



## Lothian & Borders Police Youth Strategy

### HEARING THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN

A consultation facilitated by The Children's Parliament

Lothian and Borders Police are currently developing their Youth Strategy for 2010-2013 and asked The Children's Parliament to bring together children from the policing area to give them an opportunity to contribute their knowledge and ideas. The Children's Parliament approached eight schools to represent the diversity of the five local authorities in the area. Participating children were aged 8 to 14 years old.



## THE APPROACH

The children's consultation was built around a *visual questionnaire* and a *full day consultation event*. The *visual questionnaire* asked children their views on the Police and their community. They responded by writing, drawing or filling in speech bubbles on cartoons. 140 of these were completed by children across the area.

At the *consultation event* 24 children took part in a varied programme. This included time with Police Officers who answered the children's questions about their jobs. Throughout the day children explored these questions:

- When we feel positive about Police Officers why is this so?
- When we feel negative about Police Officers why is this so?
- How can relationships between the Police and children and young people be improved?
- How can we prevent children and young people from committing offences?
- What would make you feel safe in your area?

Working alongside Police Officers and creative artists, using drama tableaux, cartooning, discussion and reflecting on the images their peers had produced in the questionnaire, the children were able to put across their main messages on a three panel mural.

## RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- 66% used the word **brave** to describe the Police Officers on the streets, 54% **friendly** and 47% **understanding**. 23% thought they were **scary** and 14% used the word **grumpy**.
- 72% of the children had spoken to a Police Officer before. One third of these occasions had been when an Officer had visited their school or Youth Club. 16% of these children had been reporting a concern. 80% felt positive about speaking to an Officer. Typically they said: *"It made me feel safe and confident that the bullies were being dealt with"* and *"It was frightening that our house had been robbed but I felt relieved when the police came."*
- Children use public places and spaces to meet their friends. 78% of the children identified a **place they like to play or hang out with friends**. However 22% **prefer to stay at home** outwith school time with many of them citing feeling unsafe as their reason.
- Children identify that **some public places are unsafe** and should be avoided. 84% of children named a place in their community they didn't like to go to with over a fifth of those saying it was because of people older than them using it and making them feel unsafe. Many of them referred to alcohol and drug use.
- Children thought the best thing about the Police was how they **helped the community** (35%) and **keep us safe** (21%). When asked to identify the **worst thing** about the Police 31% could not think of a worst thing. The most commonly cited worst thing (only 7% of children) was that the Police do not do enough in the community to stop crime.
- 21% of the children felt the best thing about being a Police Officer would be to **help people or their community** but 36% felt the **danger** of the job would put them off considering the Police as a career.

## RESULTS FROM THE CONSULTATION DAY

Throughout the day the children were asked to reflect on **positive and negative aspects about the Police**. The views of children highlight positive attributes which Police can build on; while those negative attributes identify where work can be done to enhance relationships and understandings.

WHEN WE FEEL POSITIVE ABOUT POLICE OFFICERS WHY IS THIS SO?	WHEN WE FEEL NEGATIVE ABOUT POLICE OFFICERS WHY IS THIS SO?
<p>They are fair.            React quickly.            Scare criminals.            Deal with every call.            Almost always right.            Professional.            Listen to your point of view.            Dedicated.            Enforce the law.            Helpful.            Inspiring.            Friendly.            They go to where they're needed.            Reduce car crashes.            They know how to deal with people.            Try their best to protect the public.            They're determined.            They teach you.            They tell you what you've done wrong.            Return stolen property.            Try to keep you calm.            They secure public places.            They're reliable.</p>	<p>They don't turn up when you phone.            Don't believe you.            Unfair.            If they are violent.            Not fully briefed.            We expect too much.            They make mistakes.            People say that the police pick on them.            Get the wrong people.            A wee bit impatient if you wind them up.            A policeman/woman knock is a bit loud and scary.            There's not enough time for them to do what they need to do.            They interrogate people.</p>

## HOW CAN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE POLICE AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BE IMPROVED?

The children felt it was important to bring children and young people together with Police Officers as much as possible. Typically they said: ***"Organise more events and let police and children participate together"***.

They also identified the need for Police Officers to engage with them on the streets, and to get out of their cars: ***"More patrols on foot rather than just coming round in a car – it makes them easier to talk to."***

They said Police should engage positively with children and young people in public places and spaces: ***"Join in our football games rather than move us on."***

The children felt the Police needed to change the way they engaged with children. They talked about improving communication: ***"Talk to us more."***

The children wanted Police Officers to be more respectful and less intimidating: ***"Be more understanding." "Be a bit more gentle." "Being less intimidating to approach." "Treat children with respect and they will respect you."***

## HOW CAN WE PREVENT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM COMMITTING OFFENCES?

The children felt a lot of offending was the result of boredom: *"Make more clubs so kids have something to do rather than vandalise buildings."*

Some felt the likelihood of being caught and punished would stop children from getting involved in crime. A more visible Police presence was seen as a deterrent: *"Have more Police on the street."* *"Put cameras on the wall and when they catch them, tell their parents."* *"CCTV Cameras"* *"Severer punishments and community service."* *"Stricter laws against drug use."*

Some thought children needed support to understand the consequence of an offence: *"They could make children look at what happens if they commit a crime."* *"Persuade them these things are bad."* *"Tell them all about the consequences."*

## WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL SAFE IN YOUR AREA?

Some of the children pointed out the things in their community which made them feel unsafe and needed to change. In particular this included litter, vandalism, poor lighting, the impact of alcohol on behaviour in public and particularly the threat and the reality of violence: *"More restrictions in bars."* *"Less gangs in parks."* *"More gangs off the street."*

Many felt seeing the police made them feel safer: *"More Police men and women around the area."* *"The Police should check the area occasionally."* *"Seeing more Police"*

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of the children who gave their views at the consultation event and by completing a questionnaire, and to staff who supported their efforts. Participating schools were:

- St Mary's RC (East London Street) Primary and Drummond Community High (City of Edinburgh)
- Dalkeith High (Midlothian)
- Kingsmeadow Primary (East Lothian)
- Drumlanrig St-Cuthbert's Primary School and Galashiels Academy (Scottish Borders)
- Riverside Primary and Bathgate Academy (West Lothian)

We would also like to thank creative artists Joanna Boyce, Yonnie Fraser, Lyver Chavez and Stuart England for the design and delivery of the questionnaire, art and drama techniques.

### MORE ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

The Children's Parliament introduces children to a world of ideas, creating opportunities for reflection and critical thinking as a part of mainstream Scottish society. Through participation children make their contribution to a compassionate, just Scotland by becoming active and engaged contributors. We work in and with communities, schools and families and engage with a range of professional colleagues across services.



*For more information about The Children's Parliament and how we could help your organisation engage with children contact:*

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