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## Natasha Fletcher

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### Giving young people a voice

The young people who comprise the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Youth Commission hold strong views on why they should be heard: "The Government should listen to the Youth Commission because we are the people that their policies will or have affected in the past. Also, we reach out to other young people who the policies will affect and can get their voices across. As much as adults know what young people need to learn and how, it is important that they listen to what is affecting young people because they are the ones experiencing PSHE and know what they feel they need a better understanding of."

#### Who are the Youth Commission?

The [Youth Commission](#) are a diverse group of young people between the ages of 14 to 25yrs, taking on the key role of engaging with young people in their policing region, making sure that their voices are heard on a range of issues. These are highlighted to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Chief Constable and our partner agencies to enable action to be taken. They cover the region of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton.

Each year the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (PCCO) opens recruitment for young people to apply to become a Youth Commission member. Firstly, an application form needs to be fully completed and submitted, of those successful applications attendees are invited to undertake an assessment evening; then, if successful, they are selected and offered the opportunity to become a Youth Commission member. The Youth Commission started back in 2014 here in Hampshire and has had over 105 members during this time.

Also each year, the Youth Commission explore the top priorities as told to them by young people locally. The four priorities selected for this year are:

- Unhealthy relationships
- Mental health
- Cyber safety
- Hate crime

Since April 2017 the Youth Commission have gathered the views of over 3,300 young people across our region. This has formed part of the [Big Conversation](#), a form of engagement and consultation our Youth Commission members undertake by asking young people which of the four priorities is most important to them, their thoughts and experiences of that priority and their top idea to help. The responses have been diverse and hugely insightful. It is these thoughts, experiences and ideas which enabled the Youth Commission to take action and contribute to the recent Department for Education Changes to the teaching of Sex & Relationship Education and PSHE [consultation](#).

#### Call for evidence

The Department for Education put out a call for evidence in December 2017 to both [young people](#) and [adults](#), seeking views on how the content of the subjects and how the current guidance on sex education should be updated.

The Youth Commission took this opportunity to share their thoughts and views, as they are the here and now, maturing in a world of rapid change and advancement. The Youth Commission met with our Performance and Information team here at the PCCO to undertake a coding session. The coded data included responses collated via the Big Conversation. To

read the interactive Introduction, Data Overview and Data Analysis, please visit the [website](#).

A total of 558 responses were coded across the four priorities; 180 from unhealthy relationships, 134 from cyber safety, 151 from mental health and 93 from hate crime.

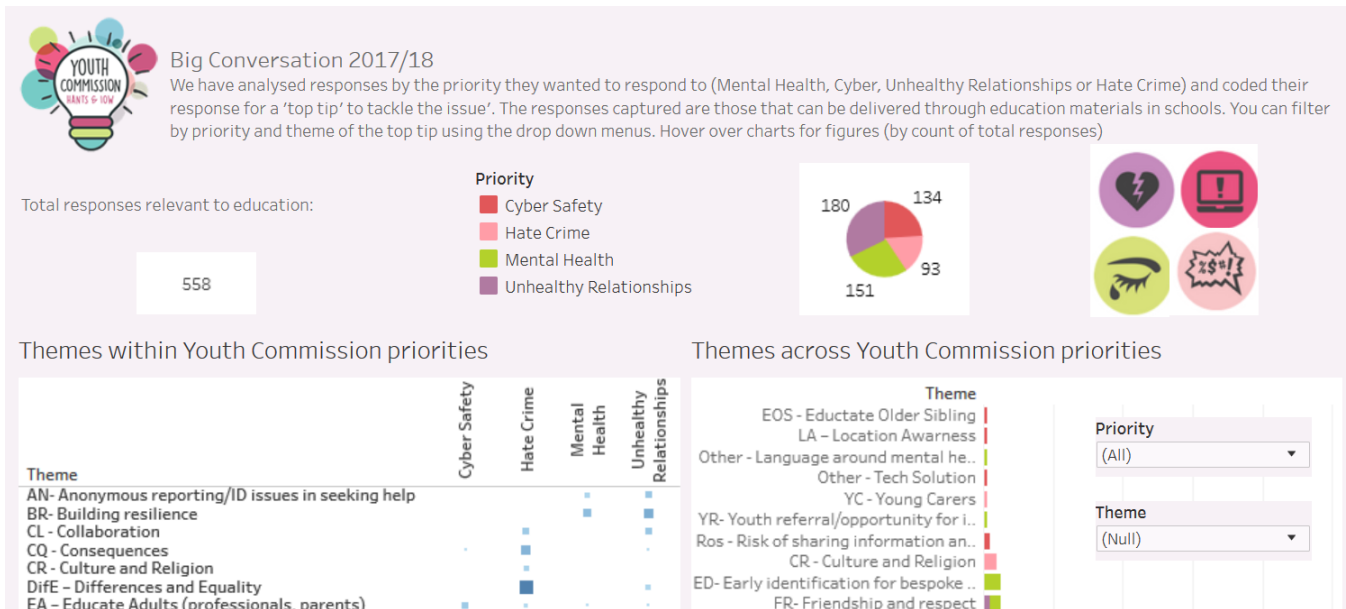
Core themes were identified in relation to the call for evidence, focusing on Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE), then those more specific to each of the four priorities were identified. The qualitative responses were coded to allow for analysis of the data and for this to be visually represented (see below).

## What young people have told our Youth Commission

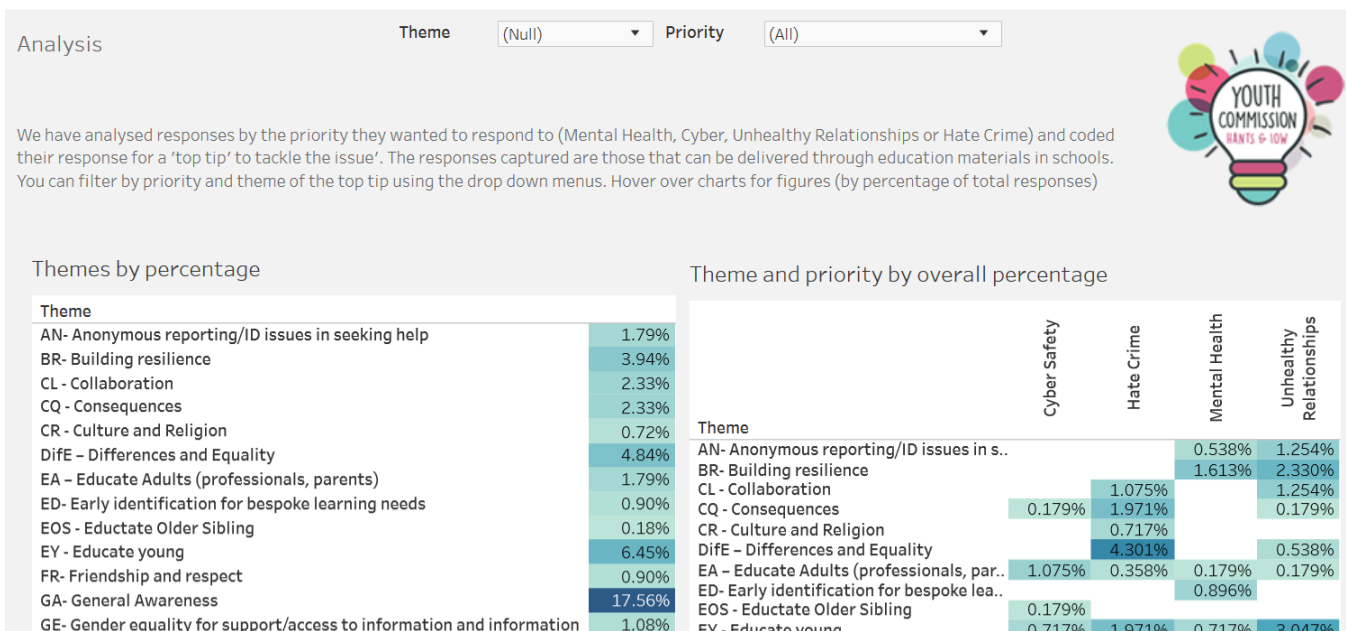
Young people have told our Youth Commission that SRE & PSHE lessons should cover how to spot the signs of unhealthy relationships (including friendships, family, friends, authority figures), when someone might need extra support (e.g. mental health, abusive relationships including family and friends), how to support perpetrators of abusive behaviours (support services, de-escalation techniques).

Currently young people feel lessons are more around the physical aspects such as contraception, sexual health and physical body

Data visualisation 1



Data visualisation 2



changes rather than emotional. While these areas are important to cover, young people have told us that they should also be integrated with PSHE lessons, not seen as separate as it is difficult for young people to not feel the physical, personal and emotional all together.

When discussing unhealthy relationship young people want to hear from other young people, to bring to life the advice and support being described. Having visual case studies makes the issues being talked about much more relatable.

Our Youth Commission also heard from young people that gender equality when learning about sexual relationships is important, especially around issues such as abuse, consent and rape. Hate crimes are strongly linked here with young people telling us that differences and equality and the impact of negative behaviours should be covered.

Amy, one of our current Youth Commission members stated, "I personally never heard about LGBT issues with relationships when I did PSHE throughout my 5 years at school. I believe this is really important because then it represents everyone especially for those who haven't accepted their sexuality yet which helps them feel more represented and comfortable."

Young people want their peers to have a greater understanding of respect in relationships (partners, family, friends). A theme from the discussions was to recognise that so called 'banter' can be very hurtful in itself and also blur the lines of acceptability. Young people's early experience shape their relationship expectations, so that frequent abuse, even in its direct and subtle forms, becomes the norm across their relationships.

A common theme raised was a general awareness of unhealthy relationships and mental health. It was frequently acknowledged that mental health is a wider issue, not occurring in isolation but rather linked with other issues occurring in a young person's life, and that it is important for the community to recognise and spot the signs too. Responses indicate that a way of achieving this is to raise public awareness, for it to be normal to talk about mental health. Young people are telling us they want people to talk to. This should be via a range of options from online, text, face to face to on the phone, and for the service options to be clear and available when they need it. Anonymous

reporting - like we have for our hate crime third party reporting centres here in Hampshire - was a key practical point raised.

There is also the need to address the impact of technology and social media, the effects of which can be long lasting. As technology is such a big part of everyday lives, our Youth Commission strongly believe that young people should be taught up-to-date information regarding apps and social media platforms used by young people today, and also the social and emotional strategies to keep safe and healthy.

Young people tell us they feel it is difficult for adults and professionals working with young people to understand how important social media are to young people. Advice to withdraw entirely from social media is not helpful.

Youth Commission members also feel that parents/carers should be more aware of social media and technology, and be knowledgeable on which devices do what. Young people tell our members that many parents do not know what they're doing online, and many parents do not ask what their children are doing. Yet, many parents are using devices just as much as young people.

Technology also affects relationships, as it can enable controlling behaviours, threats and stalking. Young people need to know how to report these undesirable behaviours, where to go for support, what will happen once they have reported something, and to have practical advice and guidance.

Gender equality and gender stereotypes are a vital part of a wider social understanding, personally and professionally, especially when entering the work place.

Our Youth Commission came up with their own ideas on how these lessons should be taught: "The lessons need to be engaging and fun but still have the important messages behind them, and not just telling you all the horrible things that can happen to you. Making sure the classroom environment is relaxed and open to questions is important so people feel like they can engage and learn what they need to. Perhaps doing a Kahoot quiz which is a great way to get everyone involved and make help them remember this lesson."

"Teachers need the appropriate training to teach this subject well but also perhaps bringing it someone from an outside source to talk about topics in PSHE would be good."

## Data sets

The data from the Big Conversation are collected from a number of engagement events across our region from Fresher's Fayres, to Pride events and community celebration and awareness events. Youth Commission members engage with young people and adults at events to raise awareness of the work they are undertaking around their selected priorities, the campaigns they are running and the positive actions they are undertaking to address the issues as told to them by young people locally.

The data collected by the Youth Commission are recorded ready for coding and analysis by our Youth Commission members, with support of the PCCO Performance and Information team.

## Youth Commission action

Our Youth Commission take an engaging and direct approach to address issues identified by young people through their consultation known as the Big Conversation. A key developmental area of this is their [campaigns](#). These are based on the priorities that have been identified for the Recommendations [Report](#) from the previous year.

A key campaign our Youth Commission developed and led on is [#GoFISH](#). This cyber safety campaign encourages young people to Go FISH (Find - Internet - Safety - Help). The accessibility and reliance of the internet means that increasingly young people are able to have a much bigger presence online (more so than their parents). We therefore need to try and make this environment as safe for children and young people as is the offline world. This [#GoFISH](#) campaign was recognised by the NSPCC for its great work in raising the awareness of cyber safety support.

Following on from the [#GoFISH](#) campaign and in response to feedback from the Big Conversation, the Youth Commission have been piloting a project known as Cyber Ambassadors across schools in our region. The main aim of the scheme is to skill-up a small number of pupils in each school that is taking part on key online safety issues (supported by a member of staff). These informed pupils then pass on their learning and offer helpful support to their peers.

In primary schools the scheme focuses on five cyber sea monsters that are up to no good online and need to be defeated - the monsters each

represent a potential online danger. The programme uses interactive games and activities to make learning about online safety fun.

In secondary schools the programme is an extension of the [#GoFISH](#) campaign it uses quizzes, activities and online tools to provide information about issues such as sexting, cyber stalking, virtual mobbing and more.

This pilot is currently being evaluated by the PCCO Performance and Information team and will be available on the PCCO website, along with the resources developed by the Youth Commission. Early indications show the positive value schools have placed upon the Cyber Ambassadors scheme and the peer focus led by young people, for young people.

The 2016-17 Youth Commission Campaign focused on [Lethal Highs](#). The aim of the Lethal Highs campaign is to inform young people, parents and professionals who work with young people of the changes in the law relating to psychoactive substances, how it could impact them/their friends/relatives/pupils and to educate people on the consequences of taking these substances. The Youth Commission went to many youth events raising awareness of lethal highs, speaking in schools, supported living accommodation and were even recognised in Parliament for their work on Psychoactive Substances.

The Youth Commission take an active role in their work, developing resources to support their campaigns such as [flyers](#) and resources to support professionals working with young people. The Youth Commission developed a Lethal Highs board game which was sold to frontline practitioners at cost value, organisations who purchased the materials included Catch22, Youth Options and Motiv8.

A campaign currently being actively promoted by our Youth Commission is [Raise a flag](#). This work focuses on raising awareness of unhealthy relationships, not just with partners but with parents, families, friends and work colleagues. An aim to raise awareness of 'red flags' in relationships that could be unhealthy behaviours and actions.

Again our Youth Commission go out and engage with young people locally, delivering sessions in schools and in the community. They developed 'flag bags', one side depicting positive behaviours and actions of a relationship and the

other side the negative behaviours and actions of a relationship. The bag contains advice and support for relationships along with Love Heart sweets to enhance the messaging. These bags are handed out to young people at events. In addition, Youth Commission members draw upon their own experiences and share what their experiences are. We have a member who has bravely spoken about her experiences of being in an unhealthy relationship Her account has been filmed and is now a practical tool for professionals to understand how to best support

young people experiencing an unhealthy relationship. Young people talking to their peers about issues that are current and directly impact them are a great way to generate proactive solutions, and for young people to feel they are being listened to and heard.

Our Youth Commission continues to develop and thrive, driving forward with their campaigns, engagement and innovative ideas. We encourage you to follow our Youth Commission on Twitter at [@HantsYC](#) to keep up-to-date with their activities.

## Education and Health

The journal, published by SHEU since 1983, is aimed at those involved with education and health who are concerned with the health and wellbeing of young people. Readership is worldwide and in the UK include: primary; secondary and further education teachers; university staff and health-care professionals working in education and health settings. The journal is online and open access, continues the proud tradition of independent publishing and offers an eclectic mix of articles.

**Contributors** (see a recent list) - Do you have up to 3000 words about a relevant issue that you would like to see published? Please contact the Editor

## SHEU

Schools and Students Health Education Unit

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*"The (SHEU survey) helped us to prioritise where we needed to be in terms of PSHE education. We delivered assemblies based on the evidence as well as curriculum development, and dealt with whole school issues – particularly in regard to pastoral care. The answers received to the question on the survey Who are you most likely to approach if you needed help worried staff as teacher was not a popular answer. Subsequently the staff asked themselves why this had happened and what needed to be done to address the issue. There was more emphasis on wider aspects of PSHE education delivery, which needed more attention. To summarise, the (SHEU survey) allows the PSHE department to assess the impact of teaching and learning and modify future lessons accordingly. It allows our school to look at whole school issues such as the extent to which the pastoral care system is meeting the needs of our pupils. It helps us to do need analysis of our pupils. It helps to provide important evidence for SEF / the extent to which we are meeting wellbeing indicators / National Healthy School standards." Secondary School Head*

For more details please visit <http://sheu.org.uk>

## Education and Health Archive

Each issue of the journal, published since 1983, is available via the archive. There are several simple indices that help to identify articles by keywords; year/issue number; author surname and article title. It can be seen that some contributors have had a number of articles published and there are a range of topics that have been covered over the years. Sometimes a contributor will update their article or develop points raised by another contributor. The pages on the website, that have been provided for the Education and Health journal, usually have the highest number of 'reads' across all pages on this Internet site.