

## 6.5 First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System

Reducing the number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System is a key priority of the Barking and Dagenham's Children and Young People's Plan 2011 - 2016: Ensure children and young people in the borough are safe.

One of the primary aims of the Youth Justice System, as established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is the prevention of offending. It is considered by government and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) that targeted, early intervention is an effective mechanism for reducing the number of children and young people who offend and enter the youth justice system. The life chances of young people who have a criminal conviction may be adversely affected in many ways in both the short term and long term.

First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the criminal justice system are classified as offenders. These are young people (aged 10 – 17), resident in England and Wales, who received their first reprimand, warning, caution or conviction, based on data recorded on the Police National Computer. Reducing the number of FTEs has been driven by the YJB in partnership with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). YOTs play a central role in reducing the number of FTEs as they have:

- A statutory duty to prevent offending by children and young people.
- Expertise in preventing offending.

Youth Offending Services across the country are measured on three national performance measures by the Youth Justice Board (YJB)

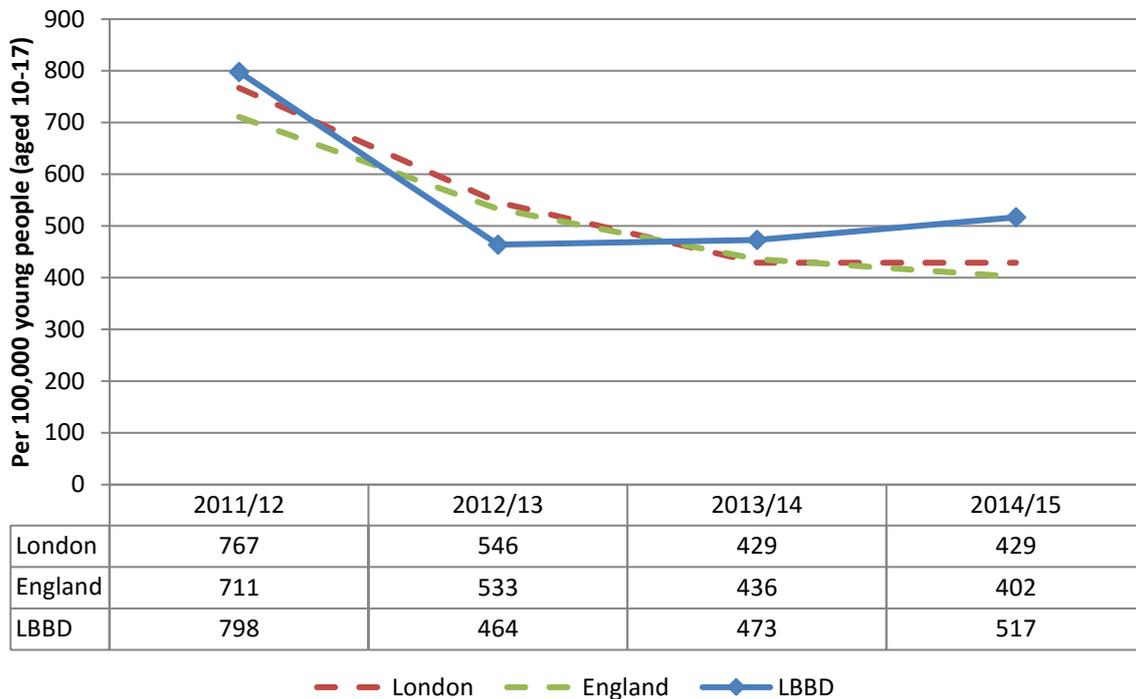
- Reducing First Time Entrants
- Reducing Re-offending
- Reducing the use of custody

One of the primary aims of the youth justice system, as established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is the prevention of offending. It is considered by the government and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) that targeted, early intervention is an effective mechanism for reducing the number of children and young people who offend and enter the youth justice system. The life chances of young people who have a criminal conviction may be adversely affected in many ways in both the short and long term.

Reducing the use of First Time Entrants remains a priority for Barking and Dagenham YOS.

Nationally, the number of FTEs in the Youth Justice System has continued to fall since it peaked at 110,784 in 2006/07. In 2014/15 there were 20,544 FTEs.

### 6.5.1 Reducing first time entrants to the criminal justice system in Barking and Dagenham. Per 100,000 population aged 10-17



Significant attention needs to be paid to the causes of this recent increase. Entrance into the criminal system by a young person may be influenced by a range of criminogenic factors, including lack of education, having a family member or peers who have offended, poor family relationships and support and substance misuse. The YOS have also observed a rise in cases at court whereby the young person has given a no comment interview, but entered a guilty plea at court, thereby making it more likely that they receive an in-court order. The YOS are developing information for both young people and solicitors in the custody suite and will also be working with the courts as to alternatives. Beyond this, work under the ‘Tailoring Youth Justice’ initiative is taking place to create guidance with the intention of facilitating a greater proportion of cases being dealt with via Triage, thereby diverting more young people from the criminal justice system.

Barking and Dagenham YOS is a co-located multi-agency team comprising staff from CAMHS, the Probation Service, the Met Police, the Local Authority and CRI SubWize.

The method by which the YOS aims to reduce First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System is through a Triage intervention. Triage is one of the three Out-of-Court Disposal options available to the police for young people who commit less serious crime.

Triage is carried out jointly by YOS police and YOS Practitioners and is used when eligible young people are arrested for committing less serious offences and admit full responsibility for their behaviour. The YOS police and allocated YOS Practitioner assess the young person and, based on this assessment, an Integrated Action Plan is drawn up to address the needs of, and the risks posed by, that young person.

Once the plan has been drawn up, a multi-agency professionals' meeting is held and attended by Children's Services Early Intervention team and YOS specialist staff from CAMHS and CRI SubWize, as well as YOS parenting staff. At this meeting an intervention plan is drawn up, and the role of the YOS worker is to engage the young person in a short programme of offence-focused sessions, which includes an element of Restorative Justice. This usually takes the form of a letter of apology to the victim, but a Restorative Justice Conference between the person harmed and the young offender can also be offered. This is a highly structured meeting, closely supervised by the YOS, during which an apology is offered by the young offender.

### **6.5.2 Demographic Predictions**

The borough has seen a significant overall population increase in the last 5 years, and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimates that the population will continue to increase to over 240,000 by 2026, a further 16% increase on the 2016 estimate. The most dramatic increase expected over this period is that of the 10-19 year old population which is set to increase by 10,000 to over 38,000, which is the largest growth projection of this age range in London.

Therefore the YOS is trying to reduce first time entrants to the youth justice system against an increasing youth population.

### **6.5.3 Gaps in knowledge/service delivery**

The YOS management board has been working hard to better understand the needs of the first time entrants and based on the information collated in a recent report which focused on the FTE's of Barking and Dagenham, the following areas have been identified as themes of the latest quarters cohort :-

- Young people that present as FTE cases are overwhelmingly male and from Dagenham.
- FTE cases involve a range of offences, with the highest single offence (nearly a third) relating to possession of a knife or other offensive weapon.
- According to case manager assessments, 'Lifestyle', 'Thinking and Behaviour' and 'Education, Training and Employment' are the areas most likely to be associated with reoffending.
- A significant proportion of cases have had, or continue to have mental health needs, with a number of cases having had some involvement with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service prior to the offence.

- Education, training and employment is a significant issue, with a notable proportion of young people having been temporarily or permanently excluded from mainstream education.
- About a third of cases live with one parent, with a further third living with one parent and a step-parent.
- A significant proportion of cases have a recorded history of witnessing domestic violence or being themselves subject to abuse.

These areas will be a focus for the YOS and its partners in the coming year in order to impact the FTE figure within the borough

#### **6.5.4 Implications**

An increase in the number of young people residing in the borough over the next five years is expected. This is likely to impact negatively on the likelihood of the YOS being able to significantly reduce its FTEs.

Prevention will need to be an area of focus for all partners within the borough in order to fully impact the ability to reduce FTE's within the borough.

#### **Recommendations for Commissioners**

Sufficient staffing capacity is maintained within the Youth Offending Service to address all health needs of young people that come into contact with the service at the out of court disposal stage in order to impact first time entrants.

Focus is given to the areas identified that are most likely to impact whether young people become known to the youth justice system.

Physical and mental health needs are considered as part of this work and ongoing focus given to the prevention aspect of services.