

What is Child First?



Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid



The Child First framework has been adopted as the guiding principle for the youth justice sector. It sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them make a constructive contribution to society. This will prevent offending and creates safer communities with fewer victims.

Child First goes beyond the youth justice system.

The number of children in custody is the lowest on record, but those who remain in the system have complex needs and face multiple challenges.

Child First aims to break down barriers and create opportunities for children to help them move forwards.



Child First is...

- An evidence-based framework
- For everyone working with children
- A decision-making tool
- Built on the best contemporary evidence available

Child First is not...



- An approach, vision, model or mantra
- New - it's based on decades of research of what we know works
- A 'hard' or 'soft' option

Decades of research tells us that working in a Child First way has benefits for children's outcomes.

The four 'tenets' of Child First



As children

Prioritise children's best interests and recognise their rights and unique needs. Be child-focused, developmentally informed and acknowledge structural barriers, meeting adult responsibilities towards children to support them to realise their potential.

Building a pro-social identity

Promote children's strengths through supportive relationships and a future-focus, empowering them to develop their identity in a way that enables them to make a positive contribution to society.



Collaborating with children

Encourage active participation, meaningful engagement and wider social inclusion for children and their families or carers.



Diverting from stigma

Encourage a childhood away from the youth justice system by using early outside support, including diversion and minimal intervention to avoid and minimise the stigma of criminal contact.

