



## Spotlight on Young Adults:

Emerging good practice across PCC areas on Young Adults (18-24) in contact with criminal justice services

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# PCC Spotlights

Through our Second Generation Project, Revolving Doors Agency and the Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A) aim to show how Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) across the country can help cut crime, end 'revolving door' offending, and improve responses to young adults and people who, as a result of multiple unmet needs, come into repeated contact with the police.

This spotlight, the fifth in the series, highlights promising work on young adults that is being commissioned and supported by PCCs across the country. Our spotlight series aims to share examples of good practice and to inform the ongoing debate on the future of the PCC role. This spotlight is timely. A recent Revolving Doors review of all police and crime plans found that two thirds of PCCs recognise the distinct vulnerability of young people in transition to adulthood. A quarter highlight 'youth' or 'young adulthood' as a key priority within their latest plans. We hope this briefing will demonstrate some of the innovative work behind the headline figures.

## Introduction: Improving responses for young adults

Young adults (18-24) are the most likely age group to come into contact with the police, both as victims and as offenders. Nationally, they represent just 10% of the population, but account for around 30 to 40 per cent of criminal justice caseloads - including police time, probation supervision and prison entrants.<sup>i</sup> To give this further context, the 18-24 cohort account for 17 per cent of the total prison population and make up a quarter of people serving community orders or suspended sentences.<sup>ii</sup>

They also have the highest reconviction rates of any other demographic that comes into contact with the criminal justice system. With over 75 per cent of young adults released from prison being re-convicted within two years of release, making them a high priority group for PCCs across the country.<sup>iii</sup>

However, young adults are the most likely age group to 'grow out of crime' and journey towards becoming active members of society when the right interventions are put in place. This is hindered when criminal justice

responses fail to provide support for their multiple needs and enable desistance as they transition from youth to adult services at the age of 18 – a divide defined by age rather than maturity – and into a system of criminal justice interventions aimed at adults, which are rarely effective in preventing further reoffending by young adults.

While this is often a feature of a wide range of public services that come into contact with this age group, other parts of public policy have gone some way to catch up with the notion that adolescence now extends well into the mid-20s.<sup>iii</sup> For example, many mental health services now extend their Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services strategically up to 25, and care leaver entitlements now extend into the 20s.<sup>i</sup>

Recent policy developments have intensified interest in the young adult age group, with the publication of the Lammy Review shining a light on the steady increase of BAME young adults in prison, in proportion to the overall prison population. The review also tabled specific recommendations aimed towards young adults, proposing that the criminal justice decision making process should take into account maturity and that practitioners should have the option to extend youth justice support

structures to offenders over the age of 18 with low maturity.<sup>vi</sup>

In addition, in 2015 the Justice Select Committee held an inquiry into Young Adults which arrived at the conclusion that there was overwhelming evidence that a distinct approach is required to meet the needs of the 18-24 cohort. Amongst the key recommendations tabled by the Committee was the need for specialist staff- throughout the criminal justice system (CJS)- trained in dealing with young adults.<sup>vii</sup> This was coupled with calls to extend statutory support provided to under 18's throughout the criminal justice process to young adults between the ages of 18-25 as well as legislative change to recognize the developmental status of this age group.<sup>viii</sup>

The Lammy Review and Justice Select Committee reports highlight just part of the growing evidence base of successful interventions that can work for young adults. An area of work that has been championed by The Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A), which has produced more than forty pieces of policy and research work that forms a strong evidence base for a distinct approach for the 18-24 population.

Innovative and effective local leadership can play a crucial part in improving the criminal justice and public service approach towards young adults. PCCs in particular have a key role to play, cutting across youth and adults

systems with an interest in reducing the demand that this age group place on the police. Many PCCs have led the way in coordinating a distinct approach to young adults in their areas, and this has contributed to a downward trend in the number of young adults sent to prison and serving community sentences in recent years – a 30% fall since 2011.<sup>xi</sup> This 'PCC spotlight' focuses on promising practice, highlighting areas where PCCs are taking a lead on these issues and offering examples that could help inform others looking to develop a more effective approach for young adults.

Despite these challenges, there is growing evidence of the kind of interventions that can work for this group. T2A have highlighted key recommendations at each stage of the criminal justice pathway, while the T2A pilots worked intensively with young adults in three locations, which lead to an increase in employment for the young adults that came into contact with these interventions.<sup>x</sup> Furthermore, many of the principles successful in the youth justice system for under-18s could also be extended to this age group.

Local leadership remains crucial in embedding a more effective approach. PCCs in particular have a key role to play, cutting across youth and adults systems with an interest in reducing the demand that this age group place on the police.

## Examples of promising practice

### South Wales PCC: Reducing Offending in the 18-25 Age Group

To replicate the success of Youth Offending Teams, which have significantly reduced offending rates in the under 18 age group, the South Wales PCC launched a series of pilots to see if the same model could be applied to 18-25-year olds (young adults).

This initially began life as a one-year pilot at Bridgend Youth Offending Service, which was launched in 2013 and funded by the Police Innovation Fund. It then progressed into a large-scale 18-25 Diversion pilot scheme which ran in Cardiff for 12 months in 2015. The objective of the pilot was to identify whether a diversion model for young adults could effectively reduce offending and support victims who had experienced crime. The scheme has since been rolled out across South Wales and due to positive results yielded by initial evaluation, has secured funding from both the PCC and the Chief Constable to run until March 2018. The key objectives of the Reducing Offending in the 18-25 Age Group project are to reduce both offending and re-offending in the 18-25 age group, to ensure a victim-centered approach and crucially, to develop and deliver an effective diversionary scheme for the 18-25 age group.

**18-25 Diversion Schemes:** These are a core feature of this project and apply to 18-25 year olds who have been arrested for offences that apply up to level 3 of the Home Office Gravity Score in an effort to divert them away from crime. In the event that a young adult is accepted onto the project, they are issued with an Adult Community Resolution (ACR) instead of a caution or out of court disposal. They are then required to return to the Police Station to sit through an interview with a trained youth diversion worker, who creates tailored intervention plan with the young adult aimed at addressing any offending behavior using a restorative practice model.

Last year the South Wales PCC commissioned an independent qualitative evaluation of the project. Key results of the evaluation included that the speed of the intervention -from arrest, to bail, to appearing at the police station- left an impact upon the young person, pressing home the seriousness of the situation. Restorative practices such as writing letters of apology to victims and attending shuttle mediations provided young adults with time to reflect upon their actions.

The South Wales PCC considers this project to be a 'golden learning opportunity' for young adults as they transition from their youth into adulthood, offering them a tangible turning point in their life course.

## Cumbria PCC: The Cumbria Youth Commission (CYC)

Cumbria PCC Peter McCall identified giving the youth of Cumbria a voice as a key priority in his police and crime plan. Following this, Cumbria Youth Commission (CYC) was established by Young Cumbria in April 2017 with project funding by the Cumbria OPCC.

The aim of CYC is to provide young people aged 14-25 with the chance to support, inform and challenge the work of the Cumbria PCC and Cumbria Police through partnership working. This will allow young people the opportunity to influence decisions about policing and crime prevention in the local area as well as ensuring that the most urgent priorities affecting them are addressed by the PCC.

In early 2017 a total of 32 Youth Commissioners were recruited from across Cumbria to work in Partnership with the PCC. The priorities identified by the Youth Commissioners include: hate crimes, underage drinking, bullying and mental health.

Having established its priorities, CYC then gathered evidence from over 3,000 young people across Cumbria.

The Youth Commission's findings informed a series of recommendations:

- *Hate crime*: The set-up of hate crime awareness workshops, accompanied by drop-in-services, to be rolled out across; schools, youth clubs and any other organisations that work with young people across Cumbria, with the aim of providing support and advice.
- *Mental health*: The delivery of free mental health training for people who work with young people to boost awareness and facilitate

appropriate signposting. CYC also recommended that workshops, run by trained professionals, be delivered to young people in order to teach them how to manage their own mental health.

- *Bullying*: the creation of a 'Cyber Bullying Reporting Tool' which would provide a third-party online support service that can review cases before they are passed onto the police. This would be complemented by increased training for practitioners to provide support to young people experiencing bullying within schools.

- *Underage drinking*: The formation of 'Street Safe', an independent service that provides transport home (in the form of a safety bus).

Over the course of 2018, CYC aims to further develop and look at ways of implementing some of the recommendations outlined in the above. It will do so by building strong relationships with local schools, Cumbria police, Cumbria County Council and Youth Offending Services) and continuing to work closely with the PCC. This month, the Commission will establish new priorities for the year ahead. In addition, new priorities will be established for 2018 at the next Youth Commission Forum scheduled for February 2018.

The Commissioner is also funding a number of initiatives aimed at reducing offending amongst young people and providing them with skills to open up new life pathways. One such initiative is 'Garden Life', a programme that targets young people aged 15-24 at risk of entering the CJS or dropping out of school. The programme encourages young people to work in a local community garden, offering them the opportunity to gain nationally accredited qualifications. All produce grown in the community garden is donated to Carlisle foodbank.

## Gloucestershire PCC: Substance Misuse Diversion and Support Project

In his second term as the elected PCC for Gloucestershire, PCC Martin Surl has continued to prioritise young people in the transition to adulthood by supporting a variety of initiatives aimed at improving opportunities for the 18-24 age group.

The PCC recognises that the impact of criminalisation at a young age can trigger a lifetime of crime for young adults, who are at a crucial turning point in their lives. As such, a core aim of the project is to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of young people for minor drug offences (or related offences) through an early intervention approach with the aid of police partnership work and support programmes.

The project has three aims: Firstly, to reduce the number of young people entering the CJS as a result of minor drug offences by identifying those at risk through police partnership work; secondly, to prevent those at risk of committing further drug related offences from doing so through focused substance misuse interventions; and thirdly, to provide support to young people who have already experienced the CJS as the result of drug related offences, by providing suitable support programmes to address their substance misuse issues.

## Leicestershire PCC: The Young Adults Project (YAP!) Shadow Board

As part of the Young Adults Project (YAP!), a multi-agency initiative for young adults in contact with the CJS, Leicestershire OPCC set up a YAP! Shadow Board in October 2016. The Shadow Board consults on a range of criminal justice issues affecting young adults and provides feedback based on their lived experience. Since its inception, the Shadow Board has engaged with over 20 young people aged between 17-25 who have a combined lived experience of homelessness, mental health, social services, learning difficulties and custody.

In 2017 the Shadow Board undertook a broad range of consultancy activities, including responding to invitations from local public services to share their knowledge about how young people become involved in knife crime and advising on how to improve screening tools used to assess the mental and physical health of young people entering custody for the first time.

## Northamptonshire PCC: Improving Outcomes for Young Adults at Court

The office of the Northamptonshire PCC, Stephen Mold, has led a multi-agency partnership group with the aim of identifying how existing court process can better respond and adapt to the needs of the 18-24 cohort.

The group is made up of practitioners from across the courts service, including magistrates, Northamptonshire Police, the National Probation Service, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company. Young people with lived experience of the courts system have also brought their expertise to the multi-agency partnership and contributed with ideas on how to improve existing services.

The multi-agency partnership produced a model based on their joint expertise, current legislation and resources, and the model is now ready to be tested.

The model was created with the aid of research currently being undertaken by the Centre for Justice Innovation, with the support of funding allocated by Barrow Cadbury Trust's Transition to Adulthood Alliance, into developing a tailored approach to young adults in court.

Despite the existence of local enthusiasm combined with readily available resources to support a pilot phase, the model has been halted until it has been assessed by HMCTS in order to secure national approval.

In order to prevent further delays in implementation and evaluation, the Northamptonshire PCC played a central role in seeking Ministerial support and pushing the project forward. He has also coordinated joint submissions with three other PCCs, who were involved in the development of the model in other regions, and who are keen to test the new courts model.

## Other areas

Examples from other areas include:

### **Avon & Somerset PCC: Youth Champion Project**

The Avon & Somerset PCC created the role of Youth Champion to improve engagement with and inform commissioning for young people aged up to 24. Since its initial creation, the position has been taken forward by the appointment of a designated Policy Officer, who leads on the areas of Children & Young People and Health & Wellbeing on behalf of the PCC. The core day to day work of the Policy Officer spans across core policing issues, such as; mental health, safeguarding, the commissioning of drug & alcohol services and supporting victims of child sexual exploitation through a tailored service.

### **South Yorkshire PCC: T2A Pathway projects in partnership with Barrow Cadbury Trust**

South Yorkshire PCC has continued work on a number of match-funded T2A Pathway projects in collaboration with the Barrow Cadbury Trust. Local T2A projects include:

*Restorative Mentoring*: delivered by REMEDI across South Yorkshire and reached its conclusion in March 2017. The project delivered Restorative Mentoring to young adults in the criminal justice system.

*The Rotherham Pathways Project*- which has been run by Together for Mental Wellbeing for the past 3 years and will continue until March 2018. The aim of the project is to reduce emergency service contact (for the 17-24 cohort), increase wellbeing and upskill staff coming into contact with young adults with multiple needs. An independent analysis of the pathways project is due to be published in Autumn 2018.

*The Innovation Project*: which is run by the South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company and exists as an independent young adult project. The project works with young adults entering 'through the gate' after release from Doncaster Prison. The aim of the project is to provide intensive support to the 18-25 cohort in order to reduce reoffending and recalls.

### **Cleveland PCC: Improving mental health services for children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system**

Improving mental health services for children & young people in contact with the criminal justice system is one of the key interest areas of a multi-agency Reducing Reoffending meeting which is chaired by the Cleveland PCC, which includes representatives from three Youth Offending Services in Cleveland.

In order to further work to improve mental health services for children and young people who come into contact with the CJS, Cleveland OPCC developed a joint successful bid with local Clinical Commissioning Groups and Youth Offending Services to NHS England. The funding secured by the bid will go towards providing training and support to help professionals, working with young people at risk of offending behaviour, to identify signs of speech, language and communication difficulties.

Throughout 2018, training sessions will be delivered to practitioners working across the Cleveland area within YOS, Pupil Referral Units, Early Help Teams, Anti-social Behaviour Teams, Exclusion Panels, Liaison & Diversion Teams, Youth Outreach Teams and Neighbourhood Policing Teams

## Conclusion and key themes: a partnership approach

Three years on from our first spotlight on young adults in contact with police and criminal justice services (published in 2015), the evidence base around the distinct needs of young adults aged 18-24 in contact with the criminal justice system has strengthened. It is welcome that a large number of PCCs (both those who have been in office since 2012 and those more recently elected) are using their unique role to drive forward new approaches to address young adult offending. Indeed, many of the second generation of PCCs have continued to carry forward initiatives set up by their predecessors or initiated in their first term in office. As a result, this spotlight has highlighted a number of successful projects that have spread force-wide, many of which started life as small pilots just three years ago.

It is clear that PCCs continue to provide essential local leadership to drive forward partnerships to improve CJS responses to young adults. Given the high level of demand that young adults place on the police and criminal justice agencies, all PCCs have an interest in improving responses and reducing young adult crime and reoffending.

In examining how the Police and Crime commissioners seek to achieve this, our review found:

**Diversion**, including exploring opportunities to tailor out of court disposals more effectively for first time offences; adapting existing youth triage approaches that can be extended to young adults; and ensuring mental health liaison and diversion services respond to the specific needs of this age group, as demonstrated in Cleveland

**Targeted support through the transition to adulthood**, e.g. Leicestershire introducing a dedicated young adults project; and Gloucestershire and South Yorkshire commissioning young-adult specific support services.

**Extending existing youth services**, including exploring how principles of the youth offending team model can be applied to young adults, and developing opportunities to link some young adults back into these teams, as piloted in South Wales.

**Engaging with young adults to harness the power of lived experience**, in developing their strategies, many of these PCCs have sought to engage with young adults, including those with experience of offending. An approach demonstrated by Leicestershire's Shadow Board.

These promising approaches take an ambitious "whole system" view, using the PCC's role to bring partners together and to drive a multi-agency focus on this issue with key partners from the youth offending, prisons, probation, health, and the voluntary sector.

PCCs are in an important position to show leadership on this issue, cutting across the youth and adults systems with a key strategic and commissioning role. Whatever the future arrangements, there is much to learn from how different areas have sought to tackle these issues and to improve responses for young adults.

## Further resources

Further information and resources are also available at [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk).

**Revolving Doors Agency, *Under the Spotlight: reviewing police and crime plans for multiple complex needs, and transition to adulthood*.** Available here: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/why-were-here/our-publications>

**Revolving Doors Agency and Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A) *Improving responses to young adults: a 'checklist' for police and crime commissioners*.** Available here: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/improving-responses-to-young-adults/>

**Transition to Adulthood Alliance *Pathways from crime: 10 steps to a more effective approach to young adults in the criminal justice process*.** Available here: <http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/T2A-Pathways-from-Crime.pdf>

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