



# Get Connected: Newport Evaluation

## Executive Summary, May 2023<sup>1</sup>

This Executive Summary includes the key findings from a more in-depth report evaluating Get Connected: Newport

### Key Findings

- Multi-agency collaboration increased after attendance of the project.
- Increased understanding of the roles of the professionals' working in Newport resulted in improved efficiency in day-to-day operations.
- Project facilitators proved fundamental to the success of the project. Critically reflective discussions where participants were challenged were essential in refocusing the goals and practices of professionals.
- The project's adaptability enabled valuable discussion to digress away from the strategic plan when required. Gaps between the five sessions allowed for crucial periods of reflection.
- The project facilitators' experience and dynamic were key to maintaining engagement and promoting critical discussion.
- Relationship building and partnership working was improved following attendance of the project. However, there were several senior leaders and influential figures who had failed to attend. Reduced attendance across the five days was noted as a factor which could limit successful future multi-agency collaboration.

### Project Connect

Project Connect was founded in 2021 with the aim of creating meaningful connections to help develop strategy, vision and mission through harnessing the power of people within the statutory and third sector. This is enabled through 'Get Connected' workshops which run over a period of six-to-nine months via five interactive day sessions.

### Recommendations

1. Greater promotion of Get Connected is needed at senior level
2. A single point of contact should be designated - before commencement of Get Connected – who should act as a facilitator during and after delivery of the project
3. Project facilitators would benefit from introducing and integrating the single points of contact from each locality across the country
4. Representatives from all organisations addressing crime and youth violence must be in attendance of Get Connected
5. More time is needed during sessions to allow for attendees to engage in deeper conversations, case studies and examples of their experiences of working to address crime and youth violence
6. Get Connected must be rolled out nationally, with a particular focus on localities experiencing high levels of crime and youth violence

<sup>1</sup> This report was prepared by Dr Grace Robinson, Jack Pippard and Daniel Robinson from Black Box Research and Consultancy. The evaluation was funded by Cleveland Police.



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## Evaluation overview

This evaluation is based on interviews conducted with attendees of Get Connected: Newport, which was conducted over five days and ran from the end of 2022 to the beginning of 2023. Each session sought to bring together local stakeholders to increase awareness and understanding of the contextual factors contributing towards crime and youth violence within Newport. Attendees were supported in the creation of an action plan that contained actionable targets towards the implementation of achievable goals. All organisations were encouraged to effectively facilitate future violence prevention strategies that improve the lives of young people within their community. Six interviews were conducted with participants holding different roles within the community, including the local authority, police, children's services, education and the third sector. Each participant attended at least four out of the five Get Connected sessions. Participants were asked to reflect on their previous experiences of multi-agency working and the extent to which this had improved since attending Get Connected, whether they thought this had already had an improved effect on the locality-specific issues in Newport and their thoughts on the structure and delivery of Get Connected.

Day One	What is a Gang	Developing a Strategic Approach
Day Two	Mapping the Problem	Partnership Working
Day Three	Assessment and Referral	Targeted and Effective Intervention
Day Four	Community Mobilisation	Local Leadership
Day Five	Breaking the Cycle	Lessons Learn and Implementation

## Collaboration

Participation in Get Connected had increased the frequency of contact and collaboration between other Newport-based professionals. These comprised professionals who shared a commitment to preventing youth violence

within the locality. Collaboration was not only aided by what participant's described as an increased frequency of contact between organisations, but also by creating a space for generating greater awareness and understanding of the role each organisation and professional played in the community.

## Focused Networking

By providing a space for new connections to form, alongside growing understanding of the roles key stakeholders played in reducing and preventing violence in Newport, focused and targeted networking was cited as a major benefit to organisations who faced lengthy delays in implementing initiatives or seeking much needed support. Communication was more stream-lined and goal-driven, ensuring that information and the appropriate sources of support could be attained with greater speed and ease.

*It's certainly improved our connections; we now know who to go to when we need support and if it's the wrong person they seem more open to steer us in the right direction.*

## Programme Delivery

Greater collaboration achieved through participating in Get Connected: Newport was facilitated by specific aspects of programme delivery, mainly coordinated and determined by the abilities of its facilitators, Joe Russo and Carlus Grant. Focused networking, which enabled participants to streamline services through a greater understanding of specific roles within the community, was aided by Joe and Carlus' ability to attract and involve the correct members of the community. They both held influential cultural and social capital within Newport which was used to benefit and



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facilitate other organisations in the pursuit of preventing youth violence.

Most participants were reciprocal of the environment Joe and Carlus had created within the sessions. Engagement is key, especially in a programme structured around participation over an extended period of time. The connection between Joe and Carlus, and their relaxed approach to the delivery of Get Connected was key in facilitating this. This resulted in establishing trusting relationships with participants which encouraged knowledge exchange and permitted more honest and open responses to the current challenges experienced within Newport.

Joe and Carlus' relationship was most beneficial when promoting constructive discussion. This is core to the success of the project, where common misconceptions are confronted by those at the forefront of the challenges. Joe and Carlus' relevant lived experience required to educate those involved encouraged participants to divulge their teachings to other group members who could challenge any assumptions and misconceptions. Coming from a respected, neutral position, Joe and Carlus were able to probe participants with questions that were sometimes difficult and uncomfortable to answer, using their experience to sift impactful answers that guided and directed the action plan towards effective solutions.

### Reflection and Refocussing

Joe and Carlus' promotion of constructive discussion permitted both reflection and refocusing. By challenging common narratives held by participants, empathy for both stakeholders and the children and young people with whom they interacted with was increased. This was alongside an appreciation

for how one, as a key agent of change, was currently contributing. This period of reflection enabled individuals to re-align the goals and practices that they were more focused towards addressing.

*I've definitely seen changes in my team in terms of their approach to certain areas. We are now considering a lot more vulnerability. Pre-Get Connected we were very much enforcement minded. Whereas Get Connected has made us think about vulnerability and exploitation more, so it's definitely helped shape a culture in our team.*

### Conclusion

It was agreed among the six participants interviewed that attending Get Connected: Newport enabled them to increase collaboration with other stakeholders involved in reducing crime and youth violence. A greater understanding of the problems being experienced within Newport, increased awareness of the role each organisation and representative played in dealing with these problems, and the building of partnerships between those otherwise unknown, facilitated more meaningful contact between organisations, subsequently improving the efficiency and effectiveness of daily practices across organisations. The formation of these working partnerships were supported by the project facilitators, who accordingly adapted the structure of the project and encouraged critical reflection. Through discussions aiding in the creation of an action plan which addressed common misconceptions and guided stakeholders towards achievable outcomes, shared youth violence prevention measures were developed.

