



# **NORTH YORKSHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

**Final 2021 Report & Five-year  
Reflective Report to the  
North Yorkshire Police,  
Fire & Crime Commissioner**

**JANUARY 2022**

**LEADERS  
UNLOCKED**



## INTRODUCTION

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission (NYYC) was established in 2015 with funding from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC). Over the past five years, the NYYC has completed four cycles and produced four final reports to the PFCC. This fourth, 2021 report serves to both discuss the NYYC's latest work, findings, and recommendations, and to reflect on the achievements and lessons learned over the previous five years.

The NYYC aims to enable young people aged 14-25\* to inform decisions about policing and crime prevention in North Yorkshire, working in partnership with the PFCC, North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS).

\*aged 10 – 25 from December 2021

## ABOUT THE NORTH YORKSHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

The NYYC aims to give young people across North Yorkshire a voice on issues of crime and policing. NYYC supports, challenges, and informs the work of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner and North Yorkshire Police.

A key part of NYYC's role is to gather the views of other young people in the county through peer-to-peer research in the form of a 'Big Conversation'. This peer-led research process provides a safe environment for young people to talk to their peers about relevant issues. The views gathered from young people are analysed by the NYYC in order to create a final set of key findings and recommendations to report back to the PFCC, NYP, and partners.

For more information about NYYC please see: <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/for-you/young-people/youth/about-the-youth-commission/> or go to @NorthYorksYC on Twitter.

The North Yorkshire Youth Commission is facilitated by Leaders Unlocked, a social enterprise that aims to enable young people to have a stronger voice and influence on the decisions that affect their lives. Leaders Unlocked has established Youth Commissions in 14 other regions in England and Wales and continues to grow. For more information about Leaders Unlocked please see [www.leaders-unlocked.org](http://www.leaders-unlocked.org)

## AIMS FOR THE NYYC 2020-2021 CYCLE

Building on the success of previous cycles, the NYYC continued to further develop its aims, priorities, and campaigns throughout 2020-2021. This included adapting to virtual working in line with the Government guidelines and restrictions due to Covid-19.

Our aims for this period were:

- Recruit and maintain an active, diverse membership of 30-35 young people from across North Yorkshire.
- Work with Youth Commission members to reevaluate the key priority topics and accompanying aims to tackle during the project (see Appendix 1-2 for Priority Aims).
- Provide Youth Commission members with the practical skills training they need for their role and continually support their personal development throughout the process.
- Enable young people across North Yorkshire to share their views, perceptions, and experiences on the key priority issues through peer-to-peer research and engagement.
- Continue to develop KYMSGAME (Keeping Your Mates Safe) to ensure the resource is used flexibly to support a sustainable approach across North Yorkshire and York.
- Support Youth Commission members to analyse young people's views and turn them into key findings and recommendations to be presented to the PFCC, NYP, and partner agencies in a final report.
- Work closely with the PFCC, NYP and relevant partners to further the aims of the Commission and allow young people in North Yorkshire a voice in crime and policing.
- Influence the development of the North Yorkshire Police Children and Young People's Strategy beyond 2020.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is grounded in extensive peer-to-peer research and engagement with **2,073 young people across North Yorkshire** between 2020 and 2021. 1,689 of these conversations were conducted through interactive workshops (both virtual and face-to-face), one-to-one interviews, and engagement stalls. A further 384 responses were captured using online surveys.

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

Additionally, the longer-term, reflective element of the report is presented against the backdrop of **North Yorkshire Youth Commission research spanning five years**, from 2015 to 2021, and incorporating three previous final reports and **over 8,000 responses**, conversations and views from young people in North Yorkshire.

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

## WHAT WE DID

### RECRUITED NYYC MEMBERS:

At the start of the 2020- 2021 NYYC cycle, 15 members were retained from the previous cohort, with a further 14 being recruited, bringing the **total membership to 29 Youth Commissioners**.

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 and nonmainstream 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**.

### IDENTIFIED KEY PRIORITIES AND AIMS:

At their inaugural meeting, the NYYC members worked together to reassess their key priorities to ensure they remained up to date and relevant to young people. Drawing on the findings of previous years, the NYYC chose to retain the same six key priorities, making only minor adjustments. They did however re-write their key aims for each priority to better reflect emerging current issues important to young people.

The six key priorities chosen were:

- 1) Mental Health and Emotional Well-being
- 2) Abusive Relationships
- 3) Hate Crime
- 4) Relationships with Police and Authorities
- 5) Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- 6) Missing Young People and Exploitation

*See Appendix 1 for Priority Aims*

### SKILLS TRAINING:

NYYC members took part in practical training sessions to acquire the key skills and knowledge needed for their role. This training included how to successfully plan workshops and interview techniques as well as targeted training from external partner organisations, including The Alcohol Education Trust and the IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct) Youth Panel. These skills were further developed through practical experience throughout the project.

## CREATED YOUTH COMMISSION RESOURCES:

NYYC members were actively involved in creating the tools that they would use for their peer-led research. They co-designed **interactive virtual workshops** to address each of their six priorities, which included presentations, quizzes, videos, and discussions.

To capture young people's responses, we developed a **Youth Commission postcard\*** depicting the six priorities and providing young people with a structure to record their views and suggested solutions anonymously.

In order to continue to share their key messages and reach other young people through the national lockdown, members created seven **short-form** videos that aimed to promote the work and aims of the NYCC and share practical knowledge and safety tips. Two of these videos were **co-created with the help of NYP**.

### KYMSGAME

Building on the work of the 2019-2020 Youth Commission cycle, the NYCC continued to utilise and develop its 'KYMSGAME' themed 'Big Conversation' workshops.

'KYMSGAME' is a campaign centred around the concept of **'Keeping Your Mates Safe'** and looks at young people's responses when exposed to potentially risky situations. The campaign is a tool for facilitating peer-to-peer conversations about safety, support systems and becoming an active bystander. KYMSGAME immerses participants in scenarios based on 'real life' and poses questions about the decisions young people can make to keep themselves and their friends safe.

NYYC members developed an edition of the game for each of the six priorities and ensured these could be used within both virtual and face-to-face Big Conversation workshops. The responses given by young people while participating in KYMSGAME formed part of the NYCC peer-research.

*\*See Appendix 2 for the postcard design*

## RUNNING THE 'BIG CONVERSATION':

To tackle these six priorities, NYCC members delivered a range of **peer-led workshops and outreach stands** with young people across North Yorkshire. At these engagement events, members utilised their co-designed resources, including KYMSGAME, quizzes, and response postcards. This 'Big Conversation' was taken out to a wide range of local voluntary organisations, educational institutions, and statutory partners across the region.

We also developed two **online surveys** to gather feedback from a wider range of young people in relation to three of the key priorities: Hate Crime, Abusive Relationships and Missing Young People and Exploitation.

As a result, the NYCC was able to engage with over 2,000 other young people about its priorities.

## PARTNERSHIPS:

Throughout this period, the NYCC participated in a range of relevant partnership forums to develop relationships and actively promote the commission, enabling opportunities for joint delivery and influence. These forums included: The NYCC Emerging Drug Trends group, The Inclusive Communities Joint Coordinating Group, and the Positive Communities Steering Group.

## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

In the final stages of the project, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission held its first in-person members' meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. The purpose of this meeting was to review the response data from the 'Big Conversation' and begin to develop key findings and recommendations for each of the six priorities. This initial meeting and further subsequent analysis allowed the NYCC to produce a set of well-founded recommendations to the PFCC and partners and NYP.

## WHO WE REACHED

Between October 2020 and November 2021, the North Yorkshire Youth Commission gathered views from **over 2,000 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 both virtual and in-person workshops, consultation events and engagement stalls at college campuses and other youth settings. In total, the NYYC delivered **78 consultation events in a wide range of localities** across the breadth of the county.

The NYYC put particular effort and energy into engaging with underrepresented and more marginalised groups of young people; in order to gather vital insights from those who are most affected by some of the priority topics. The NYYC carried out workshops and consultations with young carers, looked after children, those with first-hand experience of the criminal justice, young people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, non-mainstream education settings, and young people identified as 'at risk'.

## 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 and supported the work of the NYYC. Thanks go to:

Scalby School  
Flying Futures  
George Pindar School  
Bedale School  
The Island  
Door 84  
Joseph Rowntree School  
YCFC

Harrogate College  
The Read School  
York College  
Thirsk School  
SELFA  
Northallerton Scouts  
North Yorkshire Sport  
North Yorkshire Carers

NYFRS (LIFE Course)  
Francis Xavier School  
North Yorkshire Youth  
Selby College  
Education Strive  
Show Me That I Matter  
Skipton Youth Voice  
Selby High School

# PRIORITY 1: MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



## PRIORITY AIMS:

- Tackle the stigma surrounding access to mental health support, especially for young men.
- Educate young people on how to recognise the signs, seek help and support peers.
- Work with connected organisations to raise awareness of available support services.
- Support the police and other agencies to respond effectively to young people in vulnerable situations.

## WHAT WE DID

Through the Big Conversation, the NYYC set out to raise awareness and tackle the stigma around mental health. We also aimed to better understand the barriers that prevent young people from accessing mental health support services and what could be done to reduce them.

The NYYC engaged with a total of **429 young people** about this topic. We conducted 16 workshops.

The NYYC produced two short-form videos on the topic of Mental Health and Emotional Well-being, highlighting its importance for young people. These videos were released in May 2021 as part of Mental Health Awareness Week.

## WHAT WE FOUND

Mental Health was a high priority for most participants, and there was an awareness that the pandemic had a significant impact on many young people's mental well-being. However, overall responses to the national lockdown's effect on mental health appeared to be extremely mixed. While some young people reported feeling isolated, lonely and without a support network, others found time away from school and everyday expectations to be a welcome relief. Additionally, some participants noted that the pandemic prompted **more open conversations about mental health**.

*"The number of people with mental health issues is getting worse and Covid hasn't helped that."*

*"If you're stuck at home in a bad situation, it's really isolating. Not allowed to see friends that are usually your support and escape from things."*

*"I like doing school online, it takes away that pressure and you have more time to see your family and relax too."*

*"In lockdown, a boy at another school started posting about mental health and positivity and loads of people saw it, so that was a good thing that benefited a lot of people."*

*"Mental health is more spoken about now, I think. On TV and online, it's more accepted and you get reminded that school isn't most important, your mental health is."*

A key question we asked young people during the Big Conversation was, **'what are the barriers they face in accessing the mental health support they require'**? There were many varied and important responses to this question, including hidden disabilities, not recognising you need support, parents not taking problems seriously, a fear of not understanding the process and treatment being taken out of your control.

However, the most common barrier to accessing help, by a long way, remained a **fear of being judged or stigmatised**. Young people told us that a fear of judgement came from many different sources, including peers, parents, and professionals (such as teachers, police, and mental health support staff themselves). A related common concern was a fear of not being believed or taken seriously. This demonstrates that, despite open conversations about mental health becoming more common, there remains **heavy stigma**, shame and suspicion attached to the topic.

*"The older generation, like our parents, think it's over-reacting because they didn't talk about mental health in their day"*

*"You don't want people to think your attention-seeking"*

*"It's seen as a weakness. You don't want your mates or people at school to know."*

*"A police officer didn't believe I had a mental health problem. He said I hadn't been through half of the things other people he knew had."*

*"You don't want people to fall out with you or bully you because of it."*

*"Parents not understanding and telling you to get over it, because things were different when they were growing up, so they don't understand it."*

*"People think if you have ADHD, it's not real and you're just badly behaved, they don't take it as a serious problem or think it's an excuse."*

A second, very commonly cited barrier was a **lack of easily accessible services**. Young people complained of lengthy, drawn-out assessment processes, long waiting lists, and gatekeeping around services, which resulted in service users having to 'prove' their level of need.

*"You'll just be put on a waiting list for months, and the problem will probably get worse in that time."*

*"It's a long time from speaking up until you actually get help. You have to speak to loads of different people, which is hard anyway if you have a mental health problem."*

*"You have to wait until it gets really bad and you're at your worst before you're seen as a priority. If you say you're going to harm yourself then you get help more quickly."*

However, despite this, it was often found that young people were not aware of many of the mental health support services available to them. When asked to pick out which of 10 local and national help services, they recognised, no groups collectively recognised more than half (5) of the services, with the lowest being 90% of young people in one workshop only being aware of 1/10 of the services shown. This shows that a **greater awareness of alternative support options is needed** to tackle the issues of accessibility and service capacity. Young people agreed with this perspective:

*"More young people need to know where to go for help."*

*"Advertise groups like Mind. We have them on your football kits and on posters in school, so everyone will know to go there if they need help."*

*"Awareness of groups that you can go to for therapy and support."*

When discussing the direct role of NYP in mental health, there were mixed reactions from young people. Some reported positive experiences of receiving help from police, while others felt that officers didn't approach mental health with the sensitivity or understanding required.

*"I did have a police officer that really helped me when I was in a bad place, and they got me help."*

*"They need to be more aware of mental health. I have Tourette's and once before I've had a tick and said something in front of the police, and I got the dirtiest worst look. But I didn't choose to say it, I didn't mean it and I had other symptoms that they should know and recognise."*

In general, young people felt that police were not the ideal agency to deal with mental health problems, as this could risk making the situation more traumatic and act as an additional barrier, particularly for 'underrepresented and more marginalised' groups. However, there was a broad consensus that all **officers should be well trained in understanding mental health**, how it can affect behaviour and the additional patience and empathy that may be required.

From the responses given, the NYYC concluded that police should be well equipped to deal with mental health crises and refer young people's cases to experts and support services promptly and avoid 'police action' wherever possible.

*"I'd be scared to ask police for help, it can be intimidating."*

*"They should have an awareness of mental health but at the end of the day, it's not really their job"*

*"You're not really going to go to police and ask for help with your mental health, are you. It's not really a matter for them, you can go to a teacher, or your friends or something."*

## **OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE:**

- Increase training for officers on how to better deal with young people struggling with mental health difficulties, this will help support a greater understanding of the distinction between mental health crises and criminal behaviour.
- Signpost young people with mental health struggles to appropriate support services, and when necessary, fast-track applications for support.
- Take more of a proactive stance against bullying and verbal abuse, which was found to be a key factor in many young people's mental health struggles.

## **FOR THE PFCC AND PARTNERS:**

- Support mental health services to increase capacity and offer help to more young people within a reduced timescale.
- Raise greater awareness of easily accessible, non-referral based mental health support resources, including telephone and online services such as Kooth, and The Mix.
- Promote and work with a wide range of organisations, including support services and education settings to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

## **FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

- Utilise 'Big Conversation' workshops to promote key messages around emotional well-being and reduce stigma surrounding mental health.
- Consult with a wider range of young people with a lived experience of mental health struggles to gain a better understanding of their journey and experiences.
- Work closely with education settings to develop better mental health support systems for young people.



# PRIORITY 2: ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS



## PRIORITY AIMS:

- Raise awareness of the different types of abusive relationships and how to spot the signs, including: financial or coercive control.
- Ensure victims of abuse are aware of how to access support, regardless of gender, race, or background.
- Consult with young people to better understand the barriers to reporting abuse.
- Champion the rights of victims and stand against victim-blaming.
- Promote support services for survivors of Abusive Relationships.

## WHAT WE DID

Through the Big Conversation, the NYCC set out to raise awareness of the different types of abusive relationships, how to spot signs and symptoms of abuse and different methods of reporting abuse and accessing support. We also aimed to spark a conversation amongst young people about how young survivors of abuse could be better supported.

The NYCC engaged with a total of **282 young people** about this topic. We conducted 9 workshops and an online survey.

## WHAT WE FOUND

Through the Big Conversation survey just over half (51.9%) of respondents indicated they could **spot the signs of an abusive relationship**, while 39.2% were unsure, and the rest (8.9%) said they would be unable to recognise signs. In line with these figures, young people told us that they felt **more education on the potential signs** and how to recognise abuse was needed. Additionally, many participants added that this lack of awareness on the signs of abuse acted as a barrier to getting help.

*"If you don't know what really counts as abuse, if you don't realise, you wouldn't tell anyone and get help."*

*"Raise awareness and education of these signs, so that you can recognise if your friend is going through it."*

*"Something that would stop you from getting help would be not being educated on the symptoms and signs of abuse, so not knowing that what your suffering is even abuse."*

*"If they don't know it's abuse, if they haven't learned the signs, they wouldn't tell anyone."*

When asked about **seeking support or reporting an abusive relationship**, only 33.8% said they would go to the police at any stage of the process. This is compared with 50% being confident to seek help from a teacher or trusted adult, and 77% who would speak to friends or family at some stage. Young people gave varied reasons for not wishing to seek police support, but a key recurring theme was the feeling that their age meant they would not be taken as seriously as an adult reporting the same situation.

*"Police should just actually take it seriously. Just because you're a teen abuse can still be as serious as it is for adults or say a married couple."*

*"I would probably only go to police if it was really serious, or if it was say, physical abuse, because otherwise, they wouldn't take us seriously as someone younger."*

*"Police need to make sure that abuse is taken just as seriously for people our age as it is for adults."*

*"When it's someone our age, they will probably think it's just a falling out, or an argument, not actually full-on abuse that needs to be dealt with or stopped by police."*

When discussing what additional support was needed for victims of abuse, young people told us that they would like to see **support networks specifically designed for their age group**. While there is a range of good victim support services, young people said it would be beneficial to meet with peers who had gone through similar experiences. This would allow young victims to **feel less isolated**, and that they are not alone in their experience of abuse.

*"Set up youth services so that people can be open about their problems and meet others like them."*

*"Having someone to talk to that is your age, so they understand what it's actually like. Sometimes teachers or parents don't know what it's like."*

*"They could possibly create clubs to listen and support each other. Try to create a welcoming environment to get your mind off things."*

Relatedly, young people also told us they would like to hear more from people with a **lived experience of abuse**. This would show them that someone else has been through a similar situation, and also demonstrate that their situation can get better.

*"I think that support services and charities for victims should have previous victims, so you can speak to someone who has gone through the same thing as you."*

*"Explain and show how other people have suffered too, to make them feel less alone."*

*"Support groups with people who understand and have experienced what you've been through."*

*"People who have gone through it will understand how you feel better than a teacher or a therapist."*

Currently, only 25% of survey respondents indicated they would seek help from a victim support service. These adjustments of more targeted, age-specific peer-support, and the inclusion of more lived experience voices could work to increase this figure.

A recurring theme throughout conversations with young people was the difficulty boys and young men faced in speaking up about abuse. They told us that **gender stereotypes, stigma**, and the need to be seen as 'tough' prevented male victims from seeking help in abusive relationships.

*"For boys it's harder because you might be made to feel like it's not a male problem and you might not want to admit if you're being abused."*

*"More male mentors for boys or young men to go to, because I'd feel more comfortable talking to another male about something like abuse. And also, they would be good role models to encourage men to come forward because a lot of the time you think it's not manly, or you need to be tough about it and not ask for any help."*

*"You could be humiliated. Especially if you're a boy because you should be able to deal with it yourself."*

## **OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE:**

- Ensure every young victim who reports instances of abuse are made to feel listened to and taken seriously.
- Increase communication with young victims to make sure they understand the legal reasons and policing policies behind decisions made about their case.

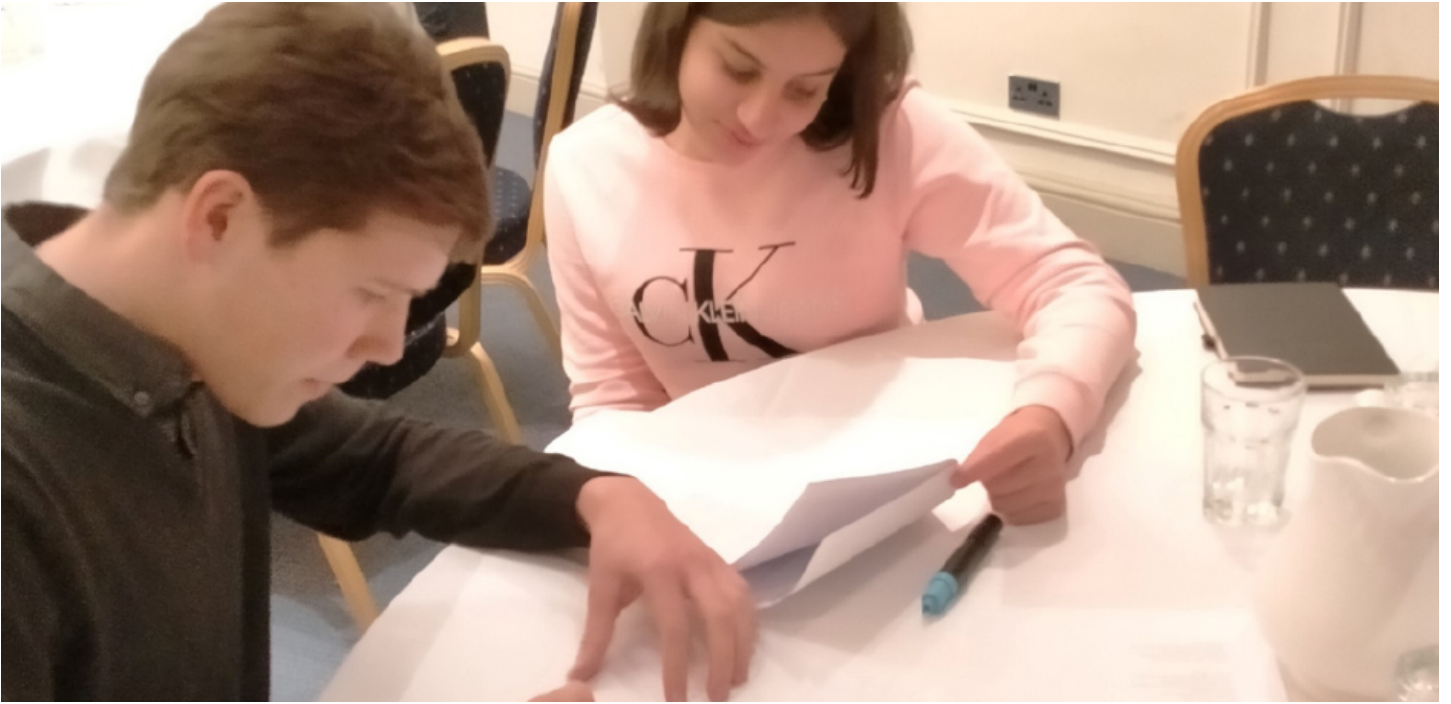
### **FOR THE PFCC AND PARTNERS:**

- Support the further development of victim support services to include specialised resources and promote support networks specifically designed for young victims.
- Include and promote the voice of those with a lived experience in all work surrounding the topic of abusive relationships.
- Consider new solutions to break down barriers faced by young people, especially males and those from underrepresented and more marginalised backgrounds, in accessing support services.
- Work with the NYYC to develop a campaign to raise awareness of Abusive Relationships and promote where to get support.

### **FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

- Raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of Abusive Relationships through Big Conversation workshops.
- Promote the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Partner with victim and survivor support organisations, such as Supporting Victims to assist in promoting available services and to encourage young people to seek help when needed.

## PRIORITY 3: HATE CRIME



### PRIORITY AIMS:

- Educate young people on both Hate and Mate Crime, challenge the rise of cyber-hate crime, and inform them where to get support.
- Raise awareness of the seriousness of everyday hate crime, such as slurs.
- Increase awareness of the impact and damage of everyday hate prejudice and incidents.
- Support those in authority to deal with hate crime effectively, including the reporting process.
- Celebrate and promote the positives of a diverse community.

### WHAT WE DID

Through the Big Conversation, the NYYC set out to raise awareness of the definition of hate incidents and hate crimes and to encourage reporting of both to police. In line with Hate Crime Awareness Week 2021, we aimed to tackle bystander reluctance and encourage young people to report on behalf of others. We consulted with young people about their own experiences of hate crime and the barriers to reporting.

We also raised awareness of Mate Crime and its negative impact on victims. We asked young people their understanding of the term, and what could be done to better protect those at risk.

The NYYC engaged with a total of **394 young people** about this topic. We conducted 11 workshops and an online survey.

The NYYC is a member of the Inclusive Communities Joint Coordinating Group (formerly the Hate Crime working group) and the Positive Communities Steering Group. Through these partnerships, we engaged in knowledge sharing, promoted the work of the NYYC and participated in the planning of two Hate Crime Awareness Week campaigns.

The NYYC co-produced two short-form videos with NYP aimed at encouraging young people to report hate incidents and hate crimes and eliminating fear and uncertainty about reporting by better explaining the process and what to expect. These videos were shared on the NYYC social media channels.

## TRAIN THE TRAINER

The NYCC delivered an additional 3 **'Train the trainer' workshops** to mixed groups of young peer leaders, teachers, and youth workers. The purpose of these sessions was to equip group leaders with the knowledge and skills to conduct their own 'bitesize' conversations on Hate Crime, its impact, and how to be an active bystander. The sessions provided more in-depth knowledge of the law surrounding hate crime, facilitation skills practise and support in planning a 'bitesize conversation'. In these sessions, we engaged with a further **22 participants**.

The NYCC has utilised sections of the **'Hurt by Hate'**\* comic book and video resources in both Big Conversation and Train the Trainer workshops.

\*Hurt By Hate is an interactive resource that aims to raise awareness of the potential impact of online propaganda and extremist grooming on young people across North Yorkshire and York. Hurt By Hate is funded by the North Yorkshire Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioner and NHS England.

## WHAT WE FOUND

During the Big Conversation, we found that most young people were **unaware of the definition of both hate incidents and hate crimes** and did not know the distinction between the two. Less than half of survey respondents said they understood the difference in the two terms, and of those, even less were able to give correct explanations. In general, the legal definitions and terminology were inaccessible and created confusion.

*"People need to know how to recognise what a hate crime actually is. A lot of people don't know what it is even."*

*"I don't know what they are, I thought they were the same thing."*

*"Before today I've not heard of hate incident, and I didn't know exactly what counts as a hate crime."*

*"More education because we don't all know what a hate crime is or if it's serious."*

This uncertainty around what constitutes a hate crime acted as a significant **barrier to reporting**. Young people frequently told us they worried that an incident or hate crime they experienced or witnessed was not significant enough to report to police. There was a feeling that reporting minor instances would 'waste police time' and not be taken seriously. Often, serious physical violence was the threshold young people considered necessary for police intervention. Almost no participants were aware they could report non-criminal hate incidents to police, or of the benefit of doing so.

*"If you don't know if it's really a hate crime or not you don't want to waste the polices time."*

*"You can only go to the police if it's really bad."*

*"Police have more important things to do. They're not gonna go after someone just for calling you a name."*

*"You might not know that you could report it to the police. You might think it's not bad enough."*

*"Not sure if I'd be taken serious or listened to."*

The view that verbal hate crimes were less serious sometimes led to the belief that hate incidents and crimes that occurred online were less significant than in-person because there was no immediate physical danger. Participants who received **hate or abuse online were less likely to report it to police**. (Although it's worth noting that not all young people consulted agreed with this perspective).

*"It's not as serious online as face-to-face, because it won't escalate like it could in person."*

*"It's still bad but it doesn't matter as much as real life."*

*"It's worse in person, because online it's just a threat but in person they could do something."*

*"Sometimes it's just banter."*

*"It's more normalised online."*

Occasionally, young people told us that they would not go to police if they were a victim of a hate crime regardless of the seriousness of the incident. This was because of a belief that hate crimes are rarely successfully convicted or that punishments were not severe enough. The NYCC found that it would be useful for young people to hear **more examples of successful convictions and uplifts**, to help build confidence in the benefits of reporting hate crime.

“Actually show the public that it’s going to be taken seriously if they do it. They won’t just get away with it.”

“Higher penalties at court, that would stop people or make them think twice.”

“The police are doing as much as they can. Hate crime is just always gonna happen because that’s some people’s opinions and we can’t stop it.”

“They always seem to get away with it, so what’s the point.”

The NYYC found that NYP, in conjunction with partner agencies, provides a good amount of alternative reporting methods, including traditional routes such as in-person and over the phone, but also online independent reporting such as Supporting Victims and True Vision.

**Supporting Victims:** <https://www.supportingvictims.org/>

**True Vision:** <https://www.report-it.org.uk/>

These varied reporting options did well in tackling some of the barriers cited by young people. For example, many said they **feared the repercussions** of being known to have gone to police or being seen as a ‘snitch’. The option to report discreetly and anonymously online or via 101 helps to negate this obstacle. Similarly, for young people whose social or cultural groups have a traditionally strained relationship with police, independent reporting mechanisms help to ensure more distributive justice.

*“Don’t want to be seen as the one reporting it to police.”*

*“It could depend on your personal reputation, or family. If the police already know you for something bad you might not be trusted if you report something to them.”*

*“You would be labelled as a snitch.”*

*“Might be scared of the police so you’re not going to go to them for anything.”*

However, through the Big Conversation, the NYYC found that young people were often **unaware of alternative reporting methods**. Many participants did not know they could report hate crimes online, and even less had heard of alternative reporting mechanisms. For example, suggestions on how to increase reporting included the option to report online, despite this already existing.

*“We need a new website or app about hate crime and reporting.”*

*“There should be more ways to report it anonymously.”*

This lack of awareness has meant that alternative reporting methods aren’t being utilised to their full potential, and the barriers cited by young people have remained in place.

The NYYC asked young people their understanding of hate crime. 80% of survey respondents said they had never heard the term before, and only 15% said were confident they knew what it meant. This demonstrates that more work to raise awareness of hate crime and its impact is needed particularly within non-mainstream educational environments, where young people may be at an increased risk.

*“I’ve heard of it but I’m not sure what it is.”*

*“More people should be aware of hate crime, especially to look out for people doing it to your friends.”*

Finally, young people consistently told us that education on different cultures and building positive connections would be beneficial to reducing intolerance and hate crime. They told us that they would like to see more **celebration of diversity in the community**.

*“Focus more in schools on different cultures, so people know they are okay.”*

*“Educate people that it’s okay to be different and not hate people for being different.”*

*“Things like pride month and special days that bring attention to it are really good.”*

## **OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE:**

- Communicate the importance of, and further encourage reporting of hate incidents and hate crimes, even if they do not meet the threshold for legal action.
- Highlight the good work and successes of anti-hate crime campaigns and operations, such as successful uplifts to hate-related convictions.
- Work with partner organisations, such as the Youth Commission and alternative reporting routes to bring clarity to the legal processes surrounding hate crime and eliminate fear of reporting amongst young people.

### **FOR THE PFCC AND PARTNERS:**

- Support closer working relationships between less heard from social groups and police and authorities to tackle under-reporting of hate crime amongst marginalised communities.
- Increase promotions of alternative reporting methods, such as the Supporting Victims and True Vision websites.
- Celebrate and encourage diversity across North Yorkshire through the promotion of local campaigns groups and events.

### **FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

- Work more closely with communities and social groups most affected by hate crime to encourage reporting, especially amongst groups with a traditional distrust of police and authorities.
- Work with the PFCC to develop an educational campaign to raise greater awareness of the specific harms of verbal hate crimes and hate incidents, often seen as 'less serious'.
- Continue to raise awareness of hate crime that targets vulnerable young people.

## PRIORITY 4: RELATIONSHIPS WITH POLICE & AUTHORITIES



### PRIORITY AIMS:

- Help to break down negative stereotypes on both sides of the relationship between young people and police.
- Ensure young people feel confident seeking police support or making reports.
- Promote positive, non-crime related interactions between police and young people.
- Raise awareness of stop and search rights.
- Explore the impact of social media on the relationship between young people and the police.

### WHAT WE DID

Through the Big Conversation, the NYCC set out to gather young people's views and experiences with police and authorities. We aimed to better understand the relationship between police and young people, and how it could be improved. Participants shared their perspectives on the stereotypes on both sides of the relationship, the barriers to reporting crime and the impact of social media. We also set out to raise awareness of Stop and Search rights amongst young people and achieved this through a combination of educational videos, quizzes, and discussions.

The NYCC took part in a training and development session with The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and the IOPC Youth Panel to better understand the police complaints process. We then used Big Conversation workshops to further share this knowledge with other young people.

The NYCC engaged with a total of **327 young people** about this topic. We conducted 13 workshops and 5 engagement stalls.

The NYCC has worked closely with NYP, OFPCC and partners throughout the project and engaged in continuous two-way dialogue and knowledge sharing.

NYCC members recognised the increasing impact social media has on public opinions of police. We, therefore, devised a campaign, as part of the Big Conversation, to better understand what messages young people saw about police online, how this affected their own perspective, and what content they would like to see from police accounts themselves. We first met with NYP officers and the OFPCC to discuss the campaign, before designing a worksheet



for young people to share their opinions and design their own social media post. Young people's responses here were added to our key findings to help NYP and the PFCC to gain a better understanding of how social media has impacted young people's perspective of policing.

The NYCC acted as a review board for the NYP partnership hub in its development of a new anti-knife crime campaign. We reviewed resources and presented feedback and suggestions for change to help the campaign better engage with young people. As a result, the partnership hub altered the images, text, and design of their posters to appeal to a wider range of young people.

Members of NYP Positive Action team and the Partnership Hub took part in a Q and A panel meeting with the NYCC on the subject of Race in Policing. The meeting allowed the NYCC to better understand NYP policies on diversity, inclusion and combatting racism in policing.

Two representatives for the NYCC were chosen to be on the Public Choice Award Panel chaired by the former PFCC. They helped to select a shortlist of nominees from NYP, NYFRS and EnableNY, which then went to a public vote. The NYCC members then attended the virtual award ceremony to show support for and celebrate the achievements of our partner organisations.

The NYCC played an active role in the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan consultation. We reviewed and provided feedback on the public consultation survey, which resulted in a new question on racial justice being added. We also attended a public consultation event to engage with the public and encourage young people to share their views.

## WHAT WE FOUND

This priority is a large topic, covering many different areas and this was reflected in the varied and complex opinions young people shared with us. The majority of young people we spoke to shared a combination of both positive and negative experiences with police.

On the whole, most young people said they had at **least one positive interaction or experience** with an officer or PCSO. When this was the case, it often led to either a positive, or at least a less negative, opinion of police more generally.

*"They came to our school, and they were friendly, that was a good impression I got and made me more comfortable with police."*

*"There is one near me that is chilled. He doesn't take himself too seriously, so people respect him more."*

*"Once a police officer did actually really help me. When I had to give a statement and stuff, they made me feel safer with it and explained everything. If it wasn't for them I probably wouldn't have done it. So, it did sort of make me think they actually cared."*

Despite these examples of positive experiences with individual police officers, young people told us that, overall, they often felt **stereotyped** by police. Most regularly this was linked to age, but also on occasion to the area they lived in, their race, or their socio-economic background. Young people said that frequently, they were treated differently to adults or other members of the community in similar situations. The most common examples given were, being penalised for being out late, in large groups, or hanging around in public spaces. This has resulted in some resentment and the feeling that they are distrusted and prejudged by police.

*"Don't stop young people just for being in a big group. You wouldn't stop a group of adults for that."*

*"Police harass young people even if we aren't doing anything. You can literally just be hanging out with your friends walking about and get stopped."*

*"You can barely leave your house without being stopped when you haven't even done anything."*

*"Police making assumptions, thinking that your clothes signal you've done something wrong."*

*"If it's late at night and they see a group of teens, they don't trust them. They just think maybe they're in a gang or something."*

This feeling of being stereotyped and treated differently due to age or other characteristics had serious impacts on **willingness and confidence to report crimes**. Young people, across all demographics, told us that they felt they would not be taken as seriously as an adult if they reported either witnessing or being the victim of a crime.

*"Because we're just kids, they might not take us seriously."*

*"Police don't believe young people. They might think that a serious thing is a joke or made up."*

*"They wouldn't take a complaint from someone our age or from round here seriously."*

Other characteristics such as gender, race and previous experience with the criminal justice system also acted as additional **barriers to reporting**:

*"It depends on race and gender; I think some will be taken more seriously than others. Like girls might not complain because of what's in the news and thinking you'll be ignored or not get help."*

*"If you've been in trouble with police before then you'll probably think they won't take you seriously or believe you."*

*"I think police would delay helping us if we called them. They wouldn't prioritise it because of racism and the grudges they already have with us."*

When discussing how trust with police could be rebuilt and stereotypes on both sides of the relationship broken down, young people largely **welcomed more interaction with police in their communities**. They told us that the opportunity to speak informally with officers, about non-crime related topics would be beneficial in improving the relationship. It would help police to better understand young people and their needs, give young people more confidence in police and create **more open channels of communication**.

*"We don't really see them around so it would be good to see police in the community more. If they stopped and spoke to us in a chilled-out way, it would ease the tension."*

*"Maybe if they came into college and you saw them regularly and got to know them there wouldn't be such a gap of trust."*

*"If they explained their job more to young people so they can understand it better. They could do workshops with young people that would help us see them as people and build a better relationship."*

*"Police can be prejudiced against us and stereotype against teens. This could be fixed by giving them more opportunities to see that young people aren't bad people."*

Another key way that the relationship between young people and police is heavily impacted is online through **social media**. While some participants told us that they either saw positive posts or were not affected by social media, a significant majority said that global news stories and viral videos **negatively impacted their opinion of the police**. Although it was rare that the content discussed related directly to NYP or the local area, this didn't seem to reduce the negative opinions that were formed.

*"You see videos of police violence at protests and things, it looks so bad."*

*"Lots of negativity, mainly toward American police but it still makes you worry about it here too."*

*"It will be police arresting someone and beating them up for no reason. Even though you probably won't get the full story on social media, so it might not be true, it will still give you a bad opinion and make you more scared of police."*

*"Sarah Everard and George Floyd, both of those have made everyone not like police I think, and we saw them both online."*

The NYYC used the Big Conversation to ask what steps could be taken to provide a more balanced, impartial view of policing on social media. Young people said that they feel it is important to hear about these global policing stories but that it would be **beneficial to see positive posts** also. The two forms of content wanted most by young people were more positive 'good news' stories at a local level, specifically targeted at their age group, and practical content such as information on rights and changes to the law.

*"More stories of events in the community and police helping people to show a positive side to things."*

*"If they did workshops or visits with teenagers in college or school, they can show that on social media to show the good relationship they're building."*

*"I would like to see success stories, campaigns, information about laws."*

Some participants also praised the existing work of NYP online. They liked seeing diversity celebrated through

the use of the pride flag and welcomed more action like this.

*"I think the LGBT flag on the logo is a good thing and makes it more welcoming."*

Throughout 2021 the NYYC prioritised **raising awareness of Stop and Search rights** amongst young people and starting a conversation around how this process could be improved to limit its damaging impact on the relationship between young people and police.

When we spoke to young people from underrepresented or marginalised backgrounds, they reported feeling disproportionately Stopped and Searched. This increased distrust of police and further marginalised said groups. Young people with experience of being searched were often sceptical of officers' motivations for doing so and they consistently reported feeling powerless to change a harmful cycle of mistrust.

*"Lads are labelled and stereotyped, so they are searched more."*

*"They'll search you just because they can, to show you who's boss sort of thing."*

*"If you do stand up for your rights you become a target and then they'll harass you more or find reasons to stop you."*

Even amongst young people who reported experiencing a search, a significant majority (90% of all participants) reported not knowing all their stop and search rights prior to the NYYC workshop. Some felt this was used against them by police, who took advantage of the lack of knowledge and violated their rights.

*"They say section 'whatever' and they use it because they know you don't know what it means."*

*"They say you can film a search but then they'll say you're obstructing or something and use it as an excuse to arrest you"*

*"If you don't know the rights, then you wouldn't know when they're broken, so the officer can do what they want then."*

On the whole, the NYYC found that, while a vital tool in policing, Stop and Search was one of the most **damaging activities to the relationship between young people and police**. Greater knowledge of rights, more communication for grounds of searches, and new mechanisms of accountability are needed to improve this.

## **OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE:**

- Work closely with the Youth Commission and other relevant groups to establish an independent review mechanism for Stop and Search, which includes young people and those most affected by stop and search.
- Increase positive engagement between police officers/PCSOs and young people through education settings, community groups and the Youth Commission.
- Work to reassure young people reporting crimes that they will be treated with equal importance, regardless of age, race, social group, or experience of criminal justice.

## **FOR THE PFCC AND PARTNERS:**

- Develop more initiatives that bring police and young people together and create more opportunities for open dialogue to break down stereotypes on both sides.
- Support NYP, the Youth Commission and other relevant groups in a joint effort to establish an independent review mechanism for Stop and Search, which includes young people and those most affected by stop and search.
- Highlight good news stories and positive examples of police and young people working together.

## **FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

- Support a dialogue between police and young people, particularly those from underrepresented or not often heard from groups. Act as a facilitator to productive and open conversations.
- Work closely with NYP, local authorities and other relevant groups to establish an independent review mechanism for Stop and Search, which includes young people and those most affected by stop and search.
- Promote stop and search rights to a wider audience of young people through Big Conversation workshops.

## PRIORITY 5: DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



### PRIORITY AIMS:

- Understand the root causes and how they can be addressed.
- Include the voices of young people with valuable lived experience of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Hear the voices of young people living within substance misuse households to understand the negative impact within these environments.
- Raise awareness of support services that can offer young people a way out of negative situations.

### WHAT WE DID

Through the Big Conversation, the NYCC set out to better understand the root causes of substance misuse amongst young people, and how these could be addressed. We asked participants to share their experiences of drugs and alcohol in their local area, and their ideas for tackling these issues. Within workshops, we aimed to raise awareness of substance abuse, promote support services, and start open conversations around ways to keep safe.

The NYCC engaged with a total of **531 young people** about this topic. We conducted 18 workshops and 1 engagement stall.

To prepare for engaging with peers on this topic the NYCC took part in a training session with the Alcohol Education Trust, where we learned safety advice as well as how to better facilitate conversations around alcohol use. We then conducted two special Big Conversation Workshops in partnership with the Trust, where participants played the online 'Alcohol Clock Game' to demonstrate safe consumption and the effect of Alcohol on the body, alongside using KYMSGAME.

The NYCC is a member of the Emerging Drug Trends group and attends regular meetings to engage in knowledge sharing and campaign planning.

## WHAT WE FOUND

During the Big Conversation, we found substance use is increasingly common amongst young people. Participants reported that both drugs and alcohol were **too easily accessible** for any age group that wanted them and that it was seen as a normal part of life, and not as a risky behaviour.

*"It looks fun, and everyone does it."*

*"I think it's been normalised. Even kids who don't get into trouble or anything will drink a lot at a party and get really drunk."*

*"Drugs are easy to get round here. It's not really a secret either."*

There was a feeling amongst young people that this **normalisation of drug and alcohol** use at a young age led to a lack of awareness of the true dangers. They told us that it was not uncommon for some young people to take substances without really knowing they were safe and without proper knowledge of their side effects. Similarly, in the case of alcohol, some participants reported drinking too much 'by accident' and many said they didn't know enough about **safe consumption**. Overall, a lot of young people thought it would be beneficial to gain a better understanding of the effects of drugs and alcohol and would like to see more **awareness raised on the potential harms** of substance abuse.

*"Not being sure how much is safe to drink."*

*"Because it's so common, you forget that it's illegal or maybe dangerous."*

*"More education on addiction, because it starts off as fun, but you won't realise until it's too late."*

*"Education about safety rather than just an adult saying don't do it."*

Some young people also suggested it would be useful to hear from people with **real-life experiences of drug or alcohol abuse**, as this would be more authentic and relatable.

*"Have someone as a real example. Show them, this is what can happen to you if you take drugs."*

*"To hear real-life experiences from young people."*

*"It's not good having some teacher that's never touched a drug in her life trying to tell you."*

The NYCC found that a big part of the problem with the accessibility of drugs came from online and social media. This has eliminated the need for a personal connection in order to access drugs, as it's far easier to connect online. Additionally, the use of **social media has taken the problem behind closed doors**, where there is less risk of parents or authorities intervening.

*"Too easy for kids to access drugs like Snapchat, social media."*

*"You pretty much see it being offered on your story. You don't even have to be looking for it."*

*"If it's on your phone, and you're looking for it on social media, it's more discreet so people won't really know. You wouldn't have to ask around to alert people."*

When asked about why young people may drink or take drugs, a lot of the responses focused on boredom and the lack of **alternative activities and initiatives** for young people to get involved in. They feel if there were more productive leisure activities to do, problems of substance abuse would be decreased, particularly in rural areas where youth provisions are especially lacking. Most often young people said they would like more sports clubs and facilities, and more opportunities to develop skills that would benefit their future.

*"Get young people involved in different ideas and groups like SELFA. Give the people who are doing drugs something else to do."*

*"Lockdown didn't increase drug use round here because there was already nothing to do anyway, so we're already taking them. If there was better stuff, like football clubs, or basketball, less people would start on drugs."*

*"Clubs at school, and stuff to do that's still enjoyable for older young people."*

*"Sports stuff and activities that's not far away, so you can get to it, and that's affordable."*

The NYCC consulted with young people about the **barriers to seeking help** when situations involving drugs or alcohol turned dangerous. A key barrier reported was **peer pressure**, and a **fear of being bullied** or facing repercussions from

friends. A significant amount of young people we spoke to said that what others would think of them would affect their decision to seek help.

*"I would be worried about it if I contacted the police, what would the people around me say if the house party was so big, I would feel a bit overwhelmed"*

*"People need more confidence to get out of situations. Everyone is too worried about what their friends will think."*

*"No one wants to be the one to ruin the party. If you call the police, you'll be known as a snitch. You're not getting invited back."*

A second crucial barrier to asking for help, or calling authorities was a **fear of repercussions** from the police themselves. If young people were taking illegal drugs or drinking underage, they worried about getting themselves or their friends into trouble. This fear was heightened during the lockdown when meeting friends and gathering in groups was banned. Young people were **reluctant to call police** when needed through fear of consequences and sometimes this led to dangerous or risky situations escalating.

*"People won't talk to someone if it's something illegal. They need to know they won't get in trouble."*

*"Worried about the consequences of getting help."*

*"If your mate is doing something illegal so you don't wanna be a snitch, getting them in trouble with police."*

*"Feeling nervous that you shouldn't be there."*

Both of these potential barriers to help could be reduced by ensuring a **harm reduction approach** is taken by police and authorities and promoting that young people who seek assistance in dangerous situations won't get into trouble for doing so.

## OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

### FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE:

- Take a supportive harm reduction approach to young people who report drug or alcohol misuse amongst themselves or peers.
- Promote and share the Operation Choice programme, that offers early drug intervention for young people.
- Utilise digital PCSOs to tackle the availability of drugs online and on social media.

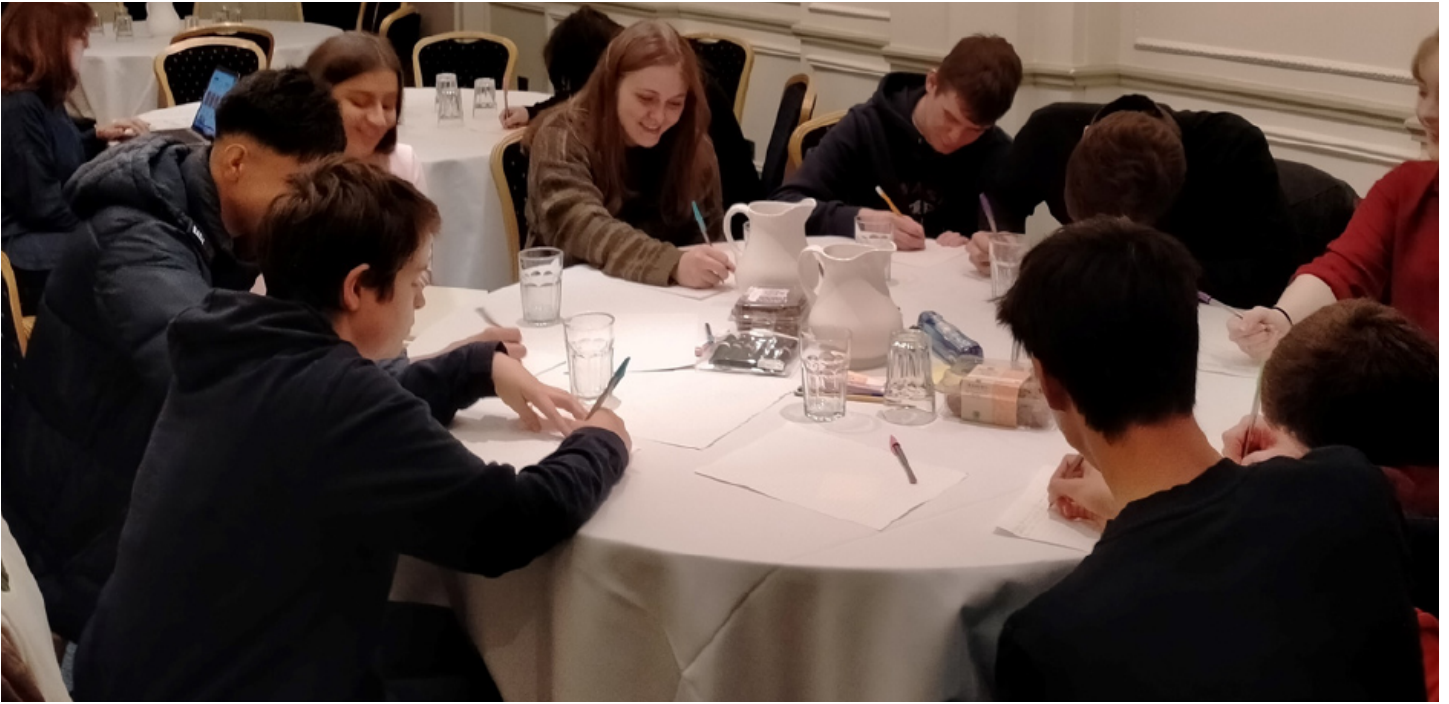
### FOR THE PFCC AND PARTNERS:

- Support the development of new initiatives and activities, including sports clubs and personal development programmes to divert young people away from drug and alcohol misuse.
- Promote and share organisations that work with young people dealing with substance misuse.
- Raise awareness of the support that can be offered to young people who are affected by living with someone with addiction.

### FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:

- Increase NYYC work with partner organisations, such as the Alcohol Education Trust, to raise awareness of drug and alcohol abuse, especially amongst young people with increased risk.
- Work with those with lived experiences of drugs and alcohol abuse to share their journey with young people to raise awareness of the different impacts' substance abuse can have on the life of young people, including friends and family.

# PRIORITY 6: MISSING YOUNG PEOPLE & EXPLOITATION



## PRIORITY AIMS:

- Raise awareness of county lines exploitation, and prevention methods.
- Put the voice of young people with lived experience at the centre of discussions.
- Ensure exploited young people are viewed as victims and are supported to overcome their situation.
- Inform police training around missing and exploited young people.

## WHAT WE DID

Through the Big Conversation, the NYYC set out to raise awareness of exploitation, with a focus on county lines and child criminal exploitation. We started conversations around the signs of exploitation and how to reach out for help. The NYYC listened to the various barriers faced when escaping exploitation and consulted with young people about how to overcome these.

The NYYC engaged with a total of **110 young people** about this topic. We conducted 4 workshops and an online survey.

The NYYC partnered with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership to provide insight and guidance on the design of a new online resource for young people on the topic of exploitation and county lines. This is currently in development.

## WHAT WE FOUND

During the Big Conversation, it was quickly established that the terminology around exploitation is very confusing, and not well understood by a lot of young people. Participants could often not identify terms such as 'county lines' 'cuckooing' and 'exploitation' even when they had a good knowledge of the practice itself. This showed that sometimes the **language surrounding the topic acts as a barrier** to open and productive conversations about exploitation.

Young people told us that they feel **more education and awareness** on exploitation and county lines is needed.



*"More awareness of signs to look for in your friends."*

*"School could provide more drug lessons, like learn more about what happens to people who get involved in county lines."*

*"I don't think most people our age know what county lines is unless your directly involved, so you need to learn about it earlier so you can protect yourself from it."*

*"Know where to go to get away from gangs if you are being exploited - bring the conversation out into the open."*

In the NYYC's online survey, 70% of respondents felt that young people were **not protected enough** from exploitation and a further 24% were unsure. Young people worried that not enough was being done to target gang leaders, and those responsible for exploitation.

*"Protect them by having harsher punishments for people who do it."*

*"Not letting the people at the top get away with it."*

*"Instead of going after the kids who are at the just the low ones in the gang, actually stop those that make the money and have the power."*

We asked participants about the difficulties young people faced in escaping exploitation, a recurring theme was a **fear of violence and repercussions** from gang leaders and those responsible for the exploitation. They feared not only negative consequences for themselves but also for their friends and family. There was a feeling from some that police could offer little protection from this threat.

*"You don't want family or friends getting hurt."*

*"If it was my mate, I would try to help but I wouldn't get involved myself. You don't want violence against yourself for telling or interfering."*

*"The police can't protect you from it. Even if they put one in jail, there's 10 more who could attack you for it."*

Having worked closely with NYP, the NYYC are aware of the huge efforts being made to tackle exploitation. However, from the responses of the young people we have engaged with, it is clear there is **not enough awareness of these efforts**. It would be beneficial for more young people, and the wider public, to be made more aware of what is being done to combat the problem.

Another key barrier to seeking help to escape exploitation was **fear of the legal consequences** and being **criminalised**. Young people said they would not risk getting themselves or their friends into trouble with the police by seeking help. Often, there was a feeling that they had eliminated the option of help from authorities as soon as they engaged in illegal activities. Young people felt they would be viewed as offenders and not victims by police.

*"They're scared for their own future. Criminal records for getting jobs."*

*"Not gonna tell the police anything and get your own mate into trouble."*

*"I don't trust the police with anything. They'll probably use it as an excuse to arrest you."*

In Big Conversation workshops, the NYYC raised awareness of the '**Section 45 defence**'\* to help break down the fear of legal repercussions as a barrier to seeking help from police. Almost no young people had heard of it before, and while some raised concerns that it could be used inappropriately as an excuse for criminal behaviour, most agreed it was a positive way of **helping young people escape exploitation**. Some participants said they were more likely to reach out to police or a trusted adult after being made aware of this defence.

*"It is a good thing that they can be seen as a victim. That would make it more likely someone would go for help."*

*"Police being approachable and not treating you like you're a bad person or judging you is good. If you know you'll get the help without getting into trouble I think more people would go to them."*

*"You might get some people who try to use it as an excuse to get away with things, but I do think it's good to help real cases of exploitation."*

*"It's good that police would help someone if they've been forced into it."*

\* Section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 created a defence for victims who commit an offense as a direct consequence of being a victim of slavery / exploitation, if a reasonable person, in the same situation with the same "relevant characteristics" would do the same.

We asked participants what they thought were the biggest **risk factors** that exposed young people to exploitation. Similar to the root causes of drug and alcohol abuse, they told us that a **lack of alternative opportunities** and diversionary activities made it more likely that people their age would be at risk of becoming involved in county lines. They said that using the drugs themselves would be the first step before progressing to trafficking or dealing. Often, this would not be within the young person's control.

*"They get hooked into it before they know how serious it is. It happens quickly."*

*"It could start by taking drugs then you owe them money so you gotta pay them back."*

*"It's like in the video, he said once you're in you're in, and that is true. It could be too late to get out."*

*It was suggested that better alternatives early on could prevent young people from going down that path.*

*"Things to do to stop you being involved with drugs to start with."*

*"Sports facilities, subsidised activities and access to jobs."*

## **OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE:**

- Better promote 'Section 45 defense' and the view that young people exposed to criminal exploitation are considered victims under the law and will receive help not punishment from police.
- Increase public awareness of successful operations that are taking place around County Lines. More people need to be made aware of what is being done to combat the problem.
- Work alongside the Youth Commission, and other young people's groups, to start more open conversations around exploitation and better understand risk factors and barriers to accessing help.

### **FOR THE PFCC AND PARTNERS:**

- Support the Youth Commission, NYP, NYFRS, and other partners to work together to raise awareness of county lines and exploitation amongst young people.
- Facilitate training for NYP and partners around the barriers young people face in speaking openly about exploitation and accessing support.
- Champion the view that young people may be victims of exploitation rather than willing offenders and promote help and support services that offer a 'way out' for young people.

### **FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:**

- Support NYP in finding new ways to create open conversations around county lines and reduce stigma for victims of exploitation.
- Work closely with North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's partnership to develop a new online resource for young people to learn more about exploitation and access support.
- Raise awareness of county lines exploitation, including signs and how to access support through big conversation workshops.
- Develop links with British Transport Police to build a better understanding of county lines in North Yorkshire.

## FIVE YEAR REFLECTION

Since 2015 the NYCC has continued to develop and expand. Across four Youth Commission cycles, we have delivered over **274 engagement** events and consulted **with over 8,000 young people** across North Yorkshire, raising awareness of important issues in crime and policing, listening to their views, perceptions, and experiences, and providing a platform for young people to influence policy and decision making in their county.

Over these past 5 years, the NYCC has worked on a number of important priorities, all identified by Youth Commission members. The issues we have consulted on are: Legal highs and Drug abuse, Cyber Bullying and Internet Safety, Vulnerable Young People, Preventing Youth Crime, Hate Crime, Relationships with Police & Authorities, Mental Health, Missing Young People and Exploitation, Abusive Relationships, and Drug and Alcohol Abuse.

Overarching the individual priorities and many recommendations for change that the NYCC has put forward over the past five years, are a number of significant components that have allowed the Youth Commission to continue to effectively represent young people across all areas of crime and policing.

### RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND DEVELOPMENT OF NYCC MEMBERS

NYCC members take on a leading role in all Youth Commissions campaigns and activities. They select priorities, design workshops, conduct peer research and produce recommendations for change. It has therefore been vital, throughout each cycle that members are carefully selected to represent young people from across the region and provided them with the training and tools to carry out their work to a high standard.

The Youth Commission has prided itself on curating a diverse membership of young people. We have worked to recruit members from all areas of North Yorkshire, as well as those from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, including those with a lived experience of criminal justice. Throughout each cycle, we have worked with various youth organisations, including the Youth Justice Service, Prevention teams, and the Trusted Relationships programme, to ensure a diverse membership that truly represents all young people. Throughout each cycle, we have maintained a membership of around 30+ young people.

The progression and personal development of our members has remained a priority throughout the past five years, with training being delivered both internally, and from industry expert organisations. Some highlights of essential member training that has been delivered are: 'Vulnerability and Safeguarding' from NYP, 'Basic Drug Awareness' from Changing Lives, 'Bystander Awareness' from All About Respect, 'Domestic Abuse Training' from IDAS, 'STOP Safeguarding Training & Prevention' from Advocacy Alliance, 'Positive Identities' from Barnardo's Prouder Communities, 'Alcohol Awareness' from the Alcohol Education Trust, and 'Introduction to the IOPC' from the IOPC Youth Panel.

As well as training events, we have provided members with additional opportunities for new experiences and personal development. For example, in the 2019-2020 cycle, six Youth Commission members took part in Challenge Takeover, which saw them take on leading roles for a day in either North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service or the Crown Prosecution Service. Through this, members gained valuable insight into the workplace environment.

### COLLABORATION WITH THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER, NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AND NORTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

From the start of the initial NYCC cycle (2015-2016) we began building a relationship and working closely with NYP and the PFCC in order to co-produce strategies and solutions to each of our priorities. This partnership has gone from strength to strength in the ensuing years, and the Youth Commission has worked with NYP and the PFCC on an increasing number of projects, including:

- Acting as a sounding board in the planning process for NYP's primary school education input on child sexual exploitation.
- Taking part in a consultation on the future of neighbourhood policing in North Yorkshire.
- Attending the PCSO's conference and NYP Women in Policing Conference in 2018.
- Conducting a joint Hate Crime subgroup, in which the NYCC played a role in NYP's decision to introduce Misogyny as a Hate Crime.
- Collaborating with the University of York and the 'Connect Project' to coproduce a Mental Health training video for NYP personnel including new recruits.
- Conducting a Stop and Search joint sub-group, in which the NYCC and NYP co-designed changes to the forms used in Stop and Search, making them more user friendly and adding signposting information.

- Delivering a peer-led evaluation of the NYP Crucial Crew programme.
- Providing feedback to the NYP partnership hub on an anti-knife crime campaign aimed at young people.
- Collaborating with the OFPCC and NYP to conduct peer research into the effects of social media on young people's perception of police.
- Sitting on the panel for the Public Choice Awards 2021, chaired by the former PFCC.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on the 2021 OFPCC public consultation questions and attending a public consultation event.

In addition to each of these projects, a key priority throughout each NYCC cycle has been 'Relationships with Police and Authorities'. Through peer-to-peer conversations, the NYCC has gained an understanding of the tensions in the relationship between young people and police and has worked in collaboration with the PFCC, and NYP to reduce these.

Moreover, all of the NYCC's peer-research for each of the priorities, as well as our final recommendations, helps to inform the **PFCC's Police and Crime Plan**, meaning that through the 'Big Conversation' young people in North Yorkshire are given a direct voice on policing in North Yorkshire.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Alongside forming a close working relationship with the PFCC and NYP, the NYCC has embedded itself in a wider network of young people's services and developed partnerships and collaborations with a range of other agencies. Not only has this led to opportunities to engage with a more diverse cross-section of young people, but it has also provided opportunities for knowledge sharing, campaign development and overall positive outcomes for young people.

In 2017, the NYCC established a Research Advisory Group (RAG) consisting of academics from the University of York, Local Authority leads, NYP and the OFPCC. The aim of the RAG was to ensure the project adhered to best practices in relation to ethics and safeguarding. The group produced an 'Ethical Framework' to help guide the project, and also engaged in a continuous review of the Commission's research methods to ensure both safeguarding and high-quality research. This has been continually used and adapted to support the development of NYCC.

Within the past five years, the NYCC joined the Inclusive Communities Joint Coordinating Group, and the Positive Communities Steering Group. The aim here was to assist in providing a multi-agency approach to tackling hate crime in North Yorkshire. Through these two groups, the NYCC has assisted in the planning and delivering of two Hate Crime Awareness Week campaigns on the subjects of Mate crime (2020) and Bystander Awareness (2021). Our activities here have included conducting a Hate Crime survey, running outreach stands, and also delivering peer-to-peer coaching on how to conduct impactful conversations about hate crime, through our Train the Trainer workshops.

Over the years, the NYCC has collaborated with the National Citizen Service (NCS) to help promote the message of 'Keeping Your Mates Safe' and to engage with a greater number of young people. For example, in 2016, the NYCC worked in partnership with Flying Futures to empower NCS participants to conduct a peer-led survey on 'Youth Vulnerability'. This activity both contributed to participants personal development and successful completion of the NCS program and also formed part of the NYCC research project.

## PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES

The primary aim of the NYCC has always been to provide a platform for young people to voice their opinions on the issues that affect them most. Over the past five years, we have endeavoured to engage with a truly representative selection of young people, including those who are often less heard from.

We have utilised various tools and strategies in order to achieve this goal. For example, throughout the first NYCC cycle 'Vulnerable Young People' was named as a key priority. This resulted in a peer research campaign investigating the various factors that place young people at an increased risk and make them more vulnerable. By listening to young people with a lived experience in this area we were able to make key recommendations that increased both protection and representation for vulnerable young people.

The NYCC has continued to learn and adapt our engagement strategies for reaching traditionally underrepresented young people. Between 2019 and 2020 we developed a one-on-one pocket version of our KYMSGAME workshop that could be utilised for more personal engagement sessions. This was used to conduct peer research with young people from the Youth Justice Service in individual interviews.

In 2019 NYYC members took part in a training session with Advocacy Alliance where they were introduced to the concept of Mate Crime, and the harms it causes to vulnerable young people. As a result, we developed a Mate Crime adaptation of the KYMSGAME workshop and delivered it within non-mainstream SEND schools, where students are most at risk of becoming victims of Mate Crime. Through this work, we were able to raise awareness of an important issue and hear from a demographic of young people who are traditionally significantly underrepresented.

Throughout the 2020-2021 NYYC cycle, we have developed a closer working relationship with NYFRS and attended their 'LIFE course' which acts as a prevention strategy for young people at risk of offending. Within this course, we consulted with participants on their relationship to police and authorities, listened to their personal experiences and delivered education on their rights. We will further develop our relationship with NYFRS in the next phase of the Youth Commission.

## **KYMSGAME**

The KYMSGAME campaign concept was developed in the third NYYC cycle in 2019-2020. It centres around the message of 'Keeping Your Mates Safe' and aims to get young people thinking about how they can best look out for their friends in risky situations.

A KYMSGAME workshop was developed for each of the six priorities and required participants to choose what action they would take in various potential real-life scenarios to best keep themselves and their mates safe. The aim was to encourage discussions about empathy, peer encouragement, safety, and responsibility, as well as to better understand the support young people need from services to help them keep each other safe.

Since its creation, the KYMSGAME campaign has gained recognition amongst partner organisations and on top of its function as a peer research tool, has become a valued educational resource and early intervention method for young people's services. The NYYC has worked with local councils and NYP PCSO's and school liaison officers to introduce KYMSGAME workshops to school-aged students who require further awareness and intervention on specific topics. For example, via the Positive Communities Steering Group, the KYMSGAME- Hate Crime workshop has been incorporated as one of several intervention options, alongside 'Wake up Call' (North Yorkshire Youth) and Train the Trainer sessions.

## CONCLUSION:

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

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

Through their 'Big Conversation' peer research with over 2,000 young people in 2020–2021 and a total of 8,003 young people over the past five years, the Youth Commissioners have 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.

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 Fire & Crime Commissioner and North Yorkshire Police. As shown through the project, the NYYC 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 phase of the project, the NYYC will work closely with the NYPFCC, NYP, NYFRS and partners to implement and address the recommendations in this report.

# TESTIMONIALS:

*'The North Yorkshire Youth Commission has given vital insight into the views of young people to our emergency services, organisations and commissioned services ever since it was founded in 2015.*

*This is now perhaps more important than ever as we ensure their views are heard after two years when the world has changed. For children and young adults, two years represents a substantial part of their lives and, with education and opportunities two of the most impacted parts of society as a result of the pandemic, it is crucial they have a voice. I am determined they will.'*

*'The Youth Commission involves dozens of people giving up their time and energy to support their friends and peers. I thank them all for what they are doing and I want to tell them that, as Commissioner, they will always have my support.'*

*'I have already met with them in my first weeks in the role, and I cannot wait to continue listening to them and working with this inspirational group in the months and years ahead.'*

## **North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Zoë Metcalfe**

*"North Yorkshire Police is committed to further embedding early intervention and prevention in the way we work, so understanding the views and needs of local young people is vital. Youth Commissioners have been helping and advising North Yorkshire Police since 2015 and their achievements since then have made real and important improvements to our service. Their ongoing work has led to valuable recommendations for improving the way in which officers can help protect children and young people who are vulnerable and how we can best deal with those who offend. Getting things right with children and young people is so important because our actions can have dramatic effects on them, their friends, family and society. We will continue to give the Youth Commission our full support so that their excellent work carries on, helping us to keep everyone safe."*

## **Lisa Winward, Chief Constable North Yorkshire Police**

*"The Youth Commission is a fantastic opportunity for young people to become involved in identifying what their key priorities are but also to go further by giving them a voice in making things happen. It is hugely encouraging and important that young people have this available to them. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service provide young people with a range of activities where they can develop the skills and outlook required to be confident in challenging others, speaking out and working together to create the sort of society that they want to live in and be part of. We remain committed to looking at ways in which we can engage with and support young people in an inclusive, accessible and encouraging way."*

## **Dave Winspear, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service**

*"For the three years I've been in the Youth Commission, I've spoken to over hundreds of people from all different backgrounds. I feel every time we have spoken to those people, no matter who they are, we always left a lasting impression. The Youth Commission has increased my confidence, opened doors to new experiences, and helped me meet lots of new people."*

## **Katie Yates, NYYC member**

*"Through the Youth Commission, I was able to gain valuable experience working with policing partners and young people in order to help bridge the gap between two demographics in my home county. I gained valuable experience and knowledge, which has assisted me in perusing my passion for policing. I am now graduating with a BA HONS in Policing Studies."*

## **Shawndelle Dixon, NYYC Member**

*"The Youth Commission has allowed me to step out of my comfort zone. I've had the opportunity to talk to hundreds of young people and listen to their stories. The Youth Commission will continue to be successful as the voice of the youth is the future. It's been a powerful group and we've reached thousands of people through our workshops, and we are looking forward to reaching so many more!"*

## **Georgia Morgan, NYYC Member**

*"I have really enjoyed being a Youth Commission member over the last few years. I am very proud of the work we've been doing to help young people's voices be heard and start a conversation about tough topics that will help to bring about change. I personally have gained a lot of confidence especially with public speaking and working in a team has been such a rewarding experience. I have met some incredible people and learnt a lot from experts in the force. Looking forward to future projects!"*

**Sophie Sabin, NYYC Member**

*"I love working with the North Yorkshire Youth Commission because it challenges my perspective on the police on a daily basis. Many of my friends are understandably sceptical of police due to recent events, but for me, I believe working alongside the police and informing them on ways they can improve as a force is the correct approach. If this does not happen soon, we run the risk of becoming an even more divided community. My work with the Youth Commission primarily aims to prevent this from occurring."*

**Leo McClelland, NYYC Member**



# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX 1: NYYC PRIORITY AIMS

LEADERS  
UNLOCKED

# North Yorkshire Youth Commission Priority Aims 2021

Twitter: @NorthYorksPCC  
Twitter: @LeadersUnlocked  
Instagram: @leadersunlocked



### MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



#### OUR AIMS

- Tackle the stigma surrounding access to mental health support, especially for young men.
- Educate young people on how to recognise the signs, seek help and support peers.
- Work with connected organisations to raise awareness of available support services.
- Support the police and other agencies to respond effectively to young people in vulnerable situations.

### ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS



#### OUR AIMS

- Raise awareness of the different types of abusive relationships and how to spot the signs, including: financial or coercive control
- Ensure victims of abuse are aware of how to access to support, regardless of gender, race, or background.
- Consult with young people to better understand the barriers to reporting abuse.
- Champion the rights of victims and stand against victim blaming.
- Promote support services for survivors of Abusive Relationships.

### HATE CRIME



#### OUR AIMS

- Educate young people on both Hate and Mote Crime, challenge the rise of cyber hate crime, and inform where to get support.
- Raise awareness of the seriousness of everyday hate crime, such as slurs.
- Increase awareness of the impact and damage of everyday hate preadjusts and incidents.
- Support those in authority to deal with hate crime effectively, including the reporting process.
- Celebrate and promote the positives of a diverse community.

### MISSING YOUNG PEOPLE & EXPLOITATION



#### OUR AIMS

- Raise awareness of county lines exploitation, and prevention methods.
- Put the voice of young people with lived experience at the centre of discussions.
- Ensure exploited young people are viewed as victims and are supported to overcome their situation.
- Inform police training around missing and exploited young people.

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH POLICE & AUTHORITIES



#### OUR AIMS

- Help to breakdown negative stereotypes on both sides of the relationship between young people and police.
- Ensure young people feel confident seeking police support or making reports.
- Promote positive, non-crime related interactions between police and young people.
- Raise awareness of stop and search rights.
- Explore the impact of social media on the relationship between young people and the police.

### DRUGS & ALCOHOL ABUSE



#### OUR AIMS

- Understand the root causes and how they can be addressed.
- Include the voices of young people with valuable lived experience of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Hear the voices of young people living within substance misuse households to understand the negative impact within these environments
- Raise awareness of support services who can offer young people a way out of negative situations.



**North Yorkshire  
Police, Fire & Crime  
Commissioner**

# 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**

## Keeping Your Mates Safe

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

The topic I discussed today was: \_\_\_\_\_

What positive action could you take to keep you mates safe?

What help or support would you need to do this?

Your age: \_\_\_\_\_

Your local area: \_\_\_\_\_

**@NorthYorksYC**  
**@Support4Victims**

**North Yorkshire  
Police, Fire & Crime  
Commissioner**

**LEADERS  
UNLOCKED**

## **GET IN TOUCH**

### **NORTH YORKSHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION**

@NorthYorksYC Info@northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk

<https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/for-you/young-people/youth/about-the-youth-commission/>

### **LEADERS UNLOCKED**

@leadersunlocked info@leaders-unlocked.org

[www.leaders-unlocked.org](http://www.leaders-unlocked.org)

