

**Iain McLellan, police officer**



**“We basically blitz the area looking for children misusing drink or drugs or getting into fights. Having representatives from so many different agencies means we can respond to the range of needs they may have, and can do what’s right for them.”**

**Iain McLellan, police officer**  
Wythenshawe

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**Every Friday night, Iain McLellan joins a multi-agency team including representatives from social services, housing, youth intervention, youth work, youth offending teams and schools, who patrol the local area in police carriers and minibuses on the lookout for children in trouble.**

Iain is based at two of the biggest schools in Wythenshawe – Newall Green and St Paul’s – both of which demonstrate highly effective integrated working. Each school has a staggering list of in-house agencies – health workers, mentors, attendance officers, education welfare officers, social workers, Connexions advisers as well as Iain himself – and all are based on site to offer 360-degree support for the pupils. These people become familiar faces in the local community, creating a real sense of neighbourhood and showing the young people that the support doesn’t end when they leave the school grounds.

It’s a very different way of working for a police officer. Iain has had to get used to working within the school system where, unlike on the streets, he doesn’t always have the final decision and has to consult with the school staff and head teacher. “It’s a very different culture,” he says, “it’s a great way of working as it allows us to really get to know the young people and make decisions based on what is best for them, rather than just automatically sending them to court when there’s a problem.”

Recently, a child was being very aggressive and abusive towards staff, including Iain, and eventually had to be physically restrained. After searching his bag, Iain discovered a high-powered BB gun in his possession. The boy was instantly remorseful and started crying and apologising.

“He’d never been in trouble before but if he’d been caught like that by a police officer on the street, he’d almost certainly have gone straight to court. Thanks to the rapport I had through working so closely with students and staff at the school, I was able to dig deeper into the issue and work out a way of stopping this kind of thing happening again without criminalising him.”

Iain’s advice for others on developing a similarly successful system of integrated working is to make sure there is mutual respect and trust between all parties. “Be patient,” he says, “and make an effort to understand where the other agencies are coming from. Try not to pre-judge others before you really know what they do and what they can offer because everybody can bring something to the table. The rewards of everybody working together like this can be huge.”

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## Familiar faces

The police reap the rewards of a multi-agency approach

