

# **NATIONAL YOUTH JUSTICE PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

## **Preface**

All children need the best start in life possible, but many young people who are involved with offending will also need extra support to help them meet their needs as individuals and move away from offending lifestyles. This presents significant challenges for practitioners and organisations in today's Scotland.

Over the last ten years we have seen the development of a significant number of tools to help assess young people involved with offending behaviour; and interventions to help reduce both the level and seriousness of their offending. The use of more structured models of assessment and intervention - as well as taking a multi agency approach to joined up working - has helped improve the outcomes of many young people and has significantly contributed to the reduction in the levels of young people involved in offending over the last decade

When working with young people who offend, many managers and practitioners recognise that it can be difficult to identify the appropriate approach or assessment tool amongst the ever expanding range of options available. The following practice guidance was designed to inform and guide practitioners through this increasingly complex field to help them work more effectively with this client group. The guidance will help practitioners and managers keep up to date with new research findings on best practice and any new evaluations on the effectiveness of particular approaches or models of intervention. As the guidance will be web based it will be regularly updated.

The guidance has been written as an aid to Best Practice and should sit alongside existing local policies and procedures within each Local Authority or Third Sector Organisation. The Guidance has not been written as a substitute for staff training or effective supervision. It is rather a guide that will assist managers and practitioners identify and sustain good practice focusing on what their own training needs are in relation to their own organisational requirements.

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## **Purpose of the Guidance**

The National Youth Justice Guidance outlines well evidenced practice models that been shown to be effective in assessment and interventions with young people who offend and points to promising approaches where the evidence for what constitutes good practice is less clear. The guidance employs case studies throughout and provides exemplars of good practice where they are available. The guidance is written in light of the agenda set out by the Scottish Government's 2007 policy paper 'Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action'

Service standards in the guidance provide a national practice framework in Youth Justice for services to incorporate into their existing local multi-agency protocols, training plans and procedures.

While this guidance is intended to serve as a practical reference point for practitioners and agencies, it should not be regarded as exhaustive or exclusive. Nor does this guidance constitute legal advice. Users of this guidance should also consult their agencies own procedures and protocols when considering what steps to take when working with a young person.

## **Who is the Guidance for?**

This guidance is primarily for services working with young people involved in offending or potentially on the periphery of offending, across both statutory and third sectors.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Background and Policy**

This chapter traces the history of Youth Justice in Scotland beginning with Kilbrandon through to current policy and legislation. It aims to give the reader an understanding of how Scotland's unique welfare system for dealing with children who offend or who have other needs, was developed. It summarises the main statutes and policies and provides links to these documents. The final section looks at the target group for Youth Justice Services.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Youth Justice in Scotland**

This Chapter outlines the roles of different agencies in relation to young people who offend. Its sets out the relationship between Scottish Government and Local Authorities and covers the role of other agencies such as police, health and the third sector. The role and remit of the Scottish Children's Reporter Authority is covered.

The chapter also looks at initiatives in place to promote best practice with young people who offend such as the National Youth Justice Advisory Group and the Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre at Edinburgh University.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Theory and Method**

This chapter introduces and explores some of the concepts and findings from research to summarise the ongoing debates over “What Works” specifically for children and young people. This involves exploring the theories underpinning the methods and approaches used including the principles of risk, need and responsivity and desistance.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Good Practice Principles**

This chapter covers roles and responsibilities for practitioners including case management and good practice in multi-agency work. It also outlines an assessment approach covering areas such as: principles of good practice; use of structured assessment tools; integrating ‘youth justice approaches’ in a GIRFEC framework; use of chronologies; analysis and formulation; and assessment formats. Action planning and reviews are covered. The section on intervention looks at principles of effective structured work, family work and promoting protective factors. An appendix covers programmes currently in use in Scotland.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Prevention**

The chapter focuses on Prevention as the first theme within ‘A Framework for Action’. It establishes a working definition of “Prevention”. Information is provided from a theoretical and research perspective in respect of the prevention of offending and to the duty of practitioners within all agencies to support children in need and their families.

The section considers the preventive practice offered by a range of agencies and services, specialist and universal, which may increase protective factors and resilience with children, young people and their families and reduce youth violence within communities. Links are made to associated legislation and practice within Education, Health, Social Work, Community Safety, Community Learning and Development. Practice examples from the Third Sector organisations and Police led multi agency approaches are included.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Early and Effective Intervention**

This chapter is divided into three parts:

- \* The first part focuses on the theoretical perspective. Definitions of Early Intervention and Prevention in the UK and in Scotland are described to provide context for current Early Intervention practice. It considers the historical context and current theoretical perspectives of early intervention, in relation to: predictive factors; the risk factor paradigm; desistance theories, risks of “net widening”; and knowledge of normal and abnormal adolescent brain development.
- \* The second part describes Early and Effective Intervention multi agency screening processes as a systems response to reducing youth offending. It considers effective Early Intervention practice for social work practitioners in Youth Justice and other Children and Families specialisms, and professionals in other agencies. This includes diversionary practice, parenting focussed work, and the role of restorative practices in the context of the GIRFEC practice model.
- \* The third part considers Early and Effective Intervention with regard to 16 and 17 year olds within the Criminal Justice system.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Managing High Risk**

This chapter looks at effective responses to adolescent violent offending and sexual offending. Definitions, research on young people who display such behaviours and key messages from research are covered. Detailed guidance on undertaking comprehensive assessments in this area of work is provided. A Section on action planning provides examples of risk management plans. The section on effective interventions covers evidence in relation to several different approaches, arguing for a needs led rather than an overly manualised approach to working with this client group and a joined up multi-modal community based response to serious offending behaviour. A final section looks at principles of risk management, supervision monitoring, disclosure, housing issues etc. Appendices on family work, normative sexual development, assessment tools and legal decision making in high risk cases are provided, as well as detailed case studies illustrating indicative processes in assessment and intervention work.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Victims and Community Confidence**

This chapter will discuss the importance of the relationship between the victim, the perpetrator, the formal controls and the, wider, informal controls of the community. There follows an exploration of the potential benefits and possible challenges in using an approach that involves considering the views and participation of the victim, perpetrator and the community and the methods that might be effective.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **Planning Performance Improvement**

This chapter will link the importance of effective planning and improvement of Youth Justices Services through self assessment. The chapter promotes the use of the voluntary Planning and Performance Improvement Framework, helping Local Authorities measure at a strategic level how well they are achieving as set out in Preventing Offending by Young People – A Framework for Action (2008). The chapter also covers outcomes based approaches to evaluation in working with young people who offend.  
*Under construction*

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **Transitions**

Covers young people involved in the adult criminal justice system or at risk of being involved in it. *Under construction*

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **Working With Girls and Young Women**

*Under construction*

## **Appendix One**

### **Recommended Service Standards**

This appendix explains some of the background to National Standards which dominated the agenda for the early 2000s but which were abolished in 2007. Recommended Service Standards are a summary of the good practice principles found in the other chapters of the guidance and are linked to Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action. Local Authorities now deliver Youth justice Services in a variety of ways and the Standards are a guide to retaining and developing good models of practice and offering some consistency in how the needs of young people who offend in Scotland are met. It should be noted that they are recommended Standards only, which offer a model of good practice, however, reference should be made to individual Local Authority policies, procedures and practice.