



CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

FINAL 2025 REPORT TO THE CHESHIRE
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

JANUARY 2026



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

**LEADERS
UNLOCKED**
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



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INTRODUCTION

The Cheshire Youth Commission (CYC) was established in 2016 and is funded by the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

The CYC enables young people aged 14-25 to inform decisions about policing and crime prevention in Cheshire, working in partnership with the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Cheshire Police (CP).

ABOUT THE CHESHIRE YOUTH COMMISSION

Since inception, the youth commission has continued its development over the past 9 years. The CYC is a peer-led project that is made up of 30 active members from a range of diverse backgrounds and life experiences. The Commission enables young people living in Cheshire aged 14-25 to have a voice on emerging issues around policing and crime.

A key part of CYC's role is to gather the views of other young people across 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 CYC in order to create a final set of key findings and recommendations to report back to the OPCC, CP, and partners.

The Cheshire Youth Commission is facilitated by Leaders Unlocked, a social enterprise that enables young people to have a stronger voice and influence on the decisions that affect their lives. Leaders Unlocked has established Youth Commissions in 21 regions in England and Wales and continues to grow. For more information about Leaders Unlocked, please see www.leaders-unlocked.org

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is grounded in extensive peer-to-peer research and engagement with over **1400 young people across Cheshire** between February 2025 and October 2025. These conversations were conducted through interactive workshops, one-to-one interviews, outreach stands and surveys.

The report is structured into four key priorities that outline the CYC's four areas of peer-led citizen research, including a special pilot run priority. Each section features a comprehensive analysis of young people's responses, verbatim quotes from individual participants, and the recommendations that have been put forward by the Youth Commission as a result of their findings.

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 OPCC, CP, and partner agencies.

THE 'BIG CONVERSATION':

The key priorities chosen by the CYC this year were:

1. County Lines and Drugs
2. Cybercrime
3. Domestic and Sexual Violence
4. Special Priority - Serious Violence

To tackle the four priorities, CYC members delivered a range of peer-led workshops, outreach stands and surveys with young people across Cheshire. At these engagement events, members utilised their co-designed resources. This 'Big Conversation' was taken to a wide range of local voluntary organisations, educational institutions, and statutory partners across the region.

In order to gather vital insights from those who are most affected by some of the priority topics, the CYC put particular effort and energy into engaging with underrepresented and marginalised groups of young people. The CYC carried out workshops and consultations with those with first-hand experience of the criminal justice system, young people from SEND provisions, pupil referral units and other organisations.

In total, we engaged in peer research with 1,400 young people across over 26 consultation events (See acknowledgements below for the full list of organisations engaged with).

JOINT WORK WITH THE OFFICE FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND CHESHIRE POLICE

This year we have worked closely with Cheshire Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on a number of young people's issues and campaigns. Some highlights include:

- Attended the launch of the consent campaign, which engaged young people in open conversations about consent and the sending of explicit photos.
- Collaborated with Cheshire police during Independent Advisory and Accountability meetings (IAAM), aimed at making the police service more representative of and responsive to the communities it serves.
- Held Youth Independent Advisory Groups (YIAG's) on County Lines, Cyber Crime, Serious Violence and Domestic and Sexual Abuse.



PARTNERSHIPS

The CYC has developed strong partnerships with local and national organisations. Highlights here have included:

- Built stronger connections with the YMCA.
- Shadowed the Detached Youth Team to areas associated with anti-social behaviour, building relationships with different communities.
- Conducted workshops with young people in the Youth Justice Service (YJS), gaining an insight into their lived experience.

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 CYC. Thanks go to:

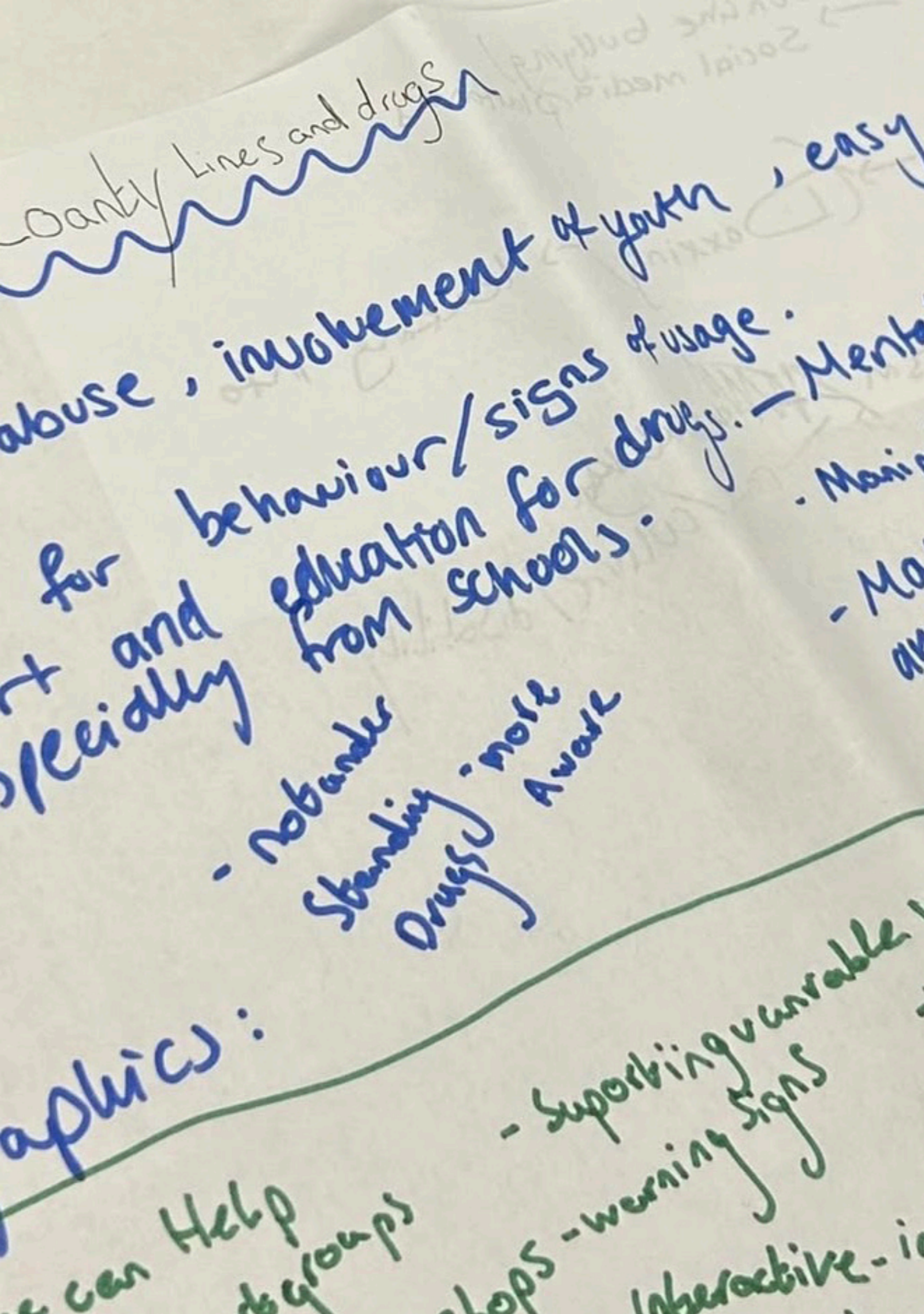
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| YMCA | The Dome Youth Zone |
| Bridgewater High School | Cheshire East Council |
| Just Drop In | The Kassia Academy |
| Live! | Youth Justice Service |
| My CWA | Remedi |
| Chester Pride | The Macclesfield Academy |
| St Paul's Centre | |

A special thanks to the individual Youth Commission Members* who have offered their time and efforts to make this project a success:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Harriet Smith | Jessica Whittaker |
| Jade Regan | Em Edgar |
| Muhaimen Saleem | Mason Duncan |
| Max Crompton | Adrianna Maczuga |
| Chelsea Cromwell | Laila Ibrahimova |
| Jessi Edgar | Masoom Ahmed |
| Cristal Clarke | Ikram Ahmed |
| Ashley Cook | Amy Mules |

Special thanks to Kofi Barrett-Wilkie, Cheshire Youth Commission Project Coordinator.

*Some CYC members names have not been published.



PRIORITY 1: COUNTY LINES AND DRUGS

The CYC engaged with a total of **464 young people** about this topic.

WHAT WE FOUND

67% of young people who completed our survey reported inadequate training or awareness on county lines. Consequently, over 70% said they don't feel confident in recognising the signs of someone being exploited or using drugs.

"One member of the police has repeatedly come in to give us education on the subject and the repetition of the same person has slowly built respect among the kids. However, this has been mainly focused on drugs so more work on county lines would be beneficial."

The CYC identified a lack of support and education in schools to help young people resist the drive of getting involved in drugs and county lines. We found the biggest influence for young people to get involved is peer pressure.

"They have negative views on police created by social media and peer pressure, so they don't feel safe or trusted enough to go to them. (social media mostly highlights bad aspects)"

"Be more observant and be more strict on drugs"

Negative attitudes towards seeking help and advice from adults and professionals was reported, with some young people sharing that they would feel judged. When asked, 'who would you go to?', over 50% said they would rather go to their friends for help.

"Trying to get to the root of why they are taking these drugs before getting angry with them and helping them to overcome the drug addiction / problem".

"People think they're going to be seen as criminals instead of helped"

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

FOR CHESHIRE POLICE:

School officers to continue delivering presentations and talks about the consequences of being involved in county lines.

Young people need to see the police's response to tackling shops who sell illegal vapes. More needs to be done to reduce the accessibility of vapes, especially to young people.

Build stronger relationships with communities to understand its needs and be a constant figure for those who may need support.

FOR THE PCC & PARTNERS:

Provide training to teachers around the red flags associated with county lines and where to go for support.

More support for SEND provisions and alternative education providers to support young people who are more vulnerable and at risk of being groomed by gangs.

Through the CYC, spread more awareness around the role of the PCC and the funded support services for young people in Cheshire.

FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:

Attend more community events and deliver peer-to-peer engagement, spreading awareness around the dangers associated with county lines and drugs.

Understand from young people what designated safe spaces should look like and what they should do.

More emphasis within workshops and online campaigns on the support and anonymous call services available.





PRIORITY 2: DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The CYC engaged with a total of **337 young people** about this topic.

WHAT WE FOUND

We asked young people 'how common are abusive relationships within your age group?', over 50% said they felt it was very common with some citing that it can be seen as normal.

"I think some people just think (toxic relationships) it's normal"

A surprising 36% surveyed said they know someone who has had their private photos shared without their consent, with a further 39% admitting to sharing underage explicit photos.

"People might not want to face the situation of their nude images being sent without their consent... they might feel unsafe after breaking up after sending these pictures, thoughts such as "what if they still keep the photos" would stay as a concern in their mind"

"Manipulation within these toxic relationships preventing the abused from ever speaking out and their issues and their limited knowledge about this subject"

Many of the young people we spoke to said they have had an education around domestic violence and sexual violence, however 62% shared they are still unsure of the signs associated with sexual or domestic abuse, especially for men.

"More education that is non-gender specific, domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender, sexuality, colour."

"Society must promote open conversation, educate abuse affecting all gender, challenge harmful stereotypes, and ensure support services are inclusive and accessible to men"

When asked, 46% of young people stated that they either knew someone who had been affected by domestic or sexual abuse, did not want to share, or had been personally affected themselves.

"I think that it might just seem really intimidating for the people who need and want to report it."

"They are not comfortable speaking to random people...to them it's just another stranger."

"I have been sexually assaulted and abused my whole life"

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

FOR CHESHIRE POLICE:

Young people identified a need for better victim support from the police.

There is a need for consistent presence in schools from school officers to build stronger relationships to help tackle issues around reporting.

Share real stories of DV cases that have received a successful outcome, so people can see the official process and the different victimology.

FOR THE PCC & PARTNERS:

Schools and services to have visits from victim support officers to build trust and stronger relationships with younger people.

Develop campaigns about equality for male, female and non-binary victims to show a more diverse perspective.

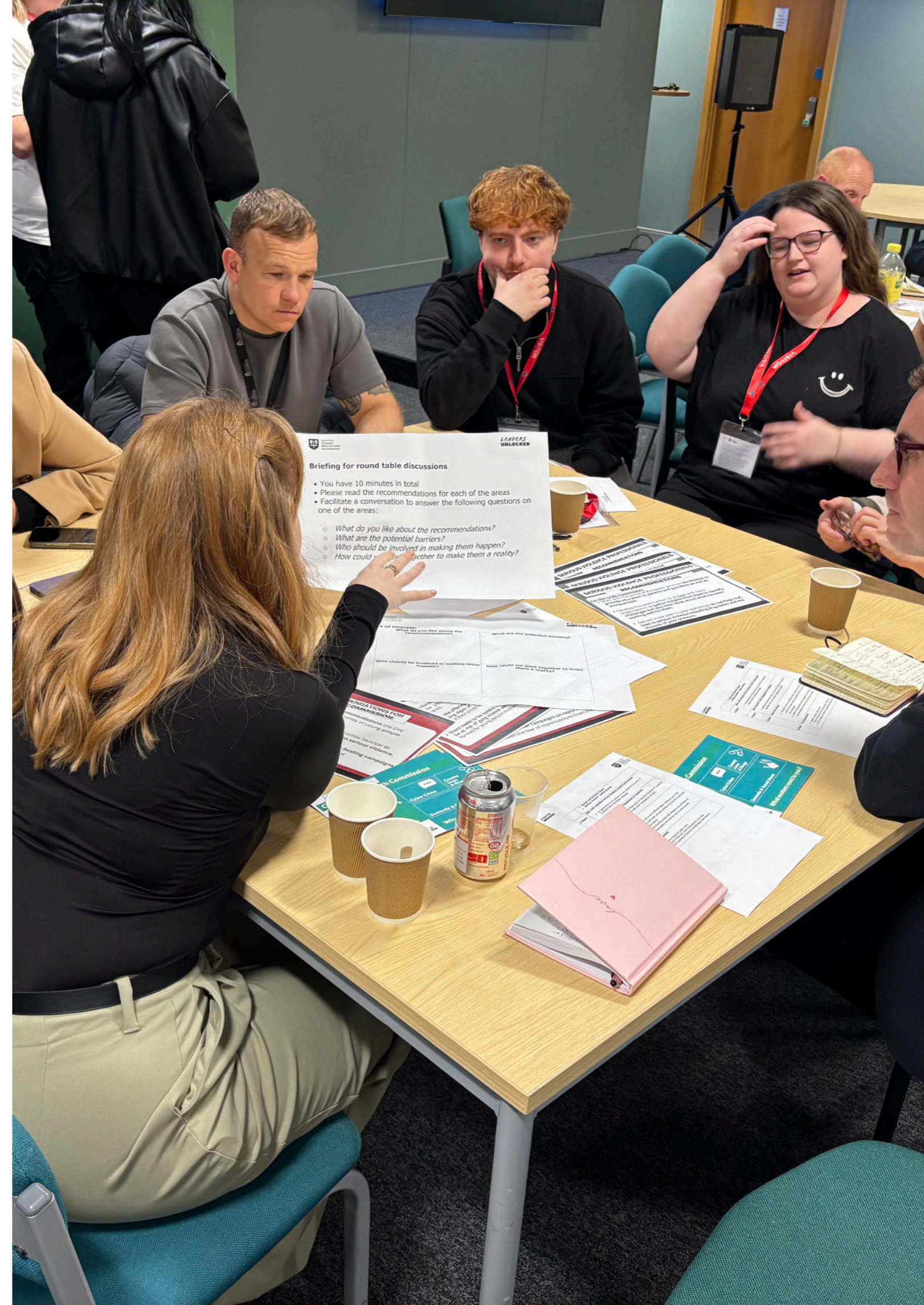
Work with parents to deliver workshops, educating them around the warning signs and where to report if they feel their child, is a victim.

FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:

Further develop the CYC workshops around the warning signs of DV & SV and the laws on sharing indecent images whilst underage.

Use social media to help raise awareness of local support services young people can access and how to access them.

Do more targeted workshops to incorporate more voices from the LGBTQ+ community and male victims.





PRIORITY 3: CYBER CRIME

The CYC engaged with a total of **348 young people** about this topic.

WHAT WE FOUND

A significant majority (93%) of young people in Cheshire told us they feel confident using the internet safely, however when we asked the follow up question 'have you ever been a victim of cybercrime?', over 1/3 said they have.

"I have seen one of my friends getting hacked on a platform called Discord and the person/ bot made him send online scam links. It happened to a few of my friends and mutual friends".

"Don't want to share anything personal but I know myself and people around me have had issues with very inappropriate boys online."

Cyber bullying and Harassment were identified as the biggest forms of cybercrime young people have witnessed or experienced.

"I've experienced cyber bullying by these 2 girls who went to my high school, and they were just saying that I told people to go kill themselves"

"Yes people constantly ask for nudes, I don't know what to do"

Over 50% said they have been approached by a stranger online, with incidents dating back to primary school.

"A lot of people in my brother's class were added to a group chat in year 6 with explicit images and discriminate texts. There were lots of strangers on there, some adult".

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

FOR CHESHIRE POLICE:

There needs to be more improvements to how the police update victims on their case and provide support during this time.

School officers to provide primary school education around cyber-crime and the consequences.

Police to showcase successful outcomes when investigating scammers to improve community relations.

FOR THE PCC & PARTNERS:

Work with the CYC to deliver workshops with parents around cyber-crime, helping to increase their cyber-literacy.

More awareness for parents on established and upcoming apps like Snapchat and Telegram to provide more knowledge and understanding.

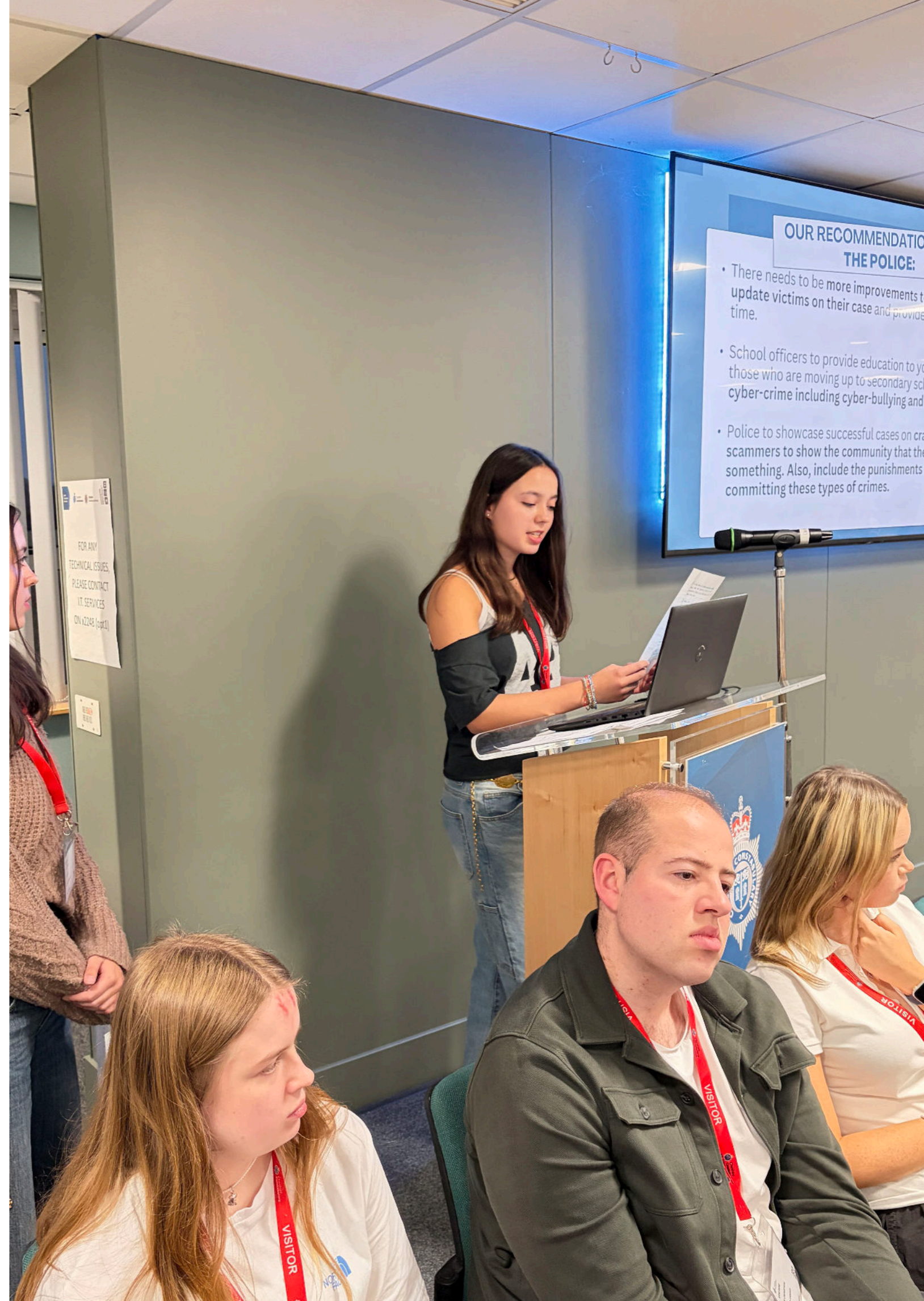
There needs to be more online campaigns on the mental health effects of social media and where to get support.

FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:

Look at lowering the age of engagement for this topic to Year 6, providing early education on the harms of cyber-bullying.

Continue to engage with SEND and alternative education providers to deliver workshops on how to keep safe online.

Develop educational short videos on personal stories around cybercrime and showing the positive outcomes of seeking support.





PRIORITY 4: SPECIAL PRIORITY – SERIOUS VIOLENCE

METHODOLOGY

In 2024, the CYC were linked with DI Samantha Blanchflower from Cheshire Police Serious Violence lead. In response to the Government's 'Safer Streets Mission', the CYC and Samantha delivered a special priority on serious violence (SV).

In early 2025, the members had a discussion around the urgent issues within serious violence that they would focus on, an emphasis on knife crime and joint enterprise was identified. The CYC ran a pilot model of workshops and surveys with an emphasis on these issues, capturing opinions around SV reduction and lived experience.

Alongside young people, they wanted to capture the perspective of professionals working around serious violence. From the professional aspect, a bespoke workshop and survey was formulated, aimed at understanding the gaps within services and capturing lived working experience.

DEVELOPMENT OF WORKSHOPS

To ensure the workshops were completely peer-led, the members were asked to develop the engagement activities and questions they wanted to find out. The expertise of CYC member Harriet, whose work with IOPC has involved delivering workshops to professionals, was pivotally drawn upon.

WORKING WITH REMEDI

The CYC have continued to develop the relationship with Remedi over the past few years, other key work within this collaboration includes delivering hate crime training from a young person's perspective. After contacting Remedi with the plan to engage with professionals, Harriet with CYC member Max attended Cheshire Police HQ, delivering a bespoke peer-led workshop in September.

In the report you will find the key findings and recommendations from both young people and the professionals from Remedi.

SERIOUS VIOLENCE – YOUNG PEOPLE

Working closely with DI Samantha Blanchflower, the CYC connected with youth groups and organisations to collect their views and opinions around serious violence. Sessions with groups such as the YJS allowed the CYC to gain invaluable insights from young people with lived experience of serious violence.

The CYC engaged with a total of **253 young people** about this topic.

WHAT WE FOUND:

When young people were asked 'what is classed as serious violence?', the majority said knife crime, with gun and gang crime being the second and third most identified type. Following up, they were asked 'Is SV a problem in your area?', the majority agreed it is an issue but not one that affected them directly or their community.

"Around the whole community of Cheshire, I wouldn't say it's the biggest thing as its more in areas such as Liverpool / Manchester but there can be a little in Cheshire but if there is it tends to be awful and has a big impact."

When surveyed, young people were asked 'what is the biggest reasons for carrying a knife?', with feeling powerful and respected being identified as the biggest reason, and gang involvement following second.

"Although you might feel safer and more powerful with a knife, put it down. If it's for your protection report the problem. There is no need to get yourself into trouble."

"Knife crime solves nothing. The world is a mess no matter what you do, so you can choose to be part of the problem or keep the little peace you have."

"Adolescence said it all"

Snitch culture and SV were reported by young people as being inter-linked, with over 58% contributing this as a major factor in under-reporting. A lack of knowledge around how to report a knife crime anonymously was also recorded (65%).

"Snitch culture has always been massive, it is cause people don't trust the police as well".

During workshops, a lack of understanding around knife crime and the legal consequences was recorded, particularly in regard to joint enterprise.

"Knife crime is not openly spoken about enough and not many people know the consequences"



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

FOR CHESHIRE POLICE:

More early intervention strategies to engage with young people to share the impacts serious violence has on, not just victims or perpetrators but also the impacts on family.

School officers to deliver workshops that include myth-busting around knives, aimed at educating young people and debunking common myths about knife crime.

Work with the CYC to deliver campaigns on reporting and knife amnesties to reduce the fear of police repercussions.

FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER & PARTNERS:

Provide funding opportunities for organisations to develop safe spaces for young people to access and spread awareness of these spaces.

Increase services offering family education on the warning signs of serious violence and how they can deal with this if their child/family member get involved.

There needs to be special support for young people who might be at risk of gang related serious violence e.g. support groups formed for young people involved in anti-social behaviour.

FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:

Further develop the CYC workshops using the recommendations e.g. include real-life stories of young people affected by serious violence.

Work with the police and YJS (Youth Justice Service) to provide early intervention workshops on serious violence.

Work with Cheshire police to deliver myth-busting campaigns around knives and serious violence to reduce misconceptions.





SERIOUS VIOLENCE - PROFESSIONALS

The CYC engaged with a total of **12 professionals** about this topic.

WHAT WE FOUND:

During discussions, both CYC members and professionals reported that social media gives too much exposure to young people. This can play a significant factor when analysing serious violence.

The environment young people grow up in was identified as playing a crucial role, not just the street or area they live in but more importantly the household they grow up in.

"You're (most people) probably carrying a knife because of how powerless you felt as a child possibly due to bad house life" (quote from a young person).

We asked the professionals 'how well does the police interact, support and meet the needs of young people involved in SV?' With 55% saying it was moderately effective but there are gaps in the support provided.

"I think the police do what they can, but I think they're extremely busy and can only do so much and don't have the time to deal with every single thing".

Both members of the CYC and professionals identified a lack of SEN and mental health support available, meaning that vulnerable young people are turning towards negative alternatives to fit in and be accepted.

When asked 'why do you think young people carry knives?', professionals identified protection as the main reason.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

FOR CHESHIRE POLICE:

Focus on restorative services for young people before they get involved in serious violence rather than after.

Be more visible and provide regular updates.

Deliver compulsory workshops/educational sessions/ restorative circles with all children that have been given a caution. Aiming to break the barrier between young people and the police.

FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER & PARTNERS:

More support groups for SEND provisions and mental health support for young people of all ages.

Work restoratively with young people to become individuals they can and want to be by removing challenges and barriers. For instance, through more funded positive activities they can engage in, particularly job opportunities post 16.

Continue to support families and increasing awareness around the consequences of serious violence.

FOR THE YOUTH COMMISSION:

Work with the police and support services like REMEDI to provide education for parents/ guardians and young people.

Develop this work further to engage with more organisations, gathering insights to identify challenges and successes.

Deliver more peer-to-peer workshops on red flags that lead to serious violence, including drug debts and the impacts of peer pressure.



CONCLUSION

We are extremely grateful to all the members of the Cheshire Youth Commission, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cheshire Police. Through the 'Big Conversation' the Cheshire Youth Commission members conducted peer research with over 1400 young people between February 2025 and October 2025. The Cheshire Youth Commission continued to reach out and engage with diverse communities across the region. We are thankful to the members for providing their time to deliver these invaluable peer-to-peer exercises.

TESTIMONIALS

"This year's collaboration with the Cheshire Youth Commission (CYC) has been invaluable in giving both Cheshire Police and my office a deeper understanding of the views and experiences of young people from diverse backgrounds. Through their peer-to-peer research and lived experiences, they have provided a powerful platform for voices that are often unheard. Members of the CYC were also invaluable in shaping tangible recommendations on policing and crime issues that matter most to young people with regards to the following priorities: serious violence (focusing on knife crime & joint enterprise), county lines & drugs, domestic & sexual violence and online safety. I have been impressed by their passion, commitment and resilience, particularly during the 'Big Conversation' Conference and their input should influence future decisions. This fantastic work lays the foundation for continued engagement, ensuring that young people's voices remain central to building trust and confidence in our communities"

Police & Crime Commissioner Dan Price

"My involvement with the Cheshire Youth Commission (CYC) on the Serious Violence project has been an inspiring journey of collaboration and impact. The focus on knife crime was not just about addressing statistics, it was about amplifying the real voices of young people across Cheshire and ensuring their experiences shaped meaningful solutions.

I worked closely with services supporting young people and youth services to take conversations beyond classrooms and into local spaces. This approach meant the Cheshire Youth Commission could engage directly with young people in their own communities, building trust and capturing their true experiences.

Through the Big Conversation, over 1,400 young people shared their views. They told the CYC about the impact of "snitch culture," the lack of awareness around anonymous reporting, and the need for safe spaces and positive activities. These insights underscored the need for education, trust-building, and safe spaces.

Collaboration like this shows what's possible when we listen, learn, and act together. A safer Cheshire starts with the voices of its young people"

Detective Inspector Samantha Blanchflower, Cheshire Police

"This marks my second year serving as the liaison for the Cheshire Youth Commission and Cheshire Constabulary, and once again I have been deeply impressed by the commitment, professionalism, and insight demonstrated by the members. The work of the Youth Commission is invaluable to the Constabulary, enabling us to capture, understand, and act upon the voices of young people across the county.

Whether contributing to our efforts on violence against women and girls, hate crime, drugs, cybercrime, or serious violence, the members have provided critical insights that shape our future work through their thoughtful recommendations.

They should be immensely proud of their achievements this year, and it has truly been a privilege to meet and collaborate with them"

Insp. Jason Murray, Cheshire Police

"I have been on the commission for around 4 years now and I love it every year. I really enjoy the workshops and teaching young people around topics such as healthy relationships and cybercrime and also the various ways to report a crime, as I feel like it is something I wish I had when I was in school. I also enjoy the conferences at the end of the year, being able to present our findings to stakeholders and members of the Police force and being a voice for all the young people. ... It has also helped me to develop my confidence with public speaking which has come a long way in my law career".

Chelsea, CYC member

"The past year on the youth commission has been so full of workshops and meetings, we've been involved in education, scrutiny and more within Cheshire. For me personally the youth commission has given me a safe space to share my experiences with the police and help try and make positive changes around Cheshire. I've particularly enjoyed doing work around our special priority - serious violence. I've led a serious violence session with professionals and helped to analyse the responses at our data meetings. I've worked with an amazing group of young people and am proud of the work we have all done this year".

Harriet, CYC member

"I have been a member of the youth commission since 2017 (the first official year). I started out as a shy introverted 14-year-old girl but during my time with the youth commission, my confidence has grown so much, ... they have brought me out of my shell... supported me as I came out of an abusive relationship, allowed me to share my story to help and support others and to raise awareness, and also allowed me flexibility and support as I stepped into motherhood".

Jade, CYC member

CONTACT US

Leaders Unlocked
@leadersunlocked
info@leaders-unlocked.org
www.leaders-unlocked.org

**LEADERS
UNLOCKED**
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner