

# All Wales Youth Offending Strategy: Delivery Plan 2009-11

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



Youth Justice Board  
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

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# INTRODUCTION

The *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* was published jointly by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) in 2004. It set out a holistic approach to end-to-end youth justice in Wales, and was premised on our shared belief that prevention is better than cure and that young people should be treated as children first and offenders second.

The strategy was underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its requirement for consideration of the rights of children and young people.

Much has been achieved as a result of the strategy, but we can do more to improve the effectiveness of youth justice service delivery in Wales and to improve the life chances of children and young people within, and at risk of entering, the youth justice system.

Our combined experience of working with, advising and monitoring youth justice services in Wales has shown us that a more focused and proactive approach is needed to promote effective governance and leadership at a local level. Only through corporate ownership and responsibility for addressing the needs of these children and young people can we ensure that more of them are able to access their universal entitlements.

We know that in parts of Wales, excellent practice cannot reach its full potential to further reduce the number of children and young people within the youth justice system because there is sometimes a lack of engagement by senior representatives from agencies that are crucial partners in the delivery of youth justice services.

Clearly, it is time to take stock and celebrate our accomplishments, but also to recognise that we must continue to work together to protect vulnerable children and young people from the damaging consequences of criminality.

Over the last year, the Welsh Assembly Government and the YJB have reviewed and refreshed the delivery mechanisms for the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*. This delivery plan describes the changes we have made, sets out the priority themes we will address and the actions we will take. It also shows how we will work with the UK Government to take forward those aspects of the criminal justice system that apply to England and Wales, such as the *Youth Crime Action Plan*.

# DELIVERY OF THE ALL WALES YOUTH OFFENDING STRATEGY FROM 2009

During the last year, we have reconfigured the way in which the Welsh Assembly Government, the YJB and our partners work together to achieve the objectives set out in the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*. We have identified six priority areas that we will concentrate on over the coming years.

The way in which the YJB monitors the youth justice system in Wales has been tailored to match these priorities. We have streamlined the number of youth justice performance indicators to match our priority areas, redesigned indicators that relate to devolved policy areas and ensured that the indicators measure as many real outcomes for children as possible. Furthermore, we have made sure that, wherever we could, the Wales Youth Justice Indicator Set (WYJIS) is represented in other performance frameworks in order to promote senior ownership of our objectives at a local level.

*Wales Youth Justice Indicator Set as represented in other frameworks*

WYJIS No.	Performance indicator	Included in
1	Reduce the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All Wales Youth Offending Strategy</i></li> <li>• Analysis of Policing and Community Safety</li> <li>• Children and Young People's Plans</li> </ul>
2	Reduce the rate of proven reoffending for young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All Wales Youth Offending Strategy</i></li> <li>• PSA 23 (Make communities safer)</li> <li>• Analysis of Policing and Community Safety</li> <li>• Children and Young People's Plans</li> </ul>
3	Reduce the proportion of young people who receive a conviction in court then being sentenced to custody.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All Wales Youth Offending Strategy</i></li> </ul>
4	Increase engagement in education, training and employment of young people in the youth justice system in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All Wales Youth Offending Strategy</i></li> <li>• Children and Young People's Plans</li> <li>• Local Government performance framework</li> </ul>

WYJIS No.	Performance indicator	Included in
5	Increase access to suitable accommodation for young people in the youth justice system in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Wales Youth Offending Strategy</li> <li>• Local Government performance framework</li> </ul>
6	Ensure that children and young people in the youth justice system in Wales with identified substance misuse needs gain timely access to appropriate specialist assessment and treatment services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Wales Youth Offending Strategy</li> <li>• Local Government performance framework</li> <li>• Substance misuse key performance indicators</li> </ul>

In consultation with the Assembly Government, the YJB has revised the format and function of the statutory youth justice plan in Wales to make it more central to the local strategic landscape. Furthermore, the way that we analyse the new Youth Justice Plan Cymru allows us to manage the rich range of service delivery knowledge and information that our youth offending teams (YOTs) in Wales communicate to us. This means that we can set improvement priorities, plan our support for youth justice services and other local partnerships, and disseminate promising practice. It also allows us to understand the story behind what the Wales Youth Justice Indicator Set tells us in order to work across Government towards the development of evidence-based youth justice policy.

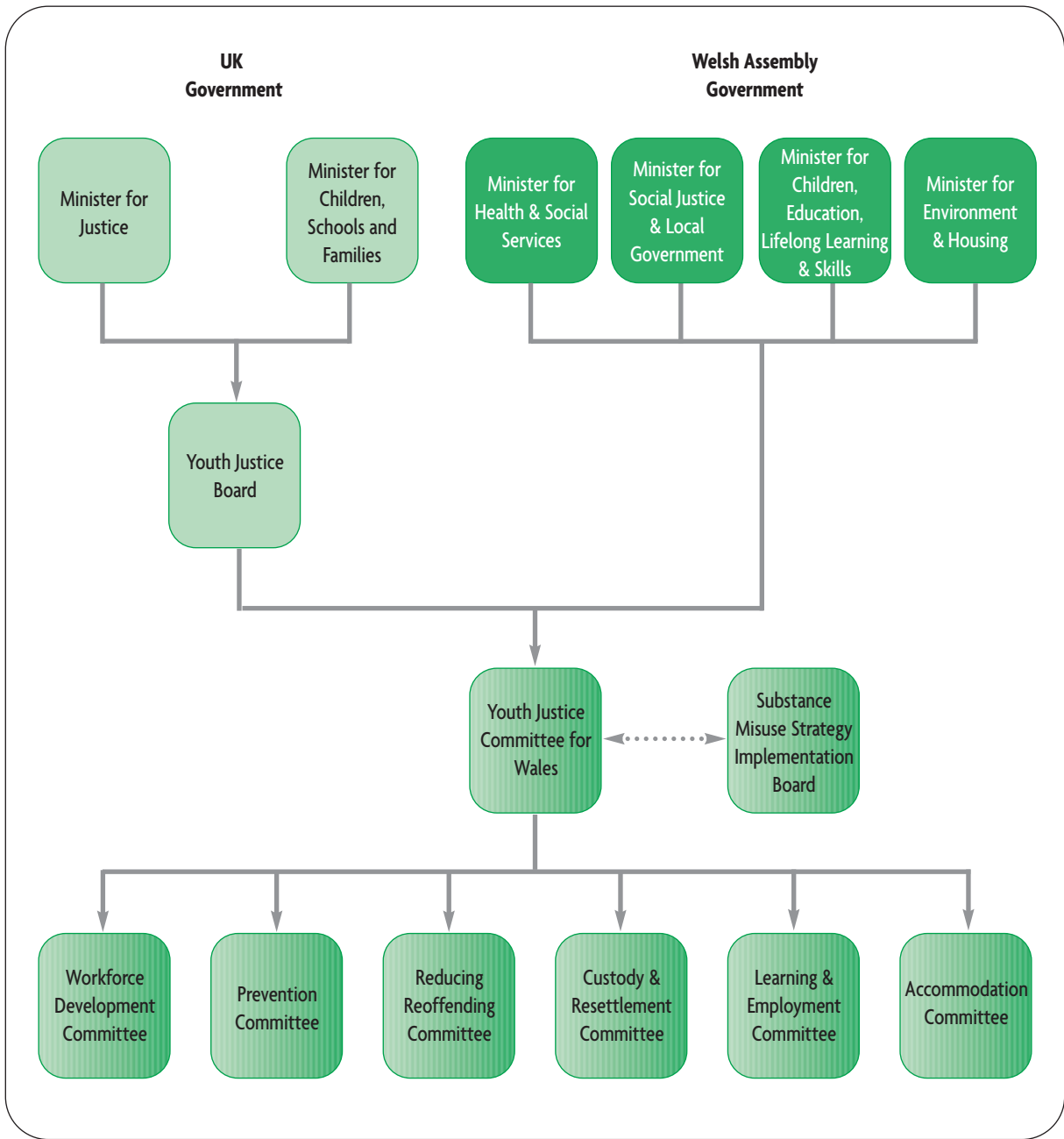
We have also changed the way in which the Youth Justice Committee for Wales will oversee the delivery of actions against our priority areas.

### Youth Justice Committee for Wales

The Youth Justice Committee for Wales is a cross-Governmental group that advises the YJB and the Assembly Government on the implementation of the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*. From April 2009, its role will be enhanced to allow it to give direction and scrutiny to a range of sub-committees, each of which will focus on performance and good practice under one of our priority areas. We believe that this will provide an essential link between senior representatives from Local Government, on-the-ground service delivery, performance improvement and the development of evidence-based policy.

We have reorganised the delivery of the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* in a way that will allow us to focus on the areas that will have the greatest impact on reducing offending and minimising the use of custody for children and young people.

Youth Justice Committee for Wales governance diagram



# PRIORITY 1: PREVENTION OF FIRST-TIME OFFENDING

## 2004 All Wales Youth Offending Strategy objectives

In the 2004 *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we set out our intention to identify children and young people at risk of offending and to provide a range of effective and appropriate programmes to re-engage and divert them from offending behaviour. We wanted to achieve this by encouraging joint working between partnerships at the local level to ensure that any response to identified need was appropriate.

We recognised that the most effective way to avoid committing young people to custody in the long run is to prevent them from entering the criminal justice system in the first place, and to retain as many as possible at earlier levels of intervention.

For these reasons, in 2006 we set a joint target to reduce the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system by 5% in 2008.

## Our achievements

- The number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Wales has fallen by 14.14% between 2005/06 and 2007/08. This means that 767 fewer children and young people became caught up in the formal criminal justice system.
- In our *Youth Crime Prevention in Wales: Strategic Guidance (2008)*, we described two tiers of youth crime prevention activity: tier one diversionary work and tier two targeted programmes. In line with this, the Assembly Government has supported a range of diversionary interventions as part of the Safer Communities Fund, and the YJB has funded SPLASH Cymru, which delivers geographically-targeted diversionary interventions each year in 15 local authorities across Wales.
- We have promoted effective targeting of those most at risk of offending by encouraging multi-agency identification processes and partnership delivery of individual support packages for these individuals. To do this, we have supported 11 youth inclusion and support programmes and nine youth inclusion projects. These programmes, funded by the YJB and the Assembly Government, bring together youth justice services, Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYP Partnerships) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to prevent children and young people from entering the youth justice system. In 2007/08, these schemes worked with over 8,000 children and young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system.
- We have also supported a new restorative approach to policing in North Wales. The Youth Restorative Disposal is being tested as a way of giving individual officers an opportunity to allow victims and perpetrators to reach mediated solutions to put right the harm that offending causes.



This means that children and young people come face-to-face with the consequences of their behaviour without being unnecessarily drawn into the criminal justice system.

### Delivery plans for 2009–11

Despite the fact that there has been a national reduction of first-time entrants to the youth justice system over the past three years, there are still areas in Wales where this has not been the case. Furthermore, the great successes that we have seen in other areas may mean that it will be hard to maintain a continuous reduction.

In order to address these challenges, we will:

- in conjunction with the Prevention Committee, build upon information from 2008–09 Youth Justice Plans Cymru and identify the reasons why certain areas of Wales are continuing to see a rise in first-time entrant levels
- widen the coverage of SPLASH Cymru by making it available to all youth offending service areas in Wales and allow local partnerships more flexibility in its delivery
- continue to fund, monitor and support targeted prevention programmes in Wales
- work with police services in Wales to pilot and roll out the Youth Restorative Disposal.

## PRIORITY 2: REDUCING REOFFENDING

### 2004 *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* objectives

When a child or young person enters the criminal justice system, it is imperative that we identify the causes of their offending behaviour in order to design programmes of intervention that will help prevent them from offending again. In order to do this, we rely on high quality, well-supported local youth justice services. Support for these services is important at a national level, but essential at a local level, where they must be recognised as full participants in both CSPs and CYP Partnerships alike.

In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we committed ourselves to promoting effective joint working between partnerships at a local level. We wanted not only to facilitate the delivery of appropriate, robust and credible community sentences, but also to ensure that as part of this, the support and services to which young people are universally entitled were made available. We wanted particular attention to be paid to the mental health needs of young people to avoid them being inappropriately dealt with by the youth justice system.

In recognition of the multi-disciplinary nature of YOTs, we also wanted to develop a cohesive and effective youth justice workforce. In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we set out our intention to ensure that the professional qualifications supported by the YJB are recognised by the Care Council for Wales, and that Skills for Justice recognised the particular skills and training needs of the youth justice workforce in Wales.

### Our achievements

- Data from youth offending services in Wales shows that the frequency of reoffending among children and young people has fallen from 44 per 100 in 2005, to 30 per 100 in 2008.<sup>1</sup>
- We have ensured that CSPs have a key role to play in the reduction of reoffending by children and young people. CSPs are responsible for local distribution of the Community Safety Fund by identifying local needs and balancing demands. We also specify that the chairs of the CSP, CYP Partnership and the youth offending service management board sign off local spending plans for the fund; this ensures that all relevant partnerships recognise and share the same agenda for delivering effective services to those who have offended.

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated by examining reoffending in the first three months after conviction, and comparing a cohort of young people in 2005 with a similar cohort in 2008.

- We have also aligned the strategic planning requirements for youth justice services with those for the Children and Young People's Plan. It is a mutual requirement of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Youth Justice Plan Cymru that the work of both partnerships is referenced in order to promote improved access to universal services for those within the youth justice system.
- From its £4.5m Safer Communities Fund, the Assembly Government supports around 50 programmes per year for YOTs, which work with children and young people serving community sentences. The YJB's effective practice grants make up around 30% of funding for youth justice services in Wales. The YJB monitors the delivery of youth justice services in Wales. It provides practice improvement support from its team in Wales and from national performance improvement consultants. The Assembly Government monitors the delivery of the Safer Communities Fund and commissions Nacro Cymru to conduct research into the delivery of youth justice in Wales, and to give direct support to YOTs.
- We have established the Referral Order as a credible and effective intervention for those appearing in court for the first time. This involves a partnership between community volunteers, YOTs and sentencers, who devise a plan of action for young people found guilty of a first-time offence too grave to be dealt with out of court.
- We have also delivered the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) as a robust alternative to custodial sentences and remand.
- In order to address the mental health needs of those within the youth justice system, we set an exacting target to ensure mental health advisors are available to each YOT.
- We have fostered the professionalisation of the youth justice workforce by creating a national qualifications framework. By April 2006, over 80% of practitioners in Wales had started a youth justice qualification from the YJB's national qualification framework. In the period from April 2006 to March 2008, a further 383 practitioners, managers and volunteers undertook a qualification or training funded by the YJB.

### Delivery plans for 2009–11

Reducing reoffending is one of the YJB's corporate goals under PSA 23 (Make communities safer), and it is one of the set of outcome measures under the Children and Young People's Plans.

Although there have been real reductions in the frequency and seriousness of youth reoffending in Wales, we recognise that more needs to be done. In the face of an economic downturn, reaching our target of reducing youth reoffending by a further 10% between 2008 and 2011 will be a challenge. Despite this, we remain cautiously optimistic that we can achieve this reduction.

We will:

- work with the Children's Commissioner for Wales to mainstream and embed consultation with, and the participation of, children and young people in the youth justice system

- support youth offending services to implement the Scaled Approach<sup>2</sup> in Wales, in readiness for the start of the Youth Rehabilitation Order;<sup>3</sup> this will give youth offending services, magistrates and judges a wide range of sentencing options from which to create bespoke packages of intervention to address offending behaviour
- improve mental health provision for those in the care of youth offending services by developing Forensic Adolescent Teams within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- oversee and implement those aspects of the *Youth Crime Action Plan* intensive package that apply to Wales via the Reducing Reoffending Committee, a subgroup of the Youth Justice Committee for Wales
- through analysis of the Youth Justice Plans Cymru and work with youth offending services, identify and disseminate emerging and notable practice
- continue funding Nacro Cymru to support performance and practice improvement in Wales' youth offending services
- ensure that professional qualifications for youth justice practitioners are integrated with those for the wider children's workforce and supported by the Care Council for Wales
- ensure that the development of integrated family support teams complements the work of youth offending services
- support Skills for Justice to enhance training within the justice sector through the use of national occupational standards, national vocational qualifications and action learning for youth justice managers.

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2 See [www.yjb.gov.uk/scaledapproach](http://www.yjb.gov.uk/scaledapproach)

3 See [www.yjb.gov.uk/yro](http://www.yjb.gov.uk/yro)

## PRIORITY 3: SAFE CUSTODY WHERE REQUIRED, LEADING TO EFFECTIVE RESETTLEMENT

### 2004 *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* objectives

In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we approached the youth justice system as a continuum, which must attend to both the vulnerability of children and young people who offend, and the risk that their actions pose to others. Where offences are grave or young people are prolific repeat offenders, this continuum may include a period in secure accommodation. Wherever possible, however, the route to custody should begin with an attempt to use robust community sentences as an alternative. We must ensure that sentencers in all parts of Wales have full confidence in their local youth offending service's ability to carry out community penalties effectively and rigorously.

However, when all other options have been exhausted, custody may be necessary. Where this is the case, it should be carried out in an environment that prioritises safeguarding and fosters rehabilitation that leads to successful resettlement into the community. This includes keeping those in custody close to home and in touch with services in Wales that can facilitate successful reintegration into learning, accommodation and employment.

Despite the fact that their liberty is curtailed, children and young people entering custody must be able to access a similar range of rights and entitlements that they should have in their communities. They should be able to make choices to maintain their cultural identity, including the language in which they wish to communicate and learn.

For these reasons, in the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, our principle was that children and young people from Wales who serve a custodial sentence should do so within an environment that maintains their connection with their families and communities. Where possible, we wanted to achieve this through an expansion of the juvenile secure estate in Wales to match demand.

In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we also emphasised the need for provision of effective resettlement packages for young people following a period within the secure estate. In particular, we stressed the need to address accommodation, education, training and employment needs.

### Our achievements

- The number of children and young people from Wales in custody has fallen from around 185 in April 2004 to 143 in February 2009.

- In order to fulfil our commitments, we have tried to manage both the supply and demand for custodial places by augmenting community sentences as a robust alternative to custody, and by expanding the number of secure places in Wales from 43 in 2004, to 79 in 2008.
- We have rolled out the ISSP to all YOTs in Wales. This provides young people with a 25-hour per week schedule of educational, training and behavioural interventions intended to promote inclusion and rehabilitation. The ISSP has provided courts with a credible sentencing alternative to custody for children and young people across Wales.
- In order to reassure the courts that children and young people serving their sentences in the community are held to account for the consequences of their offending behaviour in a constructive manner, we have encouraged the use of restorative and reparative interventions. We have funded a range of reparation and unpaid work projects using the Assembly Government's Safer Communities Fund. The YJB has encouraged all YOTs to prioritise reparation and contact with victims as part of every sentence plan.
- We have expanded the provision of custodial places in Wales. There are now an extra 28 beds in Parc Young Offender Institution (YOI) and a further three beds planned for Hillside Secure Children's Home. In 2001, there were enough secure places in Wales to accommodate around 9% of Welsh young people sentenced to custody; by 2004 this had increased to 22%, and by April 2009 there had been a further increase to around 57%.
- We have funded Resettlement and Aftercare Programmes to assist the resettlement of young people leaving custody. In four youth offending service areas in Wales, these programmes deal with the most vulnerable young people leaving custody, particularly where substance misuse contributes to their offending behaviour. We have also ensured that the ISSP is available for those leaving custody in order to support children and young people at the earliest opportunity during the community phase of their sentences.

### Delivery plans for 2009–11

Despite successes in reducing demand and increasing the supply of places, we recognise that there are still too many children and young people from Wales sentenced to custody, and too many of them have to be accommodated outside Wales. The proportion of those who appear in court and are given the most severe penalties is inconsistent across Wales. In some areas, a disproportionate number of young people are being sentenced to custody.

Although we have seen reductions in reoffending and in those entering the youth justice system, public confidence in the criminal justice system remains stubbornly low. It is possible that this lack of confidence is reflected in the courts. We must work harder to ensure that sentencers are able to address public concerns in a way that allows for young people who have offended to be kept in their communities.

While we have made a start on providing children and young people from Wales with an appropriate learning environment, we want to do more to counter the education and career deficits that can occur when they are placed in secure facilities in England. These placements can create considerable challenges

for these young people when they reach the end of their custodial terms. Important aspects of a successful resettlement package are not always available to children and young people leaving custody. Too often, unacceptably long periods of time elapse between release and access to services.

We will:

- through the new Custody and Resettlement Committee, work with Nacro Cymru to undertake a comparative study of high and low custody areas in Wales; using this information we will challenge and support areas with consistently high proportions of young people being sentenced to custody
- encourage the expansion of resettlement programmes to every youth offending service area in Wales
- increase the number of beds that we provide in Hillside Secure Children's Home, and continue to explore how we can achieve more provision in North Wales
- implement the Welsh Language Action Plan in all secure establishments that house children and young people from Wales
- establish a mental health in-reach service for Parc YO1
- through our analysis of Youth Justice Plans Cymru and work with the Home Office Crime Team Wales, disseminate emerging practice to promote ways of boosting public confidence in the criminal justice system
- develop, publish and implement a workforce development strategy for the secure estate
- carry out actions in this delivery plan related to improving access to learning and employment, accommodation and substance misuse services in order to promote effective resettlement
- work with the Department for Health and Social Services to define an expected package of support for children and young people leaving custody in Wales, and for those returning after a period in custody in England.

## PRIORITY 4: INCREASING ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT

### 2004 *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* objectives

In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we recognised the importance of learning and employment as a means by which the resilience of children and young people is reinforced to protect them from the risk of offending. We wanted to ensure that there are education and training arrangements in place for young people within the criminal justice system that meet their needs.

One of the ways to achieve this was to ensure that those within the youth justice system have an equal entitlement to educational guidance compared with those outside it. We also wanted the educational standard of all those entering custody to be assessed and addressed. In order to facilitate stable and effective resettlement, we encouraged youth offending services to ensure that careers advice is available to those leaving custody.

### Our achievements

- Together we have provided funding across Wales to build the type of partnership work that is needed to secure provision for children and young people who have disengaged from learning. Every YOT in Wales has an education officer, whose primary role is to broker access to appropriate learning and employment for the children and young people that they care for. Assisted by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), the YJB has distributed around £470,000 per year for Keeping Young People Engaged projects to ensure that the learning needs of those within the youth justice system are addressed as they transfer out of the care of the youth offending service.
- We have explored ways in which individual support and mentoring for children and young people in the youth justice system can be used to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. For example, a Personal Support in Custody project was piloted by DCELLS in two local authorities to enable young people held in Ashfield and Stoke Heath YOIs to access their entitlements in relation to education and training, and to support their transition from custody to community.
- In 2007, following a recommendation from the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, we conducted a review of Welsh language provision in the secure estate. This confirmed and emphasised the importance of both identifying and providing services for children and young people whose first language is Welsh. It is difficult for children and young people to maintain their learning when they transfer from the community to a custodial setting; this problem is exacerbated by the requirement for them to undertake that learning in a second language, where the ability to use a full vocabulary



and to articulate ideas is limited. Furthermore, when this is not understood and catered for by secure estate personnel, feelings of isolation and frustration can arise.

- As well as expanding the number of secure places within Wales, in recognition of the particular needs of Welsh children and young people in the secure estate, particularly those accommodated in England, we have undertaken a programme of work to improve facilities available in the secure establishments that most frequently house them.
- In Ashfield YOI, weekly Welsh language and culture classes are now delivered by tutors who have completed training for this role at Cardiff University. Under Stoke Heath YOI's equality and diversity policy, young people not only attend Welsh language and culture classes, but can also pursue basic skills and GCSE examinations through the medium of Welsh.
- DCELLS has funded a range of participation projects across the secure estate in Wales and England that have resulted in improved access to the kind of educational materials, information, advice and guidance that young people have told us they want. This has helped to develop libraries and resources that now include reference to Welsh culture and heritage, as well as bilingual materials that address matters such as financial literacy.
- In order to demonstrate our joint commitment to improving learning for those in the youth justice system in Wales, DCELLS has established a permanent learning initiative to ensure children and young people have improved access to their entitlements for education, training, employment and information, advice and guidance.
- We have augmented these improvements by providing an independent advocacy service and a full-time Careers Wales worker in Parc YOI. These services provide children and young people with assistance if they wish to make complaints or need advice, and ensure that planning for the world of work begins before the date of release.
- We have also made sure that youth justice professionals have ways of contributing to the wider learning needs of those they care for in a manner that facilitates continuous identification of individuals' learning needs and delivers services that suit them. Together, we have developed bespoke educational guidance for secure children's homes in Wales, and DCELLS has developed an individual learning plan that can be used by YOTs and the secure estate to aid the seamless transfer of vital information between professionals.
- The All Wales School Liaison Core Programme, jointly funded by the Assembly Government and the four police forces, has been established and is now delivered at key stages in 97% of primary and secondary schools, and a number of pupil referral units across Wales. This initiative aims to provide a core programme of accurate, consistent and credible information to deter children and young people from behaviour that may lead to involvement with the youth justice system.

### Delivery plans for 2009–11

We have worked hard to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in the youth justice system. However, there is a great deal more to be done to ensure access to appropriate learning and employment for those leaving custody or serving community penalties.

Since 2002, we have been monitoring the extent to which children and young people in the youth justice system receive their universal entitlements to education and training. In 2004/05, the proportion of children and young people in the youth justice system who had access to full-time education, training and employment was 73.9%. This had fallen to 65.7% by 2007/08 – a deterioration in performance that can be attributed to a combination of more stringent recording guidelines for this indicator and ongoing difficulties in accessing appropriate learning and employment for this group.

It is clear that there are still too many areas in Wales where mainstream education and training is not readily available for these individuals. In order to address this, we will:

- work with YOTs and Careers Wales to ensure that children and young people at all points of their involvement with the youth justice system, including those held in the English secure estate, have access to careers advice; this will be overseen by the Learning and Employment Committee and the Custody and Resettlement Committee
- enhance the All Wales School Liaison Core Programme to ensure that a tailored core programme is further rolled out to pupil referral units in areas of greatest need
- work with the UK Government to implement the transfer of responsibility for education in the secure estate to local authorities in Wales as part of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill 2008–09
- develop strategic guidance for youth offending services and local education authorities to ensure that young people within the youth justice system are provided with individual education plans, as set out in the Assembly Government's guidance *Inclusion and Pupil Support* (circular no. 47: 2006); this will be achieved through the Learning and Employment Committee, and will build on work done by DCELLS to establish an enhanced job description for youth offending service education workers
- implement a range of initiatives funded by the European Social Fund to support youth justice services in their efforts to engage children and young people in appropriate learning and aid their progress into work.

## PRIORITY 5: INCREASING ACCESS TO SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

### 2004 *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* objectives

In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we identified the need to develop and extend appropriate accommodation for young people who have offended to help them to avoid reoffending and custody. For those aged 16 to 18 in particular, difficulties related to accessing and sustaining independent housing can increase the likelihood that they will reoffend and decrease the likelihood that, should this occur, they will be kept within the community.

We set out our intention to promote the needs of children and young people in the youth justice system under local homelessness and supporting people arrangements by encouraging youth offending services and local authorities to share appropriate information.

We also wanted to establish a way of monitoring the performance of local authorities and youth offending services, and achieving access to suitable accommodation for the children and young people that leave custody, by setting appropriate targets.

### Our achievements

- In 2004, we set an expectation that 100% of children and young people involved in the youth justice system should be in suitable accommodation. Our monitoring of this target has demonstrated a steady increase in the proportion of children and young people suitably housed, from 91.6% in 2003/04 to 93.8% in 2007/08.
- We have ensured that every youth offending service in Wales has a named accommodation officer, whose primary role is to broker access to suitable housing for the children and young people in their care and to support them in maintaining stable living arrangements.
- We have also established the Developing Effective Accommodation Services for Young Offenders Project, in partnership with Llamau. This has begun to identify an all-Wales approach to the accommodation of children and young people who offend, which integrates the work of the youth offending service and local housing services.

## Delivery plans for 2009–11

Although almost 94% of children and young people involved in the youth justice system are satisfactorily housed, it is not acceptable that the remaining 6% are either homeless or in unsuitable accommodation.

In order to support local areas to address this, we will:

- publish strategic guidance for youth offending service accommodation officers and local authorities in Wales; this will be led by the Accommodation Committee and will build on the recommendations of the Developing Effective Accommodation Services for Young Offenders Project
- work with the Department for Health and Social Services to ensure that any package of support for children and young people leaving custody takes into account the need for stable accommodation
- build on the work to embed the needs of children and young people into local homelessness and supporting people strategies by pursuing the relevant actions under the National Supporting People Strategy and the National Homelessness Plan.

## PRIORITY 6: TIMELY ACCESS TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE SCREENING, ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT

### 2004 *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* objectives

Substance misuse is one of the primary predictors of future offending behaviour among children and young people. In the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*, we emphasised the need for local responses to substance misuse among children and young people, primarily through the work of substance misuse action teams.

### Our achievements

- In 2004, only 65.8% of those identified as needing a detailed substance misuse assessment in YOTs received it within five working days; by March 2008, 88.5% were assessed within this timeframe. Of those who were assessed as needing an intervention, 93.4% received treatment within 15 working days in 2004; by 2008 this had increased to 94.7%.
- YOTs can now access a range of substance misuse treatment services supported by the Assembly Government's Substance Misuse Action Fund and the Safer Communities Fund, such as the INCLUDE Turnaround Project.
- We have ensured that all young people under the statutory care of a YOT in Wales, including those released from custodial sentences, are assessed in order to determine levels of need in relation to substance misuse. We have provided funding from the YJB for substance misuse service provision within all YOTs in Wales.
- Resettlement and Aftercare Programmes have also provided enhanced resettlement support for children and young people leaving custody whose offences were related to substance misuse.
- Through the Safer Communities Fund, we have funded 11 programmes across Wales to support local partnerships in their work to tackle substance misuse and reduce substance misuse-related offending among children and young people.
- The YOT substance misuse performance indicator was included as part of the Assembly Government's substance misuse performance management framework in 2006. We have monitored performance and practice against this indicator and have continued this into the current reporting period for the *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*.

## Delivery plans for 2009–11

Notwithstanding improved performance against our key performance indicators and the excellent work that many substance misuse workers do in youth offending services across Wales, more attention needs to be paid to creating a consistent and effective service in every area. In *Working Together to Reduce Harm: The Substance Misuse Strategy for Wales 2008–2018*, we identified that levels of service vary across Wales, particularly in terms of how well the youth offending service and local partnerships work together. More needs to be done to promote and disseminate existing effective practice among substance misuse workers and to reinforce the youth offending services' engagement with Substance Misuse Action Teams.

We will:

- through the Substance Misuse Strategy Implementation Board, develop strategic guidance for the provision of substance misuse services to children and young people in the care of youth offending services
- consider the findings and recommendations of a review of substance misuse counselling provision, with a view to improving the availability of counselling services, including those for children and young people in the youth justice system
- encourage CSPs and Substance Misuse Action Teams to adopt the resettlement and aftercare model, and assist in its implementation where this is pursued
- consider the evaluation of the Turnaround Project to inform effective service planning
- work to embed substance misuse performance indicators in the new Local Health Board performance framework
- use the opportunities offered by the NHS reorganisation to better plan and co-ordinate treatment pathways for children and young people.

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