

# **Reoffending: developing a local understanding**

**Guidance for YOT Management Boards arising from the YJB Reoffending Project findings**

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# The reoffending priority

**“Reducing reoffending is a priority for youth justice and an area where greater progress can be made. This document provides YOT management boards with an up-to-date understanding of relevant issues and gives them the tools they need to get a better grip on matters affecting performance in their own local areas: it is a must read for anyone interested in identifying practical steps to help reduce levels of reoffending.”**

**Lord McNally, YJB Chair**

Reoffending across is a key priority for ministers and the Youth Justice Board (YJB). Since 2007/08 both binary and frequency rates in England and Wales have increased and, while rates reduced slightly for the latest cohort reported on (April 2011 - March 2012), they remain too high. The rates are also unacceptably high when compared to the adult population.

Reoffending is also a priority because the nature of offending and the characteristics of reoffenders are changing: Across England and Wales and at a local level, evidence demonstrates that cohorts are reducing in size but increasing in complexity, leaving a group of young people who are highly likely to be more entrenched in patterns of offending.

This poses a new set of questions about the way in which services are delivered. Responding to changing needs and risks now presents a challenge for youth offending teams (YOTs), secure estate providers and the many stakeholders involved in addressing offending and reoffending.

The YJB initiated a 3-year Reoffending Project in 2013/14 in order to help drive and support efforts to address the issues above. This guidance outlines the main learning from the first year’s work and is drawn from:

- analysis of published official statistics on proven re-offending from the Police National Computer (PNC), from 2000 up until the year ending March 2011 (2010/11). These cover both England and Wales.
- key findings arising from an analysis of case level re-offending data gathered from 27 YOTs who took part in piloting the reoffending toolkit. This involved reviewing local reoffending data on 13,500 young people in the April 2010 - March 2011 cohort.

The findings highlight 6 key lines of enquiry which may be useful to explore further at a local level. However, the greatest lesson we have learned in the first year is that there is considerable variation from area to area: the most effective approach to driving improvement starts with an analysis of local cohorts, which can then lead on to changing both resource deployment and/or practice.

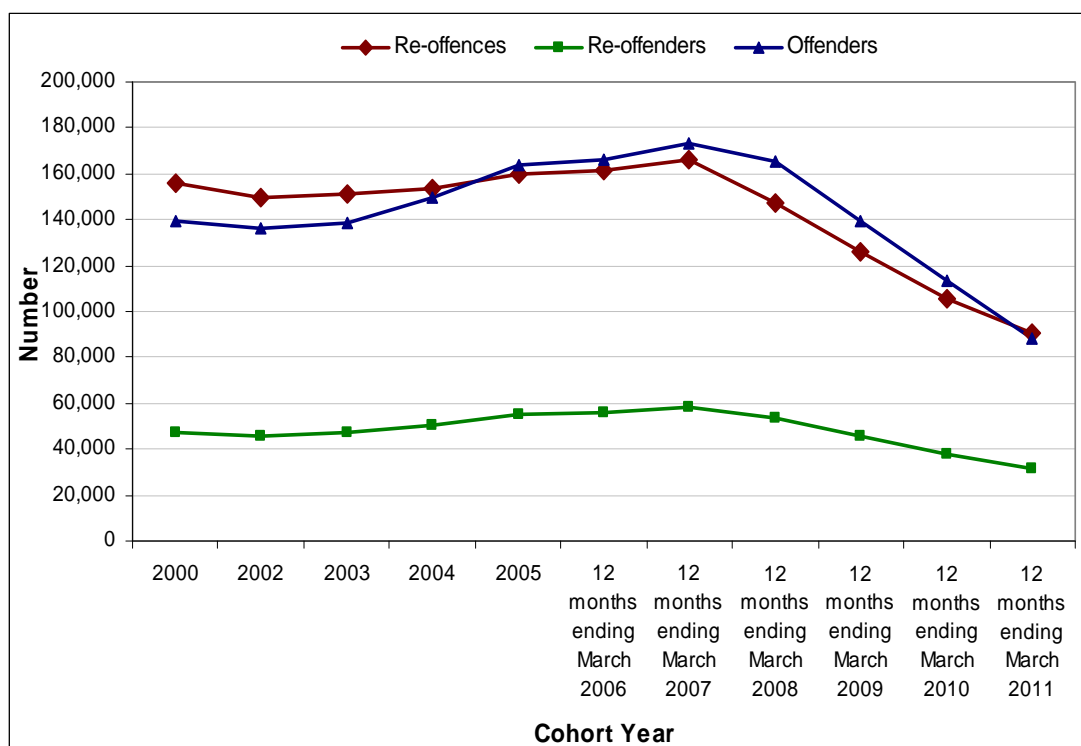
**“If the first year’s work has taught us anything it’s that the data can often surprise us: there can be no substitute for a local analysis of reoffending cohorts and the targeting of efforts and resources on the areas that this work identifies”**

**Adrian Stretch, Reducing Reoffending Project Lead (2014)**

# The new reoffending context

Both the use of custody and the number of first time entrants (FTE) to the youth justice system have now reduced substantially. We have also seen incremental reductions in the numbers of offences, re-offenders and re-offences since 2006/07: there are now far fewer young people in the reoffending cohort than 7 years ago (fig 1).

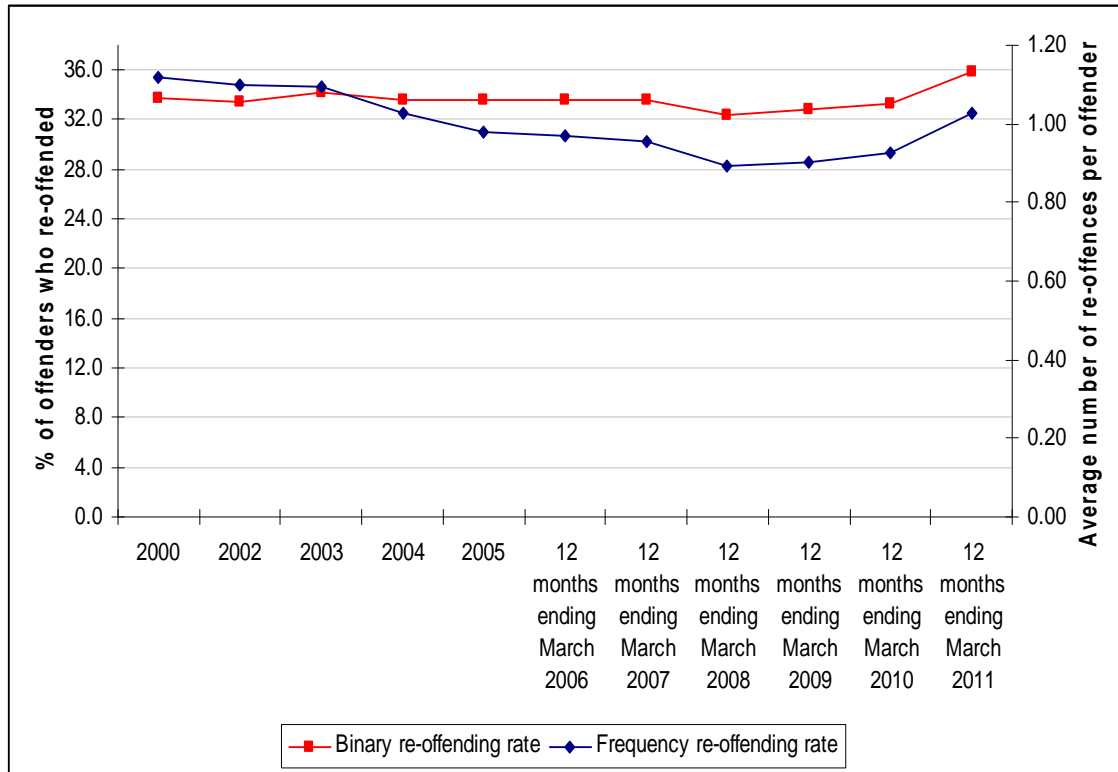
Figure 1



However, as overall number of offenders, reoffenders and reoffences have gone down, proven reoffending rates have risen up until 2010/11 (fig 2):

- As the number of young people offending has reduced quicker than the numbers reoffending, the *binary rate* of proven reoffending has increased year on year since 2007/08 until 2010/11.
- As the number of young people has reduced quicker than the number of further offences, the *frequency rate* of proven reoffending has increased until 2010/11: there has been an 8% drop in the frequency of reoffending since 2000, but an 11% increase in the 12 months to March 2011.
- The average number of previous offences per offender has increased from 1.59 in 2006/07 to 2.51 in 2011/12.

Figure 2



In 2011/12, there were around 71,000 young people in the cohort of offenders. Of these, around 25,000 young people went on to commit a proven reoffence within a year. This meant that 35.5% of young people committed a reoffence (the binary rate) and an average of 1.02 reoffences per offender (the frequency rate). The binary rate is higher than that reported back in 2000.

The number of FTEs has fallen by 78% since the peak in the year ending September 2007 and 71% since the twelve months to September 2003. This trend is continuing. In the 12 months ending September 2013, there were around 24,200 first-time entrants, a fall of 24% when compared with the 12-month period ending September 2012. This compares with around 110,000 young people when the number of FTEs was at its peak in the year to September 2007.

# A changing reoffending cohort

In 2011/12 the cohort of offenders was 49% smaller than in 2000, with the greatest reductions among those with no previous offences and those receiving pre-court disposals. This leaves a group of young people whose characteristics mean they are more likely to reoffend than those in the 2000 cohort.

Specifically we have found that since 2000, young people in the cohort:

- seem to be getting older i.e. there are more 15 to 17 year olds
- have more previous offences
- are committing offences which result in higher tariff sentences.

We also have evidence which suggests that young people in the youth justice system have greater needs when compared to the general population (see box 1).

## Box 1

31% of young people in the youth justice system aged 13-17 were identified as having a mental health need with the most common disorders being conduct disorders, anxiety and depression.

At least 60% of young people in the youth justice system have speech, language and communication needs, compared with 10% of children in the general population, and a further 29% of young people in under-18 young offender institutions (YOIs) having been identified as having specific literacy or numeracy problems.

The proportion of children and young people held in YOIs that are, or have been, looked-after children, is much higher than the general child population. A report by the Department for Education in 2011 identified that between 25-50% of children held in YOIs were looked-after children compared to only 1% in the general population.

The youth justice sector is working with some of the most vulnerable and troubled children. It is likely this group will have more complex needs and will be more demanding to support and turn away from offending behaviour than in the past. In order to impact on high reoffending rates new approaches need to be adopted, and the local analysis identifies YOT practice issues which need to be addressed and prioritised in order to improve local performance (and therefore England and Wales performance too).

**“The group of young people left in the youth justice system are now some of the most vulnerable and troubled children in society with more complex needs. It is highly likely that this group will be more demanding for us to support and turn away from offending behaviour. We need a radical rethink of our approach if we are to start to have an impact on the high rates of reoffending”**

**Lin Hinnigan, YJB Chief Executive (2014)**



# The reoffending toolkit

Following the learning from year one, the YJB is making a revised and updated Reoffending toolkit available to all YOTs.

The toolkit allows all youth offending teams (YOTs) to undertake reoffending analysis locally, and to identify the actions most likely to have an impact on reoffending in their area.

The toolkit contains the following:

- a data tool based on PNC data for every area of England and Wales, enabling areas to compare their performance over time, against England and Wales average, other areas and with predicted rates
- a data tool based on local YOT data which highlights issues of YOT practice and where resources and improvement effort need to be focused
- a live tracking tool to enable YOTs to identify and address issues with current cohorts
- a disproportionality tool which enable YOTs to see “at a glance” any over-representation of ethnic groups within the local youth justice system
- an Assessment and Improvement Document (AID) which provides guidance on use of the tools, how to interpret the data, lines of enquiry to pursue and actions to take to improve performance

For further information on the tools please refer to Appendices 1 and 2.

The YJB will continue to provide support to those YOTs from year one of the project. For year two, direct support will also be offered to a further group of YOTs on a risk-led basis.

## Box 2

“I have been YOT Manager at Bolton since 2002 and, in all that time, our reoffending rates have been below both the regional rate for the North West and the England and Wales rate. When suddenly we leapt above both these rates, we found it difficult to understand why.”

“Through using the reoffending toolkit we’ve identified a number of things:

- we need to review how we engage young people at the beginning of an order.
- we need to be smarter about recognising those who offend in the first month, as the data shows that they go on to commit a disproportionate number of offences.
- we are completely at odds with the picture across England and Wales when it comes to 17-year-olds – in Bolton, they reoffend way below the England and Wales average – and we need to do further work to find out why.

There is a degree of work to be done to populate the tools but the results are worth the effort. I would encourage any YOT to use it – it is genuinely helpful but, more than that, sad as it may make me sound, I have found engaging with it a really interesting exercise.”

**Mick Coleman, Bolton YOT Manager**

# Six potential lines of enquiry

Analysis of the year one data has identified 6 key lines of enquiry. These are by no means exhaustive and using the reoffending toolkit is likely to help identify a range of other issues. However, feedback from a range of services suggests these are helpful places to look in order to review performance. Short examples of findings from YOTs are included in the following boxes throughout the rest of this document.

## Box 3

### **Example:**

Wakefield YOT identified that it could achieve a binary rate better than the national average if 17 of those young people who reoffended 2010-11 would have been prevented from reoffending. The YOT also identified that its binary rate was only higher than national average in the 1<sup>st</sup> tier, so this is where its improvement effort will be concentrated.

# Binary and frequency rates: indicators of where to target resources

YOTs need to understand performance in each of the four tiers of the youth justice system (Pre-court, 1st tier, Community and Custody) in order to gain an insight in to whether energies and resources are being targeted in the most appropriate places.

The analysis shows that in 2010/11 the majority of young people in England and Wales were within the lower tiers, (Pre-Court and 1st tier). Many of these young people received disposals which did not bring them into contact with the YOT (e.g. Police Reprimands, Fines, Conditional Discharges, etc). However, any further offending by these young people affects the YOT's performance - in particular the binary rate, as if these young people do reoffend it is likely to be just once.

YOT partnerships experiencing this scenario would benefit from exploring this issue in more depth and deploying wider partnership resources to reduce the likelihood of these young people reoffending e.g. by reviewing Education, Training and Employment (ETE) provision (as those who are not in ETE are more likely to reoffend) or assessing the need for/quality of preventive work to be offered by local agencies, voluntary organisations or the YOT itself.

An area concerned to improve its frequency rate may need to focus its efforts on the community and custody cases as these are the young people who, if they reoffend, are more likely to reoffend more frequently.

# Demographic targeting

It is important that each YOT Partnership is familiar with the demographic make-up of the young offenders in its area in order to provide interventions that are sufficiently tailored to need. This alone can make a difference.

Across England and Wales males make up 80% of the cohort, 17-year-olds are the single biggest age group and white young people account for the majority of offenders, re-offenders and re-offences. However, the ethnicity profile varies hugely from area to area.

The local reoffending tool shows the numbers of young people and the numbers of offences they commit broken down by age, gender and ethnicity. It is designed to enable YOT partnerships to:

- familiarise themselves with their local ethnicity profile in terms of both the general 10-17 population and the youth justice population
- identify which particular ethnic groups have higher reoffending rates locally
- ensure that interventions are designed to meet local cultural needs.

A new disproportionality tool has been included within the new reoffending toolkit which enables YOTs to gain an instant view of the level of any disproportionality for any ethnic group within its local youth justice system.

## Box 4

### Example:

The analysis of reoffending by age group in 2010/11 usually shows 17-year-olds with the highest reoffending rates. However in Redbridge in 2010/11 the 10-13 year-olds also had high reoffending rates. This information is prompting the YOT to look at their provision for this younger age group to ensure it meets their particular needs.

# Do assessments lead to right levels of interventions?

Getting the type and intensity of intervention right is a critical component of delivering effective services to young people<sup>1</sup>. This is dependent on the accuracy of both initial and subsequent assessments of the likelihood of reoffending.

The pre-populated and “live tracking” versions of the local reoffending tool enable YOTs to explore this through a comparison of levels of intervention and the frequency of reoffending. It does this by showing where the level of intervention of a case may be inappropriate given the number of further offences e.g. where young people have committed multiple further offences but remain on ‘standard intervention’ and/or cases who have not reoffended yet remain on intensive intervention programmes.

This aspect of the tool provides an aid to effective quality assurance within the YOT. Where significant discrepancies are found it is likely that the YOT would benefit from examining this area further, but more detailed explanations should be sought: For example a young person might have been accurately assessed as likely to reoffend, therefore placed on intensive intervention, and that intervention may have been effective in preventing the young person from reoffending. However, it might also be that the assessment was poor, the young person was never likely to reoffend, s/he was inappropriately placed on intensive intervention, and was taking up scarce YOT resources needed by other young people. The tool cannot show which of the two scenarios above applies in each case, but it can show the YOT practice managers which cases to look at to see which scenario applies.

## Box 5

### Example:

Hull YOT found 71 prolific offenders who had committed 5 or more further offences each. Their analysis showed that only 11 had initially been assessed for intensive intervention. In response to this information Hull YOT are working to ensure that assessments are quality assured and updated when further offending occurs so that interventions provided are appropriate in terms of intensity and type.

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<sup>1</sup> The Green Paper Evidence report (MOJ 2010) refers to the importance targeting and tailoring interventions to the characteristics of individuals and the merits of skilled case management in improving offender outcomes.

Indicative findings from the Juvenile Cohort Study - a cohort of young people who came into contact with 30 YOTs between February 2008 and January 2009 - suggests that young people who had more frequent contacts with youth justice practitioners were less likely to reoffend. Youth Justice Interventions – [findings from the Juvenile Cohort Study \(JCS\)](#). Ministry of Justice Analytical Services.

# Addressing the impact of persistent offending

The data from the local analysis shows that on average approximately 7% of the cohort go on to commit 5 or more further offences, and that they account for around 50% of the total further offences. In order to impact on the frequency rate, these young people need to be identified early on and provided with interventions which can reduce the number of further offences (if not prevent further offending altogether).

This could be achieved by ensuring systems are in place to identify when young people start to reoffend and to re-assess and review them at that point to ensure the intervention is appropriate.

Note: The live tracker version of the tool can help in this process as it enables managers and practitioners to see the critical cases as they emerge and ensure the appropriate remedial action is taken as, and before the reoffending escalates.

This is consistent with the findings of other research studies, which have found that a small group of young people account for a disproportionate amount of offences.<sup>2</sup>

## Box 6

### Example:

In Southampton 10% of the cohort went on to commit 5 or more further offences. These young people accounted for 54% of all further offending. This has demonstrated to Southampton YOT the importance of identifying the potentially prolific early on in order to focus on this group and reduce the total amount of offending they go on to commit.

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<sup>2</sup> Hales, Nevill, Putney and Tipping (2009), Longitudinal analysis of the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey 2003-06.

# Early/late reoffending – pointers to further reoffending and an opportunity to engage

Across England and Wales, relatively high proportions of young people reoffend very soon after entering the cohort. These young people also account for high proportions of the total further offending. This knowledge and data provides an opportunity to intervene.

Effective early engagement may reduce early reoffending and prevent some young people from reoffending at all (thus improving the binary rate). In addition where young people do reoffend early, they are likely to reoffend on multiple occasions during the 12 months. These cases can be reviewed to ascertain whether the intervention needs to be changed in order to reduce the number of further offences.

It is not always necessary to await the young person's formal conviction for a further offence before reviewing the case. For example, a young person may have been arrested, interviewed, made a full admission and shared this with the YOT supervising officer. In such cases the YOT may decide to reassess the case and review the intervention prior to the final court outcome (which may be several months after the further offence occurred).

The tool also shows the proportion of young people who did not start to reoffend until the 2nd half of the 12-month period. The YOT could ascertain how many of these young people remained on supervision when they reoffended. Some of those young people who reoffend only after YOT intervention ends might benefit from continuing support from the wider partnership (e.g. targeted youth support) or from mentoring.

## Box 7

### Example:

In Hackney 7% of the 2010/11 cohort reoffended in the first month, and this group went on to commit 22% of all the further offending. For Hackney YOT this has highlighted the need to engage quickly and effectively with young people as soon as they enter the cohort to prevent them from reoffending at all (in order to improve the binary rate). In terms of improving the frequency rate, Hackney YOT is aware that, where young people do reoffend early, they need to be re-assessed and reviewed as they are likely to reoffend again. The intervention provided needs to reduce this likelihood.



# Addressing seriousness

Patterns of offending vary from area to area and change over time. The local tool enables YOTs to monitor patterns of reoffending in terms of type and seriousness. If local analysis shows particular trends then the YOT partnerships can use this information to ensure its programmes are attuned to addressing the most prevalent and current offence-types.

However, YOTs should beware of simply “importing” programmes which appear to be effective. The style of delivery is just as important as the programme itself, as is programme fidelity. It is therefore important for the YOT to ensure it has skilful, experienced and trained staff who can quickly engage young people and deliver programmes effectively.

## Box 8

### Example:

Among those young people reoffending in Croydon in 2010/11, more reoffended more seriously than less seriously. The YOT has gone on to identify what types of offences the increase in seriousness related too and is ensuring it has effective programmes in place to address them. The YOT also intends to use the live tracking tool to gain a current view of the types of offence being committed by the current cohort.

# What the YJB is doing next

The YJB is keen to ensure that the gathering momentum around this area of work is maintained. In order to support this, the following work is planned for 2014/15. We will:

- undertake further analysis to help understand the changing nature of the cohort
- publish the emerging findings from year 1 of the project (June)
- harvest and share effective practice related to reoffending.

This includes:

## **YJB activity to help manage a more challenging cohort**

- introducing AssetPlus - a new end-to-end assessment and planning intervention framework, which assesses young people against an enhanced range of factors including speech, language and communication needs, along with group behaviour, or gang offending as well as assessing factors which aid desistance.
- Transforming Youth Custody: the YJB is working with MoJ to increase the number of hours in education and to help develop young people's skills to support rehabilitation.
- work to tackle violence within the secure estate
- improving links with health – e.g. the comprehensive health assessment tool (CHAT)
- sharing effective practice with practitioners
- working to improve resettlement outcomes for young people leaving custody e.g. new resettlement consortia model

## **YJB activity to help understand a more challenging cohort**

Both the YJB and MoJ are undertaking a range of coordinated analysis and research which will include:

- examining the falls in First Time Entrants
- examining life course offending
- looking at the effectiveness of rehabilitation and relationships with case workers/programme providers on re-offending

- analysing the changing characteristics of offenders and re-offenders by looking at a cohort of offenders over time.

### **Innovation in Wales: Developing a new case management approach to understand and address the complex needs of young people with prolific offending histories**

This project is being undertaken in partnership with the Welsh Government in response to a profiling exercise which was undertaken by YJB Cymru in 2012 which investigated the case histories of 303 young people who had met the criteria for being prolific in their offending. What this investigation found is that the profile of these young people is characterised by high levels of need, many having unmet needs which relate to abnormal child development such as those relating to attachment, trauma and difficulty coming to terms with past and current circumstances.

This project will develop and test a new approach to case management with this cohort of young people; the approach places emphasis on the knowledge and skills required by practitioners to understand the needs and behaviour of this group and adapt practice to take account of them; relational working and sequencing intervention are central tenets of the approach.

The approach will be developed by the end of May 2014 with test initiation commencing at the start of June and coming to an end 31 May 2016. An independent evaluation will be in place alongside the test of this new approach to ensure that the learning can be captured and disseminated more broadly.

# Appendix 1: The Reoffending Toolkit

The revised Reducing Reoffending Toolkit contains the following three tools with supporting materials, as indicated below.

TOOL	PURPOSE
PNC tool	<p>The data is drawn from the National Police Computer (PNC) and provides a high-level view of performance in all geographical areas and across England and Wales against each measure. It allows areas to compare their performance with other areas and over time. It cuts the data in a number of ways to allow areas to look at particular issues such as performance for particular disposals, offence types, demographic groups, etc. It also provides predicted rates which take account of the characteristics of cohort members in terms of offending history and demographics.</p>
Populated local tool	<p>The data is drawn from YOT data submitted to the YJB via YJMIS. The YJB has now populated a separate tool for each YOT area for the April 2011/March 2012 cohort. However YOTs need to add the further offending data for the 17-year-olds by asking the local police to interrogate PNC, as the YJMIS data for this group is not sufficiently accurate.</p> <p>Once fully populated the tool enables a detailed analysis of local performance and sheds light on a number of practice issues and lines of enquiry to be pursued to improve performance (see above). This enables YOTs to take a <i>retrospective</i> view of a completed cohort and analyse past performance.</p>
Live tracking tool	<p>This is based on the local tool above but starts off blank. The YOT adds the details of young people as they enter the cohort and also any further offending, as it becomes known. This allows the YOT to monitor the performance of its current cohort, to take remedial action where required and to see how it is performing against the England and Wales average in-year. In this way YOTs can identify those young people who need to be re-assessed and to have the type and intensity of their interventions reviewed. The live tracking tool has “prompts” and “alerts” to facilitate this process</p>

The above tools are all available on YJMIS (see details of how to access them below). All YOTs are able to access the tools in order to carry out their local analysis and conduct live tracking. However the YJB will be seeking to support

a number of YOTs in analysing their data and drawing up action plans to address issues identified during 2014/15.

# Appendix 2: how to access the toolkit

## Existing users

Existing users who have previously downloaded the Reoffending Toolkit from YJ Management Information System (YJMIS) can access the new Reducing Reoffending Toolkit by logging into YJMIS.

Click on the 'Our Reports' at top left-hand corner of the page; this will display a list of folders below. Go to the folder called 'Reducing Project Folder', and then to sub-folder 'April 11– March 12 Analysis'.

The tool covering each YOT will be located in this folder. To download the tool, users will need to double-click on it. Downloading this file may take a few minutes.

All the files are password protected. The password is the same as that used before. If you would like a reminder of the password for your YOT, email [Emma Wylie](mailto:emma.wylie@yjb.org) at the YJB.

## New user

Accessing the YJ Management Information System Reducing Reoffending Toolkit for the first time.

Start by logging on to YJMIS. Beneath the 'Reports' section in the left-hand navigation pane, there are now three tabs: 'Reports', 'My Reports' and 'Our Reports', which is the new option covered in this guide.

By clicking on 'Our Reports', new users will see two options: 'Request New Group' and 'Join Group'. Users should then press the 'Join Group' option beneath 'Our Reports', enter the key 8ny5-9a53-5jrc-3m3i-7z7z into the field and press 'Submit'.

A message should then be displayed confirming that group membership has been successful.

Users can then download the Reducing Reoffending Toolkit for their YOT by clicking on the 'Our Reports' tab. This will display a list of folders. Go to the folder called 'Reducing Project Folder', and then to sub-folder 'April 11– March 12 Analysis'.

The toolkit covering each YOT will be located in this folder. To download the toolkit, users will need to double-click on it. Downloading this file may take a few minutes. All these files are password protected, to get the password for your YOT, email [Emma Wylie](mailto:emma.wylie@yjb.org) at the YJB.