AN EVALUATION OF THE POSITIVE FUTURES PROJECT

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Project and Its Initiation

'Positive Futures' is a project that was designed to develop engagement and trust between young people and the police. This was to be achieved through empowering young people to develop and deliver strategies and interventions to prevent low level crime and disorder in the communities in which they live. The project originally aimed to test two broad hypotheses: (1) that engaging the community and young people to identify and then proactively solve problems will lead to sustained, efficient, and effective solutions and (2) that properly understanding, listening, and reacting to what young people tell the police will positively impact upon their perceptions of the police in both the short and long term.

The project evolved from discussions between a local Surrey resident and former Chair of Neighbourhood Watch, the (then) Chief Constable of Surrey Police, and the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police. Inspiration for the project came from the outcome of the research that NTU placed for Neighbourhood Watch which measured the impact of schemes on a variety of crime types (minimal/2019) coupled to a study of where schemes were in the UK and declining trends over time. In addition, observations of the spontaneous and proactive community activity that was generated in the first months of the COVID pandemic and, as the project developed, it drew on existing police problem-solving models and criminological theory and concepts (such as broken windows theory and the problem analysis triangle).

The project aimed to engage cohorts of young people (broadly aged between 11 and 15 years old) living in different communities in the county of Surrey where there were thought to be issues related to trust in the police and low-level crime problems. Local schools, the police service, youth clubs and other organisations would communicate with young people, enabling them to analyse problems and devise solutions to them.

The intention was that a project lead, from the police or local community, would work with the young people to identify the local issues about which they were most concerned. Priority problems would be identified and agreed via holding a workshop or similar event involving the young people, the neighbourhood policing team, and other local organisations. The young people would then work together with relevant organisations to devise solutions to the problems and, in turn, consideration would be given to their implementation by local agencies and organisations. The more specific details of the implementation of the project were left to the local partners to agree, and the project was delivered in different ways, which will be highlighted in this report. The

project was piloted in two secondary schools in Sunbury-on-Thames ('Sunbury') and one in Woking, and at a drop-in youth club in Tadworth.

2.0 Research Design and Methodology

The University of Surrey was contracted to produce an evaluation of the pilot projects.

2.1 Research Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- To understand the primary outputs of the project, any problems with its implementation and participants' views of the barriers and facilitators to its delivery.
- To understand who gets involved in the project and why.
- To identify whether the necessary business change can be achieved at an operational level; how the process can be refined; and what local conditions/characteristics might be needed to be in place to give the programme the best chance of success if it is rolled out more widely.
- To inform decisions regarding the roll-out of the programme by assessing the extent to which further investment is justified and helping to target that investment appropriately.
- To document and analyse the development and actual implementation of the projects.
- To assess whether the projects were implemented as planned and whether expected outputs were delivered on time.
- To assess the impact of the project on the perceptions of the young people who participated.

Evaluating the project involved obtaining information about how the project was implemented, run and perceived by different stakeholders. This was achieved through interviews with two groups of people who were involved in the design and implementation of the project – Group One: "Stakeholders" – people with oversight or

management experience of the project, such as senior representatives of police services and schools who funded the project and oversaw its delivery along with the practitioners (people who delivered the project with the young people, such as police officers, teachers and youth workers) and Group Two: “Young people” – aged between 11-15 who participated in the project. In total, 14 young people engaged with interviews or focus groups for this research along with 27 interviews with those from the stakeholder group.

2.2 Structure of the Report

What follows considers the project and how it was initiated; the research design and its implementation; the results of the pilots focusing on project structure and operation; an assessment of the organisation and delivery of the pilots; and the background, engagement and perceptions of the young people who participated in it.

3.0 Pilot Structure and Operation

The project went through several design iterations in the run up to its original delivery in Sunbury. Preparation focused on producing workbooks to structure the delivery of the project. A workbook for participants was developed following a structure that resembled the 'OSARA' model. OSARA is well-used in policing and community safety work to structure the process of identifying and responding to community problems. It stands for: **O**bjective (what is hoped to be achieved); **S**canning (what the problem is); **A**nalysis (why problems occur and reoccur); **R**esponse (the plans to address the issues); and **A**ssessment (whether they worked or not). Workbooks were created to be digestible and engaging for use by young people. Four sessions were designed for Sunbury and ended with a celebration evening, broadly as follows:

Table 1: Broad structure of the initial Sunbury pilot

'Scanning'	Session 1	• Introductions, icebreakers, and games. • Input into how the police deal with antisocial behaviour. • Tours of places that might be problematic in the local area, accompanied by designing out

		crime officers.
'Analysis'	Session 2	• Reflection on the locations, the issues that were discovered there and what the potential causes of those issues were. • More detailed analysis of the problems that had been identified, making reference to criminological theory.
'Response'	Session 3	• Input into how the police design responses to problems. • Young people were invited to consider responses to the identified problems in more detail using the problem analysis triangle. • Discussions about the proposed solutions which were ultimately agreed by the groups.
'Assessment'	Session 4	• A 'Presentation Panel', where participants presented their work to several local stakeholders such as business leaders, representatives from the council and charities. • Participants were invited to set out their ideas for solutions to local problems and to try to engender support for delivering them. • Informal networking time was also facilitated.

	Celebration evening	• Where young people presented their work and received certificates for finishing the project.

The format of the Woking pilot was similar to that in Sunbury while the one in Tadworth followed the initial Sunbury model but did not in the end, for a variety of reasons, include presentations by the young people nor a celebration evening. The projects differed slightly in respect to other aspects of their operation too. In the Sunbury pilot three very specific local areas were pre-selected by the police service ('Scanning'). The young people were asked to select which of the three they would like to concentrate on. The Woking pilot made greater use of surveys designed and delivered by Surrey Police to orient the decision making of young people. These survey data, and other data, provided a starting point to where interventions might be started. In Tadworth, young people informed the youth workers about issues they felt needed to be tackled via conversations in an informal setting. The Sunbury pilot operated on 4 consecutive weeks (plus the celebration evening). In Woking the sessions were more spread out, while in Tadworth the

project developed on a weekly basis. In Sunbury the sessions were largely completed in the school day, in Woking the sessions were partly completed in school time and partly outside of it and in Tadworth this occurred outside of school hours on a Friday evening when the MYTI youth club was open. In Woking small incentives were offered to the young people to encourage participation (such as vouchers for the cinema or clothing) which were not offered in Sunbury nor Tadworth.

In Sunbury, 12 young people (six in both schools) were selected to participate, while 13 originally took part in Woking and 12 in Tadworth. As mentioned above, in Sunbury the young people were presented with three local locations on which to apply the OSARA process. These were an underpass, a skate park, and a shopping centre. The groups from both schools picked the same place – an under path in the Sunbury area. In Woking a local park was selected by the group for attention, following the results of the survey, while in Tadworth a nearby park was cited as something that needed to be improved. The problems raised by the young people about their local parks were similar in Woking and Tadworth – better signage, improved lighting, the need for defensive planting and additional bins. Following the process described above, groups worked to understand the problems and design solutions to them. A strong emphasis on designing out problems was evident in all three pilots and summarised below:

Table 2: selected problems and proposed responses to them

Sunbury (Group 1)	Underpass	• Cleaning of the underpass. • Rework of artwork. • Protection of renewed artwork.
Sunbury (Group 2)	Underpass	• Better lighting. • Mirrors. • CCTV, with overt and covert cameras.
Woking	Local park	• Defensive planting round the outskirts of the field to prevent people from breaking the fences and getting into the park when

		it was closed. • Clear signage (boundaries, rules, timings, dogs). • Additional and replacement bins. • Benches.
Tadworth	Local park	• Better signage • Additional bins • Defensive planting • Improved lighting • Address the issues surrounding the use of a hut

Further consideration of how the pilots unfolded in practice is provided in the sections below which focuses on the organisation and delivery of the pilots.

4.0 Results

4.1 The Positive Futures Concept

The ideas and principles behind the Positive Futures concept, outlined in section 1.1 above, were widely supported by those interviewed. Stakeholders felt that its underlying 'community involvement' ethos was laudable and its aims and objectives deliverable, as one stakeholder stated:

> *It was a brilliant idea. And to be honest, we all bought into it and it is executable, it is deliverable. It's really nice on paper and it could be a tool in future where we are connecting with the communities.*

Another stakeholder, a police officer, felt that the project was a good way of instigating more proactive community involvement in the solving of local problems:

> *I think the concept is fantastic, I think this whole idea of actually reintroducing the prospect of these people taking ownership and actually, "Let's resolve it together", instead of getting outside agencies who're ultimately not required. So it's taking ownership to improve their lives, instead of passing the buck per se which is, from a policing point of view, basically what I see day in, day out: "It's not my problem, somebody else sort it out for me".*

For another stakeholder, key to the concept was the idea that young people could get involved in addressing local community crime and nuisance issues, making them feel as though they've been listened to by police officers and therefore building some bridges between them:

> *The concept is great. I think when it comes to policing and problems in the local area, especially in our estate, you need the community involved … I think we do need to bridge the gap between the police and young people. I think if they can see their ideas being put forward and then being acted upon, it's only going to make them realise that their voice is listened to because at the moment they feel*

like it's not. If kids feel listened to, you get a better response from them, you get that relationship.

A key aspect of bringing the concept alive was the selection of the three pilot areas, with much consideration given to this and which criteria they should be chosen under, as this stakeholder outlines:

The criteria started with some definition around economically challenged, difficult communities for the police to engage people in… I would say that the people who lived on those estates neither loved nor hated the police but would typically get on the phone the moment there was a low-level crime problem and expect them to come in and solve it.

Number two, the communities thus defined needed to have a school that we could then go to tell them about the project and then say, "You are the vehicle for us to engage the young people." So that was the second criteria. The third is that it was going to be small enough to be measurable, so that you could kind of put your arms around it.

And I think the final one that's worth mentioning is that Surrey Police felt that they had the means to be able to support the programme wherever we wanted it. So, there was a neighbourhood police officer in that area who also liked it, got it and would be available to help if we needed it.

Overall, it was felt that the three areas picked in the three towns – Sunbury, Woking and Tadworth

– had been sound choices, as one stakeholder mentioned:

We definitely picked the right community areas. It would have been very easy to pick 'soft Surrey' and 30 kids all want to take part and 35 end up staying the course because most just joined the game. That wasn't the plan. The plan was to go to these harder to reach communities or whatever term you want to give them. So I think all of that's gone really well.

4.2 Assessment of the Organisation and Delivery of the Pilots

4.2.1 Development of the Pilots

A great deal of work went into the design of the sessions and associated documentation, following the broad principles on which the project had been conceived, with the structure linked to the aforementioned OSARA process.

However, generating the materials for delivering the project in schools presented certain challenges. Police stakeholders made clear that designing and ultimately delivering lesson plans

was time consuming. This was partly because of a lack of familiarity with teaching in a school context, as one stakeholder put it: "I'm not a teacher, I'm not used to working with young people".

More specifically, consideration had to be given to the language used in the OSARA model, which is strongly associated with police work, and whether this was suitable for young people. Hence, the formal language of OSARA and police problem solving was modified for its use with young people. Overall, though, stakeholders agreed that that broad process could be adapted for and used with young people, as one stakeholder stated: "Actually it turned out that we could adapt what we used for adults for young people to use".

Whilst time-consuming to develop, stakeholders agreed that once the documentation was available it could be reproduced, albeit with some modification, in different schools. As one stakeholder put it: "We do have some infrastructure in place now, in terms of planning, session, workbooks for the children, PowerPoints etc" and for another: "We didn't need to start completely from scratch. So yes, I guess don't feel like you have to reinvent the wheel, you can use the tools and things that are already in place, it's just a case of adapting them".

4.2.2 Commitment and Workloads

In Sunbury and Woking the pilots were police led and delivered via schools with other partners involved, while in Tadworth the pilot was led by community youth workers via a drop-in youth club. Stakeholders, from the perspective of the police, schools and youth club, tended to report that the delivery of the project was labour intensive. From the perspective of the police service, the delivery of the project was time consuming and might be difficult to scale out. For this stakeholder: "I think one of the things that will be interesting for us to discuss, let's assume we've done two or three pilots in Surrey, is how do we scale this so that it is not a drain on police time but is a very efficient thing for them to be able to manage", while another stakeholder mentioned:

I would see how much I could scale the work down by, because I was

> *fortunate in that my bosses gave me a lot of time to devote to this project. That wouldn't be viable on an ongoing basis, and police officers certainly, and that team just wouldn't have the time to be devoting that much resource on every iteration.*

Stakeholders from the schools made similar observations. Whilst positive about the project, the required administration was seen as fairly onerous both in terms of paperwork and organising time and space in the school day. Those involved in the youth drop-in centre project made similar comments:

> *Any work that we did towards* [Positive Futures] *would come out of our own time. I think that's where it got a little bit hard. But it was nothing that couldn't have been sorted through. It still worked and it's worth all the extra effort that went into it and all the extra time.*
>
> *If you've got a school, the teachers could probably carve it out in their day. If you're aiming at a similar setting to this, then it probably needs to be a paid role.*

Stakeholders from the schools suggested that material that they needed to engage with young people and their carers was delivered quite late and that there was a lot of paperwork that needed to be completed. In addition, space needed to be found in the school which was another organisational task that needed to be completed.

Concerns were also raised about labour intensity given the relatively small number of young people that were involved in the project. For one police stakeholder: "I think it has changed their perceptions of policing, but it is a very small group, to do that with, and it's really labour intensive to achieve that". For another school-based stakeholder: "I mean you also have to imagine that we've got one thousand students here and it just had an impact on four to six of them, a direct impact on a really small number".

Some of the young people involved were also less than positive about the amount of time and effort needed to participate, as two noted:

> *At some points, it did get a bit tiring where week after week … it was long at some points because it was just the same thing and same thing.*
>
> *At one point, it was quite boring because every Tuesday after school, during school, and we needed to stay after school as well. So, you just want to go home after a long day.*

Taken together, concerns about the labour-intensive nature of the project led to questions being asked about sustainability and, in short, whether the time invested was going to generate worthwhile returns.

4.2.3 Role of Agencies and Issues with Bureaucracy

A number of stakeholders identified issues with multi-agency partnership working, including its laborious nature; the slow functioning of partnerships, and the issue of having to deal with layers of bureaucracy even for the smallest of issues, as one stakeholder highlighted: “There’s bureaucracy out there, even for the smallest of things like painting underpasses, that just drives you nuts”. Another noted the painstaking nature of much of the partnership working:

If we could keep going with Positive Futures, I could only see that it could get better and better and better, but it needs to be drilled down so we have less people having meetings and having input once everybody knows each other. It should have been an easier thing to in the early stages of everyone getting to know who's who and who's involved. That's been a bit laborious.

Another stakeholder noted, with some frustration, the seemingly inevitable delays to project implementation that were apparently caused by involving many organisations in the projects:

Just getting things going on the other side of the project has taken so long and I've been in e-mail chains even I think it was two or three months ago where it was said, you know, we're still trying to get the underpass painted, but it's going to cost a lot of money and we think well, it's been was it 2-3 years now and we're still in, it feels like the same position. I know everybody has been working on it.
It's nobody's fault in particular.

Such delays caused issues with achieving the project's overall aims, as one stakeholder stated:

We just really wanted the community to have ownership over the solutions, the solutions just didn't quite materialise in the way we were hoping them to and the sort of timescale we were hoping to.

For a further stakeholder, it was the uncollegiate way that some partners worked within the multi-agency setting that was causing issues:

Unfortunately, as we've probably found a couple of times in this project, there are others that don't grasp what partnership working is, what problem solving actually means, and sometimes you have to look beyond the obvious and that happens in a lot of public organisations and private organisations. They solve their own problem and actually create 10 more for other people.

4.2.4 Funding

Funding for new projects is very often a problem for the delivery and implementation of pilot projects, but for this one, unusually, funding was not a problem. This was largely the result of voluntary donations that had facilitated the delivery of aspects of the pilots. Because this funding situation was seen as unusual,

concerns were expressed by some stakeholders that if these sources of funds were not available it could be difficult to reproduce the pilots and thus to sustain such initiatives over time, as one stakeholder put it: “If we are looking at doing some of this in the future, [named individual’s] money won’t be behind it, so what will that look like?”. However, other stakeholders were more positive that funding could become available, and that the issue of funding was more linked to being able to locate and apply for it than it not being available at

all. As one explained: "I don't think there is an issue that is so insurmountable that would stop us in our track right now. I definitely don't think it's funding at all because … clearly the higher up the mountain we go, the more money there is".

Other issues related to funding, or more broadly, allocation of resources to implement the solutions identified by the young people, were noted by participants. Whilst funding might have been available to facilitate the delivery of the project and certain specific interventions, others might well have been costly or otherwise hard to deliver. Many of the suggestions regarding the solutions that were made by young people would have required a degree of funding but also the commitment of local agencies who would need to implement them or facilitate their delivery in practice. This has clearly been a challenge as the practitioners involved in the delivery of the pilots might not have been able to access the necessary mechanisms within local government that they needed to. One stakeholder explained: "The work with the young people is finished to a certain extent, but it hasn't [been completed], because now [named person] and I have got to have meetings with all the stakeholders for the field to make sure that everyone is happy and on board with what we're doing. Then we then have to get the money". As another stakeholder put it: "We haven't been able to actually implement the solutions yet, because we're having a bit of a red tape situation with the councils…", and for another:

> *I think the biggest blockers have been not the process itself, but … you suddenly land in this world where the kids are coming up with really, really good ideas, and stuff that isn't hugely expensive, but you come into this big world of public service bureaucracy where it gets rather confusing!*

Ultimately, not getting this kind of wider support is potentially risky since, as one stakeholder stated: "There is a danger that it will never happen, and as you say you know the impact of that is it loses credibility because then people think, 'Yeah, well that was good as a talking shop, and nothing changed'". Indeed, many of the solutions identified by the young people, whether funded at all, would have had to rely on decisions made by other organisations and agencies, with support not being guaranteed.

Linked to this, and compounding problems regarding implementing the solutions

suggested by young people, some of the officers and staff delivering the pilots in schools may not have had experience of project management and how to secure community support. As one stakeholder put it: “Coming towards the end of the project when we were then having to actually start putting things in place, that was when it was starting to get very stressful, because we were then having to tie down people within the community to commit”.

Issues regarding funding and resources also links more generally to matters related to the engagement of wider partners, discussed below.

4.2.5 Engagement with Partners and the Wider Community

Stakeholders generally agreed that having more systematic engagement with wider organisations and other partners would be beneficial to the overall operation of the projects. This would be because, whilst young people might come up with ideas for solutions to community problems, they may well need to be delivered by a different organisation or agency, even if funding were to be available as discussed above.

However, more broadly, stakeholders suggested that wider partners might not want to be involved in pilots such as these, because of competing priorities and staff having the time to engage. As one stakeholder stated: "So, you have got those kind of typical blockers that are a little bit political, a little bit typical working in public service and partnership, that people have got different priorities". It therefore is important to secure the engagement of those who can help to deliver projects early on in their development.

Stakeholders drew attention to how engagement and involvement by the wider community was also likely to be important for the long-term future of the project. Two of the pilots were police led and delivered in schools. As noted previously, concerns were raised by some stakeholders that this model might not be sustainable in the long term because of the resource implications. Accordingly, it was suggested that greater community ownership would be needed to facilitate long term sustainability of the project, as one stakeholder asserted:

> *I think one of the key things we're going to have to wrap our mind around is who owns this and if it's the police and they want to own it, but they want to devolve it within the communities, how do we make that so easy for them, so that it just doesn't become a burden but an absolute enabler. I think that's a good discussion, I don't think that's a problem.*

More generally ownership by the community was considered important for making decisions about allocating resources. As one stakeholder explained:

I think having the community actively involved in that process and potentially ideally young people very much involved in choosing what's going in there and feeling like it's part of the community and they have a say in it, I think that will dictate whether or not it does last.

Again, this links again to sustainability and making sure that the solutions identified by young people can be delivered in practice.

4.3 Delivery of the Sessions with Young People

The stakeholders identified several issues regarding engagement with young people and the delivery of the sessions, including logistics of delivery, design, timing, location and conduct of sessions, as well as panel sessions.

4.3.1 Logistics of Delivery

Logistically the project has been somewhat complex to deliver. Taken together, the project involved three schools and a youth club, many venues, and liaison with multiple individuals which required considerable organisational and administrative input. Moving the children to different venues, whilst adding to the value of the project, also added to its complexity. Strongly linked to this, issues regarding administrative procedures were noted. In Sunbury and Woking, other than the delivery of the sessions which was mostly police-led, day-to-day administrative tasks in respect to the young people generally fell to the schools. However, the teachers were not especially well versed in the details of project – which of course was unfamiliar to them – and not always able to answer the questions posed by young people. As one stakeholder stated: "I think because we didn't know that when the kids were asking us those questions, we just had to go, we're not entirely sure but it's going to be great, off you go, have a great time and you're going to be with the police and you're going to be doing this, that and the other. We had to chivvy them along like that because we couldn't answer their questions". A key issue that held back progress in Tadworth was the illness of one of the key people involved, which impacted upon the management of the pilot, the resources available and its schedule.

4.3.2 Timing

The timing of the sessions was considered by stakeholders to be important,

especially as, for those projects based in schools, the project needed to fit around the academic day and the young people might get tired or otherwise become disengaged. Stakeholders drew attention to the importance of thinking about breaks and lunch times and the best time to finish. The two school-based pilots had slightly different approaches to timing. Sunbury broadly delivered the project between 13:00 and 16:00 hours one day a week. Woking delivering one hour at the end of the day and one hour after each week. This links also to the year group and what the young people might

be missing from their schoolwork. In Tadworth, the project was delivered during the three-hour window (4.15pm-7.15pm) in which the youth club was open on a Friday evening.

4.3.3 Location

For the pilots based in schools, there was also the suggestion from stakeholders that young people might have been better engaged in the classroom than outside of it. Early indications suggest that that this is because the young people are more familiar with this format – a result of their usual classroom-based work. Likewise, the young people seemed more likely, or at least more confident to, engage with the workbook material in the classroom.

For the stakeholders involved in facilitating the project at the drop-in youth club, finding the time to dedicate to the project each Friday (when the club was open) and being able to work with the same young people each week on the project, were clearly significant hurdles, as one stakeholder noted:

> *We get called out constantly. We have issues every Friday. There's never a session that goes by that we aren't involved in something. So, we couldn't sit and just dedicate the whole four hours on a Friday to this project and because we run on a drop-in service, we could have all the good intentions, put all the planning in place to do all of this X, Y, Z. On that Friday, none of the kids that we need are in. So, then you can't do anything.*

Another stakeholder at the same venue highlighted similar issues:

> *I'd say the challenges from it were nothing to do with the project itself, but just to do with us as a setting. It just might not have gelled very well with the fact that we're a drop-in, the same kids don't come in every day.*

For a stakeholder involved in a schools-based project one of the most significant problems related to booking rooms for the project while making sure that the key individuals involved were going to attend:

> *Logistically this was by far the most challenging aspect, making sure each space was booked and paid for, making sure people who are going to be*

there were going to be there.

4.3.4 Conduct

Stakeholders discussed the importance of keeping young people alert and engaged in the project sessions while being mindful of the time of day and that the children may already have had a

number of lessons in school. They suggested that a mixture of the formal project work and games and icebreakers was desirable to maintain momentum, as one stakeholder explained:

> *When we were doing the lesson plans, the tactics we had to use, we had to be mindful that they'd already been at school learning. So we then had to change the style and the way that we were doing stuff with them to keep them enraptured. So when we were having heavy sessions we would break the sessions up by incorporating games. We introduced a game at the first session to get the kids all communicating and talking with each other. Then we'd start doing some of the work. Then when you started seeing them tapering off slightly, we would then stop the training and we then introduced another game where we'd get them out of their seats, we'd mix them up a little bit. And that seemed to work quite well. They mixed, they engaged, they were laughing. They were very communicative.*

4.3.5 Panel Sessions/Communication

The panel sessions seem to have been something of a highlight of the two projects in which they occurred, certainly from the perspective of the young people who clearly found them rewarding (see later sections). However, stakeholders noted certain issues regarding the operation of these sessions. Reflecting the points about partnership working made above, it was suggested that greater involvement from those individuals who participated in the panel was helpful, especially in terms of implementing responses, raising awareness of the project, and facilitating community ownership of the project. There seems to have been a lack of clarity about what those who attended the panels would actually do, which might have been the result of limited communication, with one stakeholder stating:

> *Communication was a bit patchy throughout, so it's probably a combination of not fully understanding what the project is or that it is now their role to implement the remainder of it, and also… staffing pressures, which means that they don't really have the time to explore, at this stage, how they can help us.*

This links to not over-promising what the project is likely to deliver which may leave young people disillusioned (see later sections). There may be very good reasons

for why the solutions suggested by young people can’t be delivered – unexpected events, costs – but it is important that these are clearly communicated to them.

4.4 Background of Young People, Project Engagement and Perceptions of Outcomes

4.4.1 Background of Young People and Reasons for Engagement

As discussed above, the suggestion in the early stages of the project's development was that the children selected should be on the cusp of engaging in antisocial behaviour and/or interested in tackling community problems. It seems that the children selected to participate on the project had slightly different backgrounds, with some studying hard with the aim of going to university. This links to how the children were selected for the projects. Speaking generally across the three projects, children were selected because they showed an interest in being involved. Drawing on interviews with the young people, overall, their original attitudes towards the police were somewhat neutral. The young people typically had little experience of engaging with the police before working on the project. However, through social media especially, some may have developed negative opinions towards the service. One young person explained that "Well, sometimes I just like looking around and stuff. I don't have any opinion on the police, but what I see on social media, I just don't like the police".

Whilst the young people had not generally had bad personal experiences with the police, they suggested that the presence of police officers could make them nervous, as one young person explained: "The police are solving stuff, so they're good but when you see them, you think that something scary has happened". This was reflected by a police officer, who felt that the issue of who the police were and what they represented in the eyes of some created a barrier at the beginning of the project:

> *We are blocked by our uniform, blocked by our job … we had to reassure parents or carers that actually this isn't a trick, we're not here because we're trying to get your children into trouble, we're actually trying to do a project.*

Interviews with both the stakeholders and young people suggested that that there were several reasons why young people got involved. These were oriented around

a genuine interest in community safety, wanting to see improvements in their community and, in the case of some, an interest in developing their CV. As one stakeholder put it:

> *I think a large portion of them did want to see an improvement in the local area, I think some of the older students have done it with a view of future careers and future life posts, some have done it for the experience and adding to their CV, I suppose, in terms of supporting and working with the community. I would say, probably the rest are doing it in a sense of improvement in the community.*

Young people from across the three areas reflected this viewpoint, including the following:

> *Our form tutor last year said, "Oh, there's a thing about improving the local area," and immediately me and two of the other people said to each other, "Oh, that would be pretty fun." We thought we might be able to do something with Sheerwater Park and then yeah, we all signed up.*

> *I thought it would be very fun and to do with problem solving, and, yeah, we'd solve stuff.*

One young person outlined another, more functional reason for signing up:

> *I first heard about it when I think* [my teacher] *was coming down with a piece of paper to volunteer. He explained a brief summary. All I kind of picked up was the lesson time, you get out of lessons. So I thought 'okay'. Well, I was kind of interested anyway and I wasn't really going to sign up if I thought it would be boring.*

4.4.2 Levels of Engagement

Across the three areas, stakeholders generally felt that levels of engagement from the young people were actually pretty high, both in terms of the amount of effort they put into the projects and the length of time that they remained committed to participating, as the three quotes from three different stakeholders below exemplify:

> *The young people engaged quite extensively with the materials that we provided to them and displayed quite a range and depth of independent thought in how they thought about the problems in the areas.*

> *We signed a lot on. They're probably our hardest working kids who've had the biggest influence within the community as well by selling this project. So once they signed up, they actually put 100% effort in and did so much work. And this was a massive range within the diverse community we had in there, which was brilliant.*

> *I think what's gone really well is the engagement of the young kids, both in terms of their willingness to want to get involved and the retention. Like staying on the course throughout the frustrations, that's been great.*

However, for some young people the amount of time they had to dedicate to the

projects, and especially the timing of the sessions when they were asked to participate, did cause some problems with their schoolwork and progress, as the three different young people outline below:

> *I have RS* [Religious Studies] *once every fortnight and I was missing it because of the police thing, and I feel like it did affect my RS result.*

But maybe probably more younger years because it has affected a bit of my GCSEs.

All my lessons, [...] take you out of lessons was during my art lessons. So, I was a bit pissed. Sometimes I always missed them because [....] to do my art lesson, because I'm missing out in art and I'm like behind everybody.

This is an issue that may need to be addressed for any future iterations of the project.

4.5 Perceptions of Outcomes

It is not possible to state definitively whether the project overall was successful in meeting its broad aims of reducing antisocial behaviour and improving confidence in the police. It's also worth noting that the evaluation drew on the viewpoint of a relatively small number of stakeholders and the young people who participated. Having said that, we can still draw some useful conclusions from the work undertaken. For example, across the three areas it was generally agreed that the project had positively impacted on the young people who participated. As one stakeholder put it: "I believe this was a successful trial as well. I think it went down really, really well" while for another: "It was a good one and something that I think you guys should keep going with, definitely", and for a further stakeholder:

I can't comment on how successful the outcomes will be in terms of reducing crime or how successful it's going to be in terms of increasing the perception of policing, because we don't really have any data on either, but certainly from my understanding of the effect it's had on the young people, I think that's been very positive feedback.

Likewise, the young people explained that participating in the project had been positive overall, as one outlined: "It was a good experience and I enjoyed it a lot, yeah".

The accounts of young people and stakeholders provide further detail about what made the project a positive experience for young people. Key themes mentioned include satisfaction with making a difference; building stronger communities; having a better understanding of the local community; breaking down barriers with the police; having a voice and being listened to; playing a role in identifying problems

and in the allocation of resources; personal development of the young people, and managing their expectations.

4.5.1 Satisfaction with Making a Difference

Young people gained satisfaction from seeing that they were contributing to improve safety in the local community. As one young participant explained: “It was all quite fun. I think there is a self-satisfaction you get from helping out the community really, and if you want to live here for the rest of your life and you want your kids to grow up here, then you can always look back and reflect on all the impacts you've done on the community”. Another young person echoed these sentiments:

> *Being involved with this project has encouraged me to think more about where I live and helping be a part of making good changes. I am excited to see my ideas come to life.*

4.5.2 Building Stronger Communities

Young people indicated that they had gained a better understanding of their communities and the complexities that organisations had to deal with to solve local problems. For one young participant: “I changed a little bit because I understood how difficult it is to change something in a park”.

For one stakeholder, a key aspect of Positive Futures had been the broader, community-wide implications of the young people becoming involved in a project like this:

> *When you've got the lady walking down the shop to get her eggs, she sees the children that she might have seen last week breaking the bus shelter. Now all of a sudden, they're out there with a community officer, now picking up rubbish and repairing things. That might give her new positive light on children, and she might actually speak to those children and say good morning or hello when she's walking down the road, and then that child also then sees someone that might have shouted at them in a positive light, and that's building a relationship*

Another stakeholder echoed these sentiments, outlining how trust within communities can be enhanced via such initiatives:

It's not about just the kids. It's building up the parents' relationship with the community, building up their trust back. It just creates a much more positive environment for the kids to be able to grow up and feel like they have trusted people. It's not just them against the world. They have people that they can go to.

4.5.3 Breaking Down Barriers with the Police

Further to the sentiment immediately above, there was a broad feeling among stakeholders that even if the goals of the projects weren't met there were still useful aspects to them, including the positive effects that engaging in the projects and working with the police had on the young people concerned and their relationship with the service. As one stakeholder mentioned:

> *Building the relationship with the police, building it up, building up a relationship with the community, I do think that they found that bit of it positive. Even though the end outcome wasn't achieved, it was still a good experience for them to go through.*

Another stakeholder, a police officer, highlighted how involvement with the project had helped to reduce tensions and suspicions between some communities, who many have been traditionally wary of the police, and the police themselves, building trust that may not have been there before:

> *Even with their mates or family, they'll come over and talk to us when we're in uniform and because of that, trust is being built. The influence we had on these young people it really was effective because you know these lads, young Muslim males who if they're seen speaking to the police, are "grasses", you know, you can't speak to the feds on the street and put their own reputation on the line and their own safety, they could become a target. But that was just literally squashed by that* [the project] *and they come to speak to us, they say 'hi'.*

There was also a suggestion that participating in the project improved feelings of safety for young people in their local area, as one put it:

> *Yeah, and after interacting with the local police, it's good to know your locals and obviously the people and the council or the government has entrusted to take care of you and protect you, and I feel like it's given me a sense of more safeness because at least I know my local police officer if there was anything to happen to me, I know who would turn up.*

4.5.4 Having a Voice and Being Listened To

The project offered an opportunity to hear from young people whose voices can be hard to reach. Participants felt that young people were indeed being listened to and, as such, were given a greater voice in policing and community safety activity in their communities. As one stakeholder put it:

> *I think the value from this project was, we actually heard from a group of people who, firstly are never asked, and secondly don't tend to volunteer, because they don't really see there's much point, or they just cope and get by, with what they have.*

For another stakeholder:

> *Probably the niche it most filled was hearing from those young people about what they thought the issues were and then comparing them to the sort of things we're hearing with our mainstream surveys.*

As the above quotes suggest, this interaction and engagement, engendered by the project, was seen as important. This is because the views of adults may be different to the views of young people and young people have a lot to offer, as one stakeholder highlighted:

> *For me, I would say that it's shown me that kids are quite … don't write them off. They're very intelligent and useful and actually if you sit down and talk to them and you've got them in the right setting you can get a lot from kids.*

For another, trusting the young people's viewpoints was vital:

> *I think the biggest thing is instead of not trusting these kids to let them off the leash a little bit, trust their instincts, because actually they're going to surprise a lot of people.*

A further stakeholder commented:

> *I think this is unique because we've never actually, as far as I'm aware, done anything where we solely listen to the voice of the kids. We make assumptions that this is what somebody wants and we make an assumption. But our views, adults' views, are completely different to what kids' views are on a problem.*

In turn, the young people who participated in the project valued having their voiced heard. As one stakeholder put it:

> *Reading in between the lines I think that they just wanted their voices heard. From what they've said when we've spoken to them and the fact that one of the quotes that one of the kids made for the presentation for the media release, he was like, 'We're the future. We are tomorrow's*

future in terms of taking ownership of our communities.'

Another stakeholder commented: "I think it gives them a voice, I think that they like to be heard, I think that they feel as though their opinion matters".

Young people made similar observations, as one stated: "I think it made me feel like heard almost", while for another: "I got listened to quite a bit. Sometimes in school you don't get

listened to. But [....] the police were listening to everything we were saying". Another young person, reflecting with satisfaction on changes made in their area as a result of the project, stated:

> *I was walking down Sunbury Cross and the skate park a few days ago and I actually noticed stuff that they said they'd change and they actually had done it and I didn't think they would. It's made me feel good thinking that they actually listened. Like I noticed different bins in the skate park and different signs and stuff.*

4.5.5 Playing a Role in Identifying Problems and the Allocation of Resources

Related to the above, participants drew attention to how traditionally the views of young people have been marginalised in the allocation of resources, with funding generally focused on older generations who are more vocal and whose voices were more normally heard. In contrast, this project enabled young people to advise on how resources were allocated. As one stakeholder stated: "I've worked with residents' associations, they all tend to be a much older generation, they all tend to have very much uniformed views on what needs to be done in an area, and they don't necessarily take into consideration what younger people or what others may consider". One young person spoke positively of learning the process of allocating budgets:

> *Then I had to break up – so how much the defensive plants would cost, how much the bins are going to cost, how much maintaining the field is going to cost. After breaking it all down, there was a total obviously and yeah, it was quite interesting to see how much it would take to maintain that field.*

The input from the young people in all three pilot areas was appreciated by stakeholders, who outlined how their perspectives often shone a light into previously unrecognised problems:

> *They came up with some actually quite novel ideas for what they thought the problems might be and were able crucially to lend their local experience. And being young people who were out and about in that area quite a lot, especially at times where I wouldn't have, but I didn't live in*

that area. I never had. But even as a police officer, I wouldn't be visiting ... it was quite interesting to gain that local perspective on what the issues were from someone who uses the space as much as they did.

For another stakeholder:

So they picked up very, very quickly by themselves that what may be an issue for one group isn't an issue for another, so they wanted to establish how can we find

out what the problems are for the community within Woking. [They picked] *Alpha Park and the drugs and the anti-social behaviour that's going down there.*

A young person in Sunbury outlined how they identified and worked on local problems:

My group picked the underpass, we just kept building on that and how to fix that, to clean it up quite a bit because it's quite messy down there. Then you put in some bike rails that slow everyone down because it gets really busy.

Another young person in the same location stated:

We went around to the skate park and Sunbury Cross and the underpass as well and just pointed out and noted down things that were unsafe, things that looked a little bit sketchy. Just noted down what we could do to fix it. Then in the second meeting we were in one of the youth clubs and we picked a place to focus on, so we chose the underpass. We just noted down again things that we could improve on the underpass.

While the experience of being involved in the process of identifying issues had generally been positive for the young people, not all viewed it this way, as one in Tadworth stated:

I haven't enjoyed highlighting the negatives for my estate.

A stakeholder also issued a note of caution with regards to only involving young people in the identification of community problems:

Have you asked the local residents what they think about it and not just the 50 kids? … [We should be] *seeking residents' opinion, probably going back to that scanning and analysis and getting a more complete picture on what the issues are in the area.*

4.5.6 Personal Development of the Young People

The young people who participated in the project stated that doing so made them feel proud, with those in Sunbury and Woking, who had had the chance to present their findings, feeling a sense of accomplishment around this too, as one stated: "I felt quite relieved but also a little bit proud of myself because normally when I public

speak I get a little bit nervous and I sometimes giggle, but I didn't". And for another: "After getting a certificate and receiving the praise from the audience. I feel like I accomplished something in my life, to be honest".

A stakeholder commented:

> *They* [the young people] *did a presentation at the end, not only to the school, but also to the best of the community as well who all came down and the kids*

delivered a fantastic presentation and they sold the project to them and it just showed all the hard work that they put in.

For almost all of the young people, the overall experience of being involved in the pilots had been positive too, as one mentioned: "It was just good though. Like it's good to see what is about. I'm glad I done it". For another:

I think there is a self-satisfaction you get from helping out the community really, and if you want to live here for the rest of your life and you want your kids to grow up here, then you can always look back and reflect on all the impacts you've done on the community.

Stakeholders also saw the value of the young people being involved in the whole process, including its more difficult aspects:

Being involved in a process from start to finish is also key, I think, and not skipping any points and not letting some children join in on just the good bits. You've got to be there for the good, the bad, and the ugly, I think, and its good education for them.

4.5.7 Managing Young People's Expectations

One negative issue that occurred was the cost implications of addressing the problems that were identified by the young people, something that was apparent in all three areas but was especially acute in Sunbury with regards to the idea of improving a subway via it being painted by local artists, as the two stakeholders below mentioned:

We were then going to sort of local artists to volunteer to paint it with the big sort of sticking point was that someone was going to have to pay for the paint and painting a mural, it seems, is prohibitively expensive because you need anti-graffiti paint … and I think the quotes were in the tens of thousands of pounds.

Their expectation was something were going to happen on the ground [with the mural]*, but it didn't happen and that in future might cause participation problems.*

Another stakeholder mentioned the conundrum with regards to asking young people to identify problems that they would like tackling when there may be a

significant chance that these aims would not actually be achievable:

> *You're going to them, asking them what their problems are, saying, right, well, we're going to pick some. But then you still can't guarantee that anything they say actually is achievable. So, then you're then going back to them and asking them*

to think of something else. It's like, you can only do that with children for so long before they get bored and they feel like, well, I've already told you about five things. Why can't one of them be fixed?

The concern that young people might then disillusioned through this process, and then not commit to any future projects, was highlighted by another stakeholder:

Positive Futures set quite high aspirations, so it promised big, sure, but with young people as you're aware, you let them down once you won't get a second chance.

And another noted:

The problem is that the council don't then react quickly enough and the kids get bored and they get pissed off and they say, "Well, this is the problem with adults".

For another stakeholder, the way around this was to make sure that something tangible was delivered at the end of each project which would reassure the young people that they had been listened to:

Just making sure that something is delivered at the end of it, that that tangible thing for the young people where they actually because they're they've been listened to, their voices have definitely been heard and people want to act on.

A further stakeholder recognised that the closely-knit nature of the local community (where the youth club was based) could actually cause the young people some concerns. This was to do with the worry that the young people had that they might be seen as 'grasses' by some in their community if they told the youth works of the crime and nuisance issues that concerned them. For this stakeholder it was therefore important that the project produced tangible outcomes, to reward this risk the young people had taken:

I definitely feel like kids need to see results though … you've got children that are coming forward with information that could be jeopardising their friendships and relations with family, neighbours … You've got a tight-knit community here as well, and they don't want to be seen as

grassing. Sometimes these kids don’t want to associate with police in any way, shape or form. So, when they're putting through the trust and the relationship they've got with us, they trust that we wouldn't put them in any sort of difficult situation. They want to see a result though. They want to see that what they're saying is happening.

4.6 Suggestions for Taking the Project Forward

4.6.1 Broad Aims

There was general support among the stakeholders in all three areas for taking the project forward, albeit with some concerns and caveats which will be detailed below. For a key stakeholder, the point of developing the project would be for ordinary people to play an active and indeed proactive role:

> *The test for you, resident of Surrey, is get off the phone when you see the following happen, because no-one's going to come and rescue you, you need to do this for yourselves. But here's all the information that you need and here's all the tools that you need to be able to make that happen.*

4.6.2 What Would the Roles of Organisations and Agencies Be?

There was some debate among stakeholders as to which organisations and agencies should take the lead with any new projects that were set up in their areas, with some feeling that local councils were best placed to take things forward, as one police stakeholder mentioned:

> *If we* [the police] *were a partner in it and it was led by a separate agency – and I think it needs to be the council because they have control over land and you know, locations which are going to be tackled and that they can be more realistic about what can be achieved. Everything we have to do, they have to authorise or agree to, but we've got them on board and they're leading it.*

While for another stakeholder:

> *It's a bit pie in the sky, but even if there was some funding available to get something started with or a person in the local council who was fully committed to seeing through its implementation, whatever and applying for the relevant grant pots right at the end and sort of having dedicated ownership over it, that might be a way around it as well.*

The role of the police in any future projects was also often discussed. One stakeholder, a police officer himself, felt that the police brought certain skills to the projects that helped drive them forwards:

Where there's more police involvement … [officers] *had a bit more of a grounding in problem solving and following a bit of a structure and keeping everyone together.*

However, the same officer felt that the police were not the right agency to lead any future projects:

> *We're not always the best and right people to be leading this sort of thing … definite police involvement, but there's certainly a balance to be had and not a leadership role, I don't feel.*

This view was echoed by another stakeholder, who was a little less complimentary about the police's role:

> [In one of the pilot areas the police] *couldn't help themselves. They could not stay out of here. They had to come in here right, for all good reasons as you may well know about policing. It's all about command and control, and control especially.*

For another stakeholder, it was important that the police should not lead any future projects, as this would contradict the community-oriented ethos of Positive Futures:

> *On the one hand it was great that* [police officers] *were so involved, because they cared about it and their natural training is, as police officers, to want to keep control. So I liked all that. But on the other hand, that's not the model. The model can't be sustainable if it's rolled out on that basis.*

For another stakeholder, it was important to have a steering group overseeing the implementation of projects that consisted of the right mix of professional backgrounds and knowledge:

> *If you had that small nucleus of people, people who have got understanding of the socio-deprivation, the socio-economics and again the sociology type stuff, but also the financial stuff and the planning, so you get them sitting together and looking at what we're trying to achieve, setting the boundaries and being honest about what can be achieved. What's beyond our expertise? What's beyond our ability to achieve?*

A number of those highlighted the frustrations of working with agencies that had a relatively high turnover of staff in certain roles, which made long-term (and sometimes even short-term) planning much more difficult. One possible solution suggested by one stakeholder was to identify those within the community who could

commit long-term to any future project, so that they could oversee the project on an extended basis and thus mitigate any short-term agency ‘churn’:

> *Where we may profile the sorts of person and decide that recently retired or semi-retired people who care about communities, who’ve got the passion, the wherewithal, are the sorts of people that we need to go and find. Then I get less*

worried that on the police side and the county council side or the local borough side there will be churn, because it's inevitable. But if the real role rests with the community leaders or the community champions or whatever we end up calling them, I think there's a better than even shot if we go with that profile, but they'll be there for a long time.

Another stakeholder recognised the importance of the role of community champions in any future projects while recognising that they should be paid for undertaking their roles:

Community champions … originally doing it for free because they really wanted to make it work. … Right, you know, that's what we need them to do. We need
someone like them to be corralling the kids, getting the idea out there, then going to whoever to say "These kids have got something to tell you." … and are they willing to do that, can they do that for free or do we need to pay them? And I might be arguing now that if we do need to pay them, it still might be a good use of money.

4.6.3 Location

Where any future projects are based is crucial to their future development. The views of stakeholders were, generally speaking, in favour of them being located in schools rather than in youth clubs, due to the former having a settled population with which to work:

I think there's something in the learning about recruiting from a youth club versus a school, especially if that youth club is the drop-in centre … they come in and they go out and then they don't stay. Right, so there's something about if we replicate, we have to do it from schools because the one thing about the schools is you know nine times out of ten, they're there. They're still going to be there.

Another stakeholder felt that the close working relationships between teachers and pupils would also be a positive factor in any future project:

I would say this project is perfect for schools. They see students five times a week. They can schedule it in. They're working with the children. They clearly have care there, especially if it's a school that's local to the teachers. A lot of teachers do live quite close to the schools that they

work in.

However, one stakeholder concluded that it was best to “Base it in places other than schools” due to concerns about schools’ busy timetables and their focus on hitting their own goals and targets which meant that, in this stakeholder’s view, they struggled to prioritise other projects.

4.6.4 Budget and Resources

Having sufficient resource and budget to complete the projects was clearly a key issue. One stakeholder felt that, in order to avoid setting up projects only to discover later that they could not be funded, solutions to budgetary issues should be found right at the start of projects:

> *If we could have some money available from the start committed to implementing the solutions, or at least get the solutions rolling to keep the momentum going at the end of the project, that's what I would spend the bulk of my time trying to do.*

For another, stakeholder, to avoid young people becoming disillusioned with the project due to failures to fund their ideas, whoever's managing the project should be honest from the start and set expectations about what can be achieved with the resources available:

> *If there is a financial aspect to it,* [we will need] *somebody who's going to manage it. And be honest with people and say, 'Look, that's pie in the sky. You want to build this, that's going to cost £20 million, we've got £5, find another way of doing it'.*

4.6.5 Planning

A number of key issues were identified by stakeholders with regards to developing any new projects of this kind, including the speed of the process; sourcing any necessary finance at the start; scoping the issues before commencing, and being realistic about the local areas involved.

As one stakeholder commented:

> *Like if we can speed up the process, if we know how, where we have failed last time and we incorporate the ideas where we can keep it light.*

For another stakeholder, the future success of any project was predicated on it being well-planned, with finance in place at the start and a realistic timetable sketched out. This would prevent young people from becoming disillusioned at the length of time projects might take:

> *If I was going to do it again, I would devote a lot more time from the start to make sure there was a real solid plan but also sourcing where the money was coming from. Getting firm commitments right from the start and then getting a timeline. It was something we were conscious of that we didn't want the young people to feel that their work dragged out into foreverness.*

Another stakeholder stressed the importance of absorbing the learning from the pilots in order to put better structures and advice in place from the start of any new projects:

Hopefully with the pilot there has been some good learning and issues identified and just the opportunity for people to be aware of that in the future and be able to overcome it through some simple advice, guidance, signposting from the outset.

For one community-based stakeholder, doing some scoping work among the broader community, with regards to identifying key issues in the area, would provide guidance for the young people involved:

If you have really vulnerable young people … they kind of do need some guidance on, one, what's realistic to change and two, what the big problem is in the estate. They might need guidance with it … I think something that could be done is maybe a preliminary questionnaire to the community. So, you can get a rough idea of what the kids are going to say before you bring it to them. Because in reality, the parents and the young people, it should hopefully reflect each other.

Another stakeholder agreed:

We need to have it basic. It needs to be simple. It just needs to be like a basic questionnaire sent out. You get a rough idea. You then take it to the kids. They give you their feedback and then you actually can act on what they've said.
Something needs to be picked.

As one community-based stakeholder asserted, being realistic about the implications of the location of any future project was key:

Sometimes I think, just actually look at the bigger picture, assess the whole situation. It's not in a National Trust park. We're on an estate. You're not going to get people drawing the pond. You're not.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has described the development and delivery of a series of pilot projects delivered under the banner of 'Positive Futures', a project which sought to involve and empower young people to solve problems in their communities. It drew on observations that it has been hard to engage young people in community safety and police work and that some young people are mistrustful of

the police and lack confidence in dealing with them. In turn, the aim was to improve confidence in policing and to help reduce antisocial behaviour. The project worked closely with the police, local schools, youth clubs and, to some degree, other local partners. The project followed a four-step process linked to the well-known problem-solving model 'OSARA' in which groups of young people worked with the police and youth club workers to identify problems in their communities, analyse the causes of problems and devise solutions. In two of the projects,

solutions were presented to a group of 'panellists' who represented local agencies and organizations and who were in a position to implement the solutions that the young people identified. This final section brings together observations and associated recommendations.

5.1 Overall Outcomes

Overall, all three pilots had some successes, not least with making some discernible changes to an underpass (Sunbury) and a local park (Woking) that the young people had identified as being problems that needed addressing. While less tangible progress was made in Tadworth there were still some achievements, such as the planting of additional plants and shrubs near the youth club. The involvement of the young people in all three pilots was viewed by them, and by stakeholders, as being a positive and rewarding experience, which is a significant achievement for Positive Futures too.

Indeed, the project was well received by both the young people who participated and the stakeholders who were involved in its development and delivery. Young people did engage with the project and the material that was designed. There might be questions about whether the young people who were originally targeted when the project was designed – those who were to some degree disengaged and had negative attitudes towards the police – were actually those who participated. On the whole, the young people who participated in the pilots did not hold negative attitudes towards the police – perhaps they were simply indifferent or lacked exposure to the police service – and got involved in the project mostly because of an interest in community safety and developing their CVs.

Whilst it is not possible to answer questions about broad outcomes in terms of improvements in community safety and perceptions of the police, certain themes were clear. The young people who participated gained satisfaction from feeling that they were making a difference in their communities. They also developed better understanding of their communities and the complexity that organisations face in making changes in the environments which they live. Young people reported feeling

safer and having greater confidence in the police and other local organisations due to a better understanding of how the police and other organisations can help them. Participating in the project provided a voice for young people in terms of both making a contribution to the identification of priority problems in communities and helping to devise solutions to them. Participating on the project improved the confidence of the young people and left them feeling proud of what they had achieved. This indicates that projects like these might have positive outcomes and are worth pursuing.

Recommendations

- The Positive Futures model should be further piloted
- Young people should be the focus of future projects
- Projects should have realistic aims that are set at the beginning
- The expectations of the young people involved need to be managed carefully from the outset

5.1.1 Design and Delivery

It was clear that the delivery of the projects had involved a lot of time, energy and effort from those involved, but that, despite issues with finance, multiagency working and bureaucracy, this has been a worthwhile endeavour. Linked to this, and as mentioned in the above, the experience of the project so far indicates that the young people will engage with the project and the project material. This suggests that it is possible to involve young people in future projects if the correct materials are used to engage them and if the projects are well led. Having said that, delivering such projects can be resource-heavy and time consuming, especially when placed in the context of the relatively low numbers of young people who participate in them. There are therefore a number of factors to be considered, including investment and time in set up; staffing, funding and resourcing; partnership working; and the conduct of the sessions themselves.

5.1.1.1 Investment and Time in Set Up

A great deal of investment and time went to support the development of the pilots. This originally linked to the effort involved in securing support from police services, schools and the youth club to deliver the pilots. In this sense, the pilots benefited from the involvement of people who are well motivated to facilitate them. The amount of investment and time also links to the design and delivery of the project which was somewhat labour intensive. It has been time consuming to set up the day-to-day infrastructure for the project (workbooks, lesson plans, organising spaces to hold sessions, speaking with partners, transporting young people etc). That said, this infrastructure is in place now and so can be replicated. Consequently,

the delivery of subsequent projects should not be so time consuming.

Recommendations

- Payments should be considered for those in voluntary roles for the ‘out of hours’ worktime they spend on the project

- To have early and ongoing communication between project leaders, local agencies and stakeholders to make the facilitation of each project easier
- The panel session and any other presentations should be held on the school grounds to ease logistical issues

5.1.1.2 Staffing, Funding and Resourcing

Funding has been available to facilitate the delivery of these pilot projects, a result of voluntary contributions which have been a considerable factor contributing to successful implementation. However, more widely resourcing has been a problem – especially in relation to accessing the local authority infrastructure needed to implement the solutions suggested by young people. There is a need to be realistic about what can be achieved. Whilst young come up with ideas for responding to problems it may be the case that they are not achievable in practice – either because they are too expensive or difficult to deliver in practice due to competing priorities. There is a risk to this since young people might therefore become disillusioned with the process. With that in mind, it is suggested that time in the sessions is given to allowing young people to understand the constraints on resources and how resources are allocated.

Long-term funding needs to be secured in order to take this initiative forward: relying on the good will and generosity of individual benefactors will not provide a sustainable way of developing Positive Futures.

Recommendations

- Any financial and other resource implications of any projects should be identified and secured at the outset of projects
- Funding should be sought – perhaps from local authorities, central government, the Ministry of Justice or funding councils – to secure the future sustainability of further projects

5.1.1.3 Partnership Working

Strongly linked to resourcing, partnership working is clearly desirable, something

which is important because delivering solutions will almost certainly require the involvement of wider partners and, especially, the local authority. Earlier and greater engagement with partners might facilitate the sustainability of the project.

Recommendations

- A multi-agency approach to running projects is adopted but with the community, via schools, co-ordinating them, rather than the police
- A project manager is identified to manage projects from the outset
- Future projects could consider broadening multi-agency partnership to include schools, youth clubs, the police, local councillors, community development workers, businesses, faith leaders, universities

5.1.1.4 Conduct of the Sessions

There were several features of the sessions that influenced delivery and might be considered in future projects. There is a need to be realistic about the operation of the sessions in schools and what is achievable. In particularly, there is a need to be mindful of a timetable that allows young people breaks both because of becoming tired and/or otherwise becoming disengaged. The timetable also has to acknowledge the full school day and there will be limitations on the availability of young people given a need to prioritise their schoolwork. Some of the sessions required removing young people from the school environment. This generated certain benefits but added to the logistical challenges of delivering sessions, and some people felt they were missing out on their education as they were missing lessons.

The panel sessions and celebration evenings were especially well received and were clearly a highlight of two of the pilots. They are important for signalling to the young people that their voices are being heard and the confidence generated from presenting their work to groups of individuals that they would not normally communicate with. In respect to organising the panels, it may be that early and ongoing communication between the panellists and the project leaders is necessary to make the most of this process. Linked to the above, it might be more straightforward if the panel session was conducted on the school grounds with visitors coming in. Whilst there are benefits of going to different venues, logistically things become harder. This would also mean that other children could watch what

the participants had produced. This could have the added benefit of other children becoming interested in such projects and learning from their peers.

Hosting the projects in drop-in youth clubs also presented some logistical issues, not least because it could not be guaranteed that the same children would drop in to the youth club every week. Running the projects also created demands on the time of the youth club workers that could not be met through the hours they spent at the youth club as their time was often taken up

dealing with incidents that can regularly occur at youth clubs. They therefore ended up spending time working on the project outside of youth club hours. While projects like this do run partly on the good will of those involved it is acknowledged that this good will cannot be stretched too far.

Overall, evidence suggests that the pilots were well received by stakeholders and the young people who participated. The young people gained from participating in the projects in terms of satisfaction, understanding, confidence in authorities, improved voice, and feeling proud of their achievements. That said, with all three pilots certain issues in respect to delivery were identified. These oriented around the amount of investment and time that went into their set up; staffing, funding, and resourcing; partnership working; and aspects of the way that the sessions with young people were conducted. Despite these issues, it is suggested that the positive impacts that participating had upon the young people make it important that further Positive Futures projects are conducted.

Recommendations

- Future projects be based in schools
- Consideration is given to the timing of project sessions in schools so that young people

  participating don't feel like they're missing out on their education

5.2 List of Recommendations

- The Positive Futures model should be further piloted
- Young people should be the focus of future projects
- Projects should have realistic aims that are set at the beginning
- The expectations of the young people involved need to be managed carefully from the outset
- Payments should be considered for those in voluntary roles for the 'out of hours' worktime they spend on the project
- To have early and ongoing communication between project leaders, local agencies and stakeholders to make the facilitation of each project easier

- The panel session and any other presentations should be held on the school grounds to ease logistical issues
- Any financial and other resource implications of any projects should be identified and secured at the outset of projects

- Funding should be sought – perhaps from local authorities, central government, the Ministry of Justice or funding councils – to secure the future sustainability of further projects
- A multi-agency approach to running projects is adopted but with the community, via schools, co-ordinating them, rather than the police
- A project manager is identified to manage projects from the outset
- Future projects could consider broadening multi-agency partnership to include schools, youth clubs, the police, local councillors, community development workers, businesses, faith leaders, universities
- Future projects be based in schools
- Consideration is given to the timing of project sessions in schools so that young people participating don't feel like they're missing out on their education

6.0 Acknowledgements

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