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THE MAGAZINE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

FEATURE

Local revolutions

Annual Youth Justice Convention 2009 – redefining the relationship between national policy and delivery on the ground

YJ is published by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

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Do you have a story to tell? Have you worked with a child or young person who has made great progress? If you think you should be featured in Double Act, email **peter.valente@yjb.gov.uk**

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Knife programme pilot wins award

Young people portray their own experiences of knife crime

Birmingham Youth Offending Service, one of the pilot areas for the Knife Possession Prevention Programme, together with Recre8, a psychology-based drama company, have won the Fear and Fashion Award 2009 for excellence and innovation in helping young people to stop using and carrying knives.

The pilot for the YJB-sponsored programme was delivered to young people who had been associated with carrying knives and weapons.

The aim of the project was to highlight the effects of knife crime, paying particular attention to victim awareness, reasons why knives are carried, self-esteem, peer pressure, status and the notion of respect.

At the end of the eight sessions, Recre8 and YOS staff worked with the young people to devise *Fear*, a powerful performance based on the group's personal experiences surrounding knife crime.

The production was presented to an invited audience at The Drum, a prestigious Birmingham theatre.

Patricia Mutombo, team leader with Birmingham YOS, said: "This project has been an excellent example of partnership-working that has brought an element of creativity into our work with young people.

"It is clear that the young people involved with Recre8 have not only developed new skills but their confidence has increased together with their social skills."

Daniela Varley, director of Recre8, said: "The performance invited the audience to see beyond the crime of knife possession, and introduced them to the world that young people are forced to live in.

"The purpose of the performance was to ask the question, are we as a society doing enough to protect our young people?

"This project identified that the young people's main reasons for carrying knives is through fear of not knowing what might happen within their own areas."

EDITORIAL

CLAIRE FORBES
Editor

Convention brings practitioners together

This year's Annual Youth Justice Convention, held at the Southport Theatre and Convention Centre on 11 and 12 November put localism and partnership-working at the very heart of the youth justice agenda.

Our chair Frances Done spoke about the youth justice successes of the past year, and the challenges for practitioners and policymakers going forward.

She also emphasised the need to increase efforts to strengthen local partnerships.

The convention gave Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families Ed Balls, Tory shadow justice minister David Burrowes, and local MP Liberal Democrat John Pugh an opportunity to set out their priorities for the future of youth justice.

The event also saw a series of lively seminars away from the main hall on a variety of topical issues.

Write to us at: YJ Magazine, 11 Carteret Street, London SW1H 9DL.
Email: **yjmagazine@yjb.gov.uk**

Resettlement consortia take shape

BY BOB ASHFORD, HEAD OF YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGY, YJB

Getting resettlement right is vitally important. It can, and should, enable young people leaving custody to be given the support they need to help prevent them from reoffending.

Following the publication of the *Youth Crime Action Plan* last year, the YJB is leading a new comprehensive resettlement programme with significant additional financial support.

The work on resettlement being led by the YJB provides us with a new and exciting opportunity to make a real impact

The programme focuses on developing strategic partnerships across local authorities via two regional consortia in the YJB's North West and South West regions.

It also links to resettlement developments in London managed by the mayor's office and the local criminal justice board, and more widespread operational delivery at local level via Integrated Resettlement Support (IRS) in 48 local authority areas.

We are also working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and youth offending teams to develop an approach that provides a unique solution in Wales.

The programme, which will work locally with secure establishments, the Welsh Assembly Government and the regional government offices, aims to bring resettlement activity into the mainstream by encouraging greater integrated working between the youth justice system, children's services and other local services such as housing.

The YJB has recently appointed two project managers to develop the new resettlement consortia: Helen Mercer (North West) and Ann Marie Dodds (South West), who both have considerable experience within the youth justice system at regional level.

The work on resettlement being led by the YJB provides us with a new and exciting opportunity to make a real impact on the support and possibilities we can offer to young people leaving custody and, in doing so, continue to drive down offending and make communities safer. ▲

Further details on the progress of the resettlement programme will be featured in future editions of *YJ*.

Young people's art graces national stage

One of the entries for this year's Koestler awards

The YJB is supporting the Koestler Trust's annual exhibition, Art by Offenders, which opened last month at the Royal Festival Hall.

The show is due to run until 6 December and admission is free, with the YJB sponsoring all exhibits and awards for under-18s.

The exhibition showcases the artistic talents of young and adult offenders, and is curated by women from Downview Prison, the first time that those still serving sentences have selected the work.

Frances Done, chair of the YJB, said: "The artists in this show have laid bare their most personal thoughts and aspirations, as well as regrets for their crimes, victims and loss of liberty.

"The act of creating the work itself indicates their move towards rehabilitation, and many of the young artists are using their work to contribute towards their GCSEs, with qualifications and skills being the foundation upon which they can build a positive life on release." ▲

Annual Youth Justice in Wales conference

Local authorities in Wales demonstrated their commitment to reducing offending at this year's Annual Youth Justice in Wales conference, co-hosted by the YJB and Welsh Local Government Association.

More than one hundred senior figures joined education and skills minister John Griffiths AM, former Welsh rugby international Scott Quinnell and a host of key-note speakers and experts, including four young people currently in the youth justice system.

Youth offending team managers from across Wales supported the event by sharing their experiences with delegates and helping to deliver key messages on the central role every local authority plays in supporting young people within the youth justice system, and preventing them from entering it.

YJB national manager for Wales Sue Williams said: "Delegates, including a number of the senior councillors who attended, were particularly keen to tell us how powerful they found the seminars run by the young people."

YJB chair Frances Done who gave the opening address, said: "It was a great opportunity to meet senior representatives from local authorities across Wales, and to learn how they are engaging with the youth justice agenda." ▲

> "It was a great opportunity to meet senior representatives from local authorities across Wales, and to learn how they are engaging with the youth justice agenda"
>
> FRANCES DONE
> **YJB CHAIR**

Young people take on community challenge

BY SEAN CREANEY, SUPPORT OFFICER,
HALTON AND WARRINGTON YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM,
AND PROJECT MANAGER FOR THE COMMUNITY SPACE CHALLENGE

A local "unloved" area s transformed by young people

The Community Space Challenge is a voluntary project targeting young people at risk of offending or committing anti-social behaviour in the area of Halton.

Young people on the scheme, run jointly by Halton and Warrington Youth Offending Team and Halton Youth Inclusion and Support Panel, are expected to undertake four three-hour sessions transforming "unloved" areas within their community.

> One young person said of the scheme: "Great, had loads of fun, I really enjoyed it, can I come back on the project?"

Each young person spends four weeks planning, implementing and evaluating projects, with the aim of achieving the Junior Youth Achievement Award for 8 to 14-year-olds, or the Youth Achievement Award for 14 to 17-year-olds – courses endorsed by Changemakers.

Progress is recognised through gift vouchers chosen by the young people themselves to acknowledge the positive contribution they have made to the community, and to reward motivation, willingness to engage, and law-abiding attitudes.

Sessions have included revamping a disused community garden with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, and growing fruit and vegetables at a local allotment, with the aim of reducing inter-generational mistrust.

The project has successfully challenged some of the young people's initial negative attitudes, and has massively improved the environment for local residents in Halton.

Crucially, it has also increased the confidence of the local community in their young people.

One young person said of the scheme: "Great, had loads of fun, I really enjoyed it, can I come back on the project?", while his mother said: "Fantastic. My son now has an improved attitude towards the environment."

The latest initiative on the programme involved painting a walkway in Palacefields to highlight how fear of crime can disrupt lives – a project that involved Cheshire Police and the local Neighbourhood Management Team. ▲

For more information, visit **www.communityspacechallenge.org**

The collective approach to commissioning

BY JACQUIE FOWLER, PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, WIRING UP YOUTH JUSTICE

Collective commissioning is a structured way of obtaining goods and services, which saves time and money, and ensures that whatever is ordered exactly meets the needs of the users.

Colin Wilson, head of service at South Tees Youth Offending Service, and the Wiring Up Youth Justice programme are currently looking at how the process could be used to update all information technology across youth justice.

For now, Wilson is starting close to home. He says: "This is a governance framework to balance the requirements of the multiple users and stakeholders who benefit and make use of the Wiring Up Youth Justice IT applications such as eAsset and the Youth Justice Management Information System.

"As time goes on, users will require changes, adaptations and enhancements to the IT that has been provided by the programme. We want to assess demand at a regional level."

Collating together ideas for change and prioritising demand at a local level will save time and resources and help deliver change in a co-ordinated way.

Benefits will also accrue as a result of commissioning the development of software or delivery of training by using a formalised group of representatives from youth offending teams, the secure estate and the YJB.

As Wilson says: "Imagine if every information manager in every youth offending team in England and Wales spent 15 minutes, four times a year, raising change requests against each application.

"This would mean someone being on the phone for 18 weeks solid just to listen to the requirements for change. Collective commissioning will reduce the duplication of change requests, and save time and money for practitioners."

Wilson is establishing the level of interest in collective commissioning with the aim of setting up a governance structure and the group of representatives in the next few months, prior to the Wiring Up Youth Justice programme completion in March 2010.

If you are interested or want to find out more, email **colin_wilson@middlesbrough.gov.uk**

Advice from fellow practitioners helps make for a fine summer second time around

Young people show their creative flair

BY DAVID CURPHEY, TEAM LEADER, PETERBOROUGH YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

The evaluated benefits of summer arts colleges are well publicised. They include:

- a reduction in offending
- a greater likelihood of participating young people going on to education, training and employment, or achieving a qualification equivalent to a GCSE
- improvements in numeracy and literacy

Following an unsuccessful attempt to run a summer arts college in 2008, we at Peterborough Youth Offending Service (YOS) were cautious when we decided to run one in 2009.

Team manager Lynne Yarham led a review of the 2008 summer arts college so that we could avoid some of the pitfalls we'd encountered first time around.

She sought advice from UNITAS – the organisation responsible for overseeing summer arts colleges on behalf of the YJB and Arts Council England – and visited Ealing and Hillingdon Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) to find out what a successful summer arts college looked like.

She also had discussions with an external arts provider, RollingSound.

With a renewed enthusiasm to succeed, Lynne put together a team, with me as project manager, to support students, with the focus firmly on outcomes.

John's story

John had been given a Referral Order, and had already been identified as being at high risk of reoffending.

He wasn't initially identified as a priority to attend the summer arts college, and was placed on the reserve list.

However, following the failure of one young person to start, John was offered the opportunity to join the college.

I went to see John and his mum at their home, and found that he was very keen to join in, and promised to catch up during breaks and lunch.

His mum told me that she felt John needed some direction during his school break and, if he wasn't kept busy during this period, he was likely to "get himself into trouble".

John was as good as his word. He applied himself to the first art element (computer game design), catching up on the work he had missed during the first four days by the middle of week two.

John continued to thrive at the summer arts college, applying himself during the music week, and excelling during the photography week.

One of his photographs was used for the invitation to the celebration event.

Like the other eight young people who completed the summer arts college, John attained a Bronze Arts Award and was presented with this by the chief executive of Peterborough council Gillian Beasley and the head of youth offending, Bob Footer.

John's mother Debbie said of the celebration event: "I was so proud of him. Seeing the head of the council being bothered to present his award was a big thing."

"John has changed since he was at the college. He now thinks about things more. He doesn't like his current school, but he goes because he knows he can get results."

Since the summer arts college, John has not reoffended. More importantly, he tells me he sees a positive future for himself, and says he is not mixing with "the wrong people".

The summer arts college in Peterborough was successful for many reasons – but the most important of these were:

- the excellent advice offered by Ealing and Hillingdon YOTs
- the close working relationship with RollingSound
- support from both UNITAS and the management team at Peterborough YOS
- the hard work put in by the YOS summer arts college team
- most importantly, the commitment and efforts of nine young people, who are now proud holders of a Bronze Arts Award.

Making good: public consultation on youth reparation work

On 30 November 2009, the YJB will launch a pilot project within its website to promote youth reparation work.

The web pages, entitled Making Good, will showcase examples of reparation work and give members of the public the chance to suggest local activities.

This comes in the wake of the *Youth Crime Action Plan* commitment for the YJB to consult annually with local communities on the reparation work young people should undertake.

Eighteen youth offending teams (YOTs) in the North West of England are supporting the pilot, which involve them considering suitable public suggestions to implement.

The project will roll out to include YOTs nationwide in early 2010.

The YJB will manage the website and submissions, and also provide guidance and communications materials, such as posters and template press releases so YOTs can promote the initiative locally.

YJB project communications manager Victoria Falconer said: "By agreeing to promote the scheme at local level and implementing relevant public suggestions from the website, YOTs will be able to improve their public confidence outcomes."▲

For further details, email:
victoria.falconer@yjb.gov.uk

Practitioners are becoming increasingly savvy when it comes to using local press and radio to influence stakeholders and combat negative stereotypes of young people. Here's our mini-guide to making the most of the media.

Communications on a shoestring

Photo: Shutterstock

Citizen's panel

BY SIMON PAGE, HEAD OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES, YORK YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM

Using a local council consultation system, at York Youth Offending Service, we were able to reach a large and representative group – big enough to reveal diverse responses by gender, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, age, disability, geographical area and socioeconomic status.

We used the council system to ask the community what they thought about youth crime locally – and what should be done about it.

We then waited anxiously for the results, which came a few weeks later.

I was terrified by what we might have unleashed, but the views of the 1,600 householders on the council's list were really balanced – which contradicted the stereotype of what ordinary people think about youth crime.

In fact, their perception of youth crime locally is pretty much spot on.

This tells us that local people understand that dealing with youth crime is more complicated than local media headlines would have you believe.

Of local people, 91% reported that more visible policing topped their list of priorities.

More prosecutions and punishments were wanted by 70%, with this coming at the bottom of the list.

In addition, 34% told us they knew the big problem was high levels of minor offences, with only 15% thinking it was serious youth crime.

There was also strong support for restorative justice, more places to go and things to do for young people, and more supportive early intervention for both young people and families.

The citizen's panel has proved itself an incredibly rich source of information.

And it has told us that a "crackdown" on young people will not increase the public's confidence in the youth justice system. ▲

Like many involved at the business end of the youth justice system, at York Youth Offending Team (YOT), we kept putting PR and communications work on the "too difficult" pile.

But, in July, we bit the bullet and launched a regular monthly stakeholder bulletin, which is already getting a great response locally.

We had to hit on something easy to do and to maintain, so we made ourselves a few rules and stuck to them. We decided that the seven-rule recipe for stakeholder communications was:

- remain clear about who you want to reach
- provide the communication in electronic form only and design it in Microsoft Word
- limit yourself to two sides of A4 and 250 words per article – and include pictures
- provide a mix of serious and lightweight pieces, and always challenge perceptions
- remember that it's not just about the YOT, but about youth crime and partner services too
- make it a team effort by ensuring everyone approves the final draft, and sketch out the next one together with your team
- if the detail is covered well by someone else on another website, for example, simply include the link.

The latest edition of *York YOT News* is going to well over a hundred senior figures across York, including council leaders and health and criminal justice partners, as well as youth justice practitioners and volunteers. ▲

If you would like any more information, or advice about setting up your own stakeholder bulletin, email Simon Page at **simon.page@york.gov.uk**

Make the media work for you

Photo: Shutterstock

Why public relations matter

There are a lot of myths surrounding crime and young people – often perpetuated by a national media hungry for sensationalist headlines.

Used effectively, PR can help bust negative stereotypes about children and young people in the youth justice system, and counter media stories that seek to demonise them.

Keeping a low media profile is not necessarily the best way for youth offending teams (YOTs) to avoid falling foul of negative media coverage.

Building relationships with local media can, in fact, lead to mutual understanding and more responsible journalism.

And it's an effective way for YOTs to spread positive messages about the work they do to a local audience.

Regional newspapers are among the most trusted news sources, with twice as many people leafing through their local paper as tune into TV news programmes.

By cultivating good relationships with regional media, YOTs can help bolster public confidence in the youth justice system,and show what is being done on a local level to make their communities safer.

What makes a story of interest to the media?

Recognising what makes a good story is the first step to engaging with the media.

While there are no set criteria, a news story should do at least one of the following:

- engage people's interests and concerns – generally, the more people the story affects, the stronger it is
- include a hook or an angle, and be relevant to its audience
- have a "gee whiz" factor – something that really grips the listener or reader.

Writing a media release

A media release is a way of alerting the press to stories, making journalists aware of upcoming newsworthy events, and pushing positive messages.

A good media release should:

- tell a story, and include the key facts – who, what, where, why and how
- be simple and jargon-free and no longer than a side of A4
- have a snappy title or headline that captures the interest of the journalist
- include contact details so that journalists can get in touch for further information.

Every picture tells a story

Stories with pictures tend to get better coverage than those without.

Local authority press offices often have their own photographers – otherwise freelance photographers can be booked. ▲

The YJB press team is happy to offer advice about working with the media, and assistance in putting together press releases. Contact them on 020 7271 3014 or email **press@yjb.gov.uk**

How the good news was spread in Swindon

BY DAN CRAIG, YJB MEDIA MANAGER

For some time, Swindon Youth Offending Team (YOT) had been exploring different ways of communicating their successes to the public.

It was decided that the key to raising public confidence in the youth justice system lay at the grass-roots level, so they set about boosting the profile of the YOT locally.

A local paper, *Swindon Advertiser*, was selected as the most effective channel for these messages.

The YOT, already involved in a drive to engage young people in the delivery of their services, suddenly hit on the novel idea of asking the young people themselves to write the articles.

Thanks to this twist, the team were able to negotiate a series of articles to run in the local paper.

They also managed to get their pieces in the paper's centre-spread, which ensured that they really got the stories out there.

And the fact that the articles ran as a series helped keep up public interest, ensuring that the YOT's and the young people's achievements reached as wide a readership as possible.

The work of Swindon YOT and its young people was recognised when they won the YJB Communicating Youth Justice Award 2008 at last year's Annual Youth Justice Convention. ▲

It's all about working together

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

David Burrowes, Tory shadow justice minister

This year's Annual Youth Justice Convention in Southport hears how future partnerships need to be not only local but wide-reaching.

By Frances Done, YJB chair.

In my convention speech last year, I said that one of the biggest challenges for us all was to move from successful partnerships at youth offending team (YOT) level to the much wider effective partnerships that we have to secure if we are to make the next step in reducing youth crime and making our communities safer.

Crucially, we have to create powerful links across YOTs and wider children's services and health – at the same time, not losing the fundamental links with criminal justice agencies, the police and the courts.

And I have seen progress. In many areas I have visited, I see YOTs working positively, often taking the lead in integrating their work with that of children's services, driving up the standards of support offered to children and young people.

I am really encouraged by the number of YOT managers who have been playing a leadership role in making this happen. This comes as no surprise.

Over 10 years, YOTs have developed remarkable skills – exactly what is needed for this next crucial stage.

It takes incredibly hard work to turn the relationship between separate partners into something that can deliver the seamless, flawless and near-perfect performance that we are looking for.

We have to deliver great partnerships at the wider children's services level – but YOTs remain central to our successful delivery of youth justice. ▲

The winner in the 3D category was Redbank for their stunning ceramic vase

Ashfield won the award for the 15 to 17s 2D with their striking depiction of the US president Barack Obama

The award for the under-15s 2D work was won by Clayfields House with a detailed illustration of a scorpion

Convention puts focus firmly on local approach

Almost 900 delegates filled the Southport Theatre and Convention Centre on 11 and 12 November for the 2009 Annual Youth Justice Convention.

The event, entitled, "From National Policy to Local Practice", mixed plenary sessions with seminars covering diversity and ethnicity, and the Youth Restorative Disposal among many other issues.

The Best Communication in Youth Justice Award was won by Cambridgeshire Criminal Justice Board for their Kids are Alright campaign, which worked with local press to change the way young people were portrayed in the media.

The award included a £100 gift voucher, a cut-glass trophy and exclusive use of a winner's logo.

The Wakefield ISSP team were runners-up for their "My Town" photography project.

Clayfields House and Redbank Secure Children's Homes, and Ashfield Young Offender Institution won the awards for art by young people in custody (above). ▲

Politicians set out party priorities

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families Ed Balls, Tory shadow justice minister David Burrowes, and local MP Liberal Democrat John Pugh all spoke to the conference about their vision for the future of youth justice.

Balls stressed the success of the government's record on youth crime, and welcomed the imminent arrival of the Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO).

He also emphasised the absolute importance of early intervention and prevention.

In response to a question from the floor, Balls said that it was up to local partnerships to ensure that all the options contained in the YRO were made available locally, and that resources were only one part of the picture.

Meanwhile, David Burrowes put the emphasis firmly on local accountability, and the creation of a "separate" youth justice system, saying that, in the past few years, the line between the criminal justice system for young people and adults had become increasingly blurred.

He said that any future Conservative government would seek to strengthen the participation of the voluntary and private sector in creating positive outcomes for young people.

Pugh said that the principles of the *Youth Crime Action Plan* needed to be rebalanced in favour of prevention and support, as opposed to punishment and the excessive use of custody.

He also decried the unnecessary criminalisation of young people that had come about as a result of anti-social behaviour legislation. ▲

Sample seminars

Safeguarding in the secure estate for children and young people

YJB Board member Jennifer Izekor chaired the seminar, with contributions from Di Hart of the National Children's Society and Karl Mittelstadt, YJB lead on the issue.

The seminar was well attended, with a high level of interest from community-based agencies and individuals such as youth offending teams and councillors.

Participants were keen to hear about national developments around safer restraint techniques for the under-18 estate.

However, there was a feeling that the area of emotional well-being of young people in custody needed further consideration – particularly in relation to the disclosure of previous abuse.

The seminar concluded with a brief discussion of existing positive partnership-working between secure establishments and local authorities.

Using the Scaled Approach

Delegates wanted to hear from Neath Port Talbot Youth Offending Team (YOT) on the practice implications of a risk-based approach.

Mike Goldman, YOT manager, and Sharon Howells, a senior practitioner with the YOT, outlined benefits they'd had in tailoring packages of interventions to the young person, and having greater freedom to exercise their professional judgement.

It gave them the chance better to address the needs of the young people, without the requirement for additional resources.

They emphasised that negotiations and transparent communication with magistrates is essential to give sentencers confidence in pre-sentence reports and YOTs' decisions and recommendations. This relationship building took time and openness and required continuing effort.

YJB head of effective practice Trisha Boyce, representing the YJB, gave information on the ministerial approval process for the *National Standards* and other practice implications surrounding the Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO).

The YRO and the Scaled Approach both come into effect on 30 November.

TALKING POINT

BY FRANCES DONE, YJB CHAIR

Young people deserve the chance for independence

One of the most important needs young people have when leaving custody is for suitable, supported accommodation.

And on recent visits, I have seen what this means in practice.

At DePaul House in Birmingham, run by charity DePaul UK, I met dedicated workers who provide support in a unit for 10 homeless young people, many of whom are offenders.

These young people can now lead semi-independent lives thanks to the workers' support with basic life-skills such as learning to cook, applying for benefits, or getting into education.

As they develop, the young people can achieve an even greater degree of independence by moving into flats on the same site.

As they develop, the young people can achieve an even greater degree of independence

Depaul UK is also developing other projects in the same area to help young people achieve independence.

Key to these initiatives is DePaul's excellent relationship with Birmingham Youth Offending Service.

And partnership-working lies at the heart of another project I visited – this time in the centre of Barking, where charity Barking and Dagenham Foyer, the local authority and primary care trust (PCT) had come together to create an impressive new building.

Here modern accommodation is being provided alongside support services such as housing, benefits, and mental and sexual health – all on site in a one-stop shop.

When public sector bodies, such as local authorities and PCTs, are prepared to break out of their silos and work with organisations such as the Foyer movement and DePaul UK, we really get to see what can be achieved to help troubled young people back on the path to success. ▲

News from the Bench

BY JOHN FASSENFELT, YOUTH COURT MAGISTRATE

Whatever happened to..?

In the quieter moments of the retiring room, discussion often turns to young people whom we have dealt with in the past – perhaps continually for a few years – and who then just drop out of the picture.

It is not just curiosity that drives this desire to know. It's more down to simply wanting to follow through on a case

The problem with the work we do as youth court magistrates is that we only see our failures, and never our successes.

Many of my colleagues say to me that they frequently ask the local youth offending team about how a particular individual is doing on their programme, but responses are often sparse, and sometimes non-existent.

It is not just curiosity that drives this desire to know. It's more simply wanting to follow through on a case – to see and know what has worked, and in what situations.

This knowledge is important to magistrates, because a particular programme for one young person may not work for another.

If we are given a better idea of the content of programmes and their success rate, I believe we will be in a better position when it comes to sentencing.

Some have said letting sentencers know how individuals have fared will create bias if he or she has to deal with that young person on a future occasion.

However, the world has moved on, and magistrates are more equipped and better trained now to put information like this aside when in court.

Knowledge is power, and being told about an individual's progress will lead to a greater understanding on our part as to what works. ▲

BY BEN SAUNDERS, DIRECTOR,
MEDWAY SECURE TRAINING CENTRE

Celebrate success

Photo: Shutterstock

How do we celebrate and recognise the successes in our secure establishments?

Well the answer is not always very well, and seldom publicly.

There is often a feeling that, because custody is a last resort for sentencers, and most secure estate front-line staff lack formal qualifications, it is a kind of poor relation that can achieve very little.

However, evidence shows that much is achieved for young people in our care – sometimes more than if they had remained in the community.

Of course, it is about the individual young person and their whole circumstances, and entering custody can be hugely disruptive.

But young people in secure training centres (STCs) are provided with a high level of health-care provision – often better than they have received in the community.

They also engage in full-time education, and gain accredited qualifications and recognition – often for the first time.

In addition, they participate in activities and offending behaviour programmes that raise self-esteem, challenge attitudes and behaviour, and encourage positive interaction with others.

There have been some other excellent examples recently of initiatives within STCs.

For instance, there is the Winning the Hearts and Minds award at Oakhill, our own production at Medway of *Lockdown* magazine, and the book of poetry just launched at the YJB convention.

We all have some amazing staff, who achieve some first-class outcomes for young people in our care – and more should be done in the secure estate, the YJB and other agencies to celebrate that success. ▲

Strive, engage, improve

BY STEVE BLACKBURN,
CHIEF INSPECTOR, AVON
AND SOMERSET POLICE

The way in which the police work with our communities is of paramount importance as we strive to improve confidence in the service we provide.

It is vital that we take the views of children and young people into account.

This applies as much to strategic decision-making as it does to what happens on the streets, in schools, or when young people are under arrest or sentenced to custody.

So I was really pleased when, at the last meeting of our children and young people strategic group, we agreed to invite a member of the UK Youth Parliament to talk to us.

And I was even more pleased when he accepted that invitation. It will be interesting to get his views, and see how we could act on his suggestions. I'll keep you posted in future columns.

In the past month, I have been asked to judge, not only the winners of my own Constabulary's Children and Young People awards, but the winners of two categories in the Prince's Trust regional awards.

In both competitions, there were so many examples of courage and effort, with nominees making a significant impact on the communities in which they lived, that it was really difficult to identify clear winners.

The experience emphasised for me the need to balance the negative press that children and young people often receive, with good news stories based on examples such as these.

But recognition events will go some way to making sure those positive messages are heard. ▲

"Accelerate to" and me

BY SEBASTIAN MOH, RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME MANAGER, LEWISHAM YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

When the Accelerate to programme was brought to my attention by my line-manager, I initially thought it was a motoring offence intervention for young people.

On closer inspection, I discovered that this was in fact an excellent strategic leadership programme for youth justice and probation professionals from Black, Minority Ethnic and disabled backgrounds.

My expectations from this programme are high, but I am under no illusions that this will be a walk in the park

I attended an open day to find out more, and was so impressed with the course structure and the level of investment in it that I immediately completed the in-depth application form.

This was then followed by a gruelling assessment centre process in order to qualify for what amounted to a two-year personal development opportunity.

As one of two youth justice professionals on this current cohort, I am extremely proud of having an opportunity to undertake a programme that will "grow" me as a strategic leader.

My expectations are high, but I am under no illusions that this will be a walk in the park.

This programme will challenge me in every conceivable area of my life, and I will need to break out of my comfort zones.

Viewing my future on the canvass of my imagination, in 2011 when this current journey has ended, I would like to have grown in integrity, as well as strengthening my commitment to excellence.

I would also like to find myself in a top strategic management position. I too have a dream… ▲

Fast track

BY ANDREA CROSBY-JOSEPHS, PRACTITIONER, HARINGEY YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

The Accelerate to programme first came to my attention when my manager forwarded an e-mail from the YJB asking for interested individuals to apply.

The words which caught my eye in the description of the programme were "positive action leadership programme, which empowers participants to utilise and transfer their skills".

I'd been at Haringey Youth Offending Service for six years at that point, and had only become an operational manager the previous year.

I wasn't considering a career move or further progression just yet. That said, I knew I would benefit from better knowledge and understanding of top management processes and practices, and an appreciation of inter-related factors in criminal justice policy and strategic direction.

So I applied.

The assessment was one of the most hair-raising experiences I have had to go through in quite some time. Having succeeded, I now understand why it had to be so.

I attended the induction last month, and I have high hopes of the programme, particularly around addressing of diversity and career progression.

My experience so far is that Accelerate to really is a positive action programme which I hope many more will have the fortune to experience. ▲

Making It Count in Court

Making It Count in Court was first published in 2003 as good-practice guidance for youth offending teams (YOTs) working in court settings.

The publication, jointly published by the YJB and Her Majesty's Courts Service, has now been revised as part of the implementation of the Criminal Justice Simple Speedy and Summary (CJSSS) initiative in December 2008.

The revision, which was launched at the recent Annual National Youth Justice Convention, was completed in consultation with 600 stakeholders, who attended the four regional conferences, Moving Forward Good Practice in the Youth Court, in March this year.

Delegates included magistrates, district judges, YOTs, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), legal advisers and defence lawyers.

The content was also reviewed by a focus group of criminal justice professionals.

Making It Count in Court provides practitioners with the information they need to help sentencers come to the best decision to stop young people reoffending. As courts rely on YOTs to provide timely, accurate information about the young people before them.

The publication focuses on the work of the YOT in court and provides a framework for improved partnership working to deliver effective and efficient court practice. The framework places expectations on magistrates, district judges, CPS, defence lawyers, YOTs, police and legal advisers to ensure that victims, witnesses, young people, parents and carers get the best service possible from the court. ▲

The updated *Making it Count in Court* can be downloaded and hard copies ordered from the YJB website at **www.yjb.gov.uk/publications**

For further information, please contact Bill Kerslake or Natasha Richards of the YJB's Effective Sentences Team on 0207 271 3041.

Preventing youth crime – past and present

As we look forward, there are a number of key developments that offer further opportunities to achieve even more in youth crime prevention.

Examples of new and important work are programmes such as Triage and Intensive Intervention, under the *Youth Crime Action Plan*.

Youth offending teams and the YJB are working with the Youth Task Force in implementing these initiatives.

The partnership in England between youth justice services and targeted youth support is also critical, as is the development of children's trusts.

In Wales, youth inclusion and support panels are thriving, and the YJB is working closely with government in England and Wales to drive down the number of first time-entrants to the youth justice system. ▲

Prevention – a look back

BY MATTHEW ANDERSON, ACTING HEAD OF PREVENTION AND PRE-COURT STRATEGY, YJB

Youth crime prevention is nothing new, and there were schemes in the late 90s, such as the Dalston Youth Project, which took a more targeted approach to preventing youth crime.

But it wasn't until 1999, and the YJB's development of the Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP), that a national strategy began to emerge.

The YIP was about reaching the most marginalised and often the most challenging young people.

The reforms that created the YJB and youth offending teams in 1998 were groundbreaking, and the decision to invest properly for the first time in targeted prevention was bold and visionary.

The work to build up the YIP and youth inclusion and support panels (YISPs) was carried out by many dedicated people at every level of the youth justice system, and it created a firm foundation for initiatives that have come along since.

Although resources are under pressure nationally and locally, we must continue to invest in prevention, and make the case for more resources.

There are many thousands of young people and their families who have been steered back to success by one of the range of prevention schemes – YIPs, YISPs, Safer School Partnerships or parenting programmes.

In my typically reserved civil service way, I once said to a YIP manager: "You must become very attached to the young people."

The simple response was "I love them", and that has always stayed in my mind. ▲

How to address the needs of young women who offend

Jeanette Williams, policy and development manager at Hertfordshire Youth Offending Service, recently completed a doctorate in youth justice at the University of Bedford exploring the experiences, backgrounds and offending patterns of young women in the youth justice system, and identifying principles for effective interventions and approaches with them.

Although young women make up only a minority of young people in custody, their numbers are increasing.

Youth offending team (YOT) interventions are largely designed for young men, and tackling the needs of young female offenders is still a neglected area of youth justice policy and practice.

My research highlights the importance of early identification and intervention with young women at risk, and the need to share information between children, adult and health services to improve outcomes.

I have been part of a YJB practitioner group, which has been looking at how to work with girls and young women, and how to develop, share and disseminate good practice and research.

As a result of this work, a practice framework on how to work with young women in the youth justice system is being developed for publication in 2010.

It will incorporate contemporary research, and identify key risk factors in offending among young women, such as exclusion from school and alcohol misuse.

It will also include case studies and good-practice examples of programmes and interventions.

The framework promises to be a valuable tool in addressing the needs of young women involved in the youth justice system. ▲

Information about the YJB girls and young women practitioner group meetings can be found in the practitioner area of the YJB website at **www.yjb.gov.uk**. Click on "Diversity", then "Young women".

For a copy of the executive summary of the research, email **jeanette.williams@hertscc.gov.uk**

Details of the Professional Doctorate in Youth Justice are available from the University of Bedfordshire at **www.beds.ac.uk**

In their own words

Bobby's story

Intensive Fostering is a way to help young people like me to get back up on our feet.

When I first came on to the programme, I thought it was hell – but mostly I didn't like all of the rules.

For instance, for me, I need to get six bonds, which is half a bond a week, to start to stay at my dad's home.

In my eyes, it seemed like it would take forever but, thanks to the skills workers, and also my foster carers, I'm not acting stupid any more, and they have helped me knuckle down and to control my behaviour.

I'm no longer worried about the time I have to wait any more because, with their help, I have got five bonds.

The road that I took was bumpy, but I'm more than half way through the time that I have to be in the Intensive Fostering placement.

When I or another young person is unhappy with something on the programme, all we have to do is speak to the boss Alex, or one of the skills trainers.

On the programme, there are three skills workers who are, Nigel (skills and education), Sue (skills and therapy) and Paul (skills and therapy).

All young people who come on the programme have to see their workers normally about three times a week.

On the skills sessions, we get to go out and do activities like rock-climbing, or bowling, but sometimes have got to just talk about how you're feeling.

I would like to thank all these people for helping me and other young people. ▲

Intensive Fostering is an alternative to custody, for young people aged between 12 and 17 years.

Young people sentenced to the programme are placed with specially trained foster carers for around nine months.

During this time, everyone involved with the programme works together in order to change the behaviour that has led to the young person being in trouble.

Intensive Fostering is a daily modification programme that sees young people move from level one of the programme to level three.

They have to earn a certain amount of points each day in order to move to a higher level and to earn more privileges.

These can be awarded for ordinary things such as getting up on time, or for a good attitude at school.

Points that are awarded can be converted into bonds. With six bonds, a young person can move from level 2 to level 3.

If the young people do not earn a certain number of points, they drop back a level for one day.

The young people are expected to engage in education and skills training, and they all have an individual worker who supports then during the nine months, and helps them to solve any problems.

With a great deal of hard work, a young person can achieve level three status within 15 weeks. ▲

Young people help maintain a local cemetery

All Saints Church, Borehamwood

BY HAYLEY BROCKWITZ, YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM OFFICER, SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM

All Saints Church is on Shenley Road in the heart of Borehamwood. Attached to the church is a cemetery that is maintained by the local council.

Although the grass is mowed, and the bins cleared, the maintenance of individual tombs are not the responsibility of the local council.

With several of the graves dating back as far as the 1800s, many of them have become overgrown and unkempt.

Members of the public also use the cemetery as a place in which to sit and relax.

For some months now, our young people have been helping to clean and maintain the graves.

The project has given them a valuable opportunity to make reparation to their local community and area for their offending.

Many members of the public have commented on how the young people's efforts have contributed to their enjoyment of the cemetery.

One elderly lady who left the area many years ago, movingly told the young people what a comfort it was to her to know someone was tending her relative's grave when she was unable to.

The young people themselves seem to prefer a project where they can instantly see the fruits of their labours, and I think this has helped engage and motivate them.

It is clear to me that they have taken great pride in being given the responsibility of restoring a person's final resting place, which may otherwise have been forgotten with time. ▲

Interactive learning for volunteers

SALLY GIDDINS, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ADVISER, EASTERN REGION, YJB

The second annual Eastern Region Training Consortium conference, "Volunteers Make a Difference", took place on 19 September in Cambridgeshire.

The day was organised by eight youth offending teams (YOTs) across the region, and specifically aimed at YOT volunteers.

This year the event took on the theme of communications, and featured guest speakers, three interactive workshops, and stands run by a range of external agencies and YOT volunteer initiatives.

> It was the first time that some of them had even sat down in front of a computer

I was asked to facilitate a workshop on the Youth Justice Interactive Learning Space (YJILS), a joint workforce development initiative run by the Open University (OU) and the YJB.

A little apprehensive at the daunting task before me, I agreed, and enlisted the help of the local OU regional co-ordinator.

In the workshop, we provided an overview of what is and what will become available as part of YJILS.

I then proceeded to sign up all the volunteers, and let them have a go at YJILS there and then.

It was the first time that some of them had even sat down in front of a computer.

But we did our best to put their concerns at rest, and soon they all seemed to have settled in as part of the YJILS community.

The feedback on the workshop was phenomenal, with one volunteer saying how pleased he was that he was now able to access the same information as YOT practitioners – especially in respect of the new Youth Rehabilitation Order and the Scaled Approach.

Another said that she would be using YJILS for learning as part of her professional development. ▲

Why I do the job

BY LEAH RUBIN, PRACTITIONER, SALFORD YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

Photo: Robin Estill

> At first, I thought it would be difficult to recruit and train young people to become YOS "inspectors", but they were remarkable

"What do you think of Salford YOS?"

This question is typically asked by inspectors – but, in Salford, I recently trained over 20 young people involved in, or at risk of, offending behaviour to report on the quality of the YOS's services, as part of the Youth4U – Young Inspectors programme.

As a professional, I obviously care about the young people we work with, but I realise we don't often ask them their views on the services we provide for them, let alone make changes based on those views.

That's why I was so excited about working on the new scheme, which was set up with funding from the Look Listen Change consortium.

At first, I thought it would be difficult to recruit and train young people from the YOS to become inspectors, but they were remarkable.

And we are already making changes based on the suggestions they have made – such as improving facilities in the YOS building, and training the young people to take part in the recruitment of staff.

Since the inception of the Salford Youth4U – Young Inspectors, we have trained some of the most vulnerable kids in Salford to assess services in their community.

Our young inspectors have appreciated the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the way the service is run.

It has also helped us connect with them, and to boost their confidence and self-esteem. ▲

If you want to know more about the Salford scheme, email Leah Rubin at **leah.rubin@salford.gov.uk**

For more information on the Youth4U programme, visit the British Youth Council website at **www.byc.org.uk**

Double Act

Sophie:

My self-confidence was very low, and I couldn't see anything positive in my future.

Glenda:

After a couple of sessions, she became one of the most vocal members.

Sophie became involved with Blackburn with Darwen Youth Offending Team (YOT) in November, when she was given a 10-month Referral Order for an offence of unauthorised vehicle-taking. Life was not going well for Sophie at the time, with arguments at home and fights at school, and her anger and frustration led her to offend. She stole a car, and crashed it into a tree, causing considerable damage to the vehicle and injuring herself. Then Sophie met YOT worker Glenda.

Photos: Fergus Burnett

Glenda: When I first met Sophie, I tried to help her to think about all the things that were causing her problems, and how she could put them behind her.

I encouraged her to adopt the concept of "old Sophie" and "new Sophie".

When the YOT, in partnership with the East Lancashire Child and Adolescent Service, decided to start working towards the Investing in Children Award, I asked Sophie if she wanted to get involved.

Although she was reluctant initially, Sophie joined the young persons' dialogue group to offer her views about the services being offered to her and other young people involved with the youth justice system.

After a couple of sessions, she became one of the most vocal members of the group.

As the group grew in confidence, they started to explore bigger issues such as the development of meaningful reparation projects that would allow young people to make amends for their offending behaviour, but would also enable them to develop skills and gain qualifications.

It was great to see Sophie developing the social and communication skills that she needed to make friends and form positive relationships with adults such as her teachers and her parents.

Her parents say that she has come on "in leaps and bounds" as a result of her involvement.

Sophie is now more confident, has more friends, is positive about life, and is enjoying much better relationships with her family.

Sophie: When I met Glenda, I'd hit rock bottom. My self-confidence was very low, and I couldn't see anything positive in my future.

I didn't really have any friends, and I'd been excluded from school for fighting, and I wasn't happy at home.

When I joined the dialogue group, I was really surprised when people listened to me about how things could improve.

At first, we just gave advice on little things like decorating the office, and asking YOT staff to remind us of appointments by text, and getting them to meet us at places closer to where we lived.

But then we started doing things like interviewing people for YOT jobs. I was really amazed at how seriously they took what we had to say.

It was really good when we made suggestions about reparation projects, and seeing our ideas put into practice.

We're now ready to lead another agenda day where the young people at the YOT say what they think about the services it provides.

It'll be my job to pass on to YOT staff what they said, so that they can improve how they do things.

I've really enjoyed working with the group, and making a contribution, and it's made me feel a lot better about myself. ▲

As a result of the work of which the young people's dialogue group has been a part, Blackburn with Darwen Youth Offending Team were recently awarded membership of the Investing in Children Programme for "their imaginative and inclusive practice with young people".

For more information on the Investing in Children programme, visit **www.iic-uk.org**