

Youth Commissioner Report - January 2020

As of writing this report Georgia & I have been the youth commissioners for Dudley for 13 months in total. We have up until this point led a campaign called “Sharpen Minds Not Knives”, where we have so far centred our work around going into schools and colleges with a unique take on teaching young people the dangers of carrying a knife, the scale of the county lines situation that fuels knife violence, and the inescapable realities of using a knife in an offensive capacity. This “unique take” involves bringing together a law enforcement figure, and a reformed ex-gang member to ensure that our sessions have a maximum impact on young people. This also contributes towards bridging the gap between the community and police, which has become increasingly significant. As of this report, we have delivered our session to over 500 students between the ages of 15-17 years old, with 50% being from Dudley Sixth and the other 50% being from Beacon Hill Academy. Due to the nature of the session, we believe that the ideal year groups for the session are years 9-14. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback, and a suggestion from Beacon Hill that our sessions would be suitable for focus groups made up of students who are seen to be at risk of committing crime, or are already involved in crime.



In addition to our sessions, I have been attending Stop & Search Scrutiny panels, where use of force and stop and search is reviewed by members of the public thoroughly. I think that these sessions are a great way to encourage transparency within WMP and would like to develop them as much as possible going forward. More specifically, the panels are currently held at Brierley Hill Police Station, which can be off-putting for members of the public for a variety of reasons. Going forward, it is a goal of ours to see what we can do to relocate these sessions, and maybe even tailor them to particular audiences, but still keeping transparency in mind.

We've also been trying to aid in the rolling out of the “Citizens Advice Dudley Borough Money Confidence Project”, centred around being smart with your money and avoiding being consumed by debt. The reason why we'd like to try and roll this out is due to our belief that financial instability and insecurity can certainly be an avenue into crime, and therefore violence. At the moment, the project is only offered for adults and care leavers. However, I really think that this can be delivered to students if in the name of preventing crime. I have already proposed my ideas to the project managers, and they seemed enthusiastic about the expansion that I proposed. However, I do predict that it will be a challenge to get schools on board with offering it to students. With A level exams coming up, it would be great if the Youth Council could support me with this.

I have also been in contact with the youth offending service (YOS), of which I have had good discussions with on how we can develop the campaign. Our discussion

has since produced 2 main ideas, the first is to produce a podcast where I talk to young people who have turned their lives around, particularly via going through our YOS. The other would be to collaborate with the Dudley NPU to really change the way we look at and deal with crime geographically. This would be done through pushing an idea called “impact areas”. Essentially this involves looking at and treating crime on a more specific basis, such as by street rather than by ward, e.g Lupin Rd as opposed to Kates Hill, a street within a ward. Both ideas are still just ideas, but give a strong indication of what’s to come.

A year in, me and Georgia have come to see that there is massive potential as a Youth Commissioner, as had been the focus of our presentation at the youth summit. What we have noticed in particular is that the role is great for bringing organisations in the borough together, and we have made that one of our main objectives. For example, we sit on the safe & sound community partnership and the independent advisory group.

Having identified our main goal as violence prevention, we may seek to rebrand our “sharpen minds not knives slogan”, as we focus on preventing all violence, rather than just knife crime. We will continue to deliver more sessions in 2020, but estimate that the campaign will really come into its own.

[Click here for my appearance on BBC WM](#) (play from 19:37)

[Click here for our Daily Mirror Appearance](#)

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Emerson Hanslip

Youth Commissioners