

18 Young people, with an equal split of males and females took part in the focus group. They were aged from 12-17 and from; Billericay, Basildon, Chelmsford, South Woodham Ferrers, Epping Forest, Loughton, Braintree, Harwich, Witham, Colchester, Wickford, and Tendring.

Rachel and Jane introduced the session and led an icebreaker with the young people. Rachel then led the young people through the various priorities and discussion around them-

- 1. The first priority is to *Ensure the police are out there when you need them. Deliver effective response and follow up all reasonable lines of enquiry***

**Q; Do you think the Police are currently there for young people when they need them?**

There was an equal divide between the yes and the no responses for this question, and the following were comments from the young people-

'In Essex we don't really know how we would talk to the Police apart from calling them. We don't know what they do in the community for youths and we don't know much about them. I think we would feel we could talk to them more if they were at Schools more, or got involved in more community things' (13yrs, Epping Forest)

'If you are out and you need to speak to a Police officer then they are not usually there and you wouldn't even know how to approach them if they were there as we would be worried about getting into trouble'. (15yrs, F, Basildon)

'They are sometimes there but could be there a little bit more. Whenever they are there, there isn't really many. (12yrs, F, Wickford)

Rachel asked if others felt that they would like to see more Police around and there were a lot of nods.

**Q; Do you think the Police take young people as seriously as when an adult calls them them? Why?**

12 young people commented in the chat that they didn't think the Police were there as much for young people. Comments were as follows-

'Some kids may ring the Police to say something serious is happening and it isn't. They are just joking around. If you had a different tone of voice then they might take you seriously. (12yrs, F, Wickford)

'Sometimes they are there if its really really serious but other times they may not believe you if you sound too jokey, but that's not because I'm young' (12yrs, M, Wickford)

'I do think with us being teenagers the Police think we are more inclined to steal' (14yrs, F, Wickford)

'I think its become a stereotype over the years that teenagers don't think right and they do things without thinking of the consequences. So if a teenager makes a 999 call the Police might think its not a big deal or taken seriously' (14yrs, m, Chelmsford)

'Some young people do take the mick and ring the Police and that may ruin it for others' (14yrs, m, Billericay)

Rachel asked what could be done so that young people are listened to more and taken more seriously.

'The Police could go into Schools so that you could have that time with them and build up relationships, and so that you could learn about things like Crimestoppers to report crimes anonymously. It all comes down to good engagement' (14yrs, m, Billericay)

'Going into schools is good but going into youth groups is important too. We had this thing at school called crucial crew which was really great as it introduced me to the Police and we were able to see them as real people to help me with issues, so extending this to youth groups or supporting young people outside of school would be good too' (15yrs, f, Loughton)

'I agree going to youth groups is a good idea. At my youth group we do have some in but its won't be for long at a time. They come in, speak about the things that are going on and then go again. If they spent time with us in small groups for longer it would be better. (15yrs, f, Basildon)

'If I knew the Police then I would call them and they would come out and I could say what happened and they would help the person who was stuck' (11yrs, m, Mistley)

'Originally people called the Police a lot but it doesn't happen now and I think the Police need to come to us in places that we might be at as things have changed. Especially as lots of local Police stations are now shut or based in busier areas and not as local. There used to even be caravans or local information stalls that came around. We miss local Policing. (14yrs, m, Billericay)

Rachel mentioned that there was a phrase that talked about hard to reach young people but that maybe we just aren't trying hard enough to reach people. There were lots of nods.

2. **The second priority is around having *More hotspot policing and monitoring of known offenders. This will hopefully prevent crime.***

Jane explained a bit of what hotspot policing is.

**Q; Do you think this will work to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime?**

All the young people though that hotspot policing was a good idea.

**Q; What anti-social behaviour and crime are young people seeing and witnessing and think should be dealt with? How do you think it should be done?**

'Catcalling is something that isn't major but it does make me feel unsafe and so is quite a big thing. I think its also is something around violence against women and girls as it's a big issue. Walking at night or even to school and getting cat called feels really unsafe. (13yrs, Epping Forest)

'There was an issue in town with people with balaclavas but in places like Romford I think that's banned. One of my daughters was in the toilets in Mcdonalds and someone came in and held a knife up. We did see Police in Town a couple of weeks ago but there does need to be more presence'  
(mum of 12yr old, f, Chelmsford)

Rachel asked if young people felt they had seen knife crime and there were a few nods.

'I think vaping needs to be dealt with more by the Police as then in schools peoples wouldn't be doing it. If there were more Police around town then they could stop teenagers from vaping' (15yrs,m, Colchester)

'Its a lot to do with substance misuse like vaping and drinking. In our youth council we ran a project where we look into the hazards. Its becoming really big issue where I live and as soon as you leave school you can see kids vaping; its very unsettling and we need to have more focus on that. (15yrs, f, Loughton)

'I am scared to go out sometimes and its not just because I'm female. Its because I live near Basildon, Southend and Chelmsford and they are unsafe all the time. Theres been so many times when people have gone past me with knives' (14yrs, f, Wickford)

'I think large crowds and gangs are an issue, especially when I finish work as there are lots in the town centre and I'm scared to walk back through there at night after work.' (15yrs, f, Basildon)

'I see a lot of hate crime towards queer children, especially in and around school and theres not a lot of support offered from the Police or anyone else. By not dealing with it then I think that's has allowed it to happen more' (17yrs, Harwich)

3. **The third priority is to take drugs and weapons off the streets and help young people get out of gangs.**

In previous listening projects we have heard that young people are worried about gangs, but the worry seems to be more because they have seen videos on social media rather than actually experiencing anything themselves.

**Q; Do you think this is a fair comment? What are your views/ experiences?**

**Q; How can we help young people to know that Essex is safe and that there is not as much violence as they perceive?**

All the young people said that this was a good priority. Some of the comments from young people were- 'I think there's drugs issues in South Woodham Ferrers because of the railway line we have quite a few county lines issues. Even people smoking and vaping early on and then spreading it to the young generation. The influence of the older youths on the younger ones is huge and because we are a small town we don't have much Police visibility. Even if the Police just walked around once a week then people would know they were out there and it would act as a deterrent. (17yrs, f, South Woodham)

Rachel commented about the amount of feedback from young people in the group highlighting that they do want to see the Police more.

'I think they should be thinking about school fights because a while ago there was a fight between two schools in my local area and people pulled knives out but where we were there weren't any police, and as a result it didnt get dealt with very efficiently' (14, f, Colchester)

'I have heard that there was a huge gang fight at southend beach and they had knives and they did videos of it say like " going to war " on tik tok (12,f,Wickford)

'Make people more aware of joint enterprise - if they didn't commit the crime they can still be convicted, that might be a deterrent' (15yrs, f, Loughton)

Jane asked how many young people had seen a knife crime and around half of the young people put their hands up. Jane then asked how many had seen drugs issues and again, around half of the group put their hands up.

'If there were more Police on the streets then people would feel safer' (15yrs, m, Colchester)

'I think the Police should be in more public areas too as last year I was in Central park by the lake and two guys who were obviously on drugs called over to me and asked me if I wanted some. I think because they feel so comfortable doing that out in the open then that shows that there aren't enough Police around. (14yrs, m, Chelmsford)

'Pretty much any alleyway you go into in Essex will have used needles, drug packets, vapes and cigarettes and they are everywhere. I haven't seen an alleyway that doesn't have one of those. Then kids pick them up- even kids outside primary schools pick up the vapes as they are colourful and look interesting. (14yrs, f, Wickford)

'In my local park when I was jogging someone was running towards me and after someone else but they had a machete! I think Police should be in local parks because of all the crimes that happen there' (15yrs,f, Basildon)

'Focusing on repeat offenders and substance abuse is a good idea because its coming to a point where we need to squash the people at the top because they are bringing it down to young people. Knife crime too is so accessible and the Police need to focus on those that are introducing it to others. (15yrs, f, Loughton)

'When people post videos it encourages younger ones to get involved' (15yrs, m, Colchester)

'Theres a book called the anxious generation that talks about how it has always been unsafe and that there's been no new danger since social media was invented but because of social media and the news we are so much more scared and anxious' (13yrs,f Epping Forest)

'Its so true about seeing all the videos on social media as in Essex we saw the violence in Southend and there was loads of footage. Even some of my friends who I thought would never be interested in all that have been asking around to see who else has got footage as they then wanted to edit it and make it into a joke or edit bits on to it from other areas that then makes it look even scarier than it was' (14yrs,m, Billericay)

Rachel asked how we could protect young people from that.

'I think the Government need to introduce more restrictions to keep us safe. At the moment anyone can lie about their age and access things that they shouldn't (14yrs,m, Billericay)

Rachel played a few scavenger hunt questions with the young people to break the session up a bit.

4. **The forth priority is to ensure people are protected** (in general and vulnerable people like women and girls from domestic abuse)  
Everyone thought that this was a good priority to have.

'If we didn't have the Police there would be so much more crime. We are safe in Essex because we have them' (15yrs, m, Colchester)

**Q; Do you think the Police currently protect people?**

'I think they are pretty good- my mum works in domestic abuse and she has a close correspondence with the police' (14yrs, f, Colchester)

**Q; If you were to rate how good you think the Police were at protecting people. (10 being good and 1 being really naff) how well do you think they do this?**

The young people voted as follows- 3, 4, 4, 5,5, 5,6,6,6.5,7,7,7, 9,

**Q; What about the Fire service, how well do you think they protect people?**

The young people voted as follows- 5, 6, 7,7.3, 8, 8,8,9, 9, 10,10,10

Rachel commented that the Fire service seemed to rate higher than the police at protecting people and asked young people why they thought this-

'I think the Fire are better at protecting because they have more equipment and could break a door down in an emergency but the Police couldn't 15yrs, m, Colchester)

'The fire services response time is better than the Police' (12yrs, f, Chelmsford)

'I don't know about anyone else but I have always been far less afraid of the Fire service, and it's a more accessible space to report crimes or things that might be making them afraid' (17yrs, Harwich)

'I've never really seen the fire service or had to experience a big bellowing smoke and I don't think many people have. This probably makes us think that the fire service are better at doing their job than the police but the Police are at those situations too.' (14yrs, m, Chelmsford)

'I don't think there are enough checks around domestic abuse as when the Police get call outs for it, abusers are really good at hiding it (14yrs, f, Wickford)

'Theres a lot of focus from the Fire service around education at a younger age about keeping safe, cooking safe, smoke alarms etc which is good for us to get to trust them' (15yrs, f, Loughton)

5. **The 5<sup>th</sup> priority** is about *tackling speeding and drink and drug driving. We want to have better tech, better education for people, and better enforcement so that road deaths are reduced to zero!*

**Q; What do you think about this priority? Is it achievable?**

**Q; If a young person was worried about someone who may be about to drive whilst on drink or drugs, what would you want the Police or fire services to do to help you?**

The young people agreed this was a good priority. Some of the comments from young people were-

'I think education of the dangers is a big one as some people don't seem to realise the dangers of drink driving' (14yrs, f, Colchester)

'We had i think an Essex safety group come in and do a performance about it, but most of my year found it funny' (17yrs, f, South Woodham Ferrers)

'I agree as the death rate has increased just by drunk driving so i personally would say if you have had a large amount of alcohol then if you are then speeding then the police should act as so many people can be injured in the process so i believe then their license should be removed' (12yrs, f, Wickford)

'I do think police sometimes assume if people are drink driving by the way they are driving and because of the high rate and things like speeds bumps on the road or reducing the speed limit say from 40 to 30 mph to ensure full safety including pedestrians would be good' (12yrs, m, Wickford)

'As the Police use more technology and stingers etc then people will learn not to drink drive' (14yrs, m, Colchester)

'I think the roads have got safer due to lots of partnership work, but what is bad is the amount of people driving fast down rural roads. Even roads that just have a little bend in, people don't slow down for it. Someone died on a motorbike near me the other day because he didn't slow down on the bend. Roads like this and farm roads aren't looked at as much and they should be as people should slow down' (14yrs, m, Billericay)

'It's a hard target to have but if Police can use the tech to stop drunk drivers before they cause an accident then it could be achievable. We also need more education about making other drivers aware of the importance of reporting it as soon as they spot it' (17yrs, South Woodham Ferrers)

'There not a lot of Police in my areas but check points for drivers would be really useful to stop drunk drivers' (15yrs,f, Loughton)

6. **The final priority is about promoting a positive culture and developing the workforce in the Police and Fire services**

**Q; Do you think young people want to join the Police as a career?**

The majority of young people said they would not want a career as a Police officer.

**Q; Do you think young people want to join the Fire service as a career?**

A couple of young people said they would consider a career in the Fire service.

Rachel asked why young people mostly answered no to careers in the Police and Fire services and young peoples comments were-

'Its too dangerous' (12yrs, f, Chelmsford)

'I think more young people would prefer to be a Police officer than in the fire service as the Police have more issues to get involved with and try to help with' (14yrs, m, Billericay)

'They need to advertise it more and tell us what its like' (15yrs, m. Colchester)

'They should advertise some behind the scenes parts of the job because people just look at the worst crimes and fires that happen and think that its dangerous all the time. If they showed other bots they could see how rewarding other parts of the job are too and it may attract other people' (17yrs,f, South woodham Ferrers)

'People always think Police and Fire are about the big stuff but there's other parts too like noise complaints and less violent aspects of the jobs that may encourage more people to think about it as a career (14yrs,m, Chelmsford)

'I've seen people say they are getting involved in the riots because the Police don't do enough. I think in Southend it took the Police 4hrs to detain people' (14yrs,f Wickford)

**Q; How can we get more young people interested in these jobs or promote the Police and Fire better to young people?**

Thank you so much for your time. EVERYTHING you have said and shared will be listened to and used to help us improve our services.

**Q; Does anyone have any other comments about the Police or Fire services that you think we should hear?**

'police in my opinion naturally assume that teens have done something wrong, therefore creating more of a uncertainty towards them. I have been stopped multiple times for a suspicion of stealing and carrying drugs, when i wasn't carrying either ' (17yrs,f, South Woodham Ferrers)

George asked us to make sure that we get back to everyone with what has happened as a result of their views and Rachel assured that this would happen.

Jane thanked everyone for their views and insight and highlighted how useful they have been and will be in going forward with their plans.

Rachel thank everyone for coming and said that she would be in touch soon about participation vouchers and to let them know about any developments.