Understanding and Improving Reoffending Performance

A summary of learning from the YJBs Reoffending Programme with implications for practice

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of the YOT partnerships who have invested time, commitment and energy into the Reducing Reoffending Programme over the past four years and for sharing your learning with the YJB. Thanks also to those YOTs who feature as case studies in this guide – their willingness to share the knowledge and expertise they have developed has been much appreciated.
1. INTRODUCTION

Reducing Reoffending matters for the public, for victims and if we are to support children and youth people in living safe and crime free lives.

The YJB is now coming to the end of a four year Reducing Reoffending Programme which has worked with YOT’s who needed to improve reoffending performance and/or had a large throughput of young people. This ‘one stop’ guide consolidates the learning from this work so that stakeholders and practitioners can access it easily and use it to drive improvements. It deliberately recaps on some of the material in the YJB’s previously published work\(^1\) and integrates this with new material to offer a comprehensive picture of reoffending as we currently experience it. It is designed so you can dip into the areas you are most interested in and covers:

- how the work has developed,
- how the cohort is changing,
- a range of insights and examples on reducing reoffending at a local level,
- a consideration of the impact of the work and ways it needs to be taken forwards in the future.

Whilst the Reducing Reoffending Programme is coming to a close, our intention is that the work it has stimulated will continue. A foundation of knowledge and practice has been built that still needs to be nurtured, extended and embedded across the sector. This momentum is too important to lose. We intend to build this into YJB business as usual moving forward, that the toolkit continues to be made available to YOTs, that our Business Areas teams are equipped to support you and that a detailed ‘handbook’ on how to use the tools is published next year. My challenge to the sector is that you, build this approach into your ongoing work so that you remain sighted on the changing needs of your young people and continue to develop approaches that address those and the needs of the public effectively.

Dr Louise Falshaw  
Director of Partnerships & Performance

\(^1\) Reoffending: Developing a local understanding: guidance for YOT Management boards (2014) and Reducing Reoffending: Furthering our understanding (2015)
2. THE REOFFENDING PROGRAMME

2.1 THE AIMS
The Reducing Reoffending Programme was set up with two main aims, both of which contribute to the YJB strategic aim to reduce reoffending by children and young people in the youth justice system. They are:

1. To increase the sector’s knowledge of reoffending and the drivers behind it.
2. To support YOTs to take action to improve reoffending performance.

In practice the aims created an ongoing virtuous circle in which ideas were developed, implemented, learned from, improved and implemented again. The programme has benefited immeasurably from feedback from the sector and the path it has travelled has changed time and time again as a result.

2.2 THE APPROACH
In 2013/14 the YJB initiated a three year Reducing Reoffending Programme. This set out to find a way to help YOTs drill down into the detail of local reoffending cohorts and to develop strategies which address local circumstances. This led to the development of the first Reducing Reoffending Toolkit (see Table 1 page 5).

The Toolkit was designed with input from YOTs and developed in-house using existing YJB data and performance improvement resources. At its heart was a ‘local retrospective analysis tool’ which created a range of graphs showing trends on the local cohort. The analysis was based on data returns from YOT’s Youth Justice Management Information Systems (YJMIS), the most recent of which are around 18-months old2. It also included a Police National Computer (PNC) reoffending tool which provided high level analysis based on official PNC data.

Twenty-six YOTs who needed to improve reoffending performance and/or had a large throughput of young people, were invited to join the programme, which has since been expanded in number each year.

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2 YOTs were required to get from the Police the reoffending data for young people aged 17 years + as this data was often understated in the YJMIS returns as most YOTs on longer track the reoffending of this group. This was a disincentive for some as the logistics of getting this data proved a challenge in some areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Year</th>
<th>Number of YOTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 (2013/14)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 (2014/15)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 (2015/16)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>66</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These YOTs were given full YJB support and in return were required to present the findings of analysis to their Management Boards and develop action plans to address the issues identified. In the process they helped the YJB to test and refine the toolkit. This has gradually evolved to include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools within the toolkit</th>
<th>Contains</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local pre-populated tool</td>
<td>This provides a retrospective view of reoffending performance, taken from local data submitted by YOTs to the YJB. Reoffending data for young people aged 17+ is partially included and needs review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Tracking tool</td>
<td>A blank tool for YOTs to live track the current cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Tracking tool Asset Plus compatible</td>
<td>This is the same as the live tracking tool but allows for the Youth Offender Group Reconviction Scale (YOGRS) and the indicative likelihood of reoffending band to be recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police National Computer (PNC) reoffending tool</td>
<td>National reoffending rates for all young people across England and Wales (extract of the PNC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Disproportionality tool</td>
<td>This provides data on the level of any over representation of any of the five main ethnic groups in the local youth justice system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>A template slide pack for presentation to YOT Management Board Assess and Improve Document (AID) A guide on how to access the local retrospective tool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
As a direct response to feedback from YOTs, the toolkit has also been made available to all Youth Justice Services since 2014/15.

2.3 THE IMPACT OF THE REOFFENDING PROGRAMME

Although it takes time to impact on national data there are a number of ways in which we can tell if the work is having an impact. These include the numbers of YOTs taking action to address local issues with examples of improvement in local data and practice.

The following findings are based on interviews with 29 of the YOTs in the programme:

- Although the pace of action planning has varied 90% of the 66 YOTs in the programme now have plans in place.
- 69% (20) have fully delivered or almost fully delivered the actions they agreed locally to drive change to reduce reoffending.
- 31% (9) of YOTs who responded had progressed half or less than half of their actions. Many but not all of these YOTs joined the programme towards the end of year 2 or year 3 and had therefore had less time to progress than others.
- A review of the quality of plans has shown a high degree of congruence between the issues they address and those identified in the toolkit analysis: the plans are addressing the right things.
- 60% (18) of YOTs who engaged in the exercise attributed improvements to performance, processes or practice to work undertaken as part of the programme.
- ALL YOTs who responded reported a strong appreciation of the usefulness of the Reducing Reoffending toolkit, with a number reporting that it had been useful in highlighting effective practice for their service in addition to changes to systems or processes.

We are grateful to a range of YOTs have been willing to share practical examples of how they are improving local performance and practice:

**Wakefield YOT** identified that their reoffending rate for Looked After Children (LAC) was disproportionate. The YOT management board and strategic partners subsequently made LAC a priority theme and examined what actions their respective organisations could take to address this issue. Amongst other actions, they introduced restorative practice in local children’s home to reduce criminalisation. This has resulted in a reduction in police call outs and prosecutions for minor incidents in children’s homes. The YOT has been able to evidence the success of this restorative justice work to successfully attract external funding from its Police and Crime Commissioner to develop this area further.
**Sunderland YOT** identified that reoffending by young people who were a) not on the YOT caseload and by b) young people committing one further offence required improving. The YOT then took the following actions:

- Introduced case tracking for all young people in the cohort (not just YOT caseload) for one quarter;
- Initiated a partnership approach to young people with no YOT intervention including liaison and diversion (L&D). The L&D model is now embedded across the whole service with all practitioners supporting this early assessment intervention to focus efforts on preventing offending.
- Redesigned the YJBs “live tracker” to include the risks presented by young people in addition to the past offences. This was used in reflective case supervision with case managers to manage risk and intervention planning.
- Sharing daily arrest information with the case / team manager.
- Strengthening exit strategies to prevent one further offence.
- Implemented a “LAC protocol”: Current data identifies that Sunderland’s LAC offending rate has reduced from 15.6% to 8.6% between 2015 and 2016. An evaluation of the impact of the protocol is currently being undertaken.

The YOT experienced a reduction in the frequency rate of reoffending after 3 months from 0.45 in 2014 to 0.39 in 2015. An indirect positive impact has been that the work has enabled internal discussions about reoffending themes within the service.

**Southend YOS** identified that they had high rates of offending post custody and also that many young people were coming into the Youth Justice System having had Triage or other prevention interventions. The YOT took the following actions:

- Used a specialist group of staff to directly target the risks of those leaving custody and engage young people
- Review of support and training for Referral Order panel members to ensure robust interventions

The impact of the YOTs actions contributed to their reoffending binary rate (PNC) falling by 13.3% between Oct 11/ Sept 12 and Oct 13/Sep 14.
**North East Lincolnshire YOT** identified high reoffending rates for younger males in the early stages of their Court order and older males close to the end of their Court orders. The service took the following actions:

- Focussed management oversight on specific groups of young people;
- Undertook an outcome based accountability exercise
- Introduced ‘Signs of Safety’ to produce more focussed interventions which has been compliment by AssetPlus

The YOT are subsequently finding fewer young people are committing offences within the first eight weeks of their disposal and the seriousness of reoffending appears to be reducing.

**Hillingdon YOS** identified that re-offending rates for pre-court young people required attention and that young people were re-offending quickly after conviction.

The YOS undertook a suite of actions to address these and other areas identified, which included;

- Revising post-court process so all young people appearing at the Borough Court and sentenced to a Referral Order, or have their case adjourned for a PSR, go straight to the YOS office with their parents for an RJ screening after the hearing.
- Revising pre-court provision and processes to promote more robust assessment and interventions
- The creation of a Victim Engagement and Restorative Justice Co-ordinator post to refocus on victim work.
- Revising internal notification processes to ensure that case holders are notified of all arrests and can take immediate action with respect to reviews of the intervention plan.
- Developing new focused interventions (offence specific) based on most prevalent offence types which are evaluated for effectiveness
- Testing a ‘Whole Family Working’ model as part of the pre-court disposal process, to support successful exit planning and access to universal and targeted services, as well as early identification of siblings 'at risk' of becoming involved in offending.

The YOT is finding some early indicators of effectiveness in specific areas based on local live tracking data from an 18 month period:

A reduction in the reoffending within one month from 16% of the cohort (18 young people) in May-Sept 2015 to 8% of the cohort (8 young people) in April – Sept 2016. Re-offending by those receiving a pre-court disposal also shows an improvement from 24% of the cohort (8 young people) to 11% of the cohort (3 young people) April-Sept 2016. These should be viewed with some caution as the post outcome monitoring period is less than six months.
Brighton and Hove YOS identified that their reoffending performance required improvement, peaking at 51% (2013/14 data) in mid-2015. In 2013 the YOS used the toolkit to drill down into their cohort and found that amongst other things their assessment and oversight of community cases needed improvement, 10-13 year olds had a particularly high reoffending rate and further support was required for the pre-court and no intervention cohort. Supported by the Management board, the YOS undertook a suite of both strategic and operational service wide improvement to address the issues identified, which included implementing:

- YOS restructure including utilisation of Operations manager and workforce development;
- YOS HMIP Short Quality Screening and Youth Justice action plan; and
- YJB re-offending project analysis and re-offending plan

These service wide improvements have contributed to an impressive 12% reduction in the YOS overall reoffending rate which currently is 39%.

Hull YJS identified that the reoffending of females was higher than the national average. The YOT developed programmes for working with females and the latest reported local data has highlighted that the proportion of females reoffending has reduced from 45% (Sept 14) to 34% (June 15), though the latest data shows that the rate has increased (which is a result of those who do reoffend committing a higher number of offences).

The YOT also wanted to be best placed to respond to the smaller, more difficult cohort it now has and developed a reoffending plan to respond to this, which included:

- Developing programmes and interventions.
- Training YOT staff in Systemic Practice.
- Providing certificates for completion of orders.
- Introducing monthly meetings chaired by YOT Manager to review live cases.

More young people being placed on intensive or enhanced intervention rather than standard

Local YOT data demonstrates that the overall reoffending rate has dropped by 5.4% since the introduction of their reoffending plan.
2.4 TOOLKIT REACH WITH YOTS OUTSIDE THE PROGRAMME

As mentioned earlier, the YJB made the reducing reoffending toolkit available to all YOTs in year 2. It has proved to be very popular, with some YOTs using the retrospective tool and many others using the live tracking tool as a way to pull together more up to date performance data. The YJB has learnt from a number of YOTs outside of the programme who are able to demonstrate early indications that use of the toolkit is having a positive local impact, a few are highlighted below.

**Norfolk YOT** identified that many young people entering the cohort received no intervention. This acted as an incentive to introduce triage services from June 2015 to divert young people away from the Criminal Justice System. The numbers of first time entrants in 2015/16 was 40% lower than previous year and 185 fewer young people entered the youth justice system in Norfolk. Norfolk is seeing a much bigger percentage reduction than all the comparator groups and a long-standing gap is closing rapidly: between Oct 12/Sept 13 cohort and Oct 13/Sep 14 cohort binary offending fell by 1.9% points. The numbers in the overall cohort fell by 75 (9.2%) and the numbers reoffending decreased by 41 (13.9%).

**Bristol YOT** have deployed the live tracker using analysis of the results to inform their Youth Justice Plan including improving the range of interventions for 10 – 13 year old young people and a focus on Looked After Children.

**Buckinghamshire YOS** have deployed the live tracker alongside a locally designed audit process, aiming to provide qualitative feedback to develop each young person’s ongoing intervention. This is also intended to help identify over-arching themes within the cohort for wider practice developments or training and to identify any strategic issues that need escalating to the YOS Management Board for resolution.
2.5 REOFFENDING WORK IN WALES

All Welsh YOTs have used the YJB reducing reoffending toolkit. 60% of YOTs (9) have integrated action plans, 13% of YOTs (2) have stand-alone action plans and 27% of YOTs (4) do not have an action plan. As a result of this toolkit analysis, Welsh YOTs have taken actions to focus on particular cohort groups e.g. prolific young people, females, those offending within the first month, looked after children, 15-16 year olds and young people from out of area with the aim of better targeting the YOTs response to reduce reoffending for these groups. Other actions by YOTs include a review of assessment and intervention process, including an education report focussing on reoffending; reoffending as a standing agenda item at YOT management board meetings; YOTs holding monthly meetings to identify those at risk of offending; and regular review meetings with young people and parent/carer of those identified at risk of reoffending.

After completing this retrospective analysis, similar to the approach used in England, Welsh YOTs are now moving onto using the live tracker tool. As familiarity with the live tracker is established, more YOTs are looking at innovative ways of using the tool rather than just for up-to-date reoffending figures. We are finding positive feedback coming from YOTs who have established a team approach rather than being left as a task for Business Support with no further oversight. YOTs are continuing to use the tool to identify ways of preventing further offending within their caseload and also to focus on specific cohort groups relevant to their area. The results of the analysis are then being discussed with YOT staff and reported to Management Boards.

In relation to the latest official reoffending data, the majority of YOTs are reporting a reduction in numbers which are not yet reflected in the rates. However, a small number are presenting a reduction in cohort and reoffender groups but are showing an increase in the number of reoffences. As a result we are conducting further in-depth analysis with the YOTs requiring this support and will assist them to create and review action plans accordingly. There is also an all Wales approach being conducted by the YOTs to obtain official reoffending data which will enable them to identify the young people being included in their cohort.

YJB Cymru are continuing to offer support to all Welsh YOTs identifying various approaches to how the YOT can analyse their reoffending data and how the results can be used effectively.
3. UNDERSTANDING THE NATIONAL REOFFENDING COHORT

3.1 LESS OFFENDING BY YOUNG PEOPLE

There have been unprecedented reductions in the number of children and young people in the youth justice system:

- There were around 18,300 first time entrants in 2015/16. This has reduced by 83% compared with 107,700 in 2005/06.
- Over the same period, the average number of under 18s in custody has also reduced by 66% from around 2,800 in 2005/06, to 962 in 2015/16.
- In 2014/15, 37,900 young people were convicted or cautioned, this is a reduction of almost three-quarters since the record peak of 147,800 in 2006/07.

Figure 1 shows significant reductions in the three areas relating to the volume of reoffending: the total number of young people in the cohort, the number of reoffences, and the number of young people who reoffend.

The reality for the public, victims and for young people whose lives are blighted by becoming offenders is that offending and reoffending are happening much less than they used to. This is delivering savings in both financial and human costs. Whilst a range of factors have contributed, there can be little doubt that Youth Offending Services have been at the heart of this success story.
3.2 THE RATE OF REOFFENDING

The remaining challenge is to reduce the rate of reoffending, which as Figure 2 below demonstrates has been slowly rising from 33.6% in 2004 to 37.9% in 2014. Recent reoffending data for the calendar year shows that the 2014 rate is the same as the rate in 2013 but it is too early to say whether this constitutes an emerging trend.

![Figure 2](image-url)

The rate of reoffending is not an absolute like the number of re-offences. It involves a relationship between 2 factors (offending and reoffending) that are both subject to change. Comparing today’s rate of reoffending to the rate 10 years ago is instructive because it provides an indication of a repeated problem, but this measurement is comparing different groups of young people: the smaller number who offend today represent a greater concentration of young people with complex needs and risky, entrenched behaviours. As a group, they are likely to be more challenging to work with and more likely to reoffend. This helps us understand why the number of young people offending, and the number of offences committed, has fallen starkly but the reoffending rate has not.

The difference is also evident when we compare reoffending by adults and young people. The reoffending rate for young people has increased by 3.8 percentage points to 38% over the past 12 years (December 2003 – March 2014). Over the same period, the adult reoffending rate fell by 1.7 percentage points to 25.2%. However, the 59% reduction in the youth cohort compares to a 10% reduction in the adult cohort over the same period and young people’s share of the total offender cohort has fallen from 22% in the year ending December 2003 to only 8% - you can read more about this YJB analysis in Annex A: Adult and Youth analysis.
To try to understand this better the YJB analysed what the reoffending rate would be if the cohort in 2013/14 had the same reoffending history of those in 2003/4. We found that the estimated reoffending rate would have fallen from 38% to 35%. This suggests that given a level playing field the rate of reoffending would have remained almost exactly the same – as above you can read more about this YJB analysis in Annex A: Adult and Youth analysis.

3.3 IS THE COHORT GETTING MORE ‘COMPLEX’?

The phrase ‘more complex cohort’ could be understood in a number of ways. The kinds of complex needs this involves vary. Many of the children and young people in the youth justice system have experienced neglect, trauma or abuse in their own lives. They are more likely than their peers to have mental health or substance misuse issues and/or to have been excluded from school, and there is a high prevalence of special educational and learning needs. Children who are, or have been, in care are also more likely to find themselves drawn into the youth justice system. We know that many young people who offend will be experiencing a number of these or other issues.

At this point we don’t know if individual levels of need are getting higher but we do have some evidence that there is a greater concentration of young people with multiple needs and issues in the youth justice system:

- The dramatic reduction in first time entrants down 83% compared with 2005/06 has resulted in fewer young people with lower level needs (in terms of previous offending behaviour) coming through to YOT caseloads.

- Of those in the system, the average number of previous offences for young people in the offending cohort has increased by 40% (from around 1.5 per offender to 2.5) since 2003, see Figure 3 below.

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3 Porteous, D., Adler, J R. and Davidson, J. (2015) The Development of Specialist Support Services for Young People who have Offended and who have also been Victims of Crime, Abuse and/or Violence. Middlesex University


**Asset score analysis**

Further evidence of increasing case complexity comes from analysis the YJB undertook on changes in average Asset scores over the period 2009/10 to 2015/16 – both for total scores, and for the individual dynamic risk factors. You can read full details of the Asset Scores Analysis in Annex B. The key findings were that average total Asset scores increased (reflecting an increased risk of reoffending) by 16% between 2009/10 and 2015/16. The average score for each of the 12 dynamic risk factors increased over the time period studied, particularly those for perception of self, and emotional & mental health. It is important to note that the majority of assessments remained in the lower-risk score bands, but while there is no evidence of a marked increase in average risk levels, the findings do further support the contention that the average youth justice ‘case’ has a higher level of need now then previously.
3.4 ENHANCED CASE MANAGEMENT (ECM) IN WALES

YJB Cymru together with the Welsh Government are piloting a new approach specifically designed to address the complex and multiple needs prevalent in the young people with prolific offending behaviour. Twenty one referrals had been received, each of these have been subject to a ‘team formulation’ exercise and intervention plans generated in line with the individual needs of each young person. There is no conclusive evidence of effectiveness but initial indications are that levels of engagement have improved, numbers of breaches reduced and re-offending rates slowed. Cases have been reviewed more frequently than envisaged, with interventions being discussed monthly in most cases. Most practitioners have taken advantage of the available clinical supervision, though the focus of discussions has varied between individuals. Some have raised personal impact issues or things related to the broader work of the YOT, others have wanted to discuss clinical issues specific to the young people they are working with. Annual practitioner review days have also been held in order to share learning and feedback on the progress of the work.

The project evaluation is now nearing completion and publication is expected early in 2017. In the meantime the project has provoked significant interest and discussions are taking place with various potential stakeholders about how to take the approach forward.

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9 A ‘Team formulation’ exercise is a complex clinical process requiring qualified psychological leadership to ensure safety and rigour throughout. The process builds on the traditional assessment approach and goes further to focus on the developmental causes which have given rise to the current problems looking in detail at historical information. Young people referred to the ECM Project have complex histories and the formulation model explains how chronic, underlying and unresolved trauma can impact on behaviour during childhood and adolescence.
4. UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING LOCAL PRACTICE

This section summarises a range of learning and examples from the programme which have implications for practice.

4.1 ‘LINES OF ENQUIRY’ – WHERE TO LOOK IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE REOFFENDING PERFORMANCE

Analysis of local retrospective case level data identified eight key ‘lines of enquiry’, which provide a useful good starting point for reviewing YOT performance and are explored in more detail in the YJB’s previously published work\(^\text{10}\). They are summarised below:

**Binary and frequency rates – Indicators of where to target resource:** Different performance issues require different strategic and practice responses. High binary rates of reoffending give an indication that work to address young people’s issues before or as they come in to the system is needed. High frequency rates would suggest that work relating to improving practice and addressing prolific reoffending are likely to have a positive impact.

**Demographic targeting:** It is important that each YOT Partnership is familiar with the demographic make-up of the young people in their area in order to provide interventions that are sufficiently tailored to need – this alone can make a significant difference.

**Do assessments lead to the right levels of intervention?** Getting the type and intensity of interventions right is a critical component of delivering effective services to young people. The YJB’s analysis of data from local tools showed that of 802 young people who went on to commit 5 or more further offences in year two, half were initially on standard intervention or no intervention at all. Only 12.8% were initially assessed for intensive intervention. This illustrates the need for YOTs to access workforce development for staff and for effective quality assurance processes in YOTs to ensure assessments accurately reflect likelihood of reoffending as circumstances change and bring about appropriate levels and types of intervention which can address that likelihood. The new assessment framework Asset Plus will assist YOTs with this.

**Addressing the impact of persistent offending:** 6% of young people in the year two cohort went on to reoffend and become prolific offenders (committing 5+ further offences). This small group accounted for 45% of all further offences. To reduce their frequency rate, YOTs need to be able to identify which young people are most likely to be in this group and to ensure they, along with wider partnerships, get the right type and intensity of intervention right from the start, or at least to provide such intervention as soon as the reoffending becomes apparent. The operational live tracking tool explored later can help YOTs to do this.

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\(^{10}\) Reoffending: Developing a local understanding: guidance for YOT Management boards and Reducing Reoffending: Furthering our understanding
**Time to first further offence – engage young people quickly:** Amongst those who reoffended in year two, 19% did so within the first month of entering the cohort, and 43% within 3 months of entering the cohort. This underlines the importance of YOTs being able to effectively engage young people as soon as the disposal is made and before any further offending occurs.

**Addressing seriousness:** Patterns of offending vary from area to area and change over time. The retrospective local tool enables YOTs to monitor patterns of reoffending in terms of type and seriousness and can use this information to ensure resources are attuned to addressing the most prevalent and current offence types.

**Looked After Children:** Looked after children (LAC) and those leaving care make up a small proportion of the total cohort, but reoffend at over twice the rate of those who have never been looked after. Work with colleagues in children’s social care and through the local corporate parenting strategy can help to ensure that these young people are not unnecessarily criminalised. The YJB will shortly be initiating a piece of work to help understand and address the over representation of LAC in the Youth Justice System.

**Young people in the cohort but not receiving YOT intervention:** Almost a third of those entering the cohort received disposals not requiring YOT intervention (Police Cautions, Fines, and Conditional Discharges). While this group tends to have a lower reoffending rate than those on more intensive orders (Detention and Training / Youth Rehabilitation Orders), they account for 27% of all further offending, and this is therefore having a significant impact on reoffending rates in many YOT areas. It is also worth noting that many young people come to the end of any YOT intervention long before they exit the cohort (e.g. those on short Referral Orders or Conditional Cautions). Some of these young people remain likely to reoffend and are in need of planned exit strategies involving partner agencies. Again the live tracking tool can assist YOTs thinking in this area.

### 4.2 DIFFERENT WAYS TO USE THE ‘LIVE TRACKING’ TOOL

The live tracking tool was developed as a direct response to requests from YOTs wanting to focus on their current caseload in addition to learning from retrospective data. YOTs are encouraged to use their findings from retrospective analysis to inform their live tracking efforts for example focussing on the cases most likely to reoffend. The tool has quickly became popular with YOTs. Although originally designed as an operational case management tool, YOTs have developed a range of other innovative ways to use it. We have outlined the 4 most promising approaches below:


**Operational Case Management approach**

This approach enables YOTs to make sure the right action is being taken with the right young people at the right time. This involves reviewing individual cases and taking appropriate remedial action to prevent reoffending before it occurs. Operational live tracking enables YOTs to take action when young people’s circumstances change in a way that might make them more likely to reoffend (rather than waiting for them to reoffend). This approach is particularly important for YOTs wishing to improve their binary rate.

**Strategic approach**

This allows the YOT Managers and YOT Management Boards to identify trends and changes in local reoffending patterns so that services can be shaped to address current needs. YOTs using this approach input details of young people as they enter the cohort then refer to the graphs the toolkit produces which give an indication of demographic groups, issues, offence types, and a range of other issues. This data can then be shared with the YOT Management Board and used to shape the YOT’s services in terms of programmes, interventions, support available from the wider partnership.

**Quality Assurance approaches**

This approach could be used to a) check Assessment Planning Intervention and Supervision (APIS) processes are completed to the required standard as young people receive disposals and therefore enter into the cohort or b) to conduct ‘lessons learnt exercises’ when young people have reoffended to gain an understanding of whether signs were missed or more could have been done to prevent it. This would help improve future practice.

**Identifying performance trend approach**

This approach uses the tool as a way to get up-to-date information on performance trends based on local data. It involves inputting the membership of the most recently completed cohort quarter and adding the reoffending data for each member. Though not official data, the YOT Management Board can see whether the trend is improving or not, and the nature of the most recent issues needing to be addressed.

YOTs will have less need to use the tool in this way once the YJB’s new Reoffending Application within the Youth Justice Application is launched (see section 5.2).
Below is a selection of examples of YOTs making use of the Live Tracking tool.

**Durham YOS** have deployed the live tracker in order to monitor reoffending performance for those YP that receive intensive supervision or have offended prolifically all of which are subject to a premium service of targeted interventions. The young people are identified every 6 months and monthly risk panels are held to address any reoffending activity.

**Tri-Borough YOT** have used the live tracking tool strategically, operationally and for quality assurance. It has enabled them to identify themes to inform both strategic planning and interventions. For example, through the data the YOT identified that the younger cohort of offenders in one of the Boroughs was more likely to reoffend. In response to this the YOT targeted additional resources to enhance the plans of support and to bolster engagement and compliance with that age group. The Live tracking tool is also highlighting the need to consider strategically how we can ensure that early help and wider prevention work can be better targeted to prevent young people from coming back into the system.

Through looking at the live data on a more regular basis the YOT are identifying early those who have reoffended or have matters pending. This enables them to consider at an earlier stage if there are any additional resources or actions the YOT can take in order to minimise reoffending.

Tri-Borough report a reduction in their local reoffending rate, which was running above the London average prior to Jul13-Jun14 cohort and is now below the London average. Recent data for the Jan14-Dec14 cohort shows Tri-Borough youth reoffending at 41.7% while the London average is at 43.0%.

**Luton YOT** have developed a Live Reoffending Tracking Management Procedure. They focus on young people subject to disposals and compile a monthly analysis report detailing the relevant cases requiring further scrutiny and note any themes in reoffending e.g. disproportionate Special Educational Needs (SEN) or reoffending by Looked After Children (LAC). This report also identifies and provides information on likelihood of custody cases and those already subject to custody. It then feeds into the service’s ‘Likelihood of Custody Scrutiny Framework’. Operations Managers utilise the report produced to inform the structure of individual case supervision using an audit template.

This approach is enabling the YOS to provide a framework of supervision and reflection which identifies the reasons for any new offending and develops strategies to address them. Learning is disseminated to the whole Service to ensure that individuals with responsibility for assessing, managing and delivering interventions have the confidence, ability and autonomy to work effectively with young people.
**Stoke-on-Trent YOS** monitor live tracking data through a monthly ‘Live Tracker’ meeting. If a young person re-offends they allocate a review manager who will complete a detailed review of the case which is aligned with the current HMIP inspection guidance. This includes a full review of the case file, interviews with workers, young person and parent/carer. The findings related to individual cases are used to inform intervention plan actions.

The case review findings are collated annually in order to identify common themes, underpinned by feedback from service users. To date they have been used to:

- identify and address system blockages (e.g. review the housing offer for YOS LAC/leaving care children)
- inform strategic areas for development (e.g. Joint work with Vulnerable Children and Corporate Parenting is undertaken to address the issue of inter-agency planning)
- influence commissioning (e.g. substance misuse services)
- identify effective practice (e.g. good evidence of health assessment and intervention forming part of the plan to reduce offending)
- address training and development (e.g. restorative justice training).

**Southampton YOS** use the re-offending tool in a number of ways, for example:

- to flag cases for entry onto their Priority Young People scheme (prolific young offenders). These cases are reviewed on a monthly basis by the YOS / Police and Local Authority. Each has an allocated Police single point of contact. The local impact of this has been that the level of reoffending has reduced consistently in this cohort over the past three years

- by tracking the cohort over a two year period they have become more aware of offending by young adults previously known to the YOS. The service is currently involved in the development of a police-led project (Gateway) to look at a different response to young adult offending (using a joint-decision making model)

- to influence the service’s response to young people under the age of 10 years, with emerging criminal behaviour. They have identified a cohort that will be reviewed through the local Community Tasking and Co-ordination (CTCG) process around anti-social behaviour with Families Matter (Troubled Families) provision being allocated accordingly.
4.3 LEARNING FROM ‘DEEP DIVES’

We have completed two short studies to see if there are any common themes from YOTs with high reoffending performance and with cases involving prolific offenders:

**Reoffending in High Performing YOTs** – read more on this in *Reducing Reoffending: Furthering our understanding*

This study looked at 12 YOTs with good and poorer reoffending performance to try to understand the drivers behind good performance. Findings suggested that this appears to be associated with the YOTs that:

- have a highly-motivated and engaged staff group committed to reducing local reoffending rates
- are able to enlist the support of the wider partnership to work with young people who are likely to reoffend – this chimes with our findings from year two (p14) about the need for a partnership response to support young people in the cohort but not receiving YOT intervention
- have sufficient resources available to consistently meet minimum national standards.

**The London ‘Deep Dives’**

In year three the YJB engaged with London YOT partnerships to undertake a deep dive case file analysis of prolific reoffending by young people in London. ‘Prolific’ was defined as 5 or more offences. The findings showed that good quality YOT intervention appears to have some impact on the outcome of cases. Successful outcome were associated with:

- positive YOT worker / young person relationship
- effective engagement with parents
- the level of young people’s motivation to change - which can be raised by the effective engagement and intervention of the YOT worker
- good partnership working.
4.4 THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR PRACTICE

Since last year’s *Reducing Reoffending: Furthering our understanding* the Ministry of Justice have published an evidence review\(^{13}\) of “What Works Managing Young People Who Reoffend?” The review focuses on high quality evaluations of the impact and delivery of youth justice supervision, programmes and interventions within the community. Following this, the YJB produced a reducing reoffending effective practice paper\(^{14}\) for practitioners, giving an overview of approaches and drawing out some UK case study examples.

The evidence presented provides some consistent, though broad, lessons:

- young people benefit from a stable, trusting and respectful relationship with at least one practitioner. Practitioners need the skills to engage young people, and to establish trust as well as boundaries

- their work with young people should be broadly therapeutic rather than overly focused on punishment, and should recognise desistance from offending as an ongoing process. This does not mean ignoring personal responsibility for offences and the harm caused, but doing so in a way that supports young people to see and seek positive change

- work with young people should recognise them as individuals and respond to their needs, risks, strengths and circumstances.

**Note:** While we can draw these broad conclusions, it should be acknowledged that there are serious limitations to the evidence. Evaluations have tended to focus on individual programmes and specialist interventions, but for many young people these are not the main content of their work with YOTs. Even for these programmes, there is often insufficient data to measure differences between key groups of young people – for example by age, gender, ethnicity, disability, offending history, or for looked after children. Some evidence-based programmes rely on international research, and have not been robustly tested in the UK context.

HM Inspectorate of Probation published a report called ‘*Desistance and young people*’\(^{15}\), about young people abstaining from crime. This combined evidence from desistance research with their learnings from inspections and interviews with former and current service users. Little desistance research has been conducted with children or young people. However the inspection learning from young people echoed findings from research with adults. This was that the best approaches were built on a trusting relationship with the practitioner, and were

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\(^{15}\) Barnes, C. et al. (2016). Desistance and young people. London: HM Inspectorate of Probation
personalised to the individual’s needs, history and circumstances. This echoes the reoffending evidence, though desistance theory places particular emphasis on the need to support the individual with structural and social issues; that to focus solely on individual change is insufficient. The inspections had identified some weaknesses in support targeting wider circumstances: for example help with school, family and peers.

Early in 2016 a new study\textsuperscript{16} was published exploring the effect of adverse childhood experiences on reoffending, using data from the USA. The report notes the large body of evidence identifying childhood mistreatment as a risk factor for reoffending, and seeks to address the relative lack of research into why and how this is. The results suggest adverse experiences have a direct effect increasing the likelihood of reoffending, and also an indirect effect through ‘negative emotionality’. This suggests that young people who have traumatic early experiences may be more likely to perceive situations and people as threatening or hostile (and react negatively), which in turn increases the risk of offending.

As stated earlier the YJB has been working to develop trauma-informed practices for youth justice through the Enhanced Case Management approach, which is currently being piloted by YJB Cymru and has created a reference group of key partners to address this issue.

\textbf{4.5 UNDERSTANDING DISPROPORTIONALITY}

The YJB has designed and developed:

- a Summary Disproportionality Tool which sits within the overall reoffending toolkit. This allows YOTs to see ‘at a glance’ any over-representation of the five main ethnic groups in their local youth justice system

- a Case-Level Ethnic Disproportionality tool which will analyse the level of any ethnic disproportionality of the five main ethnic groups within the local youth justice system. The Tool will assist YOTs to understand if, when, where and how ethnic disproportionality occurs and highlight key lines of enquiry to inform action.

The YJB has also made addressing over-representation one of its three cross cutting themes: the over-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people is now considered across all the YJB’s work to identify issues and opportunities to address issues across commissioning, monitoring services, and the sharing effective practice.

5. MOVING FORWARDS

We will take the following action to support the continued implementation of the Reducing Reoffending Programme:

5.1 SUPPORTING YOTs

The programme’s focus in its final months is to continue to work with YJB Business Area colleagues to support programme YOTs to be able to embed reoffending work, particularly those now doing this in the context of revised operating models. From April 2017 reoffending will be integrated into the ongoing work of the YJB’s Business Area Teams. All Partnership Advisors will receive further training in the toolkit and there will be a national lead for this area of work. We will also continue to monitor reoffending and provide performance improvement support where this is needed through the YJB’s YOT Commissioning and Oversight Group (YCOG) process. This means that this area of practice will be protected and indeed enhanced, with important links into the sector led improvement and the wider data offer.

5.2 IMPROVING THE TOOLKIT

We will continue to update the toolkit and would encourage you to share your learning with us and each other via the YJB Resource hub. We will share a Reducing Reoffending ‘how to’ handbook by the end of the financial year which will provide a detailed outline of how to use the toolkit in practice.

We are now close to being able to provide YOTs with up-to-date, fully populated reoffending tools based on YJMIS and PNC data through the new YJ Application Strategy, which is improving the YOT Case Level Data model and reporting tools. This has been a long term ambition of the programme and we very much hope that the ease of data accessibility it will introduce will encourage YOTs to integrate analysis into the way they deliver youth justice services. It will include an updated reoffending toolkit which incorporates AssetPlus and PNC data and is updated on a quarterly basis. This will give every YOT its own ‘interactive dashboard’ which allows users to cut and slice data and drill down into specific areas of interest as they wish. We hope to make this available by the end of March 2017. We will provide updates on this via the YJ Bulletin.

We are also exploring the possibility of developing a ‘distanced travelled’ measure. This would use Youth Offender Group Reconviction Scores (YOGRS) from AssetPlus to develop ‘expected’ reoffending rates both locally and nationally by reference to previous cohorts. This would enable us to see which areas are performing better than expected (and thus where there it is likely we could identify effective YOT reoffending work) and which areas may need support.
5.3 EMBEDDING REDUCING REOFFENDING AT A LOCAL LEVEL

As we have seen, many YOTs now have well developed strategies for reducing reoffending. Others are at various stages of developing and embedding their approaches. Our ambition is that the analysis and addressing of reoffending issues is built into performance management and oversight of all YOTs. We believe this can bring incremental progress over time and help to provide clear strategic direction for addressing the complex and wide ranging issues that contribute to reoffending.

YOTs reading this guide who want to improve their reoffending performance are encouraged to do the following:

- request your latest retrospective local reoffending tool from us by emailing reducingreoffending@yjb.gsi.gov.uk
- read the guidance contained within the toolkit and check how in line your local data is with the PNC data and if required seek reoffending data for your young people aged 17+
- analyse the data within the tool and contact your local YJB Business Area team for support if required
- consider what the analysis is telling you and recommend and agree actions with the YOT Management board
- adopt a service wide approach to developing and implementing the agreed actions to address the issues identified by the analysis
- consider and implement live tracking based on findings from the retrospective analysis
- embed the learning from this guide into the YOT both strategically and operationally
- once you have established a local strategy, review and revise it on an annual basis using the tools we will continue to make available.
6. USEFUL LINKS

1. YJB website - How to reduce reoffending by children and young people including how to access the reducing reoffending toolkit

2. MoJ - What works in managing young people who offend?

3. YJ Resource hub - YJB Reducing reoffending by young people effective practice paper for practitioners

4. HM Inspectorate of Probation - ‘Desistance and young people’

5. Study about Adverse childhood experiences, negative emotionality, and pathways to juvenile recidivism
   http://cad.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/01/28/0011128715627469.abstract