of diversity among the public.

Many are **unsure what constitutes** a hate crime and some are **unaware they have been a victim**. Some commented that it is difficult for them to know when 'a line has been crossed' and when to report hate crime. Some said there is a general lack of awareness of different ethnicities, cultures, faiths and sexualities. Others commented that many people are not aware of how hate crime and discrimination affects others.

“There is a lack of knowledge as what actually constitutes a hate crime.”

“People are not aware of hate crime affecting others. People need to be aware of discrimination issues like ageism, racism, and homophobia.”

“It is difficult to know when a line has been crossed and when to act/ who to report hate crime to.”

We spoke to many young people who had **experienced abuse on the basis of their sexuality, faith or race**. Numerous young people were brave enough to share examples from their personal experiences with us. Many of these experiences happened in and around schools. For instance, some young people from Skipton told us they get bullied about their religion or because of their sexuality and gender, especially at school. In Harrogate, young people said they were victimised at school for being gay.

“Many I know have experienced quite heavy bullying because of their sexuality/Gender, especially at schools.”

“I get bullied for being transgender. I was dragged into an alley and abused on my way home. They threatened to spread rumours about me if I told anyone. I’m verbally abused in school and sometimes physically.”

Young people also told us about **experiences of hate incidents and hate crimes in public places**. One young person told us they were bullied for being transgender, dragged into an alley and abused, followed by threats. Another young person told us they were attacked walking home from school, knocked out, and it was recorded on someone’s phone. In York, Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) students told us they have been racially abused in student accommodation and on nights out. Others said they had experienced racism and Islamophobia at nighttime. We found that these experiences can make young people feel insecure, vulnerable and isolated from society. In Colburn, some young people said they were scared to go out due to problems with hate.

“I get targeted for being gay. I was attacked walking home from school. I got knocked out and someone recorded it for everyone to see on a phone.”

“Facing racial abuse as some people target Islam, and people who follow it. I have experienced this at late night in York.”

“Some people give racist insults because they are drunk and this makes me feel insecure and vulnerable as I feel I can’t be part of society.”

Many people told us they **see hate crime happen in their areas** and they feel ‘helpless’ to stop it. They commented that hate crime impacts the community and can affect them emotionally, even when they are not the victim. Several said they had seen cases of racism and sexism in public, especially late at night. One young person said they had seen Islamophobic abuse directed at Muslim women and families on public transport, with no action being taken by staff. Another individual mentioned a same sex couple getting spat on in public and explained that this makes people ‘scared to love each other.’

“I’ve often seen cases of racism and sexism. Especially in busy areas late at night.”

“On the bus a women in a hijab and her son were receiving abuse. The driver apologised but said there was nothing he could do as there was no proof, only witnesses.”

“Female friend got spat on for holding hands with her girlfriend in a bar.”

We heard from young people that **schools and colleges don’t always do enough to challenge hate crime** – although the issue does vary from place to place. Young people feel that schools need a greater understanding of hate crime, discrimination, diversity, and LGBTQ issues. Young people told us that some teachers fail to address the issues and make them feel safe. Often, hateful language may not be taken seriously and may be viewed as a form of humour or ‘banter’. On the other hand, universities were generally seen to be effective in addressing hate crime on campus.

“Schools and colleges need more insight towards LGBTQ+ and handling hate crime towards students.”

“I have been victimised at school for being gay. An example of this: teachers fail to address my insecurity about safety.”

“I don’t think that schools in the area do enough to challenge hate crime. There have been many times where agencies such as the police should have been involved.”

The impact of hate crime on victims can be far-reaching. During the Big Conversation, we heard that the **victims of hate crime suffer emotionally and mentally**, including facing anxiety, panic attacks, and social isolation. Some felt that victims do not get enough support, and therefore mental health issues could escalate. We found that support services can be perceived to be difficult for young people to access. Within the LGBTQ community, some said there is not enough support for young LGBTQ people.

Many young people also expressed a **lack of confidence to report incidents**. Some perceive that the police lack sensitivity towards the issues facing minority groups. Some felt they couldn’t approach the Police about hate crime because they feared they would not be taken seriously. One person said that the police did not do much when they reported racial abuse on nights out. Another commented that police did not supply enough information after a hate incident was reported.

“Police do not know how to deal with people who have been racially abused; I think this is because they feel racial abuse is to do with peoples personal opinions on different races.”

“Police are not sensitive with young people who get bullied about their sexuality. Young people feel they can approach the police because nothing will be done.”

“Several instances where a black friend of mine has been racially abused on nights out. Little is done by the police afterwards to adhere to the hate crime.”

“A friend experienced hate crime on a night out. He spoke to the police, who at first were engaging but soon after did not supply enough information.”

The solutions suggested by young people included: more education and awareness; community cohesion initiatives; improved police communication and follow-up with victims; safe spaces and support schemes for victims; new ways to report hate crime; harsher consequences for offenders; and more work on addressing the root causes.

Our key recommendations:

For North Yorkshire Police:

- Dedicated NYP Champion for hate could be utilised to train and support in raising the awareness.
- Police need to promote clear definitions of hate crimes and reporting guidelines for hate crime.

For the PCC and partners:

- Education and understanding is so important for young people; everyone needs to work together to ensure this happens.
- Focus on getting education into Academy schools.
- Work on advertising support services across the county.

For NYYC:

- Continue to raise awareness and educate young people, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and LGBTQ+ young people.
- Work with agencies to develop the current work further and work with schools/groups.
- Actively promote reporting mechanisms among young people.

For support services for Hate Crime:



Supporting Victims:

The North Yorkshire specific service for victims of crime, which allows victims to report hate crime and receive support.

www.supportingvictims.org; 01904 669276

True Vision:

Reports can also be made online via **www.report-it.org.uk/home** or reported by calling the non-emergency number **101**.

Priority 4: The Relationship between Young People, Police & Authorities



What we did

Through the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission set out to gather the views and experiences of young people and feed them back to NYP. We also aimed to advise the police on how to engage effectively with young people and prevent youth crime.

The Youth Commission gathered a total of **483 postcard** responses about this topic.

NYC members carried out workshops and outreach stands to gather young people's views on this topic in the following places: Askham Bryan College, Brompton Hall Special School, Colburn Prevention Service, Craven College, Dovedale Children's Home, Eastfield Youth Club, Foundation Housing, NCS (National Citizens Service), SASH Scarborough, SASH York, Selby College, Skipton College, York St John University, and the University of York.

What we found

49% of young people felt The Relationship between Young People, Police & Authorities was important or very important

4% of young people said that The Relationship between Young People, Police & Authorities was the most important priority to them

We received **many positive comments** about the relationships between young people, the Police and authorities. Some young people said relationships are good, with police and other authorities offering help to young people. Several remarked that police officers were supportive in their interaction with victims. One person

commented about the positive police presence at recent protests. Several people felt the police were doing the best they could with limited resources, but acknowledged that people rarely hear about the positives.

“Positive police presence at a recent protest - impressively accommodating and removed from political bias.”

“The relationships are good. Police and other authorities offer good support and help for all young people.”

“The police are doing the best they can and most police are really good you never hear the positives about police.”

PSCOs and youth officers were highly praised. Numerous people highlighted the value of these officers making time for young people and investing in building positive relationships, for instance by going into youth clubs. As a result of this, young people reported feeling greater trust and respect towards PCSOs and youth officers than they did towards other officers. Several young people commented that PCSOs show them more respect than police officers and ‘actually listen to us’.

“From my experience PCSOs have more respect because they actually listen to us.”

“PCSO are good had alcohol but told to just stay out the way.”

“I trust PCSO more than police because you get to know them, they did bike training with me so I know who they are.”

However, many young people also highlighted **a lack of police presence** in their areas, and were aware of the lack of resources available due to limited funding. Several young people commented that they do not really know the local police and rarely see them. Some young people in villages and more rural areas, such as Richmondshire, felt the police ‘seemed to have forgotten’ about their areas. Some said the police were not visible during evenings and weekends and this made them feel unsafe. Several people commented that it is difficult to get help in non-urgent situations and they are unsure what to do in these situations. Some young people feel the cuts have inhibited the Police from maintaining relationships.

“The police often seem non-existent”.

“There are not many police around. If I need help or anything that is not urgent it is difficult to get advice.”

Young people also talked about the **lack of positive contact with the police as being a problem**. Some felt they only saw the police in negative situations. Some commented that this was also evident in the way NYP uses social media, with the emphasis more on finding criminals than building positive relationships.

Some **perceived the Police to be intimidating and unapproachable** – partly because they feel there is a lack of interaction and engagement. For this reason, we found young people may be reluctant or afraid to speak to the police when they need help.

“I often find that the police can often intimidate young people despite being there to protect the general public. Despite me having no contact with the police myself, I still find the police intimidating.”

“Police tend to be completely non-engaging and very serious making them less approachable.”

“As a person of outstanding nature in the community and a regular volunteer, the police still treat me and others with suspicion and distrust. They have a certain barrier that makes them unapproachable.”

Many young people perceived **a lack of respect or empathy from the Police**, which they felt might be due to a lack of understanding of youth culture and individual backgrounds. Some said the police don't understand them when they are angry and this means situations can easily escalate. University students commented that the police don't seem to care about them because they are not from the area.

"Police handle young people rough and don't understand me when I'm angry."

"Riot gear means you can't see faces and you don't know who they are which makes you get angry and defensive."

Some **young people expressed concern about the stereotypes the police have** of their generation. Many commented that the Police seem to assume they are doing something wrong when they are out, especially when in groups. Some felt they were stereotyped based on the clothing they wore, such as tracksuits and designer brands. Some felt they had been unfairly targeted or treated badly by the police. A few said they were targeted because of their past or because of family members being known criminals. "Police stop and search us and when they've found nothing they will become agitated and try and find something wrong with us."

"When you're walking down the street or when you're with friends who wear Adidas, Nike Armani, police always seem to stare at you with no reason and give you strange looks."

"When we wear tracksuits police think we are druggies."

"Police speak to us in threatening ways and some people are scared or lack confidence to speak up."

"Police target me 'cause of my past."

Some people felt the Police stopped them too much. Young people in some areas (e.g. Colburn) commented that they get asked what they are doing on a regular basis. Some felt that Stop and Search can be over-used or used in the wrong way. Some young people expressed the view that they get stopped when they are out because there aren't enough things for them to do, such as football pitches and skate parks.

"Police stop and search us and when they've found nothing they will become agitated and try and find something wrong with us."

"When we had music playing while walking through the streets and how they stopped us and checked our bags. I believe it was because we were in tracksuits."

We heard from a number **young people who were arrested and put in police custody and felt they were treated poorly.** One person said their possessions were taken away, which made them angrier. Others said they were not shown respect or given any space to calm down. One person said they were left hungry in the cells. Several told us they feel they were arrested without proper evidence. One person said there were large numbers of police present when they were arrested, which they found very intimidating.

"When you get arrested in custody it is like being treated like an animal and they take everything away from you and don't give you any space, it just makes you more angry."

"There was [a high number of] police for 2 people getting arrested. It was very intimidating."

Young people told us **they don't know enough what police and authorities actually do.** They feel there is a lack of information about the role of the Police and the positive work they are doing. Some young people commented they did not know a lot about what the Police do in their areas.

"There is a lack of information about what the police actually do. I don't really know a lot about the police in the area."

The solutions suggested by young people included: increased police presence and patrols in certain areas; PCSOs and officers in schools; educating young people on the role of the police; community and police engagement; informal and positive communication and activities with young people; police training to increase empathy and understand; more PCSOs; increased use of youth ambassadors; and improved custody experiences.

Our key recommendations:

For North Yorkshire Police:

- Increase patrols in rural areas.
- Include young people in police recruitment.
- Work with partners to promote the positive work the police do.

For the PCC and partners:

- Create a Young People's Board to support in employing officers across the county
- Involve young people in Takeover Days to help build relationships.
- Work with local youth officers to build relationships with services users, and include them in both positive and challenging activities.

For NYYC:

- Continue the work with NYP, share positive stories and highlight the benefits to relationships we have built.
- Continue the conversation with young people across the county from a range of services.

For support services for the Relationship between Young People, Police & Authorities:

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/

In non-emergency situations, call **101**



Priority 5: Drug & Alcohol Abuse



What we did

Through the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission set out to raise awareness of causes and effects of drug and alcohol abuse, to understand young people's experiences, and work with NYP to reduce availability and harm.

The Youth Commission gathered a total of **545 postcard** responses about this topic.

NYC members carried out workshops and outreach stands to gather young people's views on this topic in the following places: Askham Bryan College, Brompton Hall Special School, Craven College, Door 84 Youth Club, Eastfield Youth Club, Harrogate High, NCS, Police Cadets, SASH Scarborough, SASH York, Selby College, Skipton College, Thirsk Sixth Form, York College, York RAF Cadets, York St John University, York Theatre Group, Yorkshire Coast College, and the University of York.

What we found

70% of young people felt Drug & Alcohol Abuse was important or very important

13% of young people said that Drug & Alcohol was the most important priority to them

During the Big Conversation we found that many young people are **concerned about widespread drug and alcohol abuse** in their communities.

Many young people commented that **drugs are too widely available** in their local areas. Some commented that drugs are easier to obtain than alcohol. In the city, young people said drugs can be accessed in nightclubs. Outside the city, in smaller areas such as Thirsk, young people told us it is very easy to find out where to get drugs. In some places, young people told us that dealers approach them in the street and in rented cars. Drug dealers are felt to target younger people because they see them as vulnerable.

“Drugs can be accessed in any nightclub and you can freely walk in with a pocket full of drugs.”

“Loads of dealers around this area, you could just hand around on the street and one would come up to you, happens a lot.”

“Rented cars are dealing drugs around local areas.”

“Adult dealers target younger children, as they are vulnerable and feel pressured to ‘look cool’. Also in small areas it is easier to know where to get it.”

Some young people expressed concern that there are **so many new drugs coming onto the market**. Some are increasingly concerned that drugs are not being manufactured correctly or safely, which can cause severe harm or death. Some young people may take Spice because it’s cheaper than cannabis, and they don’t recognise the dangers. We also heard that steroids are widespread in some areas.

“Too many class A and B drugs. New introduction of different pills.”

“My friend takes Spice ‘cause it’s cheaper than weed but he acts differently on it and doesn’t realise the dangers.”

“Steroids are all over in Thirsk.”

Many also warned that alcohol is easy to get hold of and **increasing numbers of young people seem to be drinking excessively**. Some felt there was a general perception that alcohol is not harmful because it is legal. Some told us that underage drinking seems common, even for 12 and 13 year olds, and some parents seem to ‘turn a blind eye’. Some also told us there is underage drinking at parties and local nightclubs, with fake identification being used in order to get served in bars and clubs in some areas (e.g. Selby).

“Young people (12 and 13 years) are getting drunk and parents allow this.”

“Alcohol is so easy to get hold of. More and more young people are abusing it. Young people don’t think it is harmful because it’s legal.”

“I have experienced a lot of underage drinking in my area, both at parties and at the local club.”

We heard that young people can get into **vulnerable situations** on nights out due to excessive alcohol consumption. Young people commented that some nightclubs continue to serve alcohol to people when they are clearly drunk. Some said that people get their drinks spiked in bars and clubs, especially females. This is a real concern in York, where students told us that these incidents are fairly common and are not always dealt with effectively. We heard that bouncers don’t always do enough to make sure people are safe when they are kicked out of clubs.

“Clubs help extremely drunk people to the bar to consume more alcohol. I’ve seen people trying to drug young people drinks especially girls. Presumably to take advantage of them when they are too drunk to understand what is happening to them.”

“Two friends were victims of drink spiking in York on separate occasions. One of them was never followed up. The police said it was her own fault for not monitoring her drink!”

Young people told us about a **variety of root causes** for drug and alcohol abuse. These included using drugs to escape reality, peer pressure, from friends and family boredom, mental health, and upbringing. Young people entering university felt huge pressure, with drug and alcohol use often being referred to as part of the “student life”. Several young people told us there is a large drug culture at university and ‘it’s easy to fall into the trap.’

“It’s easy to get into a group and take drugs, you are influenced by the group.”

"Lots of people do drugs due to their background or as influence of people or if they have mental health issues they use to help them."

"Not enough support given to students struggling with peer pressure related to drugs at University. Large drug culture at university and it's easy to fall into the trap. There is a lot of peer pressure and lack of regulation."

Young people identified a **lack of understanding** of the harm drug and alcohol use can cause, and the long-term effects, especially in relation to alcohol. Many feel they don't know enough about how to keep safe when using drugs or alcohol. Numerous young people commented that existing education on drug and alcohol abuse is not effective. Young people have highlighted a need for education about the risks, rather than on the classification and the law. They feel there is not enough information available on harm prevention and they want education 'without scorn'. Young people also pointed to a lack of education on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), warning that people still don't know the dangers even though the law has changed.

"Every drug talk we've had at school has been useless."

"Young people are always discouraged to drink this just makes us stop listening."

"There is no specific training or data on legal highs and even though laws have changed people still don't know the dangers."

"I think in talks it should be more what to do and how to help when on drugs rather than saying don't do it because teens are still going to it either way."

Numerous people felt that drug users should be responded to in a **more supportive, rehabilitative manner**, rather than simply being punished. Many felt that more could be done by NYP and partner agencies to understand the underlying reasons why people turn to drugs and alcohol, and tackle these root causes. Some also commented that Police could address drug and alcohol issues more effectively if they had better relationships with young people.

"The police can do more to help people struggling with drug abuse instead of punishing them/ imprisonment."

"People wont know how to get help or who to go to because afraid of getting arrested."

"Police never bother to try and find out the reasons why someone may be drinking excessively. It is automatically thought that it is a social thing."

There is a problem with a perceived lack of support for young people who are users of drugs and alcohol. We found that most young people **wouldn't know where to go if they have a drug or alcohol problem**, and some feared they would be judged or punished. Some felt that teenagers need a different type of support than 'harder' drugs users.

Some young people recognised the **positive work that has already been done** by the Police to address these issues. Some young people highlighted the benefits of police coming into schools to reinforce the importance of staying safe on nights out and responsible drinking. We also received positive comments about the policing of the nighttime economy in York.

"Great experiences from the police coming into schools to educate students of varying ages between 14-18 years old. They have really helped reinforce the importance of looking after yourself on nights out and to drink responsibly by showing real-life footage and consequences."

"I feel that the police deal with alcohol and drug abuse quite effectively in York but I think this differs depending on the area and problems which are prominent."

The solutions put forward by young people included: Youth clubs and activities; better education and awareness; more searches; support groups for users targeted at young people specifically; safe spaces to talk about drug use; drug testing; peer education to get the message across; stricter enforcement of age regulations by pubs and clubs; help for drug dealers to get jobs; and better relationships between NYP, young people and the community.

“Get more groups, like North Yorkshire Youth Commission, into high school and speak to each year group explaining the importance of not abusing alcohol.”

Our key recommendations:

For North Yorkshire Police:

- Shift the approach when dealing with drug and alcohol abuse – move towards a ‘care/help first’ approach for first offences.
- Promote more widely the drug awareness courses.
- Drug and alcohol youth officers to build relationships with support services.
- Raise awareness of the support services available for young people and their families.’

For the PCC and partners:

- Drug and alcohol awareness training to become mandatory in all schools and colleges and universities with a focus on the harm.
- Create ‘safe zones’ for young people to come and talk about drug and alcohol abuse, and access support and information.

For NYYC:

- Continue talking to young people about the risks of drug and alcohol abuse and where they can access help.
- Develop a drug and alcohol awareness campaign for teens.
- Hold events in rural parts of the county during summer.

For support services for Drug & Alcohol Abuse:

Compass Reach:

www.compass-uk.org/compass-reach; 01904636374

Changing Lives-York:

Offers abstinence-based, structured, day treatment for individuals suffering from drug and/or alcohol addiction. 01904 464680; yorkinfo@changing-lives.org.uk

North Yorkshire Horizons (Adults Only):

www.nyhorizons.org.uk; 01723 330730



Priority 6: Missing Young People & Exploitation



What we did

Through the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission set out to listen to the views of young people who are homeless and living in care. We aimed to raise awareness and tackle stereotypes towards these young people, and to inform police training and empathy in relation to missing young people.

The Youth Commission gathered a total of **198 postcard** responses about this topic.

NYC members carried out workshops and outreach stands to gather young people's views on this topic in the following places: Craven College, Eastfield Youth Club, Futureworks, North Yorkshire Police Cadets, Selby College, Skipton College, Thirsk Sixth Form, York RAF Cadets, Yorkshire Coast College, York St John University, and the University of York.

What we found

78% of young people felt Missing Young People & Exploitation was important or very important

13% of young people said that Missing Young People & Exploitation was the most important priority to them

During the Big Conversation, we found young people run away from home **for a variety of reasons**. They may be fleeing abuse and conflict in the home, or running from the authorities. They may simply want to hang out with their friends or fit in with a certain social group. Some may even be encouraged by social media – for instance, a with a social media challenge urges teenagers to go missing for two days. Overall, young people commented that there should be more focus on understanding and addressing the root causes, particularly for those who run away frequently.

“More younger people are running away from home. For the reasons they want to distance themselves from the negative stuff such as conflict, upset, maybe even abuse happening.”

“More people I know have gone missing in York than anywhere else. Someone I know went missing just last night.”

“There are too many children and teens going missing with little to no publicity.”

We found there are **some unhelpful myths and assumptions** about why young people go missing. Some young people felt they were not taken seriously enough, and when they went missing it was sometimes perceived as ‘attention-seeking’. Some also commented that individuals could get blamed for getting abused, as people might think they bring it on themselves.

“Exploitation is a really critical topic that is not being discussed.”

“A lot of people think people go missing for attention-seeking.”

“Young people get blamed. Most people think they bring it on themselves.”

Young people are **vulnerable when they go missing**. People can take advantage of their vulnerability, especially around drink and drugs. This can result in very dangerous situations and even fatalities. Young people highlighted sexual abuse, exploitation, substance abuse and other dangers such as falling in the river.

Young people commented that **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a growing concern**. Numerous young people shared personal experiences of grooming, sexual harassment, sending and receiving indecent images, and being followed. When online, young people may feel they are getting all the attention they want, and sometimes they don’t realize they are being groomed until it goes too far. Some people also commented that there is a tendency for young girls to go out with older lads, as they drive and have more money, which often leads them into exploitative relationships.

We found that **CSE and exploitation is not talked about enough with young people**. Not enough people are aware of the different types of exploitation - including criminal exploitation, online exploitation and grooming. Most young people are not aware of the signs of exploitation, and do not know where to go to seek help. More needs to be done to identify the support services available for young people who are affected by exploitation. This lack of understanding and awareness is also a real barrier to reporting.

Several young people commented that the **Police should be doing more for missing people** cases. They expressed the view that the police don’t always show enough care and compassion when people go missing. Some felt the Police could be very dismissive, and more should be done when someone is reported missing. Some said you should not have to wait so long to report someone missing. Others said there is not enough support for those affected, including family and friends.

Young people with personal experience of going missing expressed the view that **more follow-up work needs to be done**, both by the Police and other agencies. This follow-up work should focus on addressing the root causes and working through any issues the individual may face living at home. Some felt that once they were found they seemed to be ‘forgotten about’ and there was not enough compassion from professionals.

“Police don’t show any care when people have gone. Their attitude is that the young person will return in time. There is no support for family or friends.”

“Young people who go missing are reported to police and once found just forgotten about.”

“My experience is that I reported my friend who is 18 years old missing who had an argument with family. The response was that she will come back after she has cooled down.”

On the other hand, several people commented that they are reported missing to the police too often, causing **unnecessary police involvement**. Some of them felt that the Police shouldn't necessarily be called and it was treated 'too severely'. Being reported missing can be embarrassing, they explained. Some of these young people told us that the Police may overreact to missing young people or 'use it against them'. Some commented that the police should not be the ones responding to missing young people, but there should be other agencies instead of the police.

"Being reported as a missing person is embarrassing."

"Police overreact to missing young people and use us because we are an easy target."

"Police should not be the ones responding to missing young people."

The solutions put forward by young people included: giving help for the root causes, rather than just picking up young people and dropping them home; more publicity for missing people cases and use of social media; have a separate unit to deal with these cases; educate on CSE; police should discuss CSE with young people; youth mentors to chat to young people who have gone missing; meetings to follow up why people go missing with families and police; search and rescue team rather than police; and more engagement with victims to provide support regarding criminal exploitation.

Our key recommendations:

For North Yorkshire Police:

- Always have a conversation with missing young people to record their views and inform the follow-up support, ideally within 7 days of going missing. Focus on the 'root' cause of going missing.
- Use social media to advertise where police officers are at certain times, so young people can come and talk to officers about any concerns.
- Signpost young people towards support services and safe places.

For the PCC and partners:

- Promote support services for victims and how to access them.
- Work with partners to raise awareness of the different types of exploitation, e.g. criminal exploitation, including among parents.
- Support the development of a district-wide working group, to enable gaps in relation to appropriate follow up support for missing young people to be addressed.
- Greater partnership working among key agencies to prevent young people from going missing and ensure appropriate follow-up support – including weekends and evenings.
- Promote safe places for young people to go across the country for young people in need – better and consistent promotion.

For NYYC:

- Actively recruit care-experienced young people with experience of going missing or being exploited.
- Create an information pack on support for missing young people and exploitation to use with young people to support awareness and understanding.
- Work with partners to promote education around online exploitation and grooming – highlighting the different types of exploitation such as CSE, criminal exploitation, and online exploitation.

For support services for Missing Young People:

North Yorkshire Police guidance pages:

northyorkshire.police.uk/what-we-do/public-safety-and-welfare/missing-people

Missing People:

The only charity in the UK dedicated to bringing missing children and adults back together with their families. www.missingpeople.org.uk

York City Council/ North Yorkshire County Council further advice or support on homelessness:

Dial 01609 780780

www.northyorks.gov.uk/homelessness

www.york.gov.uk/info/20012/housing/2045/youth_homelessness_support/1



Conclusion:

We are extremely grateful to the members of the North Yorkshire Youth Commission and the local partners, NYP leads, and academic experts who have been involved in making this piece of work a success.

The insights and recommendations contained in this report – together with the extensive the joint work that has been done between NYP, NYPCC and NYYC – represent a very significant contribution to the work of the Police & Crime Commissioner and North Yorkshire Police.

Through their 'Big Conversation' with over 3,300 young people, the Youth Commission has managed to reach and engage a hugely diverse cross-section of the youth population across North Yorkshire. They have made particular efforts to hear from those whose views are often overlooked. This peer-to-peer process is of enormous value, both as a piece of research and as an engagement exercise.

On 23rd April, a wide range of stakeholders came together at the North Yorkshire Youth Commission conference. At this conference, stakeholders were actively involved in roundtable discussions about the future of NYYC. Some of the key messages arising from these discussions were:

- PCC and NYP plan to involve NYYC in the recruitment of police officers
- NYP intends to involve NYYC in reviewing plans around Vulnerability
- The Youth Offending Team intends to integrate the recommendations into their practice
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) intends to use the findings to inform engagement with young males around mental health
- NYYC and partners to work together to raise awareness of the Supporting Victims Service among young people
- Schools attending the conference intend to use the findings to inform their approach to Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE)

Our hope is that the North Yorkshire Youth Commission will be further developed as a channel for engaging young people in the work of both the Police & Crime Commissioner and North Yorkshire Police. As shown through the project, the Youth Commission can help bridge the gap between young people and policing, through ongoing engagement with the youth population. They can provide youth-centred advice 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. Over the next 2 years, NYYC will work closely with NYPCC, NYP and partners to implement and address the recommendations in this report.

Testimonials:

Jorawar Singh, NYYC member

"The Youth Commission has given vital skills such as how to work as part as a team and communicate efficiently and confidently. Furthermore it has changed how I view situations, I can now recognise and educate people on what a hate crime is for example and I have also made some friends along the way."

Hamaiza UI-Hassan, NYYC member

"I believe the Youth Commission has helped me to educate both young people and the police on sensitive topics that I am passionate about. I have had the opportunity to communicate literally with police officers and young people. Including , having the availability to a local police officer that attended Youth Commission events. As well as this I was able to talk to students from my local area and this was one of the most valuable experiences for me. I was content at the fact that young people felt that they could confide in me with personal stories."

Fay Wileman, NYYC member

"The Youth Commission gave me a voice and opportunity to allow other young people have a voice. Through my time with the youth commission I felt so privileged to hear so many diverse young people's view. It allowed me to learn how to communicate with range of different people and understand their views. I built so much confidence through the commission, speaking in front of large crowds but also leading workshops. It help me decide on my career path as it made me want to make a difference to young people at grass roots level through becoming a PCSO. I have learnt about the amazing things the criminal justice system but also how there is a lot more work to be done."


Shawndelle Dixon, NYYC member


"The Youth Commission has educated me whilst helping to educate others, myself, on each of our key topics. It's really helped me come out of my shell and I've met some really lovely people, who share the same passions as me. It's been such a great opportunity. I want to be a police constable when I grow up and working with the Youth Commission has really helped to open my eyes about how the police support young people. It's also helped to show me what still needs to be worked on, in that respect. I've met some great people in my short time in the Commission and I'm so grateful for the opportunity. Joining the Commission is one of the best decisions I've ever made."


Appendix 1: NYYC postcard


YC:UK
YOUTH COMMISSION


**North Yorkshire
Youth Commission**


 **Hate Crime**

 **Relationships between Young People, the Police & Authorities**

 **Mental Health & Vulnerable Young People**

 **Abusive Relationships**

 **Drug & Alcohol Abuse**

 **Missing Young People & Exploitation**

What matters most to you?

You have a Police & Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire who wants to hear your views.

My issue is: _____

Please tell us your current views and experiences of this issue in your area.

My top idea to address this issue is:

Your age: _____

Your local area: _____

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YC:UK
YOUTH COMMISSION

LEADERS UNLOCKED

Police and Crime Commissioner North Yorkshire

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