



North Yorkshire Youth Crime Prevention Strategy 2009 - 2011

**A Strategy for Preventing Offending & Supporting Young
People as part of Integrated Services**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Historically, the Youth Criminal Justice System has been concerned primarily with children who have offended. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, however, requires everyone working within that system to have regard to the principal aim of preventing offending (including re-offending). In the launch of the new 'Children's Plan' in December 2007 The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families announced "Our job is to intervene early to prevent children engaging in risky behaviours like drug taking or binge drinking, disengaging from education or getting into crime." Whilst Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) have often been expected to take a lead role in delivering, or coordinating, services for a wide range of children who have not offended or who are below the age of criminal responsibility, their core work and resourcing remains focussed on young people who have offended and they are not able to achieve this goal alone. The aim of preventing offending provides a focus for multi-agency integrated working.
- 1.2 It is far from easy to predict future offending as 'Risk Factors' associated with offending behaviour are also typically characteristic of many vulnerable children. An exclusive concern with potential criminality may deflect attention from the broader range of problems that children from disadvantaged backgrounds frequently face. As a result, North Yorkshire Children's Trust believes that preventive services, broadly conceived, are the shared responsibility of all Children and Young People's Services. Additionally the prevention of young people from becoming offenders is the shared responsibility of all agencies that are involved with young people, including those that are responsible for the increasing array of measures to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB), for example the Police and social housing providers.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this strategy the following definitions have been agreed:

Child/Young Person – a person under the age of 18

Parent/Carer – a person who is caring for a child or young person and has responsibility for their welfare and development.

First Time Entrant – those young people receiving their first substantive outcome within the criminal justice system.

Substantive Outcome – a Reprimand, a Final Warning, a Conditional Caution or a court disposal.

3. Policy Context

3.1 Commitment to Children and Young People: The Obligations of Police Authorities (June 2007)

The document provides a valuable resource for police authorities as they consider their obligations to safeguard, protect and promote the well-being of children and young people as defined by the Children Act 2004. www.apa.police.uk

3.2 Targeted Youth Support: A guide (Mar 2007)

Youth support is essential for vulnerable teenagers who are likely to need help and opportunities from a range of different agencies and who have the most to gain from a timely coordinated and effective response. Getting this right gives vulnerable young people the chance to enjoy their teenage years, build positive futures and avoid a range of potential serious problems. This guide offers a framework to inform the design and implementation of targeted youth support in each local area. www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

3.3 Aiming Higher for young People: A ten year strategy for positive activities (July 2007)

In the context of ongoing education and youth service reforms this document sets out a strategy to transform leisure-time opportunities, activities and support services for young people. www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

3.4 Youth Alcohol Action Plan (June 2008)

The government made a commitment in the children's plan, published in December 2007, to look at what more might be done to reduce excessive drinking by children and young people under the age of 18. This document sets out the Government's conclusions and the actions that should be taken by organisations to address the problems associated with young people's alcohol use. www.dcsf.gov.uk

3.5 Youth Crime Action Plan. (July 2008)

The Youth Crime Action Plan is a cross government analysis of what further needs to be done to tackle youth crime. It sets out approaches for enforcement and punishment and early prevention and makes reference to the objectives set out in the Drug Strategy and Youth Alcohol Action Plan. The Youth Crime Action Plan: One Year On review sets out progress so far, and identifies further objectives. www.dcsf.gov.uk

3.6 Respect Action Plan (January 2006)

The Government's initiative to "*rebuild the bonds of community*". The agenda focuses on 6 strands of work: supporting families, a new approach to the most challenging families, improving behaviour and attendance in schools, activities for children & young people, strengthening communities and effective enforcement and community justice. The Respect Action Plan aims to tackle anti-social behaviour and explains the need for intervening early where problems occur and broadening efforts to address other areas of poor behaviour. www.homeoffice.gov.uk

4. Principles

4.1 The key principles underpinning this strategy are:

- i. That the majority of children and young people in North Yorkshire do not become seriously involved with offending or anti-social behaviour.
- ii. That children and young people are often the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators.
- iii. Services will be provided at a level suitable for the needs of children, young people and their families. Wherever possible, support will be provided by universal and early targeted services and in non-stigmatising settings.
- iv. Activity should be planned and delivered collaboratively and coordinated effectively to ensure provision is accessible and avoids unnecessary duplication.
- v. Services will be targeted on the basis of need, within the resource capacity, and at an appropriate time.
- vi. Services provided will be evidence-based and outcomes evaluated to ensure that effective and appropriate support is provided.
- vii. It is acknowledged that some children and families are more vulnerable and at risk than others and will require specific services to support them. The aim is to identify these families early and engage with them.
- viii. Where partner agencies work closely together there should be effective information sharing.

- ix. The workforce, including volunteers will be appropriately trained and supported to deliver effective support to children and their parents and carers.
- x. There will be appropriate systems in place to ensure children, young people and vulnerable families are safeguarded.
- xi. Discrimination and inequalities will be challenged and all practitioners will promote inclusion and fairness.
- xii. The active participation of children and young people and their families will be promoted.

5. Aims

- To prevent first time offending and re-offending by children and young people.
- To provide a system for identifying and supporting children and young people at risk of offending behaviour and their families.
- To increase access to universal and targeted services for those identified in the above group.
- To work in partnership with other agencies to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children and young people and identify alternative and more appropriate strategies to deal with problematic behaviours and/or meet identified needs.
- To influence public perception of young people and minimise the negative images and public anxiety about young people's involvement in crime.

6. Targets

- To reduce the number of First Time Entrants to 1500 per 100,000 of the 10-17 year old population by 2011 (National Indicator 111).
- To reduce the rate of proven re-offending by young people to 106 offences per 100 young people in the cohort by 2011 (National Indicator 19).
- To increase public confidence that parents are taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children (National Indicator 22, variable targets by District).
- To reduce the community's perception of anti-social behaviour from 11.2% to 9.2% by 2010/11 (based on Place Survey) (National Indicator 17).
- To increase the proportion of young offenders engaged in suitable full-time education, employment or training to 64% by 2011 (National Indicator 45).

7. Prevention of First Time Entrants.

7.1 Universal intervention.

Most children and young people will never become involved in offending or anti-social behaviour, and many more can be prevented from ever doing so through the provision of good quality universal services. Schools, youth services, sports clubs etc. play an important role in developing children and young people's sense of self worth and their role as a member of the community. Through engagement in schools and positive activities, young people often develop a sense of right and wrong, fair play and justice. Good quality anti-bullying strategies and citizenship programmes can all have an important impact on preventing children and young people from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour or offending.

7.2 Avoiding criminalisation.

Where young people do become involved in anti-social behaviour and offending this may be because of difficulties in their life. These may not always be apparent to those dealing with them but often include educational special needs, poor and inconsistent parenting, exposure to domestic violence, substance and alcohol misuse and peer pressure. Before involving the police and seeking a formal outcome to a situation, professionals working with children and young people should consider what a responsible parent or carer would do with their own child in similar circumstances. There are less formal approaches which can often result in better outcomes for both the victim and the young person, particularly restorative approaches that encourage the child or young person to consider the consequences of their actions on the victim, their families and the wider community.

Restorative Justice

Under current guidelines and targets, the Police are able to exercise very little discretion in dealing with reports of youth offending due to the pressure to bring offences to justice. Once an incident has been reported to the police as a criminal matter they have to investigate and where the perpetrator is found it is likely that the young person involved will be given a formal criminal outcome.

This can have longer lasting consequences. For example, a playground fight with a friend could result in a substantive outcome for common assault. The friends may make up some time shortly afterwards but as the assault was against another "child", this could potentially make it very difficult for the young person to obtain certain jobs e.g. working with children or vulnerable adults, for many years to come.

North Yorkshire Police have adopted a Restorative Justice Approach to dealing with minor offences by young people through the introduction of an innovative and effective "Youth Restorative Diversion" (YRD) system. Under this system the young person and the victim are positively consulted to achieve an agreed, fair resolution, and referrals may also be made to other support programmes where the young person can receive targeted interventions.

Looked After Children and Young People.

Foster carers, residential care staff and other professionals working with Looked After Children follow the guidance in the North Yorkshire's Children's Social Care policy for involving the Police in managing incidents. A clear distinction is required when calling the police to a child's home environment. Police need to be clear whether they are being called to provide assistance in the safeguarding and welfare of a child or young person as defined in Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, or whether the request is made to report a criminal act and thus the recording of a crime.

Community Prevention & Diversion Projects

A wide range of projects at County and District level offer positive support to young people and communities in reducing the incidence of youth crime. For example the Police-led Cop-A-Lot programme provides positive activities during school holidays, and partnership funding has enabled nationally-recognised "Prison Me No Way" workshops to be delivered in many local schools. North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service provide an innovative 5 day "LIFE Course", an exciting and motivational team-building programme of fire safety and arson prevention for at-risk young people. District-level community safety partnerships provide resources and leadership for positive diversion, for example through construction of skate park facilities.

7.3 Targeted Intervention

There are some children and young people who from time to time require more support than is available through even good quality universal services. These vulnerable children and young people will have additional needs that require additional services. To ensure young people get the support they need, the green paper Youth Matters set out a vision that, by April 2008, every young person at risk of not achieving the five Every Child Matters outcomes should be able to access the Targeted Youth Support.

North Yorkshire Targeted Youth Support (TYS).

The identification of young people (aged 11-19 and up to 25 with LDD) who might benefit from YYS is linked to the North Yorkshire levels of Vulnerability. Where young people have a number of factors causing concern at level 2 (early intervention) a referral can be made to YYS. If appropriate and the young person has consented they will be allocated a YYS practitioner who will assess their needs, agree a personal development plan, negotiate with other services regarding their contribution and review the progress made. The intention is to provide early identification and intervention to prevent the young person's problems from escalating.

Targeted Prevention

Young people (aged 10 – 18) at risk of offending or other poor outcomes are identified through the YJS and other services for local targeted initiatives. Examples include a shoptheft prevention programme in Scarborough, and a team entry for the national Boxcar Championship in Harrogate. Consultation and information-sharing with Anti-Social Behaviour Teams ensures wide access to many of these programmes.

8. Preventing Re-offending

8.1 The provision of high quality universal and targeted services can prevent the majority of children and young people, including those at increased risk, from becoming involved in offending. Of these young people, many receive a pre-court disposal of either a Reprimand or a Final Warning. National statistics show that less than 30% of young people receiving a pre-court disposal re-offend within 12 months (Figures for 2004 reported in Home Office Statistical Bulletin June 2006). The statistics for North Yorkshire are even more positive with only 27% of young people receiving a pre-court disposal re-offending within 12 months (Figures for 2008 cohort reported by North Yorkshire YJS). The receiving of a pre-court disposal should not be seen as an indicator of a significant risk that the young person will re-offend. It can, however, be one indicator that a young person is vulnerable and requires additional targeted support.

Referral Panel Meetings & Contracts

The first stage of court sentencing for a young person is the Referral Order. This requires the young person and their parent(s) to meet with a trained panel of community representatives and discuss their behavioural problems. Victims are supported to participate in the meetings, either directly or by letter. A turnaround contract is then agreed, specifying the positive changes the young person will undertake and the help they will receive.

Community Reparation

North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service provides a wide range of reparation projects where young people can make amends for harm which they have caused. These activities include work for charities in every sector, creating garden and play areas, decorating and catering, and preparing materials for education and community projects.

Intensive Project Activity

Special projects are constructed to engage and motivate the most disaffected young people, often targeting serious & prolific offenders managed by the YJS Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme. This has included substantial music and video projects, such as the 2007 Connecting On The Out Project.

PPO Deter

There are a small number of young people who are serious or persistent offenders and who need to receive consistent and targeted interventions from a number of services to minimise the risk of their re-offending. Under the national Prolific & Priority Offenders (PPO) strategy, these young people are identified for proactive multi-agency management through the PPO Deter Panels.

Exit planning from the YJS

Effective assessment of those young people exiting from YJS provision will help to identify those young people who still have a number of vulnerabilities that might make them more likely to re-offend. These young people will benefit from referral to TYS. Exit planning will also provide a route for young people back into universal services and put in place support mechanisms to assist their transition.

9. Monitoring of the strategy

- 9.1 The implementation of the Youth Crime Reduction Strategy is a priority within the Making a Positive Contribution outcome of the North Yorkshire Children and Young People's Plan.
- 9.2 Improved outcomes for young people are assessed through the performance management framework of the Children and Young People's Plan and the monitoring arrangements of the Local Area Agreement targets.
- 9.3 The YJS reports the number of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time to the Youth Justice Board on a quarterly basis and reports on the recidivism rates of offending for a tracked cohort of young people to the Youth Justice Board on an annual basis.

10. Priorities for Improvement

- 10.1 To achieve the aims of this strategy there are a number of areas that require further development as a priority:
- Co-ordination of strategies and local planning mechanisms which are focused on the same target groups of vulnerable young people.
 - Promotion of positive images of young people.
 - Activity with communities to increase their involvement with young people to reduce feelings of insecurity and negative perceptions.
 - Availability of parent/carer support programmes.
 - Extension of the Restorative Justice Programme and evaluation of its impact on targets.
 - Implementation of the Targeted Activities Programme and evidencing that it is engaging vulnerable young people
 - Effective exit planning for all young people ending orders with the YJS.

11. Implementation

The strategy is intended to inform local action plans either by single services or multi-agency groups which will evidence activity that is contributing to the attainment of the targets outlined in section 6.