



Youth Interventions

Inspection

Key Facts



Definitions of terms



Youth Diversion Officer

A Police Officer who engages with children who have come into contact with the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Youth Court

A Court where cases involving children accused of offending are taken care of and decided.

Public Prosecution Service

The organisation that decides on cases investigated by the police, for example, if they are sent to Court or diverted away.

Prosecutors

Professionals who decide what should happen after the police send an investigation file to the Public Prosecution Service.

Department of Justice

A department that oversees the resources, laws and policies for the justice system.

Judge

A person who hears the evidence presented at Court about a case and makes a judgment based on the evidence.

Earlier Stage Diversion

Support for children who are just starting to get into trouble with the law.

Community Resolution Notices

A process for police to respond to some offences outside of Court.



The inspection

Inspectors visited the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) in 2023.

When we visited, the YJA had just turned 20 years old.

We wanted to find out how well YJA does its job.

YJA works with young people in the community to help them make better choices or stay out of trouble with the law.





How did we do the inspection?

We looked for good examples of support given to children, families and victims.

We did this by:



Visiting all the YJA Area offices.



Asking staff to answer some questions about their job.



Speaking to children, parents and carers, and victims.



Speaking to staff in person.



Meeting with partners like Youth Diversion Officers in the police and Prosecutors.



Visiting a Youth Court and speaking to Judges.



Reading documents.

What did we find?

We found lots of strengths:



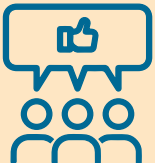
Dedicated staff built excellent relationships with children, families and victims.



Staff did their work in a way that put young people first. Staff got to know about the lives of young people and all the good and bad things that have happened and how this affects them now.



Staff worked with local organisations to find placements that met children's needs.



'Absolutely amazing' and a 'total lifeline' are some of the things children and their parents and carers said about the YJA staff.



Victims and their supporters highly valued the support they were given.



Other organisations were really positive about the work of YJA and the staff.



Children and families welcomed Earlier Stage Diversion Support, which is about helping young people sooner, so they don't get into more trouble with the law.

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What did we find?

Areas for improvement included:



Everyone working together towards the same goals for youth justice.



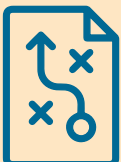
Helping make sure the YJA has the staff it needs now and in the future.



Recording of how children had been involved in needs assessments and plans.



More detailed records about the YJA's work to keep children and other people safe from harm.



Better managing and planning for Earlier Stage Diversion.



What did we recommend?

We have two types of recommendations:

STRATEGIC

To do with the overall aims and goals of YJA as an organisation and what it wants to achieve.

OPERATIONAL

To do with how staff work in their jobs every day and the things that help them do their jobs well.

We made five strategic recommendations.

For example, we want:

- ✓ The YJA, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice to agree and make a plan to work together towards the same vision and goals for youth justice and how to make sure the vision and goals are being reached.
- ✓ The YJA, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Public Prosecution Service to agree an action plan to look at Community Resolution Notices for children.

We made five operational recommendations.

For example, we want:

- ✓ The YJA to check that its services and support are right for children.
- ✓ The YJA to ensure its new Needs Assessment Tool is evaluated.
- ✓ The YJA to look at how it does Earlier Stage Diversion to make sure it is supporting young people to make better choices and to keep out of trouble with the law.