

S.A.F.E. Initiative Report

Shaping Active Futures for Empowerment

Produced by

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	03
Introduction	04
Programme Ethos	05
Programme Aims	06
Session Structure and Themes	07
Key Outcomes	08
Session Reflection	09
What worked well	10
Challenges and Considation	11
Key findings	12
Recommendations	13
Conclusion	14



Executive Summary

The **S.A.F.E.** (Shaping Active Futures for Empowerment) programme was piloted to directly address the deep-rooted mistrust between young Black people and the police.

Created and delivered by a Black former police officer with 30 years of frontline experience, **S.A.F.E.** offers a trauma-informed, culturally competent space where young Black children can explore issues of justice, identity, and safety on their own terms.



Over the course of eight sessions, participants engaged in honest, emotionally rich conversations.

They challenged harmful myths, redefined concepts of fairness and authority, and developed practical, community-focused solutions for improving police interactions.

By the final session, average trust scores increased from **3.4 to 7.5 out of 10** — a significant shift that speaks to the power of authentic dialogue and representation.

The pilot revealed:

- Profound mistrust of policing, shaped by lived experience, generational trauma, and media narratives
- The validating impact of representation, particularly for Black girls seeing someone who reflects their identity in a position of authority
- A strong desire for empathy, consistency, and human connection from those in power
- Spill-over effects on educators, who began to reflect more deeply on race, authority, and school culture

The next step is clear: scale delivery, embed **S.A.F.E.** into education and policing frameworks, and evaluate its long-term impact.

Introduction

I was just leaving policing when the case of Child Q came to light. The circumstances hit me hard—especially as the mother of a young girl. It forced me to reflect deeply on the safety of Black children when interacting with an institution I had dedicated 30 years of my life to.

Since transitioning away from policing, I have spent countless hours thinking about how I could contribute meaningfully to this conversation. That's when I created **S.A.F.E.**—Shaping Active Futures for Empowerment.



What is the S.A.F.E. Programme?

As a former Black officer, I wanted to develop a programme that encourages young Black people to explore why many do not feel safe around the police.

Research—including reports from Crest Advisory and the PRAP review—highlights the deep-rooted lack of trust Black children have in the police, shaped by experiences of adultification, stop and search, and systemic racial bias.

S.A.F.E. seeks to shift perspectives, build trust, and equip young people with the tools to navigate interactions with authority confidently.

Unlike traditional programmes focused on crime reduction, **S.A.F.E.** is about relationships, solutions, and empowerment. It offers Black young people a safe, open space to have honest conversations about policing, trust, and their lived experiences.

To truly safeguard and empower our children, we must engage in early, honest, and informed conversations—supporting them not only as vulnerable individuals but as active agents of change.



Programme Ethos

The **S.A.F.E.** Programme is an early intervention model grounded in lived experience, education, and empowerment. Led by a former Black female police officer, it offers a rare and essential bridge between authority and community.

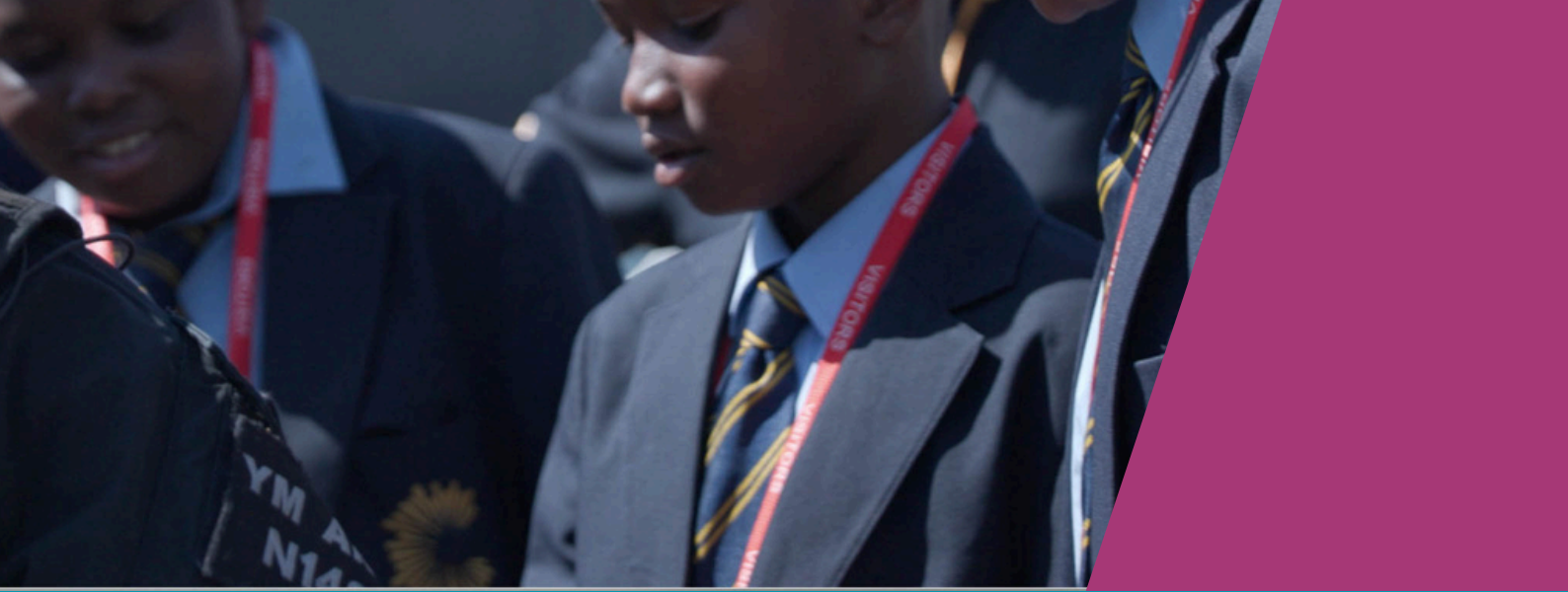
Crucially, **S.A.F.E** isn't about making young people accept policing as it is—it's about helping them shape what it should be.

Through dialogue, rights education, and creative exploration, participants reclaim their narratives, share experiences, and co-create ideas for improving the relationship between Black communities and the police.



Programme Aims

- Build young people's confidence, knowledge, and emotional safety when navigating authority.
- Offer space for open, race-conscious dialogue that centres youth voice.
- Foster relationship-based engagement, not compliance—building long-term trust between young people and the police.



Session Structure and Themes

S.A.F.E. is delivered through eight sessions:

- Seven 60-minute in-person workshops, and one observation visit to a local police station.
- Each session blends education, dialogue, and interactive learning.
- Ideal group size: 8–12 participants, aged 11–13, to ensure maximum impact and safety for reflective discussion.

01

Building Trust & Setting the Tone

02

Lived Experience & Systemic Issues

03

Navigating Interactions with Authority

04

Building Bridges for a Better Future

05

If You Were in Charge

06

Breaking Barriers – Youth Voices in the Room

07

Vision for the Future

08

Ongoing Engagement

Key outcomes

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Participants' trust in policing increased markedly by **121%**—from an average of 3.4 to 7.5 out of 10 by the final session. This shift reflects a growing sense of psychological safety and openness within the group.

”



Improved Rights Awareness

Students gained critical knowledge about their rights, including how to navigate stop and search interactions with confidence and composure. They demonstrated increased awareness of both legal entitlements and emotional self-regulation strategies.

Representation Matters

The presence of a Black female officer resonated deeply—especially with Black girls. It affirmed their identities and created space for honest, emotionally charged dialogue. Seeing someone who looked like them and had walked in both worlds—community and policing—was transformational.

Solutions-Oriented Thinking

Participants actively generated thoughtful, actionable ideas to improve community–police relations. These included: Police immersion in communities to build familiarity; Emphasis on positive body language and Consistent, non-crisis-based engagement with schools

Brave & Honest Dialogue

S.A.F.E. created an environment where young people felt genuinely seen and heard. Conversations were emotionally rich and reflective. As one participant asked poignantly:

Session Reflections

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We took part in the pilot and our students found it invaluable. Karen was refreshingly honest, open and warm with our the students and this made them feel as though they could be open and honest in return. The sessions were enjoyable and the students looked forward to them each week. There has been a measurable change in the way the students are able to articulate their thoughts and feelings towards the police. This was an excellent project and one we hope to continue moving fowards.

Rebecca Zolna

Assistant Headteacher ewellery Quarter Academy

”



Session One

Participants arrived guarded and sceptical—yet curious.

Session Two

The Trust Traffic Light activity revealed pervasive mistrust rooted in racial profiling and disengagement.

Session Three

Myths around stop and search were challenged. Young people called for calm, respectful communication.

Session Four

Youth redefined fairness—not as abstract equality, but as everyday respect and relational justice.

Session Five

Empathy and consistency were valued above control or force.

Session Six

Officers who were open and vulnerable made the biggest impression—authenticity was key.

Session Seven

Final reflections were hopeful, empowered, and forward-looking

Session Eight

The shift from conversation to connection, laying the foundation for lasting partnership



What worked well

- Culturally competent, trauma-informed facilitation—delivered by someone with both professional and lived experience.
- Use of interactive tools such as Two Truths and a Myth, and Trust Traffic Light to foster engagement and critical thinking.
- A psychologically safe space for emotional exploration and constructive challenge.
- Positive ripple effect among school staff—contributing to a shift in institutional culture around race, policing, and safeguarding.



Challenges & Considerations

- **Curricular Constraints:** Limited timetable space made integration difficult. Future delivery should embed SAFE within PSHE, safeguarding, or enrichment timetables.
- **Emotional Intensity:** Some content was heavy; delivery must remain trauma-informed, with pastoral support available where necessary.
- **Avoiding Tokenism:** To be impactful, S.A.F.E. must be part of a longer-term, whole-school approach to equity and inclusion—not a standalone initiative.

Key findings

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Change is possible. But it doesn't happen through lectures or leaflets. It happens in relationships, in representation, and in the spaces where people feel safe to speak and be heard.

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Profound Mistrust Exists

Rooted in personal experience, family narratives, and media representations, mistrust of the police was consistent across participants.

A Desire for Respectful, Human Policing

Youth consistently called for fairness, consistency, and kindness. They don't want fear-based policing; they want connection.

Representation

A Double-Edged Sword – While many valued seeing a Black officer, some expressed discomfort about Black officers being perceived as 'sell-outs'. The tension between visibility and authenticity must be acknowledged.

Adultification & Stereotyping

Participants expressed frustration at being treated as older, more dangerous, or less innocent—especially Black boys.



Recommendations

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This type of engagement is so important, particularly for younger children so they see the police as open, accessible and available to them. The more of this type of activity we can do the better, as it really does break down barriers and bring us all closer together.

**PC Steve Mason– Black and Asian Police Association
West Midlands Police**

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Police Buy-In at Every Level

Engage both frontline officers and leadership. Prioritise humility, presence, and active listening.

Curriculum Integration

Embed S.A.F.E into PSHE, safeguarding, and citizenship education. Develop a digital toolkit for schools to support independent delivery and reflection.

Facilitator Development

Invest in training for facilitators to ensure delivery remains trauma-informed, racially literate, and youth-centred.

Sustain Engagement Beyond the Programme

Create structured partnerships between schools and local police to maintain youth-led dialogue and build long-term trust.

Robust Evaluation Framework

Partner with an academic institution to co-develop tools that can track attitudinal change, engagement quality, and long-term impact.

Conclusion

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Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

— Nelson Mandela

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S.A.F.E. is more than a programme—it's a response to what Black children are telling us.

The pilot has revealed deep emotions around policing: fear, anger, mistrust, frustration—and yet, a genuine curiosity. These feelings can't be ignored; they need space to be explored safely and honestly.

S.A.F.E.—Shaping Active Futures for Empowerment—creates that space. It's rooted in dialogue, healing, and empowerment, giving young people the confidence and language to make sense of their experiences and build a stronger sense of self.

This is not a one-time intervention. The appetite from both young people and schools shows the need for a long-term, education-focused partnership—one that builds trust and creates lasting change.

My hope is that this work continues and is actively supported—so every child feels safe, heard, and empowered to shape their future.

Karen Geddes OPM



Thank You

We hope this **S.A.F.E.** Pilot Report has provided valuable insight into the impact and potential of trauma-informed, culturally competent engagement with young Black people.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this pilot—especially the pupils at Jewellery Quarter Academy in Birmingham, and the West Midlands Police Black and Asian Police Association—for their commitment to creating spaces where young people feel seen, safe, and empowered.

If you have any questions, reflections, or would like to explore opportunities for collaboration, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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