



# **Youth Restorative Intervention Evaluation Summary report**

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## Summary

This report is a summary of a GtD's evaluation of the Youth Restorative Intervention and details of the findings can be found in the full report.

The Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI) is run jointly by Surrey Police and Surrey County Council's Youth Support Service<sup>1</sup>. It is a pre-court disposal and an alternative to the youth caution, the youth conditional caution<sup>2</sup> and prosecution. With a few exceptions it is the default disposal for young offenders who are under the age of 18 and admit the offence. The intention of the programme is to prevent reoffending, to repair harm to victims and improve their satisfaction with the Criminal Justice System (CJS), and to provide better value for money in the youth justice system. Overall, the initiative seeks to improve the experience of the criminal justice system for all: the victim, the offender, their families and the wider community.

## Description of the YRI

There is no criminal conviction on completion of the YRI. When a case is suitable for the YRI, a police officer or YSS worker will then meet the parties to explain the process and establish what needs to be done to "put right" the consequences of the offence. The victim and offender's needs will be assessed, and the young offender will be encouraged to access the services provided by the integrated YSS. The parties will also agree to either direct or indirect mediation. At the conclusion of the mediation, the young offender will undertake a number of actions, such as a letter of apology, reparation, attendance at support sessions and agreeing to certain standards of behaviour.

Three quarters of the young people on the YRI were male and two thirds were over 16<sup>3</sup>. The vast majority of offences that they had committed were not deemed to be serious and the most common offences were theft and handling and violence.

## Design of the YRI

The design of the YRI is well founded on the prior research evidence.

Described as an 'approach' rather than a process, the YRI largely followed the key principles of good restorative practice:

- The process was voluntary, but it was ideal to have the participation of both parties.
- Offenders acknowledged responsibility and were held accountable throughout the process.
- Face-to-face communication with the offender increased victim satisfaction.
- The restorative outcomes were fair, realistic, achievable and credible.

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<sup>1</sup> As a Youth Support Service, the YSS incorporates the functions of a Youth Offending Team (YOT) into a service that works with a range of vulnerable young people and those with additional needs. (Byrne & Brooks, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> The youth caution and the youth conditional caution replaced reprimands and final warnings in April 2013.

<sup>3</sup> As found by the evaluation.

## **Delivery of YRI**

The evaluation found that the YRI was delivered to a high standard. This is a notable achievement in light of the prior research<sup>4</sup> that found such schemes take time and commitment to implement effectively.

### **Victims**

Victims generally commended the staff and praised particular aspects of the support: from being informed, conveying their feelings, being well prepared for the meetings and managing the case effectively.

### **Offenders**

Offenders reported having good relationships with their YRI key workers and recognised that the YRI was there to help. While the frequency of contacts with the offenders was difficult to analyse<sup>5</sup>, the number of contacts appeared to increase with offence gravity score, suggesting a targeting of resources to the risks or needs of the young people.

### **Management**

The senior management team displayed consistent leadership of the initiative. It is evident that they articulated a shared vision for the initiative and demonstrated their commitment to ensuring its success and continuation.

## **Impact of YRI**

The evaluation found that the YRI was successful in improving victim satisfaction, reducing first time entrants to the criminal justice system and re-offending.

### **Victim satisfaction**

In common with previous evaluations of restorative schemes, the victims generally reported that their engagement was positive and that the YRI contracts were fair and just. This corresponds with the results of Surrey Police's independent YRI Victim Satisfaction Surveys (Reed, 2013)<sup>6</sup> that found 91% (N=150)<sup>7</sup> of victims were satisfied with the process.

### **First time entrants**

The use of the YRI consciously seeks to reduce criminalisation. As the default position for dealing with most youth crime, it has been successful in providing a robust approach to reducing FTEs in Surrey. The Youth Justice Board's FTE figures<sup>8</sup> for Surrey between October 2010 and September 2011 was 394 FTEs per 100,000 young people. Between October 2012 and September 2013 the figure was 189 – the lowest in England and Wales indicating that a young person is less likely

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<sup>4</sup> See review of research evidence and good practice in Section 2 below.

<sup>5</sup> This is due to an inconsistency in recording the number of contacts made with offender that made it difficult to assess the efficiency of the resources deployed.

<sup>6</sup> Since October 2011, Surrey Police has conducted six waves of a YRI victim satisfaction survey. The latest wave (wave 6) was conducted by Quality Fieldwork Research in November 2013.

<sup>7</sup> This figure is derived from Waves 1-6 of the victim satisfaction survey.

<sup>8</sup> YJB monitoring statistics for England and Wales, January 2007 to December 2013 (Shared by YSS).

to receive a criminal record in Surrey. The respective figures for England were 780 to 478.

### **Reoffending**

The YRI was successful in reducing reoffending. This is a notable achievement in light of some ambiguous reoffending outcomes found by the prior research (Hoyle Young & Hill, 2002 c.f. Shapland et al, 2008).

The reoffending rate for those who attended the YRI was 27% compared to 33% for the control group<sup>9</sup>, a 6% difference. This 6% difference represents an 18% reduction in the reoffending rate.<sup>10</sup> Of the YRI group, it was found that young people who reoffended tended to have had previous convictions. They were increasingly likely to reoffend if they had two or more previous convictions. Fifty per cent of those who attended the YRI - and who had two more previous convictions - reoffended, compared to 60% of a corresponding group in the control.

### **Benefit of YRI**

The evaluation found that the direct costs of running the YRI were cheaper than the alternative of processing the offender through the police, which was a mixture of youth cautions, youth conditional cautions and prosecution. The evaluation also found that the YRI provided wider savings to the public purse.

The cost to the police and Youth Service of administering YRI per case is £360. By contrast, administering the alternative costs £600, and, by increasing the extent to which offenders gain criminal records and reduces employment prospects, it creates potential for a loss of tax and increase in benefit payments of the order of £360 per offender. A further disadvantage of the alternative is that it has a 6% higher level of reoffending, bringing almost £80 in costs to the courts, police, YSS, and the NHS. Together, some £1,040 in current and future public sector costs is avoided per offender when £360 is spent.

This implies that for each pound spent on the YRI compared to the alternative, there is a potential £2.86 return to the public sector.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, there are reduced social costs relating to each victim, estimated to be some £200. This implies that in total for each pound spent on the YRI compared to the alternative, there are £3.41 of benefits. These results are summarised in the table below.

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<sup>9</sup> A control group constructed from pre-court and court convictions between April 2009 and March 2011.

<sup>10</sup> In measuring the reoffending rate, effective resolutions and further YRIs were included in the measure because these had largely replaced youth cautions and conditional cautions in Surrey.

<sup>11</sup> The reported figures are rounded to the nearest £10 and therefore the ratios cannot be produced from the reported figures.

**Table 1: Cost of the YRI and the alternative**

Intervention	Cost to administer (per offender)	Cost of 6% higher reoffending (per offender)			Total (per offender)
		Courts, police, YSS and the NHS	Benefits and tax	Victim social costs	
YRI	£360	-	-	-	£360
Mixture of youth cautions, youth conditional cautions and court sentences	£600	£80	£360	£200	£1,040
Difference	£240	£80	£360	£200	£680

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

These positive outcomes and benefits are the result of designing an intervention that was based on good practice and delivered to a high standard. Importantly, the YRI has strong and consistent leadership that was committed to restorative principles. This leadership has sought to improve the experience of justice for all. In doing so the YRI reduced the unnecessary criminalisation of young people, reduced reoffending, provided better interventions for victims, improved victim satisfaction and reduced costs to the youth justice system. Overall the initiative views offenders as vulnerable young people who require the appropriate support from the integrated YSS. While the evaluation concludes on a positive note, there are three principal recommendations that will help inform the development and expansion of the YRI approach:

- Review the efficiency of the intervention and in particular investigate how the YRI was delivered by the police and the YSS workers – in particular the amount of time spent delivering the intervention, the frequency of meetings and the type of staff used - to ensure the highest levels of consistency, efficiency and effectiveness. .
- Undertaking a further reconviction study using PNC data to understand the reoffending outcomes better.
- Investigate the reoffending data to understand why young people with a public order offence are more likely to reoffend than young people as a whole.