



investing in children

Community Safety Report – Overview

County Durham and Darlington Police Authority helped commission this report on Community Safety in County Durham. We used various methods to complete this project these were:

- Agenda Days, two were held in Darlington Dolphin Centre
- Visits to venues used by young people with one on one conversations with young people
- Interviews with various groups of young people
- Interviews with the Police
- Interview with the Newton Aycliffe Town Manager
- Questionnaires written and filled in by young people
- Researched information and found statistics based on anti-social behaviour

Whilst doing our project we took into consideration all the evidence from our research, which we have tried to include in all the sections that explain our views about young people and the media, the Police and community safety. We have tried to bring in things that are happening on these topics in other places around the country and what we might learn from them. To help with our work on young people's attitudes to community safety issues we invited Graham McArdle, an Anti-social Behaviour Officer from Durham Community Safety Office to talk about his work.

All the information we have is first hand, not second hand. We personally gathered information brought up in Agenda Days and questionnaires produced by members of the Community Safety Group.

We have held Agenda Days with different County's and given out questionnaires in local Youth Centres and the following conclusions were made:

- It is time to change negative attitudes between young people and the Police - look at ways of improving this. An interesting finding from the questionnaires

were we discovered that 36% of young people believe it's unfair that the Police have the right to move young people on when in a group of two or three people, they should have the right to go out with more than one or two people.

- The media's attitudes, approach and actions concerning young people needed to be challenged. People believe the biased views they read. We have become aware of how young people are presented in the media, they represent young people as problems and criminals with no articles on young people achieving awards or doing something good for the community. 71% of the stories are negative and one in three focus on crime. Most descriptions referring to young people in the media are: evil, monsters, brutes, scum, menace, heartless, sick, inhuman and yobs.

Young people have views about the world we all live in and have as much right as anyone else to express these views, and to have the opportunity to do that:

- Show young people more respect
- Stop overstating the case of young people's involvement in crime – only a small majority of young people commit crime, stop demonising youth
- Start POSITIVE campaigns to improve facilities and resources for young people in local communities – don't wait for tragedies to happen before doing something
- When young people don't leave the house they are categorised as obese, but when they do leave the house and socialise, due to no definite perception in the law defining anti-social behaviour, members of the community pin point big groups of young adults that may be 'hanging around' together having harmless fun.

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