

**Northamptonshire Youth Commission
Executive Summary**

Gangs & Youth Violence and Young Drivers



BE THE CHANGE

**Northamptonshire Police,
Fire and Crime Commissioner**



Foreword



Last year, I set up a Northamptonshire Youth Commission with one aim in mind, to hear directly from young people about the issues they face and to bring their fresh and exciting ideas to bear on the work of my Office.

The Commission members decided that gangs and youth violence and the matter of road safety were of real concern to them and their peers and they set about interviewing and considering the views of more than 1,100 young people from across the county. As a result of these interviews, the Youth Commission has produced this report on the concerns they have identified and a number of recommendations that they think would make the county a safer place.

I could not be more proud of the work that the Youth Commission has carried out. To have young people capturing the views of other young people on these very significant issues is, I believe, something of a first for the county. I am committed to following through on the recommendations they make and I thank them all for this very important piece of work.

Stephen Mold, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Mold". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Introduction from Northamptonshire Youth Commission Members

We wanted to take a minute to say thank you for reading our report, to introduce ourselves and why we chose to do this consultation. We joined the Youth Commission because we wanted to help make a difference, have a voice for someone who doesn't. Be a part of something to help the next generation - it's our community and we all need to work together to make a difference.

Why we chose the theme young drivers

We are the young drivers of the future and we want the roads safer for us and future generations, including our own brothers and sisters. Most people in our Commission knew someone who had been in an accident or had been affected by one, including people who had lost their lives and this motivated them to do more to raise awareness. People relax more after passing their test, and accidents affect more people than we think, lots involving young drivers. Young people are easily distracted by their mobiles or loud music or pressured to show off with speeding and unsafe driving. We know there are a lot of people who are bad drivers that aren't young people but we want young people to be a generation of better, more aware drivers. We also want young people to feel safe as passengers and know what to do when they don't.

Why we chose the theme gangs and youth crime

Gangs are a big part of our society, Northamptonshire is central to a lot of the cities and used as a bypass for gang activity. We hear about it too much. Some young people don't have a choice – they are forced into gangs for various reasons; sometimes to provide for their family, sometimes due to family connections. Some people are influenced to join gangs as they feel like they don't belong or have a family, so they join the gang as a surrogate family, not truly understanding the consequences. Some people don't have a choice, or fully understand the consequences of the decision they are making. We need to use our platform to raise awareness. We want to let people know where they can go for advice if they need it or are worried about someone, and to help people feel there are choices and someone who cares.



"Social media is being used in a negative way and its influencing young people for example, people showing off weapons and violent music lyrics and videos. So it's up to us to use our platform to show people other ways to use social media and the good stuff that's out there, to influence them in another way"

Youth Commission Member

It's really important you read this report if you live or work in Northamptonshire as this isn't about London or national statistics, this is about our own young people and their views and experiences of Northamptonshire. We don't want to be the generation that is teaching our eight year old kids about the dangers of knives, exploitation, gangs and drugs on the streets instead of how to cross the road safely. We can only make that difference together.

Bradley, Holly and Rowan Northamptonshire Youth Commission members

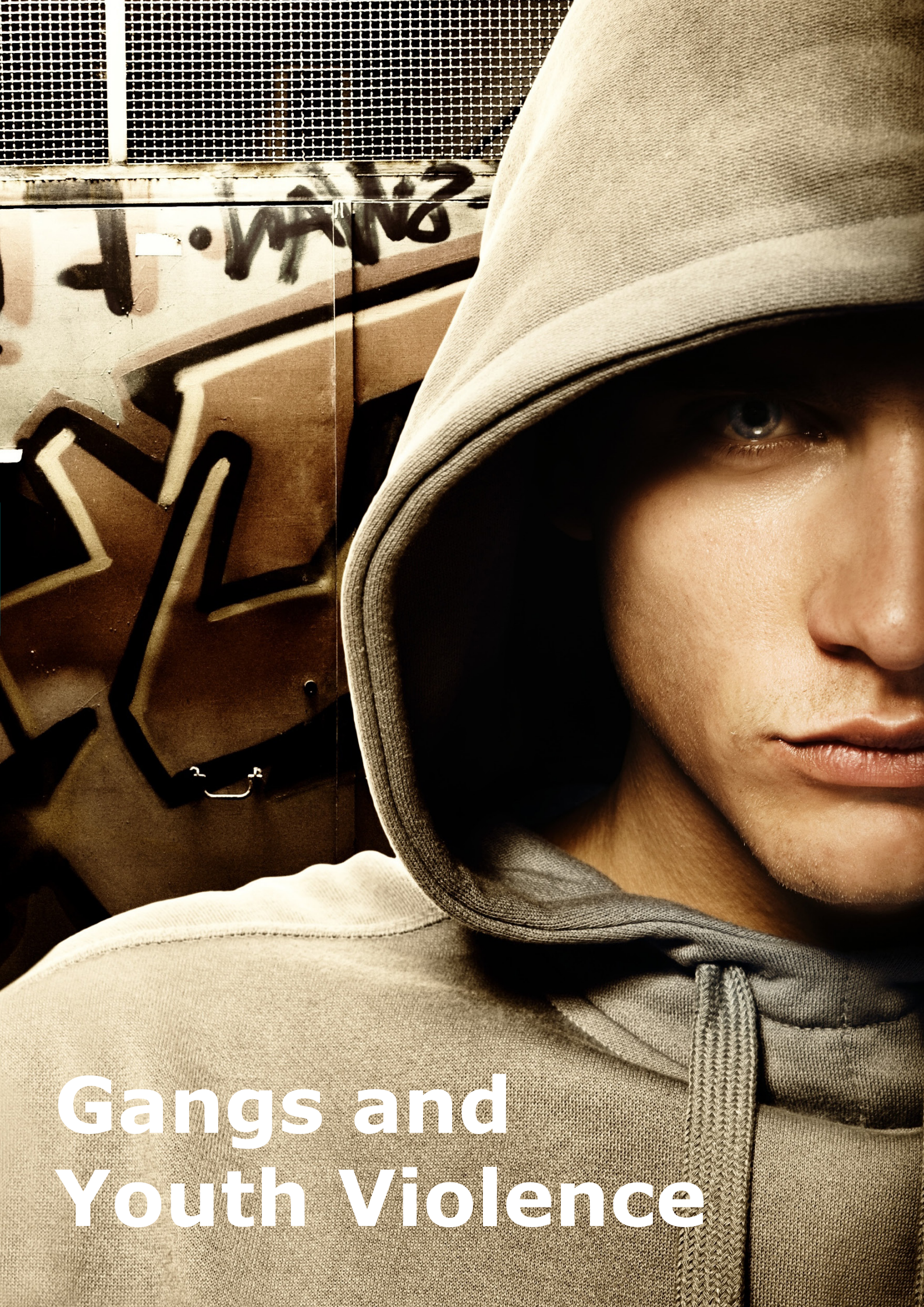
If you're aged 14 – 19 years join us and be a Youth Commission member and help be the change: <http://www.northantspfcc.org.uk/opfcc-youth-commission/>

To view the Youth Violence and Young Driver full report please go to www.northantspfcc.org.uk

Executive Summary

Northamptonshire's first Youth Commission comprises of 20 young people aged 14 – 19 years who are dedicated to giving young people across Northamptonshire a voice, and to ensure the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service make decisions to better meet and understand the needs of local young people.

The Youth Commission discussed with the Commissioner and representatives from the police and fire service the main issues they saw facing young people. This feedback together with the priorities of the youth commission members themselves directed the youth commission to choose youth violence and young drivers. Youth commission members then undertook a large consultation with 1,116 young people across the county. The aim of this consultation was to understand the concerns young people had about youth violence and young drivers and with the aim of finding ways to address some of these issues.



Gangs and Youth Violence

Gangs and Youth Violence

The first theme chosen on behalf of the police was gangs and youth crime, key findings were:



43%

of young people who answered this question said they knew someone who has carried a knife or other weapon



71%

felt that social media/music/music videos had an impact on mental health

75%

of respondents would not get involved or would not know where to get help



54%

thought people carried weapons for protection, 25% to look good with peers and 21% to threaten others/ cause injury
(respondents could pick more than one answer)



8%

would tell the police if they were worried about someone and only 2% would tell the police if they were approached themselves

"I wouldn't trust a school counsellor or anyone employed by a school, including teachers, because from what I've heard from friends who have been through counselling and who have gone to teachers, the situation always ends up worse for them"



92%

had not heard of CIRV (Community Initiative to Reduce Violence), a multi-agency police led approach to gangs



22%

of respondents said they had either been approached to join a gang or commit crime, or knew someone who had. Agreement was highest from young people in Kettering (40%) compared with 27% in Wellingborough and Daventry, 23% in Northampton, 21% in Corby and less than 20% in East Northants and South Northants



60%

thought that social media/music/music videos glamorised being involved in crime or gangs

When asked who they would talk to if they were being pressured to take part in crime or join a gang, the most popular answers were family member (63%) or friend (57%) compared to the next highest answer of teacher (25%)

The survey has told us that the majority of young people that responded either did not want to get involved, or if approached by a gang did not know where to go to for help. We need to raise awareness about what to do, where to get help at an early stage, and in a way that is appropriate to their needs.

Gangs and Youth Violence Recommendations

Overall young people wanted emphasis placed on supporting vulnerable young people and preventing them from entering into a gang rather than focussing on punishment and enforcement.

- **Involvement of young people** - The Youth Commission members are keen to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to take part in activities that engage them, so that they feel valuable members of the local community. This will prevent them from feeling the need to belong to a gang or take part in criminal activity.
- **Understanding what activities already exist** - The Youth Commission wanted to understand what opportunities and activities currently exist for young people in areas of vulnerability across the county and to ensure these are communicated to young people who live there. These activities may need access to funding and should be shaped by the young people who will potentially use them and need a partnership approach.
- **Promotion of resources via social media** - There are a number of current resources that the Youth Commission considered to be effective, but there is a need for current and new resources to be promoted through schools and specific social media sites that are used by this age group. Young people stated that currently the most popular sites for their age group are Instagram and Snapchat. Young people stated that it was important to include information on how a young person can access help and to equip young people with strategies to employ when they feel in danger or concerned.

"I'd also not want any police or anything like that involved in matters in fear that I would accidentally destroy my future or a friend's future by having something said that goes down on a permanent record and then can't get a job"

- **Spoken word and positive drill project** - A project of communicating Northamptonshire Stories (case studies of those who have been at risk of or who have been part of a gang) was suggested with potential contributions in spoken word, music, and video. As there was particular concerns from young people in Kettering, one of the projects will be undertaken with young people in this area. With the aim of promoting this throughout the county.
- **'Episodes' style game** - To develop an online game/app with young people using the spoken word case studies as a basis for the game.
- **Mentoring scheme** - There is a need for a mentoring scheme to be developed as the youth commission feel there are a lack of role models and positive influence. Young people stated that this should be delivered by people they can relate to and be made available at youth provisions and organisations that offer support, and on a voluntary basis, not through schools and by a self-referral system.
- **Impact of social media** - Young people described the impact of social media generally on their mental health and suggested the development of a "positive self" campaign, that should include how and where young people can access support.

"The 'roadman' phase boys, as well as a few girls, went through was due to the influence of London grime music"

Northamptonshire Case Study - A gang member's experience

Workshops were held with young people from Blackthorn, Goldings and Corby to share their views on their experiences of the police and relationships with them. They shared their concerns about gangs and associated criminal behaviour in their area and the difficulties of having neighbours that are involved in gangs the level of drug use and general feeling unsafe.

In addition to this a further discussion took place with a current gang member and an ex-gang member about their experiences and what life was like from their perspective. The current gang member, a 17 year old male, described how he believed he would be next to die in his community, including the impact this has on his mental health.

*'I will be the next to be killed, it will be retaliation, I f***ed with another gang. I live everyday thinking this will be my last, its f***ed with my head. I can't do much about it.'*

He went on to talk about why he got involved and has to carry weapons:

'I had to go out and sell a load so I could get a grand and buy stuff for my mum, you do it for your family. They need electric, food, pay bills so they don't get evicted. I want to be able to go to my family and say order a takeaway and I'll pay. I need the money for my family.'

*'We use knives to protect ourselves, our stash [Drugs]. If it gets stolen we will be killed anyway so we have to protect it and risk being stabbed by people trying to take it - either way you're f***ed!'*

He then discussed witnessing friends and people around him being stabbed and shot, dying in front of him. He shared about how hard it hits you and hurts every time it happens.

'I've seen people shot and stabbed, my mate got killed next to me - I contacted mans to get a dotty [Gun] to go back and get them but when I met mans they told me to wait, chill - we got this. I let them - I don't want to get caught with a gun, that's 10 years! The more times you see people get stabbed/shot the more deep it is [pats heart], gets you deep.'

His friend, 18 year old male, disagreed and described it having less impact the more you see it:

'People getting stabbed/ shot all the time - you don't cry no more'

He is no longer involved in gangs but did express how he misses the 'family' element it provided, he went on to share:

'I used to be in gangs but I got out because I moved away, I miss it and sometimes think about going back - I feel safe as part of a gang - I have people to back me, they got my back.'

He expressed feeling safe as the gang 'had his back' but acknowledged in other areas of the conversation that the lifestyle messes with your head and stated:

'I always hug my sisters and my family and say goodbye before I go out in case I don't come back'

Both young men seemed very sombre as they talked about the lives they have to lead and shared that it is 'expected' of them due to family members already being in the lifestyle. The current gang member saw no way out other than his own death, which he talked about with a degree of certainty and resignation to what he saw as the inevitable.

Young Drivers



Young Drivers

The second theme chosen by young people was young drivers, which is a priority for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

"The car felt like it was coming off the ground over speed bumps and hills due to how fast the driver was going"



46%

felt unsafe on a car journey

74%

were not aware of any young driver safety campaigns

35%

of respondents said they would get out of the car, which could present a different risk i.e. unlit country lane in dark clothing, stranded in unknown area

40%

of respondents said they would know what to do if they felt unsafe, but often young people either had no strategy for removing themselves from danger, or cited an approach that would have little or no effect

WITH
➔



10%

said they would scream or cry

The main concerns for people when in the car with a young driver were



60%

the car being driven too fast or dangerously



40%

being distracted by their mobile



36%

(affecting the concentration of the driver) the music is too loud/fast

"Motorists on their phone often swerve, I have a car and motorbike and have had near misses on both"

This survey suggests that there is a need to continue educating young drivers and passengers about these issues and also help young people remove themselves from danger.

Young Drivers Recommendations

There is a lack of awareness of the current available resources for young people on road safety, and those they are aware of are often outdated

- **Promote resources** - Young people lack strategies on what to do when they feel unsafe on a journey, the youth commission suggests a social media campaign and more face to face work in schools to raise awareness of what to do.
- **Too fast to soon video** - Use data collected from the survey to help inform a new 'too fast too soon' video through the Northamptonshire Safer Roads Alliance
 - Use social media (Instagram, Snapchat) to promote and share. Young people wanted the video to pop up ensuring more young people will see it and it will have a wider impact.
 - Young people wanted greater recognition of other young people that have lost their lives on Northamptonshire roads and to demonstrate the impact that unsafe driving (e.g. drink driving and not wearing a seat belt) can have on individuals, and families and friends who have lost a loved one.
 - It was also suggested that a slogan could be used as part of this campaign and within the video to encourage the message to be retained in young people's minds.
- **Online App** – Young people spoke positively about developing an online app to increase awareness of road safety and educate other young people about potential hazards when driving.
- **Social media campaign** – Short video clips to raise awareness with young people about the dangers and their impact on young people and their families, using Northamptonshire examples of young people losing their life on Northamptonshire roads.
- **Road Safety Champions** – Young people lack strategies on what to do when they feel unsafe on a journey, the youth commission suggested utilising peer educators in schools sharing resources and strategies.



Help and Advice

Gangs or Knife Crime:

CIRV – If you are in a gang and want to get out ring 07539 183975 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. CIRV have a team ready to help you. <http://www.aimonline.org.uk/CIRV/>

Knife free - <https://www.knifefree.co.uk/know-the-risks/>

NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/staying-safe-away-from-home/gangs-young-people/>

Runway helpline - <https://www.runawayhelpline.org.uk/advice/gangs/>

Youth Counselling - reachyouthcounselling.org.uk

Free2Talk - <https://www.free2talkcic.org/>

Road Traffic Accidents:

Voice - Voice for Road Harm, providing practical and emotional support for victims of road harm and trauma. <http://voicenorthants.org/roadharm/>

BRAKE - Support following a road death or injury <http://www.brake.org.uk/>

Roadpeace - Supporting bereaved families through peer support, our local group network, befriending service and trauma support programmes. <http://www.roadpeace.org/>

Cruse Bereavement Care Helpline - www.cruse.org.uk

Samaritans - The Samaritans provide confidential, non-judgemental emotional support. www.samaritans.org



✉ comissioner@northantspfcc.pnn.gov.uk

🖱 www.northantspfcc.org.uk

🐦 @northantspfcc