

Have you got what it takes?

Working with the youth justice system



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Important facts

The youth justice system in England and Wales is a network of organisations working together under a legal framework and overseen by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales. However, youth justice services in the community are delivered locally.

Since the peak in youth offending in 2006/2007:

- proven youth offending is down 77%, the number of cautioning and sentencing occasions has decreased from 227,586 in 2006/07 to 52,990 in 2014/15;
- first-time entrants to the youth justice system are down 81%, from 110,784 to 20,544 over the same time period; and
- the average number of young people in custody fell by 64%, from 2,915 to 1,048.

The National Audit Office estimates that, in 2009, offending by young people cost the UK economy between £8.5 and £11 billion a year. The proportion of young offenders who go on to reoffend within a year is 38%, and for those leaving custody it currently stands at 67% – the highest in the criminal justice system.

Background

Youth offending teams

Youth offending teams (YOTs) are a partnership of organisations (including the police, health, probation and the local authority) responsible for co-ordinating the provision of youth justice services in their local authority area. It is the duty of every local authority, acting with partner agencies, to set up one or more teams. Youth justice services include but are not limited to:

- the delivery of community sentences;
- supervising young people on licence following their release from custody;
- the assessment of young persons and the provision for them of rehabilitation programmes; and
- providing reports or other information required by courts in criminal proceedings against children and young people.

As with all bodies carrying out functions in relation to the youth justice system, YOTs must have regard to the statutory aim of the system to prevent offending by children and young persons.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have a duty to make arrangements with other criminal justice organisations, including YOTs, for the exercise of their functions so as to provide an efficient and effective criminal justice system for the police area (Section 10 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011).

The Ministry of Justice carried out a stocktake of YOTs at the beginning of 2015, to understand how the model has evolved since YOTs were set up. The report can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stocktake-of-youth-offending-teams>

Youth Justice Board

The Youth Justice Board works closely with YOTs and oversees and supports the performance of the youth justice system. It is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Ministry of Justice is the YJB's sponsor department.

The YJB provides national co-ordination, guidance and monitoring of locally managed YOT partnerships. It advises Ministers on the operation of the youth justice system and identifies and promotes effective practice. It is also responsible for commissioning (contracting) secure accommodation for young people who have been sentenced or remanded by the courts.

The YJB has worked with YOTs to develop a wide range of evidence-based youth crime-prevention programmes, alongside national and local partners such as the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), local authorities and charities.

The YJB undertook a series of visits to complement the MoJ's stocktake. The report can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445271/Board_Visits_Final_Report.pdf

Review of the youth justice system

MoJ has commissioned a review of the youth justice system to examine the approach to tackling youth offending and whether the current system, which was created in 2000, remains able to meet the challenges we face in 2015 and beyond.

The review will report in summer 2016.

More information

How are YOTs set up locally and how is their performance monitored?

YOTs usually cover a single local-authority area but some YOTs cover two or more. Local YOT management boards scrutinise performance against three national indicators (first time entrants to the system, the number of young people in custody and reoffending rates) and they may also measure performance against other local indicators. The YJB monitors YOTs against the three indicators, and encourages sector-led improvement. HMI Probation provides formal inspections of YOTs and the YJB supports post-inspection improvement.

How are YOTs funded and who decides what they spend it on?

YOT funding comes from a range of different sources, including from the local authority, police, and centrally from the YJB. PCCs may also provide additional funding to YOTs from their prevention funds. Each YOT management board decides on local priorities and what they spend on them which is outlined in annual youth justice plans produced by the local authority. They can use funding to commission services to reduce and prevent youth crime and antisocial behaviour.

What do YOTs do about antisocial behaviour?

Some YOTs work alongside local authorities and police to prevent antisocial behaviour by young people. This could involve monitoring civil orders and delivering and commissioning targeted youth-crime prevention programmes. Many YOTs lead on providing or commissioning voluntary parenting interventions. These interventions support parents to recognise that family factors are strongly associated with managing a young person's risk of offending. In the hardest-to-reach families, where parents will not agree to intervention voluntarily, YOTs will apply to a court for parenting orders.

How are young people placed in secure accommodation?

When a young person is sentenced or remanded to custody by the courts, the YJB decides where they will be placed. Placement decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account individual circumstances and needs.

The YJB commissions secure places for children and young people in a distinct youth justice estate which is separate from the adult prison system. The YJB holds contracts and service-level agreements for providing secure places in young offender institutions (YOIs), secure training centres (STCs) and secure children's homes (SCHs) across England and Wales.

What do YOTs do about serious youth violence and gangs?

YOTs work closely with the police and other local agencies (including Community Safety Partnerships) to reduce serious youth violence, group and gang offending. In many areas this includes delivering the Knife Crime Prevention Programme (KCPP) and gang specific interventions. YOTs play a role in ensuring appropriate information on gang affiliation or association is shared with CJS partners including the police, National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies. YOTs also play a role in the delivery of Counter Terrorism Prevent responsibilities and those of Child Sexual Exploitation where young people who offend are often at risk of or have been victims themselves of wider exploitation.

More information

Youth Justice Board

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/youth-justice-board-for-england-and-wales>

Youth Justice statistics for England and Wales (published by the YJB, there is an annual publication and a monthly custody report)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics>

The Role of the YOT Police Officer – joint guidance from the YJB, NPCC and College of Policing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-offending-teams-the-role-of-the-police-officer>

HMI Probation

www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmi-probation/

Modern YOT Partnerships

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319291/youth-offending-partnerships-guidance.pdf

