

# Youth justice resource pack



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# Foreword

Councils are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all young people in their areas. When it comes to youth justice, that responsibility means working with young people to prevent them from coming into the youth justice system in the first place, and supporting those who do to make sure it doesn't define them, and they still have good life chances.

There are many varying and complex reasons young people may end up involved in crime. In the majority of cases, those reasons are issues that we, as local authorities working with our partners, can help young people to tackle. They cover everything from difficult family relationships, to drug and alcohol misuse, to mental health issues or problems at school. When young people do get involved in crime, we need to make sure that they not only understand the impact of their offences and work to make amends, but are supported to address underlying needs. Councils are not there to punish, but to protect. Where a young person is given a custodial sentence, we also need to do all we can to make sure they are safe. While councils have no direct control over most institutions, this pack outlines some of the ways in which they can support young people in custody, and the Local Government Association (LGA) will continue to lobby the Government for improved safety in youth custodial institutions.

Youth offending teams (YOTs) have an excellent track record of working with young people to prevent their coming into the youth justice system. Compared with the year ending March 2007, there are now 85 per cent fewer young people who are first time entrants to the youth justice system and 74 per cent fewer young people in the average custodial population. The number of youth cautions handed out has dropped by 90 per cent – more than 100,000 – in the same period to 13,500.

However, YOTs have also been victims of their own success. As the number of young people in the system has fallen, so too has the youth justice grant. We now run the real risk that this long-term decline will stall or even reverse if teams are less able to carry out the preventative work that has been so effective over the last decade.

We also know that those young people who remain in the youth justice system are those with the most complex needs; these young people often need more intensive and specialised support, over longer periods, and for that we need the right funding, the right staff and strong partnership working.

At the LGA, we will continue to fight for appropriate funding for councils to keep carrying out this important work that enhances the lives of so many. This resource pack is designed to help councillors look closely at services in their own areas, and to help them learn from good practice elsewhere to make sure that services are evolving as they need to, in response to the needs of young people locally.

**Councillor Richard Watts**

Chair, LGA Children and Young People Board



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# Youth justice an introduction

## What is ‘youth justice’?

The youth justice system in England and Wales incorporates work to prevent offending and reoffending by under-18s, the processes by which children and young people are prosecuted for, convicted of and punished for crimes, and work to improve outcomes for young people who have had contact with the youth justice system, as well as for the wider community.

## Who is responsible for youth justice in England and Wales?

A series of reforms to the national structure of the youth justice system came into force on 1 September 2017 in order to ‘create stronger, clearer governance’ to the system. This included moving several elements of the system into Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice.

### **Youth Justice Board**

The youth justice system in England and Wales is overseen by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), a non-departmental public body operating at arms-length from ministers.

Its primary function is to monitor the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services. It has a legal duty to:

- advise the Secretary of State on matters relating to the youth justice system
- identify and share examples of good practice
- report on how the system is operating and how the statutory aim to prevent offending

by children and young people can best be achieved.

Its strategic direction is set by its Board, which is appointed by the Secretary of State and formed of experts in education, health, local authorities, policing, the magistracy and the voluntary and private sectors.

### **Youth Custody Service**

The Youth Custody Services (YCS), which sits within Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), is a new body responsible for the youth secure estate, managing and rehabilitating children in custody. The YCS is a distinct arm of HMPPS, with a dedicated director accountable directly to the Chief Executive and working closely with the Chair of the YJB. This is responsible for the governance of the youth secure estate, and for deciding where a young person will be placed if they are given a custodial sentence.

### **Ministry of Justice**

The Ministry of Justice has responsibility and accountability for commissioning youth custody services. Together with the YJB, it sets clear standards for the provision of youth justice and will be responsible for intervening decisively to address poor performance.

### **Youth Offending Teams**

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are partially funded by the Government’s youth justice grant, in addition to funding from councils themselves and statutory partners, and deliver elements of the youth justice system at a local level. These are generally hosted by the local council (county, in two tier areas), although in some authorities they are supported by agencies such as the police or the office of the police and crime commissioner.

Statutory partners to YOTs are the local authority (responsible for ensuring the partners work together to deliver effective youth justice provision), education, police, health, and the National Probation Service.

YOTs are separate from the courts, though they work in close partnership with them.<sup>1</sup> They carry out the council's responsibilities for:

- local youth crime prevention
- supporting young people at the police station and in court
- supervising young people serving a community sentence
- staying in touch with young people if they're sentenced to custody.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation leads on multi-inspectorate inspections of YOTs, while children's services are inspected by Ofsted (in England), and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.

## How is local youth justice work funded?

The YJB administers funding to local authorities to support youth justice work. The Youth Justice Grant is a ring-fenced grant to help reduce re-offending, the use of youth custody and the number of first time entrants to the justice system. It can also support effective public protection and safeguarding.<sup>2</sup> Having been reduced by more than 50 per cent since 2011, this now accounts for around one third of YOT funding<sup>3</sup>; the rest is provided by councils and their partners including the probation service, police and health, as outlined in Section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/youth-offending-team>

2 Youth Justice Board YOT Grants Guide 2016/17 <https://yjresourcehub.uk/yjb-effective-practice/youth-justice-kits/item/227-the-youth-justice-board-yot-grants-england-and-wales-guide-2016-2017.html>

3 Deloitte for Ministry of Justice (2015) Youth Offending Team Stocktake [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445641/yot-stocktake-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445641/yot-stocktake-report.pdf)

The YJB Grant for Junior Attendance Centres (JACs) is to enable the local authority to provide JACs to meet the demand for attendance centre requirements from the courts they serve. JACs are expected to address offending and reoffending behaviour by children and young people and any intervention provided must have this principle as its core aim. Key outcomes should include giving people skills and knowledge to gain education or employment opportunities, and building resilience, independence and self-discipline.

In Wales, the Welsh government provides additional funding to YOTs.

## How is the system performing?

Statistics on youth offending, broken down by YOT, are available from the Ministry of Justice at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics).

The number of young people in the youth justice system has fallen considerably over the last ten years. Compared with the year ending March 2007, there are now:

- 85 per cent fewer young people who were first time entrants to the youth justice system
- 81 per cent fewer young people who received a youth caution or court conviction
- 74 per cent fewer young people in the average custodial population.<sup>4</sup>

The number of arrests of young people has fallen by 79 per cent compared with the year ending March 2007. There have been year-on-year decreases since arrests peaked in the year ending March 2007.<sup>5</sup>

4 Ministry of Justice, Youth Justice Figures 2016/17, January 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-annual-statistics-2016-to-2017>

5 *Ibid*

In the year ending March 2017, the police issued 13,533 youth cautions (previously reprimands and final warnings), a decrease of 90 per cent on the 131,660 given in the year ending March 2007.<sup>6</sup>

However, while the total numbers of reoffenders and reoffences have also fallen, the 12 month reoffending rate for young people was 42.2 per cent for the year ending March 2017 – stable compared to the previous year, but four percentage points higher than the year ending March 2007. This compares to a reoffending rate of 28.2 per cent for adults.<sup>7</sup>

## What is a community sentence?

Sentencing is the responsibility of the court, and will take the form of a community or custodial sentence. There are several different types of community sentences, including youth cautions, referral orders and youth rehabilitation orders.

### Youth cautions

An alternative to prosecution, youth cautions are usually issued in cases where a young person admits an offence, and there is a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute. Following a youth caution, the police have a statutory duty to refer the young offender to the YOT. For a second or subsequent youth caution, the YOT has a statutory duty to carry out an assessment of the young person and consider putting in place an intervention programme aimed at preventing re-offending. There are interventions attached to this youth conditional caution (YCC), but non-compliance with the YCC can result in prosecution for the original offence and can be cited in any future criminal proceedings.

### Referral orders

A referral order is the usual outcome (depending on the seriousness of the offence) for a first-time offender who has

pleaded guilty, and lasts between three and 12 months. The young person is required to attend a youth offender panel, which includes an advisor from the youth offending team. The young person will agree to undertake certain commitments to compensate for the harm caused and address their offending behaviour. The local YOT is responsible to the Court for ensuring that the order is carried out. If the young person breaches the order, they can be taken back to court and re-sentenced.

### Youth rehabilitation order

This is a community sentence including one or more of 18 different requirements, for example curfews, unpaid work and mental health treatment, which the offender must comply with for up to three years. The local YOT is responsible to the Court for ensuring that the order is carried out. If the young person breaches the order, they can be taken back to court and re-sentenced.

## When will a young person be given a custodial sentence?

Custodial sentences are only imposed in the most serious cases, and include a Detention and Training Order in which half of the sentence is spent in custody, and the other half in the community supervised by the YOT.

Only the Crown Court, which hears the most serious cases, can impose custodial sentences of more than two years.

### Remand into local authority care

Where a young person is arrested, the custody officer must aim to release them on bail wherever possible. If the custody officer decides that bail – even with conditions – should be refused, they must transfer the young person to local authority accommodation until their court appearance. This can be secure (such as in a secure children's home) or non-secure, such as with foster parents.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid



## Youth Custody Institutions

There are three types of secure institution for young people aged under 18 who are sentenced to custody, and the Youth Custody Service decides which institution a young person should be sent to based on age, risk and need, as identified by the YOT assessment. Girls can only be sent to secure training centres or secure children's homes. Young people should receive 30 hours of education and training per week in each institution, though evidence shows the number of hours actually received varies widely<sup>8</sup>, averaging only 15 hours per week in young offender institutions (YOIs).<sup>9</sup>

Young offender institutions:

- are run by HMPPS which contracts some to private companies
- are for people aged 15 to 21 (people under 18 are held in different buildings)
- house between 60 to 400 people, split into 'wings' of 30 to 60 people
- there is no YOI provision for girls under 18.

Secure training centres:

- are run by private companies and HMPPS (Medway)
- are for people aged up to 17
- house between 50 and 80, split into units of five to eight people.

Secure children's homes:

- 14 homes are run by local councils, and one by the voluntary sector
- are for people aged 10 to 17
- house between eight and 40 people
- some contain a mix of welfare and youth justice beds, while others specialise in either justice or welfare provision.

Youth justice beds in secure children's homes are commissioned by central government, while welfare beds are spot purchased by individual local authorities. This fragmented approach, combined with the overall shortage of secure homes, makes it difficult to ensure sufficiency of both types of beds, and work is currently underway between central and local government to develop a more joined up commissioning process.

Local authorities have specific duties in relation to young people in youth custody institutions. In particular, they must ensure that young people are assessed for Education, Health and Care Plans where requested, and that special educational needs (SEN) provision based on those plans is provided. However, councils have no statutory powers to ensure that young people are receiving this provision, for example where young people are being kept in cells rather than being allowed out for appointments and education. Councils also have no power to move children, including looked-after children (including those on remand to youth detention accommodation), where they have concerns over their health, safety or wellbeing, but they can raise concerns via YOTs to request managed moves.

<sup>8</sup> Houses of Parliament (2016) Education in Youth Custody Post Note [researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0524/POST-PN-0524.pdf](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0524/POST-PN-0524.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Taylor Review p38

# Legislation and practice

## Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

Section 38(6) of this Act requires that where children and young people are to be kept in police detention, they must be transferred to local authority accommodation wherever this is practicable. It also gives the officer acting on behalf of the local authority the right to detain that young person.

Section 57 notes that where a young person in the care of the local authority is in police detention, that authority should be informed that the young person has been detained, the reason why, and where they are being held.

## Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 is the key piece of legislation with regard to council responsibilities for the welfare and protection of children in their areas. This includes responsibilities towards children in need (section 17), which continue to apply when a child is in secure custody.

## Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced the statutory requirement for local authorities to establish one or more youth offending teams (YOTs) in their area, with each requiring the involvement of the local authority, police, NHS and probation services.

Local authorities are required, after consultation with partner agencies, to publish a Youth Justice Plan each year outlining the composition of, and funding for, their YOT and the functions it is to carry out. Those functions should include those outlined in Schedule 2 of the Children Act 1989, which require councils to take reasonable steps to encourage children not to commit criminal offences. Those plans are to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board and this requirement forms part of the terms and conditions of the YJB YOT Grant.

Governance for YOTs should be provided by a distinct management board comprising all statutory partners. Guidance on governance is available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/319291/youth-offending-partnerships-guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319291/youth-offending-partnerships-guidance.pdf)

The Act also introduced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), which were replaced by injunctions for the prevention of nuisance and annoyance, and criminal behaviour orders, under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

## Children Act 2004

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to promote cooperation between local partners to improve the wellbeing of children in their area, including the police, probation services and youth offending teams.

Section 11 outlines those organisations that have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. These include secure custodial institutions.

## Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

Section 92 states that where a child is remanded to local authority accommodation, the court must designate the local authority, and this must be the authority already looking after that child, or the authority where the court believes that child to live or to have committed an offence. The court may also impose requirements on the local authority around compliance with conditions imposed upon the child.

Section 104 specifies that a child remanded to youth detention accommodation – that is, a secure training centre, a secure children’s home or a young offender institution – is to be treated as a looked-after child by the designated local authority. Section 103 allows for the recovery of costs for remand in a youth detention centre from that local authority.

Guidance on the Children Act 1989<sup>10</sup> was updated to reflect this, specifying that where a child or young person is remanded to local authority accommodation, they are entitled to the same care planning and review processes as other looked after children. Where they are remanded to youth detention accommodation (YDA), the local authority must prepare a Detention Placement Plan to describe how the YDA will meet the young person’s needs, and specify the roles and responsibilities of partner organisations.

## Children and Families Act 2014

Sections 70-75 of the Children and Families Act 2014 place a duty on local authorities to carry out an Education, Health and Care assessment on a young person in a secure institution if requested. Where a young person already has an EHC Plan, the council must arrange appropriate special educational needs provision based on that plan while they are in custody.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>

The Act also places a duty on the person in charge of the establishment to cooperate with the local authority (Section 28).

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by the UK in 1992.

Article 3 states that in all actions concerning children, including within courts of law, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 37 emphasises that the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child should only be a measure of last resort, and only used for the shortest appropriate period of time.

## Laming Review: In Care, Out of Trouble

The Laming Review was set up to look into the over-representation of children in care in the youth justice system, identifying reasons for this and making recommendations to tackle the issue.

The review found that while the vast majority of children in care didn’t offend, those that did had clear gaps in their social development and basic education, and there were good examples of effective practice improving the situation.

Recommendations within the review highlighted the importance of strong leadership, early intervention, effective partnership working and the need to respond to the needs of individual children.

## Charlie Taylor Review

In September 2015 Charlie Taylor was asked to lead a departmental review of the youth justice system for the Ministry of Justice. In the review, YOTs were highlighted as a “key strength of the youth justice system”. However, significant concerns were raised around the availability of mental health services for young people in the system. With regard to custodial settings for young people, it was noted that there was a lack of appropriately skilled staff to provide adequate support to young people in the institutions, while increasing violence and poor access to education were also areas that needed urgent attention.

The Taylor Review made recommendations for extensive reform of the youth justice system covering devolution, courts, sentencing and custody. It acknowledged the importance of a multi-agency approach not only to tackling offending, but in early intervention to avoid young people entering the youth justice system in the first place, and highlighted the need for flexibility around local delivery of youth justice services.

The government’s response agreed with a range of recommendations within the report, in particular around education and health provision both as preventative measures and when young people are in the youth justice system. Changes to Youth Offending Institutions (YOIs) were also agreed to improve safety, including additional staff and specialist support units. Two Secure Schools will also be developed – one in the north, one in the south – and piloted as alternatives to existing secure custody, with the aim of tackling the root causes of offending, including behaviour, mental health and educational attainment. Further work is being undertaken on sentencing reform and the courts.

## Youth Custody Improvement Board

The Youth Custody Improvement Board was set up to explore and report on the current state of the youth custodial estate and recommend how the system could be improved, particularly focusing on risks to safety and wellbeing. The Board published its report in February 2017, and was clear on the urgent need to reform and improve youth custody, highlighting issues with safety, education, health, workforce, and governance and accountability. It concluded that the youth secure estate was not fit for the purpose of caring for or rehabilitating children and young people.

## Concordat on children in custody

The concordat on children in custody was developed by the Home Office in partnership with organisations including the Youth Justice Board, the Children’s Commissioner and the Association of Directors of Children’s Services to prevent the detention of children in police cells following charge with criminal offences. It sets out the roles of different agencies around children in custody, and provides a protocol for how transfers from police to local authority accommodation should work in practice. A number of councils and police forces across the country are signatories to the concordat.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 states that where a young person cannot be released on bail, they will be placed on remand and transferred to the care of the local authority wherever practicable. This should happen in the vast majority of cases; ‘impracticable’ does not refer to the availability of local authority accommodation or where transfer is difficult, for example.

Requests for non-secure accommodation must always be accepted by the local authority. Options for this include returning the young person to their family, or using

foster families or children's homes, sometimes referred to as a PACE bed. When the young person is transferred to local authority staff, the power to lawfully detain that child also transfers to the local authority. This includes the duty to transfer the child to court.

Where a local authority cannot provide accommodation when requested, for example a lack of available secure accommodation, legislation states that it should reimburse the police for the cost of accommodating that child.

## The Lammy Review

David Lammy MP chaired an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals in the criminal justice system in 2017. In the final report, Lammy stated that "my biggest concern is with the youth justice system" due to significant rises in the proportion of BAME young people represented.

The review highlights that there is no single explanation for the disproportionate representation of BAME young people in the system. Higher arrest rates, differential treatment and plea decisions all have a role to play.

The review makes several recommendations specifically to address the treatment of, and outcomes for, BAME young people in the criminal justice system, including a stronger emphasis on parenting and the community in rehabilitation, and consideration by the YJB of interventions and actions to take to address disproportionality.

## HM Inspectorate of Prisons Annual Report 2016/17

In the summer of 2017 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke, published an annual report which illustrated the scale of challenges facing the youth justice system.

HMCI concluded that: "There was not a single establishment that we inspected in England and Wales in which it was safe to hold children and young people." He described the speed of decline as "staggering," and warned that the current state of youth custody is so dangerous that tragedy is "inevitable".

# Key lines of enquiry for councillors

## How many children and young people are your YOT currently working with?

In addition to knowing the overall number, it is helpful to know about the cohorts of young people – how many are being worked with in a preventative capacity, how many are receiving targeted support, and how many are in secure custody, for example. How have these figures changed in recent years, and why? Does a reduction in overall numbers reflect successful preventative work, for example, lower need, increasingly targeted support or reduced capacity to support young people?

It can also be useful to know how these numbers compare with those of your statistical neighbours to help assess local performance or to spot opportunities to learn from practice elsewhere.

## What are the characteristics of the young people your YOT is working with?

The characteristics of the young people the YOT is working with will impact upon the support they receive. Younger children will need a different type of support from teenagers, for example, while those with complex needs will require a range of support involving numerous partners.

Nationally, disproportionate numbers of young people from BAME and white working class backgrounds are in the youth justice system, a large proportion have previously

been in care and mental health problems and learning difficulties are more prevalent than for other groups of young people. Many young offenders also come from difficult family backgrounds, with issues such as alcohol and drug misuse, offending or abuse within the family.<sup>11</sup> If particular groups are over-represented in the youth justice system in your area, you may wish to look at the possible reasons for this to identify whether reforms or targeted interventions are needed.

It is useful to know whether the characteristics of young people working with the YOT have changed over time, and what has caused those changes. Find out how the team is altering its work to suit those changing characteristics, and consider whether there are any barriers to making necessary changes, for example funding, engagement by partners or inflexible contract agreements.

What plans have been made for the future in light of changing trends? Consider both national and local patterns. For example, as the number of young people in the youth justice system has significantly dropped nationally, those who remain are often the most difficult to rehabilitate,<sup>12</sup> requiring more support to move away from offending behaviours. If this national trend is reflected in your area, plans should be in place to address this going forward.

Are there good working relationships between the YOT, children and family services and other local authority departments? With young people coming to youth justice services having increasingly complex needs, it is likely that they may have previously been in contact

<sup>11</sup> Taylor Review (2016)

<sup>12</sup> Taylor Review (2016)

with children and family services. Even if they haven't, a joined-up approach to dealing with the root causes of offending is essential, so the YOT needs to be working closely with children's services to provide holistic support to both the young person and their family, where appropriate.

Where young people have cases open to both the YOT and children's services, staff should be sharing information and working closely together to ensure consistent support that responds to all of the young person's needs, rather than receiving siloed services.

Consider also relationships between the YOT, the rest of the council and with district and parish or town councils. Young people either at risk of entering or already involved in the youth justice system, need a coordinated response from a range of services, including housing, education and public health. It is important that each department understands the role it has to play in reducing offending and reoffending amongst young people, and improving their life chances. In addition, councils have a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the crime and disorder implications of their day-to-day activities.

## How engaged are local partners?

The police, NHS and probation services have a legal duty to work with the council as part of the YOT, while others can be invited to take part as the statutory partners consider appropriate. The composition of, and funding for, the YOT should be outlined in the Youth Justice Plan each year.

Each partner has a clear role to play as part of a joined-up approach to tackling youth offending. Things to consider include:

- The level of funding and staffing provided by each statutory partner.
- Representation on the management board, including by non-statutory partners and councillors. Statutory representatives

should be senior enough to be able to take strategic decisions on behalf of their organisation.

- The quality, timeliness and outcomes of health treatments – including mental health – for children in the youth justice system or at risk of becoming involved.
- Protocols in place between the police and children's homes to deal with incidents and avoid the over-criminalisation of looked-after children.

More broadly, the responsible authorities on local community safety partnerships (the council, police, fire and rescue services, community rehabilitation company, national probation service and the NHS) are under statutory duties to share information and should be working together to assess local issues and identify local priorities to reduce crime and disorder, substance misuse and re-offending. Community safety partnerships are held to account by overview and scrutiny committees for community safety.

Consider also the involvement of the police and crime commissioner (PCC). PCCs have a responsibility to ensure community needs are met as effectively as possible, and they work in partnership across a range of agencies at local and national level to ensure there is a unified approach to preventing and reducing crime. They should therefore be fully engaged in local youth justice work to ensure a coordinated approach. PCCs are held to account by police and crime panels, which are formed primarily of elected councillors.

Education partners should not be overlooked. Engagement with education is a key way in which young people can avoid becoming involved in crime, or reoffending. Maintained schools, academies, free schools, colleges and Pupil Referral Units should ideally be engaged by the YOT to make sure that support can be provided to pupils of concern, and to ensure placements are available to young people who need them. In addition, children and young people in the youth justice system are more likely to have special educational needs; it is important that

schools understand their responsibilities to refer children for SEN assessments where this is a concern, as providing support to children early can help them to remain engaged with education and less likely to get involved in criminal activity.

Local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships (previously LSCBs) should also have strong links with the YOT. Many of the children who become involved in youth crime have already had contact with children's services, and good links and data sharing between the YOT and safeguarding partnerships can help to make sure emerging issues are spotted quickly and responses are joined-up.

Non-statutory partners can also be important in delivering opportunities to help young offenders in their rehabilitation, or in diverting young people from potential engagement in criminal activity. Local businesses may be able to provide work or training for young offenders, or placements with voluntary groups can help young people to establish routines and build up some key skills. Are there local sports clubs or activity groups that can help to provide diversionary activities?

Consider also how local service-specific plans fit together alongside YOT plans. Youth crime does not exist in a vacuum, and plans should support each other to deliver positive outcomes. Plans such as the Community Safety Partnership Plan, public health strategies and plans for children's services will all be relevant. When these are being considered by the council, consider whether they support the YOTs work to reduce youth crime and reoffending. The Children's Services scrutiny committee is a useful forum for looking at how the council is working together, including through its various plans, to support children and young people.

## What work are we doing to prevent young people from offending?

Councils are required to undertake preventative work with children at risk of offending, and this responsibility is often delivered by the YOT through local crime prevention programmes. However, budget cuts have impacted on the ability of many YOTs to run these as widely as they have done previously.<sup>13</sup>

How is spend prioritised by your YOT? How are decisions taken around which young people to work with, which issues to target, and which interventions to use? How is evidence used in commissioning, both to identify which issues to tackle and to select interventions? Is there flexibility within your YOT plans to respond quickly to emerging issues?

The involvement of partners, including all levels of local government and other public sector partners, is vital here. How are resources being pooled to make the best use of what's available, and how are partners feeding in intelligence around what preventions are needed?

## What support is given to children and young people who are arrested?

All procedures when a child has been arrested, for example the police interview, must take place in the presence of an appropriate adult to safeguard the child's interests. This can be anyone over the age of 18 who has no other involvement in the case, such as a parent, guardian, or a local authority worker.

Find out how appropriate adults are provided for children where their parents or guardians are unavailable. Are there long delays for

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1153263/yots-face-in-year-cuts-of-gbp12m>



appropriate adults to arrive? How frequently do they receive training?

The National Appropriate Adult Network has produced a set of standards<sup>14</sup> to improve delivery of the service; while not mandatory, these standards provide a helpful starting point in understanding the strengths of the appropriate adult service provided by your YOT, and identifying any areas for improvement.

Where parents or guardians can attend, is any support available to them so that they can appropriately safeguard their child's interests, for example explanations of legal processes?

Any young person whose first language is not English is entitled to an interpreter if they need one. The appropriate adult should ensure this has been arranged.

Where a young person has special educational needs, the appropriate adult will be expected to provide support to ensure they understand the process. Often the appropriate adult will be a person that is already in contact with the young person, and who is therefore familiar with their needs. If a suitable appropriate adult cannot be identified, the interview should be postponed until one is available.

## Do you have sufficient placements for young people who are on remand?

How often is your council asked by the police to provide remand accommodation for children and young people, and how many of these requests are for secure and non-secure accommodation? What proportion of these requests can be appropriately met? How do these statistics compare to your statistical neighbours?

Where your council cannot provide appropriate accommodation for a young person when requested, that child must

be held in custody at the police station, which is considered inappropriate for the vast majority of those under 18. The cost of providing this accommodation must also be reimbursed to the police, an incentive for the police and councils to work together to make sure children are being held in the most appropriate accommodation.

## What support do we give to children in care and care leavers who are at risk of becoming involved with the youth justice system?

While 94 per cent of looked-after children do not get into trouble with the law, around half of young people currently in custody have experience of the care system.<sup>15</sup> Find out the proportion of children looked after by your authority that are involved in the youth justice system, and find out how this has been changing over time. Are things improving, or is there more work to be done? Have the types of offence changed, or the profile of young people involved? It should be noted that some young people may become looked-after as a direct result of their offending behaviour, so it is important to understand the wider context behind these statistics.

As corporate parents to children in care, the local authority has an important role to play in providing the support, stability and encouragement to a child that good parents would, instilling the protective factors that can help them avoid engagement in youth crime. The LGA's resource packs for councillors on corporate parenting<sup>16</sup> and support for care leavers<sup>17</sup> provide more detail on these areas.

Lord Laming's review of children in care and the youth justice system, 'In Care, Out of Trouble', outlines a range of

<sup>14</sup> [www.appropriateadult.org.uk/index.php/national-standards](http://www.appropriateadult.org.uk/index.php/national-standards)

<sup>15</sup> Lord Laming In Care, Out of Trouble [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/In%20care%20out%20of%20trouble%20summary.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/In%20care%20out%20of%20trouble%20summary.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/corporate-parenting-resource-pack>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/support-care-leavers-resource-pack>

recommendations to improve the over-representation of looked-after children in the system. These focus on leadership, early support, responding to the particular needs of minority groups and care leavers, and effective partnership working.

## How are incidents in children's care homes dealt with?

Children aged 16-17 in care homes are twice as likely to have a criminal record than those in other placements, and nearly 20 times more likely than non-looked after children.<sup>18</sup> This is in part due to how incidents, such as property damage or difficult behaviour, are dealt with in those homes, with police often being called where normally such incidents would be dealt with within the family or placement.

Many local authorities are now working with their local children's homes and police forces to ensure that incidents are dealt with more proportionately, aiming to avoid the excessive criminalisation of children in care. This can include, for example, protocols between children's homes and the police, and staff training.

Your council's corporate parenting panel should monitor the proportion of those in children's homes who are involved with the youth justice system, find out what arrangements are already in place to manage incidents in children's homes, and work with and support officers to find out if improvements can be made.

## What support is provided to young people when they leave custody?

Young people leaving custody will often need significant support to help them readjust to life back in the community and to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Around two thirds of young people released from custody will re-offend within a year,<sup>19</sup> but each young person is different and will need personalised support to address the underlying causes of offending and to provide stability when leaving custody.

The YOT is responsible for the sentence plan of every young person sentenced to custody, and should work closely with the secure institution as the release date approaches to ensure that appropriate support is in place.

Ensuring that young people have appropriate accommodation, where they feel safe and welcome, when they leave custody will help to prevent falling back into old patterns and provide security as they make the transition out of secure custody. Many young people will be able to return home, but where this isn't possible, young people aged under 18 must be assessed and provided with accommodation to meet their needs.

Young people aged under 18 should not be treated as adults when it comes to housing allocation. Find out what housing options are available to young offenders in your area to support rehabilitation, and consider whether more work needs to take place to improve the availability of appropriate accommodation. In two tier areas, district councils will have an important role to play here.

Young people who have been in custody are around three times more likely to have a mental health illness than those in the general population.<sup>20</sup> Support to help young offenders

<sup>18</sup> Howard League for Penal Reform (2016) Criminal Care: Children's Homes and Criminalising Children <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Criminal-Care.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Justice Proven Reoffending Statistics October 2015 to December 2015 (published October 2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/proven-reoffending-statistics-october-2015-to-december-2015>

<sup>20</sup> [www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_work/youth\\_justice.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/youth_justice.htm)

deal with mental health concerns should be easily accessible; find out how the NHS provides services for these young people and what continuity of care there is for offenders leaving custody.

Young people who are under the supervision of a YOT are 2.6 times more likely to be NEET (not in employment, education or training)<sup>21</sup> than those who are not. Supporting young offenders to find something worthwhile and constructive to do with their time upon leaving custody can help them feel that they are making a positive contribution, and can be key in helping them to create a new life away from offending.

Find out what proportion of young offenders – both those who have been in custody and those who received community sentences – working with your YOT are NEET. How has this changed over time, and how does this compare with your statistical neighbours? What programmes are in place to help young people engage in work or training?

## How are you supporting looked-after children in custody?

Particular consideration must be given to looked-after children in custody, for whom the local authority remains the corporate parent.

In the Taylor Review, it was noted that some looked-after children faced changes to their social worker whilst in custody, and didn't know which children's home or foster home they would be returning to afterwards, even at the point of leaving custody in some cases. Stability is an important factor in helping all young people to work towards positive outcomes. Wherever possible, social workers should remain the same throughout a child's sentence, and if a child was settled and making good progress in a placement before entering custody, efforts should be made to make that placement available again on

<sup>21</sup> [researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06705/SN06705.pdf](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06705/SN06705.pdf),

their release, though this may not always be practical. If this is the case, a new placement should be identified as early as possible, and certainly in advance of a child's release.

Government guidance<sup>22</sup> is clear on the importance of social workers visiting looked-after children regularly in custody and maintaining an up-to-date care plan. The social worker is also responsible for monitoring whether the child is safe, and whether their health, wellbeing and educational needs are being met. While the local authority does not have the power to change the secure establishment where a child is serving their sentence, guidance outlines clear routes of escalation where there are concerns. Councillors should consider whether social worker caseloads are manageable to enable this to happen effectively, particularly as the relatively small number of youth custody institutions means that young people may be placed some distance from their home authority.

## How are we supporting children and young people at risk of, or involved in, gang violence?

In 2017, the Children's Commissioner estimated that 46,053 children aged 10-18 in England were members of a street gang.<sup>23</sup> While gangs tend to be concentrated in cities,<sup>24</sup> all councillors should be aware of the risks of gang activity in their areas, particularly in relation to issues such as county lines (see below) where gang activity moves beyond its traditional geographical area and involves those in places further afield.

<sup>22</sup> Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childrens-commissioners-report-on-vulnerability/>

<sup>24</sup> Centre for Social Justice <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DyingtoBelongFullReport.pdf>

'Ending gang violence and exploitation' outlines the Government's approach to tackling gang related violence and exploitation. This outlines six priorities for local partners to work together on:

- tackling county lines
- protecting locations where vulnerable young people can be targeted
- reduce violence and knife crime
- safeguard gang-associated women and girls
- promoting early intervention
- promoting meaningful alternatives to gangs.

Find out if any of these are affecting your local area, and if so, what action is being taken. Have the issues facing your area changed in recent years? How is information shared between partners to make sure that new trends are picked up swiftly and those at risk are offered help at the earliest opportunity?

The Early Intervention Foundation identifies a range of risk and protective factors in its report, 'Preventing gang and youth violence: Spotting signals of risk and supporting children and young people', which will help to identify those potentially at risk. The report also outlines evidence-based interventions to prevent gang involvement.

## Are we seeing county lines activity in our area, and if so, how is this being tackled?

County lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and towns using dedicated mobile phone lines.

It is a major cross-cutting issue involving trafficking, gangs, drugs, violence, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, and missing persons, and has been emerging across most local authority areas in recent years.

It involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'.

It is important that young people who have been exploited through county lines are treated as victims first, rather than a focus on any crimes they may have committed. While there will be a justice response, many of these young people will need support to break ties with their exploiters and process what may have been extremely traumatic experiences.

Victims may be trafficked to new locations to sell drugs and therefore could be considered to enter the National Referral Mechanism. For more information on this, please see the LGA's 'Tackling Modern Slavery: A council guide'.<sup>25</sup>

The Home Office has produced guidance on county lines to support local authorities: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines)

## How are we helping young people to avoid radicalisation?

All councils have a duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'; this is known as the 'Prevent' duty. This covers all elements of violent terrorism and non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism.

This duty means that councils should:

- give due consideration to the threats of terrorism
- understand and assess the risks of terrorism in local authorities

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/modern-slavery-council-guide>

- build or use existing multi-agency partnerships/forums to coordinate Prevent activity
- where there is a risk of extremism, develop an action plan to prevent people from being drawn to terrorism, monitor the implementation of the action plan, and measure the impact of the work
- support the Channel programme and make appropriate referrals.

The Channel programme provides multi-agency support for those at risk of being drawn into terrorism. It is managed by a statutory 'Channel panel' that is led by the council (in two tier areas, this will usually be the county). Find out how well this works in your area, and whether specific programmes and support are in place for children and young people who are referred.

It is also helpful to make sure that frontline staff and partner agencies are clear on the referral pathways for Channel specifically in relation to children, and to identify how effective training on radicalisation is for relevant staff such as youth workers, social workers and those in the YOT.

The Government's Prevent Duty Guidance<sup>26</sup> outlines a range of activities that councils should be carrying out under the Prevent duty, while new LGA guidance 'Scrutiny, counter-extremism and the Prevent duty' offers a detailed consideration of how councillors can support scrutiny of local arrangements. This guidance will be available on the LGA website in Summer 2018.

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445977/3799\\_Revised\\_Prevent\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_\\_England\\_Wales\\_V2-Interactive.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445977/3799_Revised_Prevent_Duty_Guidance__England_Wales_V2-Interactive.pdf)

## What action are you taking to reduce school exclusions, and to support those young people who have been permanently excluded?

Engagement in education and training is one of the most important factors in reducing offending and re-offending,<sup>27</sup> with nine out of ten children in YOIs having been excluded from school in the past.<sup>28</sup> Councils have an important role to play in engaging and working with local education partners to try to engage young people in education and keep them in mainstream schooling wherever possible.

Councils should work with their local schools to make sure that exclusions are a last resort. Comparing local exclusion rates to national averages will help to identify whether more work needs to be done locally to try to keep children and young people in school. School governors have legal duties around exclusions,<sup>29</sup> so find out what training is available for governors in both maintained schools and academies or free schools, and how adherence to the guidance is monitored.

Undiagnosed or unsupported special educational needs can lead to disengagement from education by children and young people, so it is vital that schools and councils work closely together to make sure that children are properly assessed and, where required, appropriate support is provided. This includes ensuring that children are in the best school to support their needs.

It is important that alternative provision (AP) is considered an integral part of the local

<sup>27</sup> Youth Justice Board (2006) Barriers to Engagement [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/353968/yjb-barriers-EET-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353968/yjb-barriers-EET-report.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Prison Reform Trust (2017) [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Autumn%202017%20factfile.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Autumn%202017%20factfile.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Department for Education (2017) Statutory guidance: school exclusions <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

education system, rather than being on the periphery. Local education leaders should see AP as an option to support them to get the best out of all pupils, rather than somewhere to put children whose behaviour is difficult to manage to get them 'out of the way'. Ideally, children in AP should be able to return to mainstream education after a period of intensive support; even where this is not possible, they should still have the opportunity to achieve their potential. Find out why children are being placed in AP, how long they stay there and how this is managed, along with the progress those children make. Are you satisfied that those children are getting the support they need to achieve? What proportion of children return to mainstream education?

Quality assurance for AP is crucial. Reports by Ofsted and Charlie Taylor<sup>30</sup> have found that quality is too often poor and fails to meet the needs of children and young people. Schools and councils are responsible for assuring the quality of AP that they send young people to. This can include the quality of teaching, safeguarding processes and checking whether provision is registered (where necessary). Is there a local process in place for this? Ofsted inspection reports of AP will help to assess the quality of local provision, though provision only needs to be registered and inspected where it has five or more full time pupils, or one pupil who is looked-after or has a statement of special educational needs.

Commissioning of placements should also take into account the individual needs of children. Different AP will cater for different needs, and if a child is to flourish, it is essential that they are in the best possible placement. This includes making sure that children have the opportunity to study for qualifications suited to their ability, that challenge them and help prepare them for adult life. How do the Progress 8 scores of young people in AP, and their outcomes in terms of education, employment and training after leaving, compare to their peers

in mainstream provision and to national averages?

## How are we working with families to reduce family violence?

There is robust evidence of a link between experiences of family violence – including sibling violence, child to parent violence, and witnessing domestic violence – and subsequent participation in youth offending.

Evidence also highlights a range of protective factors that can help to moderate this link, including high self-esteem, high quality relationships with supportive adults, and a safe school environment.

Find out how children and young people at risk of family violence are identified and supported, and what support is provided to families to help them to move away from damaging behaviours. How are partners, in particular the police, involved in this work?

<sup>30</sup> Charlie Taylor (2012) Improving Alternative Provision [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/180581/DFE-00035-2012.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180581/DFE-00035-2012.pdf)

# Key resources and further reading

## **Charlie Taylor Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>

## **Early Intervention Foundation: Preventing Gang and Youth Violence**

[www.eif.org.uk/publication/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence/](http://www.eif.org.uk/publication/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence/)

## **Concordat on children in custody**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/concordat-on-children-in-custody>

## **HM Chief Inspector of Prisons annual report: 2016 to 2017**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-chief-inspector-of-prisons-annual-report-2016-to-2017>

## **Home Office: Ending gang violence and exploitation**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-violence-and-exploitation>

## **Laming Review: In Care, Out of Trouble**

[www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/care%20review%20full%20report.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/care%20review%20full%20report.pdf)

## **The Lammy Review**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/lammy-review>

## **Youth Custody Improvement Board Report**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-custody-improvement-board-findings-and-recommendations>

# Case studies

## London Borough of Hackney

A desire to improve integrated working and outcomes for young people in the London Borough of Hackney has led to the adoption of an evidence-led clinical approach to working with some of the young people coming through their Youth Offending Team (YOT).

Hackney Children and Families Services provides an integrated, in-house child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) that covers children's social care, the YOT, the Family Support Service ('troubled families') and Young Hackney (youth services).

The team comprises mental health professionals from a range of backgrounds, including clinical psychology and family therapy, and offers direct clinical assessments and interventions to young people, their parents and carers, as well as staff training, clinical supervision and consultation. This approach means that professionals are able to support young people with underlying problems and mental health difficulties as part of a holistic approach to reducing offending and re-offending.

One of the team's forensic psychologists is co-located in the YOT and attends team meetings, including risk management meetings, so that needs for clinical input can be identified early and taken forward by the wider team. Additionally, the team works jointly with East London Foundation Trust CAMHS to offer a custody triage service, with CAMHS services offered post-arrest to young people where 'no further action' is taken by police.

Evidence-based approaches are key to the model to ensure the most appropriate support is offered to support young people in the youth justice system or at risk of offending. Interventions offered include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), family therapy, the Good Lives Model, AIM2 assessment, and various trauma-focused therapies. The team also offers group work for those at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or gang involvement.

Employing in-house psychologists has proven cost-effective for the authority and allowed for effective integration of working across services for children and young people. This integration has been viewed positively by partners; joint commissioning with the local NHS has been revived and work is progressing towards more budgets being pooled in the future. The clinical service was also highlighted by Hackney's Ofsted inspection in 2016 as a particular strength, with the real-time clinical input and consultation enhancing support for complex cases.

Pilot data indicates that clinical input has contributed to a 10 per cent reduction in re-offending rates in cases where therapeutic support has been provided to young people. At a wider service level, clinical consultation is now being provided to support 50 per cent of casework within the YOT.

Rather than delivering all interventions themselves, the in-house clinical team is able to skill-up other professionals to deliver clinical approaches and oversees this work. This allows more people to benefit from these approaches and takes advantage of existing relationships between professionals and the



young people and families they are working with. This is supported by group clinical supervision, consultation and training. This has been embedded through the co-location of the clinical team with the YOT and other services for children, families and young people.

The model has significant support from council members, senior management and other partners thanks to its impact not only on YOT cases, but other work across children's social care.

### **Contact**

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## **Surrey County Council**

The Surrey Family Service, in partnership with Care Services and Surrey Police, has developed an integrated approach that has achieved year-on-year reductions in the numbers of children in care coming into the criminal justice system.

An inter-agency protocol between the Surrey Family Service, Surrey Police and local children's homes outlines a set of principles for all agencies to work to, and provides options around how best to work with young people to avoid unnecessary criminalisation and to support behaviour change. Training for all police staff led by care leavers (Total Respect) has also helped improve police understanding of some of the issues faced by young people in care to further embed the importance of the protocol. Link workers in children's homes from both the police and Surrey Family Service provide a consistent point of contact for staff and children, and the regular interaction with police in particular has proved successful in building trust with young people who may otherwise have had a negative perception of police staff.

Not only do the protocol and link worker arrangements support improved outcomes for children and young people, but they have also contributed to positive culture change in Surrey's care settings. Embedding restorative practice has led to a greater understanding of young people's behaviour and a subsequent culture change, which has reduced reliance on more traditional sanction-based methods of behaviour management. Instead, staff have learned to respond to challenging behaviour with a more relational and restorative approach, seeing 'transgressions' on the part of children as opportunities for learning and development of self-discipline, rather than relying on imposed discipline which is all too often ineffective.

Care staff are better equipped to manage difficult behaviour and their care, dedication and applied restorative practice has not only seen reductions in offending but a more than 50 per cent reduction in use of restraints,

and other indicators that the children's homes are safer, healthier and happier places for children and staff to live and work. All staff joining the children's homes now undertake a three-day multi-agency training course on restorative practice to ensure the ongoing implementation of this approach.

The local desire to support children in care led to changes meaning that all but the most serious of offences committed by children in care are now dealt with informally and not in the courts. A Joint Decision Making Panel comprising officers from Surrey Police and the Surrey Family Service considers most offences by young people, with the most common outcome being a Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI). This involves engagement with victim(s) so that their needs can be considered and met wherever possible. The approach is based on the premise that children should be supported both to take responsibility and to try to put things right. Sometimes this involves young people taking steps to undertake practical activities that can simultaneously benefit the community and build their own skills and self-esteem, which can in turn reduce the risk of repeat offending in the future.

The change in approach would not have been possible without a high-level commitment from all agencies involved, with a determination to collaborate more effectively and improve outcomes for children in care. This commitment to reducing the criminalisation of children in care continues to be firmly on the agenda of the Corporate Parenting Board, supported by a Reducing Offending by Children in Care Steering Group and a multi-agency forum help to drive the strategy and continuous improvement.

### **Contact**

For more information, please contact [anna.mullen@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:anna.mullen@surreycc.gov.uk) or [chris.stevens@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:chris.stevens@surreycc.gov.uk)

## Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Like all local authorities, Stockport was facing challenges around the financial sustainability of all of its services, and was therefore keen to identify how to cut out duplication. In addition, the needs of young people entering the youth justice system were changing, becoming more complex and requiring an increasingly creative approach that improved how services worked together to best support young people.

Stockport put together a business case that would allow them to bring services together more efficiently, without losing the specialist skills held within each team that were so important to support and protect children and young people.

Over the course of two years, the entire children's services department underwent a significant change, with jobs re-evaluated from the top down, structures altered, and a physical move to base all staff in the same offices. Consultation was significant, alongside strong communication from senior managers and councillors to make sure that the vision for the service was clear, and potential pitfalls of the new model were mitigated early.

The Youth Offending Service, as part of the new integrated approach, focusses on youth justice, anti-social behavior and targeted support as functions, rather than a 'service', recognising that clients of the YOS are likely to need support from a range of practitioners. YOS workers spend time with other teams to find out how they work, and all team managers sit together to improve problem solving and find integrated solutions while avoiding duplication.

When it came to moving staff to work together, young people had the chance to influence the main reception, with youth justice clients using the same entrance as other children's services visitors. Acting on ideas and feedback from young people made sure that they felt both safe and welcome

when visiting. The YOS has also found that young people have responded well to the new, open plan layout which is also frequented by families and children; the less intimidating atmosphere and open space helps people to remain calm in what can be a difficult situation.

The gradual introduction of the changes, and detailed consultation along the way, means that staff were committed to making the new approach work from the beginning, and confident that the changes were the right ones to deliver positive outcomes.

### **Lessons learned**

- Winning over hearts and minds is essential when redesigning services.
- Make sure that leaders have a clear vision, and involve everyone in the discussion about how to achieve it to make sure that people are positive about the end goal, and confident that new proposals will help to get there.
- Listening and learning is an ongoing process rather than a one-time effort, and implementing major change takes time.
- Young people are at the heart of the service, so involve them wherever possible – they will spot things that you won't!
- It can be easy to end up with lots of 'generalists' when integrating services; however retaining specialists is vital for both the staff themselves and the young people they're helping.

### **Contact**

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## **Newcastle City Council**

Supporting ex-young offenders to avoid re-offending means making sure that they have somewhere safe to live, are mentally and physically well, and have something meaningful to do during the day. Newcastle City Council recognised, however, that employment and training opportunities for these young people were limited, and so set out to create their own opportunities. This led to the creation of the Skill Mill, which has now been established in five locations in England (Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool, North Yorkshire and Durham) as well as Tallinn in Estonia.

The Skill Mill is a Not for Profit Social Enterprise that provides employment opportunities for serious and prolific ex-young offenders aged 16-18. Young people take part in outdoor work with high social impact, undertaking accredited training and obtaining qualifications as they work. Improving their local areas helps them develop a sense of ownership and belonging in their communities.

The Skill Mill works with local partners on job opportunities, which helps to develop good teamwork and work ethic amongst young people who are working on real jobs alongside experienced staff, often for the first time. Being seen and treated as employees rather than young offenders is key to building confidence and encouraging young people to shift their perspective both on themselves and the world around them.

The supervisor role within the Skill Mill is key, providing both a managerial and mentoring role to the young people involved in placements. Participants are expected to perform their roles to a high standard and to enable them do this, the supervisor also helps them with issues such as getting into a routine, managing their money and navigating sometimes chaotic home lives.

Young people take part in time-limited placements, during which follow-on employment opportunities are sought with partners to improve the chances of permanent employment when placements end.

## **The impact**

Virtually all of the young people who have gone through the programme in Newcastle, Leeds and Liverpool are now in full time employment, with only four instances of re-offending over the course of the programme from a total of 60 beneficiaries.

Qualitative evaluation of the programme has found that young people report improvements in relationships, work ethic and sense of purpose, as well as a change in how they use their spare time, and with whom. The programme also helps to encourage young people to see themselves as a part of, rather than separate to, their local community. For example, one participant complained about having to wear overalls and high-vis clothing on the bus to work; however, he quickly discovered that most others on the bus at that time were dressed in the same way, and he felt he was a part of a wider community of workers.

## **How is the new approach being sustained?**

Advisory boards in each area are developing relationships with local partners of all sizes to increase the opportunities available to young people and improve the sustainability of the programme. Local authority members have been important drivers locally to help build support for the idea, realising the potential added value and community cohesion, resilience and restorative benefits to be accrued. Locally-elected councilors have also identified funded projects for The Skill Mill to undertake.

A large-scale bid is being submitted through the Life Chances Fund to enable the scaling-up of the project across both existing and additional sites. The Fund is a Social Impact Bond, in which commissioners will pay back investors upon the delivery of key outcomes.

## **Lessons learned**

The supervisor role is key; this role must be held by someone who is able to manage difficult behavior while providing a mentoring role and supporting young people's development.

Allowing young people to work as part of a team, and to be respected as an employee, is key to their development.

Support needs to be in place around the work placement to support the young person with other issues that may exist, for example housing issues, mental health concerns or money management problems.

The environmental and outdoor aspects, bringing young people into contact with nature (for many for the first time), is shown to have had a highly therapeutic effect.

## **Contact**

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## Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Four departments within Wakefield Metropolitan District Council have joined forces with WDH (Wakefield District Housing) – the district’s largest social housing provider – to provide informal education over the summer for those at risk of disengaging from education.

The Youth Offending Team, Youth Work Team, Early Help, and Countryside Services work together with WDH to identify young people who could benefit from additional support, and to deliver a programme to connect young people to their communities, and to challenge them and give them a sense of achievement through working towards arts and environmental awards.

Through creative, environmental and educational activities, the week-long programme aims to develop a range of life skills and experiences such as teamwork, social responsibility, organisation and communication.

Feedback on the programme from both parents and the young people is impressive, with all of the parents who responded agreeing that the programme made a positive difference to their child’s behavior and confidence. Of the 27 young people who completed the programme in 2016, 25 were in full time education, training or employment one year on and only two had offended, with many engaged in schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh, football or citizenship programmes.

One of the young people who took part in the programme, Michael, was referred to Branching Out by the YOT after being convicted of a serious offence and not attending education. Through close working with YOT staff, the Branching Out team was able to support Michael through the programme, where he excelled in supporting other participants and was proud to receive his certificates at the final celebration event. One year on, Michael has not committed

any further offences, regularly attends Youth Services football sessions, and is in full time education studying to be an electrician.

### Contact

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## Suffolk County Council

Suffolk's Youth Offending Service identified that a lack of positive male role models, and certain perceptions of masculinity, was resulting in negative behaviours among some young men in the county, including involvement in youth crime. To address the issue, the YOS worked with the council's Early Help team and a local drug and alcohol service to develop a programme, Boyhood2Manhood, which gave young men a safe space to discuss their beliefs and opinions, and to be challenged safely by their peers and facilitators.

The programme runs in several different forms to suit participants and according to the details of their referral, from 11 weekly after-school sessions, to term-time lessons in school or alternative provision, to shorter, more intensive school holiday courses.

The course content is flexible to make sure that the target audience is catered for, but covers issues from relationships, to alcohol, to self-esteem, and aims to improve decision-making and consequential thinking. Lesson plans are developed to encourage participants to actively engage, and not only help young men to question their existing opinions, but to look at how alternative perspectives could contribute to and improve their lives outside the classroom.

Staff, who are all specifically trained to run the course, have implemented a range of measures to ensure that the programme is a success for those attending. This includes meeting participants individually before the course starts to address any anxieties and start to develop relationships, and texting participants on the day of the course to remind them that their attendance is important and valued. A peer mentor, who has completed the course previously, also attends to act as a conduit between the participants and the staff.

The multi-agency nature of the programme makes it easier to ensure ongoing support for participants when they have completed

the sessions, whether that's through the YOS, education, the early help team or another agency.

More than 90 young men were supported through the course in 2017, with consistently high feedback from those taking part, as measured through Signs of Safety. Participants particularly commented on the chance to learn new things in a fun way, with staff that they liked, as well as feeling more confident after the sessions and appreciating the chance to look at things differently.

### Contact

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