

North Wales Police and North Wales  
Police and Crime Commissioner

# Children and Young People

A Strategy for Child Centred Policing  
in North Wales



## Foreword by the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for ensuring an effective and efficient police service in North Wales whilst the Force are responsible for providing policing services to our communities. The Commissioner carries out extensive consultation and engagement with the public, key partners and the Chief Constable before establishing policing priorities. The Commissioner sets these in his Police and Crime Plan and the Chief Constable is responsible for delivering services to meet those priorities.

As Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to support the Commissioner in his work to ensure an efficient and effective police service for all people in North Wales.

I have dedicated my whole professional career to working with children and young people. I have spent thirty three years working with the most vulnerable in our society, and am keen to use my position as the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales to promote the rights of children and young people.

The Commissioner, Arfon Jones, states in his **Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021** his commitment to keeping our children and young people safe and allowing them to lead healthy, responsible and positive lives. In order to deliver this we must understand the key issues that face children and young people in North Wales today.

From abuse and neglect to road safety, cyber-crime and antisocial behaviour, there is a huge range of crime and safety issues that impact in a significant way on young people. This is why it's important to understand the nature of such issues and how the Force deals with them. We need to know what crimes affect young people and that they are given an appropriate response by North Wales Police.

Both the Force and the Commissioner need to work closely with statutory partners to ensure the best outcomes for children across North Wales. This work cannot be done by a single organisation in isolation.



We must engage and consult specifically with children and young people on an ongoing basis in order to reflect their views in shaping policing for the future. We must also feedback how their contributions have been taken into account.

We are accountable to children for decisions and for outcomes that affect their lives.

There are over 160,000 children and young people within the population of North Wales, from a range of different backgrounds, reflecting different cultures and life experiences. It is vital therefore that policing services reflect their needs and are delivered in a way that supports, safeguards and encourages positive interaction.

This strategy demonstrates our desire and our commitment to maintain and improve policing services for children. By listening to children and young people and working together with the Force, we can ensure children will receive the very best in policing services.

**Ann Griffith**  
**North Wales Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner**

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# Introduction

The needs, rights and welfare of all children and young people are hugely important within the world of policing. These rights are set out clearly within the principles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**<sup>1</sup> and the Welsh Government's **Rights of Children & Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011**.

In establishing this Strategy the Police and Crime Commissioner is undertaking to preserve the Convention rights. In policing in North Wales we will endeavour to protect children from harm, support young victims and witnesses and aim to reduce repeat victimisation. In addition we will work with partners to improve outcomes for young offenders, to support them to move away from criminality. We aim to keep our young people safe and allow them to lead healthy, responsible and positive lives in a climate in which they can contribute and thrive.

This strategy ensures a focus on crime and disorder issues that particularly affect children and young people and on the provision of the policing service they receive.

As part of our statutory duties to engage with the communities of North Wales, we undertake to ensure that children and young people have a voice and we will engage with and listen to them. It is important that we consider their views when holding the Force to account for policing services in North Wales.

There is great variety in the type and nature of crime and personal safety issues that affect children and young people as victims, offenders and also witnesses. The challenge for North Wales Police is to keep fully abreast of these issues and work together with the young people in North Wales' communities to tackle them effectively.



Over time crime issues can change and develop. This requires the police to be aware of the changing dynamic of crime affecting children and young people and to be sufficiently adaptable to deal with it effectively for the benefit of all children and young people in North Wales today.

<sup>1</sup>(The Convention 1989. In force since 1990. Implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the child.)

## What do we want to achieve?

We want young victims of crime to be able to recognise the fact and feel confident enough to report it to the police. When people report crime it allows the police to get a clear understanding of the issues that affect our communities and therefore allows them to deal with it effectively. Increased reporting is also a demonstration of improved confidence in the police. However, we also want to see fewer young victims of crime overall.

Our goal is to create an environment of:-

### 1. Improved confidence of children and young people in North Wales Police resulting in

- Better relationships between the police and young people
- Willingness of children and young people to report crime

### 2. Reduced number of young people being drawn into the criminal justice system.

Measuring success will be challenging as measuring and understanding confidence levels is not an exact science. However, we will employ a number of methods to help us to gauge opinion, such as carrying out a survey and carrying out regular engagement to give us indicators around confidence and trust in policing services. We also want to see fewer young people being drawn into the criminal justice system. The Police and Crime Commissioner is Chair of the North Wales Local Criminal Justice Board. He will work with

partners across all the criminal justice agencies to consider ways in which criminal justice and wider community partners can play their part to reduce the numbers of young people committing criminal offences and coming into the criminal justice system.



# Participation, Protection and Provision

The three underpinning pillars of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are addressing Participation, Protection and Provision. The key areas of delivery that we have identified for our work fall under these three headings.

## Participation

### Engagement and Communication

The Police and Crime Commissioner must:

- Consult and engage with young people about crime
- Scrutinise the Force on their provision of policing services to young people
- Scrutinise the force's engagement with young people

Both the Force and the Commissioner have statutory duties to engage with the public. Effective modern day policing must be done with the consent of the public, and that includes the consent of our young people. It is therefore vital to the Force and Commissioner that they build and maintain a positive relationship with young people in the community.

The Police and Crime Commissioner must consult and engage with young people about crime and the way in which they receive policing services. The Commissioner must also be satisfied that children and young people of North Wales are receiving a policing service that is fair, reasonable and proportionate.

In addition to carrying out engagement activities with young people, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner will

carry out a number of scrutiny activities to be assured that North Wales Police maintain a good relationship with young people.

We will challenge the Force through our local policing engagement scrutiny process to demonstrate their active engagement with young people and how they have sought views and interacted with young people.

Local policing is one of the most important areas of policing for engagement with young people which is why our scrutiny here is so important. Our engagement scrutiny also extends to receiving feedback on the delivery of the school liaison programme.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) will carry out its own engagement with young people. We will ensure that this engagement includes those who have direct experience of the criminal justice system. All engagement carried out by the OPCC will be compliant with General Data Protection Regulations.

The Action Plan details the activities which will ensure that the voice of the child is heard in relation to policing in North Wales.

## North Wales Police Cadets

North Wales Police operate a Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) scheme. This scheme has been running since 2015 and is very different to cadet schemes previously run by the Force. It is a two year programme, available to those aged between 13-18 years, from across North Wales. However, unlike previous schemes it is not intended as a recruitment tool for the police service, but rather it has an emphasis on engaging with vulnerable young people in the community and gives the cadets an opportunity to participate positively in their communities.

The aims of the National programme are to:

- Promote a practical understanding of policing amongst young people,
- Encourage the spirit of adventure and good citizenship,
- Support local policing priorities through volunteering and give young people a chance to be heard and
- Inspire young people to participate positively in their communities.



There are currently six cadet units operating across North Wales in six of the ten local policing areas, these are led by Police Support Volunteers at colleges of further education.

The real strength of the programme is that it helps the police to understand the issues facing young people; this in turn helps the police to deliver a better service.

# Protection

The Police and Crime Plan objectives were developed in response to the areas of greatest threat, risk and harm facing the communities of North Wales. The list below highlights areas that impact on our most vulnerable children and young people.

## Safeguarding Matters

- Young people at risk of sexual, physical abuse and neglect in the home.
- Children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse at home.
- Recognising and tackling child sexual abuse including sexual exploitation.
- Responding to missing children (with particular focus on looked after children who go missing).
- Road safety for young drivers to reduce the likelihood of fatal or serious accidents involving young people.
- Safeguarding and supporting children impacted by Modern Slavery and following the protocols in place to deal with this and children who are trafficked.
- Dealing with the issues of forced marriage and female genital mutilation in North Wales.
- Guarding against and tackling the potential radicalisation of young people.
- Dealing with young hate crime perpetrators and potential perpetrators.



- Supporting young victims of crime.
- Dealing with young people with mental health and substance misuse problems.
- Responding to children impacted by organised crime including Child Criminal Exploitation (County Lines)<sup>2</sup>, Child Sexual Exploitation and Modern Slavery.

These are key matters not just for the Force in relation to safeguarding children and young people but also for statutory partners. The OPCC will explore how the Force works effectively in partnership, for example through the North Wales Safeguarding Board and other partnerships to deal with such issues.

The above is not an exhaustive list of issues. However it highlights some of the key themes that fall within the Police and Crime Plan.

<sup>2</sup> County Lines refers to the exploitation of children by urban street gangs to transport/store/distribute drugs or commit other criminality in rural or coastal towns.



# Provision

## Reducing Criminalisation

There are different ways in which North Wales Police can contribute to reducing the criminalisation of children and young people. This may be by adopting particular policies, changing an operational approach or working together with partners.

## Neighbourhood Policing

The role of community officers in preventing reoffending is very important. We will monitor the work of North Wales Police to deal with low level offending by young people and in encouraging distraction and community based activities to help them to move away from such offending and/or anti-social behaviour.

## Looked After Children

The Commissioner is concerned about the unnecessary criminalisation of children. This is particularly so for looked after children as they are over-represented in the criminal justice system. We have therefore agreed to support and monitor processes to reduce the criminalisation of looked after children.

## Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment

Outcomes for children affected by parental imprisonment are often less favourable than those who are not. This is particularly so when it comes to the likelihood that those children will go on to become offenders themselves. Compared to their peers, children face significant pressures

and emotional upheaval during the period of a family member's imprisonment and have a greater likelihood of a range of poor outcomes, and of facing impoverished and damaging lives.

Intergenerational offending is a big issue: a landmark study found that 65% of boys who had a father in custody go on to offend themselves. The imprisonment of a mother also has lasting consequences for children and only 5% of children with a mother in prison remain in their own home.

Families, generally, are more likely to experience poverty and debt and feel stigmatised in their communities; the children tend to feel more isolated in schools. This also affects children and families who have a parent or family member involved elsewhere in the criminal justice system, not just in prison.

Children with a parent in prison:

- are twice as likely to experience conduct and mental health problems;
- are less likely to do well at school and more likely to be excluded;
- are three times more likely to be a perpetrator or victim of domestic violence;
- are four times more likely to become dependent on drugs; and
- cost the public purse ten times more by the age of 28.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has carried out research into the measures in place in North Wales to support such children in order to help improve their potential and to minimise negative outcomes. It was clear following this research that there was no such support in place. Following collaborative work with key partners (through the North Wales Safer Communities Board) 2 new roles have been created. These roles will make a difference to many children across North Wales who may need support but are currently hidden within the system. This partnership approach to dealing with this issue has the potential to bring great benefit to a number of children throughout the region who are or will be impacted by the imprisonment of a parent.

### **Youth Justice Services in Wales – Enhanced Case Management**

Since 2010 the number of young people coming into the criminal justice system in North Wales has reduced considerably, however, we must focus on those who remain within the system and seek to tackle reoffending rates.

Work is progressing within the Youth Justice Service in Wales to tackle the multiple and complex needs of some young people who enter the criminal justice system and remain there with high reoffending rates. The Enhanced Case Management approach was piloted in parts of North Wales and showed initial success. This approach targets children with a minimum of 25 offences. In order to understand and target the right approach for a young person's needs this model analyses their specific requirements in terms of welfare, background (such as Adverse Childhood Experiences) education, mental health and substance misuse.

The recent evaluation of this approach has shown a reduction of reoffending in those with particularly complex needs. The Commissioner supports such innovative projects that help to reduce reoffending rates.



### **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

There is a growing body of research that has identified the long term harms that can result from chronic stresses placed upon people during childhood. Neglect, domestic abuse, sexual violence, alcohol and substance misuse within the home, when occurring during childhood are examples of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). People with greater exposure to ACEs are more likely to develop health harming, anti-social and criminal behaviours, particularly during adolescence. Evidence shows that people with 4 or more ACEs are 14 times more likely to be a victim of violence and 15 times more likely to have committed a violent offence against another person.

North Wales Police are actively working together with partners to deal with the impact of ACEs and to prevent their occurrence where possible. By working with the local health board, local authorities, other criminal justice partners as well as the Welsh Government and other national agencies North Wales Police can help to reduce the negative impact of ACEs and aim resources to prevent their occurrence where possible.

Local authorities are currently undertaking a great deal of intervention work with families including initiatives such as Team Around The Family. Furthermore the ACE programme will establish a rich understanding of service provision for ACEs across all organisations including statutory, private and third sector. The intention of the programme is to bring about consistency and develop pathways in collaboration, ultimately seeking to prevent and not just react and problem solve.

The programme will transform the way in which North Wales Police responds to ACEs. Officers will receive specialist training by dedicated ACE co-ordinators. There will be better understanding of networks to enable better support to stakeholders. A shared understanding and approach across agencies will equip North Wales Police with better information and processes in order to support families.

## Children and Mental Health

The police are regularly required to help people who are experiencing mental health crisis and often it is young people who experience these types of crises. The importance of dealing appropriately with such vulnerable people cannot be underestimated. Mental illness is a health issue and those experiencing its effects should not be placed in police custody especially not children. North Wales Police therefore work closely with partners in the health service

and in local authorities to ensure that young people experiencing mental health crisis which brings them to the attention of the police are given the safest and most appropriate care that does not unnecessarily criminalise or add further trauma to an already stressful event.

## County Lines and Organised Crime

Tackling organised crime is one of the main priorities for North Wales Police. One of the ways in which organised crime gangs impact young people particularly is through the criminal activity known as County Lines. This is where children are exploited through urban street gangs to transport, store and/or distribute drugs or carry out other criminality in rural or coastal towns. The gangs are usually based in large cities. North Wales Police with the support of national partners such as the National Crime Agency are working to tackle and prevent the ability of such gangs to operate across North Wales. Safeguarding the young people affected and caught up in this criminality is of paramount importance as is preventing its occurrence. North Wales Police are in receipt of funding through the Government's Transformation Fund to protect young people and tackle County Lines activity in North Wales.



## Stop and Search

The United Nations Committee [2016] has stated that children's rights to privacy means that the use of Stop and Search must be proportionate, considering the age and maturity of the child and non-discriminatory. It also stated that there should be better collation and publication of data on stop and search to help monitor its use on children.

Stop and search figures in North Wales continue to show significantly higher numbers of stops of young people (those under the age of 25) than for all other age categories. North Wales Police is a member of the national Best Use of Stop & Search Scheme and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner sits on the Force Public Encounters Board (formerly known as the Stop & Search Board). We will continue to scrutinise and challenge the Force over its use of stop and search powers in relation to young people.

## Children in Police Custody

It is important that both North Wales Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner are working together effectively with partners to avoid the use of custody for children.

Where custody is required it is paramount that the correct process for dealing with children and young people operates efficiently and appropriately. When children and young people do come into police custody there are a number of measures in place to ensure the safe and proper handling of detainees including checks of appropriate adults.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has a duty to monitor custody processes and to hold North Wales Police to account in this regard. The office recruits, trains and supervises a number of voluntary custody visitors whose role it is to visit custody suites across North Wales.



They check the welfare needs of detainees are met and that proper process is followed. The Police and Crime Commissioner also receives regular reports to the Strategic Executive Board from the Force on the use of custody for children and young people. These reports are then published on the Commissioner's website.

## Use of Force

Use of force against children and young people held in custody is now considered by the Police and Crime Commissioner within reports to the Strategic Executive Board. In addition use of force is also a part of the regular dip sample exercise of complaints files.

## Complaints

Children and young people have the right to complain if they are unhappy about the way in which they have been dealt with by the police. Often children and young people are unaware of their right to make a complaint about policing services. We will promote their right to complain.

As part of our scrutiny of professional standards, we shall proactively monitor complaints brought by children and young people.



# Performance

## Outcomes

The outcomes that we are seeking to achieve are not easily measurable. We will therefore need to find innovative ways in which to demonstrate the success or otherwise of this work.

We will consider evidence and indicators that point to the following:-

### 1. Improved confidence of children and young people in North Wales Police resulting in

- Better relationships between the police and young people
- Willingness of children and young people to report crime

### 2. Reduced number of young people being drawn into the criminal justice system.

The Commissioner's main vehicle for scrutiny of North Wales Police is the **Strategic Executive Board** which meets approximately every 8 weeks to analyse progress against the Police and Crime Plan and to look generally at the performance of North Wales Police. An update on matters identified for scrutiny within this Children's Strategy will periodically be required from the Force to this meeting.



## Delivery

An action plan supporting this work has been established together with the Force.