



SHAPE YOUR SAFETY:

Young Voices 2025





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WHAT IS SHAPE YOUR SAFETY: YOUNG VOICES?

In February 2024, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) – supported by the CURV Partnership - held a youth engagement event attended by 100 young people aged 12 to 15-years-old.

Teesside Hope Hack allowed young people to have their say on a range of topics such as politics, racism and division, poverty, and community safety.

The Hope Hack was one of dozens of similar events that have taken place across the country to give young people a voice. Set up by the Hope Collective in memory of murdered 10-year-old Damilola Taylor, they hope to make a better world for young people of the future by asking them for their solutions in workshops on various topics.

The day was designed to give young people the opportunity to explore the overarching theme of poverty and inequality and then come up with solutions on how to create a fairer society through the eyes of young people. Our report from this event can be read [here](#).

The following year, Police and Crime Commissioner Matt Storey hosted and facilitated four events called 'Shape Your Safety: Young Voices' – interactive and engaging days to capture the voices of young people across Teesside.

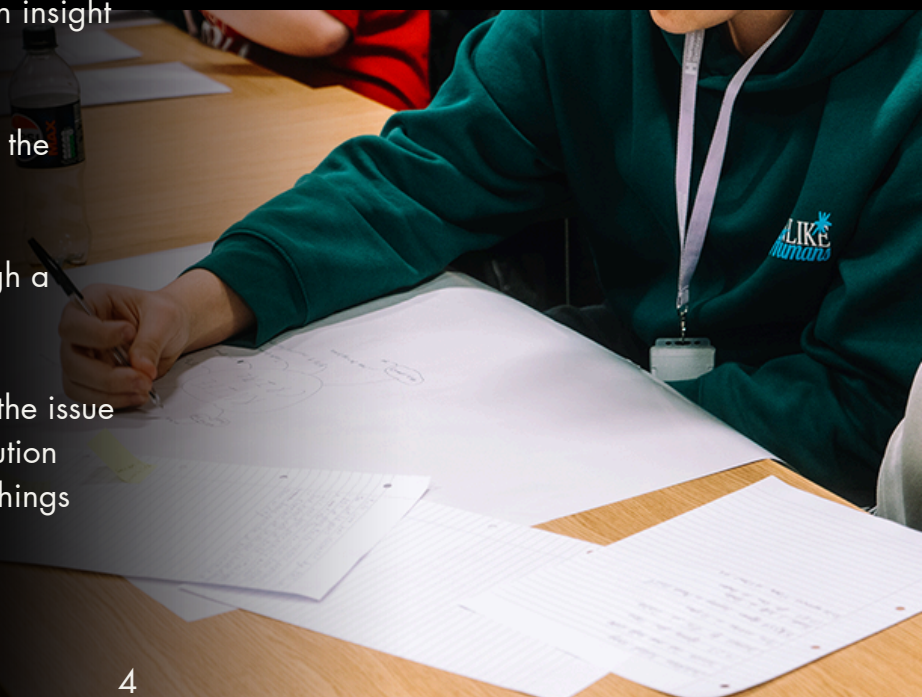
In a slight departure from the Hope Hack, the events focused on specifically on crime and community safety issues within Cleveland. Events took place in a college in each of Cleveland's four boroughs and reached almost 160 students. Attendees were between the ages of 16 and 19 and were studying a variety of subjects such as politics, public services, sociology, criminology, English – or were engaged with the King's Trust.

A cohort of up to 40 students per event were divided into four small groups to gain insight on a specific topic.

Groups were facilitated by staff from the OPCC and CURV.

The attendees were supported through a number of workshops to:

- Conduct research to understand the issue
- Have discussions on the best solution
- Develop a new project to make things better



The students worked within their group to implement a policy, campaign or project to tackle the issue they were tasked with. Once developed, their solution was presented to PCC Matt Storey, local MPs, elected members and representatives from local services.

The students were asked questions by these stakeholders on how their new project or policy will implement change and reduce crime. They also needed to consider how they would fund their new policy or project, whether it was controversial and how they planned to explain it to the public via media and communications.

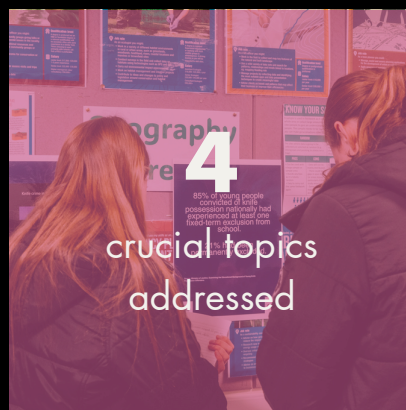
This report has been created to summarise the findings of the Shape Your Safety: Young Voices. These full day events were held February and March 2025 at:



combined with
King's Trust



Almost
160
young people across
Cleveland took part



4
crucial topics
addressed



20
local elected members
and senior leaders
attended

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE DISCUSSED

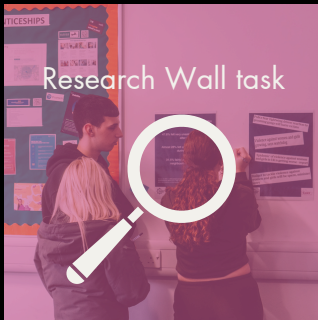
We created a day that was designed to give young people the opportunity to explore and understand community safety issues within Cleveland.

They were asked to work collectively to develop solutions to tackle four of the biggest challenges we face as a society.

We wanted them to play a central role in ensuring young people feel safer, supported and included in shaping local policing and community safety.



COLLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE



Research Wall

Attendees were provided with national and local data, statistics and news articles about their specific topic.

They were asked to reflect on these materials and discuss within their group how this issue impacts young people and the wider community.

More is More

Thinking about their specific topic, attendees were provided with a piece of A4 paper with eight identical boxes.

They had had eight minutes (one minute per box) to fill each space with a different solution to their chosen problem. This exercise aims to encourage creative idea generation under time pressure – and without the chance for second-guessing or doubt.

Sunflower

Collectively as a group, the young people reviewed each other's suggestions, discussed popular ideas and identified one idea they would take forward as a team.

Attendees now had to think about how they would make their policy a reality, what media strategy they would use and what challenges/barriers they may face.

They did this by placing their idea at the centre of a 'sunflower' graphic and added their thoughts as 'petals' around the outside.

Presentation

Finally, the attendees worked together to develop a presentation to tell their fellow students and the stakeholder audience about their idea.

Attendees prepared for any tricky questions they might receive from stakeholders.

KNIFE CRIME

Knife crime is one of the most prevalent issues affecting society – not only in Cleveland – but across the country. With some of the highest rates of knife crime in England and Wales, it was important that young people from Cleveland had their say on this challenging and deep-rooted issue.

Across all four colleges, there were commonalities in the young people's views on knife crime and how to tackle it in Cleveland.

Bede College

'Live your life, don't choose the KNIFE!' The aim of the project and campaign is to lead an education programme with primary and secondary schools. This would be delivered by people with lived experience, including victims and perpetrators, detailing the consequences and the impact of knife crime.

This would be complemented with sports and leisure activities to occupy young people. In addition, an educational programme for parents would be delivered to identify early signs and provide advice on where to seek support.



Middlesbrough College

'Super Force: Ditch the Knife and Save a Life' would tackle knife crime by making it a requirement for shops to have secure storage for knives, with ID requirements and age verification before purchase. Knives would need to be stored behind glass and retrieved by shop workers for customers.

The group also wanted to see more non-uniformed police patrols, more rehabilitation work in prisons and capital punishment for repeat offenders.



Hartlepool Sixth Form College

'Efficient Policing' aims to tackle knife crime by increasing the efficiency of local police in highly affected areas and improving youth education. The group also wanted to reduce the accessibility of knives by limiting the sale of them both online and in-person to 'immature' people or people with prior offending.

They wanted to see a zero-tolerance approach to knife crime - meaning if you are caught with a knife, you will have an increased prison sentence compared to the sentences currently in place. They wanted to create a knife crime offenders register to track offenders and prevent reoffending. This can be achieved by regularly checking up on offenders to see if they are in possession of any illegal knives.



Redcar and Cleveland College/King's Trust

'Drop a Knife, Spare a Life' aims to create a knife crime offence register to track and monitor offenders. This group also wanted to see it made more difficult for people under 25 to buy knives.

They felt that it was important that people released from prison for knife crime offences receive support to get back into meaningful employment.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

There are estimated to be around 3,000 violence against women and girls (VAWG) offences recorded nationally each day, with 1 in 12 women becoming victims every year. VAWG has been described as a 'national emergency' by police leaders and the true extent violence and abuse is likely to be far greater – as most victims do not report their experiences to the police.

With the support of their facilitators, the young people of Cleveland developed the following solutions to tackle this pressing issue:

Bede College

'White Rose: WRITTEN BY WOMEN, FOR WOMEN'

The aim of White Rose is to create a discrete website to help support women who feel they may be unsafe. This website will include a 24-hour live chat, safety features and advice on what to do in an unsafe situation.

One safety feature included an automatic voice recording which mimicked the sound of a real phone call with a friend, to play aloud if a person felt uncomfortable whilst in public places alone.



Middlesbrough College

'Boys will be Boys' is an educational programme to crack down on misogynistic behaviour. The ethos of the programme is to stop teaching women about how to defend themselves, but to instead educate boys on how to treat women appropriately by redefining the negative phrase 'boys will be boys'.

The campaign would have a focus on society, for challenging and calling out negative male behaviour. The group also wanted to increase awareness and knowledge of the many charities available for support, by ensuring they attend schools and colleges, providing contact numbers and raising awareness of the services they provide.



Hartlepool Sixth Form College

'Break the Silence, Stop the Violence' is an educational course to reduce sexual violence in teenage relationships. The course would be part of mandatory school curriculums, so young people can be aware of how to safely redirect a situation which has the potential for sexual violence.



The aim is to encourage people to speak up and intervene when they hear sexually violent language or harassment, in order to prevent the escalation into future sexually violent acts, especially in classrooms and on social media platforms.

The group wanted to teach young people the signs of sexually violent behaviour and show them an appropriate way to help. These courses will be adapted to all ages, from primary school education on consent and boundaries, to secondary school input on understanding the long-lasting effects of rape and sexual assault.

Redcar and Cleveland College/King's Trust

'Violence Against Women and Girls' The group's aim is to implement an interactive virtual reality resource on VAWG, including a resource pack for students and teachers adapted to all ages of schooling. The programme will help to understand what a healthy relationship looks like and the impact of abusive behaviour.



The content will be made relevant to the age of the student.

The group thought that if students have been demonstrating inappropriate behaviour whilst in school i.e. catcalling, it will be made mandatory to re-sit this educational course, so the person understands the impact of their behaviour on their victim.



COUNTY LINES, DRUGS AND GANGS

Drug-related crime is one of the most common issues raised by communities when they meet the Police and Crime Commissioner. Drug-related crime includes possession offences, drug cultivation (plus associated crimes around modern slavery and trafficking), the sale and supply of drugs and county lines.

As younger people are more at-risk of becoming involved in county lines and similar offences, they were asked for their views on reducing it:

Bede College

'Rise Above' this group wanted to form a charitable organisation called Rise Above, to build youth clubs in deprived areas of Stockton and Middlesbrough. At the youth clubs, a programme of activity would be delivered throughout the week for young people from the ages of five to 17-years-old.

This would be focused on anti-drugs and gang education and delivered by someone with lived experience. Sessions would be tailored to the appropriate age groups.



Middlesbrough College

County Lines, Drugs and Gangs, the aim of the project is to teach young people to increase their awareness of all forms of exploitation, how to spot the signs and how to alert the authorities. The group felt it was important to reach parents and give them information on how to tell if their child is at-risk, or involved, in criminal behaviour.

The project would provide posters with anonymous phone lines, to allow people to report intelligence around the exploitation of young people. The young people were also supportive of the increased use of random police searches for suspected criminals or drug dealers.



Hartlepool Sixth Form College

'Safe Path - Stop the Lines, Stop the Crimes' the aim of this project was to create an app where young people involved in county lines could report crime anonymously. The anonymous nature of the app would allow young people to feel safe enough to tell someone about their experiences, without the fear of repercussions. The group also came up with an idea which involved sending live location points to police, so that authorities could track the journeys of victims and offenders. This would allow agencies to disrupt criminal activity but also safeguard victims who are often groomed or forced into county lines.



Redcar and Cleveland College/King's Trust

'Operation Phantom' aims to improve the protection of Cleveland residents by using police enforcement to tackle drugs, gangs and county lines. This operation plans to use stealthy police tactics, such as hidden surveillance in criminal hotspot areas.



The group also wanted to see covert police operations when camera-based surveillance was not an option. They were passionate about providing a dedicated police resource to tackling drug crime. This would allow police constables to help get drugs off the streets via stop and search, whilst also giving detectives time to track those involved in distribution and organised crime.



ONLINE SAFETY, INCLUDING RADICALISATION

An ongoing concern for young people and parents alike, the increasing prevalence of online-based crimes requires policing to keep pace with new technological methods to harm individuals.

With constant changes, particularly around the use of artificial intelligence (AI), many people feel more needs to be done to reduce harm from scammers, sexual predators and abusers.

Most of the young people who took part in the events felt that greater regulation of the online world was required:

Bede College

'EdYouPol: Educate. Youth. Politically: Nurturing Future Generations' This government initiative will see the EdYouPol education programme piloted in 500 primary and secondary schools across the UK.

The aim of the programme is to help future generations to think more critically about the things they see and hear online. It aims to tackle issues around misinformation and prevent radicalisation.



Middlesbrough College

'Guard My Web - Youth Online Safety Act' is an app that will filter sensitive content, including content deemed to contain misinformation, across all other social media apps. The app will have a logo, or a 'watermark' displayed on any online content that confirmed it was factual and verifiable.

Other functions of the app include:

- Filtering sensitive content
- Tracking phone usage
- Verification on social media using a form of photo ID
- Ensuring that only one form of ID can be used per account



Hartlepool Sixth Form College

'Clear Content Act 2025' The group at Hartlepool Sixth Form wanted to pass legislation to increase the regulation of social media. It would establish higher age restrictions for social media apps, to prevent grooming and to prevent young people from accessing explicit music and content.



It would also make it illegal for social media platforms to display factually inaccurate information. The group felt it would assist in drawing the line between free speech and hate speech, with common rules for all social platforms operating in the UK.

The legislation will also aim to educate people on how to stay safe and be aware of dangers online and promote the use of an app for parents to monitor what their children are viewing online.

Redcar and Cleveland College/King's Trust

'Safety-Net' is an app designed to keep people safe online. The aim is to educate secondary school pupils about the risks of online safety issues, such as scams and their digital footprint (sharing content on the internet remains permanently and cannot be deleted).



The group also wanted to raise awareness on how to identify fake news, how to recognise cyber stalking and how to stay safe online.



EXPERIENCES OF THE EVENT

On behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Matt Storey would like to thank all participants for their time and efforts in contributing to creating safe, strong and more confident communities. In addition, an extended thanks to the colleges for providing staffing and hosting these events:

- Bede Sixth Form College
- Middlesbrough College
- Hartlepool Sixth Form College
- Redcar & Cleveland College combined with King's Trust

"I learned how to develop ideas about policies on how to bring solutions to the current epidemic of violence against women and girls."

"I learnt more about the seriousness of the topic, alongside the other topics that the other groups did their presentations on. It gave more of an insight into the severity of the issues, alongside some ways to help resolve them."

"I managed to improve on my teamwork skills with others, as well as decision making. I had also learnt of many prevalent issues and statistics from the presentations of others, and how they could be resolved."

"I enjoyed speaking in front of VIP members and telling them the problems we face in society from a younger point of view."

"I enjoyed hearing the research and ideas done by other groups in their presentations. It was also interesting to hear other peoples' ideas and opinions from within my own group."



WHAT NEXT?

We want this report to inform policy and commissioning activity at a local, regional, and national level.

The contents of this report will help the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver against the Commissioner's Plan, by ensuring a young voice is captured in the debate.

It has also been used to support with the development of the Cleveland Knife Crime Action Plan, which includes specific reference to increased educational provision for young people and stronger enforcement for offenders.

During the events, some stakeholders invited the students to attend specialist services that support individuals that are victims/survivors of crimes. This is a fantastic opportunity for the young people to gain a greater insight on what services they provide. In addition, local MPs have pledged to raise awareness of the attendees' solutions to reduce serious violence.

We are committed to hosting further Shape Your Safety: Young Voices events in 2025, focusing on underrepresented young people. The voices of these young people are often not captured due to personal circumstances, vulnerabilities or due to their detention in a custodial setting. We want to amplify their voices and perspectives, which are often overlooked or underrepresented in mainstream decision-making processes.

If you are interested in Shape Your Safety: Young Voices events, contact us now on pcc.office@cleveland.police.uk






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