

Youth Justice Pathfinder Project: Headline Report: Serious Youth Violence and First Time Entrants to the YJS in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

That first time entrants in Newcastle enter the justice system with “low level offending” which is not likely to escalate to more serious violent crime.

86% of first time entrant (FTE) offences are gravity score 3 (in other words low level offending) and below. For non-FTE offences this figure is 80%.

For young people who go on to commit a serious youth violence (SYV) offence, 57% of their FTE offences are gravity score 3 and below, with 43% at score 4 and above.

There have been 7796 offences committed since January 2016, committed by 2315 individuals. 234 offences have been SYV offences, committed by 174 individuals.

2141 individuals committed offences that were not SYV offences.

SYV accounts for 3% of all offences over this period.

Of the 234 SYV offences, 111 (47%) were violence against the person offences.

Violence in Newcastle is seen to be mainly associated with ‘status’ and ‘identity’. Some of which is believed to also be linked to drug dealing, and involvement with negative peer groups.

Whilst less developed gangs and expensive drug trade (compared to other core cities) in the city was reported by some stakeholders as contributing to low SYV levels, concerns were raised around the number of young people in Newcastle who are vulnerable and could potentially be further exploited by county lines activities.

Social media was seen to play a significant role in young people's involvement in crime, and most notably in more serious crime, while also making them vulnerable to exploitation and harm, as was the impact of diminished youth services.

There was an overwhelming pride in being from the North-East, and Newcastle in particular, although this did feed into the young person's status and identity, which was seen to be linked to SYV

The gravity of a person's index offence is a significant predictor of whether that person will go on to commit a serious/violent offence, A higher gravity index offence increases the odds of a future SYV offence; a unit increase in gravity results in a 1.4 times increase in the odds of a future SYV offence.

That interventions delivered by Newcastle reduce the likelihood of first time entrants escalating to more serious violent crime. This line of enquiry will also seek to understand what about these interventions work for the identified cohort.

The project identified a number of factors from the qualitative research as being significant in terms of the interventions offered by Newcastle YJS - either directly or with partners - to reduce the likelihood of escalation to SYV. These included:

The value of relational work with young people, undertaken by their case manager, and the value of the case worker retaining that relationship with the young person is seen as exceptionally strong.

Interventions have a strong place / community focus, which are risk-based. Young people seem more receptive to interventions which are place based and reflect the issues and realities of their own communities.

Newcastle YJS working with their partners, have developed an effective approach to the coordination and management of risk.

YJS staff have a detailed understanding of the issues and challenges young people face in the city and the complexities associated with addressing them.

The strength-based approach adopted, to prevent escalation to SYV appears strong and to underpin much of the case management activity.

Newcastle YJS draws from a portfolio of intervention (delivered by the YJS and partners) where each has a clear role and purpose, and notably a strong restorative ethos with a transformative focus.

Police intelligence is seen as particularly valuable in this context, as is the community-based intelligence for case managers and third sector organisations.

Outcome 22 appears to have made a significant impact on the FTE cohort size. Stakeholders praised this intervention as a method of avoiding some of the more damaging long-term effects - including an escalation of criminal activities - of a formal sanction. Currently 38% of the current FTE with Newcastle YOT are outcome 22.

The extent to which the young people involved in serious violent crime in Newcastle are already known to statutory services.

For the young people who went on to commit a serious violent crime; the nature of the “trigger” offence which led to their involvement with the Youth Justice Service.

“*They are not strangers*”; this was the most enduring comment made by a stakeholder and consistent theme across the research. This comment was made to highlight that while not all young people were previously known to YJS, many were known to statutory agencies largely due to wider concerns relating to their welfare.

Entering the Youth Justice system is inherently linked to vulnerability and trauma; risk factors associated with FTE (compared to the general population):

- Over nine times more likely to be living in a home where domestic abuse has been perpetrated.
- Twice as likely to have been open to Children’s Social Care within the 12 months prior to the offence
- Almost five times more likely to be a Child in Need
- Three times more likely to have a Child Protection Plan or be in care

Young people who ultimately go on to commit SYV offences were more commonly open to Children’s Social Care at the time of the offence.

Newcastle’s historically high FTE rate quite closely links to the levels of vulnerability and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) in the city:

- Newcastle’s rate of three key social care factors (Children in Need, Child Protection Plans and Children in Care) has been consistently above the average for the North East region, the Core Cities and the national average over the past five years.
- Children in Care (CIC) in Newcastle over the last decade has been consistently higher than both the regional and national picture.
- Currently the number of CIC in Newcastle is over one and half times larger than the national figure with 116 per hundred thousand, compared to the national average of 74 per hundred thousand.
- This picture also tracks through into offending data; with 4% in Newcastle compared to 2% nationally of CIC subject to a youth caution.

The data shows that for First Time Entrants, approximately 1 in 4 of the young people were open to Children’s Social Care, and for Serious Youth Violence this rose to well over 1 in 3. This compares to approximately 1 in 17 for all under 18s in Newcastle

The Newcastle context – how Newcastle’s demographics compare and relate to other core cities

Ethnicity

In Newcastle 91.3% of the general population is described as “white” (the second highest for any English core city).

The 10–17-year-old general population is 83% white (Census, 2011).

Newcastle has the lowest number of non-UK born residents (excluding students) and the lowest number of people migrating in from other parts of the country of any other English core city (Source: ONS).

The statistical data supported this, 75% of individuals who offended in the study period self-identified as “White British”.

When looking specifically at SYV, 69% identified as “White British”.

CSC rates

36% of the current YJS cohort are known to Children’s Social Care. 16% are Children in Care.

Health Of the current cohort of 142, emotional development and mental health issues were key desistance factors for 92 of the young people. Speech, language, communication and neuro-disability was identified for 25% (36 young people). Physical health and development were identified for 11% of the caseload (16).

Substance misuse

Of the current cohort of young people, substance misuse is identified as a key factor in desisting from criminal behaviour for 46% (65 of 142)

Accommodation

Living arrangements, housing and financial considerations are a factor against desistance for 16% of the current caseload

Education

Of the current YJS caseload, in the pre-16 bracket, 66% are at school for fewer than 25 hours per week.

76% are recorded as persistent absent.

Overall school attendance for this cohort averaged at 54%

Of those currently open to YJS, 69% have had a fixed exclusion during their school career, while 13.2% have been permanently excluded.

For those over 16, 50% were not in education, training or employment (NEET). Of these, 25% were in care.

Deprivation

30% of Newcastle’s LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas) are in the most deprived 10% nationally.

For FTE (74%) were living in the most deprived 20% of areas, as defined by the IMD.

In an age-matched sample of children who had not offended, 67% lived in such areas.

75% of FTE were in receipt of free school meals, compared with 59% of the non-offending sample.

Good Practice

1. Strong Case Management and Relationship with the Young people

This was clearly evidenced through the stakeholder interviews and the digital tool exercise with the young people. Stakeholders demonstrated a clear, detailed, and thoughtful understanding of the young people, the environments in which they live and the challenges they face, yet remained resolutely committed to seeking positive outcomes (in varying forms) for all young people.

2. Child first Approach

The child first approach, and concern for the young people’s vulnerability and welfare is clear and evident as a guiding principle through all areas of youth work (YJS, courts, policing, third sector) in Newcastle.

3. Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

There is evidence of high levels of vulnerability, complex and chaotic lives for the young people engaged with the YJS. However, multi-agency working as the core to the case management approach, and a recognition of the impact of ACE was evident throughout this research allowing an appropriate package of support to be developed.

4. Proportionality

There was a strong ethos of ensuring that the intervention and support available to a young person were proportionate. The scaled approach seems to be working well and ensuring that interventions are tailored to the individual and based on an assessment of their risks and needs.

5. Outcome 22

This appears to be having a strong positive impact in recognising that intervention, as opposed to formal action, can have a positive impact on reducing reoffending for young people. Stakeholders particularly identify this as a welcome addition to the options available for responding to young people entering the CJS and limiting some of the more damaging long-term effects of a formal sanction. Of the current active intervention programmes in Newcastle YJS, 38% are Outcome 22.

6. Community Based interventions

The interventions available for young people in Newcastle who are involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in crime have a strong place-based emphasis. For young people there was clearly a value placed on interventions that were delivered in their local areas. Understanding communities and taking a localised and tailored approach to interventions underpins the Newcastle approach.

7. Place

Throughout the research there was an incredibly powerful and consistent narrative relating to place in terms of the understanding stakeholders have of the city, the historical issues which still manifest themselves in day-to-day life, the limited demographic change, the tensions and rivalries relating to particular areas of the city young people may experience (for example postcode peer groups), as well as the young people’s pride in being from Newcastle. This understanding of place, clearly informed practice, and was used as a positive hook for change

8. Hub and Spoke model

What is particularly strong in Newcastle is the understanding and value the partners place on each other’s work, the specific role they play, and critically the importance of Newcastle YJS as the communicators of risk and knowledge brokers. This model ensures strong governance and ultimately issues of safety, well-being, risk, and harm reduction are addressed. This model of governance for partnership working allows for ‘joined up’ practice but also allows diverse methods, connections, and practices to ensure the appropriate course of action for the young person/ event / community is in place.