

# Children and Young People First



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government/Youth Justice Board joint strategy to improve services for young people from Wales at risk of becoming involved in, or in, the youth justice system

July 2014



Youth Justice Board  
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuenctid





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## Foreword

The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy and Delivery Plan have provided the framework for Youth Justice Policy in Wales since their publication in 2004 and 2009 respectively; laying a shared foundation between the Welsh Government and the Youth Justice Board (YJB), to work effectively together to prevent offending by young people in Wales.

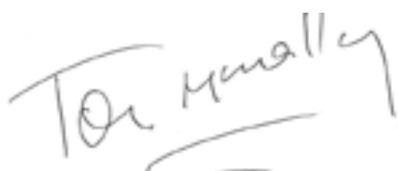
Much has been achieved in recent years through targeted prevention programmes and restorative alternatives to charging<sup>1</sup>. The number of first time entrants into the youth justice system continues to fall and the number of children and young people in custody are the lowest ever recorded being 50 in March 2013. However, reoffending rates are still of concern. In part, this is due to those children remaining in the youth justice system having more concentrated levels of complex needs and more persistent patterns of offending. This strategy shows how young people involved in persistent offending and risky behaviours are among the most vulnerable and victimised young people. They require support in order to prevent them from further offending and it is for this reason the Welsh Government is working to ensure better support for those young people who reoffend.

We need to work together to help to change perceptions of young people who offend and to better understand the needs of these often troubled, vulnerable young people and how their self-belief, skills and achievements can be encouraged to give them better chances in life. It is only through our combined efforts that we can set about the task of responding to youth crime in a responsible, flexible and optimistic way and create a system that supports young people's efforts to change and help to create a safer and fairer environment for everyone.

Anyone who has visited a young person in custody will have heard first-hand about the life experiences of some of these young people. We are determined custody must only be used as a very last resort and what we should be focused on is ensuring children and young people grow out of crime rather than be drawn deeper into it.

A criminal record is the biggest obstacle between a young person and the life they want to lead. However, it cannot be forgotten that behind every criminal record is a record of crimes committed against victims who have themselves been left vulnerable through the consequences of offending.

We have the opportunity to help remove these obstacles through our joint approach as set out in this Strategy. There are no hard to reach young people, only those who are easy to ignore.



Lord McNally  
Chair  
Youth Justice Board



Lesley Griffiths AM  
Minister for Local Government  
and Government Business, Welsh Government

<sup>1</sup> Police-led restorative alternatives to charging are a mechanism for diverting children and young people away from the youth justice system and into mainstream services, in order to get much needed support.

# 1. Executive Summary

1.1 This joint strategy brings together the Welsh Government and YJB's vision and commitment to improve services for children and young people from Wales at risk of becoming involved in, or who are in, the youth justice system. It provides the Welsh Government, the YJB and those delivering youth justice services with a coherent framework through which the prevention of offending and reoffending by children and young people can be achieved. It builds on the approach and achievements delivered under the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy 2004 (AWYOS)<sup>2</sup> and its subsequent Delivery Plan 2009<sup>3</sup>.

1.2 This Strategy is underpinned by a number of key principles and sets out eight high level outcomes which should be the main focus of those involved in delivering services to children and young people in contact with the youth justice system. It outlines the priority areas and the delivery mechanisms the Welsh Government and the YJB have to help realise our vision for youth justice in Wales.

1.3 The priorities are:

1. A well-designed partnership approach.
2. Early intervention, prevention and diversion.
3. Reducing reoffending.
4. Effective use of custody.
5. Resettlement and reintegration at the end of a sentence.

1.4 Delivery mechanisms to achieve this are:

1. Supporting the youth justice sector to develop effective practice.
2. Overseeing and supporting the youth justice sector.

1.5 The strategy will be implemented through the development of a delivery plan. This will enable the Welsh Government and the YJB to monitor the implementation of the Strategy, ensuring it remains relevant and is able to respond to the changing needs of youth justice practice and how services are organised and delivered.

1.6 The Strategy will be reviewed and updated to reflect any implications for youth justice services in Wales as a result of The Report of the Commission of Public Service Governance and Delivery<sup>4</sup> and The Report of the Commission on Devolution in Wales, Empowerment and Responsibility: Legislative Powers to Strengthen Wales<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> [www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/youthoffending/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/youthoffending/?lang=en)

<sup>3</sup> [www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/youthoffendingdeliveryplan/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/youthoffendingdeliveryplan/?lang=en)

<sup>4</sup> [www.wales.gov.uk/topics/improvingservices/public-service-governance-and-delivery/report/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/improvingservices/public-service-governance-and-delivery/report/?lang=en)

<sup>5</sup> [www.commissionondevolutioninwales.independent.gov.uk/search/doc-type/papers/](http://www.commissionondevolutioninwales.independent.gov.uk/search/doc-type/papers/)

## 2. Vision

2.1 We want a country in which we all work to prevent children and young people from entering the youth justice system. But if young people do offend, we want to ensure the system and associated services do all they can to help and support them to have the best chance of not having further convictions. Children and young people at risk of entering, or who are in, the youth justice system must be treated as children first and offenders second in all interactions with services. Wales will be a country where young people are able to contribute more positively to their communities, crime is reduced and there are fewer victims of crime.

2.2 Reducing offending and safeguarding children and young people in Wales is best achieved by devolved and non-devolved services working together. We need all services, and the communities they serve, to be supportive places where children and young people feel safe and have access to appropriate provision and advice.

## 3. Outcomes

This strategy outlines the commitment of the YJB and Welsh Government to work towards delivering the following outcomes:

1. Children and young people are engaged in mainstream services through access to, high quality prevention, treatment and support<sup>6</sup>.
2. All services work in holistic, multi-agency partnership and are accountable for meeting the needs of children and young people.
3. Children and young people are not unnecessarily brought into the youth justice system and are diverted into services which are accountable for and able to meet their needs.
4. Offending behaviour is challenged and responded to proportionately with an opportunity for young people to make amends.
5. Children and young people are recognised as being made vulnerable by contact with the criminal justice system, and are safeguarded from harm.
6. The values, attitudes, knowledge and skills of practitioners enable young people to stop offending and lead-crime free lives.
7. Sentencing children and young people to custody is a last resort, reserved for crimes so serious no community sentence is an appropriate response.
8. Children and young people make a seamless transition between a youth justice sentence and an independent, crime free life.

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<sup>6</sup> such as health, housing, education and social services.

## 4. Principles

4.1 The fundamental principle which has underpinned our approach to youth justice to date is treating those involved in offending behaviour, or at risk of offending, as children and young people first. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In 2011, the Welsh Government introduced the Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure, 2011. This measure places a duty on Welsh Ministers to ensure due regard to the rights and obligations in the UNCRC<sup>7</sup>.

4.2 The principles which will be part of the approach taken to effectively deliver the strategy are:

- Young people are children first, offenders second;
- Young people in the youth justice system have the same access to their rights and entitlements as any other young person;
- The voice of the young person is actively sought and listened to;
- Services focus on early intervention and holistic multi-agency support;
- Promotion of a culture where identifying and promoting effective practice is fundamental to improving outcomes for young people;
- Services are held to account for addressing the needs of young people;
- The youth justice sector is supported to develop the knowledge and skills to understand and address the needs of young people;
- The voices of victims are heard, and they are provided with the opportunity to share their views and take part in restorative approaches.

## 5. Background

5.1 The youth justice system is made up of a number of organisations working together. Some focus on the needs of children and young people (under the age of 18) in the youth justice system by looking after their welfare; services like health, social services, education and housing. These policy areas are devolved to the National Assembly for Wales. Others, which are non-devolved such as the police and the courts, focus on enforcing the law to hold them to account for their offence.

5.2 The YJB for England and Wales (“the YJB”) is an executive non-departmental public body. It oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales. It works to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people, and ensures custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour.

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<sup>7</sup> Wales is the first country in the UK to formally adopt the Convention as the basis for policy making for children and young people.

5.3 As the youth justice system in Wales is provided by Welsh and UK organisations, the Welsh Government and the YJB work together to help ensure it works effectively. The Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel is jointly convened by the Welsh Government and the YJB. Its primary purpose is to assist the Welsh Government and the YJB to implement policy which prevents offending and reoffending by children and young people in Wales and to provide scrutiny and support to the implementation of this strategy through our joint delivery plan<sup>8</sup>.

5.4 This strategy builds on the core principles which have underpinned the joint approach undertaken by the Welsh Government and YJB to tackling youth offending to date; these principles also underpinned the previous joint 'AWYOS'<sup>9</sup> (2004), its subsequent delivery plan (2009) and the Welsh Government Green Paper (2012)<sup>10</sup>.

## What has been achieved so far?

5.5 The youth justice system in Wales has achieved a great deal in recent years, with significant reductions in the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system and in the number of children and young people in custody. There has been a 56% reduction in the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system between 2009 and 2013. This equates to 2000 fewer Welsh young people getting a criminal record; with the number of children and young people in custody falling by 59% between March 2010 and March 2013, from 121 to 50<sup>11</sup>.

5.6 Key achievements under the AWYOS and its Delivery Plan underpinning this success:

- Supported the development of Police-led restorative alternatives to charging, which are a mechanism for diverting young people away from the youth justice system into mainstream services;
- Provided capital funds to develop a new house block and purpose built vocational unit at Hillside Secure Children's Home;
- Worked with Hindley Young Offender Institution to adjust service provision to ensure the cultural and language needs of young people can be addressed;
- Established a Child and Adolescent Mental Health in-reach service in Parc Young Offender Institution;
- Provided support to Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) to implement the Scaled Approach in readiness for the introduction of the Youth Rehabilitation Order<sup>12</sup>;
- Piloted and evaluated resettlement support panels in six YOT areas;

<sup>8</sup> The YJB Corporate and Business Plan, 2014-17; 2014-15 sets out the way in which the YJB works in partnership with the Welsh Government through key outputs that make up the YJB's contribution to the joint delivery plan under this strategy. [www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/corporate-reports/yjb/yjb-corporate-plan-2014-17-business-plan-2014-15.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/corporate-reports/yjb/yjb-corporate-plan-2014-17-business-plan-2014-15.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childreynoungpeople/publications/youthoffending/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childreynoungpeople/publications/youthoffending/?lang=en)

<sup>10</sup> Green Paper Consultation on proposals to improve services in Wales to better meet the needs of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or are already in, the youth justice system, [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/people-and-communities/gpyouthjustice/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/people-and-communities/gpyouthjustice/?lang=en)

<sup>11</sup> Youth Justice Management Information System Data

<sup>12</sup> Introduced by the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act, 2008: UK Government

- Facilitated local authorities and key partners to establish a resettlement consortium to collectively address the resettlement needs of young people; and
- Supported YOTs to become effective multi-agency partnerships.

## What needs to be done?

5.7 The focus of the work to date on preventing young people from offending has delivered significant successes in reducing first time entrants into the youth justice system and those sentenced to custody. However, alongside this positive reduction a new pattern has emerged. There is now a growing proportion of young people who have a high level of complex needs which mean they keep offending and progress very quickly through a range of community sentences and into custody.

5.8 Reoffending rates remain of concern. With fewer children and young people in the youth justice system, those remaining may have more entrenched behaviours and persistent patterns of offending. This is often coupled with interlocking and complex needs. The vulnerabilities of this group were evidenced in a project undertaken by the YJB to profile children who are prolific offenders (25+ offences)<sup>13</sup>. This showed 79% had been involved with, or had been referred to social services, 81% had no qualifications, 57% had contact with/or referrals to Mental Health services and 38% were identified as having Special Educational Needs<sup>14</sup>. While maintaining the trends in first time entrants and those sentenced to custody remains a priority, greater focus now needs to be given to the group of young people left in the system whose reoffending is high.

## 6. Priorities

### Priority 1: A well-designed partnership approach

#### Outcomes

- Children and young people are engaged in mainstream services<sup>15</sup> through access to high quality prevention, treatment and support.
- All services work in holistic, multi-agency partnership, and are accountable for meeting the needs of children and young people.

#### Background

*“Lots of young people commit crimes just to get the attention of their families and the support of services, and they re-offend to keep getting support. It’s difficult to get out of.”*

*Young Person’s comment as part of the Green Paper Consultation<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> Annex A [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/people-and-communities/gpyouthjustice/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/people-and-communities/gpyouthjustice/?lang=en)

<sup>14</sup> Annex A [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/gpyouthjustice/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/gpyouthjustice/?lang=en)

<sup>15</sup> such as health, housing, education and social services.

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Proposals to improve services in Wales to better meet the needs of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or are already in, the youth justice system.

6.1 We expect children and young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system, those who are involved and those leaving statutory youth justice services to be able to access support services no matter where they live in Wales. We also expect services to work together to provide coordinated, multi-agency, wrap-around support which is consistent across Wales so young people do not fall into 'service gaps'; or move back and forth between services where there are disputes with regard to who is responsible for providing the relevant support.

6.2 Partnership working is fundamental to ensuring young people have access to services when they need them. Over recent years we have continued to make changes to the way in which public services are organised to be able to deliver the 'right services to the right people, at the right time and in the right way', whilst not losing sight of the current economic difficulties we all face and what can realistically be achieved. But the needs of some young people continue to go unmet. This means we still have some distance to travel.

### **How will we deliver?**

#### **YOTs**

6.3 YOTs are multidisciplinary teams made up of health, social services, education, police and probation working together and are statutory local partnerships<sup>17</sup>. YOTs are part of the Local Authority and have a statutory responsibility for managing children and young people who are on sentences imposed by the courts. The make-up of a YOT provides an excellent example of partnership working whereby the management, care and support of young people enable them to fulfil their statutory functions.

6.4 While we believe YOTs are very effective in what they do, we are aware the pathways into many mainstream services, particularly at the end of sentence and the transition to adult services, are fragmented. This can often lead to young people losing support when their statutory sentence comes to an end.

#### **Governance & Management Boards**

6.5 Another example of effective partnership working is the management board formed to provide strategic direction to the organisation and delivery of YOT services. The membership of the Board consists, at its core, of the statutory partners, but can also include additional partners which can be locally determined to suit needs and objectives. In 2014/15 the YJB will produce updated joint guidance on effective YOT partnerships, which will set out how they should operate, with a particular focus on the responsibilities of local partners and governance arrangements.

#### **Welsh Government – working across departments**

6.6 Services for young people in the youth justice system, or who are at risk of entering the system, will only improve if all departments work together effectively. We will focus on the main areas of the Welsh Government responsible for children and young people which impact on the delivery of youth justice services. These are: education, training and employment; mental health; substance misuse, housing, social care and the Youth Crime Prevention Fund.

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<sup>17</sup> Crime and Disorder Act: UK Government

## Education, Training and Employment

6.7 Research indicates that a young person's educational experience is a significant factor in their risk of involvement in criminal behaviour. The risk factors associated with offending behaviour and education disengagement are closely related. Under-achievement at school, disengagement, poor literacy and numeracy skills and a significant prevalence of special educational needs are evident in the youth justice population. Tackling the engagement of young people who offend in education, training and employment is often key to achieving successful outcomes and reducing reoffending<sup>18</sup>. Further support is needed so children and young people in the criminal justice system can engage or remain engaged in employment, education or training.

6.8 We will work closely with key stakeholders to improve learning outcomes for children and young people at risk of offending or reoffending. We will support them by: identifying and disseminating interventions and practice proven to be effective in a youth justice setting; working with training and education providers to improve the quality, opportunities and range of training and education provision available; establishing and promoting safe and achievable pathways to employment; and supporting the prevention and reduction of offending and reoffending by encouraging a multiagency and holistic approach to the co-ordination of provision to support young people not making positive progress.

## Mental Health

6.9 For young people with a mental illness, having timely access to, and close working relationships between, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and YOTs can help identify need, and speed access to services. Through liaison and diversionary activity vulnerable 'at risk' young people can be prevented from entering the criminal justice system. Equally, those individuals already in the system can often present with complex, multiple problems. The assessment of need by health and other professionals therefore needs to ensure access to universal services to meet their needs and which respects their dignity, wherever the individual is in the system, from initial point of arrest, through to custody and resettlement, supporting the young person following their sentence.

6.10 To enable YOTs to support young people to access treatment and services for identified mental health problems, co-occurring conditions and emotional and behavioural difficulties, there needs to be:

- Dedicated time from an appropriate and clearly identified CAMHS professional to support each YOT, aligned with Tier 3 forensic CAMHS teams.
- Strengthened links between CAMHS and YOTs to enable timely access to relevant help and support for young people identified at risk of offending and anti-social behaviour.

6.11 CAMHS in-reach services should also be provided to young people in secure settings to ensure these young people have the same access to support and services as those in the community.

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<sup>18</sup> Leech, J. (2011) The education of young people who offend: Welsh Research and Practice Briefing. Dartington: Research in Practice.

## Substance Misuse

6.12 Having access to the right services at the right time, designed to minimise the impact of substance misuse, is essential. The relationship between crime, anti-social behaviour and impact on personal health is well understood and documented. Service access to those agencies set up and funded to provide help for young people who misuse drugs and alcohol should be based on an assessment of need. Referral pathways should be simple and understood by a range of professionals likely to encounter young people involved with the criminal justice system. This extends beyond YOTs and social workers. It should include schools based nurses and counsellors, youth and sports development workers, and teachers with pastoral care duties.

6.13 Support for preventative programmes in schools is paramount to promote clear messages.

## Housing

6.14 There will be some young people who, for whatever reason, are no longer living with parents or carers and will require accommodation and support to live independently. Absence of appropriate accommodation can in some instances influence court outcomes; such as deciding whether to grant bail. There are also still occurrences where young people leaving custody do not know where they are going to live or have placements in bed and breakfast until something more suitable becomes available. Having somewhere to live is a basic need and if this is not in place youth justice workers face significant difficulty in addressing other needs and offending behaviour. It also has to be acknowledged for some young people returning to the family home can increase their vulnerability further.

6.15 A new Housing Bill was published on 18th November 2013 which brings forward a number of reforms outlined in *'Homes for Wales: a White Paper for better lives and communities'*. It includes stronger duties which will ensure prevention of homelessness:

- Introducing a new corporate duty for local authorities to take reasonable steps to help people avoid homelessness;
- Keeping the definition of homelessness unchanged, but extending the definition of 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days; and
- Allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty through an offer of good quality private rented sector housing.

## Social Care

6.16 A significant number of young people in touch with the justice system, together with their families, will have had contact with social services at some point in their lives. The interface between YOTs and children's social care need not be difficult to operate. We still hear of cases where a 'looked after child' has not been found accommodation on the day of release from custody and children's social services close cases due to YOT involvement. Youth justice services should not be left to address the social care needs of young people on their own, particularly when a young person is deemed to be looked

after, or who is in need of care and support. Service Level Agreements should be in place locally explicitly stating the role of each agency involved in providing care and support to young people.

6.17 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 will, when enacted in April 2016, give effect to the Ministerial priorities outlined in the White Paper *Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action*. It has, at its heart, two key objectives. Firstly, to improve the well-being outcomes for people who need care and support, together with carers who need support; and secondly, to reform social services law to deliver the Welsh Government's commitment to integrate social services to support people of all ages as part of families and communities.

6.18 The legislation will therefore:

- Provide children with an enhanced entitlement to an assessment of their needs for care and support.
- Support an increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention.
- Afford enhanced duties on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to prevent and reduce the need for care and support for people in their area. Encouraging children not to commit offences and reducing the need for criminal proceedings against children are specified priorities for these preventive services.
- Place individual well-being,<sup>19</sup> and how this contributes to improving outcomes at the heart of service design and delivery.
- Ensure local safeguarding partners are supported by more robust leadership and a stronger, more effective framework for multi-agency co-operation.

6.19 Local Authorities are not expected to act in isolation or to provide all of these services themselves, but to play a leading role in identifying, supporting and, where appropriate, securing a range of services to deliver improved outcomes. Effective multi-agency co-operation and partnership working is essential to support and facilitate the successful re-integration of individuals within their communities.

### **Youth Crime Prevention Fund**

6.20 The Welsh Government's Youth Crime Prevention Fund (YCPF) supports projects aimed at diverting young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour. This includes projects relating to education, training, leisure, arts, sports, restorative justice, and initiatives to combat substance misuse.

6.21 The YCPF moved to delivery through regional collaboration from April 2013. The Fund continues to support projects which prevent young people from offending and reoffending.

6.22 Funding is allocated on a regional footprint basis across six Regional Footprint Partnerships in Wales. Each area decides which projects to run in line with the criteria for the use of the funding as the Partnerships are best placed to determine the priorities for their area. An established formula is used to calculate allocations based on the percentage of recorded youth crime, and overall recorded crime.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/strategies/statement/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/strategies/statement/?lang=en)

6.23 All projects must be relevant to the prevention and reduction of youth crime and deliver collaborative outcomes which meet national and local priorities across a broad range of associated priority areas such as child poverty, mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse projects and schemes.

## **Priority 2: Early intervention, prevention and diversion**

### **Outcomes**

- Children and young people are not unnecessarily brought into the youth justice system and are diverted into services which are accountable for and able to meet their needs.
- Offending behaviour is challenged and responded to proportionately, with an opportunity for young people to make amends.

### **Background**

*“What I have been through since committing my offences has been a shock to my system. Triage has really helped to raise my awareness about what could happen to me in the future if I re-offend. I really don’t want a criminal record”.*

*Young Person’s comment as part of the Green Paper Consultation<sup>20</sup>*

6.24 The Welsh Government and YJB approach to preventing children and young people from offending is evident in the work we have undertaken under the previous strategy. In addition, in 2008 we published ‘*Youth Crime Prevention in Wales; strategic guidance*’ which described the prevention landscape at the time and provided guidance to those establishing and operating programmes aimed at preventing young people entering the criminal justice system.

6.25 Since 2008, there have been two important developments which will continue to shape prevention in Wales. The first is an increased involvement in targeted prevention from wider Local Authority children’s and youth services. For example, initiatives led by the Welsh Government, such as Families First and Integrated Family Support Services, have included specific references to working with young people at risk of entering the youth justice system.

6.26 Second, in line with the evolving working relationship between the YOT and the Police there have also been developments in the way decisions are made about the response to young people who, for whatever reason, do offend for the first time. Programmes have evolved, such as the Bureau model and the Triage model, supported by the YCPF, which formalise joint decision making and targeted intervention at the arrest stage. The out of court disposal framework<sup>21</sup> also provides greater flexibility for the Police to deal quickly and proportionately with first time offending which does not merit prosecution at court.

6.27 We believe prevention in all its forms is the key to stopping young people coming into the justice system. Therefore we will concentrate on providing support to both children’s and criminal justice services to develop consistent models and approaches to prevention and diversion at the following three tiers:

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Proposals to improve services in Wales to better meet the needs of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or are already in, the youth justice system.

<sup>21</sup> Introduced by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act, 2012

- Tier 1 – early intervention and prevention services;
- Tier 2 – targeted YOT prevention; and
- Tier 3 – alternatives to charging and diversion.

## **How will we deliver?**

### **Tier 1 – early intervention and preventative services**

#### **Family Support Services**

6.28 The best way to protect children and young people from the factors which increase the risk of becoming involved in anti-social and offending behaviour is to secure access to the right support services capable of meeting their needs. These factors are not only associated with offending but also with vulnerability and exclusion, and if not addressed early have devastating implications for the individual, their families and the wider community.

6.29 The Welsh Government funds and contributes to a number of initiatives designed to help individuals and families receive appropriate help at the earliest possible opportunity and stop families escalating towards crisis. For instance, Families First is designed to improve outcomes for families, particularly those living in poverty. It also promotes the development of new models of integrated working to deliver better support for families.

6.30 Families First has been the driving force of our whole family approach by establishing a Team Around the Family (TAF) and Joint Assessment Family Framework in every Local Authority. Wales has become the sole UK nation to require all Local Authorities to operate a TAF model. This necessitates organisations working together to place families at the centre of their planning and delivery, to support families to build resilience. Families First links and promotes access more widely to services and has strong liaison and partnership working arrangements in place with youth justice, Community Safety Partnerships and Probation-led services.

#### **Information and advice for young people and families**

6.31 We believe for children, young people and families it can be a daunting task to identify and navigate through the various services which exist in local areas. As a result we have ensured the Family Information Service (FIS) is a key component of the Families First programme. The FIS in Wales provides a free impartial information and advice service for all parents/carers of children and young people aged 0-20, and the professionals who work with them. They provide a wide-reaching valued service to parents and carers.

### **Tier 2 – Targeted YOT Prevention**

6.32 There will be young people who risk falling into a 'service gap' because their needs are too complex for easy integration into universal services yet who have not met the threshold for statutory intervention. Left unidentified and unsupported these young people are more likely to become dis-engaged and disillusioned with mainstream services. It is in instances like these we believe targeted multi-agency prevention is appropriate. YOTs are the primary providers of services to identify and prevent children and young people from offending, however this work is often delivered in partnership with others from the voluntary and public sectors.

6.33 We want to build on the success of targeted prevention programmes such as Youth Inclusion Support Panels (YISPs) and Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs). Therefore we will continue to encourage multi-agency partnerships to undertake appropriate targeting of those individuals at risk of committing anti-social behaviour and offending, or who are presenting with a number of factors in their lives which increase the likelihood of them offending. To achieve this we want to see continued improvements in partnership working, communication and information sharing with Tier 1 services.

### **Tier 3 – Alternatives to Police Charging and Diversion**

6.34 When a young person does offend for the first time or commits low-level offending there need to be effective ways of dealing with them in the community. The more we can prevent young people entering the youth justice system the more we can prevent the risk of them getting into further trouble in the future. At the point of arrest, Police-led alternatives to charging<sup>22</sup> exist as a mechanism for diverting children and young people away from the youth justice system and into mainstream services in order to get much needed support.

Often hidden or unidentified needs are only discovered when some children and young people have committed an offence, and come to the attention of the Police. For example, substance misuse or emotional and mental health issues or the fact many young people are also often victims themselves, having witnessed offending behaviour at home from parents or siblings, or being negatively influenced by their peers.

6.35 The Bureau and Triage models evolved to formalise the relationship between the Police and YOTs and improve consistency in decision making at the arrest stage. Both these initiatives have demonstrated positive results. In areas which have them, the reduction in first-time entrants has been accelerated and the rate of reoffending among those entering the early stages of the youth justice system has reduced. The benefits of the new out of court disposal framework will further reinforce the good practice which exists and ensure outcomes are proportionate to the crime committed as well as being effective in reducing the risk of further offending.

6.36 An important feature of initiatives such as the Bureau and Triage and the way they work in the new out of court disposal framework is the focus on utilising a Police-led restorative approach to low-level offending. Restorative Justice is an approach which focuses on the needs of victims and those who have committed crime, as well as the wider community. If done successfully it allows the individual to make amends and repair the harm caused by criminal behaviour without suffering the long term stigma and economic exclusion associated with a criminal record.

6.37 There continue to be areas in Wales which do not have initiatives such as Bureau or Triage, so there is still a lot of work to be done in improving the parity of decision making at the arrest stage and the diversion of young people into services which are able to meet their needs. This is especially the case in more rural areas where delivery is more challenging. While the out of court disposal framework provides significant leverage in achieving our

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<sup>22</sup> The approach is an alternative to police charging, and provides opportunities for those directly affected by an offence to communicate and agree how to deal with the offence and its consequences. The young person has the opportunity to apologise for their crime and understand the impact this has had on the victim.

goal we will also work with the Police and other partners to ensure the right information, guidance and training is provided to professionals. Financial and practical support will continue to be provided to areas wishing to establish initiatives such as the Bureau and Triage; with a particular focus on how such initiatives can be delivered in rural or remote areas.

### **Priority 3: Reducing reoffending**

#### **Outcome**

- Children and young people are recognised as being made vulnerable by contact with the criminal justice system and are safeguarded from harm.
- The values, attitudes, knowledge and skills of practitioners enable young people to stop offending and lead-crime free lives.

#### **Background**

*“I came back into the system because I didn’t have the support of my family when I got out – they disowned me after my first offence. I am determined not to re-offend and get back the support of my family, it’s all I want”.*

*Young Person’s comment as part of the Green Paper Consultation<sup>23</sup>*

6.38 Effective early intervention and prevention has led to far fewer young people being brought into the system, this means the needs of young people are addressed before they develop entrenched patterns of offending. Consequently, the young people remaining in the system are more likely to have the most complex needs and highest rates of reoffending.

6.39 Fewer young people in the system means greater flexibility for services to provide more intensive support and intervention. However, this also means individual areas now have challenges of scale in commissioning and delivering specialist services for relatively few young people. Understanding and addressing the behaviour and complex needs of the young people remaining in the system is a priority.

#### **How will we deliver?**

6.40 We expect young people in the youth justice system to have the help and support they need. They should not, under any circumstance, face further disadvantage or vulnerability due to their offending. Health, housing, education and social services provision will be accessible. We will work to overcome any systemic obstacles, so service provision is based around the needs of the young person rather than how services are organised and delivered. We will also focus on:

- Supporting the role of YOTS and improving sentence management;
- Understanding reoffending and addressing complex needs;
- Youth to Adult Transitions – improving the links with and transitions of young people to adult services.

<sup>23</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Proposals to improve services in Wales to better meet the needs of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or are already in, the youth justice system.

## Role of YOTs and sentence management

6.41 YOTs are an excellent example of effective needs-led multi-agency working. For practitioners to address these needs and effectively manage and support young people there needs to be in place an up-to-date assessment and planning framework. High quality assessments are the cornerstone of youth justice practice which can contribute to reducing reoffending. The current framework, *Asset* and its associated tools, which have been in place since YOTs were first established, is now in the process of being updated by the YJB. This is taking place in response to the changing nature of youth justice practice and developments in policy, research and practice.

6.42 The new framework, *AssetPlus* puts the views and experiences of young people and families at the heart of practice as well as providing greater consistency in assessment, intervention planning and information sharing across youth justice services. It has a renewed focus on professional judgment and aims to identify the young person's strengths, needs and problems, and facilitate planning of appropriate interventions across both community and custody.

## Understanding offending behaviour and complex needs

6.43 The significant reduction in the number of young people caught up in the youth justice system demonstrates current youth justice practice has been the 'right thing to do' for most young people. However, there continues to be a core group of young people who continue to re-offend despite efforts made by services to engage with them and support them to lead crime-free lives. These young people need a different approach.

6.44 Through our work to profile the characteristics of young people with prolific offending histories we know significant numbers of them were involved with social services, had no qualifications and had also been referred to mental health services. Also of concern was over a third were, or have been placed on the child protection register, had experience of absconding or staying away from home, and were identified as having special educational needs.

6.45 In terms of emotional and mental health difficulties, many young people present with emotional and mental health needs, which fall outside the remit of CAMHS; such as those relating to childhood trauma and attachment. Youth justice services often have only a short window of opportunity to engage and work with young people. Therefore, being able to understand the complexity of needs which a young person has and how to respond on a case-by-case basis is vitally important.

6.46 In recent years there have been advances in knowledge and evidence which enable us to better understand life-course development and how this correlates with offending. We realise we need to be doing more to enable youth justice services to understand the complex interplay of factors which lead a young person to repeat offending. We believe it is a significant challenge to achieve long-term change in a young person's behaviour without addressing both immediate needs and those which stem from early childhood development. Through the direct work it undertakes with youth justice services, the YJB has provided

practical support to local areas to undertake in-depth analysis of large cohorts of young people. This enables those involved in planning and delivering services to better understand the young people and communities they are working with and target resources more effectively.

6.47 In April 2013 the Welsh Government and YJB also embarked on a journey to develop a new case management approach for YOTs in Wales. This approach will provide a framework which will emphasise the importance of relational working with young people and sequencing interventions in a way which is meaningful to the young person and most likely to achieve positive change. Over the course of this strategy we will continue to develop and pilot this approach, and capture learning through monitoring and evaluation. If it is found to be beneficial we will make this more widely available.

### **Youth to Adult Transitions – improving the links and transitions of young people to the adult system**

6.48 Those remaining in the youth justice system not only have more complex vulnerabilities, they are also generally older; with a far greater proportion of sixteen and seventeen year olds. Many of these young people will consequently transfer to adult services; both in the justice system and other services such as the move from CAMHS to adult mental health provision. The point of transfer from youth to adult services is a critical time for the young person involved, and for professionals who must work to ensure the welfare of the young person and any risks posed to the public by them are minimised.

6.49 Improving transitions will produce better outcomes for young people as they are supported during a fragile time in their lives. Making improvements in the way information is shared from YOTs to probation services, adult prisons and other services will lead to more informed assessments, continuity in interventions and advances in addressing their needs. This will, in turn, have a direct effect on reducing reoffending. A successful transition involves a number of organisations working together, promoting partnership and learning, and having a positive impact on the justice system as a whole.

6.50 We will continue to work together with the National Offender Management Service and the National Probation Service to ensure those involved in the transfer of a young person from the youth to adult system are aware and supported in understanding and applying the principles and processes for effective transition. In our endeavour we expect those involved in youth to adult transitions to keep abreast of the youth to adult framework and its associated resources and tools.

## Priority 4: Effective use of custody for young people

### Outcome

- Sentencing children and young people to custody is a last resort, reserved for crimes so serious no community sentence is an appropriate response.

### Background

*“It would be a good idea ensure more support was provided to young people who offend and go in to custody and to stop them reoffending.”*

*Young Person’s comment as part of the Green Paper Consultation<sup>24</sup>*

6.51 The significant reduction in the number of young people sentenced to custody has in part been due to a number of legislative changes and improvements in practice and collaborative working of both secure and community based services. We want to continue building on the progress made and move towards our aspiration for Wales as a country where custody for young people is no longer needed, because young people no longer commit crimes serious enough to warrant this.

6.52 While the reality is that being a zero custody nation may always be an aspiration, it remains an important guiding principle to ensure fewer young people of any age end up in custody. There will be times when young people commit crimes so serious, removal from the community is the only option in order to act in the best interests of their victims, the public and themselves. Custody should only be used sparingly and as a last resort. When young people are placed on remand or sentenced to custody, they should be detained in an environment which not only challenges their offending behaviour but is primarily working towards effective reintegration and resettlement through improved educational attainment, attention to their cultural, language, health and social care needs. Those delivering services to young people who are detained should maintain equal focus on the young person’s resettlement and reintegration back into the community. Whilst it is the young person’s past behaviours which have resulted in them being detained, a future-orientated approach will provide them with a better chance to lead a crime-free life on release.

### How will we deliver?

#### Placement of young people

6.53 The YJB is currently responsible for commissioning a distinct youth secure estate and also placing in secure accommodation children and young people who are remanded or sentenced to custody. This includes deciding which custodial establishment a young person is sent to. The YJB ensures children and young people are placed in an establishment best able to meet their assessed needs and which takes into account the individual risks and circumstances of the young person.

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<sup>24</sup> Proposals to improve services in Wales to better meet the needs of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or are already in, the youth justice system.

6.54 We believe closeness to home can be a key factor in successful reintegration and resettlement. Wherever possible the YJB places a young person from Wales within a Welsh establishment; at either Parc under-18 YOI<sup>25</sup> or Hillside Secure Children's Home situated in South Wales. There is currently no provision for young people in the northern half of Wales. For these young people, the nearest secure accommodation is in England, at Hindley under-18 YOI. However, in planning the configuration of the secure estate, the Ministry of Justice and the YJB must also take strategic decisions on the relationship between geographic proximity and other factors such as the declining number of young people sentenced to custody. Therefore, if the welfare and effective resettlement of children and young people from Wales is to be better promoted, we must consider an approach which sacrifices geographic proximity for increased investment devoted to specific, culturally appropriate in-reach provision.

6.55 As part of the 2009 Delivery Plan of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy we worked together with Hindley under-18 YOI to develop enhanced provision to address the practical difficulties which have historically faced Welsh young people in English secure establishments. As a result young males aged 15-17 years of age, where appropriate, are placed at Hindley under-18 YOI.

6.56 We recognise there will occasionally be times when young people will need to be placed in other English establishments which are better equipped to meet their needs. We will work together, and with the Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service, at a strategic level to ensure young people experience a seamless transition back into Wales. There are also English young people placed within the secure estate in Wales, it is our responsibility to make sure they are not disadvantaged compared to their Welsh counterparts, and their needs are met.

### **Configuration of the youth secure estate**

6.57 Under the Transforming Youth Custody Programme the Ministry of Justice and the YJB are currently undertaking work to put education at the heart of youth detention through the development of Secure Colleges, improving existing provision and improved resettlement. The decline of the youth custody population has reduced the demand on all types of establishment<sup>26</sup> and has also led to changes in the profile of the population. For instance, the closure of Ashfield under-18 YOI, alongside the reduction in Welsh young people being remanded or sentenced to custody, has resulted in a greater number of English young people being placed at Parc under-18 YOI. Also, all female under-18 YOIs have now been decommissioned therefore females are now placed in either a Secure Training Centre or Secure Children's Home.

6.58 In terms of Secure Children's Homes across England and Wales there has been a large fall in occupancy rates and a change in the type of placement. Whilst there has been a steady decline in the number of young people placed by the YJB, the percentage of young people placed by the Local Authority on welfare grounds has increased. With regard to Hillside secure children's home in South Wales, there are now fewer secure justice places

<sup>25</sup> Young Offender Institution (YOI)

<sup>26</sup> The secure estate is currently made up of Secure Children's Homes; Young Offender's Institutions and Secure Training Centres.

available which has been in response to decreasing demand<sup>27</sup>. The change in the profile of the population sentenced or remanded to the care of secure children's homes means providers have to adapt current provision to meet the needs of an older population.

6.59 We believe there is a need for a distinct secure estate which includes secure establishments in Wales which are able to meet the needs of both Welsh and English children and young people placed in its care. Therefore we will work with the Ministry of Justice to develop legislation and policy to ensure secure establishments are able to fulfil this requirement.

6.60 In terms of the youth secure estate in Wales we recognise a lot of good work takes place within both these establishments and through the links they have with community provision. For instance an area of good practice identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons in 2012<sup>28</sup> at Parc are the transitional arrangements in place for young people serving longer sentences when they move to the adult site. Hillside has in place a range of specialist health and substance misuse services, good links to community health services, and a purpose built vocational unit. Both establishments are members of regional reintegration and resettlement arrangements which are focused on maximising the opportunities Local Authority cross-border working can generate.

6.61 The change in the profile of young people in the Secure Estate as well as the geographical proximity of Parc under-18 YOI and Hillside SCH offers a number of opportunities for closer working between the two establishments. We recognise it is equally important to strengthen the role of services such as health, education and social services in understanding and meeting the needs of young people in custody. We will work together to address this at a strategic level.

### **An integrated approach between the secure estate and YOTs**

6.62 At a local level, YOTs continue to provide support while young people are in custody, and on their release. It is important to coordinate community and custodial sentence management to provide a seamless service for the young person. Resettlement and reintegration should be at the heart of the care and sentence management process and should be the focus of both settings from the time a young person enters custody. This is particularly important when young people are serving sentences of a shorter length. Provision of the same kind of packages should be considered as early as the pre-sentence report stage, as voluntary support can provide Magistrates with greater confidence to impose a community sentence.

6.63 Young people should be supported so they can maximise opportunities on release from custody, with services in place to ensure the work undertaken inside secure accommodation can be continued outside. The more effective use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) and Mobility will assist in preparation for release. Effective working between custodial and community agencies is much easier when professionals are dealing with fewer custodial

<sup>27</sup> For further statistical information, see Department of Education (2013) Children accommodated in secure children's homes at 31st March, 2013. Statistical First Release (SFR; 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Report on an announced inspection of HMP & YOI Parc Young People's Unit 2 – 6 July 2012 by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

establishments<sup>29</sup>. Our plans to encourage greater collaboration amongst the secure estate in Wales and with YOTs alongside an agreed protocol on placement decisions with regard to Welsh young people will help with this.

6.64 Interventions, support and training across both settings must be coordinated jointly by both the secure establishment, the YOT and wider partners to ensure continuity of provision and shared ownership. All relevant partners should be represented at meetings which fulfil statutory requirements and also local and regional mechanisms such as multi-agency panels which plan and oversee care, sentence and resettlement planning. We therefore need a tiered approach whereby public, private and voluntary sector organisations establish strategic and operational partnerships.

6.65 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014<sup>30</sup> gives effect to the White Paper *“Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action”* which set out the Welsh Government’s vision for social services and social care in Wales.

6.66 The revised statutory framework is based upon the principle of promoting the well-being outcomes of the people of Wales and a new joint duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to work to assess the needs of their population and to put in place services to prevent, delay or reduce individuals’ needs for care and support. The Act builds upon, and enhances, the existing duties of Local Authorities to support young people and their families as well as promoting partnership and co-operation with statutory and Third Sector partners across both children’s and adult services.

6.67 Since 2011, local authorities, YOTs and the secure estate have worked in partnership to support specific groups of children whose potential vulnerabilities required effective co-operation across the agencies to support their effective reintegration back into the community. This practice has been underpinned through secondary legislation and statutory guidance developed in partnership with the YJB.

6.68 The governing legislative framework has been re-enacted with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and supplemented to provide that all children in the secure estate may receive a visit from their local authority. It is our intention to utilise this revised legislative framework to build upon existing practice through a revised statutory framework to ensure the outcomes of Local Authority visits to children in the secure estate should reflect the potential needs and vulnerabilities of such children and form a key element to our proposed approach to effective planning for reintegration and resettlement.

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<sup>29</sup> Hazel, N. and Liddle, M. (2012) Resettlement in England and Wales: key policy and practice messages from research. London: YJB

<sup>30</sup> [www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=5664](http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=5664)

## Priority 5: Resettlement and reintegration at the end of a sentence

### Outcome

- Children and young people make a seamless transition between a youth justice sentence and an independent, crime free life.

### Background

*“You should be assigned one YOT worker who sticks with you through the process, there should be more consistency”.*

*Young Person’s comment as part of the Green Paper Consultation*

6.69 The previous chapter has outlined the Welsh Government and YJB’s aspiration for Wales to become a ‘zero custody’ nation. Until this vision becomes a reality, getting resettlement and reintegration right for children and young people who are sentenced to custody remains a priority. There are some particular challenges for children and young people when they finish their time with the YOT or leave custody. Unless they are under the care of Children’s Social Services or have their needs met by a supportive family, no one has ultimate accountability for ensuring these needs are addressed. This can result in young people being left unsupported; what is sometimes referred to as the ‘accountability gap’. In addition some will make a difficult transition to the adult justice system.

6.70 Reoffending on release is particularly high, with 76% of young people attached to a Welsh YOT who were released from custody going on to reoffend within 12 months<sup>31</sup>. This can often be associated with missed opportunities and an absence or delay in the provision of services which are vital to effective resettlement and enabling young people to desist from crime. When children and young people leave custody they often return to the same circumstances they were in when they first offended and it is not surprising therefore they re-offend.

6.71 Evidence tells us ‘effective resettlement can transform lives, helps protect society and saves money’<sup>32</sup>. We recognise we play a significant part in strengthening the role and a sense of shared ownership of services. We will achieve this by building on existing arrangements and effective practice to support service planners to develop a two-tiered (strategic and operational) management approach at a local and regional level which is supported nationally across the Welsh Government and by the YJB.

<sup>31</sup> Statistic from bespoke analysis of the *Proven Reoffending Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, July 2011 to June 2012* (Ministry of Justice, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> Cited by Frances Done, Chair of the Youth Justice Board in Hazel. N. and Liddle, M. (2012). *Resettlement in England and Wales: key policy and practice messages from research*. London: YJB.

6.72 We will develop a two-tiered approach which is supported nationally through:

### **Having a common and shared understanding of resettlement and reintegration**

6.73 Within the criminal justice field, resettlement has been mostly associated with the custodial environment and the transition an individual makes 'through the gates'. The change in the profile of the youth justice population alongside a changing practice landscape has led us to consider the wider meaning of resettlement; putting an equal emphasis on supporting those leaving community sentences. Young people serving community sentences often share characteristics and present with similar complex needs and challenging behaviours to those in custody. Learning from the pilot and evaluation of resettlement support panels<sup>33</sup> also suggests providing voluntary support packages at the pre-sentence stage can increase magistrates' confidence in community sentencing options. Providing resettlement and reintegration support to these young people should be provided to prevent young people from ever entering custody.

6.74 To develop a shared understanding of resettlement and reintegration across Wales we will ensure relevant Welsh policies and joint guidance are in line with the following guiding principles:

- Young people eligible for resettlement and reintegration support are those placed on remand, sentenced to custody or serving community sentences and are at risk of custody if their offending behaviour continues;
- Resettlement and reintegration should be considered at the earliest opportunity and be at the heart of the care and sentence planning process;
- A distinction should be drawn between the requirements of a statutory sentence and the voluntary support provided to resettle and reintegrate young people back into the community and mainstream services;
- Young people should be involved in resettlement and reintegration planning, which should be 'person-centred', holistic and tailored to individual needs; it should be a flexible process which adapts to changing needs;
- The coordination of resettlement support and reintegration should be undertaken by the most suitable lead agency (not always youth justice services) with the length of support being determined between the agency and young person and, where possible, parents and carers.

### **Implement changes to public service delivery structures**

6.75 The young people remaining in the system are more likely to be those with complex needs and entrenched patterns of offending. This means individual local areas now have challenges of scale in delivering and commissioning services for relatively fewer young people who require greater attention. The vision for public service delivery in meeting the resettlement and reintegration needs of young people is to develop a tiered approach. This will enable resettlement and reintegration to be understood and addressed at a local,

<sup>33</sup> Phillips, L., Smith, R., Martin, K., Mehta, P. and Durbin, B. (2012) Evaluation of the YJB Pilot Resettlement Support Panel Scheme. Cardiff: Welsh Government Social Research.

regional and national level. This will involve having open and clear lines of accountability and information sharing between each level, which will include partnerships and mechanisms for highlighting and resolving individual, social, environmental and systemic issues.

### **Nationally, we will work together to resolve systemic issues which impact on the provision and continuity of services**

6.76 We will develop new policies and guidance. We will establish a reporting mechanism for those responsible for commissioning and delivering services to report issues which cannot be resolved within existing frameworks and arrangements, and which require our intervention. Furthermore, we will commission the development of national resettlement standards which can be adapted to suit regional and local needs. This will ensure greater parity and access to services.

### **Regionally, we will provide financial and practical support to Reintegration and Resettlement Partnerships**

6.77 Reintegration and Resettlement Partnerships will be established as part of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act and will address the common problems encountered when resettlement planning, undertake case reviews and share good practice. Our proposal to support these regional partnerships is based on the learning from the evaluations of resettlement consortia across England, resettlement support panels in Wales and the regional projects we have established in South and North Wales.

6.78 Young people should be able to access the same services no matter where they live in Wales. Therefore we expect those responsible for commissioning and delivering services to work together to develop a coordinated approach which is able to tailor services to individual needs.

### **Locally we will continue to support multi-agency holistic arrangements which plan and coordinate resettlement and reintegration support for young people**

6.79 Each young person will have a plan for reintegration and resettlement in place. These arrangements will have a clear pathway which links services seamlessly and provides the best possible opportunity for young people to resettle and progress to a life free from crime. Young people are more likely to engage in support when it is not viewed as an extension to a statutory sentence. We expect young people to be supported in addition to their case manager, in either a custodial or community setting. This should happen from the start of their sentence (even as early as the pre-sentence report stage) and last throughout the duration of their sentence and beyond, until the young person can act independently. The Individual Resettlement and Reintegration Plan will be an exit from sentence strategy. This will be put in place and include input from partner agencies and providers who must work in partnership to ensure continuity of services and support to fulfil this expectation.

## 7. Delivery Mechanisms

### **Delivery Mechanism 1: Supporting the sector to develop effective practice**

#### **Background**

7.1 The YJB defines effective practice as that which 'produces the intended results'<sup>34</sup>. Any method, practice or programme supported through good design and evidence showing reduction in offending and improved outcomes for young people would be deemed effective.

7.2 We recognise the development and promotion of effective practice needs to be supported by input from across policy, academia and practice with these three areas working much more closely together. Effective youth justice practice in Wales should:

- Be based on sound theory, have a clear design and/or be led by evidence from evaluation;
- Have practical application for those who intend to use it; and
- Successfully implement both Welsh and UK Government policy.

#### **How will we support delivery?**

7.3 As well as being one of the YJB's statutory responsibilities, the promotion of effective practice should underpin the full extent of our responsibilities and the work we do in partnership.

7.4 The strong culture of partnership working at a national level in Wales led us to establish a Practice Development Panel; a collaboration between those involved in policy, research and practice. The Panel has many functions but primarily is in place to provide support for youth justice services to develop and evaluate their practice and, when possible, make this practice more widely available. The input from the Welsh Universities has been an invaluable component; mainly because youth justice services are increasingly keen to monitor and evaluate what they do. This will be a key area for support and development under this strategy.

#### **Responding to the needs of the youth justice sector**

7.5 We recognise we have a role to play in ensuring youth justice services have the most up to date knowledge and evidence there is. However, we are also aware there are gaps in knowledge and evidence which make it difficult for youth justice services to respond appropriately to offending behaviour and young people with varied and often complex needs.

7.6 There is a sufficient pool of existing knowledge, research and materials to guide practitioners, this will be summarised and made available for use by youth justice services. Where there is insufficient evidence, we will undertake further work to encourage its development. This might include assisting services to build evidence which supports practice effectiveness.

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<sup>34</sup> Chapman and Hough 1998

## Identifying and disseminating effective practice

7.7 We recognise it can be a challenge for busy services to put aside time to document, evaluate and submit their innovative work for consideration by the wider youth justice community. In order to help services carve out this time, we will undertake direct work with youth justice services to identify and facilitate the development of emerging practice.

7.8 There youth justice services are keen to evaluate and develop their emerging practice, we will work with them to document it, conduct any relevant literature searches and help them consider plans for further evaluation; including liaison with the Welsh Universities who can also provide support.

7.9 Making information about effective practice easily available to youth justice managers and practitioners in a useful and practical format is the ultimate objective of our work. The way in which we will do this will differ, depending upon the nature of each particular piece of practice, and whether or not practice is required by legislation, guidance or national standards. A key component of all the dissemination routes we have at our disposal will be collaborative working with our effective practice partners.

## Workforce development

7.10 The most valuable resources for the delivery of effective youth justice are the practitioners themselves. The youth justice workforce comprises staff and volunteers in the statutory and voluntary sector, working across community services and secure establishments. These include:

- Core staff who undertake statutory functions and interventions with children, young people and their families;
- Specialist programme staff who assess and intervene on particular criminogenic and welfare needs of individual young people; and
- Volunteers who support interventions across the full range of community settings and secure establishments.

7.11 We want a comprehensive and collaborative approach to the induction and continuing professional development of staff who work with children and young people in the youth justice system across community and secure settings. Work is underway to define the National Learning and Skills Framework for youth justice across England and Wales and to ensure it is fully embedded in the sector by the end of 2015. This will include:

- High quality continual professional development resources for youth justice services, aimed at addressing identified gaps in skills and knowledge;
- The development and promotion of 'Foundation Skills for Youth Justice' to all sectors of the workforce, augmented with sector specific skills and competencies advice; and
- An affordable and accessible professional qualification (The Effective Practice Certificate) for professionals in youth justice.

7.12 In Wales we will supplement this by providing targeted training for practitioners. This will align with our work to develop new approaches to the case management of young people with complex needs and prolific offending and other priorities identified by our work with the Practice Development Panel.

## **Delivery Mechanism 2: Overseeing and supporting the youth justice sector**

### **Background**

7.13 YJB Cymru<sup>35</sup> works with the Welsh Government and youth justice services in Wales to monitor performance and offer improvement support where required. The overarching ethos behind this work is one of minimal central intervention and maximum local determination; supported by YJB-developed tools and resources to facilitate collaborative improvement.

### **How will we support delivery?**

7.14 The oversight of performance in community and custodial youth justice services is a collaborative process, where individual services or regional groupings feel they are able to share concerns and risks with the YJB in order to seek improvement. Each quarter YJB Cymru collects and analyses information gathered from data relating to the three England and Wales outcome indicators:

- First time entrants to the youth justice system
- Proven reoffending
- Use of custody

7.15 In cooperation with the Welsh Government, YJB Cymru also does this with information on the following devolved outcome indicators of access for those in the youth justice system to:

- Education, training and employment
- Suitable accommodation
- Assessment and treatment for substance misuse needs

7.16 YJB Cymru has a range of tried and tested tools to support service improvement across community and custodial youth justice services. These include practice and performance toolkits to analyse issues and identify areas for analysis and improvement, as well as provision for the use of an evidence-based practice assessment inventory in collaboration with our academic partners.

7.17 However, where poor performance persists, and youth justice services do not take the necessary steps to improve, we will use a process of intervention that can ultimately lead to escalation to Welsh and UK Government Ministers. We will work to avoid this through active support and engagement with youth justice services and their management boards.

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<sup>35</sup> YJB Cymru is the YJB's division within Wales.

### **How will we oversee the delivery of the strategy?**

7.18 A Delivery Plan will be developed and overseen by the Welsh Government/YJB Youth Justice Strategy Implementation Board. The Implementation Board's membership comprises of representatives from the YJB and across all relevant departments in Welsh Government, including, community safety, health, social services, education, local government and housing. In addition we will work with our national partners through the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel to facilitate open and transparent scrutiny of progress.