



PREVENTING OFFENDING

Getting it right for children
and young people

Strategy summary



safer
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SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



Our vision of Scotland as the best place to grow up extends to all of our children and young people.

Scotland has a proud record of taking a holistic approach to the needs of children and young people. Where children are involved in, or at risk of offending, evidence and experience tells us that we must remain committed to an integrated approach – tackling deeds while taking account of wider needs.

We know that as far as possible children and young people should be kept out of the criminal justice system. Where offending does take place, effective and timely interventions are needed to address that behaviour and its causes.

Progress – founded on that consistent Scottish philosophy – has been made over recent years. This has been delivered with the support of national and local partners, through the implementation of both the Preventing Offending by Young People Framework and the national roll-out of the Whole System Approach in all mainland authorities. Positive alternatives, prevention and ensuring appropriate interventions are in place where children and young people are involved in offending, are part of a broader approach to tackling inequalities and promoting social justice.

We take a child-centred, preventative approach focused on the following outcomes:

- helping ensure communities are safe from crime and disorder
- improving life chances for children and young people involved in or at risk of offending
- enabling all children and young people to be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens

The importance of a child-centred approach to Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) has been reaffirmed by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act). Provisions in the 2014 Act in respect of Children's Services Plans, Named Person and Child's Plan will be critical to future arrangements in support of youth justice.

Priority themes for 2015 to 2020 are:

Advancing the Whole System Approach

Improving Life Chances

Developing Capacity and Improvement

In this document when we talk about a child we are referring to someone under the age of 18. This respects the definitions set out in the Act 2014 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Good practice indicates the principles can also apply to young people over 18, and there is a particular need for various partners and agencies to take account of their corporate parenting responsibilities.

ADVANCING THE WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH (WSA)

Develop, sustain and improve WSA

- Encourage and support WSA leaders and practitioners to promote good practice and highlight the benefits achieved through this approach
- Support partners to embed preventing offending work in Community Planning following changes in Community Justice
- Ensure that resources are targeted on a strategic basis from 2016 to support the next phase of WSA
- Integrate findings from the WSA evaluation and implement arrangements from the end of 2015
- Support partners to ensure that the implementation of the 2014 Act will improve local partnership work on youth justice and WSA
- Support partners to integrate Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) with the implementation of the 2014 Act, including development of EEI practice to ensure consistency and appropriate involvement of the Named Person
- Continue to support good practice on EEI and promote an improvement culture among national and local partners

Effective interventions

- Maximise the opportunities for diversion from the Criminal Justice System, and formal processes to respond swiftly and bring action on offending much closer to the offence and to encourage greater use of diversion across the Criminal Justice System
- Minimise delay in proceedings involving children. Continue to improve the exchange of information between Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) in relation to jointly reported cases involving children
- Explore opportunities with the Judiciary, COPFS, the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service, and SCRA to deliver on the Council of Europe Directive on Child-friendly justice to enable more cases to be remitted from court to Children's Hearings. Options will include joint training sessions and improved access to resources
- Continue to seek to reduce the number of children in secure care and custody, including through safe community-based alternatives
- Build on good practice to improve outcomes for children in secure care
- Ensure action to divert children and young people from serious organised crime – linking with strategy on serious organised crime
- Encourage alternatives to remand where possible while ensuring community safety

IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES

School inclusion

- Work with school professionals to build capacity and awareness about working with young people involved/at risk of involvement in offending – by the end of 2016
- Share good practice throughout Scotland in approaches to school inclusion with a focus on preventing offending by the end of 2016
- Ensure that young people at risk of disengaging from education are identified early and supported. This will include support for families and will include collaboration with Education Scotland and local authorities

Strengthening relationships and engagement

- Help create the conditions for children and young people to be active participants in change and improving youth justice
- Promote positive relationships between young people, their families and communities to help develop social networks and build resilience
- Support workers to build quality and consistent relationships
- Enable gender specific approaches where appropriate, recognising strengths and needs in relationships as part of the focus on tackling inequalities. This will include a national training programme to support practitioners working with girls and young women by October 2015



Victims and community confidence

- Encourage use of restorative approaches where appropriate
- Ensure that victims' rights and needs are systematically reflected in the work undertaken with young people who offend
- Encourage better and more regular engagement with communities about youth justice to build awareness of, and support for, the Scottish approach

Improving health and wellbeing

- Support prevention and early intervention to improve health and wellbeing through Curriculum for Excellence, GIRFEC and Health Improvement
- Build on the work already undertaken on substance misuse to include New Psychoactive Substances. This means developing knowledge, skills and information on evidence-based practice for those professionals working with children and young people by 2016
- Improve understanding and enhance capacity in relation to mental health and trauma through practice development and supporting services for young people
- Promote dialogue with key partners to ensure needs and methods of working with these children and young people is reflected in Scotland's Mental Health Strategy
- Improve awareness and support of speech, language and communication needs of children involved in offending

Opportunities for all

- Ensure that low level offending as a child does not negatively affect opportunities for securing education, training or employment as an adult
- Implement changes on disclosure of childhood offences in 2016 to reduce the impact on future life chances
- Ensure that young people who have disengaged from education or have left school are supported to re-engage and participate in learning, training or an Activity Agreement to develop the skills they need
- Build relationships with employers, to help them see the strengths and potential of our children and young people including those who may have a criminal record

Transitions

- Support reintegration of young people from custody and secure, to allow them to move onto and sustain positive destinations
- Support young people and families during all periods of transition, especially within the crossover between child and adult services
- Improve transitions between children's and adult justice systems, where needed. Transitions must be planned and supported and take account of Corporate Parenting responsibilities, including the extension of rights of previously looked after young people

DEVELOPING CAPACITY AND IMPROVEMENT

Developing Capacity

- Support workforce development linked to implementation of the 2014 Act
- Build a more collaborative approach to enhance training and workforce development opportunities founded on common core skills
- Develop appropriate forums for youth justice practitioners, policy makers and others to share knowledge and good practice
- Build the confidence of youth justice practitioners in their skills and abilities to support our children and young people
- Refresh training for Children's Panel Members taking account of the 2014 Act
- Develop leadership development opportunities at all levels but particularly for front line managers

Improving systems

- Improve systems of information capture to support improvement including national information on EEI and diversion
- Strengthen the evidence base about the needs of young people at risk of, or involved in offending behaviour and complexity
- Ensure that good practice and evidence is shared and that youth justice practice and policy is informed by the best knowledge and evidence
- Develop a shared dataset and performance framework to monitor trends and assist in targeting of resources, workforce development and practice

NOTES

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