

From: Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Youth Engagement – progress report
Date: 2 February 2016

**Kent Police & Crime
Commissioner**

'Devoted to Kent'



Background:

1. The Commissioner never underestimates the value and insight young people and those who work with young people can provide in ensuring communities remain safe, re-offending is reduced and trust and confidence in policing is maintained.
2. Following a workshop in April 2015 the Commissioner established a new forum called the Youth Advisory Group (YAG). By bringing young people and representatives from a range of established groups who work with young people together, the purpose of the YAG is to assist the Commissioner by:
 - actively engaging and consulting with young people;
 - gathering evidence from young people to inform policy development;
 - representing young people's concerns and priorities in the annual Police and Crime Plan refresh.
3. In addition, the YAG is also intended to serve as a conduit for other organisations to access young people and engage with them.

Progress:

4. YAG meetings are held every quarter, and attendees currently include young people and representatives from the following organisations:
 - Kent Youth County Council
 - Medway Youth Parliament
 - Pipeline Youth initiative
 - The Prince's Trust
 - The Young Lives Foundation
 - CXK
 - UPRISING Youth & Community, Ashford
 - The Independent Police Advisory Group (IPAG)
 - Medway Council
 - Youth Justice & Safer Young Kent, KCCHowever, the breadth and diversity of representation has, and continues to increase as the YAG develops.
5. The first YAG meeting took place in September 2015. In order to inform development of the long term victim services contract, the meeting focused on the services available to young victims and witnesses of crime in Kent. The group received a presentation on what support is available and how it's accessed, including the role of Compass House and the facilities it offers. As a result, there was discussion around a number of matters including crime reporting generally, the various stages in a victim's journey and awareness amongst young people of what support is actually available.
6. In terms of outcomes, the feedback was provided to the senior manager leading on the long term victim services contract to consider. In addition, the YAG endorsed a visit to Compass House to look at the physical environment/facilities to ensure they cater for the needs of young victims and witnesses of crime. Ideally, the visit needs to take place on a working day when Compass House is staffed, but due to school/college commitments this limits dates to school holidays. Despite best efforts, it was not possible to arrange a visit before Christmas and it will now take place either in the spring half term or Easter break.
7. Further to the first meeting, the YAG has a standing invitation to attend the Commissioner's Victims' Panel. Consisting of victims of crime and Victim Support Volunteers, this forum is used to gather views and opinions on the work being done to improve victim services in Kent. The panel was heavily involved in the development of Compass House and plays a pivotal on-going role in reviewing the services available.
8. The next YAG meeting is scheduled for the 26 January 2016. In light of the recent extremist attacks and atrocities across Europe, the South East Counter Terrorism Unit (SECTU) is presenting as part of a national consultation with young people regarding radicalisation and travel to areas of conflict. The meeting will be an opportunity for the SECTU to provide important information, but also obtain feedback on the Prevent strategy and how the police can help keep young people safe from the dangers of radicalisation.



9. As part of the annual Police and Crime Plan refresh consultation, members of the YAG were invited to submit their views, with particular reference to those actions that relate to young people. A number of responses were received, the general consensus being that the existing areas of focus were the right ones.
10. To support the work of the YAG, the Commissioner also ring fenced £15,000 to enable the funding of specific projects and/or engagement with vulnerable and 'hard to reach' young people. To date, none of this funding has been spent.
11. In its role as a conduit for other organisations to engage with young people, the Force have requested support from the YAG to inform the design of the new Kent Police website. In addition, a YAG representative now also sits on the Independent Police Advisory Group (IPAG) Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel. The purpose of the panel is to:
 - ensure police officers use stop and search powers lawfully;
 - improve trust and confidence in the way stop and searches are conducted; and
 - monitor and scrutinise the proportionality of stop and searches in Kent and Medway.The next meeting of the IPAG Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is the 25 January 2016.
12. However, it should be noted that in addition to the YAG, the Commissioner continues to visit organisations, or attend meetings across the county in order to hear from young people first hand. Recent examples include:
 - The Prince's Trust on the 6 November 2015;
 - Kent Youth County Council on the 15 November 2015; and
 - Medway Youth Parliament on the 15 January 2016.

The Youth Diversion Fund:

13. The Commissioner firmly believes that once a young person is in the criminal justice system, it's very difficult for them to get out. Therefore, the Police and Crime Plan reflects a commitment to educate young people and divert them away from crime and anti-social behaviour.
14. Providing effective diversion activities for young people can reduce negative behaviour leading to fewer victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. It can also help divert young people from the criminal justice system and increase their understanding of the impact of risk taking behaviour.
15. The Youth Diversion Fund was launched to provide funding to community or voluntary organisations that support the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan in providing diversion activities for young people.
16. On behalf of the Commissioner, the fund is administered by the Safer Kent charity (formerly the Kent People's Trust) which reviews all applications to ensure they meet the following grant criteria:
 - divert young people from crime or anti-social behaviour; and/or
 - look to positively address potential risk-taking behaviours; and
 - look to engage with vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups; and
 - amount to a maximum contribution of £5,000 per annum, preferably with match-funding.
17. As in 2014, a number of groups received contributions towards their work with young people in 2015. Further detail can be found at <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/youth-diversion-fund.html>.