



## Regional Forum Roundup

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June we held our Young Voices Regional Forum. The aim of this forum was to encourage young people to share their [findings and ideas](#) on the issues discussed at local conversations. Discussions on this occasion, mainly focused on young people's policing and community safety concerns and how they felt the police could help them feel safer and more confident to report.

Young people attending represented different locations across the force area and provided a summary of the key issues raised in their local area. They presented their feedback to our panel members, who were senior leaders in the police and public sector and were interested in listening and hearing from young people about the issues important to them and their ideas for positive change.

A roundup of the points raised by young people at local conversations and the regional forum are illustrated below:

### Bridgend



Young people felt that there were missed opportunities in the content delivered by the school's police liaison programme. Topics such as drugs and smoking had become a repetitive subject, which had been heard on many occasions. They felt that they should also be receiving inputs on other important issues that were affecting them.



Cat calling and sexual harassment had been raised as a main concern amongst young people in Bridgend. They felt that receiving inputs at schools on this issue to explain the implications of this behaviour and the support available to victims, would benefit people who were subject to this behaviour.



Examples were shared where young girls had experienced cat calling in schools. It was often the case that they didn't know where to go for help and worried if they would be taken seriously, as they were often told that this behaviour was 'technically nothing'. This gave the impression that there was no support available and subsequently had a negative effect on others speaking out who were subject to this behaviour.



Young people also felt that there was a lack of police presence in the Bridgend area and officers were only seen if they made a drugs arrest, or someone had called the police. They felt that it was important that South Wales Police were seen in communities more often and were proactive in engaging with people in the community to strengthen relationships and build their understanding.

## Cardiff



Street safety and fears of walking alone in Cardiff town centre were highlighted. Young people felt that walking alone in the town centre when it was dark was intimidating and scary. More police visibility and patrols would help them feel safer when walking alone.



Young people were interested in finding out more about the behaviours relating to stalking, what healthy relationships looked like and the behavioural signs to look out for.



The supply of drugs was also a concern. It was emphasised how accessible drugs were to get hold of and how drug supplies were being posted on social media.



Racism had also been raised several times, mainly relating to how young people felt that black ethnic minority people were stopped and searched more often than white people.



Whilst social media was a good platform to communicate and reach young people, it was emphasised that face to face communication remained the most important approach, as it enabled stronger messages to be conveyed.

## Merthyr Tydfil



Young people felt that they were seeing more drugs and substance misuse taking place in society, and that this had now become integrated within their communities, where they felt there was no escape.



Young people felt that there was a lack of good relationships with the PCSOs in their area and there was a lot of anxiety about the police in Merthyr. They felt that better engagement from the police, especially in the education setting, would help to improve these anxieties.

## Neath Port Talbot



Drug related violence and dealing had become more common and was taking place in plain sight. Young people were concerned about how easy it was to access drugs and the fact that people were more commonly posting their drug supply on social media as a form of advertising it.



Knife crime and the frequency of incidents involving stabbings, or people seen with knives had also become more concerning since lockdown had been lifted. This caused concerns amongst young people, as they were worried about going out, in fear of what weapons people may be carrying.



Post covid-related anti-social behaviour was also highlighted as a concern, which young people felt had increased since lockdown restrictions had been eased.



Young people also discussed reasons why victims subject to hate crime may not report to the police. The main reasons for this mainly centred on the fear that if the offender was known to the victim, they could work out who had reported to the police and may target the victim again.

## Rhondda Cynon Taf



Young people raised concerns about gangs congregating in parks, near shops, and underage drinking and smoking, leading to anti-social behaviour. This often made them feel uncomfortable and unsafe in areas that they often enjoyed spending time with their friends.



Young people told us that although they were worried about anti-social behaviour, gangs, and drug use, they wouldn't feel comfortable reporting this to the police. Reasons for this included that they didn't feel confident speaking to the police about these issues in person or over the phone and felt that they wouldn't be taken seriously.



Understanding how to contact the police, other than 999 and 101 was also raised. Young people weren't clear what other reporting options were available, that didn't involve speaking to someone on the phone.



Young people spoke to us about how they didn't always feel that the police listened to them. Improving relationships between young people and the police could be achieved through greater engagement in schools, youth groups and whilst on patrol.

## Swansea



There was heightened fear and concern in the student community in relation to sexual harassment and street safety. Students didn't feel safe in Swansea and they weren't always clear where to report their concerns. Lighting provision was also raised as a concern, as many young women didn't feel safe walking alone at night.

# Young People's Ideas and Suggestions

As well as seeking to further understand the key issues concerning young people, we were also interested in hearing their ideas to help us address the issues that were important to them. Their ideas and suggestions are outlined below:

## Reporting

- 1) Young people liked the idea of developing a young person's app that would include a chat/messaging reporting function, which also offered the option to report anonymously.
- 2) Young people told us that there was a lot of anxiety surrounding reporting, especially not knowing what was deemed important enough to report to the police. They felt that it would be useful to have a separate reporting option, that encouraged people to share information about incidents that weren't necessarily a crime. They felt the idea of a separate reporting option to make the police aware of information, as opposed to reporting a crime, may encourage more intelligence to be shared with the police.
- 3) Young people were keen for the police to promote more explicitly that victims who reported hate crime would be given the opportunity to speak to the police about what they felt comfortable doing and how they wanted to proceed. They felt that this was an important message to communicate to the public, as this would help alleviate concerns about the consequences of reporting.

## Schools and Education

- 1) Young people felt it was important that school inputs continuously evolved to reflect the wider issues that were affecting them.
- 2) In addition to police inputs at schools, young people felt it would be worthwhile involving specialists with real life stories and experiences to help convey stronger messages.

## Social Media

- 1) Young people advised that the best social media platform to communicate key messages to them was via Instagram.

# Panel Reflections

The role of our young voices panel members was to listen to the feedback shared by young people, provide their reflections and consider how feedback and suggestions could contribute towards positive change.

A summary of the panel's reflections is outlined below:

## Police and Crime Commissioner, Alun Michael



Alun was grateful for the honest feedback and the way in which creative solutions had been considered in such a positive way.

Alun mentioned the current review of the school's police programme and that young people could really help in the redesign of this work. Alun took on board the points about repetition of content, and whilst sometimes repetition demonstrated the importance of a topic, it could also

have a declining effect.

Alun was interested in working with young people to think more about how we could create a different avenue to enable people to feed in information to the police, which would assist the police to take a preventative approach. Alun was also keen to have more discussions with young people about the role of the PCSO and how their role was to work with communities to solve problems and improve relationships.

Alun suggested that it would be helpful to have a session in a few weeks to provide feedback on how panel members intended to take on board the issues discussed. This feedback session would also provide young people with the opportunity to share their reflections on whether there were other things they wanted out of the young voices conversation and whether we were doing this in the best possible way.

## Assistant Chief Constable Jenny Gilmer



Jenny was impressed with how many fantastic points had been raised by young people and was grateful for their honesty and helpful suggestions.

Jenny was interested in finding out more about how the police could bridge the gap with young people to help them understand there was nothing to fear when reporting. It was clear that there were trust and confidence issues when considering contacting the police and Jenny was

keen to collectively think hard about how we encouraged young people to overcome this fear.

Jenny acknowledged the importance of policing relationships in the education setting and how topics needed to continuously evolve in line with the issues and concerns that young people faced. Jenny agreed about the importance of positive interactions with the police and referenced the example provided, where police officers should be asking young people 'how you are doing' as opposed to 'what you are doing'. Jenny emphasised the point that as a police force, we needed to continuously remind ourselves not to make assumptions of what concerned young people and what the solutions were.

### **Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Emma Wools**



Emma thanked all the young people who had attended and contributed and was impressed with the feedback and ideas presented.

Emma agreed that it was key to engage young people in the education and curriculum they received and was keen that they were involved in identifying the gaps in education and learning around crime prevention and safety concerns.

Emma was concerned about the issues of cat calling and sexual harassment and was keen to work with young people to explore ideas about how the police and partner agencies could get key messages out about this and create safe spaces to report. Emma was also keen to further understand what areas young people didn't feel safe in and what they felt the solutions were to help them feel safer.

Emma advised that she was heavily involved in work which aimed to make a difference in tackling racism and would like to come back through local conversations to test ideas with young people and seek ideas and solutions from them.

### **Jon Drake, Director of the Violence Prevention Unit**



Jon felt that it was a fantastic session and was grateful for the insights and ideas shared.

Jon was concerned that young people were worried about knife crime and explained how the Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) had been set up to prevent young people getting hurt in violent related crimes, such as knife crime, drugs, and sexual violence. Knife crime was high up on the VPU's list of issues to address. Jon was interested in understanding what other avenues, apart from schools, did young people feel were the best to target key messages and advice.

### **Sally Holland, Children's Commissioner**



Sally said that she felt privileged to be part of the forum and welcomed the development of the Young Voices initiative. Sally was also impressed with how passionate young people were in wanting to address the issues raised. Sally reassured attendees that as part of any engagement, she always kept note of points raised by young people, as this feedback was key in influencing what she should be prioritising and discussing with partners and Government.

Sally advised that similar issues had been raised by young people across Wales and most recently, her National Youth Advisory Board had also discussed the repetition of content delivered in schools. Her young panel had concluded that what young people needed was the chance to have safe spaces to explore and discuss their experiences and talk through the best ways to respond. Sally advised that she had fed this back to the Education Minister.