



December | 2016

IPAG Young Persons Report (Final)

Young People & Kent Police Engagement

This report has been jointly produced by Gurvinder Sandher, the County Chair and Elaine Bolton, the Vice Chair of the Independent Police Advisory Group (IPAG).

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the young people, IPAG Chairs, community leaders, police officers and staff, especially the Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) and organisations, especially CXK, involved in this piece of work for their support, views and ideas on young people and the police.

1.0 Objective of Report

The key role of the IPAG is to:-

- Be a critical friend to Kent Police
- Challenge conventional thinking
- Improve how the Police deliver their services
- Engage with our communities

Young people are one of the key themes for the IPAG in 2016/2017. The aim of this theme was to:

- Gain young people's understanding of the role of the Police
- Identify the key issues affecting young people
- Establish young people's views of the Police
- Identify ways to improve and develop relationships between young people and Kent Police

2.0 Methodology

To gather the views of young people the following methods were used:

- **Focus groups.** A brief was developed by Elaine Bolton for the IPAG Chairs to facilitate focus groups with young people and this was piloted through CXK with two of their programmes: The Princes Trust Programme in Maidstone (with 5 young people) and Elevate in Canterbury (with 5 young people) with Elaine facilitating. Then focus groups were carried out by District IPAG Chairs - Shepway (with 14 young people), Thanet (with 24 young people), Maidstone (with 16 young people)

The majority of those attending were white and British, with more males than females. There was more diversity in Shepway.

The focus groups, except for the Thanet one involved young people who had mostly been in contact with the police.

Areas discussed included the role of the Police, key issues for young people, views of the Police and what young people and the Police can do to improve the relationship between themselves.

- **Discussions at the Maidstone District IPAG meeting** with four staff from local schools, including schools for vulnerable young people.

The issues discussed included the role of the Police, key issues for young people, views of the Police and what young people and the Police can do to improve the relationship between them.

All the schools spoke of the need for the Police to come and visit and talk and develop positive relationships with the students, rather than only visit when there has been an incident and one or some of the students are the offenders.

- **Young people being members of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel**

Three young people attended the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel and were able to contribute with their views. Part of the Panel involves reviewing body worn camera footage of stop and searches. One example of footage, which had been picked at random, involved young people having their car searched. The young people gave valuable feedback on this footage – how the Police officers conducted themselves in the search and what else to look out for when searching young people.

- **Surveys of young people**

Sevenoaks District IPAG surveyed 60 students aged between 12 and 13 years old at a local school, the majority of whom had not been in contact with the police.

- **Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)**

The previous PCC had a Youth Advisory Panel which the County IPAG Vice Chair sat on. Unfortunately the Panel was not proactive and despite active IPAG participation the panel was disbanded.

During the preparation of this report the current PCC has been asking for views on what should be in the new Policing Plan. It was identified by the IPAG that there had been little response from young people when the first wave of results were received. The PCC confirmed that there was to be a special forum for young people which would take place in early December. In the initial Policing Plan Survey the IPAG noted that there were not any specific young people's issues mentioned, although there was a commitment that Kent Police would continue to tackle a range of issues on a daily basis.

- **Review of strategies and research on young people and the Police**

The following were reviewed:

National Perspectives

National Strategy for the Policing of Children and Young people

The strategy identified that:

- This is a complex area of policing and one that "we often struggle to get right" stating that it is about trust, building good relationships between children and police, with every interaction leaving a mark and that there is a need to think carefully about what sort of mark that is.

- Young people are not mini adults and that the “ability to engage and interact with young people will affect our relationship with them and, ultimately, our effectiveness in reducing policing demand in the future by preventing them from becoming victims or offenders getting it wrong, especially when it results in the unnecessary criminalisation of young people, can mean heavy costs to the individual for life and the wider society”.
- The 18-24 year age range is a key stage of development, which is a time when they are most likely to come into contact with the Police.
- Recent evidence shows the lack of confidence many young people have in the ability of the Police service to protect them, and so they rarely ask for help.
- Engagement should be positive and opportunities sought to enhance the relationship with young people and that their voices must be heard and their opinions respected.

The Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) research published in October 2016, which involved nearly 1000 children and young people across England. It identified that:

- Police need to have specific training on how to communicate sensitively and effectively with children, which should be child or youth led.
- Children in contact with the Police need to be listened to and their views taken into account.

Local Perspectives

Kent Police’s Children and Young people Strategy 2016 – 2018

The IPAG notes that this mirrors much of the National Strategy for the Policing of Children and Young People. The key recommendations that Kent Police are looking to address are:

- It needs to be proactive and consistent in engaging with young people
- Allow young people to have a say on services and engagement from police and partners.

- The PCC and Kent police to consult with a broad and balanced representation of the young people in Kent.
- Kent police officers and staff should be trained how to effectively communicate with young people.
- Partnership working to be encouraged to provide initiatives that integrate police and young people, social integration, support young people who are offending or at risk of offending with regards to their wellbeing and personal development.

3.0 Our findings

3.1 Young people's understanding of the role of the Police

The majority of young people cited a good understanding of the role of the Police e.g. "to enforce the law", "protect people", "security e.g. terrorism".

3.2 Key Issues for young people

The key issues identified from the focus groups and surveys included:

- Cyber bullying and other forms of bullying
- Stop and search
- Drugs – ease of availability
- Shoplifting
- Sexual harassment
- Alcohol – availability
- Fights
- Underage sex and relationships

In Thanet the issues had already been chosen for feedback on and included terrorism, cybercrime and fraud, protecting vulnerable adults and children, organised crime and gangs.

Only two of the issues identified (stop and search and cybercrime) were common to those outlined in the national and local strategies on young people (i.e. stop and search, looked after

children, detention, custody and the criminalisation of young people, child sexual exploitation, gangs, human trafficking and modern slavery and children and domestic abuse).

Stop and Search was an issue that came up regularly, especially for those who had been in contact with the Police. There were some concerns about how Kent Police used their powers and whether there was excessive use of stop and search. Kent Police's ability to communicate effectively with young people was also questioned.

Cyber bullying and bullying in schools were other important issues highlighted. It was suggested by the young people that closer work between Kent Police and local schools would be useful in terms of educating young people around some of the dangers of the web and in increasing the confidence of young people to report incidents.

There was also a view from young people and school staff that better school liaison with the Police would have a positive impact in terms of encouraging young people to report incidents and break down barriers between young people and the Police.

3.3 Young people's views of the Police

Where there had been contact with the Police, views of the police had been mostly negative such as stop and search, as stated in the focus groups. Examples included a view that young people were stereotyped, that there was a lack of trust and respect of young people, often poor communication between Kent Police and young people as well as a general lack of approachability.

It is important however, not to be overly critical at this stage as over 80% of the respondents to a survey conducted in Sevenoaks felt that Kent Police provided a good service however, the caveat is that the majority of young people that took part in this survey had not had any contact with the police as they were aged between 12 and 13.

3.4 Improving and developing relationships between young people and Kent Police

Communication came up in a number of focus groups. There was a view that the Police do not really know how to communicate with young people, especially face to face and due to this sometimes barriers went up between young people and Police due to a lack of mutual respect.

There was a feeling that if a more positive approach was taken when communicating with young people, even if they were sometimes in the wrong this would in turn encourage more open and respectful interaction from the young people.

There was also a shared view that relations between young people and Kent Police could improve if there was more interaction and contact. This was reinforced by the survey in Sevenoaks in which 64% of respondents said more interaction would lead to improved relations between young people and Kent Police e.g. school visits, talks and interaction/fun.

Those people that had not had contact with the Police often had no opinion of how the Police could improve youth engagement. Those that had contact stated that the Police could be friendlier and not “over react”.

Educating young people was regularly identified as a way to improve the relationship between young people and the Police – for instance advice on how to be safe on line, how young people maybe targeted for sexual exploitation.

4.0 Conclusion

This was the first piece of coordinated work done by IPAG members under the new District model. It is noted that only four Districts across 2 divisions actively contributed to this report which will have an obvious impact on its findings. This has however, been a useful learning curve for the IPAG and we will continue to focus on young people as a key priority for the duration of our term and it links in well with our other priorities including Hate Crime, Stop and Search as well as Prevent.

Generally across the different focus groups, meetings and surveys, some key common themes come out. There is a need to look at how Kent Police communicate with young people with a need to maximise opportunities for interaction both in educational establishments and community settings. There were also mixed views about how young people saw Kent Police.

There was an appreciation from some young people of the difficult nature of the job and generally there was good understandings of the work Kent Police do to protect our communities. Stop and Search came up as an issue in some districts and is an area where some further work may be required to increase confidence of young people in the process.

5.0 Recommendations

1. Ensure that there is young people's representation from each Division on the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel on a continued basis.
2. The IPAG, Kent Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to work together to run workshops with young people and invite to the IPAG Annual Forum and other related meetings to discuss topical issues and gain feedback from young people on policing issues on an ongoing basis.
3. Review of the training provided for the police involving young people, and explore how they could be involved in the training itself especially around probationer, Stop and Search and Protecting Vulnerable People to ensure that officers are able to interact constructively with young people.
4. Use new opportunities such as the newly established Cadets Scheme to look at more effective communication with young people including the use of social media to ensure more effective 2 way dialogue.
5. Kent Police should make better use of opportunities to get involved in community engagement and educational projects which focus on young people such as the National Citizenship Service, The Princes Trust and Black History Month where they can engage with young people and develop positive relationships.

We would suggest a review in 12 months' time to check progress and a clear internal lead identified within Kent Police to move these recommendations forward. **14 December 2016**