



Cleveland Youth Commission:

Final Report to the Police and Crime Commissioner

March 2021

**LEADERS
UNLOCKED**



Contents

Introduction	3
About this report	3
About the Cleveland Youth Commission	4
What We Did	4
Recruitment	4
Identifying Priority Issues	5
Creating the Tools for the Cleveland Youth Commission	5
Joint Work with Cleveland Police	5
Awards, Achievements and Partnerships	6
Who we've reached:	6
Our Partners	6
Priority 1: Hate Crime and Online Crime	8
What We Found	8
Our Recommendations	9
Priority 2: Mental Health Awareness	10
What We Found	10
Our Recommendations	11
Priority 3: Drug and Alcohol Abuse	12
What We Found	12
Our Recommendations	13
Priority 4: Youth Activities and Preventing Offending	14
What We Found	14
Our Recommendations	15
Priority 5: Young People & Their Relationship with the Police	16
What We Found	16
Our Recommendations	17
Conclusion: Taking Things Forward	18
Testimonials	19

Introduction

The Cleveland Youth Commission (CLEV YC) was established in 2020 with funding from the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Lisa Oldroyd.

The CLEV YC is a peer-led project that is made up of 27 active members from a range of diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Commission enables young people living in Cleveland aged 14-25 to have a voice on issues around policing and crime.

The key objectives of the Commission were as follows:

- Recruit 27 young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and life experiences.
- Work with CLEV YC members to identify their key priorities that they wanted to tackle during the project.
- Equip the CLEV YC members with the practical skills training required for the role.
- Plan and deliver conversations with young people from across Cleveland during the CLEV YC 'Big Conversation'.
- CLEV YC members present their findings and recommendations at the Cleveland Youth Commission 'Big Conversation' conference to the PCC, Police and partner agencies. *
- Work closely with Cleveland Police to provide Clev YC members with opportunities to influence policing strategies and decision making.

**(Note: Due to Covid-19 restrictions workshops have been delivered online, including the Cleveland Youth Commission 'Big Conversation' conference in March 2020.*

The Cleveland Youth Commission is facilitated by Leaders Unlocked, a social enterprise that has successfully delivered the Youth Commission peer-led model across 13 other regions in England and Wales and is planning to expand further in the years ahead.

Leaders Unlocked exists to allow young people across the UK to have a stronger voice in their communities on issues that affect them. Accountability and fairness are paramount in helping organisations to adopt new ways of working with young people and the communities they serve.

You can find out more by visiting www.leaders-unlocked.org

About This Report

This report is based on evidence that has been collected by delivering extensive engagement workshops – the CLEV YC has reached over 1,200 young people from across Cleveland in the last year. The responses have been gathered in youth-led engagement events, targeted surveys and social media campaigns.

The report allocates each priority its own section, which consists of a comprehensive analysis of young people's opinions using exact quotes from individual participants, and the key recommendations based on the findings of the Youth Commission.

This report is intended to be a genuine, independent record of what young people have told us through the CLEV YC 'Big Conversation'. The report is intended to support any future actions by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cleveland Police and relevant partner agencies.

About the Cleveland Youth Commission



The [Cleveland Youth Commission](#) focuses on giving young people a stronger voice in raising policing and crime issues within their local communities. The CLEV YC works closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to [challenge and inform](#) the work of the PCC and Cleveland Police.

The CLEV YC engages with young people through [peer-led workshops](#) that provide young people with space to comfortably and confidently speak to their peers. All the responses gathered during the Big Conversation are analysed by the CLEV YC members to pull together the key findings and recommendations. This is then presented to the PCC, the Police and local partners in this report.

A key element of the CLEV YC's role is to gather the views of young people through peer-to-peer engagement. This is a strength of the project, as it provides young people with a safe environment to talk to their peers about issues in their communities. This approach allows for more honest information to be collected.

What We Did

Recruitment

In July 2020, Leaders Unlocked carried out a 2-stage recruitment process, which included distributing an easy to access recruitment pack which included an application form and information relating to the role. The second stage was to conduct telephone interviews with all the applicants. This process has been made possible by working proactively with local organisations from education settings, youth organisations and the voluntary sector. Our aim is to ensure that the CLEV YC members are true representatives of their communities be that by locations, backgrounds or life experiences.

We have recruited 27 CLEV YC members from the following diverse backgrounds:

- 9 Male (31%), 17 Female (65%), 1 Unknown (4%)
- 8 BAME (31%)
- 2 identify as LGBTQ+ (8%)
- 4 identify as LLDD (15%)

Identifying Priority Issues

In September 2020 the CLEV YC hosted their inaugural meeting, which focused on members discussing key issues and research ideas for the project. CLEV YC members decided to focus on the following key priorities:

1. [Hate Crime and Online Crime](#)
2. [Mental Health Awareness](#)
3. [Drug and Alcohol Abuse](#)
4. [Youth Activities and Preventing Offending](#)
5. [Young People and their Relationship with the Police](#)

Creating the Tools for the Cleveland Youth Commission

During the members' meetings, CLEV YC members co-designed workshops and took an active lead in running activities on the day. This comprised of [hosting quizzes](#), [workshop demonstrations](#) and [presenting their plans](#). This meeting gave the Youth Commission members the opportunity to develop:

- [Virtual workshops](#)
- [Design materials for the workshops](#)
- [Practice presentation skills](#)
- [Identify key organisations where the Big Conversation should go](#)
- [Learn new leadership skills](#)

The CLEV YC members have [received training for their role](#) and have developed their [active listening techniques](#), [facilitation and leadership skills](#) throughout the project.

For the purpose of data collection, the CLEV YC members created [postcards](#) to collate the relevant information for their research. The postcard shows each priority that the CLEV YC was collecting responses on, allowing young people to provide their opinions of all priorities regardless of the workshop they were attending. The postcards have highlighted real-life opinions and experiences that young people have experienced but may feel uncomfortable discussing – the postcards are designed so that the response is anonymous as the name of the individual is not requested. The CLEV YC also utilised [online surveys](#) to collect responses during the national lockdown.

Joint Work with Cleveland Police

The CLEV YC was invited to take part in a [Use of Force Scrutiny Session](#), arranged by Chief Inspector Pete Graham. Members evaluated anonymised scenarios from the perspective of young people to assess whether the use of force used by Cleveland Police was proportionate to the crime. Following a successful pilot session [the Hartlepool](#)

team requested [monthly scrutiny sessions](#) alternating between Use of Force and Stop and Search. CLEV YC members were also involved in a meeting regarding a youth-friendly social media platform to provide ideas for the Hartlepool Neighbourhood's teams social media.

Awards, Achievements and Partnerships

In November 2020, the CLEV YC members were provided with an exciting opportunity to mark World Children's Day – two of the Youth Commission members were offered the opportunity to be the ['Youth Chief Constable'](#) and ['Youth Police and Crime Commissioner'](#) for the day. The CLEV YC were invited to produce two projects to pitch to the Youth PCC on the day – the projects were in conjunction with the PCC's Safer Communities Initiative. The chosen project, the ['Tree of Life Project'](#), was designed with mental health in mind following the national lockdowns as a result of Covid-19. This project's development is set to begin in Summer 2021.

In January 2021, the Cleveland Youth Commission was featured in Hartlepool's Neighbourhood Policing Monthly Newsletter.

Who we've Reached:

The CLEV YC has actively engaged with [over 1,200 young people](#) across Cleveland. In total, the CLEV YC have ran a number of [events](#) in a wide range of localities across Cleveland, in addition to the five surveys based on their priority topics.

The breakdown for each priority are as follows:

Hate Crime and Online Crime	437
Mental Health Awareness	250
Drug and Alcohol Abuse	236
Youth Activities and Preventing Offending	172
Young People and their Relationships with the Police	164
Total	1259

Our Partners

The [Cleveland Youth Commission](#) members are very grateful to everyone who has supported us by allowing the CLEV YC in to their organisations, and would like to say a very big thank you to the following organisations:

Bright Minds Bright Futures
Cleveland Police
Cleveland OPCC
Eggescliffe Aliens
Hartlepool Borough Council
Hartlepool College

Hartlepool Youth Service
Middlesbrough Children Matter
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Stockton, Thornaby & District Scouts
Teesside University
Youth Focus

A special thanks to the individual Youth Commissioners who have offered their time and efforts into making this project a success:

Alice Hodgers
Bethan Eve Radley
Danni Gatenby
Eliza Fryett-Morley
Evie Wells
Kaitlyn McGoldrick
Kieran Jones
Liam Short
Maisie Pledger

Manal Ahmed
Mannpreeta (Preea) Singh
Mark Popplewell
Maxwell Cameron
Netanya Alwis
Nieve Rusby
Philippa Newton
Phoebe Grimwood
Sadie Roberts

Saiyra Khan
Sam Grogan
Sarah Flounders
Shaan Hussain
Shay Miah
William Crame
Zoe Stephenson

A final thank you to this year's co-ordinator [Chelsea Greenwood](#) who was instrumental in bringing the project to fruition.

Priority 1: Hate Crime and Online Crime



The Cleveland Youth Commission has spoken to 437 young people in Cleveland relating to hate crime and online crime. Young people are often affected by different variations of online crime, but have stated that it is not always clear when a person has been a victim of online crime or where to report it. Reported hate crime has been steadily increasing across the UK, with high rates of hate crime being identified against ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ+ community and people with physical or mental disabilities. The CLEV YC believe that this needs to be addressed by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

What We Found

48% of the young people we spoke to believe there has been an increase in hate crime since the COVID-19 pandemic. 70% believe that online crime has increased in the same timeframe.

Young people have argued that COVID-19 has highlighted an underlying racist attitude towards Asian members of the community due to the origins of the pandemic in China. Young people believe that this attitude has negative connotations for cohesion in the wider community:

“More people are getting assaulted for things they didn’t do, like Asian people apparently spreading COVID”

Young people in Cleveland have voiced their support for the Black Lives Matter Movement which has protested the discriminatory behaviours of police forces around the world towards black people. The movement originated in the US after the murder of George Floyd but has gained traction across the UK – young people in Cleveland would like to see the police treat all members of society fairly regardless of their race:

“I believe in BLM, I’d like the police to act more fairly when it comes to race”

Young people have argued that victims of hate crime and online crime are negatively impacted – hate crime and online crime have resulted in [damaged mental and physical health](#) for the victims, friends and family. This negative impact could explain why the rates of reporting for hate crime and online crime are lower than the rates of offending:

“It knocks your confidence and makes you feel quite isolated, embarrassed, worthless and at times ashamed”

“I felt like I couldn’t come out with my gender identity and sexuality no more”

Young people in Cleveland believe that hate crime and online crime are both the result of a [lack of education about different cultures](#). With the increased accessibility to online services, people can find others who share their learned prejudices in order to support their attitudes, but these attitudes are generally based on assumption rather than fact. The young people that we spoke to believe that in order to tackle this, education about different faiths and cultures should be [provided to people from an early age](#):

“I think there should be more of a focus on preventing children from developing harmful views at a young age”

Young people in Cleveland have stated they would feel comfortable reporting hate crime or online crime to their parents, a trusted adult or the police – however, they have also stated that [schools and the police do not take reports seriously](#). Whilst education for young people is required in order to prevent prejudices from developing, the police and teachers should also receive some form of [training in how to deal with reports](#).

Our Recommendations

Cleveland Police:

- Increased **training** on **unconscious bias, equality** and **diversity** within the force.
- **Educate the public** clearly on what ‘Hate and Online Crime’ **is and how to report** these crimes through posters and events, whilst **underpinning the importance** of the subject.

PCC & Partners:

- **School should teach the impact of these crimes from a younger age** and highlight the detrimental effect they can have on mental health.
- Establish and promote a **local site or helpline** exclusively for anonymously reporting Hate and Online Crime.
- Schools to **work collaboratively with Police officers and the Youth Commission** to deliver workshops/assemblies to educate peer-peer with the presence of an officer.

Cleveland Youth Commission:

- **Raise awareness** through workshops, social media, surveys and posters, whilst promoting and illustrating a positive use of social media.
- **Promote helplines and advice services** for hate and online crime with a focus on the importance of reporting these crimes.

Priority 2: Mental Health Awareness



The Cleveland Youth Commission has spoken to 250 young people in Cleveland about mental health awareness. Mental wellbeing includes a person's social, physical, psychological and spiritual health – it is more than just the absence of ill mental health. Mental health is required in order to cope with the normal stresses of life, but in recent years there has been a global move from politicians to strengthen support for people with mental health issues. According to the young people we have spoken to, in Cleveland mental health provisions fall short of the requirements.

What We Found

Of the young people we have spoken to, only 30% believe that mental health is taken seriously by parents, schools, the police and the community.

Young people have argued that the support provided for young people with mental health issues does not fit the requirements sufficiently from all sectors. Poor mental health in young people has been too easily blamed on hormones or fallouts with friends rather than supporting recovery:

“People say it's just hormones or teachers say it's just stress or friends just say “same” if you say you feel depressed”

Young people have admitted that many of them do not feel 'brave' enough to request support for their mental wellbeing – however, those who do seek help are met with long waiting lists due to a lack of resources for mental health care. Young people in Cleveland have argued that this further diminishes mental health.

Signs of mental health concerns are often missed by parents and school officials as a result of poor education on the subject and the negative connotations associated with it. The subject of mental health has often been considered a taboo subject in society and as a result young people believe that it is harder to openly discuss their struggles:

“People need to educate themselves or need to be educated about suicide and where to go to if they need help and should be taught how to spot someone who needs support”

“Teaching coping methods for exams”

86% of the young people that we spoke to in Cleveland addressed the negative impact of Covid-19 on their mental health – they stated that educational settings have not provided a substantial level of support for young people who are struggling with their mental health. Many young people have recognized the inequality of access to support for mental health that has been highlighted by the pandemic, as many resources are only available online. Young people would like to see more resources provided to young people who do not have access to the internet:

“Try and make it easier for people without the internet to access resources they need”

Our Recommendations

Cleveland Police:

- **PCSOs to engage with schools** to create a collaborative approach to mental health awareness whilst also allowing students to **feel more comfortable approaching familiar PCSOs** on the street if they have issues with mental health in the future.
- **Involve young people with experience** of mental health in the training of Police officers.

PCC and Partners:

- Encourage organisations in the community to **hold group sessions for young people** to provide a safe area and environment.
- Encourage **mandatory mental health awareness courses in educational settings** and provide staff with training on spotting early signs.
- **Provide more funding for mental health services and organisations** that support children, young people and vulnerable adults to reduce resource demand whilst improving pathways for lower-level mental health issues.

Cleveland Youth Commission:

- **Provide education in workshops and on social media** on how to spot signs of mental health issues.
- **Promote key positive messages** on social media platforms on how to support others.

Priority 3: Drug and Alcohol Abuse



What We Did

The Cleveland Youth Commission has spoken to 236 young people in Cleveland relating to drug and alcohol abuse. Drug abuse can often lead to further criminal activity such as anti-social behaviour, vandalism, violence and burglary. Young people across Cleveland told us that drugs are extremely accessible, even from a very young age. This creates an unsafe feeling in the younger community and puts young people at risk of exploitation through drug-related crimes. Young people do not feel safe being out on the streets and feel they cannot go out without being peer pressured into drinking and taking drugs.

What We Found

Young people have stated that it is currently **too easy to get hold of drugs and alcohol**, which is one of the main reasons why substance addiction continues to be a problem. Many young people have noted that drugs and alcohol are cheap to purchase, in some cases costing less than food or other essentials.

Young people believe that part of the onus falls on **parents to guide their children** and educate them on the detrimental effects that drugs and alcohol can have on a person. As such, many young people in Cleveland believe that **parents also need to be educated** on the risks and impacts of substance abuse in order to guide their children:

“Hardships and lack of education, not knowing how to solve problems”

68% of the young people we have spoken to believe that **substance abuse has increased in Cleveland as a result of Covid-19**, as the national lockdown has damaged the mental health of many people. This is problematic as 28% of the young people we spoke to also stated that they **would not know where to go to get support or advice** if they were experiencing a substance-related issue. This can in turn have a negative impact on their mental stability:

“Addiction is a serious problem, especially in poor areas as mental health issues are common alongside money troubles.”

Young people have identified that a primary reason that people turn to drugs and alcohol is that they have a [lack of understanding of how to deal with their emotions](#) and problems in their life. Young people believe drugs and alcohol can be seen as an escape from these hardships:

“Depression and Anxiety can very easily lead to substance abuse as it can be viewed as the only escape”

“Creating a safe space for users who are suffering, offering to help them instead of arresting them and putting it on their record”

The above issues can be resolved by providing young people with more stimulating activities – young people in Cleveland have argued that boredom leads to ‘experimentation’ with drugs and alcohol. Young people would like to see more activities and facilities provided in the area in order to prevent addictive behaviours:

“With teens give us more to do and let them play football on Acklam hall, keep the goals and nets up at Mill Hill so they have something to do”

Our Recommendations

Cleveland Police :

- **Use online platforms** such as social media and the Cleveland Police website to share more advice and information about local support services available.
- **Work with educational settings** to educate and highlight the risks of drugs and alcohol.

PCC & Partners:

- **Help build public confidence** to reach out and access services and helplines.
- **Fund recreational spaces** for young people to avoid boredom and experimentation.
- **Provide teachers and parents with training programmes** to educate them on how to support, detect and advise.

Cleveland Youth Commission:

- **Increase social media presence** and post educational stories on positive coping mechanisms such as keeping active.
- Workshops to include **education on living with people with addiction issues** and how to get support.

Priority 4: Youth Activities & Preventing Offending



The Cleveland Youth Commission has spoken to 172 young people in Cleveland about youth offending and preventing offending. As mentioned in previous sections, boredom has been accredited as a primary reason that young people turn to negative behaviours. Young people have argued that there needs to be more recreational facilities available in the community in order to reduce youth offending. The national lockdown demonstrates the impact of low social interactions on the growth of criminal activity – 38% of young people in Cleveland believe that crime has increased during Covid-19 as a result of a lack of entertaining activities.

What We Found

Of the young people we spoke to, 48% believe that increasing the number of recreational activities provided to young people has a positive impact on levels of youth offending. It is worth noting that young people have stated a willingness to volunteer at a youth facility in order to provide the services – 38% of young people said that they would volunteer in order to reduce crime rates:

“More activities would work because then those who do crime out of boredom, won’t be bored since they have things to do”

“Even before COVID there wasn’t much, the youth club I used to go to is closed as far as I am aware, and there’s nothing to do”

It is important that the activities provided are **not only in the form of sports**. Young people in Cleveland have stated that an increase in recreational activities should also include artistic facilities, such as music and art groups. Without developments in the arts, **a large percentage of young people will be missed** from the intended audience.

Education plays an important role in reducing offending – young people in Cleveland have argued that providing information on sentencing, criminal records and DBS checks would be more impactful than the current approaches in education settings:

“Police can come into schools and talk about the consequences and they could even give examples of people who have committed a crime and gone to jail because of it”

“I know about arrest /prison - Anything other than that I’m not sure of. I know it goes on a DBS check”

Similarly, young people would like to see [further opportunities in educational settings](#) to gain qualifications. This would increase the opportunities available to young people who could turn to crime as a result of a lack of employability.

Our Recommendations

Cleveland Police:

- **Form stronger bonds with young people** by making appearances in youth activity centres and providing education in schools.
- **Provide more education** on the consequences of crimes and sentencing.

PCC & Partners:

- **Assist clubs with funding and promotional material** to help advertise their groups to young people.
- Create a scheme where young people can be **up-skilled** to help manage and coordinate local youth activities on a paid or voluntary basis.
- **Linking employers to young people with criminal records**, dispelling stigmas and prejudices.

Cleveland Youth Commission:

- Continue to **be a voice for young people in Cleveland**, updating and having conversations with the PCC and Cleveland Police around young people’s concerns on a regular basis.
- **Link with the Police** to understand the consequences of crime and the sentencing in order to deliver peer-led workshops to educate young people on these. Incorporate personal stories or visits from those who have experienced the system.

Priority 5: Young People & Their Relationship with the Police



The Cleveland Youth Commission has spoken to 164 young people in Cleveland about young people and their relationship with the police. Young people have raised concerns over the nature of their relationship with the police – whilst a large percentage have argued that they would feel comfortable approaching a police officer, young people have argued that the police do not treat them with the same levels of respect that would be given to adults.

What We Found

72% of young people stated that they would feel comfortable approaching a police officer, with 64% believing that the police would act on a report accordingly. Interestingly, young people in Cleveland have stated that they would feel more comfortable approaching a female officer rather than a male officer:

“I would feel more comfortable talking to a female officer than a male. Men are intimidating”

93% of the young people that we spoke to were not aware of the Independent Office for Police Conduct or their purpose. This suggests that young people in Cleveland are not aware that police conduct is reviewed to ensure that officers do not exceed the remit of their powers. This is problematic as 45% of the young people that we spoke to did not know their stop and search rights:

“I knew police could stop and search you but didn’t know I had rights”

These two statistics suggest several concerns. Firstly, nearly half of the young people we have spoken to would not know if a stop and search was completed correctly. Secondly, the vast majority of the young people we spoke to did not know that police actions are audited. Thirdly, based on the statistical crossover it is more than likely that the young people who are aware that their stop and search rights had been breached would not be aware that they could complain about improper behaviour from an officer. Young people would like information to be signposted in relation to complaints and stop and search rights.

Regarding mental health young people have noted that they feel **the police would not take them seriously if they were suffering from mental health issues**. They believe that mental health issues would make them appear unreliable in the police's opinion and additionally, they would not accept mental health issues as a reason for irregular behaviour:

"As someone with mental health issues, I have a feeling I wouldn't be taken seriously"

The young people that we spoke to have also stated that they believe the police are **too busy to deal with their requests**, and as a result have stated that they would not report a crime. This needs to be addressed – young people need to be assured that the police are never too busy to take their report:

"I think their resources are too far spread so I think they will do their best but most of the time can't see it through"

"The police have too much on their plate - I won't report a crime"

Our Recommendations

Cleveland Police:

- **Engage in activities in the communities** to create a better bond between the young people and the Police. Increasing the overall sense of Police approachability.
- Widely **promote stop and search rights** to everyone, ensuring age and ability appropriate language is used.

PCC & Partners:

- **Promote the IOPC widely**, everyone should know they can make complaints and how to report unfair policing.
- **Organise external events for young people** and police to interact to build trust and relationships.
- Promote the use of **restorative justice**.

Cleveland Youth Commission:

- **Promote the IOPC in workshops**, social media and surveys to educate young people on reporting crimes and Police complaints.
- **Promote stop and search rights** in workshops.
- **Engage with peers** on what events would interest them in relation to building relationships with the Police.

Conclusion: Taking Things Forward



The Cleveland Youth Commission members have worked extremely hard to ensure the success of this project and we are thankful for the dedication they have shown throughout, particularly as the project ran through two National lockdowns. We would also like to give our thanks to all of the local partners who have been involved in this project.

The Cleveland Youth Commission members are keen to continue working alongside the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cleveland Police and partners. The members have appreciated the opportunity to work with young people from diverse backgrounds and want to continue with their peer-led research, empowering young voices from across Cleveland.

The Cleveland Youth Commission will be a critical element in taking forward and developing the recommendations that have been set out in this report.

Testimonials

Lisa Oldroyd - Acting Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Oldroyd

"We established Cleveland Youth Commission to give young people a voice about policing, crime and community safety in their area.

"People under 25 have a unique and invaluable insight into what the next generation expect from their public services in reducing crime, supporting vulnerability and keeping them safe.

"I have been extremely impressed at the high-quality engagement and consultation conducted by the young people, which they have personally overseen and developed every step of the way.

"With over 1000 responses to their Big Conversation, the Commission has significantly strengthened the voice of Cleveland's young people and their findings are already starting to influence change.

"This report will give the new Commissioner elected in May a fantastic foundation on which to build effective policy which will reflect the needs, concerns and expectations of the region's young people."

Richard Lewis – Chief Constable Cleveland Police

"The young people involved in the Youth Commission are the future of Cleveland – we need to invest in them and I am sure that many will go on to make excellent contributions to public service later in their careers.

"We have seen many great young leaders, a great example of this was when young people took on the role of Chief Constable and PCC for the day.

"The Youth Commission has been a great opportunity to engage with young people representing the region and it helps us better understand the concerns and expectations of young people.

"We will continue to work closely with the Youth Commission to ensure that our services continue to develop to best cater for the young people of Teesside."

Sarah Wilson – OPCC, Commissioner's Officer for Consultation & Engagement

"It has been an absolute pleasure to work with the Youth Commission members during this project. Their enthusiasm for making a difference to their local communities has been refreshing, as has their openness in sharing their views and in challenging the practices and processes that community safety agencies have in place. All too often the voice of young people is lost in service development and I feel this project has really given young people a voice. I look forward to continuing to work with the Commission to take forward the proposals they have developed through the Big Conversation. A very inspirational group of young people."

Lesley Makin - Safer Communities

"I have been involved in numerous initiatives where young people have been consulted on numerous issues. What struck me about the Youth Commission presentation it was very different - it was clear that the process had empowered young people; they presented in a manner that showed they had taken ownership of the research; were very articulate in what they had found out; had obviously explored underneath the issues that are affecting young people and crucially identified solutions. The evening very definitely demonstrated that Leaders were being unlocked."

Liam Watson - Kicks Coordinator and Coach Mentor

"I thought it was an excellent way to give young people a voice and allow them to shape things for future generations. MFC Foundation's Premier League Kicks programme would love to work in partnership with the PCC in the future to help add value to our current offer."

Chelsea Greenwood – Cleveland Youth Commission Project Coordinator

"It has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to work with the Cleveland Youth Commission 2020-21. I am proud of each and every one of them that not only have they managed to reach out to over 1,200 young people in the community, but they've managed to do it through a global pandemic!

The Cleveland Youth Commission members provided a voice and a safe space for an age group which ultimately are our next generation. More importantly, if each of the 1259 young people reached through the project tell at least one friend what they have learnt, the education and awareness will be spreading across Cleveland!

The Cleveland Youth Commission members were always supportive of one another and full of energy, they went out of their way to encourage and congratulate one another on their successes and have formed strong friendships which hopefully will follow them through their life. Moreover, the skills that they have learnt throughout the project will be transferable in the next stages of their journeys. I'd like to say a big thank you to all staff at Leaders Unlocked, The PCC and Cleveland Police for making this project possible and I'm thoroughly excited to see the recommendations implemented in the future".

Saiyra Khan – Cleveland Youth Commission member

"This project has meant a great deal to me as it has highlighted the importance of having good communication between the youth and the police officers to move towards a more understanding, safer community"

Kaitlyn McGoldrick – Cleveland Youth Commission member

"The Youth Commission has gave me a place to express my voice and actually allowing it to be heard. I'm so thankful that I'm able to be a part of such an amazing group. I believe that the youth commission has a massive role in helping Cleveland become even better. This is by making sure that young people's voices and concerns can be heard and actually doing something about it. The data collection really opened my eyes to what is happening in Cleveland and what young people's views are on certain topics and I believe that by gathering all this information, that we as young people can make a real big difference in Cleveland for the better."

Manal Ahmed - Cleveland Youth Commission member

"I am really looking forward to sharing our interesting and beneficial findings with you all. As a member of the Cleveland Youth Commission, I feel like we have gathered up as much evidence as we can in order to voice the opinions of young people who want to strive for a change. My experience has been one of the best and the role of the Youth Commission is one of great importance in maintaining the communication between young people and the police. I am extremely grateful to be a part of the entire process!"

Manal Ahmed - Cleveland Youth Commission member

"Being part of the Cleveland Police Youth Commission has given me a voice on what matters to young people in my local area. I have gained confidence in myself and the ability to express my views and take on board what really matters to people in my community. I am currently studying policing at Redcar and Cleveland College and the knowledge I have gained from Youth Commission has really helped my studies and I hope to one day become a police officer."

Beth Radley – Cleveland Youth Commission member

"I have loved being part of the Cleveland Youth Commission and seeing what a difference young people can actually make to the local area and I have loved being able to be a part of the Youth Commission. The most important thing about this is that the Youth Commission has reached out to all the young people in Cleveland and made their voices heard! I am so grateful for people listening to young people like me to make a difference."