An Independent Research Evaluation of 'Reaching Communities – Positive Futures'
2021-2023: Impact Evaluation Final Report

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Aims of the research

Keele University has been commissioned to undertake a research evaluation of Engage CIC's 'Reaching Communities - Positive Futures' programme between 15th March 2021 – 31st July 2023. This follows an effort across the local community to tackle the serious and escalating issues of youth crime. The community-based programme aims to engage with children across the Stoke-on-Trent area in a range of outreach, mentoring, education and diversionary activities. Running for a period of three years, the project will focus on prevention and early intervention to inspire children aged 10-19 to live positive lives and prevent them from entering the criminal justice system. The purpose of this research evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of 'Reaching Communities – Positive Futures' operating across the Stoke-on-Trent area.

The research evaluation will consist of three strands:

a. The first strand will focus on **research and development**. This strand of work will involve setting the focus and direction of the evaluation by developing a set of evaluation questions that reflect the perspectives, experiences and insights of as many relevant individuals, groups, organisations and communities as possible. In addition, an overview of the 'Reaching Communities – Positive Futures' will be established, the design rationale and activities that compose the service.

b. **An impact evaluation** assessing the outcomes of 'Reaching Communities – Positive Futures'.

c. **A process evaluation** identifying how the 'Reaching Communities – Positive Futures' programme was delivered, any challenges that were faced and any improvements that can be made. This strand will also provide an opportunity to identify practices of innovation

This report focuses on the second strand, the impact evaluation.

Methods of Data Collection

For the impact evaluation, data was collected using the following methods.

Survey

A survey was designed that measured key demographic information; engagement with, and attitudes towards, school and education; employability skills and future aspirations; perceptions and experiences of community relations; views and experiences of the police; views and experiences of

crime; and health and wellbeing. The survey was distributed electronically via Survey Monkey by Engage staff during the sessions with young people. A total of **152 questionnaires were completed.**

Focus Groups

Five focus groups were conducted with young people attending Engage sessions, comprising four girls and twenty boys aged between 12-16 years of age. Of the girls that participated, three were white British and one was Asian British. Of the boys that participated, fifteen were Asian British, two were White British, one was Black British and one was dual ethnicity. The girls' focus group took place separately from the boys.

Demographics

Of those that completed the survey, the majority were male (92.6%%; 7.4% female) and aged between 12 and 15 years old (65.5%). 11.5% were aged 8-11 years and 23% were aged over 16 years.[1] This flags an **initial observation with regards to the age range of children and young people** that Engage are working with. Engage states it aims to work with young people aged 10-19 years. The survey was completed by those as young as 8 years old and those as old as 23 years old. This finding was also reflected in the practitioners' interviews, where it was noted that staff were working with an age range of children as young as 9 and as old as 23. The wide age range of participants, often referred to in interviews as a homogenous group of 'young people', may potentially raise issues regarding safeguarding - the mixing of younger children with adults without any indication of an awareness or provision of safeguarding measures being in place - and also in terms of ensuring that the provision offered is age appropriate for the participants. **We suggest that Engage reflect carefully on these issues.**

One hundred young people (67.1%) described their ethnicity as 'Asian Pakistani', 4.7% as 'Black African', 6% as 'Black Caribbean', and 1.3% as 'Black Other', 9.4% as 'White British', 6% as 'mixed', and 5.4% as 'other ethnic group' (it would be useful to find out what ethnic group these individuals identified with). (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographics: Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percentage
Asian - Pakistani	100	67.1
Black - African	7	4.7
Black - Caribbean	9	6
Black - Other	2	1.3
Mixed - White and Asian	2	1.3
Mixed - White and Black African	4	2.7
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	0.7
Mixed - Other	2	1.3

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[1] . One respondent claimed to be 4 years old, and we have excluded this from analyses as we assume this is a mistake.

White - British	14	9.4
Other Ethnic Group	8	5.4
Total	149	100

Just over 89% claimed that they were currently in full-time education. For the remaining, 8.5% said they were in part-time education; 5.6% were working as an employee; 14.8% were on a government sponsored training scheme; 13.4% were self-employed or freelance, 4.9% were working unpaid for family business; and 2.8% were doing other paid work. It is unclear whether some are doing these activities alongside being in full-time education, or if they misunderstood the question.

The majority of survey participants had attended 1-3 sessions (44.3%), with 39.6% attending 7 sessions or more. 5.4% had attended 0 sessions, and 10.7% had attended 4-6 sessions.

Key Findings

Engagement with, and attitudes towards, school/education

Table 2 shows that the vast majority of respondents either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statements about school.

Table 2: Attitudes towards school

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
I am NOT bored in lessons	98 (72.1%)	38 (27.9%)
Most of the time I WANT to go to school	87 (65.4%)	46 (34.6%)
I like my teachers	93 (68.4%)	43 (31.6%)
I work as hard as I can in school	89(65.9%)	46 (34.1%)
School is NOT a waste of time for me	102 (75.6%)	33 (24.4%)
School work is worth doing	106 (79.1%)	28 (20.9%)
I am happy when I am at school	96 (72.2%)	37 (27.8%)
I get good marks for my work	98 (72.6%)	37 (27.4%)

This finding illustrates overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards school, the value young people place in it, and the effort they feel they put in. This is an unexpected finding and suggests that those captured by this survey do not require intervention aimed at improving attitudes towards school.

Just over 20% of survey respondents said they had never played truant from school, whereas 45.8% said they had 'once or twice' (8.5% 3 or 4 times; 6.3% 5-10 times; and 5.6% more than 10 times). The majority therefore demonstrate a positive relationship with school and engage with their education.

A very small percentage play truant regularly, and for those that had played truant in the last 12 months, they had significantly less favourable attitudes towards school than those who had not played truant (see Appendix A).

Just under 18% of those who responded stated that they did not have a Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND); 24.6% do; and 57.7% preferred not to say.
49.3% had never been suspended from school, 41.5% had a temporary suspension; and 9.2% had a permanent exclusion.

When broken down by ethnicity, some slight variations existed in attitudes towards school: **those who identified as 'Asian Pakistani' were typically much more positive about school than other ethnic groups**. For example, for the statement 'I am not bored in lessons', 80.6% of Asian respondents agreed compared to only 56.3% of black respondents, 57.1% of those from mixed heritage, and 50% of white respondents ($p < .05$). Similarly, for 'School is NOT a waste of time for me', 83.7% of Asian respondents agreed compared to only 68.8% of black respondents, 28.6% of those from mixed heritage, and 50% of white respondents ($p < .05$). For 'I get good marks for my work', 77.2% of Asian respondents agreed compared to 81.3% of black respondents, 42.9% of those from mixed heritage and 41.7% of white respondents ($p < .05$). A similar pattern was evident across all questions about school.

For gender, more female respondents agreed that school is a waste of time (62.5%. $P < .05$), disagreed that schoolwork is worth doing (62.5%. $p = .001$), and disagreed that they got good marks for their work (62.5%, $p < .05$). The numbers are small though so we cannot say anything conclusive about this.

In contrast, the findings from the focus groups reveal that attitudes towards school were somewhat mixed and often negative. Of those that had disclosed that they had been excluded, reasons provided related to their race and ethnicity:

> NOAH: Basically I was walking and some guys come from behind me saying they're going to bang me and I turn around…and I goes to him, remember what happened last time? Because I bashed him last time, him and all his mates…And then I got kicked out for that.
> INTERVIEWER: What about the lad that said he was going to bang you? Did he get kicked out?
> NOAH: No, he's still in school
> BEN: All 15 of my mates got excluded because they're brown. And now one white guy was still in school.
> INTERVIEWER: So the lad who said he's going to bang you, is he white?
> NOAH: Yes. So basically we had a big fight…So we had another fight after that, then another fight…And basically we had a big fight. It was a fair fight. And I was the only one who got kicked out

Whether or not there are clear grounds for racism to be made here is not the remit of this report. However, what is clear is that such experiences no doubt lead to a general mistrust of teachers and school more generally.

Feelings of mistrust were also acutely felt by the girls we spoke to with some suggesting that teachers rarely took their concerns seriously. In the following account, Talia describes a situation where she had hurt her thumb. Upon raising the issue with her teacher and the school nurse she was told to 'go to class, you'll be alright':

> TALIA: I broke my pinkie, I broke my thumb. Every time I went to complain, I kept being told you're fine, go to class, you'll be alright. In other words, stop acting. I went to hospital four days later and found out that it was fractured, it was broken. I then had to have a full-on wrist cast for a couple months. Because the teachers wouldn't fucking do anything.

In addition to feelings of mistrust, some of the girls described feeling silenced particularly during situations where they were trying to provide an explanation for their behaviour:

> CARYS: When we're lining up at the end of break, or at the end of dinner and it's hot, and they shout at you for not being in your line. And then when you try to explain what happened, they don't give you a chance. And if you say, but Sir this happened, or Miss this happened, they just give you a detention for not listening to them. They just think that everything is perfect and yes, yesterday you were fine, but today you might be feeling stressed about something and want to talk about it. Okay, it might not have been big deal but it also might have been but they don't let you talk.
>
> HAZEL: To be honest, the only thing they're good at is preaching, particularly when you're fighting.
>
> CARYS Someone pushed them into me and I was having a shit day, and they turn around and goes, what the fuck are you doing? And I turned around and shouted at her. And then she started grabbing my hair and I was, I can't do shit now. So I grabbed her hair and someone came up behind me, one of the teachers, pulled me off her and I ended up pulling her dreadlock out. And then they told me I could have the police called on me. But I wouldn't have done that if I wasn't feeling so stressed about stuff

Contained within Carys' description of a confrontation with another girl are feelings that she had not been listened to by the teachers concerned. Carys' feelings of being stressed that day, to her, had led her to react in the way that she did. However, rather than teachers using this opportunity to explore why Carys was feeling stressed they instead threatened her with a call to the police.

Teachers being quick to resort to punishment, rather than seeking an explanation for their behaviour, was common amongst the experiences of the participants we spoke to. In the following example, Talia talks about the day she was late to school because she had seen a cat been hit by a car. Rather than console Talia during what she described as an incident that 'really messed [her] up in the head', she was instead given a detention for being late:

TALIA: One time, I was on the way to school and so I saw a cat get hit by a car right? So that really messed me up in the head. When we got the cat out the road and I had to take it somewhere, because I can't just leave a dead cat in the middle of road while it's still trying to… Well he wasn't dead, he was trying to move. It died in my arms and then I was late to school. They gave me a detention for it, even after I explained… I saw a cat get hit by a car.

SOPHIE: Yes, they don't care. They didn't care when you explained.

TALIA: I was breaking down about it and they were, you're fine just go to class, and it's not even that important. But the year before, my cat was hit by a car. And that was really emotional for me.

HAZEL: You know what pisses me off the most? When they stand in the middle of the floor, all the parents saying we support your kids. We give you all the caring and love. And then actually inside, they're different.

These findings reveal that there is much work to do regarding engagement with and attitudes towards education. However, reasons provided for lack of engagement and negative attitudes relate very clearly to young people's experiences and encounters with teachers. Putting in place interventions to improving this relationship may be beneficial but perhaps beyond the remit of Engage Communities.

Employability skills and future aspirations

As seen in table 4, the majority have confidence in their ability to achieve what they want, in their future career and in their own skills to ensure future employability. These young people though do feel there are not the opportunities or access to appropriate support and guidance in the local area.

Table 4: Attitudes towards employability skills and future aspirations

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
I feel confident I can achieve what I want to	76.1%	23.9%
I feel I have control over my future job	72.5%	27.5%
I am confident I will have the skills required to make me employable in the future	79.6%	20.4%
There are good job opportunities in my area	57%	43%
I have access to sufficient and appropriate support, information, advice and guidance about jobs, careers, training and opportunities	76.8%	23.2%

This confidence however did depend on the ethnicity of respondents, and age and gender to some extent. For example, for the statement 'I am confident I have the skills required to make me

employable in the future', 83.5% of Asian respondents agree; 70.6% of black respondents agree; 85.7% of 'mixed' respondents agree; but only 46.2% of white respondents agree ($p < .05$).

The same pattern is prevalent for 'There are good job opportunities in my area', whereby 67% of Asian respondents agree compared to only 41.2% of black respondents; 28.6% of 'mixed' respondents, and only 30.8% of white respondents ($p < .05$). For 'I have access to sufficient and appropriate support, information, advice and guidance about jobs, careers, training and opportunities', 83.5% of Asian respondents agree, compared to 70.6% of black respondents, just 28.6% of 'mixed' respondents, and 61.5% of white respondents ($p < .05$). Again therefore, **the young people who identified as Asian hold much more positive attitudes towards their employability skills and future career prospects as compared to other ethnic groups, particularly those who identified as 'white' and 'black'.**

For **age**, the only significant difference was for the statement 'I have access to sufficient and appropriate support, information, advice and guidance about jobs, careers, training and opportunities' with older respondents feeling more positive about access to such guidance and support (87.5% of those aged over 16 years agreed with this statement compared to 77.4% of those aged 12-15 years and 50% of those aged 8-11 years. $p < .05$).

The only difference for **gender** is for the statements 'I feel confident I can achieve what I want to' with male respondents typically agreeing (78.2%) compared to only 44.4% of female respondents ($p < .05$), and the statement 'I have access to sufficient and appropriate support, information, advice and guidance about jobs, careers, training and opportunities' (79.7% of males agreed compared to just 33.3% of females, $p < .05$).

We suggest that these findings are considered in the design of interventions moving forward, with more targeted work at improving confidence in these areas being done with those that are of a younger age, and those identifying as 'white', 'black' and/or 'female'.

Table 5 again shows overall positivity amongst the respondents regarding their life. The only slight exception is with the statement 'I wish I had a different kind of life' where the majority (59.9%) agree.

Table 5: Attitudes on life

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
My life is going well	76.8%	23.2%
My life is just right	71.1%	28.9%
I wish I had a different kind of life	59.9%	40.1%
I have a good life	76.8%	23.2%
I have what I want in life	69.7%	23.2%

These attitudes did not typically differ by age or gender.

No statistically significant differences existed depending on ethnicity to these questions. Although there are some interesting percentages here: for example, **'**I have what I want in life' – 71.1% of 'Asian' respondents agree, as do 76.9% of 'white' respondents and 75% of 'other' group, compared to only 58.8% of 'black' respondents and '57.1% of 'mixed' respondents. For 'I have a good life' –76.3% of 'Asian' respondents agree, as do 85.7% of 'mixed' respondents, 84.6% of 'white' respondents and 100% of 'other' group, compared to only 58.8% of 'black' respondents.

There does therefore seem to be **a pattern emerging with regards to ethnicity in that those who identified themselves as belonging to black African/Caribbean/'other' have less positive attitudes towards their life, their future career, and school, particularly compared to the Asian Pakistani respondents.**

Similarly, we suggest that more targeted work in helping to improve attitudes towards 'life' is done with those young people belonging to Black African/Caribbean/'other'.

Community relations

Table 6 shows generally positive views towards community cohesion in the area.

Table 6: Perceptions of community cohesion

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
People from different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds mix well together	79.6%	20.4%
People usually respect each others' religious differences	66.9%	33.1%
If my home was empty, I could count on one of my neighbours or other people in this area to keep an eye on it	79.6%	20.4%
The people who live in my local area can be relied upon to call the police if someone is acting suspiciously	72.5%	27.5%
I have neighbours or other people in my local area I feel I could turn to for advice or support	73.2%	26.8%

There are some differences in perceptions of community cohesion depending on ethnicity. Not all differences are statistically significant but there remains a clear pattern emerging where Asian Pakistani respondents typically report more positive attitudes about their community than other ethnic groups:

- **'**People from different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds mix well together' – most agree with this statement, no differences by ethnicity.
- 'People usually respect each others' religious differences' – no statistical significance but 70.1% of 'Asian' respondents agree, 75% of 'other' group agree, 57.1% of 'mixed' respondents agree, 53.8% of 'white' respondents agree, and 58.8% of 'black' respondents agree.

- '**If my home was empty, I could count on one of my neighbours or other people in this area to keep an eye on it'** – 82.5% 'Asian' respondents agree, 85.7% of 'mixed' respondents agree, 76.9% of 'white' respondents agree, 87.5% 'other' group agree, and only 58.8% 'black' respondents agree
- '**The people who live in my local area can be relied upon to call the police if someone is acting suspiciously'** – 78.4% 'Asian' respondents agree, 57.1% 'mixed' respondents agree, 53.8% 'white' respondents agree, 75% 'other' group agree, and only 58.8% 'black' respondents agree
- '**I have neighbours or other people in my local area I feel I could turn to for advice or support'** –73.2% of 'Asian' respondents agree, 57.1% 'mixed' respondents agree, 84.6% of 'white' respondents agree, 75% of 'other' respondents agree, and 70.6% of 'black' respondents agree

No differences were found by age.

There were some differences for gender,

- 'People usually respect each others' religious differences' (66.7% of females disagreed compared to just 30.8% of males, $p < .05$)
- '**If my home was empty, I could count on one of my neighbours or other people in this area to keep an eye on it'** (55.6% of females disagreed compared to 18% of males, $p < .05$)
- '**The people who live in my local area can be relied upon to call the police if someone is acting suspiciously'** (66.7% of females disagreed compared to 24.8% of males, $p < .05$)

Very few respondents reported any prejudice against people from other racial/ethnic/religious backgrounds (4.9% very prejudiced, 28.9% a little prejudiced, 49.3% not prejudiced at all).

These findings align with the findings from the focus groups. It became clear during our discussions with Asian British boys, in particular, that a strong sense of community already exists for them. Nevertheless, they also spoke positively about the opportunities provided by Engage to participate in activities that make them 'feel relaxed', where they can 'let their guard down' and 'be with their friends':

NOAH   You get to feel relaxed and let your guard down.
BEN   They're not racist.
NOAH   Yes, you get to see your friends and chat. Play football.
BEN   No, but people, they would not let us be with our friends, but Engage actually lets us.
LEO   What [unclear]?

In talking about their experiences of the Engage sessions, young people emphasised how they provided opportunities to 'interact with more people' (Scott, Focus Group X). The girls we spoke to were particularly positive about the sessions suggesting that they helped to create a sense of community for them:

TALIA: We play a football match with different children of Stoke and of different…

CARYS: Different ages.
TALIA: Yes, different age groups. So we make friends, and it just helps us play football and come together.
CARYS: To improve your skills.

The girls we spoke to suggested that this sense of community helped them to manage more positively situations of confrontation:

CARYS: She hit me in the face.
INTERVIEWER: So you girls were in a fight?
CARYS: This was in a game of volleyball where I got hit in the face with the ball. She was on the other side. She was on a different game completely and then bang. I get angry really fast, so soon as it hit me in the face, everyone went quiet to see if I was going to snap or not. And I just looked up and carried on. If it was someone else, I probably would have lost my shit and hit them. But I didn't because she's a friend

The sense of community experienced by the Asian boys, however, became more fractious when talking about their usual associations with white people. Common among the expressions of participants, young minority boys in particular, were their experiences of racial microaggressions:

INTERVIEWER: You said something about it's not racist. What do you mean by that?
BEN: If you've been… From white people. Normally they wouldn't let us be with each other. Sometimes people aren't racist, but most of the time people can be racist by the things that they do. They won't let us be with each other. But Engage, they let us be with whoever we want.

Although a strong sense of community already exists for some of those attending Engage sessions, encouraging young people to 'interact with more people' and create safe spaces for them to 'feel relaxed', 'let their guard down' and 'be with their friends' is clearly of benefit and should be continued.

Views and experiences of the police

It is in this section on attitudes towards the police that we begin to see less positivity. Whilst the majority do believe the police can protect them from crime (73.9%) and will be there when needed (62%), the young respondents in this survey had less confidence in the ways in which the police treat young people. Here, there is more of a 50/50 split in attitudes (see table 7).

<div align="center">Table 7: Attitudes towards the police</div>

The police….	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Can protect me from crime	73.9%	26.1%
Will be there when I need them	62%	38%

Are helpful and friendly to young people	66.2%	33.8%
Treat everyone fairly	51.4%	48.6%
Listen to the concerns of young people	55.9%	48.6%
Deal with the things that matter to young people	60.6%	39.4%
Do a good job in the area where I live	62%	38%
Treat young people the same as they treat adults	54.9%	45.1%
Are generally honest in the way they deal with people.	57%	43%
I have great respect for the police.	59.2%	40.8%

Significant differences by gender were found for the statements 'The police are helpful and friendly to young people' (77.8% females disagreed compared to 30.8% of males, p < .05); 'The police listen to the concerns of young people' (77.8% of females disagreed compared to 37.6% of males, p < .05); 'the police Do a good job in the area where I live' (77.8% of females disagreed compared to 35.3% of males, p < .05). **Overall, females seem to hold slightly less favourable views of the police compare to males.**

No significant differences in attitudes towards the police depending on age. Findings suggest that those aged between 12-15 years appear to hold slightly more negative views of the police than the other age ranges surveyed, but not significant.

There were no significant differences depending on ethnicity with all ethnic groups holding more negative views about the police. This reflects a departure from the other questions asked so far which showed more positivity than we would perhaps expect.

Perhaps unexpectedly, those who attended 7 or more sessions with engage reported less positive attitudes towards the police overall as compared with those who attended fewer sessions.

69.7% of respondents had been stopped by the police in the past 12 months. While there are no significant differences between ethnicities here, the percentages do show slight variation (read with caution due to numbers) – 64.7% of 'black' respondents said they had been stopped compared to 75% 'other', 74.2% 'Asian', 71.4% 'mixed' and only 38.5% 'white' respondents.

No significant differences in police attitudes depending on whether they had been stopped by the police, except for the statement 'The police treat everyone fairly' – 54.5% of those who had been stopped *disagreed*, compared to 34.9% of those who had not (p < .05).

For those that had been stopped by the police, there was real variation about whether they were satisfied with the police treatment: 18.3% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied; 37.3% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied; and 24.6% were either satisfied or very satisfied. This may reflect the different reasons the police may have made contact.

These findings align to the experiences captured by the focus groups. Aligning with their views of teachers, the young people we spoke to unanimously expressed a dislike and mistrust for the police.

NOAH: We don't like the police, forget them. No, I'm being serious.

Many of those we spoke to had experienced being stopped and searched by the police at least once:

OLLY   They just think we're all in a gang. He was just walking around, he come from the mosque, he's walking home, in a black car… He had a cap on and they stopped him and tried to search him for no reason.
INTERVIEWER: And have all you guys been stopped by the police?
JAMES   Yes
OLLY   Yes.
BEN   Yes.
NOAH   Yes.
INTERVIEWER: How many times?
BEN   Two times.
JAMES   Also twice.
NOAH   Twice. Two or three times.
OLLY   I just walked away twice.

When asked about why they thought the police stopped them, participants struggled to identify a reason often suggesting that it was when they were 'minding their own business':

INTERVIEWER: And when they stop you, are you actually up to something or are they just stopping you for no reason?
JADEN: You'll just be walking and then they'll just ask you what you're doing.
INTERVIWER: So, when they say what're you doing what would you say in response?
JADEN: I'll just keep walking.
INTERIEWER: And then what would they say?
ALFIE: I'm going home.
JADEN: And they'll be, have you got anything on you? And then you just say no.
INTERVIEWER: And what do you think they're talking about when they say have you got anything on you?
JADEN: Drugs, knives, guns.
JACK: Fireworks.
INTERVIEWER: So, what's it like feel like when they're stopping you and asking you for things like that when you're just minding your own business?
JADEN: Discrimination.
JACK: It feels quite frustrating.
INTERVIEWER: Why is it frustrating?
JACK   Because I'm just trying to mind my own business.

When describing their encounters with the police, particularly during a routine stop and search, participants described feeling disempowered. Although they knew the law, and felt able to challenge

officers, they were aware that if they did they may end up in more trouble or 'dead' as described by Olly and Ben:

> BEN: Like with me, I was just walking, the guy just run at me, pick me up like this and threw me to the side. Then he said, police stop and search. If he said that first, I would have just stopped there and let him search me and carried on.
> INTERVIEWER: The thing is though, like you said, the police actually have to have a reason before they stop you, to search you. What happens if you try to challenge them?
> JAMES: Yes, but they have to say it first.
> INTERVIEWER: What happens if you try and remind them of the law? And say, actually, you need a reason to stop me.
> OLLY   Dead.
> BEN   Dead.

Common amongst the expressions of the young people we spoke to were experiences of 'adultification'. As Matthew explains, the police never seemed to bother them when they were younger but as they've got older, despite simply doing 'dumb and stupid stuff' and 'just being daft', the police routinely stop them. The only difference, of course, is that now these young people look physically older and so are responded to by the police under the suspicion that they are up to no good:

> MATTHEW: When we were younger they were alright to us, but as we got older they've changed a bit.
> INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that is?
> MATTHEW: Because we do stupid stuff.
> INTERVIEWER: You said you do stupid stuff, what do you mean by stupid stuff? Are you not just hanging out with your mates chilling?
> SAM: We are.
> MATTHEW: You don't even have to do dumb and stupid stuff, you just do stuff.
> INTERVIEWER: Are you breaking the law or are you just being daft?
> MATTHEW: Just being daft.
> JAKE: Just daft.

Many of the participants we spoke to explained these encounters as being a consequence of the police being racially biased. As Jake explains, it appears to them that the police are often looking for a reason to interact negatively and that they 'love arresting someone who's not white':

> Interviewer: You've just said the police are racist, is that something you've experienced, or you've seen?
> Jake: The police will ask you questions, and they love you getting cheeky to them.
> Interviewer: Why do they love you getting cheeky to them?
> Jake: Because then they have a reason to get you done. They love it.
> Interviewer: What will they do at that point?

Jake: Arrest you.

Interviewer: They'll arrest you, for what?

Jake: If you do something that you're not meant to do and the police come, some days you just need a conversation, but they'll just come, and they'll want you to get cheeky. Sometimes there's a police officer and you just know that there's nothing more that they love arresting someone who's not white.

As with the discussion about 'engagement and attitudes towards education', these findings reveal that there is much work to do regarding 'views and experiences of the police'. All of the young people we spoke to were able to recall at least one negative encounter with the police, despite very few of them having committed a crime or gave the police reason for a 'stop and search'. Putting in place interventions to improving the relationship between the police and young people may be beneficial but perhaps beyond the remit of Engage Communities.

Experiences and views of crime

Worries about Crime

We asked questions about young people's worries around crime. When asked, 'How safe do you feel walking alone in your local area?', 74.6% felt very/fairly safe, and 25.4% felt a bit/very unsafe. There was a significant difference for **ethnicity whereby those of 'mixed' heritage appeared to feel more unsafe (71.4% felt unsafe, $p < .05$). For gender, females demonstrated they felt more unsafe than males (66.7% of females felt unsafe compared to 22.6% of males, $p < .05$).** For age, 8-11 years olds felt more unsafe with 43.8% reporting that they felt 'a bit/very unsafe' compared to only 26.9% of 12–15-year-olds and 9.4% of 16+ ($p < .05$). **As might be expected, the young age group of 8–11-year-olds are therefore more worried about walking alone in their area.**

When asked 'Overall, how worried are you about being a victim of crime?'**,** 46.4% were not at all/not very worried, and 53.6% were a bit/very worried (there is more of even split here). There were significant differences for age – 87.5% of 8-11 year olds are 'a bit/very worried', 52.7% of 12-15 year olds are 'a bit/very worried', and only 36.7% of 16+ are 'a bit/very worried' ($p < .01$). **Again then, younger children aged 8-11 years are more worried about being a victim of crime than older respondents.** There were no significant differences for gender or for ethnicity.

We then asked the young people to state how much of a problem various types of crime are in their area (Table 8). It seems that violence, people joining gangs, carrying knives, using drugs, and people dealing drugs are conceived as being the key problems in the area.

Table 8: How much of a problem are the following in your area?

	Not at all a problem	A small problem	A big problem
Violence	18.2%	26.4%	55.4%
People joining gangs	20.7%	27.9%	51.4%

People carrying knives	22.2%	23%	54.8%
Stealing	31.1%	31.8%	37.1%
People using drugs	27.8%	21.1%	51.1%
Sexual harassment	57.3%	23.7%	19.1%
Sexist bullying	55.3%	28.8%	15.9%
Hate crime	45.2%	29.6%	25.2%
People dealing drugs	30.6%	17.9%	51.5%

Answers to these questions did not differ by gender, ethnicity or age. The only exception was for the perceptions of those dealing drugs as a big problem, with 62.5% of 8-11 year olds perceiving this to be a big problem as compared to older age groups (just 53.5% of 12-15 year olds and 41.9% of over 16year olds, $p < .05$).

Aligning to the findings set out here, common among the expressions of those that participated in the focus groups were feelings of unsafety and a sense that they were not protected from the reality that living as a young person in the area brings. These feelings were often ignited when discussing the presence of drugs and being pressured not to take drugs, but to sell them:

> SAM: It's not really a bad area. The only thing is just drugs.
> INTERVIEWER: Are they quite easy to get hold of?
> SAM: Easy.
> JAKE: It's just a text.
> INTERVIEWER: And you can get hold of anything or is it just mainly weed?
> JAKE: Anything.
> MATTHEW: Anything.
> INTERVIEWER: So, why is that bad about the area? Why don't you like that?
> SAM: Because people approach you and try and make you sell it.
> INTERVIEWER: Would you rather it just wasn't around or does it bring its own problems?
> SAM: Yes, it brings problems.
> INTERVIEWER: Like what?
> SAM: It messes people up.
> JAKE: Yes, it causes fights with different areas in Stoke, and it just causes big problems.

Against this backdrop of feeling potentially unsafe, the Engage sessions were described as offering a place of refuge from the 'streets':

> MARK: They help you off the streets.
> JADEN: Instead of going to the park you just come here and play with everybody here.
> JACK: Yes, it's safer anyway. You can meet your friends instead of just being on the street where something can happen.
> INTERVIEWER: So, what do you mean by, safer?

MARK: So, you're inside where you're being supervised. And then if you're on the street no one's really watching you.

INTERVIEWER: What's dangerous about the streets?

MARK: Well, anyone could be anywhere.

ALFIE: One thing could lead to another and maybe a fight or something like that.

In light of this finding, participating in Engage sessions may help to reduce the negative, and sometimes fearful, encounters that young people often experience in their communities.

Experiences of crime

Just over half – 52.1% - of respondents reported having been a victim of crime in the last 12 months. Of those that had been a victim, **only 4.9% reported it to the police**. The most common reasons for <u>not</u> reporting to the police was that they dislike the police (29% of responses). See Table 9 below.

Table 9: Why did you not report any of these incidents to the police? *Tick All That Apply*

	%
I dealt with the matter myself	14%
I thought someone else would call them	3%
Not confident the police would be able to do anything	11%
Dislike the police	29%
Language difficulties	18%
Fear of reprisal by offenders / make matters worse	12%
Too trivial / not worth reporting	3%
Previous bad experience of the police	10%
100.0%	

While the conversations with young people during the focus groups revealed a significant distrust for the police, aligning with the findings revealed here from the survey, young people were also qualitatively reluctant to draw on the help of the police, even if they needed to:

INTERVIEWER: So a couple of you have been in trouble, stopped and searched. Have you ever actually… In a situation where you'd call the police for their help?

JAMES No

NOAH No.

NOAH No.

JAMES Who calls the police to your home?

INTERVIEWER: So if your house had been robbed or something of yours had been robbed, you wouldn't call the police? How serious would it have to get for you to call the police?

BEN   I wouldn't call the police if someone I don't know had been stabbed. I wouldn't call the police, I'd call the ambulance for their help.

NOAH   Yes, I'd call the ambulance.

OLLY   But then again, the ambulance would ask, what's the reason. Then he'd say, you got a knife and then you'd pay for it after all.

Embedded within this exchange is a sense that the police are not there to protect them. James' question, 'who calls the police to your home?' suggests that rather than representing help, the police represent a threat that should be avoided at all costs. In a similar vein, Sam explains that the police bring with them 'unnecessary problems':

INTERVIEWER: So, when you say you avoid them or you just keep out of the way, or you don't speak to them, why is that?

SAM: To not cause unnecessary problems.

INTERVIEWER: Why would it cause unnecessary problems speaking to them?

SAM: The police, their job is to catch people doing stuff, and they love doing that, so there's just no point in talking to them.

Others felt that the police were a 'waste of time' and that even when they do report an incident 'nothing happens':

LUKE: I'm just wasting my time.

JADEN: And wasting their time too.

MARK: And I doubt that they'll find anything. They will open a report and then nothing happens. If it was for the theft of your car or something then yes, but for something like a watch, they don't really care.

In the absence of trust for the police, young people resolved disputes often through more informal means. Upon witnessing a friend of his having his bike stolen, Scott and his friend called their uncles who managed to retrieve the bike 'within an hour':

INTERVIEWER: So you wouldn't think to ring the police straight away?

SCOTT: When I was at the park these lads was on the park, the skate park. And then these lads, they went, and then they came back with more people. Asked for a go on my mate's bike, he said no because they looked a bit dodgy and that. And they kicked him off his bike and robbed his bike. Then there was a massive fight, then they all ran off with the bikes. And then we had to call some of our uncles and then we found them, and we got our bikes back.

Interviewer: So why did you call your uncles, and not ring the police?

SCOTT: Because our uncles knew roughly who they were.

JAKE: The police just makes it worse though.

Interviewer: Police makes it worse?

SCOTT: They don't do anything.

Interviewer: You'd rather deal with it yourself if you can?

JAKE: Say it's your bike, they're not going to call the police. Because first thing, they make it too long.

AIDEN: Exactly, they're not going to do it for a bike.

JAKE: They're not going to anything about it.

SCOTT: We got the bikes back within an hour. Within an hour, we got the bike, if the police were called we'd have to wait.

Interviewer: So you feel like they wouldn't be interested anyway?

SCOTT: They won't even be interested. So once my mate's dad's car got, the windows got smashed and they robbed everything. And the police came and they said we aren't going to do anything about it, why did you leave your valuables in there?

Interviewer: And I think you said as well, ringing the police can sometimes bring its own trouble. What do you mean by that?

AIDEN: Because sometimes, basically… Let's say it was just not a big deal right but a suitable thing to call police. Then the police just takes it whole different level, start going… Let's say if you have siblings, they go to the schools or something, ask them about it, ask other people about it, and it just makes it even longer.

In fact, using informal justice systems to resolve problems was common among the experiences of those we spoke to. In the conversation below, Sam, Jake, Dylan and Matthew refer to the 'olders' when describing older youths or young men from their community and who they describe as 'running' the city. Although they would only draw on this support in the most exceptional circumstances, knowing that the 'olders' are there provides these young people with a sense of protection that they do not feel they have from the police:

INTERVIEWER: If you felt like your life was fully in danger would you then go to the police?

SAM: No.

JAKE: Never.

WILL: I'm probably just going to go to my family.

DYLAN: I'd go to the olders.

MATTHEW: Yeah, the olders.

INTERVIEWER: Do you go to your olders about everything?

SAM: No, just serious stuff.

JAKE: If there's something really serious.

MATTHEW: When it's life and death, that's when you go to your olders.

INTERVIEWER: So, olders would include your parents?

SAM: No.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me who you mean.

SAM: The older youth in their 20s.

INTERVIEWER: You get in touch with the serious ones?

SAM: Yes because they will sort it out.

INTERVIEWER: So, they've got your back?

SAM: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So, who are they?

JAKE: Like our family they are, that run Stoke-on-Trent, basically.

SAM: Yes, keeping their eye on the youth.

JAKE: Because they've got the experience of the rules, isn't it?

MATTHEW: Most of us are related one way or another, even if it's far, they still treat us like we're close, and they'll do anything for us, really. If I had a problem they'd sort it.

Survey respondents were also asked about their involvement in crime and whether they know someone involved in crime. They were asked:

- 'Do you know someone (a personal friend, an acquaintance, a family member) who is involved in a gang?' **59.2% responded 'Yes**
- 'Are you personally involved in a gang?' **78.2% responded 'No'**
- 'Have you ever personally carried a knife or other weapon, or know someone else who has carried a knife/other weapon?' **50% responded 'No'**
- 'In the last 6 months, have you been arrested by the police?' **78.9% responded 'No'**
- 'Have you been charged with committing a crime?' **75.4% responded 'No'**

Here, we see around 40% of young people surveyed admitting to knowing people involved a gang, and 50% having carried a knife.

There are significant differences to these questions by ethnicity.

- 'Do you know someone (a personal friend, an acquaintance, a family member) who is involved in a gang?' **$p < .05$. 68% of Asian respondents answered 'yes' , higher than for other ethnicities**
- 'Are you personally involved in a gang?' **$p < .01$. 30.9% of Asian respondents answered 'yes', higher than for other ethnicities**
- 'Have you ever personally carried a knife or other weapon, or know someone else who has carried a knife/other weapon?' **$p < .001$. 59.8% of Asian respondents, and 52.9% of Black respondents, answered 'yes', higher than for other ethnicities**
- 'In the last 6 months, have you been arrested by the police?' **No significant difference here.**
- 'Have you been charged with committing a crime?' **No significant difference here.**

No significant differences were typically found on these measures for age. The only exception was for the question **'**Do you know someone (a personal friend, an acquaintance, a family member) who is involved in a gang?'. Here, 64.5% of 12-15 year olds answered 'yes' compared to only 31.3% of 8-11 year olds and 56.3% of over 16 year olds ($p < .05$).

Again, no significant differences were typically found on these measures for gender. The only exception was for the question 'Have you ever personally carried a knife or other weapon, or know someone else who has carried a knife/other weapon?' – 52.6% of males answered 'yes' compared to just 11.1% of females ($p < .05$)

Similarly, the conversations with young people during the focus groups revealed that, although reluctant to carry knives, they acknowledged that they may have to carry them in the future:

> Jake: Knives are a whole different situation to fists.
> Interviewer: Do you think there's ever a situation where you might be tempted to carry one?
> Jake: It depends.
> Sam: Even with carrying you can be arrested still.
> Interviewer: You can go to prison.
> Sam: Exactly.
> Jake: So, if you feel like your life is fully in danger that's when you might have to carry one.
> Will: Obviously, you contemplate it.

Although carrying knives does not appear to be a particular problem for the cohorts participating in both the survey and focus groups, focus group conversations did reveal that they may have to consider doing so in the future. This finding, however, should not be considered in isolation from their views and experiences of authority figures. Both the quantitative and qualitative data invariably reveal significant distrust in teachers and police officers. Young people's encounters with these figures do not produce feelings of safety and protection, as one would expect, but rather result in feelings of vilification and silencing. Therefore, young people's use of informal justice systems and the need to take control of their own safety is what might be considered a rational reaction to the failure of more formal systems of protection and safeguarding. **In order to prevent young people from entering into the criminal justice system, Engage Communities should consider their role in improving the relationships between young people, teachers and the police. Engage could consider how to involve young people in the dialogue about how to improve relationships with teachers and the police.**

Health and wellbeing

We ended the questionnaire with some questions about hobbies and general health and wellbeing. When asked 'what do you mostly do in your spare time?', the majority of responses were for 'hang around with friends outside' (21.3% of responses), followed by 'hang around with friends in the home' (20.7%) sports activities (16.7%), and play on computer games/iPad/other technological device (12.7%). See table 10 below.

Table 10: What do you mostly do in your spare time? [tick all that apply]

	Number of responses	% of responses

Play on computer games/iPad/other technological device	38	12.7%
Watching TV	31	10.3%
Go on social media	34	11.3%
Hang around with friends in the home	62	20.7%
Hang around with friends outside	64	21.3%
Sports activities	50	16.7%
Read books	8	2.7%
Other	13	4.3%

We next asked about drug and alcohol consumption over different time periods: 'ever', 'over the last 12 months', and over the 'last 4 weeks'. Table 11 below shows the results. Around less than a quarter of respondents have tried cigarettes, vaping, and alcohol but do not seem to use them regularly. A much smaller percentage have tried other drugs.

Table 11: Alcohol and drug use

	Ever	Last 12 months	Last 4 weeks
Cigarettes	18.7%	12.6%	9.5%
Electronic cigarettes (vaping)	25.5%	20.1%	16.3%
Alcohol	16.2%	13%	9.5%
Cannabis	15.9%	14.3%	8.8%
Spice	4.5%	2.2%	0.7%
Laughing gas cannisters	14.1%	10.6%	10.5%
Ecstasy	7.4%	4.6%	6.1%
Methamphetamine, Speed or other Amphetamines	4.4%	3.9%	4.5%?
LSD	3.8%	4.7%?	4.5%
Cocaine	9.2%	5.6%	6.8%

The majority of respondents feel their health is either very good (23.2%) or good (52.1%). There were no differences by age, gender or ethnicity here.

On average, respondents had done exercise on 2 days of the week.

56.3% of respondents feel their mental health is 'good'. No significant differences by age, gender or ethnicity are identified.

We also asked a series of questions about mental health over the last 2 weeks. Table 12 shows the results and demonstrates that the majority are not being bothered by feeling down or depressed, lack of sleep, eating problems, feelings of failure, lack of concentration, or feeling anxious. Approximately just under half though have experienced such concerns for several days over the past 2 weeks but very little, if any, experienced them for more than half the days or every day.

There were no significant differences based on gender, age or ethnicity to these questions.

Table 12: Measures of Mental Health

In the last 2 weeks…	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
'How often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?'	50.7%	43%	5.6%	0.7%
How often have you been bothered by trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much?	49.3%	45.8%	2.8%	2.1%
How often have you been bothered by poor appetite or overeating?	61.3%	32.4%	4.9%	1.4%
How often have you been bothered by feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure, or have let yourself or your family down?	56.3%	38.7%	3.5%	1.4%
How often have you been bothered by trouble concentrating on things, such as reading or watching television?	48.6%	41.5%	9.2%	0.7%
How often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious or on edge?	50%	37.3%	12%	0.7%

Although the findings set out here reveal that they majority of young people are not suffering from poor health and wellbeing, the focus groups revealed that the Engage sessions were nevertheless having a positive impact on these issues. Aiden and Kyle, for example, described how the sessions keep them 'busy', 'energised and healthy':

> PETER: I like the way they help us stay away from other things, like for example we
> come back from home, some people just sit there, but they distract us.
> INTERVIEWER: So instead of being stuck at home bored, you get to do other stuff.

AIDEN: Keeps us busy.
KYLE: Keeps us energised and healthy.

Others spoke about how the Engage sessions became a place where 'you can talk about anything' and be confident of not being judged:

MATTHEW: Yes, I talk to him about anything.
INTERVIEWER: So, tell us what you talk about.
MATTHEW: Anything. He'll give you advice if someone tries to approach you with drugs or anything. Some things you can't go to your parents, but you can go to [the engage session provider].
INTERVIEWER: What does that mean, having someone like that that you can go to if you can't go to your parents?
MATTHEW: It's a good relationship to have because he will never judge you. He will just always listen and tell you what's right and tell you what's wrong.

The girls we spoke to also felt that they could talk to the Engage practitioners and described some of the sessions as 'therapy'. Again, throughout this conversation, young people express feelings of trust and respect for the Engage practitioners:

CARYS: Every time I come into boxing, it's more like a therapy session for me. It's really easy to talk to them all. You can always just go to them.
TALIA: Yes, I can trust her.
CARYS: It makes me feel safe.
SOPHIE: You've got someone to talk to, but not… Supporting you even in the darkest times there is someone. You're not just fully alone.
INTERVIEWER: And is that what the Engage staff are like here?
CARYS: Yes, they comfort you and they make you feel more… First time I came, it was just before Christmas, and they were, what's your name? What do you want to do? And I felt comfort because you feel like you're not all alone.
CARYS: You don't feel isolated.
SOPHIE:Yes, you don't feel isolated and you feel you can do… You can be yourself. And in the five minutes I was just out playing.

A series of additional analyses were caried out on the survey data to explore any 'change' in young people's attitudes from attending engage sessions. The analyses revealed evidence of significant positive change in young people's mental health and wellbeing the more sessions they had attended. For those who have attended 7 or more sessions, the young people report much more positive feelings on these measures than for those who attended fewer sessions. These were significant for all of these measures (see below).

'Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much?' 70.9% of those who attended 7 or more sessions, reported 'not at all', compared to 32.8% of those who attended 1-3 sessions ($p < .01$).

'Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by poor appetite or overeating?' 90.9% of those who attended 7 or more sessions reported 'not at all' compared to just 39.1% of those who attended 1-3 sessions ($p < .001$).

'Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure, or have let yourself or your family down?' 83.6% of those who attended 7 or more sessions reported 'not at all', compared to 34.4% o those who attended 1-3 sessions ($p < .001$).

'Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by trouble concentrating on things, such as reading or watching television?' 76.4% of those who attended 7 or more sessions reported 'not at all', compared to just 25% of those who attended 1-3 sessions ($p < .001$).

'Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious or on edge?' For those who attended 7 or more sessions, 85.5% reported 'not at all', compared to just 18.8% o those who attended 1-3 sessions ($p < .001$).

Finally, when asked *'over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?'* 69.1% of those who attended 7 or more sessions reported 'not at all', compared to 35.9% of those who attended 1-3 sessions ($p < .01$).

The young people we spoke to are therefore clearly benefiting from attending the Engage sessions. The sessions provide a place of safety, both in terms of physicality and wellbeing. Based on the survey and focus group data, therefore, one of the places we can confidently say that engage sessions have made a positive difference is with young people's mental health and well-being.

User experience

The young people we spoke to during the focus groups unanimously expressed enjoyment for the sessions and try to attend as often as possible:

> BEN: It's very good. I like how they do football sessions after school.
> NOAH: Yes, I come here every day, every week.
> LEO: Every week, yes.

They did however, have some suggestions for improvement. Many, for example, would like to Engage offer more sessions:

> SAM: More sessions.
> MATTHEW: More tournaments, they stopped it because of fighting. You had fighting

and they wouldn't do any more football tournaments.
JAKE: More sessions.

Others, including both boys and girls, suggested that Engage should offer more sporting variety. The girls, for example, were keen for Engage to include activities like paintballing, team building and archery while also suggesting for there to be scope to explore the arts such as drama and street dance:

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you guys play football and you practice your skills. Is there any other sessions you'd like to see Engage doing?
CARYS: Volleyball.
TALIA: Paintball.
SOPHIE: Team building.
TALIA: Archery. Archery would be a really good one. I can't see any archery clubs, but I really want to learn how to do it.
SOPHIE: Street dancing.
TALIA: I love drama. We could do a play.

The boys suggested that Engage should offer cricket sessions:

OLLY: Cricket.
JAMES: Cricket would be sick.
NOAH: Cricket's my second home.

The focus group discussion also revealed several examples of good practice. Some of the young people we spoke to referred to the way in which Engage practitioners used positive and inspiring language:

KYLE: Basically, what they say inspires us.
INTERVIEWER: So what do they say?
KYLE: No matter what, keep on trying.

As well as offering a place of refuge from the streets, as described earlier, the Engage sessions were also commended for creating 'just girl' spaces where 'you can be yourself' and do 'whatever you want':

CARYS: Just girls.
INTERVIEWER: And what do you think… Is it… Do you prefer it being just girls…
SOPHIE: Yes.
TALIA: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: Or would you prefer to be mixed?
CARYS: Us girls. Just girls. You can be yourself. Be yourself.
TALIA: If boys are here, you'd probably have to do… More pressured to be good. To impress them, but when you're girls you can just do whatever you want. If the boys are good, they'll compete. If you're not good, and they'll probably make mock of you.

> INTERVIEWER: You're worried they might mock your football skills. Is that what you mean?
> SOPHIE: It's like they think that they're better than us with football.
> TALIA: Yes.
> SOPHIE: They think girls can't play football.

Embedded within this conversation, however, is the pressure girls feel to 'impress' boys and a fear of being 'mocked' for their football skills. This discussion was also reflected by some really worrying comments made by the boys about girls that were grounded in gendered stereotypes. When asked about whether the girls and boys sessions should be held together, the boys suggested that the girls may not only feel uncomfortable but that 'football is seen as a men's sport' and that 'if a girl gets hurt, she'll end up crying' whereas a boy will 'get back up and carry on':

> OLLY: It's more up to the girls because they'll feel uncomfortable themselves, to be fair.
> JAMES: And because football is seen as a men's sport so.
> BEN: They can have a girl's session.
> INTERVIEWER: Do you think football is a man's sport?
> BEN: It's better for a man. For example, if a girl got hurt, she'll end up crying. But if a boy gets hurt, then he'll get back up and carry on.

Conclusions

In this final report we present findings from both the survey and focus groups with young people attending Engage sessions. We have sought to present findings under the headings educational achievement, employability, community cohesion, views and experiences of the police, experiences of crime, and health and well-being.

On the whole, the findings illustrate that there is much to be optimistic about. All participants reported positive community relations but, in the focus groups, acknowledged the benefit of Engage sessions in encouraging young people to 'interact with more people' and creating safe spaces for them to 'feel relaxed', 'let their guard down' and 'be with their friends'. Young people participating in the study also reported positive health and wellbeing, no doubt reinforced by the Engage practitioners who create supportive and inclusive environments where young people can be confident of not being judged. Crucially, the findings showed that young people reported improvements in their mental health and wellbeing the more they attended Engage sessions.

Recommendation 1: Engage to continue to create supportive and inclusive environments that create safe spaces for young people and retain 'girl only' sessions.

Less positive are the findings relating to attitudes towards employability skills and future aspirations, attitudes towards education and experiences of the police, and experiences of crime. Aligning to the findings of the baseline report, the survey data revealed that males identifying as Asian held more

positive attitudes towards their employability skills and future career prospects than their other ethnic group and female counterparts.

Recommendation 2: Target work towards improving the confidence of those that are younger age and those identifying as 'white', 'black' and/or 'female'.

Recommendation 3: Target work in helping to improve attitudes towards 'life' with those young people belonging to Black African/Caribbean/'other'.

Although the survey results revealed strong engagement and positive attitudes towards education, the findings from the focus groups revealed a mistrust for teachers. This sense of mistrust was also extended to the police, which was evident in both the survey and focus group data. Similarly, while experiences of crime were few among the participants of the survey, it became clear in the focus group discussions that addressing such conflictual situations young people often drew on their own informal justice support systems.

Recommendation 4: In order to prevent young people from entering into the criminal justice system, Engage Communities should consider their role in improving the relationships between young people, teachers and the police.

The overall user experience of Engage sessions were unanimously positive. However, the findings revealed that to improve their offer Engage communities should consider the following:

Recommendation 5: Increase the variety of sporting activities offered and to consider introducing activities that explore the arts, such as drama and street dance.

Finally, littered throughout the focus groups discussions were some worrying male attitudes about girls that were often grounded in gendered stereotypes.

Recommendation 6: Use the boys only sessions to challenge their attitudes about women and girls and their roles within society.

Appendix A:

Table A.1: Correlation between playing truant and attitudes towards school

	Not played truant	Once or twice	3 or 4 times	5-10 times	More than 10 times	*Significance Value*
I am NOT bored in lessons	79.3% agreed	76.9% agreed	75% agreed	33.3% agreed	25% agreed	P < .05
Most of the time I WANT to go to school	88.9% agreed	63.1% agreed	41.7% agreed	44.4% agreed	37.5% agreed	P > .05
I like my teachers	89.3% agreed	75.4% agreed	41.7% agreed	22.2% agreed	12.5% agreed	P < .001
I work as hard as I can in school	82.1% agreed	73.8% agreed	41.7% agreed	11.1% agreed	12.5% agreed	P < .001
School is NOT a waste of time for me	89.7% agreed	80% agreed	58.3% agreed	55.6% agreed	25% agreed	P < .05
School work is worth doing	89.3% agreed	78.5% agreed	75% agreed	77.8% agreed	37.5% agreed	P > .05
I am happy when I am at school	89.3% agreed	72.3% agreed	50% agreed	44.4% agreed	50% agreed	P > .05
I get good marks for my work	89.7% agreed	78.5% agreed	50% agreed	22.2% agreed	25% agreed	P < .001