CYCJ: A Stakeholder's Perspective

Findings from the 2014 Stakeholder Survey

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Introduction

Each year the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) agrees a workplan with the Scottish Government, to provide clarity and a direction about how CYCJ will achieve its strategic aims and objectives over the coming financial year. As our strategic plan indicates, CYCJ strongly believes in engagement, connection and participation. As such, it is important to us to ensure that we engage with all of our stakeholders in the development of this plan, to ensure that we can meet the emerging needs and priorities of the people we work with and for. We achieve this by undertaking a regular stakeholder consultation exercise that allows CYCJ to benchmark progress, as well as to seek views, perceptions and experiences.

Our key professional stakeholders include not only policymakers in the Scottish Government, but also the full breadth of the Youth Justice workforce (including practitioners across statutory and third sector organisations, and researchers and academics in the field, among many others). Other important stakeholders include, of course, young people themselves, as well as the communities of which they are part. These three groups made up the separate arms of our consultation. Professionals were consulted via two separate online surveys (an initial 'call for ideas' and a more in-depth survey exploring these emerging priorities in greater detail). Communities were also consulted using an online survey (although paper versions were available on request) that was aimed at community councils to gather a range of interested views. Young people were issued with a short, postcard-sized survey predominantly via schools, but with boosted samples drawn from youth clubs and youth offending services to capture the full experience of young people.

The following report documents the pertinent issues from each of these three perspectives separately. However, it is also evident that there are clear parallels between the three groups, particularly those of young people and their communities. The report concludes by briefly outlining how and in what way we have interpreted and used the valuable findings from the exercise. A young person's poster has also been drafted that summarises the key points from young people and communities.

Lastly we would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in our stakeholder survey. Your views are very important to us.

Youth Justice Workforce

1. Demographics

- A total of 53 respondents completed the survey, although some respondents did not complete all of the questions. Responses where the respondent only completed the demographic information but no other questions were excluded from the analysis. One community council completed both the workforce and the community council survey, the workforce entry was also not included in this analysis.
- Responses were down from 64 in the 2013 stakeholder survey, but this may reflect a change in the methodology, whereby the workforce was this year initially asked for ideas for work and projects in November followed up with the main survey in December. This initial contact led to 34 responses although due to the anonymous nature of the survey it is not possible to determine if these are unique responses or if there is some overlap.
- Responses were drawn from across Scotland, with 21 of the 32 Scottish Local Authority areas represented by at least one response. One respondent was based outside of Scotland. Glasgow was the frequently named Local Authority area (seven responses), followed by Edinburgh (five responses) and Angus, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire (each with four responses).
- Local Authority respondents made up the bulk of respondents with 32 responses (60%). 'Other' respondents comprised seven responses (13%) and were mainly drawn from SCRA, Children's Hearings or Community Justice Authorities.

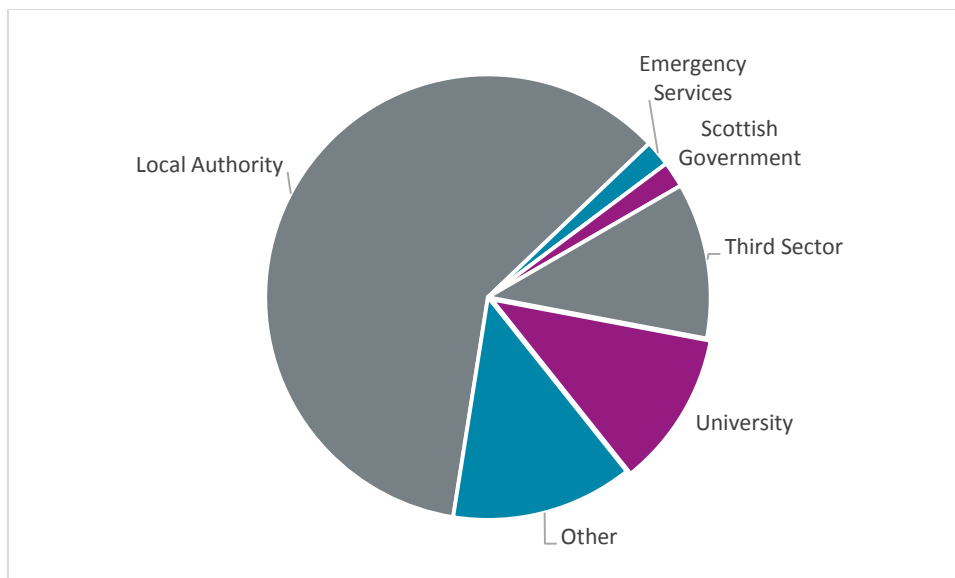*Figure 1: Respondents by Organisation Type (n=53)*

- The most frequent role of respondents was that of a Criminal Justice Social Worker (nine responses, or 17%), followed by Children and Families Workers (eight, 15%) and Youth Justice Social Workers (five, 9%). Other respondents included service managers, researchers, Children's Panel members, Third Sector staff, an elected member and EEI workers.

2. Benchmarking

- The Stakeholder Survey repeated questions that had been asked last year in order to provide some form of measure for progress and performance. It should be noted that there have been some minor wording tweaks but that the content of the questions has broadly remained the same.

- Focusing on the nature and contact that the workforce has with CYCJ reveals a broad increase in contact across a range of mediums including: online interactions, face-to-face contact and written documents (see Figure 2). Regular use of the website, e-bulletins and briefing papers/information sheets displayed a notable increase over the past year. This coincides with a relaunch of the CYCJ website in January 2014. Although regular followers of CYCJ on Twitter appear to have fallen slightly this is likely to be a reflection of sample characteristics, as Twitter followers have more than doubled in the same time period and numbered 735 at the end of 2014. A notable decrease is the number of respondents having contact with CYCJ at meetings. This may reflect a genuine reduction, for example potentially due to a reduction in NYJAG meetings during 2014, or again may reflect the sample characteristics. It may be that the survey this year reached a broader range of stakeholders outside of the core managerial cohort that typically represent their organisations on Champions Groups etc.
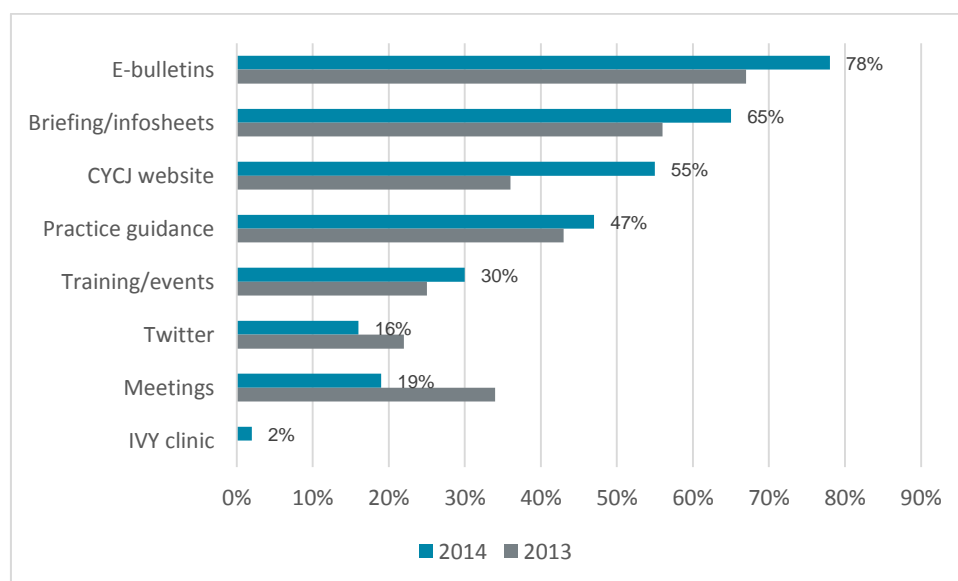

Figure 2: nature of contact with CYCJ and % of respondents reporting this type of contact 'regularly' or 'all the time'

- Respondents were asked to rate the impact of CYCJ out of 100. Given the time, effort and resources required to create organisational change it is simpler to influence knowledge and understanding than it is to support changes in organisations and services. It is therefore not surprising that the area where CYCJ was seen to have the biggest impact was on knowledge, followed by practice and then policy. However, each of these areas displayed an increase in the perceived impact compared to the previous year, with each area recording between a seven and nine-point increase.
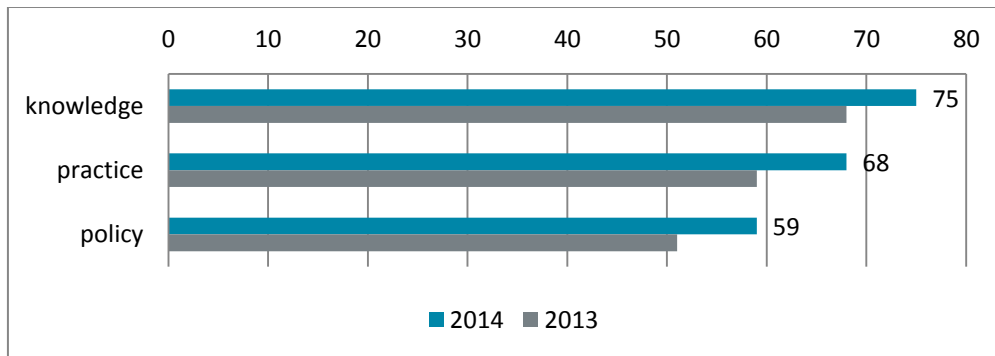
Figure 3: Mean rating (out of 100) of CYCJ's impact

3. Approach

- The workforce were asked to outline what they thought worked particularly well in CYCJ's approach. A total of 37 people responded to this question, with a few respondents providing multiple comments. The most common response (15 responses) was frequent and direct communication from CYCJ that meant that busy staff did not have to go searching for information: *On mailing list – really useful information received straight to mailbox*. The E-bulletin was cited specifically by many respondents as providing a useful monthly 'prompt': *I like the accessibility of the material and find the e-bulletins informative.*
- Training and events were also well received by the workforce (14 responses). Respondents tended to appreciate the opportunity to attend events and found them to be relevant and meaningful for their current practice: *the Centre organises training that is relevant and up-to-date*, and events had the potential to be transformative: *The events I have attended have been inspiring*.
- Access to CYCJ resources such as research reports and information sheets was viewed by the workforce as particularly useful (13 responses): *I have found the policy and research reports helpful to date…as they provide an overall context for the work being carried out which can be difficult to keep in mind as a practitioner.* The information sheets were viewed as being very accessible.
- CYCJ staff were also perceived as friendly, approachable and with expertise that meant they could provide a useful level of support to practitioners (11 responses): *They have also met with us to discuss best practice, sounding boards for ideas, provided consultation and guidance in practice areas and supported our events on a local level.* The national remit and oversight of youth justice was thought to be helpful: *They have a national knowledge that is helpful in terms of development and have always been able to steer me in the right direction…if I am looking for specific pieces of information or guidance.*
- When asked what worked less well, it was apparent that most respondents were satisfied with the way that CYCJ operated. Out of 29 responses 17 felt that the CYCJ approach was appropriate: *My experience has been very positive and I cannot actually think of any issues*. Two respondents felt that they did not know enough about CYCJ to provide appropriate comment and two provided comments about what was working less well with the youth justice system, rather than CYCJ per se.
- Specific areas highlighted that CYCJ could address included the format of its communications, namely the e-bulletin or the website as a small number of respondents felt it was initially off-putting or had become more difficult to find the information that was

needed (3 responses): *The layout of the emails could be improved as how they come through doesn't look interesting. However, on closer inspection there are usually good articles.* Two respondents felt that registration for events could be organised more efficiently: *Can be a bit slow in getting confirmation / details for training and events*. Two respondents also felt that CYCJ outputs were not specific or relevant enough for their field of work (in these instances this involved criminal justice and the children's panel): *There is currently less of a focus on the adult criminal justice system which may be planned for the future.* One respondent felt that the location of events was not always accessible to participants from the north of the country.

4. Priorities

- Based on the initial call for ideas in November 2014 a total of 14 different topics were presented to the workforce and respondents were asked to rank up to five projects, with one being their highest priority. It should be noted that, by necessity, the projects presented were fairly broad and it may be that ideas for *specific* projects within these topics varied between respondents.
- Using a 'first-past-the-post' system (i.e. looking at the number of first choice votes only) the highest priority projects were in relation to: complex needs; substance misuse; and looked after child and youth justice.

Table 1: Highest ranking priorities by the workforce

Topic	Number of respondents ranking it as the highest priority
Complex Needs (mental health, trauma, loss and bereavement etc)	10
Substance Misuse (interventions, social groups, screening etc)	6
Looked After Children and Youth Justice	6
Professional Development activity (students, staff etc.)	3
Desistance (co-offending etc)	2
Victims and Communities	2
Youth Justice Data (national/ local data)	2
Reintegration	2
Sexually Harmful Behaviour	2
Secure Care (outcomes etc.)	1
Assessment	1
Evaluation (services, interventions etc.)	1
Gender (different needs and contexts for females / males)	1
Documentation (processes, services, best practice etc across country)	0

- Using a more proportional system (counting the number of 'top three' or 'top five' rankings by respondents for each topic) reveals a similar ranking order, but less of a clear demarcation between the top three priorities. Reintegration and gender both became a little more prominent when looking at the wider rankings. Table 2 overleaf is sorted according to the top three rankings, as this was the minimum number of items that could be selected in order to proceed to the next question. Top 5 rankings would result in a slightly different order.

Table 2: Top 3 and Top 5 priorities by the workforce

Topic	Number of respondents ranking it in their top 3 priorities	Number of respondents ranking it in their top 5 priorities
Complex Needs (mental health, trauma, loss and bereavement etc)	17	26
Substance Misuse (interventions, peer and social groups, screening etc)	16	22
Looked After Children and Youth Justice	15	24
Professional Development activity (students, staff etc.)	8	10
Desistance (co-offending etc)	8	14
Reintegration	8	13
Gender (different needs and contexts for females / males)	8	11
Sexually Harmful Behaviour	7	12
Assessment	7	10
Youth Justice Data (national/ local data)	6	9
Secure Care (outcomes etc.)	6	9
Victims and Communities	5	9
Evaluation (services, interventions etc.)	5	9
Documentation (processes, services, best practice etc across country)	1	4

- Respondents were also asked to identify other priorities that had been missed from the list. The workforce tended to agree with the list that had been provided, although a total of 11 additional suggestions were recorded. These included: autism; the effect of family imprisonment; holistic approaches; domestic abuse; family work and general suggestions such as 'developing best practice grounded in research and practice wisdom'.

5. Other

- Respondents were asked to provide any final comment. One respondent reiterated a view that more work needed to be targeted towards panel members, otherwise this section was simply used to reiterate the perceived value of CYCJ or to say thank you for the service provided: *You are awesome, keep up the good work!*

Communities

1. Demographics

- Surveys were sent to approximately 990 community councils around Scotland where an email address or contact number could be identified, although the final target population reached is difficult to ascertain as many of the community councils turned out to be inactive or had out-of-date contact details. Communication was predominantly electronic although hard copies were issued if requested.
- A total of 235 responses were received (around one-in-four of the target population) and responses were received from community councils in 31 out of 32 Local Authority areas. While more rural Local Authorities tended to be more represented, in terms of the *number* of community councils responding, it should be noted that community councils are more numerous in these areas and may represent smaller populations over larger geographies. However, a number of community councils did not complete each and every question in the survey and as such the response sets vary between questions.
- Surveys were most often completed by the community council as a whole, either by a member of the council following discussion, or collectively at the meeting (53%). A further third of responses were completed by a community council member without consultation with the community council (34%). The remaining surveys were completed in a variety of ways, for example by a subgroup of the community council who had been tasked with completion of the survey.

2. Community issues and priorities

- Community Councils were first asked what was the biggest issue facing their community at the present time. While the intention was to identify *any* issue, not simply those relating to young people or criminal justice, the information sheet provided as well as the name of the centre may have prompted respondents to think in terms of crime issues. Certainly from a few of the responses it appears that this question has been interpreted in this way: *youth crime doesn't appear to be a problem, per se* or: *No CYCJ issues*. While it is not possible to ascertain how many councils answered the question in this way, it is likely that crime issues have, to some extent, been over-represented.
- Despite this, crime issues were only the third biggest issue facing communities, after roads / transport issues, and environmental issues. A total of 304 issues were mentioned across 216 community councils as some community councils had identified more than one key issue, although only those that received *at least* 10 responses are reported here. Table 3 outlines these key issues with selected responses provided underneath each theme.

Table 3: Biggest issues that communities are facing (n=215)

Biggest issue	Number of respondents ranking it as their biggest issue
Road conditions /Traffic / Public transport issues *Traffic speed* *Condition of roads* *Lack of frequent and/or affordable public transport and fuel costs* *Very bad parking facilities to allow schools and shops to operate safely*	52
Environmental Issues *Windfarms* *Derelict properties within the community* *Development of the greenbelt* *Litter*	45
Crime and Antisocial Behaviour *Theft, drugs and youth disorder* *Antisocial behaviour; theft; damage to cars* *Vandalism and loitering* *Break-ins*	44
Lack of facilities / Services / Resources *We have a lack of facilities for all age groups, an overcrowded primary school* *Closure of council buildings and facilities* *Lack of amenities for the whole community, youths in particular* *Reduction of schooling, access to health services*	41
Substance Misuse *Drug use is sporadic but of concern* *Underage drinking which can cause antisocial behaviour* *There would appear to be an increased use of "Legal Highs"*	31
Unemployment / Deprivation / Economic Decline *Lack of employment, especially for young people and those over 50* *Deprivation - unemployment, lack of investment* *Failing High Street*	26
Housing Issues *Lack of affordable housing* *Pressure to create more housing and its impact on…infrastructure*	17
Other Issues (varied, but most frequently 'support for elderly residents')	11
No Major Issues	10

- Community councils drew connections between some of these issues, with crime / antisocial behaviour and substance misuse the most frequently linked. Although crime and substance misuse occurred together frequently, for example in bulleted lists, unless the community council drew a direct connection these have not been included. However, they were explicitly linked on 16 separate occasions, for example: *drug misuse and those who are involved in stealing from shops to pay for their habit* or: *petty vandalism caused through drunkenness.*

- With crime as the third biggest issue, some community councils did specify that it was youth crime that was the problem (mentioned in 15 out of the 44 references to crime or antisocial behaviour): *Youth disorder in various forms. Noise of youth congregations*, others did not specify who were responsible for crime in their area and a small number noted that crime was associated with adults: *No one issue, usually assault, but that is not generally by young people, mostly husband and wife.*

- Crime issues tended to be nuisance or pretty offences which, while very frustrating for residents, costly and damaging to the environment, tended towards the lower end of offending: *Vandalism with particular reference to scratched cars which sound minor but is very expensive to repair.* More serious crimes mentioned included housebreaking and assault but were mentioned fairly infrequently.

3. Community issues facing young people

- Community Councils were then asked what were the biggest issues facing young people in their community, in order to identify any differences between young people and the community as a whole. A total of 305 suggestions were provided from 228 community councils. While many of the issues remained the same as for the community in general, the order of these priorities was somewhat different. Table 4 overleaf outlines these key issues with selected responses provided underneath each theme, and again only those issues that received more than ten responses were included.

Table 4: Biggest issues that young people in communities are facing (n=227)

Biggest issue	Number of respondents ranking it as their biggest issue
Lack of Facilities / Services / Resources *Lack of facilities for teenagers/young people* *No local youth clubs or organisations - need to travel to access these* *No school, no facilities, no jobs* *Lack of access to sport and social activities that often are either over-subscribed or expensive*	117
Unemployment / Deprivation / Lack of Opportunities *Difficulty in accessing further education (and therefore higher paid employment)* *Lack of opportunities for viable and sustainable employment* *There are "jobs" but few "careers" available* *Young people cannot get work because they are not qualified in anything for whatever reason*	78
Public Transport Issues / Road Safety *Social exclusion as a result of poor transport* *Even if they do get a job, there is a lack of public transport after 6pm* *High cost of public transport* *Lack of public transport from rural area to nearest town for facilities*	42
Lack of Understanding / Inclusion / Engagement *A sense of identity, the recognised organisations tend to presume they know everything and don't engage the young people in the community* *We find that young people are not engaging in community issues* *Reflects the difficulty we, like most other community councils, have in engaging with younger people in the community*	17
Substance Misuse *Easy availability of drugs is probably the biggest problem in the area* *Underage drinking* *A small number of young people who have problems with underage drinking*	16
Other Issues *Peer pressure* *Cyber bullying*	11

- By far the most common response was a lack of facilities and amenities for young people in the local area, raised by more than half of all respondents. A lack of facilities was attributed mainly to budget cutbacks, unaffordability or inaccessibility. However, a small number expressed the view that young people were not interested in the facilities on offer and a similar number indicated that there were insufficient adult volunteers in the community to provide activities, despite interest from young people.
- Misunderstandings between young people and adults were common, for example communities mentioned that, with nothing to do, young people frequently resorted to 'hanging around' which was intimidating for some adult or elderly members of the community: *They feel that there is nowhere for them to get together informally and just have a bit of a carry on, maybe kicking a ball about, listening to music and not doing anything organised or supervised. The bus stop in the centre of town is ideal for them, covered and near to the Co-op which is open til late for sweets and pop but the nearby residents object to the noise and feel intimidated - plus wet if it's raining and they are waiting to catch a bus.*

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- The second most common response was a lack of meaningful employment in the local area due to economic decline, although a small number of community councils felt that young people were now lacking in suitable for qualifications or ambition for the available jobs.
- A lack of frequent or affordable public transport was the third most frequent response and was implicated in both difficulties accessing amenities as well as in accessing employment or educational opportunities. Transport was *directly* associated with lack of amenities on 22 separate occasions and with a lack of employment or education opportunities in six responses.
- Interestingly crime and antisocial behaviour did not feature highly, and was only mentioned by five community councils in relation to this question. Perhaps this reflects a view of crime and antisocial behaviour as something that is *caused* by young people, not necessarily *experienced* by them, although this was not explored in the survey. However, many studies show that young people are more likely to be victims of crime than adults.
- The challenge of engaging and involving young people was a key difference between the issues facing the community as a whole and those that were specific to young people (apathy and lack of community spirit was to some extent an issue among the wider community, but was only raised by eight community councils in response to the previous question). Responses generally indicated that there were two distinct reasons behind this disengagement – either a lack of interest from young people: *poor education systems which do not teach them any life skills or the value of participation in their community* or a lack of understanding or involvement from adults in the wider community: *perhaps the "biggest" issue facing young people will be the "perception of issues", rather than the issues themselves: i.e. negative stereotyping that young people do not have as great a contribution to make to the community than they actually do, and thus exclusion from the democratic process*. Lack of transport was also a factor that served to isolate young people from their friends or social networks.

4.   Perceptions of crime trends across Scotland

- Community councils were asked about their impression of youth crime trends across Scotland (not in their local area) over the past five years. The results suggest that community councils do not have access to accurate or up-to-date information about national youth crime figures, as only one in five believed that youth crime had reduced in that timeframe and a large proportion of community councils were not confident at being able to answer the question. In reality, official police recorded crime statistics suggest that youth crime has almost halved over the past five years (down by 45% since 2008/09). This is a consistent trend seen across each of the eight Police Force areas that existed prior to police reorganisation in 2013.
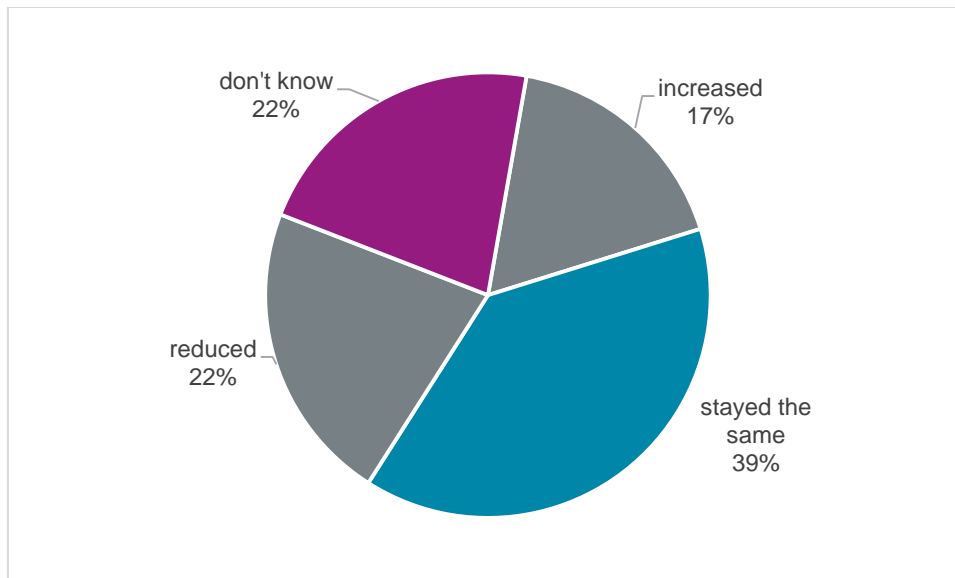
Figure 4: Perceptions of national youth crime trends over the past 5 years (n=222)

5.   Youth crime locally

- Community councils were asked to rate how much of a problem youth crime was in their local community area. This revealed a different story to the national picture, with around two-thirds of respondents stating that youth crime was 'not really a problem' or 'not a problem at all' (64%).
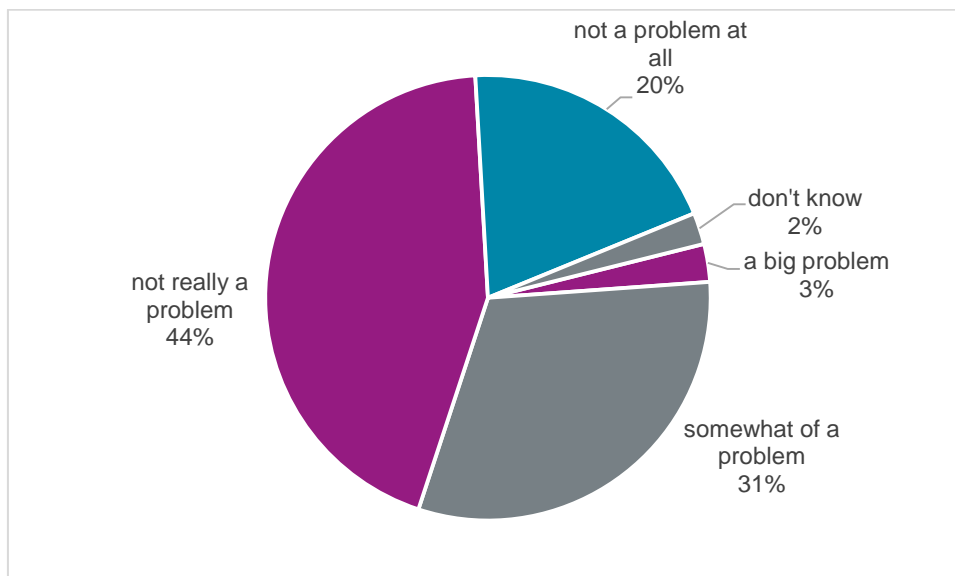

Figure 5: Is youth crime a problem in your community (n=201)

- Only six community councils felt that youth crime was a big problem in their area. These areas were spread throughout the country, with two from Aberdeen, and one each from Clackmannanshire, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire and Stirling. Neither did there appear to be an especially strong link with deprivation as, for the five community councils who provided

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their details, there was a wide variation in deprivation levels ranging from a community council in the *most* deprived 5% of neighbourhoods in Scotland, to one that was in the *least* deprived half of neighbourhoods in the country[1]. However, almost all did fall in the more deprived half of neighbourhoods.

- Community councils formed their understanding of crime in their local area mainly from reports from the local community police. Other sources of information were experience or observation, or the local media.

6. Reducing youth crime

- Suggestions were sought from community councils as to how youth crime could be reduced in their area. In total 279 suggestions were made from 197 community councils, as outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 5: What would reduce youth crime in your area (n=197)

What would help to reduce youth crime	Number of respondents
Improved / more accessible amenities and facilities *More facilities for kids; not necessarily just sport* *Better public transport access to allow youths to attend the facilities in town* *More affordable leisure facilities* *Organised activities*	96
More Police on the street / Police involvement *More visible police/community wardens* *Communication with and education by the police* *Early police involvement in community projects to create a mutual respect* *More community police officers on the ground*	37
Community engagement *Involvement, listening, understanding* *More community projects which bring young and old together* *Continue to include the youth in our consultations and activities* *Getting individuals to be involved in their community*	37
Not applicable as it's not a problem *Youth crime is not really a problem in our area*	29
Economic improvement / policy changes *More employment and better opportunities locally* *Changes to economic policy in terms of welfare and wider macroeconomics* *Full well paid employment....and prospects of a good and productive life*	26
Improved education / awareness-raising / intervention *Continuing education on Alcohol and Drugs* *Better education*	15
More parental responsibility *Parental responsibilities and involvement* *Parents teaching their children proper values and how to behave*	12
Other Issues (varied, but most frequently environmental changes such as lighting and CCTV) *Brighter better-designed footpaths*	12
Tighter controls on substance use	10

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[1] The *most* deprived datazone (SIMD, 2012) in each community council area has been used for this analysis, and so may overestimate the levels of deprivation across the entire community council area.

- Unsurprisingly, improving the access to and provision of structured and positive activities was the most frequently mentioned solution for reducing youth crime: *More evening activities. Hardly any crime, just bored young people that sometimes carry out vandalism mainly in playpark*. However, a few councils recognised that young people were not always interested in organised activities or what adults thought they should be interested in, and that there was a need for greater understanding of youth culture (see below): *Giving young people a warm, illuminated comfortable safe place THAT THEY WANT TO USE. It is no good offering youth clubs or formal entertainment, they just want a space to be themselves. However our town does not have such a space, or anywhere in the town where such a space could be constructed - sadly, even if funds could be made available I am not sure there is anyone who would have the time or ability to project manage it*.

- An increased police presence is often viewed by the general public as a good way to reduce crime, and in this respect community councils were no different, with more police officers the joint second suggestion. In particular respondents were keen to see increased foot patrols of community police who know the young people in the area. Councils thought this would have a deterrent effect as well as improving relationships between the police and young people: *Local police do a great deal of work to establish good relations with young people but are spread too thin over the area. More community police presence would be good*.

- Of interest was that better community engagement was cited as frequently as the suggestion of more police on the streets, suggesting that communities view themselves as having a role to play in reducing youth crime and not just enforcement agencies. There was a recognition that involving young people in their communities created a sense of ownership and mutual respect. Community councils at times mentioned that they needed to find a way to support better dialogue and involvement with the younger members of their community. However, this community engagement was not limited to young people, and there was an acknowledgement that adults could do more to support the whole community, as well as young people: *The issue is often not the provision of facilities or funds, but the availability of committed adults to run sports and recreational programmes, or to mobilise and motivate younger people to take part in other community-focused activity.*

7. Information needs

- Community councils were also asked what information they would like to know about youth crime. A total of 211 suggestions were received from 186 community councils, as outlined in Table 6 overleaf.

Table 6: What information would your community council like to know about youth crime (n=186)

What information would you like	Number of respondents
Local crime information – trends / statistics etc *Real data, not media led* *Would like to know how to access local trends of youth crime* *Where incidents occur and more detail on police response follow up on detection* *Crime figures and what type of crime (crime reports)*	56
No need for information / already have sufficient information *We receive a monthly report from our community Police Report* *We get a regular update from the police and they attend our meetings as often as possible so we are really kept up to-date* *It's not a priority for us really, so nothing*	44
What works / examples of good practice *We would like to learn from other communities what they have done to reduce youth disorder and to make their towns safer places to live* *How do other communities deal with youth crime?* *What we can do to help prevent youth crime. Knowledge of any initiatives that have reduced youth crime*	33
Better understanding of youth crime – causes / system / national trends etc. *National figures as a comparison* *More information about the work of the Youth and Criminal Justice System* *We would like to know the causes of youth crime but also how our area compares with other areas*	32
Information on current services and initiative locally *What are the measures and activities currently in place* *What the council proposes to do about replacing village facilities* *What councils and Scottish Govt. intend to do about the problem*	20

- There was a clear appetite for local information about youth crime, whether this was the number or nature of offences, or hotspots 'etc'. Many councils mentioned that data covering bigger geographies was not always that useful for them, but that they did not want to rely on media reporting of crime which was often a source of local information. However, the need for information did tend to depend on the relationship with the local police, as a substantial minority of councils felt that either they did not need any information due to low levels of crime in their area, or that the information they already received was satisfactory. This was most likely to be the case when local police attended the community council meetings, although a number of councils noted that this was a declining trend: *The police have recently stopped giving a monthly 'crime stats' report. We think that should be re-instated* and: *Would like the Community police team to resume attending meetings where they can inform us of incidents/ problems etc. and where information can be passed on to them*.

- Community councils were also keen to find out what they could do to help prevent or reduce youth crime in their area, especially by learning from other similar council areas that had had successes in this regard. A number of councils were keen to find out how to better engage young people in the local community: *Any information which helps to reduce youth crime would be useful for our community, particularly suggestions for more youth involvement in the community*. It appears that many community councils have no current way of linking in with other councils in their wider Local Authority area, or in other

areas. However, a small number of Local Authorities did facilitate connections between community councils, by organising quarterly meetings between community council chairs for example.

- There were also a number of community councils who expressed a desire to better understand the 'big picture' when it came to youth crime – either by finding out about what was happening nationally, or how the justice system works, or by having a better understanding of the causes and effects of crime. In addition, many felt that national youth crime statistics and trends (or information from other areas) would help them ascertain the scale of the issue in their own community and allow for benchmarking and comparison.

- In addition community councils were keen to find out what was being done locally to address youth crime, for example by finding out what services were available in their area and how effective these were. Lastly, although it was not reported above, a further eight community councils indicated that they received almost no information about youth crime and would welcome any information: *Any information that's available* or: *As much as we can possibly get.*

Young People

1. Demographics

- Although young people clearly are part of communities, it was decided to consult with this group separately, especially given the reported lack of representation of young people in local or national democratic processes. The consultation adopted a three-pronged approach, seeking views from a broad spectrum of young people of secondary age in schools and youth clubs as well as more targeted opinions of those already in receipt of youth justice services. The same short postcard survey was issued to all three groups. Of 516 issued, 423 (82%) were returned overall and Table 7 below shows the breakdown of the response rate. It is not known how many of the young people consulted in schools and youth clubs had also some current or historic involvement with offending.

Table 7: Response to young person's postcard survey

Target Group	Number of postcards issued	Number of postcards returned	% of all returned responses
Schools	316	284	66%
Youth Clubs	100	74	17%
Youth Justice	100	71	17%
Total	**516**	**429**	**100%**

- Responses were received from a range of areas including rural and island services as well as schools and services in rural areas and also the Central Belt of Scotland.
- The average age of the sample was 15 years old, ranging from ten to 24 (a number of youth clubs returned surveys from young people outwith the target sample of under 18s, but it was decided to include them in the analysis). The average age was broadly similar across the three different settings (ranging from 15.0 in schools to 15.6 in youth justice services and youth clubs).
- Respondents were more likely to be female (54%) than male (46%). However, youth justice respondents were more likely to be male than female (59% compared to 41%).

2. Perceptions of youth crime

- Young people were asked whether youth crime was a problem in their community. Although most young people responded that it was 'sometimes' a problem, young people were slightly more likely to respond that it was 'not' a problem in their area. The young person's response cannot be directly compared to the community council response to this question, due to differences in wording/response options as well as potential differences in the geographical areas from which responses were received. That said, it appears that there were broad similarities between the two groups: for example 20% of community councils said that youth crime was not a problem at all, compared to 23% of young people. Furthermore, 44% of communities felt that youth crime was 'not really' a problem, compared to 42% of young people who stated 'sometimes'. The biggest difference appears in those respondents who felt that youth crime was a definite problem in their community (34% of community councils responding 'somewhat' or 'a big problem'; compared to 17% of young people responding 'yes'). However, this may reflect a larger

proportion of young people responding 'don't know' (18% compared to 2% of community councils).
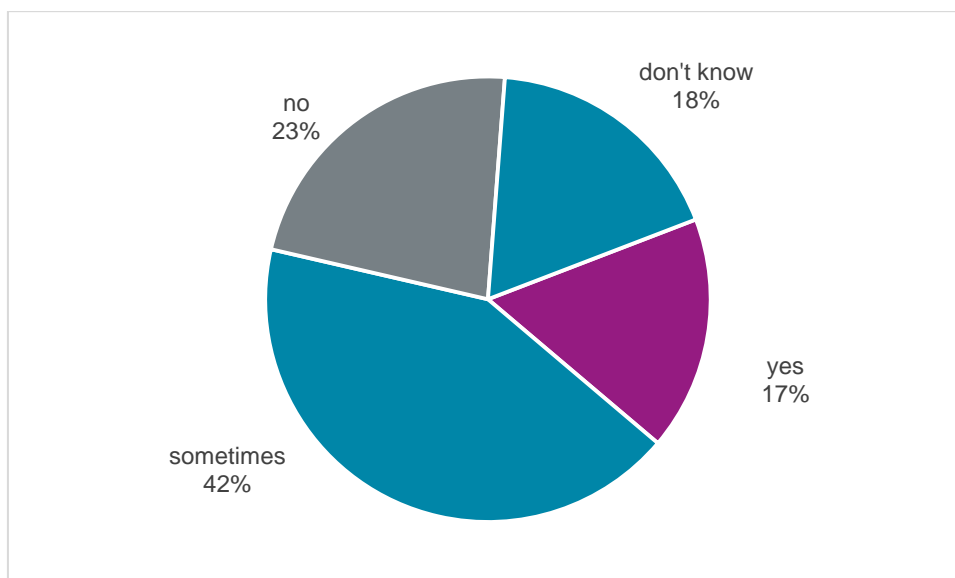

Figure 6: Is youth crime a problem in your community (n=429)

- Unsurprisingly the response varied quite substantially between schools, youth clubs and youth justice services, as around 9% of school-based respondents thought that crime was a problem in their community, compared to 20% of youth clubs and almost half (46%) of youth justice-based respondents.
- This perhaps reflects potentially different circumstances between young people in these populations. However, while there is unlikely to be direct overlap between the three groups i.e. the same young person completing the survey more than once, there *is* likely to be a range of experience in the samples regardless of the population in which they were consulted i.e. young people from schools who also have experience of Youth Justice services.
- Males were slightly more likely to respond that youth crime was a problem in their community (21%) compared to females (13%). Interestingly, perceptions of youth crime as a problem tended to decrease with age (with the exception of those over 18). However, the small sample size in the youngest and oldest age groups mean that these figures should be treated with caution.
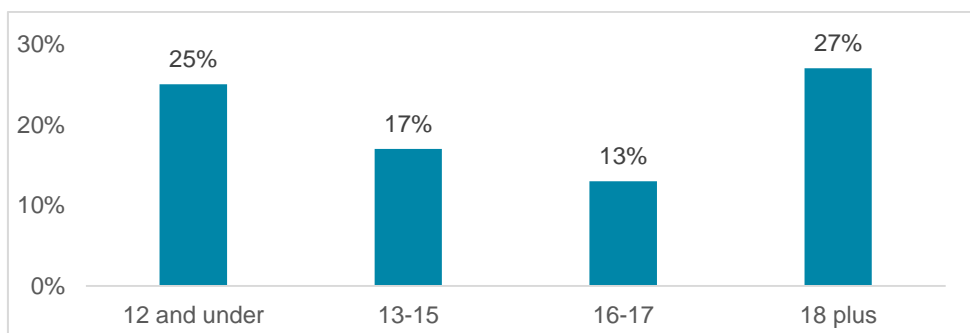

Figure 7: % of respondents who perceive youth crime as a problem, by age (n=72)

3. Involvement in youth crime

- Young people provided a total of 665 reasons why they thought that young people might become involved in crime, as outlined in Table 8 below. Only suggestions that received at least 25 responses have been included here.

Table 8: Why do you think some young people become involved in crime? (*n*=421)

Reasons for involvement in crime	Number of respondents
Peer Pressure / Desire to fit in *I think young people get involved in offending due to peer pressure and trying to fit in with the crowd* *Because they think it's cool and try to fit in with their friends* *To prove yourself and to fit in with friends* *Maybe if they get in with the wrong group of people who offend then they might get peer pressured into it*	232
Boredom / Nothing else to do / For fun *Boredom. Lack of hobbies or things to do in area* *They are bored and need something to do* *Some youths are often bored with nothing to do so commit a crime to get some kind of thrill* *Some people might think that it is fun. Or for something to do*	170
Immediate environment (family and community influence) *Because they are on the streets and their parents don't care* *Family issues/the way they were brought up* *If they have difficult family situations or live in areas where it is difficult not to become a part of it* *Role models like parents and older siblings setting an example*	113
Wider societal issues *Issues such as unemployment won't help as crime could be a distraction* *Sometimes criminal activity is the only way for them to survive e.g. stealing food, poverty* *Social exclusion*	51
Substance Misuse *Under influence of alcohol/drugs* *To find your next fix (alcohol, drugs or fags)* *A lot also take drugs and drink which influences their behaviour*	46
Personal Characteristics / Choices *Lack of maturity/awareness* *Maybe they're bad at dealing with things so they take it out on others* *Also some get involved with their own choice and will*	38

- By far the most common response, mentioned by more than half (55%) of respondents was that of peer pressure, particularly if a young person was involved with an antisocial peer group. The need to 'fit in' was commonly expressed, and was seen as a reason why young people joined gangs, or tried to impress their friendship groups.
- There also appeared to be some congruence between the views of communities and the views of young people, as a lack of interesting activities in the local area featured highly in both responses as a reason why young people might get involved in offending. In addition, peer pressure was sometimes seen to be exacerbated when coupled with a lack of positive activities or opportunities in the local area, as young people were then more

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likely to be influenced by their friendship groups in a negative way: *sometimes they can get caught up in the moment and do something silly*.

- Young people also expressed a more nuanced view of crime by acknowledging the wider disadvantages that might underlie youth crime, including family and neighbourhood influence, and societal issues such as unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and inequality: *I believe young people get involved primarily due to peer pressure, poverty and discrimination* or *Even with some things to do* [*activities*] *some can't afford to do so*.

4. Resisting and desisting from youth crime

- Participants were asked what young people could do to avoid being caught up in crime, and 585 responses were received from 415 young people, as outlined in Table 9:

Table 9: What can young people do to avoid getting involved in crime? (*n*=415)

What young people can do	Number of respondents
Get involved in activities / Keep busy *Find distractions i.e. volunteer, games etc.* *I think if we had more youth clubs then crimes would calm down a lot* *Get involved in other activities in school and after school* *Find new hobbies, join clubs and that will get them off the streets*	203
Change friends *Don't get involved with the wrong people* *Stop hanging around with the wrong people* *Choose friends wisely* *Make the right friends who are a good influence*	115
Speak to adults / Get help *Speak to adults who you trust* *Get help. Speak to someone* *Tell someone if something is happening at home or if you are getting peer pressured* *Listen to your parents*	57
Take responsibility / Make the right decisions *Don't be stupid. Don't do anything you know is wrong* *Think of the consequences before they act* *Take responsibility for themselves*	51
Work hard / Have goals *They can also just put their head down and get to where they want to be* *Have a clear future goal to keep occupied to achieve it instead of getting into trouble* *Stay at school. Have a set plan for when they leave school*	46
Resist peer pressure *Don't do what other people make you do, decide your own decisions* *Stay quiet or say no and walk away*	39
Avoidant strategies *Stay indoors* *Stay at home*	29

- Despite being the most popular suggestion, some young people recognised that joining a club or finding a hobby was not always that easy, especially for disadvantaged young people or in areas that lacked facilities: *Join the limited clubs in the Western Isles* or *A*

lack of work, education, cultural opportunities. Friendship groups on the other hand were seen as more of a personal choice and something that could (or should) be changed.

- Respondents also thought that young people should speak up if there were issues that were worrying them at home, school or in the community. Counselling and support groups were seen as useful for young people who were involved in offending because of troubled backgrounds. However, a small number of respondents noted that not everyone has someone to talk to: *Personally, I know that I can always talk to someone, however this is not always the case. I think that you just have to review the situation and do what you think is right.*

- Some young people felt that, to some extent, involvement in offending was a personal choice and that young people should "grow up" and take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Others felt that young people could be better educated about crime and the consequences of crime to help them make the right decisions: *Learn more about youth crime.*

- Although peer pressure was the most common cause of youth crime, resisting it did not feature particularly highly on the list of things that young people could actively do to avoid being involved in crime. Whether this is because young people simply viewed the choice of friendship group as the most important factor in peer pressure, or whether they felt that resisting peer pressure might be too difficult for young people is not clear from the research.

- A noticeable minority of young people recommended entirely avoidant strategies to keep out of trouble – mainly by staying indoors. While this is clearly useful in the short-term, it is not clear how useful this strategy would be in developing longer-term skills and resilience.

5. The role of adults in reducing youth crime

- Young people thought that adults had a varied role to play in helping young people avoid getting involved in youth crime, generating 503 suggestions. Only those that received more than 25 responses have been reported in Table 10 overleaf.

Table 10: What adults can do to help young people? (*n*=411)

What adults can do	Number of respondents
Provide activities / Facilitate activities *Be more of a family, do things together* *Set up youth centres and give young people something to do* *Encourage children to join clubs, volunteer for things* *Involve them in activities*	103
Educate *Teach them rights and wrongs and the consequences* *Educate young people/ Teach good morals to young children* *Guide them in the right direction* *Give them advice to help stop them from offending*	102
Enforce / Monitor / Discipline *Be better parents, know what children are doing* *Phone the police. Stop them hanging around with people they do* *Parents can monitor them and punish them* *Curfewing them so they're not out late*	94
Listen / Understand / Connect *Understand the frustration of being isolated with nothing to do* *Try to connect with them, talk to them and see their concerns from their eyes* *Listen to what they have to say* *Don't patronise and be understanding*	76
Provide Care / Support *Be there for them* *Help them and give them advice. Support* *Get better help for young people maybe in less fortunate areas, or with parents who are drug users or alcoholics* *Be more supportive. Care for the young people*	64

- Adults were seen as the people who had the power to make things happen in their communities – from setting up groups, to finding funding for services, influencing policy, or simply providing money to their children to facilitate involvement in activities.
- Young people clearly viewed adults as educators, sources of support and role models. Many young people suggested adults could learn a lot about young people by becoming more involved with them and by simply talking to them. Young people also felt that adults should enforce good behaviour, even if young people didn't always appreciate it at the time: *Be more strict but probably won't work*. However, young people also recognised that providing appropriate levels of freedom and discipline was a delicate balancing act: *Keep a closer eye on their children but avoid being too controlling, find a balance*.

6. Rethinking the approach to youth crime

- Young people were asked to consider what they would do if they were in charge of youth justice, and were given free rein to generate solutions. However, it appeared young people found the more abstract question somewhat of a challenge, with 25 non-responses and a further 29 indicating that they did not know what they would do. Despite this, a total of 450 suggestions were received (excluding the 'don't knows'), although responses did not differ drastically from what they thought that adults should currently do.

Table 11: What would you do if you were in charge? (n=404)

What you would do	Number of respondents
Provide activities / Opportunities *Give offenders some alternatives e.g. After school clubs, part time jobs etc.* *Organise community events, have more places that are open late that deal with youth* *Have more things for youth to do on weekend nights like Friday and Saturday nights* *More things to encourage people to stay in school and make it appealing and a benefit to stay*	129
Greater enforcement / Harsher penalties *I would implement more police and more CCTV* *Make alcohol laws more strict* *Make punishments more harsh so they wouldn't want to commit a crime* *Give them a warning then if they do it again, take things very seriously*	88
Educate *Make schools talk about crimes more* *Have groups. Make leaflets. Make websites. Make teenagers be aware* *Have pupils learn about it in greater detail. Tell them what is wrong/right* *Educate children on the dangers and consequences of crime*	69
Provide services / Support *I would set up a group for troubled youths, help them understand that crime is wrong* *I would also create support in school so the youths can be helped* *The younger you get help the better. You need a worker you can trust and stick with you* *Offer a 24 hr service for YP so that they have someone to contact.*	47
Listen / Understand / Connect *Don't lecture them as an adult, but talk to them* *Try and help them out by speaking to them* *Listen to young people and be understanding of certain problems they may have* *Become friends with the young people and be aware of them*	45

- Young people, like communities, thought that the provision of activities would be a key factor in reducing crime. However, while the largest proportion of young people believed in providing opportunities for young people, it was also clear that they took a fairly punitive approach if these opportunities were not utilised and young people continued to be involved in crime.
- Young people thought that schools could take on a bigger role in educating young people about crime and consequences. Inviting police and experts into schools was seen by some as a helpful way to do this. For those directly involved in crime, specialist and supportive services were seen as necessary, not just educational and preventative efforts.
- Some young people also mentioned trying to address misunderstandings between young people and their communities, by ensuring that people took the time to better understand children and to dispel negative stereotypes: *Involve the wider community and stop the demonising of YP who are better educated and engaged than ever before.*

What Happened Next?

We have used the findings from the stakeholder consultation in many different ways. First and foremost we have used this to help us develop and agree our workplan for April 2015 to March 2016. As a small centre, of course we could never begin to incorporate everything that has been suggested. However, we have followed the workforce's key priorities very closely. The top three priorities included complex needs, substance misuse and looked after children and youth justice and so, for the forthcoming year, we have planned a number of activities around these priorities. There are engagement, training and development events linked to these three areas, and we have tweaked some of our ongoing work to more clearly reflect these priorities (such as topics for information sheets). Furthermore, each priority will be underpinned by new research activity to enhance and develop our understanding of these areas.

We have used the feedback, particularly about what works well and what works less well, to guide our CYCJ 'improvement' sessions where we reflect on how we have been performing and where we can do better. These sessions take place quarterly and we will continue to use your feedback to assist us with this. We have already reflected on your feedback about our engagement, exploring comments about the difficulties practitioners experience attending events, and the finding that the workforce had less direct contact with CYCJ during meetings this year. As a consequence, we have introduced 'CYCJ roadshows', events delivered on request, tailored to local needs and delivered locally. We are hoping that these will allow us to reach a broader practice audience and widen our reach to those involved in front-line practice. We have reduced our national events to allow us to focus on this new approach.

We also recognise that priorities can change and that we need to be a responsive and flexible organisation. As a result, we will shortly be implementing an ongoing consultation and engagement mechanism via our website and social media - keep an eye on these platforms for more information. This will not replace our stakeholder survey, but will mean that we are less reliant on large-scale surveys to gauge the mood of our stakeholders. We also have shared the findings with the Scottish Government to help inform their plans for developing the latest national Youth Justice Strategy and so the stakeholder survey will have a wider impact that reaches beyond CYCJ.

During March we have also been taking CYCJ back to school, with visits, feedback and engagement with secondary school pupils who took part in the survey. These sessions have allowed us to say thank you, to ensure that young people know that their views are being listened to, but also to explore the findings in more detail.

In May we are planning an event to bring communities and young people who have moved on from offending together to discuss the results of the survey and to think about how young people and communities can work together. This event will allow the sharing of best practice and good ideas between communities, something that communities felt would be useful. We also plan to work with colleagues in the Scottish Government to look at the information about youth crime that is available on a national and local level to help ensure that communities are well informed.

Lastly, thank you again to everyone who took part and we look forward to working with you to achieve better outcomes for young people in 2015/2016.