

Practice guide

Family Help and Children's Social Care

Youth Justice – Operation Inclusion & No Comment pathway, Wirral

Background, purpose and rationale

There are several initiatives that have been run in Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) and the wider Harm Outside the Home Service (HOTHs). Within Wirral, we are always looking at ways to add innovation, education, training and support to children in our services, to improve outcomes for the children and their families and listening to the voice of the victim and child. We wanted to look into a number of elements and launched numerous projects.

What we did to improve children's outcomes

Operation Inclusion is a deferred Prosecution Scheme championed by Merseyside's Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) and developed in partnership with Merseyside Police. Originally piloted in Wirral, this is now practice in all Merseyside YJS. The project supports young people who would usually receive a statutory Court Order, or Youth Conditional Caution (YCC) and thus receive a criminal conviction.

We worked with Merseyside Police and the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that young people identified as hitting a strict criterion of offences and vulnerabilities, were able to access the deferred prosecution scheme. It is a more bespoke intervention than a simple Youth Caution and it can be as long as needed. Wirral's interventions are usually 3 to 6 months but can be longer if the caseworker feels it is required. The young person, parent/carer are invited to a Panel with YJS, Victim worker (if there is a victim), Police Officer, Education Worker and a volunteer from the local community. At the Panel the process of engagement is discussed along with what will happen if the young person re-offends or stops engaging in the programme. If the child does not engage to a satisfactory level following their allocation, the YJS will follow the normal Out of Court Disposal procedure of sharing this information with relevant service partners and the Police. The police will then decide if that matter reverts to being charged to court or for the child to receive a YCC. If this happens the Child will receive a criminal record and may affect future employment and training.

Building on to Operational Inclusion and its success, again in partnership with Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP), we wanted to look at the Pathway for No Comment: interviews at custody. This was following the Lammy Report 2017, with regards to disproportionately in the Criminal Justice System for children from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We felt that young people who on arrest and interview gave a "no comment" interview had less opportunities than children who didn't. Working again with our key partners since June 2024, we have developed the "no comment" pathway, this is for specific offences where there is no denial of the offence, purely a "no comment" interview.

What was the impact?

Operation Inclusion has been running on the Wirral for 4 years. We have worked with and supported 69 young people through intensive support and multi-agency intervention. To date only eight of these 69 children (12%) have returned to us for minor offences, and none have received a Court outcome as all have been dealt with via our Outcome 22 process.

Since the No Comment project is in its infancy, Wirral have delivered seven no comment interview interventions to young people. One of which was a young person clearly being exploited, who was subject of an active referral to the Home Office's National Referral Mechanism, and was arrested with intent to supply Class A drugs. At the time of writing this report none of the 7 young people have entered the Court arena. The estimated cost of a "court event" for a child is £1608, the 68% of children who have successfully completed their intervention is potential saving of £24,120 within 9 months (see resources for 9-month review).

Resources

Out of Court Disposal Deferred Prosecution Scheme Pathway
 No Comment 9 Month Review

Find out more Contact

Contact Kathy Gill, Interim Head of Service, Harms Outside The Home
Kathygill@wirral.gov.uk