



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Youth Justice Strategy 2014

A young person's summary



Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

Introduction

The Welsh Government and the Youth Justice Board want to make sure children and young people have the best possible chance to lead lives which are full of opportunities.

To do this we know some young people need help and support to stop them getting involved in crime or re-offending.

The Youth Justice Board watches over all the work the youth justice system does across England and Wales.

The youth justice system in Wales is made up of lots of different services working together.

These include:

- services which are looked after by the Welsh Government like health, housing, education and social services, and
- services the UK Government are responsible for like Police and courts.

Having a criminal record can mean young people miss out on opportunities and it makes life harder, so we want to do everything we can do to stop this happening in the first place.

This strategy sets out our vision to improve services for children and young people and gives us a framework for working better together.

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



Young Person's comment

Introduction

Our Vision.

We want:

- Wales to be a country where we all work together to help stop children and young people getting involved in crime and entering the youth justice system,
- to make sure those who do offend get help and support from everyone they need; like social workers, teachers, employment and training services, health services and housing,
- children and young people to be treated fairly and have the help they need. We don't want them to miss out on services because of what they've done, and
- Wales to be a country where young people are able to be a positive part of their communities, crime is reduced and there are fewer victims of crime.

The UNCRC.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is at the heart of all the work we do. This means we focus on children and young people's rights and needs and not just on their behaviour.

Why do we need this new strategy?

There's been a lot of really positive work happening in Wales which has meant less young people are getting involved in crime but the number of them re-offending is going up. This needs to stop!

These young people need more support and help from services to stop re-offending because:

- 81% have no qualifications,
- 57% have been in touch with mental health services,
- 38% have special educational needs, and
- 79% have been in touch with Social Services.

This strategy has **5 priority areas** we want to focus on.

1 A well-designed partnership approach

This means we all understand our part in working together across all services to help children and young people.

Outcomes - what we want to see:

We want children and young people to get all the support they need to stop getting involved in crime, as well as any treatment and support they need from all the available services.

We want all services to work together, putting children and young people at the centre so they support all their needs across all areas of their lives.

Why?

We want all children and young people to have all the support they need, when they need it, no matter where they live in Wales.

It is really important no young person misses out on the services and support they need.

How will we do this?

There are many different ways services can work better together. These include:

- offering more support to young people through Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) made up of people from Health, Social Services, Education, Police and Probation workers,
- making sure each of the people who manage youth offending teams have new guidelines on how to work together better with other services,
- working together across all Welsh Government Departments,
- working closer with Education, Training and Employment services so they notice earlier children and young people who need more support,
- making sure the Health services which support children and young people with mental health problems are part of YOT teams. This will mean children and young people get all the help and support they need quicker,
- working with services such as Education, Counsellors, Youth Workers and others to stop young people getting involved in drugs, alcohol and other substance misuse,
- working with Housing services to make sure young people are not homeless and able to get the support they need,
- making sure we work with Social Services so we have support plans for children and young people. This includes making sure they have somewhere to live if they have left custody or someone to care for them if they need it, and
- continuing to run projects such as Education, Training, Sports, and Arts projects which help stop children and young people getting into crime. These projects are run with money from the Youth Crime Prevention Fund.

2 Early intervention, prevention and diversion

This means we step in early to help stop young people getting involved in crime or re-offending and help them choose a different path so they have the best opportunities in life.



“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 reoffend. I really don’t want a criminal record”.

Young Person’s comment

Outcomes - what we want to see:

We want children and young people to not be brought into the youth justice system unless they really need to be. Instead they should be placed on a pathway where all services can support them.

We want offending behaviour to be challenged and responded to in the right way. Young people should be given the chance to put things right.

Why?

We believe stopping young people going into the youth justice system gives them better opportunities in life. Having a criminal record can make life much harder so this is really important.

How will we do this?

We want to make sure young people in the youth justice system get supported at 3 different levels or tiers.

Tier 1 support, steps in to support a family, early in a child’s life. We have projects like Families First to support families facing poverty, unemployment and help them through other difficult situations. We also offer free, easy to find information and advice.

Tier 2 support, comes from YOTs when a young person is in the youth justice system. At this level, we want to make improvements on how we share information and communicate with other departments at other tiers (or level 1 and 3).

Tier 3 support, looks at other responses to crime than the Police charging young people. We have projects run by the police and YOTs called Bureau and Triage. These have helped young people make different choices.

These projects are not run in every part of Wales and we want to see change so all young people have the support they need.

3 Reducing re-offending

This means we support children and young people in the youth justice system so they stop re-offending.

Outcomes - what we want to see:

We want people to understand putting children and young people into the criminal justice system can be a negative thing. It can make them more vulnerable and they need to be kept safe from harm.

We want everyone working in the youth justice system to have the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills they need to help support children and young people to stop offending and live crime-free lives.

Why?

We know many of the young people in the youth justice system have more than one issue they need help with. This can mean they are more likely to re-offend. Understanding their needs is a big step in stopping this.

How will we do this?

We will focus on things like:

- helping YOTs to know more about the young person's needs so everyone knows how sentences are managed and the part that all services play in giving support,
- supporting YOTs so they can work in different ways to get better results, and
- supporting young people by making it easier for them to move from child services to adult services when they need it so they don't have gaps in the support they need.



"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 reoffend and get back the support of my family, it's all I want".

Young Person's comment

4 Effective use of custody for young people

This means young people only go into custody if there's no other way forward.



Outcomes - what we want to see:

We want putting children and young people in custody to only happen if it has to. It's something that should only happen if the crime is too serious for a community sentence.

Why?

We want Wales to be a 'zero custody country' but we know there are times when the crime is so serious removing the young person from their community is the best thing for the victim, the community and themselves.

Custody should be a place for them think about what they have done and want to make a positive change. It should also be a place where they get all the support they need to have a crime-free life. This includes making sure they get help with:

- any physical or mental health problems,
- any learning needs or lack of qualifications, or
- social care needs like family problems or lack of housing.

"It would be a good idea to have more support provided to young people who offend and go in to custody and to stop them re offending."

Young Person's comment

How will we do this?

We want to focus on:

- making sure young people are sent to the best place to meet their needs,
- making sure they are as close to home as possible,
- making sure young people from Wales are placed in Wales if possible,
- making sure young people from Wales who are in secure places in England get all the help they need,
- making sure we have the best custody places available in Wales, even though there are fewer young people going into custody, and
- making sure young people get the support they need by YOTs working together with the custody services and involving them in plans, sharing information, and being part of meetings.

5 Resettlement and reintegration at the end of a sentence

This means children and young people in the youth justice system will get all the help and support they need to settle back into a community and a crime-free life.

Outcomes - what we want to see:

We want children and young people to have all the support they need when leaving the youth justice system so they can have a crime-free life, full of opportunities.

Why?

When young people leave custody they often return to the same situation they were in when they first offended and they end up re-offending. It's really important young people get support after they finish a custodial sentence, or leave the youth justice system.

We think these support services should be given to young people who have been in custody and also to those who've been on community sentences.

This would mean more young people get the support they need.

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



Young Person's comment

How will we do this?

We want to focus on:

- making sure all Welsh legislation, policies and guidance ensure support is given to young people who have been on community sentences as well as those who've been in custody,
- making sure nationally, all new policies and guidelines deal with the problems services face in supporting young people,
- making sure regionally, there is money and practical support for services working with these young people, and
- supporting local services so each young person has a plan in place that links into the help they need to settle back into community life.

The way forward

We have a plan which sets out steps for how this strategy is to be delivered.

We want this strategy to really make a difference in the results we see in children and young people's lives so we will be keeping a check on how it is working.

We will do this by collecting information on things like:

- how many new young people are entering the youth justice system,
- how many are going into custody, and
- how many re-offenders we have.

This will mean if we find this strategy is not working the way we want it to we can step in quickly and make any changes we need.

Thank you for reading this.

If you'd like to know more or have any comments please go to:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/people-and-communities/safety/youthjustice/?lang=en>

or e-mail us at:

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