Community Confidence Action Research – Under 16 Key Findings - Letham

Introduction

Between the 13th and 20th January 2023, the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and Police Scotland ran a survey in a local primary school in Letham to gain views on policing from those under the age of 16 as part of the Community Confidence Action Research Project after receiving approval from Perth and Kinross Council. A second separate survey was conducted between September to November 2022 to gather the views of those aged 16 and over and the key findings are available here.

Working with the primary school to design the approach, questions were made available via the SPA's Citizen Space platform to those in Primary 4 to Primary 7 and in total there were 95 responses. These questions related to what they would do if they had a general worry/problem (Q2), who they would contact if they were in danger (Q3), if they felt the police would help them if they were in danger (Q4), why they had chosen their answers to the previous questions (Q5) and what they would like to see the police focus on in the area (Q6).

Teachers for Primary 1 to Primary 3 also asked questions of their pupils relating to how they feel about the police and what could make them feel better. It was up to each teacher how they introduced these questions to their classes, and SPA officers received summaries of the responses for each year group.

This paper outlines the key findings of these questions. SPA officers analysed quantitative responses in Microsoft Excel and reviewed qualitative responses for key themes. It should be noted that due to the non-representative nature of the sample the findings of these questions cannot be generalised to the entire Letham population.

Primary 1 to 3

Teachers were given a set of questions asking how pupils felt about the police (with a happy, neutral and sad) face options, along with what would make them feel happy about the police.

Pupils in Primary 1 and 3 generally felt happy about the police (results for Primary 2 were not provided for this question).

All years responded to the question on what would make them feel happy about the police. It was noted that some children could not describe what the police do, and there was a desire for more engagement with police e.g. meeting police, seeing police more, seeing insight a police station, seeing what police do and

what they use (to take people to jail and question them), knowing more about their cars and motorbikes etc. It was also noted that there could be more understanding on police roles and responsibilities, and how they support and help children, families and schools.

Other comments related to police keeping them safe, making sure there is "no bad guys", being nice and caring, helping if they were needed, having dogs that help find them if they are lost/"sniff out bad guys", and arresting "bad people".
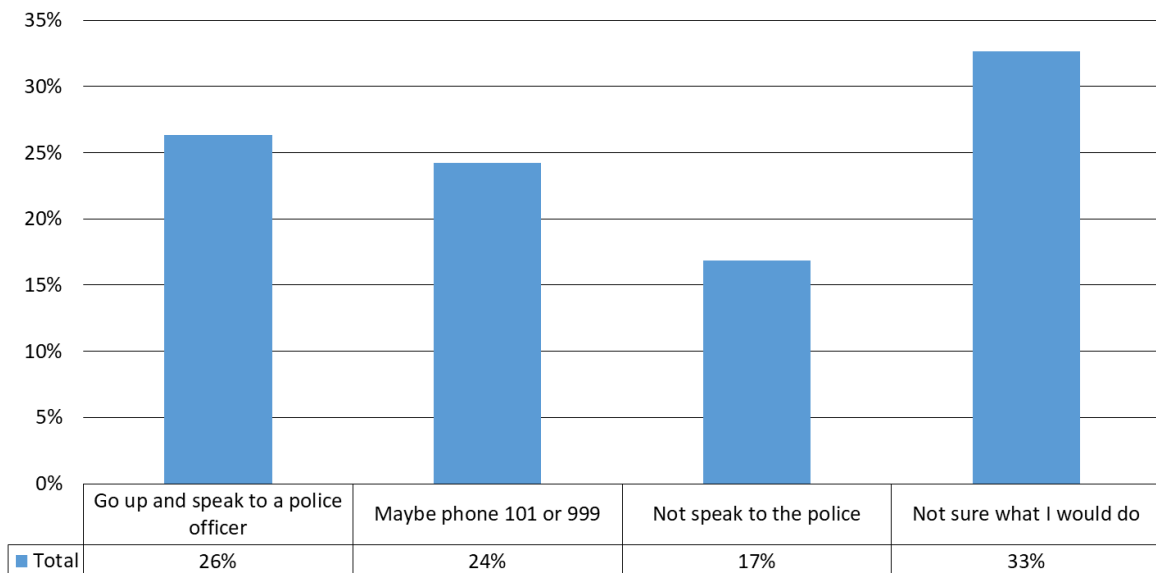
Primary 4 to 7

Question 2: If I had a general worry or problem outside of school I would…

Figure 1 shows that 33% (n=31) of pupils would not be sure what they would do if they had a general problem or worry outside of school. This is followed by 26% (n=25) who said they would go up and speak to a police officer, 24% (n=23) who would maybe phone 101 or 999 and 17% (n=16) who would not speak to the police.

Of the 16 who would not speak to the police, all thought they would either call the police straight away or maybe at some point if they were in danger and needed help, and all but one thought they would help them if they were in danger. The one who did not commented in Question 5 they would feel safe telling their parents but might involve the police if it was "something really bad".

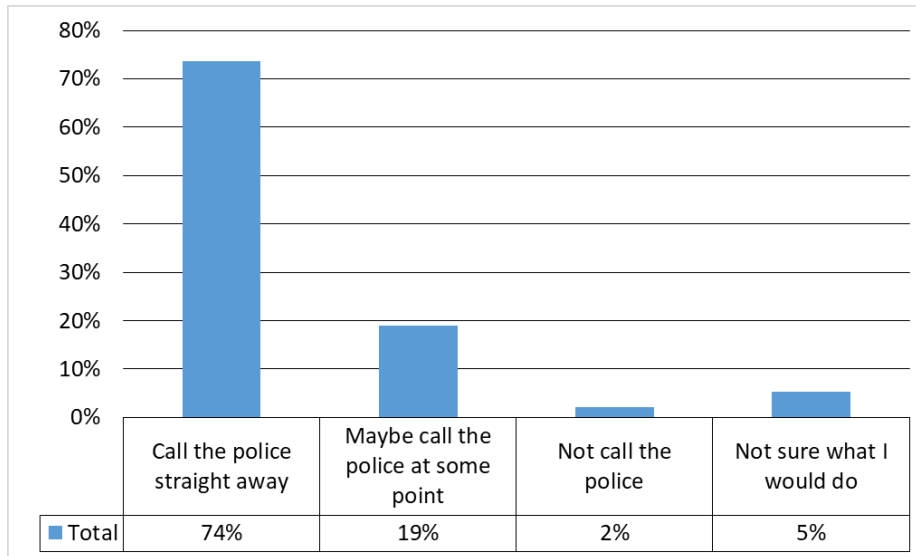**Figure 1: If I had a general worry or problem outside of school I would…**

	Go up and speak to a police officer	Maybe phone 101 or 999	Not speak to the police	Not sure what I would do
Total	26%	24%	17%	33%

Question 3: If I was in danger and needed help, I would…

Figure 2 shows that the majority of pupils (74%, n=70) would call the police straight away if they were in danger and needed help. 19% (n=18) would maybe call the police at some point, 5% were not sure what they would do (n=5), and 2% (n=2) would not call the police. Of the two who would not call

the police, one noted in Question 5 they would mostly handle the situation themselves unless they felt it was too dangerous.
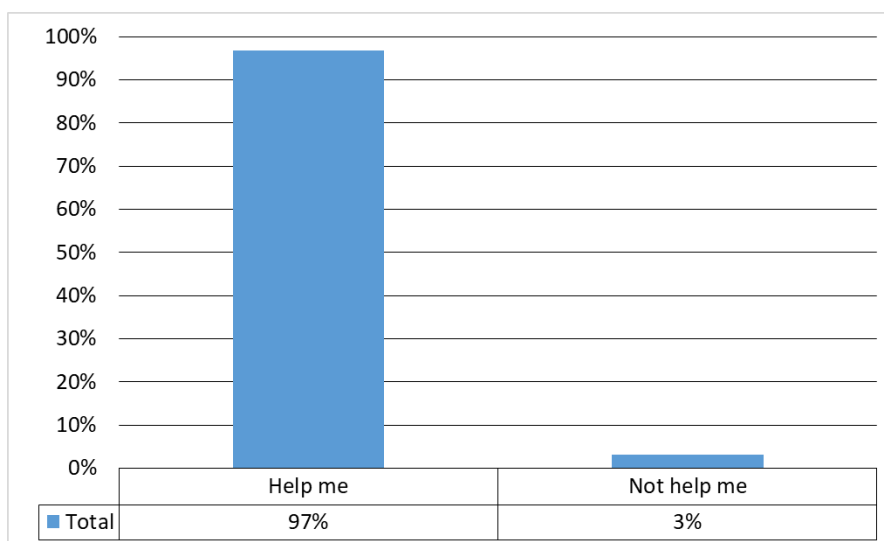
Figure 2: If I was in danger and needed help, I would…

	Call the police straight away	Maybe call the police at some point	Not call the police	Not sure what I would do
■ Total	74%	19%	2%	5%

Question 4: If I was in danger and needed help, I think the police would…

Figure 3 shows that if they were in danger and needed help, the majority of pupils thought the police would help them (97%, n=92).

Of the three (3%) who selected "Not help me", comments in Question 5 related to feeling the police would think it was a prank call as they had seen this on television, they would tell their parents and might only involve police if it was "something really bad", and they did not think the police would help due to witnessing a slow response to an incident reported by a family member.

Figure 3: If I was in danger and needed help, I think the police would…

	Help me	Not help me
■ Total	97%	3%

3

Question 5: Thinking about your answers above, can you tell us why you chose these options?

For Question 5, when asked to reflect on their answers to the previous questions and comment on why they chose these options, 76 pupils left comments. These largely related to believing the police could/would help, it was the right/smart thing to do and feeling they were safe/would keep them safe.

There was a comment on how calling the police would depend on the danger level and that they would not help with small worries only emergencies. It was also noted that some pupils would speak with someone they knew or their parents before contacting the police.

One noted that the police are busy most of the time and they would not want to bother them – this respondent previously said they would not speak to the police if they had a general worry or problem, but would call straight way if they were in danger and needed help and felt the police would help them.

Question 6: What would you like to see the police focus on in Letham?

In total 79 comments were received for Question 6 which asked what they would like to see the police focus on in Letham. Many included focusing on antisocial behaviour (e.g. fighting, less noise in flats, shouting at night, and bullying etc.), keeping people safe, and road safety (e.g. recent road traffic accidents, speeding etc.). There was some mention of preventing and solving crimes (largely in relation to robbery) and helping with bad/dangerous people. There was also desire for engagement in schools (e.g. helping in schools and showing pupils how to be and keep safe). Unrelated to policing there were also comments about reducing litter in the area, the quality of flats in the area, and giving people food.

Conclusion

Overall, the majority pupils who responded appeared to view policing positively. In terms of what pupils felt police should focus on or what would make them feel happier about the police, the main suggestion across the years appears to be around having more engagement in schools. There was also mention of keeping people safe and references to antisocial behaviour, road safety and helping with dangerous/bad people in the Primary 4 to 7 responses.