

Youth Crime Action Plan: One year on Summary

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1. The vast majority of young people are law-abiding and make a positive contribution to their communities. But a small minority commit crime and behave anti-socially with devastating impact for victims, families and communities and the futures of the young offenders themselves.
2. Tackling both the causes and consequences of youth crime has been at the centre of our reforms since 1997. We have taken tough action to tackle serious youth violence, including knife crime, through the Tackling Knives Action Programme, and anti-social behaviour, by introducing tools and powers such as anti-social behaviour orders.
3. The youth justice system has been transformed. In 1998, Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were founded in all areas, introducing for the first time multi-agency teams combining expertise and resources to get young people on the right track. The Youth Justice Board was created to oversee the youth justice system in England and Wales.
4. For the first time, a separate custodial estate was established for young people who needed to be in secure conditions. Healthcare and education in custody have improved. And we have put victims and witnesses more securely at the heart of what we do, giving victims rights in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and giving them a voice in the system through the Victims' Champion, Sara Payne.
5. Furthermore, we have invested a considerable amount in prevention. We have reduced bad behaviour and attendance at school (in 2007/08, behaviour was judged to be good or outstanding in 72% of secondary schools),¹ opened 3000 Sure Start Children's Centres, and made record investment in young people's positive activities and in support for

¹ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08 (2008). Ofsted. London: The Stationery Office
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Annual-Report-2007-08>

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parents. From 2008/9 to 2010/11, we will be spending around £2bn on prevention, including wider activity such as Sure Start Children's Centres, parenting support and positive activities. We are also spending over £1bn a year to support the Ten Year Strategy for Childcare and Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare which will help reduce inequalities amongst very young children and remove some of the risk factors that can lead to poor outcomes, including crime later on down the line.

6. Our wider offer to young people is crucial to our efforts to ensure that all young people are on the path to success, and to give them the skills and maturity to prevent their involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour. To support this, in 2008 we extended to 17 year olds the September Guarantee which was introduced in 2007 to ensure that every young person leaving compulsory education at 16 receives a suitable offer of a place in learning. And we have already legislated to raise

the education and training participation age, to 17 in 2013 and then to 18 in 2015.

7. We have also implemented key commitments from *Aiming high for young people* to increase participation in positive activities and improve the quality of youth services for all young people in a way that supports their development of wider skills and resilience. This includes making substantial progress in delivering our commitment to transform places to go, launching **myplace** which has already committed £240m to 62 highly innovative youth centres and facilities, and investing over £22m this year in upgrading youth facilities located in areas of high crime and anti-social behaviour. And through Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds over 1.5million young people have benefited from positive activities that have been determined by young people themselves.
8. We have seen the following encouraging trends. Fewer young people re-offend and those who do commit fewer crimes. For example,

between 2000 and 2007, the frequency of young people's re-offending fell by nearly a quarter (24%)². The number of young people coming into the criminal justice system in the first place has also gone down, by 9% from 2006/7 to 2007/8³. Fewer young people are using drugs and alcohol and more are taking part in positive activities. Furthermore, the number of young people suffering serious youth violence has reduced. Latest provisional figures⁴ show a 22% reduction in admissions for 'sharp object' assault for teenagers across England in March 2008 to February 2009 compared with the same period the previous year.

9. Building on this progress, in 2008 the Government launched the £100 million Youth Crime Action Plan, with four main aims:

- **Preventing youth offending**, reducing the number of young people who enter the criminal justice system in the first place.
- **Reducing re-offending** at all levels, from anti-social behaviour to serious youth violence, with effective punishment and rehabilitation.
- **Building public confidence** in our efforts to tackle youth crime, including offering **better support to young victims** and letting people know what we are doing and see the results.
- Ensuring that young people in the youth justice system are given the opportunity to **achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes** to give them the best chance of turning their lives around.

² Reoffending of juveniles: results from the 2007 cohort England and Wales Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin (2009). Statistical bulleting. Ministry of Justice. London.
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/reoffendingjuveniles.htm>

³ First-time Entrants Aged 10-17 to the Criminal Justice System in England, 2000-01 to 2007-08 (2008). Department for Children, Schools and Families. London
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000821/FTEPublication.pdf>

⁴ Hospital Episode Statistics Admissions for Assault by Sharp Object Teenagers (13-19 years old). The Health and Social Care Information Centre. London
<http://www.hesonline.nhs.uk/Ease/servlet/ContentServer?siteID=1937&categoryID=1131>

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10. To achieve these aims, we committed in the Youth Crime Action Plan to a triple-track approach across everything we do to tackle youth crime:
 1. Better **prevention** to tackle problems before they become serious or entrenched.
 2. More **support** to address the underlying causes of poor behaviour, including support for parents. This support will be non-negotiable where necessary.
 3. Tough **enforcement** where behaviour is unacceptable or illegal.

Case study: Joining up to achieve results: North East Lincolnshire

Police intelligence about calls relating to youth anti-social behaviour is used to direct **after-school patrols, street based teams and Operation Staysafe** to hotspot areas across the county, with the combined aims of reducing crime (first-time entrants and re-offending rates), increasing participation in positive activities and improving community cohesion.

Police officers initially undertake a high-visibility after-school patrol, through which they signpost young people to the evening's positive activity sessions. This patrol then leads into the street based teams and Operation Staysafe activities, with uniformed officers joined by outreach youth workers, including young people with records of offending, who are on the apprenticeship scheme. They work together to great effect in engaging with the hardest-to-reach young people in those areas. Young people are also signposted to the Youth Service's Mobile Youth Unit situated in the same location. This facility offers IT support, sexual health advice and referral to mainstream support services. As part of the operation, young people at significant risk of harm are removed to a place of safety staffed by senior youth workers who will look after their needs and refer them to the appropriate agency.

North East Lincolnshire has reported a 53% reduction in calls to police on youth anti-social behaviour between January and June 2009 compared with the same period in the previous year, from 3,777 to 1,788. This information is collected from the operational records of local police forces.

Progress so far

11. We have made real progress in the last year in delivering the Youth Crime Action Plan and related work on alcohol and knives.
12. To **prevent youth offending**, the following has been achieved over the past year:
 - We have set up 42 new youth crime **Family Intervention Projects**, targeting high-risk families. We have reached 2,000 families – well on the way to our target of 20,000 families by 2011. We have also expanded **support to parents** by rolling out the Parenting Early Intervention Programme – shown to halve the number of parents with concerns about their children’s behaviour – to every local authority.
 - We have launched the **Open Drive** to ensure that activities are available to young people when they are most needed, including on Friday and Saturday nights. Extra funding to 81 areas resulted in more than 5,000 additional sessions, engaging over 26,000 young people.
 - We have introduced **street teams** of youth workers to 65 local areas, working in partnership with the police to engage with young people on the cusp of disorder, as well as **Operation Staysafe**, which removes vulnerable young people from the streets late at night and takes them to a place of safety.
 - We have **supported more young people who are misusing drugs and alcohol**.
 - We have encouraged more schools and police forces to set up **Safer School Partnerships**, which build better relationships between young people and the police, and we have invested in **after-school police patrols** in 65 areas.

Case study: Lives turned around – Family Intervention Project in Stoke

Following multiple complaints from neighbours about the anti-social behaviour of their three youngest children, Family A were referred by the police and housing service to the Family Intervention Project. The mother and stepfather had rejected previous attempts to support the family to address a number of complex issues and none of the four children attended school regularly.

The Family Intervention Project key worker took a persistent approach which paid off. She worked intensively with the family to address poor parenting, spiralling debts, undiagnosed mental health issues, failure to attend school and the younger children's association with criminal and anti-social young people. Ten months after joining the project, all four children are back in full-time education. The eldest is at college full time and is holding down a part-time job. The educational achievement of the three youngest children has improved. The second eldest, who refused to go to school, is now enrolled in a practical skills-based course and is mentoring younger children participating in summer diversionary activities. The stepfather is being treated successfully for mental health issues and all the family's debts are being addressed. **There have been no further complaints of anti-social behaviour.**

13. Sometimes enforcement action is necessary in order to intervene early and stop problems escalating. The **Tackling Knives Action Programme** has taken this approach, carrying out targeted stop and searches to deter young people from carrying knives.
14. Delivering on our ambition to **reduce re-offending**, we have:
 - based **YOT workers in police custody suites** in 30 areas to deal with low-level offending more effectively, ensuring that young people are referred to appropriate services;

- taken tougher action against those who commit **serious youth violence**, with more and longer custodial sentences being given for knife possession. We have also provided £500,000 and support for a new **No To Knives coalition** bringing together NGO representatives (e.g. from the Peace Alliance, Prince's Trust and Damilola Taylor Trust) with leading figures from sport (Premier League), music (MOBO and Brit awards) and the corporate world (Asda) to drive forward a high profile anti-knives campaign;
 - made sentences more of a deterrent to young people by **expanding reparation during young offenders' leisure time**, including on Friday and Saturdays nights; and
 - tackled youth anti-social behaviour through **Challenge and Support Projects** in 52 areas of the country, working with over 8,000 young people and families between September 2008 and April 2009.
15. To **build public confidence** in our efforts to tackle youth crime, including offering **better support to young victims**, we have:
- **Broken new ground in supporting young victims and helping to keep young people safer.** Almost 13,000 young people have benefited from support and advice. We have also made a public pledge setting out what young people can expect from their local area.
 - **Given the public a chance to identify what reparation work they would like young people on community sentences to carry out.** We have provided guidance to YOTs on the need to consult local communities about local projects suitable for reparation work and many YCAP areas are already giving the community greater involvement. Islington, for example, has created community panels to advise on reparation projects, while Bolton use their Citizens' Panel to ask

Case study: Paying back to the community on Friday and Saturday night in Leeds.

Through the Youth Crime Action Plan, Leeds has extended the quantity of reparation activities completed by young offenders at weekends including Friday and Saturday nights, as a way for young people to pay back to the community.

Much of the reparation activity is delivered through the Leeds Youth Offending Service in partnership with the Groundwork Trust. The Trust's co-ordinators work closely with local communities to ensure that they are at the heart of decisions about the type of reparation work young people carry out. The partnership is well established so community groups often simply approach Groundwork with suggestions for activities.

One example of reparation work which came directly from the community was the environmental work done in the grounds of Rothwell Parish Church. This was suggested by a local resident who attended the church and knew of the reparation programmes expected of young people from the Youth Offending Service.

Other types of reparation delivered through the Trust include litter picks, working with neighbourhood wardens and charity shop work. The type of reparation activity is linked to the individual young person's offence history.

for suggestions for young people's reparation work as well as adult community payback.

- **Expanded the use of restorative justice**, where offenders make amends to their victims, through piloting the Youth Restorative Disposal in seven police forces.

In the future

16. The aims and approach of the Youth Crime Action Plan are the right ones. Prevention, support and enforcement remain the framework that is required in order to go further in tackling crime.

17. At the centre of our plan is a commitment to ensuring that the public knows about our work, can have a say in it and is confident that we are doing the right things and achieving results.

18. In particular, this means that support for victims must be a major plank of the work, and that they must have confidence in it.

19. Our vision is of:

- **confident communities** that have a say in local justice;
- **confident families** that get the support they need; and
- **confident young people** who are safe and are contributing positively.

Case study: A police officer on patrol during Operation Staysafe in Peterborough

On a freezing cold evening with temperatures set to drop below zero, travelling in an unmarked car, we stop and chat to youngsters, asking them to explain why they are out, and assessing the risk they could be in.

Just after 9pm, we find two boys, aged 10 and 11, riding in the middle of the road on bikes without lights, one of them smoking. We're not convinced by the boys' story that their parents know where they are, so we decide to take the boys to the place of safety and contact their parents. The boys are taken back and handed over to children's services experts, including members of the Youth Offending Team and referral and assessment workers, who eventually decide the boys can both return home. Both were followed up with an intervention plan to address their vulnerability.

For some youngsters the experience is quite daunting. One 14-year-old girl, who was caught drinking alcohol, doesn't appear quite so bold when she bursts into tears the moment her mother arrives at the centre to take her home. The teenager may have feared a stern talking-to, but her mother is clearly just glad to see her safe, and thanks police before taking her home.

Case study:

Despite it being a quiet night a total of nine children at risk were brought in off the streets. **Peterborough has reported a 5% reduction in calls to police on youth anti-social behaviour between January and June 2009 compared to the same period in the previous year, from 2,622 to 2,503. This information is collected from the operational records of local police forces.**

20. As well as continuing to drive forward the programme we have started, our action over the next year will achieve this vision by focusing on the following:

- **More consistent support for families who need it,** ensuring that the increased support now available is more consistently offered to families who need it, backed by action to ensure that this is taken up by families who don't take up help voluntarily.
- **New powers to ensure that parents take proper responsibility for the poor behaviour of their children.** We will strengthen Home School Agreements so that all parents and pupils understand their responsibilities to follow school rules and to

support good behaviour. In addition, new powers will be introduced so that a mandatory assessment of need for a family or parenting intervention is undertaken before an Anti-Social Behaviour Order is granted.

- **Earlier identification and intervention.** In the autumn, we will publish our plans, including new legislation, for improving local services' early intervention with children and families who need extra support. As part of this, we will consult on how services should work together to respond to a whole range of problems, including specific triggers that will lead to an automatic assessment of the need for parenting and family support.

- **A national offer for young victims**, backed by £500,000 of investment. The Victims' Champion, Sara Payne, will consider what more can be done for young victims as she undertakes her victim and witness journeys, meeting victims and witnesses across the country. She will report on these in the autumn of 2009, highlighting good practice and identifying areas for reform.
- **Building better relationships between young people and the police through encouraging the further formation of Safer School Partnerships.** Our vision is that every school that wants one should be part of a Safer School Partnership, subject to local resources. Our starting point is that areas where Safer School Partnerships will have most to offer schools should be prioritised in the first instance. Local partnerships (such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Children's Trusts) are best placed to know how to make this happen in their local areas, and to decide how to resource partnerships. Over the next year, we will ensure that parents know how they can ask for a review of whether a Safer School Partnership would be appropriate for their school.
- **Challenging all local areas to ensure that positive activities are available in areas where anti-social behaviour and crime are a problem, at times where it is most needed, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights.** This builds on our investment, throughout 2009 and 2010, in over a hundred youth centres providing positive activities in these areas through the Youth Capital Fund plus programme. Additionally, building on the Positive Activities for Young People guidance, *Creating a Sense of Belonging*, which sets out a clear expectation that the police will be involved in the targeting and commissioning of positive activities, the Youth Taskforce will work with local areas to ensure that police information on hotspots of youth crime

and anti-social behaviour influences the places and times that positive activities are delivered.

- **A renewed drive on serious youth violence**, to continue the drive against knife crime and extend our approach to cover all serious youth violence, with added investment in the Tackling Knives Action Programme, including making a greater commitment to tackle public fears about the impact of gangs on local communities, building on the work of police and local agencies which was successful in our earlier targeted programme. We will also drive closer joint working at local level to get the most out of the overlaps between the Tackling Knives Action Programme and Youth Crime Action Plan. All Youth Crime Action Plan areas that are also part of the Tackling Knives Action Programme will be asked to consider how they can prioritise serious youth violence in their Youth Crime Action Plan work. This means that Youth Crime Action Plan

initiatives, such as Family Intervention Projects, Operation Staysafe, after-school police patrols and street teams, will be focused particularly on young people at risk of getting involved in serious youth violence and other crimes, where this is necessary.

- **Stepping up our action to tackle youth alcohol-fuelled disorder**, starting with targeted enforcement activity over summer 2009.
- **Stepping up action to tackle anti-social behaviour**. Tackling anti-social behaviour is one of our major priorities and it is critical that, along with support and positive activities for young people, local agencies use the available tools and powers at their disposal, so that communities feel safer and have greater confidence in our efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour. There are four elements to our approach. First, the antisocial behaviour action website will provide people with contact details for who is responsible locally for tackling anti-

social behaviour and provide people with more information about specific measures that are being taken in their area to deal with it. Second, the Anti-social Behaviour Action Squad will work with local areas to establish local panels which will provide advice and support to frontline professionals who want more help to deal with problems that are having a severe impact on the community – such as underage drinking on an estate, or a family that's causing widespread chaos. Third, we will explore ways to speed up the process of bringing anti-social behaviour cases to court. Finally, we will look at ways of giving further support to give victims of persistent and long-term anti-social behaviour.

- **Ensuring that communities have confidence in sentencing**, by consulting annually with local communities on what reparation work young offenders should undertake and to publicise that work, both through the consultation and on an ongoing basis. We will also

promote the use of the unpaid work requirement within the new community sentence, the Youth Rehabilitation Order.

- Action to **tackle girls' offending**, particularly where it is related to alcohol. We will also look further at how girls are drawn into gang activities.

21. These actions, coupled with the drive and dedication of our delivery partners and practitioners, will make a real difference to the lives of young people and their communities.

Focus on Wales

Many of the Youth Crime Action Plan commitments related to aspects of policy that are devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. We have been working with them to ensure that commitments relating to reserved functions are delivered through the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy and, where relevant, align with the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy Delivery Plan 2009–11. To that end, we have funded two local authorities in Wales to deliver the reserved aspects of the Youth Crime Action Plan intensive package. Newport and Cardiff have submitted proposals which include ‘triage’ – placing Youth Offending Team officers in police custody suites, extending reparation activities and using street-based teams of Youth Offending Team officers and outreach youth workers.

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