



Your Shout:

The views of young people living in poor communities in North East England

Report of a one-day young people's engagement event

By **Loraine Sweeney**

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Challenging ideas – Changing policy

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About ippr north

ippr north, the Newcastle-based office of the Institute for Public Policy Research, produces far-reaching policy ideas, stimulating solutions that work nationally as well as locally. These are shaped from our research, which spans the northern economic agenda, public services, devolution, food policy and rural issues, as well as a strong democratic engagement strand which involves a wide range of audiences in political debates.

ippr north, Bioscience Centre, Centre for Life, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4EP Tel: +44 (0)191 211 2645 www.ippr.org/ipprnorth. Registered Charity No. 800065

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Executive summary

Child poverty is undoubtedly one of the most pressing and persistently difficult policy issues facing Britain today. Central to tackling child poverty is the need to raise attainment, opportunities and aspirations of the young people living in our most disadvantaged communities, whose life chances are significantly lower than those from more wealthy areas.

In order to achieve this it is important that those who are living in these communities are not left behind by policymakers and that their views are listened to and acted on in order to achieve change. Understanding the reality of living in these communities is important in order to fully understand the significant barriers and challenges facing them and how best to tackle these to achieve more equality of opportunity for all young people.

This report captures the views of young people living in such communities across the North East (as relayed during a one-day event in Sunderland in April 2008): their views on family life, where they live, adult attitudes to young people, the issues that concern them most and their future.

One of the main findings was a feeling among the young people of being disconnected from society. They also felt that adults – such as those from the local community, shopkeepers, the police and bus drivers – often had very negative views about them. Worryingly, some young people said that adults were sometimes verbally abusive and threatening towards them. This was backed up by youth workers, who described young people as feeling like they were not a part of their local community.

Other main themes related to tension at home, often due to a lack of money. Some young people had left home to live with older siblings as a result of this and others wanted to leave home. Some young people also faced significant caring responsibilities which affected their free time, meaning they could not socialise with friends, and affected their schooling and further education.

Young people's views about where they lived were predominantly negative, which was mainly due to a lack of facilities for their age groups. And where there were facilities, they were considered too expensive for them to use regularly. The cost of transport was another major problem, although fares varied across different areas. Those living in rural areas were particularly badly affected by high transport costs.

Young people were also concerned about issues related to sex and teenage pregnancy, and some knew friends who had babies at a young age. They felt schools did not tackle sex education in the right way.

There was a general concern around issues related to their safety, local crime and the police. Some felt threatened by other groups of young people and described how alcohol, which some felt was too easily available for young people, contributed to crime.

Although most young people gave examples of jobs they would like to do, they were less positive about how to achieve their ambitions, and some of them were not sure what they wanted to do when they left school. Most were concerned about the cost of higher education and transport. Some young people had also faced stigma from employers because they lived in a poor area.

Youth workers' views mirrored the issues raised by young people. They described a lack of family support for the young people they worked with and said that many had no stable family life. They reported that many young people faced discrimination because of where they lived and that one positive way to tackle their lack of horizons would be to make more residential courses available so they could learn new skills and gain confidence to travel and try out new things. They felt that young people were not ambitious because many jobs were short term and low paid, offering little opportunity, with the effect that some young people felt trapped in their local area.

1. Introduction

Statistics show a worrying trend among young people of disengagement in politics. Feelings of exclusion and being ignored contribute to low aspirations and disengagement. To counter these feelings of political antipathy, to provide a space for young people to air their views and concerns, with their peers, and for this to then feed into policymaking, ippr north, commissioned by Save the Children Fund and Government Office North East, organised a young people's engagement event, named *Your Shout*, in Sunderland on 7 April 2008.

Understanding how poverty affects young people from a young person's perspective is an important part of tackling poverty. By engaging young people from disadvantaged areas in discussing the issues that affect their lives, and presenting their views and aspirations in this report, we aim to inform ippr north's research in this area, and recommend action for policymaking on child poverty at both the national and regional level. The report will also contribute to the work of the North East Child Poverty Strategy Group.

We would like to note that some of the young people involved were active in regional forums such as the Youth Assembly and so were already engaged locally, which should be borne in mind when considering their responses, but most of the participants did not fall into this category.

Background: the need to tackle child poverty

Eradicating child poverty is a key aspiration for government. In 1999, 3.4 million children lived in poverty in the UK and Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, committed in March 1999 to halving the child poverty rate by 2010/11 and ending child poverty by 2020. Since then, the numbers of children living in poverty have fallen in all parts of the UK: in 2005/6 600,000 fewer children were living in poor households than in 1999.

However, child poverty statistics published in March 2007 showed that child poverty rose for two successive years in both 2004/5 and 2005/6, and the Government is still a long way from achieving its target.

The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-11 reaffirmed the commitment to end child poverty and its consequences – by reducing the education gap between poor children and their peers, for example. The creation of the Child Poverty Unit in October 2007 signalled a further step by the Government to take forward efforts to meet its child poverty target. But what does this mean in practice and for the North East in particular?

Child poverty in the North East

In the North East 140,000 children between 2003/4 and 2005/6 were at risk of living in poverty¹. This equated to 28 per cent of the region's children. This percentage is the highest in the UK outside Inner London. The figure is given before housing costs; if these are taken into account then a further 20,000 children are at risk of living in poverty in the region.

The new Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (IMD 2007) is measured at the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA), and is made up of seven LSOA-level domain indices. The North East is the region that has the greatest percentage (at 34.2 per cent) of its local Super Output Areas falling in England's most deprived 20 per cent.

Table 1 (next page) shows a selection of scores from the indices. Those highlighted in bold are areas lived in by the young people who participated in the *Your Shout* event.

1. Department for Work and Pensions, Households Below Average Income (HBAI) 1994/95-2005/06 (revised), April 2007, available at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2006/contents.asp

Table 1. Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (English local authority rank of average deprivation)

Local authority	Rank of average deprivation score 1 = most deprived; 354 = least deprived
Liverpool	1
Hackney	2
Tower Hamlets	3
Manchester	4
Knowsley	5
Newham	6
Easington	7
Middlesbrough	9
Hartlepool	23
Wear Valley	33
Sunderland	35
Newcastle upon Tyne	37
South Tyneside	38
Wansbeck	46
Redcar and Cleveland	50
Gateshead	52
Sedgefield	54
Derwentside	73
Blyth Valley	80
Darlington	95
Stockton-on-Tees	98
North Tyneside	102
Berwick-upon-Tweed	133
Chester-le-Street	140
Durham	180
Alnwick	206
Teesdale	209
Castle Morpeth	223
Tynedale	244
West Oxfordshire	349
South Cambridgeshire	350
South Northamptonshire	351
Surrey Heath	352
Wokingham	353
Hart	354

Source: Department of Communities and Local Government, Indices of Deprivation 2007

Objectives of the event

The *Your Shout* event sought to find out young people's views generally of what it is like to live in disadvantaged communities in Britain today, rather than of their individual personal situations.

The event explored the participants' views on:

- Family life
- Where they live
- The issues that concern them the most
- Their aspirations for the future
- Whether young people could change things.

Methods

The *Your Shout* event involved three elements:

- Drama to engage the young people (2.5 hours)
- Deliberative workshops to explore their views in detail (1 hour long, run consecutively, with seven to eight participants in four groups)
- Capturing their views on film in order to produce a DVD from the event.

Participants were given tokens at the end of the event to thank them for their contributions during the day.

(See Appendices for details.)

We wanted to ensure that the young people found the event enjoyable and interesting and felt able to discuss the issues that were of importance to them. We deliberately structured the event around young people's visions and approaches in order to understand the subtleties and complexities of their experiences and to avoid imposing adult narratives such as 'social inclusion' onto participants. This report uses the language used by participants themselves as much as possible in order to communicate young people's views faithfully and accurately.

The event used innovative techniques such as presenting the lives of fictional characters to whom the young people could relate and give their views on. The majority of young people enjoyed this and it enabled them to open up to the issues that would be explored in more depth in the afternoon deliberative workshops. The aim of the workshops was to give participants the opportunity to describe in their own words what it feels like to live in their local area, to explore their views on how young people are portrayed by the media, their local community and by other adults and to discuss their aspirations and views on whether things could change for the better in their local area.

The drama focused on a range of fictional characters who were presented as being friends facing a number of difficult issues from alcohol problems to unemployment, sleeping rough, caring for family members and teenage pregnancy. Using actors, the drama explored a typical night for these young people, showing how they related to each other, and how other people perceived them. The participants also discussed difficulties they faced. In one scene a number of friends talked about how one of the characters had ended up sleeping on the streets and why they thought this had happened.

The young people discussed their views on the drama in groups and also interviewed the characters from the drama.

The use of drama proved successful in encouraging the young people to begin to discuss the topics which were then explored in more depth in the afternoon session, which used deliberative workshops to engage with young people. This approach offers a number of advantages compared with other research methods such as focus groups: it is carried out over a longer length of time, which gives a greater opportunity for different participants to express their views fully and with confidence, and for discussion and debate.

The workshops included large group discussions and smaller break-out groups. They utilised discussion guides, which had been prepared using appropriate language. Care was taken to omit policy terms or words that had moral or political connotations for adults unless they were words used by participants themselves. For example, we avoided using terms such as 'social inclusion', 'deprivation' and 'disadvantage'.

It was clear that peer group dynamics influenced the way participants presented their views and attitudes within the workshops, which enabled us to gain an idea of the shared norms that govern young people's views of where they live, their future and how things could be changed.

Most of the young people enjoyed the event, and young people in one group agreed with a participant who said *'Adults should come to more meetings like this to understand us.'*

Who took part

The groups of young people were recruited by Save the Children Fund North East who partnered ippr north for the event, using their contacts with youth groups across the region. ippr north produced an information pack and posters, which were used to encourage young people to take part. Twenty-nine young people from youth projects across the North East took part, including:

- Two young people from Hendon, Sunderland (aged 17 and 18)
- Two young people from the Family Health and Community Project, Cowgate, Newcastle (aged 16)
- One young person from UK Youth Parliament in Durham (aged 16)
- Six young people from Stockton Youth Assembly (aged 16, 16, 17, 17, 18, 20)
- Five young people from Easington, County Durham (aged 12, 14, 15, 15, 16)
- Three young people from Durham MPs Reference Group (aged 15,16,17)
- Three young people from Brighter Futures Project, Middlesbrough (aged 13,14, 14)
- Five young people from A690 project, Sunderland (aged 14,15, 15, 16, 16)
- Two young people from South Tyneside Young Peoples Project (14, 14).

Youth workers were also present on the day, discussing the issues in a separate group. This report captures their views in Section 3.

2. The young people's views

On the drama

Following the drama scenes, performed by actors from the Gibber Theatre, young people were asked to describe how they perceived the characters and to decide whether they felt the drama was realistic and whether, in particular, they felt any of the scenes reflected life in their own communities.

The language used by young people to describe the characters was generally negative, although sympathetic and not derogatory. Participants described the situations in which the characters were presented as 'deprived' and 'confused', and said the characters had 'suffered from a bad past and bad background'. All the young people agreed with these descriptions. Some young people also described some of the characters as 'alcoholics'.

Young people did raise issues related to poverty, despite not using this word itself to describe the characters' situation. They said that the characters wanted money, lived in quite rough areas and suffered from family problems. They also said that the area where a person lives impacts on his or her behaviour; and that the characters were acting in the way they were because they had nothing else to do and were bored. When asked what the future held for the characters, they said they had no prospects and were trapped.

What came across strongly was the importance the young people attributed to the living environment of the characters. They did not say that the characters themselves were to blame for their problems. In the afternoon sessions, when talking in relation to their own experiences, participants expressed that the problems they faced were due to boredom and having nothing to do.

Most of the young people said that the drama was true to life and in their discussion groups some of them said it was very much like that where they lived.

One young person said one of the scenes, in which a character described starting a fire, reminded her of an incident where she lived in Hendon, Sunderland:

'We've had fires in the cornfields near where I live, and (once) one person was trapped.'
(female, 18, Sunderland)

However, some young people did not agree that the drama was realistic and felt that it exaggerated the experience of young people:

'It showed young people as getting drunk and behaving as criminals, the same way the media portray us. It doesn't represent the majority.' (male, 18, Stockton)

In one group, the young people described the drama as being about showing extremes. They said that although the characters were not realistic, they felt some of the issues that were explored were realistic.

Views by topic

We have grouped the views of young people, as relayed in the afternoon discussion groups, under a number of topic headings, according to the issues they themselves raised.

i) Family life

Some young people talked about family life as experienced themselves or by their friends. Three main themes emerged relating to family life: tension at home, caring responsibilities and a lack of money.

Tension at home

Some young people said there was tension in their family and that they did not get on with their parents. One said that this made him not want to go home so he slept at his friend's house instead. A number said that as a result of difficulties with their parents, they had chosen to move in with older siblings. Some of the young people said a lack of money caused tension at home because their parents wanted to give them money but could not.

'If your mum is trying to make ends meet and you want to go out and don't have money it can cause friction.' (male, 18, Stockton)

Some participants also described a lack of routines in their family, and said that they did not sit down for family dinners.

Caring responsibilities

Some young people were carers for family members such as younger children or parents. They said that they received no recognition for this and found it difficult.

'It affects my social life, because I've had to spend time doing things for my dad, rather than going out.' (female, 17, Durham)

Lack of money

The young people talked extensively about having a lack of money with some describing how this affected their family.

It is notable that youth workers described how many of the young people taking part were from poor families, but young people did not want to talk about this openly. They talked more about what it meant in general and some also described how this affected their friends' lives. Many said they had nothing to do because they could not afford to go out anywhere.

'It used to be love that made the world go round, but now it's money.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

Young people were also very aware of the reality of living on benefits and how this affects families. They described how families would receive their benefit money, but when bills came in it could make them feel under stress.

'People say these days you don't need money to have a good time, but you do. Benefits aren't enough to live on; you can't get enough food for your family.' (female, 17, Durham)

'It costs a lot to do something so you just give up.' (male, 17, Stockton)

Young people also described how people who are known to be poor can get picked on by others in the community.

'A friend of mine with a sick parent gets bullied because they haven't got a lot of money, so they can't keep up with fashion trends, so people call them names.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

'You will get bullied if you are poor at school.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

Despite not having very much money themselves, some young people said that if someone – a friend or family member – was even worse off than they were, they would lend money to this person. They also said that sometimes poor people had to resort to stealing.

'People start nicking stuff because they don't have enough money.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

Young people were also asked to discuss what they thought it would be like to be poor. They gave examples of how they thought other people and wider society perceived poor people.

'People think those people are lazy.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

'People call them chavs because they don't have jobs.' (female, 13, Middlesbrough)

'My friend lives in a shelter, which means she can't get a qualification. She has no parental support and no money. She has health problems, she didn't get a chance to go to school and doesn't go out.' (female, 16, Stockton)

Young people also discussed clothes and how these were often used to discriminate against young people. Many said adults think all young people who wear tracksuit bottoms are chavs but they said this was not always the case. It was sometimes just to do with what you could afford. They also said they felt what you wore was important, particularly the right brand of clothes that would be accepted by your peer groups. A few said that single parents in particular found it difficult to afford clothes.

'They look scruffy because they can't afford to buy new things.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

'Single parents find it difficult to buy school uniforms for children, especially top-name brands.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

Looking at money from another angle, we explored what young people would do with a relatively modest amount of money by asking what they would do if they had £50. Most young people's responses were very practical. They said that they would buy clothes, food, cleaning products and go out with friends, for example to the cinema. Some said they thought young people near where they lived would spend it on alcohol or drugs but others disagreed with this.

'If you had enough money, it doesn't mean you'd put drink before food.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

When asked what they would do if they had money generally (not a specific amount), many said they would like to travel, but some disagreed with this saying they would prefer to stay near family and friends. A few said they would lend their money to others on the dole. One young person said he would spend it quickly and one said he would use it to buy a good bed.

'I would buy a comfortable bed and stay in it for the rest of my life.' (male, 14, South Tyneside)

Many of the young people involved were about to or had left school and were considering options for further education. They said one barrier was funding. Young people felt it was unfair that not all young people qualified for Education Maintenance Allowance. Some of the young people's parents earned just over the threshold for receiving EMA and said they would lose out as a result. They said that if you had more than one child it would be very difficult to send them to college or university. Some felt it would be fairer if the benefit system took account in some way of families with more than one child. Some of the young people agreed that all young people should get a set amount.

'I think it's wrong not everyone gets EMA.' (male, 17, Sunderland)

ii) Where you live

Young people were then asked to describe the area where they lived. The young people who took part live in a broad cross section of areas across the North East, but all are areas with high levels of child poverty. Most of the young people – in particular those from Sunderland, Newcastle, Stockton and Durham – did not like the area where they lived. Young people from Middlesbrough were more positive about their area.

When talking about their local physical environment the young people used strong terms:

'It's horrible.' (male, 20, Stockton)

'I live near a tip and it smells!' (female, 17, Durham)

'I don't like where I live.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

However, some of the young people agreed that people labelled areas negatively and they felt this was not fair. They felt that the reputation of their local area impacted on them, with many saying that they often did not feel safe (see below for more on this).

'You only know what an area is like when you live there.' (male, 18, Stockton)

Young people from County Durham were particularly vocal in attributing problems to high unemployment and being isolated due to living in a rural community. For those in Middlesbrough, safety was a big issue, which some people from Easington in County Durham also related to.

'Lots of people have been made redundant and have no qualifications. There aren't enough jobs and lots of strikes. Sometimes there isn't enough food in the shops because of this and kids don't attend school. Some kids are supposed to be in a secure unit but they drink and get sent home.' (female, 12, Easington)

When asked whether they lived in a poor area, most young people said they did not think this was the case. However, more described the area where they lived as rough and other young people in the groups related to this. They seemed reluctant to describe their area as poor, although we know that some did come from areas with high levels of poverty. Instead, they described their area as normal, 'like any other area'.

'If you are not a hard person you will have to leave my area.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

A few young people said they were laughed at by others because of where they lived and others said that because everyone in their area was the same this meant they were not living in poverty.

'I don't think our area is deprived, everyone is the same.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

Comments like these show how young people should not be expected to discuss these issues in words that policymakers would use. It is important to draw out comparisons using their own language.

One group was asked to give examples of what it would be like to live in poverty. One young person gave an account of someone he had met who came from a very poor area. He said that he felt sorry for this person, which was a common sentiment. The young people did not seem quick to judge people from poor families and were not derogatory about them.

'Once a bloke was hanging out with us. He said he was from Norton. People were laughing at where he was from and he got angry. I wanted him to stop. I felt sorry for him. I'm going to university but he hasn't been given the choice. People don't have these chances. They're deprived of that opportunity.' (male, 20, Stockton)

iii) Local facilities for young people

Young people from all areas said there was nothing to do in their local area, with the exception of those from Middlesbrough. Cost was a major barrier identified by all young people, including those from Middlesbrough. The majority said they spent a lot of their time sitting near the local shops. Those from County Durham, who lived in a rural area, said they felt isolated and that there were no facilities at all: even shops were few and far between.

'There is nothing for us to do.' (female, 14, Sunderland)

'We sit on the corner.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

'It sounds negative [to sit on the corner] but everyone does it, because there is nowhere to go.' (male, 20, Stockton)

'My area's just crap. There's a football field and nothing to do.' (female, 15 Durham)

When asked what they would like to do participants said they wanted to be able to have enough money to go out with their friends.

'It's nice to have money to go out with your mates and have somewhere to go.' (male, 18, Stockton)

In some areas, such as Cowgate in Newcastle, young people described local facilities closing down altogether. They said a sports centre and local school had recently closed. In other areas, facilities were badly maintained and vandalism had ruined them.

Some young people, particularly those from Middlesbrough, described having good facilities but said that this was spoiled by 'chavs' (or 'charvers', a word that relates to groups of young people from poor areas who cause trouble and commit crimes) who have drink and drug problems. They said there was nowhere to spend money even if you wanted to and that young people ended up drinking because there was nothing else to do. They also described no-go areas where they would not meet

friends because chavs were there and some said they had been threatened by young people with knives. The cost of leisure was also a major barrier for young people.

'People have fights because of music or the way you dress.' (female, 16, Durham)

Some young people suggested that this could be channelled better if there were activities such as karate or kick-boxing. One girl said that in her area, Durham, the only boxing club was boys only. When asked why they thought young people got involved with these groups and got involved in fights they said:

'It's about reputation and getting noticed, people want a bad reputation in Stockton, it gets you noticed.' (male, 18, Stockton)

'People fight because they are bored.' (male, 15, Durham)

Some young people said if the young people you are with fight or cause trouble it could lead to you doing the same, due to peer pressure, as young people tend to do what their friends do.

iv) Issues that concern young people the most

The young people were asked, in their discussion groups, to list the issues that concerned them the most. The results, discussed in more detail below, were as follows:

- Transport
- Drink and drugs
- Crime
- Safety
- Attitudes of the police
- Teenage pregnancy
- Sex
- Graffiti

Transport

Cheap travel was a very important issue for young people in all the groups. Most young people said that transport was expensive, which impacted on their lives considerably. It was particularly expensive for those living in rural areas of County Durham, as they often needed to take more than one bus or mode of transport and the cost was high. For example, young people from one of the villages in County Durham said it cost them £4 to get to Durham city and £14 a week to go to college. They felt that this significant cost was a major barrier for them in travelling to jobs and further education, to socialise and to participate in leisure activities.

'If you get a job outside your area you can't afford to get over there.' (female, 16, Durham)

'I have to go to hospital regularly and it takes four buses to get there. It costs about £7 [to get to Durham] and then £6 to get to the hospital and the same on the way back. Although prices are becoming cheaper now.' (female, 12, Easington)

Those living near a Metro light rail station in Newcastle said Metro fares were not as expensive as bus fares. They also said fares in Newcastle seemed cheaper than those for other areas in the North East. However, they believed that Newcastle fares were still too expensive for them and stopped them being able to do things. They also felt it was unfair that when you were over 16 there was a big jump in bus fares even though you might not be in employment.

'OAPs get free transport and young people have to pay loads.' (female, 16, Stockton)

One young person (male, 20, Stockton) suggested that there should be a set low-cost fare to go anywhere, or that transport should be free, as was the case for young people in London. But another

young person (female, 15, Sunderland) said that this would not be fair because adults would have to pay more for their fares or through taxes.

Young people in Middlesbrough said buses were fairly cheap, costing them between 50p and £1.70 to get into the city. Young people from Durham and Middlesbrough said bus drivers sometimes did not stop for groups of young people. (See also adult attitudes section below.) Many young people said safety was also an issue on buses.

'There should be a bus for children to get onto because if you go on a Saturday after a match it's full of drunk men and you don't feel safe.' (female, 12, Easington)

'There was a man on the bus sniffing stuff the other day.' (female, 16, Durham)

Alcohol and drugs

There was a consensus across all groups that young people drink alcohol because there is nothing to do. Some felt that it was acceptable for young people to do this and others said that where you drank was the distinction between whether you had a drink problem or not. They also felt that the public and the media focused on people with less money who drank and that more wealthy people did not get a bad reputation despite drinking to the same extent. Interestingly, young people from all areas believed there was pressure to drink and take drugs, as well as to smoke and steal.

'My parents won't let me smoke because of my Grandad. He's ill from working in a mine and drinking too much. My neighbours are drink and drug addicts and there are stabbings and shootings.' (female, 12, Easington)

'Everyone drinks but some do it inside.' (female, 17, Durham)

'People who have less money might spend more of their money on drink, but people with better jobs might spend the same money. No one says anything about that.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

'Drinking is a problem when it's hurting your life.' (male, 20, Stockton)

The accessibility of alcohol and drugs to young people was also a concern to some young people. They said that the cost of drinking and promotions such as buy one, get one free, made excessive drinking worse. However, some young people disagreed with this and said that they believed young people would drink whatever the cost.

'Drink should be more expensive.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

'Off-licences sell direct to kids and sometimes don't ask for ID.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

A number of young people from different areas said that there were 'fag houses' in their local area where people sold cheap cigarettes and sometimes alcohol.

'There are fag houses. I can't take my little sister to friends' houses because adults sell fags and drink.' (female, 12, Easington)

Drugs were not as widely discussed and most young people did not have as many concerns or experience of people taking drugs. One person did know of someone at her college who took drugs, and said it was widely known but no one did anything about it.

'Someone at my college takes heroin, it should be stopped.' (female, 15, Durham)

'Drug addicts use syringes and leave them [where I live].' (female, 12, Easington)

Crime

Most young people identified crime as a major issue. They were concerned over young people being the victims of crime. Some young people said they did not feel vulnerable because they knew the people involved and therefore felt safe. They said that young people sometimes did commit crimes.

They also felt that adults were prone to believing that any young person they saw on the streets was causing trouble when this was not always the case.

'I know loads of people like that but we don't feel threatened by them because we know them, but if they were somewhere else we would feel intimidated.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

'I worry about crime so instead of going out I stay in and play on the computer.' (male, 18, Stockton)

'Most young people are afraid of gangs.' (male, 17, Stockton)

'We got told to stay off the field the same night someone got stabbed.' (female 17, Durham)

Young people also said that their safety was also at risk at school, because bullying was not properly tackled. In one group, young people said that although teachers said they would do something, they did not sort things out.

'People come and take things off you, like ear muffs. You don't say anything because they are in a big group.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

'My teacher doesn't care if I get bullied at school.' (female, 16, Stockton)

'When you are at school you have to be in a group. I was friends with everybody.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

Safety

'I know someone who had to move out of her street because her neighbour was trying to beat up her boyfriend all the time. My area is nice and quiet now when the drug dealer is gone.'

Along with crime, young people in two groups talked about their fears for their own safety. In another group young women talked about the need for self defence classes, saying some clubs such as boxing were for boys only.

'If I saw a group of young people I didn't know, I would feel unsafe.' (male, 17, Sunderland)

'The high street is horrible, it is not a nice place, sometimes I feel intimidated and open to crime. You don't just see it in the paper, you see it around too.' (male, 20, Stockton)

'I've been threatened with a knife.' (female, 15, Durham)

Attitudes of the police

Young people from three groups said that they did not trust the police. They said that the police did not like them. Most agreed that the police did not take young people seriously and some said they did not always respond when they were needed. More worryingly, young people also said that police were sometimes abusive and even violent towards them.

'We get split up for no reason; we're just walking.' (male, 20, Stockton)

'The police pick on you for nothing or because of who you hang about with.' (male, 17, Sunderland)

'[You should] make sure the police pull you for a reason.' (female, 16, Sunderland)

'I've been shouted at to move by the police but was actually waiting for a bus.' (female, 16, Sunderland)

'The police swear at you and are dead rough with you.' (female, 16, Durham)

'If one area is very bad they get lots of police and CCTV but that just moves the trouble somewhere else.' (male, 17, Stockton)

'When you need them [the police] they are not there. Even if they have been there physically, they do the paperwork, but you are just a number.' (female, 16, Stockton)

Participants also expressed concern over the role of street wardens. Most areas did have street wardens but all young people who discussed them said they did not think they were effective. They also said they did not take any action because they were local and relatives of the people causing problems.

'Street wardens seem scared of the chavs.' (female, 15, Durham)

'They are often related to the people [causing problems] in the groups.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

'You should call the proper police if there are chavs and you need anything doing. I'm not bothered as long as I am not in trouble.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

Graffiti and vandalism

Young people from two groups said graffiti was a problem where they lived. They said the local parks and public toilets where they lived were vandalised.

'The toilets are horrible, minging, awful, where all the drunk men go.' (female, 16, Durham)

'The parks are getting ruined. My brother goes and fights there, they fight different groups, emos and chavs.' (female, 15, Durham)

Young people in one group said that not all graffiti was bad, however.

'Art graffiti looks great but just tagging isn't, cos it makes the place look bad but art graffiti brightens where you live.' (male, 17, Durham)

Teenage pregnancy

Some young people said they knew people who were pregnant while teenagers. Young people from Stockton said there was a high rate of teenage pregnancy there. One group said that the emotional side of sex was being missed out, and that all teachers talk about is contraception.

Young people said they believed some of the reasons that young women became pregnant were because they drank alcohol, that they wanted attention or because they knew that you can get a £500 grant towards the cost of having a baby. However, young people in this group did not express whether they thought this was good or bad, although they did say that they believed £500 would not cover the commitment and expense involved in having a baby.

'My sister had a child at 15, went to college and moved out [of the family home] at 16. Her child is now 10 and she is still with the partner.' (male, 15, Easington)

'My friend got pregnant for the attention, she saw the attention other people got.' (female, 16, Stockton)

'You can spend £500 just like that, but you can't just give your bairn away [when you've spent the money].' (female, 16, Easington)

Young people felt schools were missing a massive part of sex education: about why people have sex. They felt young people were having pressure put on them about sex.

'At school they say, "when you have sex", not "if you have sex". It shouldn't be something casual, but something you do with someone you love.' (female, 16, Durham)

v) Good things about your local area

Young people were also asked what they thought was good about where they lived. Although many did not like their area in general, they did express some positive feelings. They said having local shops was a good thing, although for some living in rural areas their nearest shop was two miles away. Most young people liked being near their friends and family.

One person said it was good to be near a laundrette and another said she liked living near the sea. Others said they liked swimming baths, areas where they could skate and parks but that they felt parks should cater for young people of different ages. Young people from Stockton and Hendon said the shops were a meeting place for going out, and also a place to gather.

vi) Things you would change to make your area better

The young people were generally positive about being able to change things.

'Yes, we can change the world, we are going to stop child poverty.' (female, 12, Easington)

'By helping people and then they [the people you have helped] will help others.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

Some young people said that while they felt they were listened to, what they wanted was to see change.

'It's all very well listening to young people, but what are they actually doing to help?' (female, 16, Durham)

Others felt it was about being positive as individuals.

'You can't change other people but you can change the way you react to things.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

When asked what they would change, young people focused on:

- Tackling groups such as chavs
- Having more things to do and places to go
- Making it cheaper to do activities
- Cleaning up the local area.

One group said that they felt drinking in the street was a less important issue.

When asked how they thought they could go about changing things the young people had the following ideas:

- Sign a petition or email the prime minister
- Improve the portrayal of young people in the media
- Get involved in groups such as the youth assembly.

'Young people could help older people, such as with the digital divide [the gap between those who have access to digital technology and those who don't have access] by helping to show them how to use computers.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

'Community spaces should be used to benefit the whole community.' (male, 18, Stockton)

'Cleaning up the local area and then advertising it to the local media so that they can include positive stories about young people.' (male, 18, Stockton)

Below are more detailed comments from young people on the things they would like to change. A common theme is that most young people wanted to see new facilities in their local area that they could use and enjoy.

'We need more of a choice of facilities so that young people are not just hanging around the streets. But not just sports clubs.' (male, 18, Stockton)

When asked what facilities young people would like to have locally they said:

- A youth club – which needed to be safe, accessible and open 12 hours a day, including at the weekends
- A safe place
- Somewhere to go dancing
- A sports centre – including self defence classes for young women
- Somewhere to go and talk if a family member is ill
- Singing classes – but they should be youth-led
- A swimming pool
- Cheaper transport and more buses
- Fewer police cars
- Playing fields which were safe places to go
- Theme parks
- A youth café with computers
- Organised events
- A BMX park
- Music facilities which included music decks
- Outdoor activities like kayaking
- Go-karting – but they said that this needed to be less expensive than it was currently
- Somewhere to try hairdressing

Other young people agreed that there needed to be more facilities but said that unless the cost was reduced, young people would not be able to make use of these facilities.

'More things, but it has to be cheap fares so kids can go there.' (male, 20, Stockton)

When asked what 'cheap' would be, young people in one group said that activities should be priced at around £2 or £3 instead of £5. They felt that young people should be charged a lower rate than the standard rate for these kind of activities.

'There's loads to do if you are rich.' (female, 16, Sunderland)

'Sometimes you are too old to take part in youth clubs locally.' (female, 16, Newcastle)

Young people discussed the differences in costs across the North East. For example, they said swimming costs £3.75 in Durham compared with £2.70 in Sunderland, £2.40 in Newcastle and £1.80 in Middlesbrough.

Some young people felt that if you lived near a facility you should be able to get in for free. Someone else said that there needed to be more publicity about facilities locally.

One young person (male, 17, Stockton) suggested that school sports buildings should be used outside school hours and in the holidays for other activities that young people could take part in. He said one local school in Stockton already did this. Another (female, 18, Sunderland) said that a school in Hendon lets the public use their swimming pool and sports facilities.

Young people also said opportunities to relay their views through magazines and forums were also important locally. They gave the Stockton Youth Assembly's Yo Yo magazine as an example of this and said the magazine is distributed to schools.

vii) Your views on the future

Continuing to live in the local area

We also wanted to explore whether, given their views of their local area, young people felt they would like to stay there in the future or whether their prospects would be better if they moved away.

A few young people did not want to consider moving away but their loyalty was more related to wanting to be near their friends and family than their local area. However, others felt they would have to move away because of a lack of jobs and prospects locally.

One young person was shortly going to move with her family to Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. She was pleased about this and described their destination as 'bigger and better'. Her friends said this made them also want to move away from Middlesbrough to go to somewhere like Milton Keynes or Manchester but they were less keen on going to London. There was a perception that there are more opportunities in the South.

'The kids down South have more to do. I'm bored and want to go somewhere bigger.'
(female, 14, Middlesbrough)

Some young people from Durham wanted to move elsewhere in the North East. One said possibly Grimsby where she had family. Another wanted to move back to Darlington because she did not like her local area and because, she said, the shops were better and bus prices were cheaper.

Another group of young people said they would like to live abroad. When asked whereabouts they would like to go they said Canada, Australia or Spain. All young people in this group agreed that England was not a good place to live.

'Everyone in England has a bad attitude and start on people for no reason.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

'I'd like to travel in a caravan around the world.' (female, 14, Durham)

The future

The young people were asked what they thought about the future in general. Nearly all of them were negative about their future and some expressed this in relation to what they saw happening locally as well as a lack of job and further education opportunities. Some young people linked the problems locally to a lack of jobs.

'It's going to get worse.' (female, 16, Durham)

'It's because of a lack of jobs.' (female, 12, Durham)

Other young people on this table agreed. One (female, 14, Middlesbrough) said you could see children as young as five fighting. Some said they felt it was inevitable that if someone in your family was involved with fighting and crime that this would continue to other generations.

'People have ASBOs so they can't find jobs.' (female, 13, Middlesbrough)

'Your brother is a chav, he'll have kids and they'll end up being chavs and his kids after that.' (female, 16, Durham, speaking to a friend)

Your own future

When asked about their prospects, all young people either said they did not know what they would do or said that they were concerned about lack of jobs and opportunities for them.

'I'd like to die and come back again.' (female, 17, Durham)

'I'll see what the future brings me, I don't know what I'll do.' (female, 15, Durham)

'You're going to have to get a job before you get your own kip [place to live].' (male, 17, Sunderland)

'Everyone in my family is a failure, so it makes me feel a failure. I don't know what I want to do in the future, never mind if I want to do the course.' (female, 17, Durham)

'My mum wants me to live at home but I keep on having arguments with my dad. Eventually I want to move out with a bunch of mates.' (male, 18, Stockton)

Many young people were worried about having to leave home, their local area and family and friends.

'I don't want to leave my family.' (female, 12, Easington)

'I don't want to go to university and leave my friends.' (female, 16, Durham)

'I'd be scared [to leave home].' (female, 18, Sunderland)

Another young person said that this made them feel more determined, but that they did not know what they wanted to do in the future. One young person said that she felt she was being forced to choose but that she was not ready to.

Other barriers to leaving home were caring commitments and lack of money. One young person (male, 18, Stockton) wanted to move into shared rented accommodation with friends. Another said she did want to leave home but cared for a relative so was not able to and that this made her feel depressed.

'I'd like to move out now but have got to look after my dad because my brother won't do anything. Everything sucks, I hate life.' (female, 17, Durham)

In deciding whether to stay in the local area or move away, the number of employment opportunities was a major factor for participants. The majority of young people said they believed that if you stayed local your future prospects would not be good. Some young people talked about people they knew who had left their local area and were now doing well. Most young people said that there were no good jobs in their local areas.

Young people also expressed concern that where you lived could jeopardise your chances of securing a job. They knew of well-qualified people who had been overlooked locally because they felt that if you lived in a very poor area employers labelled you.

'There is stigma [when you go for jobs] because of where you live.' (female, 16, Sunderland)

Some young people believed that moving away from the North to the South gave you more prospects.

'You can't get a job around here, you have to go down South.' (male, 20, Stockton)

'There are more things to do [in the South] than hanging around.' (female, 14, Middlesbrough)

Some others said they wanted to move out, but it was an aspiration rather than something they felt they could do soon.

What will you do when you leave school?

Some young people said they had been pressurised by their school or careers advisers to go for a career path that they were not happy with. Some had been told they were not clever enough to pursue the career they wanted to, and others had been told they were too clever to pursue their choice.

'People look more at your negatives than your positives.' (female, 14, South Tyneside)

'They tell you what they think you should do but they don't listen. You are put under a lot of pressure to do what they think you should do instead of what you want to do.' (male, 18, Stockton)

'The teachers [at my school] told one of my friends she would not get into university because she wouldn't get the grades.' (female, 16, Stockton)

'University doesn't guarantee you a job. My aunt got a degree but couldn't get a suitable job in the North East, only down South or in London.' (female, 15, Sunderland)

Some young people felt they had received good advice on their options when leaving school.

'Connexions offered me taster sessions so I could find out what I wanted to do.' (female, 16, South Tyneside)

While a small number of young people said they definitely wanted to go to university and that their families would be able to afford it, other young people said they did not get enough advice at school about careers. They also said the advisers focused more on academic routes such as A-levels and university and did not give sufficient information or choices on vocational courses. All young people in one group agreed that there should be more choice of courses available to them in their local area. They also said the opening hours of Connexions (which gives information and advice to 13- to 19-year-olds) were not user-friendly: in some areas it was not open outside school hours.

'Careers advice is not raising aspirations.' (male, 18, Stockton)

'I'm not a big fan [of Connexions] as they have a narrow local focus and you get more options and choices if you are clever.' (male, 17, Stockton)

'Less formal [e.g. vocational] qualifications can be more interesting.' (female, 17, Sunderland)

'She [a connexions adviser] was basically judging the book by its cover.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

'I don't think you should be told what to do. If people put too much pressure on you then you don't want to do anything.' (female, 15, Durham)

Some young people were interested in apprenticeships because they liked the idea of work-based learning. One young person wanted to be a plasterer but said there was only one provider in the local area who would train you. He said because you needed to travel to this provider, it was difficult to afford the transport costs. Young people also said that if you did not do an apprenticeship when you were 16 then it would be too late because it was more difficult to get one after this age.

Other young people said that they could not afford to pay for three or four years of higher education or university. Some young people said there were no courses they wanted to do in their area. One group had a discussion about whether all young people should be eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), currently set at £30 a week. All young people in the group agreed that all young people should be eligible for it.

What job would you like to have in the future?

Some young people were very definite about what they wanted to do. Some were interested in manual work (being a plaster, bricklayer, mechanic or joiner). Others were interested in working in public services (firefighter, police, paramedic, nurse or doctor). Others were interested in careers that helped people (youth worker, working with children). One young person said she was interested in a career in the police, which caused some tension in her group because other young people in the group were very mistrustful of the police. Other participants were interested in the army, or employment as a solicitor, vet or hairdresser. One person said that whatever job she did she wanted to be part of a team.

'Because of my anger, through being bullied at school, they've [teachers at her school] told me I can't work with kids.' (female, 14, South Tyneside)

'I want to help naughty children.' (female, 16, Easington)

viii) Society's attitude to young people

The participants were asked how they felt other people in society perceived young people. Some young people said society gave mixed messages for young people aged between 16 and 18.

'You are not an adult but not a child, it's a grey area. You are age 16 for bad stuff and age 18 for good stuff. There should be one cut-off age.' (male, 17, Stockton)

They also said that a minority of young people made the majority look bad. On one table they all agreed that poor areas get picked on.

The media

The majority of the participants agreed that media stories about young people portrayed them negatively and affected people's attitudes about young people.

'The media very much feeds stigma. They paint an unfair picture of young people. On the news, if there is an article about the elderly, normally they are the victims, but if it's young people, it's how they have committed an awful crime.' (male, 17, Stockton)

'There's never anything positive in the media: bad press sells.' (female 15, Sunderland)

'Channel 4 said that Middlesbrough was the worst place in the world, I was appalled. People believe the hype at the end of the day.' (male, 20, Stockton)

'If they [the media] put across negative views it can encourage bad behaviour.' (female, 18, Sunderland)

'The generation gap doesn't help things. They think the news tells you everything about life but if you suggest the media sensationalises things they think it's a true picture. Old people are always doing good things but with young people it's the opposite, they've committed a crime.' (female, 16, Durham)

Young people in Middlesbrough said the local paper, the *Evening Gazette*, was very negative and they felt that the local media were often the worst out of all the media at portraying young people in a bad light. They also felt that the North as a whole was covered in a negative way in the national media.

Adult attitudes towards young people

Young people felt strongly that adults were often threatening or rude to them. In particular they said this applied to bus drivers, drunk adults and the police. They said that adults would label a whole group of young people as troublemakers even if it was only one person causing problems.

'Nobody ever speaks to us.' (female, 16, Easington)

'Young people are seen as stupid.' (female, 16, Durham)

'Most people think, oh, you're a kid, what do you know?' (female, 17, Durham)

'People set their dogs on you and they also video us.' (female, 16, South Tyneside)

'We arranged a bowling competition locally, but when no young people turned up the adults started calling us [names].' (male, 14, Easington)

'An MP came to a conference at our school. Young people were looked on as stupid.' (female, 16, Durham)

How to change adults' opinions of young people

When asked how adults' opinions could be changed, some young people said that if adults came to meetings such as this event they would realise young people were not all bad. Young people from Stockton also said that producing a magazine was a good way of getting views across, giving their example of the Stockton Youth Assembly magazine, Yo Yo.

'Adults should be calmer.' (female, 16, Sunderland)

2. Views from the youth workers

The youth workers at the event also had an opportunity to discuss issues related to child poverty. They were seated at a separate table to young people.

The youth workers said they felt the drama was a positive way of drawing out key issues and that the themes were realistic. They drew attention to the fact that although the young people involved in the event did not describe themselves as coming from poor homes, many of the families the professionals worked with were in fact poor.

The youth workers discussed issues related to the young people and families in the areas in which they worked. They explored family life and the behaviour of young people and described how the young people they worked with did not feel a part of their community. They cited the effects of alcohol, a lack of aspirations, employment and educational opportunities and stigma towards young people by employers as well as the attitudes of adults generally and negative portrayal of young people by the media as the reasons behind this feeling.

'Very few families I work with have good jobs or money. The families scrimp and scrape to get by and they don't get pocket money.'

Family life

Some of the youth workers explained that the young people they worked with had no stable family life and that bad behaviour started at around eight or nine years old. They said that families had a lot to do with behaviour problems, as some young people learned their behaviour from their siblings and parents. This included drinking alcohol.

'Young people don't go home for tea, lads stay up all night and sleep all day.'

'There are not many opportunities to do things as a family, parents work shifts and there is no time for family meals. There is no conversation with parents. Young people don't want to go home. They often sleep in the day and then go out at night.'

Some youth workers said families did not encourage young people, but another disagreed with this and said this was not the case with the families she worked with. Youth workers expressed concern that some young people missed school because they had caring responsibilities.

Lack of boundaries

The youth workers said that they felt that young people often did not get a fair deal, but also that they were given no boundaries. They said that young people can be arrested seven or eight times and that the police still take no action. One youth worker said that young people needed to learn what is right and what is wrong. Another said that boundaries were important to keep young people safe.

Effects of alcohol

The youth workers said that excessive drinking was a problem which they felt was due to the strength of alcohol promoted to young people and to being easily accessible for those under-age. 'Fag houses' (see previous section) are one source of alcohol that they mentioned.

'It has got a lot worse [than when we were young]. We didn't hang round street corners and could not access alcohol so easily.'

One youth worker said that the children she works with (in Middlesbrough) did not drink, for cultural and religious reasons.

Another youth worker described problems caused by young people having nothing to do in their local area and said that alcohol was often given to young people by their parents as a desperate measure to try to stop them taking drugs.

'In Easington, there are 100 plus young people gathering. Parents give them alcohol to stop them taking drugs.'

A lack of aspirations and opportunities

The youth workers said that many of the young people they worked with did not have aspirations for the future.

'Young people only see tomorrow, not the future.'

Others among the youth workers said that young people have low aspirations and feel trapped. They said that they found young people only gave very modest replies to questions on aspirations. Young people found it difficult to work their way out of their situation because they could not see what they could gain from doing so.

'There is a fear of progression and a lack of self esteem. The extent of their confidence is factory work. Young people are not going to university because it is not affordable.'

'Young people from [these communities in] the North East have no aspirations, and as their families have no aspirations young people have no role models. Parents say, "I never went to school and it did me no harm".'

The youth workers also said that those who do go to college often drop out due to lack of money or family responsibilities. However, young people from Brighter Futures – a group which works with young people from black and minority ethnic communities – did want to go to university. Youth workers discussed why this was. They agreed that immigrants aim to achieve better results and that usually they have come to Britain for a better life, because they want the best for their children and themselves.

The youth workers also described a lack of opportunities for young people. They said there were not enough apprenticeships and that some areas did not offer many options for young people wanting to pursue technical careers. They also said that offering apprenticeships to 16-years-olds is too young an age, as quite often young people do not decide what they want to do until they reach 19. But by that age it is too late as there is no provision of apprenticeships for young people over 18.

The youth workers said the young people they work with do not see employment as attractive because often it is low paid, short term and part time. Young people are also quite territorial and therefore will not travel to find work; this is also partly due to prohibitive transport costs. All of the youth workers agreed that transport was a major barrier to young people finding work.

Additionally, many young people live in communities where there is high unemployment, often across the generations, and having a lack of qualifications or even getting into trouble and getting arrested is not always seen as being a problem.

Stigma by employers

The youth workers expressed concern about stigma by local employers towards young people from poor areas. They said employers associated their areas with high crime and that where young people live has a big impact on their prospects. They said that young people were discriminated against when applying for jobs. This was particularly discussed as an issue for young people from Hendon and Pennywell.

'Employers judge young people from [the addresses] on their application form before meeting or seeing their capabilities.'

'I knew a young woman who had a portfolio in youth work, university, a part-time job on a Saturday. But when the family name was recognised, she was stigmatised and could not get a job.'

Adult attitudes to young people

The youth workers said that attitudes from shop workers to young people were often negative. They said that sometimes signs were put up in shops that read 'no pets and no children', effectively putting young people in the same bracket as animals. One worker said he felt that young people are treated worse than disabled people in terms of discrimination. He also expressed concern about the new

'mosquito' technology, which emits an unbearable sound only heard by people under the age of 25 to stop young people gathering near shops and other public places.

Discrimination against young people was also felt to extend to the media, and one youth worker said that while working-class young people received bad press, far fewer wealthier young people did, despite them also drinking heavily and having underage sex.

Residential courses

Some youth workers said that residential courses were a good way of giving young people some independence and broadening their horizons, helping them to meet other young people and to see what life is like away from their local area, giving them a new outlook. Youth workers said that skills such as map reading, planning and budgeting were useful and that young people would be able to use these in the future.

Appendix 1: Your Shout discussion questions

The event focused on issues related to living in disadvantaged areas across the North East. Young people were asked:

- Do you think the drama was realistic?
- Do you agree with the opinions portrayed by the actors?
- Are these sorts of behaviour prevalent where you live?

Afternoon deliberative workshop questions

Can anyone give any examples of young people they know who have had to deal with poverty [can use general term agreed to in the morning by consensus – poverty or hardship]?

In what way?

In terms of socialising?

In terms of buying things? What kinds of things?

What kind of an impact has it had on them?

Has it affected them in terms of family relationships?

In terms of school, college or training (apprenticeships etc)?

In terms of job prospects?

In terms of the way they are viewed by others?

Any other ways?

More generally, what kind of hardships do you think young people in the North East face?

How does lack of money affect young people's lives?

Does it affect social activities? What kinds of activities and in what way?

What about buying things? What kinds of things? (Food, clothes, phone, school uniform, books, travel)

Imagine you had £50 a week to spend: what would you do with it?

What about travel?

What about young people's future prospects – do you think poverty has an impact on this?

In terms of school, college, training?

Is transport an issue in deciding whether to study?

Are there other issues that affect whether young people can go on to further education?

What about leaving home?

What about job prospects facing young people? Is it easy to get a job?

What about the kind of jobs you can get?

What do you think you will be doing in ten years time?

What do you think other people in your community think about young people?

Are you taken seriously by local communities?

What about the police, and people's views on causes of crime locally?

Appendix 2: Your Shout event drama script

This script is copyright of Gibber Theatre.

Character breakdown

Hugo Stereotypical adult societal negative view of young people, Humorous, plays devils advocate to reveal characters issues.

Gary Gary is 16 and has only lived in Bensham for 12 months. He used to live in Walker but moved in with his mum (now a single parent) because she is separated from her partner, Gary's Dad. Gary has always been close to his Mum but resents her for making him move away from his mates and his dad. Neither his Mum nor his Dad has ever worked.

Gary has issues with reading and writing. He is dyslexic but embarrassed about it and denies it. Gary has recently been excluded from school following a fight with a teacher.

He hangs out with a few mates on the estate who have also been excluded from school. He passes the day going into town or at the park. Gary smokes, drinks alcohol and has on occasion taken drugs.

He has been involved in shoplifting for himself but mainly for his sisters (they get bullied for not having the latest stuff and he is trying to help them). He has been referred to the Youth Offending Team for his petty crimes. Gary loves his little sisters and watches out for them when things aren't too good.

He uses alcohol as a means of escape and does not do drugs any more. A year ago he got drunk with a friend, stole a car causing an accident and fatality. He is unaware of this, but often brags about the thrill of nicking cars and 'blingin' them up the motorway!

Lisa Lisa is 15 and is originally from Teesside. She thinks she is pregnant to Gary. She is terrified but hasn't told anyone. She has seen what having a baby did to her friend: depression, hardship, not being able to go out, no friends, no money to buy food and clothes. She is tough, streetwise and very clever. She has been predicted to get around 8 GCSEs at C or above. The schools' Connexions Personal Adviser has helped her think about higher education options which she would love to do but she thinks she will just get a job because no one in her family has been to university and it costs a fortune.

She lacks support from her mother and father who both work shifts (day and night) and leave her to look after her younger brother (she is pretty much his full time carer).

She lost her sister a year ago in a car crash which is why she hates people who drink too much.

'A year ago my older sister was driving back from a party in Whitley Bay when she must have heard sirens behind her. The police were chasing some drunks in a stolen car and she swerved to get out of the way and must have lost control or something because she sped off the road and crashed into a tree. She died in hospital three days later.'

She is unaware that Gary caused the accident. Lisa would love to have a career in the travel industry but will probably just get any job.

Lee Lee, 16, lives out near the airport and travels to Wallbottle school every day. He hates where he lives because there is nothing to do. Lately he has started to sleep at his friends' houses and only goes home if he is forced or he can't find anywhere to stay. He is easily led and succumbs to peer pressure easily. He has started to hang around with Gary who he looks up to and he has even started going nicking with him sometimes.

Lee always seems to have quite a lot of money compared to other kids his age. Both his parents are on long-term sick pay and his father is registered as his mother's carer. He hates being at home and his only real aspiration is to get away from where he lives but he can't officially leave home because his parents would lose benefits.

Mickey Mickey is 17, his father is in prison. He lives with his Mother but hardly ever sees her as she has several jobs trying to make ends meet. His brother is claiming benefits while working to make ends meet. Mickey takes drugs and gets drunk regularly.

He left school with no qualifications but he isn't worried about getting a job because he and his brother have a plan to cultivate their own marijuana supply.

He is currently on an entry to employment programme which he is only doing so he can get £30 EMA per week. He doesn't see the consequences of his actions on anyone or anything. He thinks he is going to be 'well minted' one day.

Music: Dirty Little Secret – American rejects

Scene 1

Hugo Hello and welcome to 'dirty little secrets' the talk show where we don't just open a can of worms we eat the contents – not literally, of course, that would be hideous. Tonight we have a mixture of surprise celebrity appearances and you the real people...Dish the dirt, spill the beans, we've all got a 'dirty little secret' so what's yours? I am going to say some words and if you feel positive about them I want you to give me a cheer. If you have negative feelings towards the word I want you to give me a boo! If you couldn't give a flying monkey about the word just keep quiet... Ok here we go ... School ... Manchester United... Other words... Friday Night ... Alcohol.... Interesting!! Let's meet tonight's first guest

Loud music – Children of the night

Gary Y'alreeeet

Hugo I'm very well. Now tell us, what's your 'dirty little secret?!'

Gary I haven't got one.

Hugo Come on, don't be shy...

Gary I pick me nose?

Hugo No.

Gary I pick me arm pit?

Hugo Do you?

Gary Aye. Nah...Oh alright actually I do. You see sometimes I get this fungus right and it grows all over me... Here I'll show you

Goes to show the audience his armpit

Hugo Thanks for sharing that but that isn't the secret I'm looking for. Let me give you a clue. Mine's drinking

Gary What you doing that for?

Hugo It's a clue...

Gary I don't get it.

Hugo It's you drinking alcohol...You drink alcohol!!

Gary So... that's not a secret.

Hugo But why do you get drunk, Gary? To show off in front of your mates?

Gary No

Hugo To get your stomach pumped?

Gary No

Hugo To go around fighting everyone like the proper big man?

Gary No

Hugo So, what's the point?

Gary You drink to get drunk, man, or there's no point. Am I right my friend?

Hugo He is not your friend and between you and me drinking alcohol is very dangerous.

Gary Between you and me drinking alcohol is a complete laugh.

Hugo No, drinking alcohol is very...

Gary No, drinking alcohol is completely cush!

Hugo Drinking alcohol is...

Gary Listen, drinking alcohol is brilliant. You can go proper radgey and no one says anything, they just let you get on with it... It's hilarious.

Hugo Drinking alcohol is very dangerous! It's a drug! Don't do it!

Gary Whatever! Wind your neck in will ya!

Hugo exits

FLASHBACK 1: FRIDAY NIGHT ROUND GAZZA'S

Music 'From Paris to Berlin'

Gary opens a bottle and starts drinking, laughing, dancing etc.

Gary (sings)

From Lager through to Gin.
And every drink that I get in,
My heart is pumping for fun, pumping for fun,
'Cause when I'm drinking with you,
Who knows or cares what we we'll do,
My heart is pumping for fun,
You know I can drink more than you.

Lisa, Lee and Mickey enter and join in

All From Lager through to Gin.
And every drink that I get in,
My heart is pumping for fun, pumping for fun,
'Cause when I'm drinking with you,
Who knows or cares what we we'll do,
My heart is pumping for fun

Drinking is our game,
And every night we do the same,
Hoping to get mortal - 'cause school makes us insane.
It's just a buzz give it a ago,
I'm never out of control,
Hungry for some action - who can say what that might be

From Lager through to Gin.
And every drink that I get in,
My heart is pumping for fun, pumping for fun,
'Cause when I'm drinking with you,
Who knows or cares what we we'll do,
My heart is pumping for fun,
You know I can drink more than you. (x8)

During these lines Gary starts on Lee and makes him keep drinking to the point where he can hardly stand up. Gary pretends to drink the same to make Lee feel small. Behind his back we see Lisa pouring her drink away but pretending to drink it and get drunk. She exits

Music stops

Lisa Alright lads. *(She clocks Gaz with Baz)* Argh you're tryin to get Lee drunk now are you?

Gary Shut up man yi radgey, he loves it.

Lisa You're the radgey. I know you were trying to get me drunk last night?

Gary Shut up man, you were loving it, ... 'get me a bottle of Bella Brussco for when we're babysitting Gary', a cap full and she was chucking up everywhere, going all faint and that.

Lisa No I wasn't, you kept filling me glass up saying it would help me relax, I was relaxed till you started falling about all over me mam's glass table, he wazzed all over our Freddie's school bag Lee.

Gary So, schools for losers

Lisa Gary Twaddle... I hate you. I know you were putting something in me drink coz it stunk. And why did the fire brigade turn up 5mins after you'd done a runner?

Lee I love firemen, me, they always put the fires out, did they put the fire out?

Gary There was no fire, well not at her house, it was just a laugh

Lee Argh... right *(Tries to laugh)* but what if there'd been a real fire?

Gary Alright keep your hair on, I don't know what I'm doing when I'm drunk!

Lisa You do it all the time, you're pathetic. You get drunk, then cause trouble around the town. I know you went causing trouble with Mickey one eye

Gary No I didn't *(Mickey enters)*

Mickey Yes you did, you little liar

Gary Mickey *(High fives)* Do you want a drink?

Mickey *(He drinks)* Y'alright darling! *(Lisa gives him the v's)* Ah man, I had a right session after you went home to mammy.

Gary Shut up!

Mickey Aye, I got hold of some super skunk. Had about twelve buckets. It was mental. I just sat laughing at my hands for three hours. It was pure mad.

Lisa Pathetic, more like.

Lee What are you talking about?

Gary You'll turn your brains to jelly, man.

Lee Shut up, man. You do drugs all the time, you.

Gary Not anymore, mate. I've left that well behind. I've moved on, haven't I?

Lee Eh?

Gary Well it's something you do when you're a kid, innit? You can't be doing it all your life. You've got to grow up and move on.

Lee Get stuffed. There's nowt childish about tack. You probably just can't handle it.

Gary Believe what you like – I'm perfectly happy with my beer and tabs these days, I just get mortel!

(They laugh)

Lisa Happy you're pathetic making other peoples lives a misery

G + M Shut up

Lisa I know you done Mrs Twisties back shed last night

Gary No I didn't. It was Mickey, his mam needs a lawn mower.

Mickey She does, like

Lisa Well you can tell that to the police, can't you

G + M Eh?

Lisa Apparently they've got your every move on CCTV.

FILMED SCENE.

POLICE POINT OF VIEW

- WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
- WHAT THE LAW SAYS?
- CRIMINAL DAMAGE
- HOW HAVING A CRIMINAL RECORD CAN IMPACT ON YOUR FUTURE
- STATISTICS ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALCOHOL RELATED CRIMES.

Exercise 1: Vote with your feet

At the end of the scene the actor/facilitators will run an interactive exercise based on ippr's model of 'vote with your feet'. This will get the young people moving and enables us to get a snap shot on their general views towards youth culture and moves us on to discuss what they have just seen.

We've got a length of ribbon – from this side of the room to that side.

The line represents amazing in the right corner, and terrible in the left, if you stand in the middle you don't care either way.

Okay, let's all get up and vote with our feet!

Questions for this exercise: what else?

- what do you think about facebook or myspace or bebo?
- do you like fashion?
- what do you think of football?
- what do you feel about where you live – your local area?

General discussion in groups (20 mins): Where you live

By using the scene as a starting point the young people can begin to talk about their own experiences in a non-intrusive, safe way. The discussion will be naturally steered by the facilitators to explore identified learning objectives while being led by young people. The outcome of the discussion will be a broad overview of where the young people live and the issues they face.

Young people, we will break into four smaller groups of approximately ten each. Each group will be assigned a Gibber facilitator, as well as experts from ippr, who will be encouraged to join in all discussions. Staying in the same groups throughout the morning will help build trust and further promote the need to listen to and work with each other in formulating the research document.

This first discussion will start by looking at the characters depicted in the Gibber's first scene, e.g.

- Were the characters realistic?
- Do you agree with their opinions?
- Do young people behave like that?
- Can talk more specifically about characters if needed?
- What's it like where you live?
- Where do you go?
- What do you do?

Flipchart activity

- What type of activities do you get involved in outside of school?
- If you were in charge of the local council/government what would you change/why?

Ask groups to agree to:

- 3 worst things about where they live
- 3 things that they would change to improve where they live

Rank them along the ribbon where we voted earlier. We have put it up on the wall. Remember, amazing on the right, terrible on the left.

Feedback to the whole group

General discussion – pointing out what is similar and what is different from the groups, comparisons etc.

Ask if people want to elaborate or is there anything they feel strongly about.

Introduce next scene

Scene 2

Music: Dirty little secret

- Hugo Eeeeh, What a laugh you two are, 'Mickey Waddle One Eye' ladies and gentleman, Gazza's best mate?
- Gary Whey hey!
- Hugo So Mickey, you're 17, is that right? You've got no job, no money, no prospects... what do you want to do with the rest of your life?
- Mickey Shut up man, you daftee
- Hugo Seriously Mickey, what do you want to be when you grow up?
- Mickey I dunno nowt, I've never had anything before, why should life change?
- Hugo Why don't you try to be a little bit more positive about yourself?
- Mickey Here man are you on something, what have I got to be positive about eh? You don't know nowt, man, here right. My dad's in Durham doing time
- Gary Aye, got set up by the bizzies for nicking a car, said his prints were all over it but they couldn't've been coz he always wears gloves, doesn't he, Mickey?
- Hugo Really Gary
- Mickey At school, right, my brother Thomas got excluded because he set fire to the headmaster's car. So as soon as I walked in there a few years later, all the teachers were like 'Ah here

comes another Waddler, he'll be just like his brother', so they treat us like shit from day one. So I thought, bollocks to that, if that's what you think, then that's what I'll be like!

Hugo Well why doesn't he prove them wrong Gary?

Gary I don't know.

Mickey Why should I?

Hugo Coz it's your life Mickey, not your brother's, your mam's, your dad's, Gary's... it's yours and it's up to you to get something out of it.

Mickey There's nowt to do

Hugo Nothing

Gary It's boring man, Hugo

Hugo So, that's why you slip Pernod into your girlfriend's drink!

Mickey It's not his girlfriend

Hugo Calling the fire brigade out eh? 'Bogus Calls' did that alleviate the boredom? What a laugh that must've been, ladies and gentleman.

Mickey Shut up, man, he didn't know what he was doing

Hugo Oooh, he thought it was funny last week, ladies and gentleman, when he was drunk and then there's your friend Lee who looks up to you so much, it's a funny little trick that – you know, pretending you can drink more than him but really your not actually drinking.

Mickey What's he on about, do you not drink?

Gary Shut up, man, he doesn't know what he's on about, remember that time we got Lee mortal and we were pouring it out.

Hugo So 'that's your dirty little secret?' The fact that you trick your mates into getting so drunk they don't know what they're doing.

Gary Shut up you daftee

Mickey It's not his fault if they can't handle it.

Gary You need to chill out man, it's just a laugh.

FILMED SCENARIO 2

- COMPROMISED SAFETY
- YOUNG PERSON IS VICTIM OF ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR RATHER THAN PERPERTRATOR

Music: Dirty little secret

Enter Gary, who continues as if in mid conversation.

Gary So he got a bit of a kicking. That's hardly my fault is it? You can't blame me for his actions. You have to take responsibility for yourself sometime.

Hugo I couldn't agree more, Gary. People have to take responsibility for their own actions which brings me nicely onto the second and final part of this week's show. What do you know about anti social behaviour?

Mickey Nothing, why, who's been talking?

Gary Argh, he's got an ASBO!

Mickey Shut up, man.

- Hugo One form of anti social behaviour that is on the increase, Gary, is drunk and disorderly
- Gary Nobody gets drunk and disorderly with me, not when I'm drunk anyway or I'd knock them out. Corner shop Friday night, just walked in filled me pockets with chocolate... walked out – have it. Who's gonna stop us. Once, right, last summer, me and me pal Nutter Hutter were mortal, having a right laugh right, we smashed this car up down Newcastle, next thing I knows, man, we're blingin' it 100 miles an hour up the A1, hilarious. And right, get this, it's totally acceptable – it's not illegal to drink! And I didn't do drugs so don't be having a go at me.
- Hugo It is actually illegal to buy alcohol if you're under 18, Gary, or indeed drink alcohol in a public place but never mind. Sounds a little bit whacky. But Gary, why do you have to drink to get drunk, 'binge drink' in order to indulge in these crazy activities?
- Mickey Whey coz he wouldn't do them if he was sober, would he, dohh!
- Hugo dooh! Sorreee! But what about the victims, Gary?
- Gary Argh here wi go, 'There is no victims.' Everybody gets drunk and be's stupid, at some point in their life
- Hugo What about when you nicked Mrs Twistie's lawn mower
- Gary It was for his mam
- Hugo What about Mr Walker, the man who's shop you stole from
- Mickey What about him?
- Hugo What about the poor innocent person who's car you smashed up then proceeded to take, without permission, and drive 100 miles an hour up the A1 last summer?
- Mickey They're insured!
- Hugo Thank you, Mickey. It's about time we had another guest on the show so please give a big round of applause for Gary's friend Mickey (*Mickey looks confused*) Get off ... as we say good bye to him and Hello to... ..Lisa Fatham.
- Mickey eyes Lisa up she gives him the v's*
- Lisa You should be locked up, you.
- Gary Alright Lisa? What's the matter with you?
- Lisa You! That's what's the matter. You're an idiot, getting drunk all the time, being abusive, nicking things, bullying people into getting mortal and then leaving them virtually unconscious in the middle of town
- Gary Shut up, man
- Lisa You shut up.
- Hugo So Lisa, you've obviously got strong feelings about drinking alcohol, getting drunk and anti social behaviour.
- Lisa I do, yes. I think people like him should be locked up.
- Gary Shut up, you get drunk all the time you.
- Lisa No, you shut up.
- Gary Here man, shut up *BUILD TO CRESCENDO*
- Hugo How yeeees shut up will ya!!Lisa, Gary has every right to get drunk if he likes, it's a free country. *Gary and Hugo share a look*
- Lisa He can get drunk if he likes but he's got no right to take make other people's lives a misery

just because he's drunk. How do you think he would feel if it was his mother some little charva was knicking from, swearing at, throwing stones at and you do that Gary coz I've seen you so don't start denying it.

Gary I'm not.

Hugo Lisa, isn't there a stronger reason you are against drinking alcohol? A more painful one?

Lisa No, well, yes, but it hurts too much to talk about that.

Hugo Well maybe you should have read your contract, love. It states quite clearly that you have to.

Lisa runs off upset

Hugo Seems we've lost our star guest ladies and gentleman... so why do young people behave the way they do, ladies and gentleman. There's nowt to dee for the youth of today? Or is there? You decide! You've been watching 'dirty little secrets'. Thank you very much and goodnight.

Exercise/Discussion 2

The audience will split into their four groups of 10 and will be asked to 'hot seat' the young characters from the scene. This enables the young people to ask the characters questions and find out what is contributing to their individual attitude and behaviour. By doing this we begin to look at what hardship is and how and why it affects different people but without actually mentioning the word 'hardship'. By using the characters as a stimulus the young people are able to speak freely about issues that they may have found difficult before.

Ok, what we would like you to do now is split up into your four groups where you will have the opportunity to find out a little bit more about our four characters Lee, Gary, Mickey and Lisa.

What we'd like you to do is try and find out what's going on in their lives.

Why they behave the way they do?

Where they live?

Have they got friends?

Do they go to school?

What would they like to do after school? 6th form, college, university?

Do they just want to get a job, what kind of job?

What do they do for money?

The list is endless and you can ask them anything you like and they will try to answer honestly. You'll be given three minutes to interview each person and afterwards I'd like each group to write down on your pads a word or a phrase that describes each person.

Graffiti wall

The morning will conclude by bringing the audience back together to feed back what they have discovered in their groups. As the young people express their opinions and findings the facilitators will write key words and phrases on a graffiti wall. The summary of the morning will be based upon the young people led discussions around the characters identifying that their attitudes and behaviour could be attributed to 'hardship' in one way or another. The young people will be encouraged to define hardship, adding words and phrases to the wall throughout the rest of the day.

The words or phrases will be added to the middle of a flipchart paper on the wall from which we will develop a spider diagram facilitated by actors. Facilitators will ask what they think were influencing Lee, Gary, Mickey and Lisa's attitudes and behaviour which will act as a catalyst for a summary discussion around hardship.

Tim: Summary + handover

Appendix 3: Event evaluation (responses from the young people)

25 forms out of 29 attendees

Have you found today's conference enjoyable?

Very	68%
Quite	28%
Not at all	4%

How informative have you found today?

Very	56%
Quite	40%
Not at all	4%

What did you most enjoy about the group activities?

- The drama
- Working with the theatre company
- The interviews with the actors
- Discussing the various characters – this was enjoyable as it allowed us to delve deep into numerous issues
- Finding out about other people's lifestyles and the area they live in
- The chance to meet new people and hear their opinions
- The wide range of discussions
- The food
- All of it
- The topic chosen to talk about – alcohol

What did you least enjoy about the group activities?

- Could have had more breaks
- Patronising and the activities didn't seem to be aimed at anything
- We didn't talk to other groups
- Feeding back to the whole room
- Just sitting and talking
- Having to speak on the spot
- Not being able to speak
- Interviewing
- Being videoed

How would you rate the actors?

Excellent	80%
Reasonable	16%
Poor	4%

How would you rate the activities?

Excellent	48%
Reasonable	48%
Poor	4%

How would you rate the venue?

Excellent	60%
Reasonable	40%
Poor	0%

How would you rate the refreshments?

Excellent	36%
Reasonable	48%
Poor	16%

Other comments

General comments from individuals:

It was great

Gibber crew only briefly told us not to drink, but because they were acting it was much more understandable and made me think

I really enjoyed being treated like an adult and listened to

Meeting new people kept me interested

It was great to let our voices be heard

Improvements:

Moving around and interacting with other people

The subject matters could have been more poignant from the actors

Jelly and ice cream please

More biscuits and better food

I would suggest event greater involvement from young people in the activities

More artistic things

The acting was awful and I didn't see the point in interviewing actors pretending to be young people