

Summary of Feedback comments from Youth Debate 23 October 2008

Background

The motion for debate was:

This Assembly calls upon the executive, young people and their representatives to work together in analysing the risk factors and origins of why many young people have been drawn into anti-social behaviour, underage drinking and drug taking with a view to addressing the underlying causes of such behaviour. The assembly further calls upon the executive, young people and their representatives to work together to introduce effective measures that raise awareness of the harmful affects of these behaviours on individuals and on society as a whole, with a view to reducing the occurrences of those behaviours.

1. Feedback from pre Youth Debate discussions: What things do you consider as anti social behaviour?

- Getting in trouble with the police
- Drugs – not necessarily so may lead to anti social behaviour
- Underage drinking
- Drug dealing
- Vandalism
- Shoplifting
- Damaging public property
- GBH
- Fighting
- Harassing people
- Being sectarian (violence)
- Disturbing the peace
- Abuse to locals
- Racism
- Some graffiti
- Knife/gun crime
- Loitering – but not necessarily anti social but may be perceived
- Burglary
- Absconding
- Stealing cars (joyriding)
- Assault
- Breaking windows
- Sitting in house – not socialising
- Underage sex – drunk and unprotected
- Rioting

- Criminal activities
- Laughing in the face of authority

Why do you think people get involved in these behaviours?

- Cry for help
- Boredom
- Peer pressure/leader
- Feel like it/ enjoyment
- Rebellious
- Adrenaline kick
- Curiosity
- Society expects it!
- Bad background
- Area you live in
- Social investment
- Lack of facilities – look at needs of 14 - 20 year olds
- Lack of info/ publicity about existing facilities – rural/towns consider these not being fully utilised
- Not enough youth workers
- Problems at home
- Mental health issues - under the influence of alcohol / drugs / debt
- Lack of education/income
- Low self esteem - no morals/no self respect
- Unemployment
- School / bullies
- paramilitary
- Scared
- Celebrity influence/media influence
- Tv/games influence
- Music influences (gangster rap)
- Negative influence from papers and tv- sending out messages that young people should behave in certain ways
- Price of alcohol and easy access
- Young people's attitude to alcohol
- Being made fun of when you are in care – easy targets
- Think younger people are more naïve
- Money to be made – drug dealing/alcohol

How do you think these behaviours affect other people such as friends, family, neighbours and old people?

Friends:

- Do the same as your friends to fit in
- You would say something if they were doing something really bad
- Doing something bad that encourages your friends to do it, depending on what it is
- Some might be disappointed

- Anti social behaviour might be with your friends
- Wouldn't do it on your own but with your friends!
- Peer pressure them into negative/positive behaviours

Family:

- Negative image of you
- Disappointed
- Upset /angry
- Worried
- stressed
- Respect you less
- Ashamed
- May cause you to be homeless
- Put you into care
- Take away privileges
- Might encourage it ; depending on family background
- Parents may be made redundant
- Break up/divorce
- Depression
- Evicted (family)
- Negative image of family
- Increase domestic violence in the home
- Parents could face court charges (education welfare officer, youth diversion office and PTS)
- People may think badly of your brothers and sisters if you are involved in 'asbo' crimes
- People will blame your parents / friends wrongly

Neighbours:

- Will fight with family
- involvement with PSNI
- distress for elderly
- people may start to take extreme measures to protect themselves if they feel under threat
- involvement from external groups(not police)
- might have to move – either you or your neighbours
- council may evict you
- afraid to go out or let children out
- talked about family
- lead to more problems within the community
- area will be less popular (if more police involvement)
- increased rioting
- victimised / intimidated - fear
- bullied

Old People:

- scared to leave their house
- cost - damage

- stereotyping young people
- bad image of young people
- old people becoming increasingly isolated
- become police dependent
- paranoid about all young people
- older people always have a fear of violence from younger people
- mentally damaged
- could affect their health – unable to get peaceful nights sleep
- protective – “my wee John wouldn’t do that”

What do you think can be done to reduce or stop these behaviours?

- Nothing – reduced but not stopped
- Raise awareness of issues
- Harsher punishment
- Higher fines
- Curfews
- More ASBOs (workable – maybe if before 18) (legal – yes)
- Less police involvement
- PSNI involved in community – treat kids fair
- Involve all of the community
- Neighbourhood watches
- More money from government for young peoples services
- Attract people who wouldn’t normally go to youth clubs
- Target an activity that those involved in ASB will do
- Street based work
- Less threatening behaviour
- More and improved community services
- Counselling services – for young person and parents
- Get young people to accept responsibility for their own actions
- Peer influences – not just suits
- Cross community work
- Greater funding for community support e.g after school clubs, longer opening hours at leisure centres.
- Prevention – provide alternatives for young people- facilities and resources – assertive & confidence skills P6 /P7
- Discuss issues with young people at early years i.e. 9 – 12 years
- Encourage more sporting activities
- Midnight soccer 59% crime reduction
- Young people get respect, run own activities will supervise
- Reduce drinking age
- Off licence should ask for id
- Learn how to drink responsibly
- Those who have had experience of drugs/alcohol want to do more to help kids
- Encourage local businesses to invest in young people in their talents and skills
- Media to portray young people more positively
- Appropriate sanctions relevant to ‘crime’ committed

- Listened to
- Reduce voting age to 16

Our generation can put sectarianism behind us – SO LET US DO IT!!

1. Government are out of touch with young people.
2. Need more actual involvement with them
3. Need to take their lead from charities who do the work with young people (and actually LISTEN to the young people)
4. Government should give YP more of a role in society so they can take responsibility for their actions
5. Youth Counsel set up: not tokenism
6. Executives/ MPs coming into schools
7. Take their suits off! (can be intimidating to YP)
8. Change attitudes to YP: let them prove themselves
9. Has to be a number of things working together

We are not being given a model of respectful government.

2. Key issues raised by the young people at the youth debate

Causes of anti-social behaviour:

- Boredom, low self esteem, lack of self respect, peer pressure, advertising, easy access to alcohol and pressure from exams etc.

Tackling these:

Boredom and adequate facilities

- Roll out of schemes such as midnight soccer
- Do away with adult cinema fares for 14-18 year olds
- Facilities must operate at appropriate times to suit young people (weekends in particular)
- Affordable, age appropriate and accessible leisure activities
- Consultation with young people on the activities they actually want to do
- More dedicated youth workers
- Funding for community centres and activities which young people want

Work with marginalised groups such as disabled young people and those with mental health issues

- Emotional well-being and mental-health officers established to work with young people on individual basis
- Confidential counselling services which are widely known to young people
- Targeted intervention in deprived areas
- Communication for the deaf community and those with disabilities to ensure they have the right information

Advertising

- Should be ban on advertising on billboards, televisions, newspapers etc
- Ban advertising alcohol through sponsors of football and Gaelic teams etc

- Advertising targeted specifically at young people – alcopops etc.

Supply of alcohol

- Heavy fines for those buying and selling alcohol for/to under age young people
- Police patrols around off licenses
- Increase in legal age to purchase alcohol
- Lower the legal drinking age
- Stop supermarkets selling alcohol so cheaply
- Regulation of the drinks industry

Policing

- Transfer of policing and justice to ensure issues are dealt with at local level
- Stronger consequences for those involved
- Police should not judge young people to be 'up to no good' just because they are in a crowd,
- Executive should operate and lead by example
- CCTV and visual policing in areas associated with alcohol and drug misuse

Tackle anti-social behaviour through education

- Improve education, advice and information services about making the right choices at an early age (peer education)
- Confidence and assertive training for children leaving primary school
- Increased education and awareness of the effects of alcohol and drugs and antis-social behaviour
- Education for parents and families

Engaging young people

- Ask for their views on what can be done in local areas
- MLAs must value what young people say and listen to them in the planning of services
- Lower the voting age to 16
- Set up a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Negative image of young people

- Must lose the image that all young people are involved in underage drinking and drug taking
- Should promote the positive contributions made by young people
- Media should present more positive image of youth