

CC(3) AWE 04

Further information paper with regard to written and oral evidence provided to the Communities and Culture Committee Youth Justice Inquiry by Barnardo's Cymru

Provided by Dr Sam Clutton at request of Bethan Jenkins (AM)

Introduction

In our written evidence to the Committee Barnardo's Cymru referred to inconsistent sentencing practice between Youth Courts in Wales. Particular reference was made to recent figures indicating that Merthyr Youth Court has the highest rate of custodial disposals across England and Wales.

This evidence was identified through an article in the media which reported on a letter sent to local authorities in England and Wales by Frances Done as Chair of the Youth Justice Board.ⁱ The article included a table of 'Youth custody rates (per cent)' by council and Merthyr Tydfil was reported as having the highest rate in England and Wales at 12.6 per cent. This figure appears to reflect a calculation which relates to a rate per 10,000 population.

We understand that in their evidence to the Committee the Magistrates Association suggested that the higher rate of custodial disposals in Merthyr Tydfil result from a higher rate of violent crime in the area. A Welsh Assembly Government statistical release on 'Local Crime in Wales 2008'ⁱⁱ confirms that in 2007-08, Newport, Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil had the highest rates of 'Violence against the person' in Wales (as a rate per 10,000 population).

The Youth Justice Board has published data on 'Offences resulting in a disposal 2007-08' and 'Disposals 2007-08'.ⁱⁱⁱ Barnardo's Cymru is unable to access data which allows for a calculation of youth offences per 10,000 population or Youth Court disposals per 10,000 population. However the data which is available allows for the calculation of 'Violence against the person' as a percentage of all offences resulting in a disposal for children and young people aged 10 to 17 years in Wales and by youth offending team. It is also possible to calculate disposals resulting in custody as a percentage of all disposals for Wales and each youth offending team. This data is reproduced in the tables below.

An examination of available data undertaken using this approach suggests that:

- In Wales in 2007-08 of all youth offences resulting in a disposal 17 per cent of offences relate to ‘Violence against the person’.
- In Wales in 2007-08 of all youth justice disposals 3 per cent resulted in a custodial sentence.
- Gwynedd Mon had the highest percentage of youth offences leading to a disposal resulting from ‘Violence against the person’ at 23 per cent (as a percentage of all local youth offences). Powys had a similarly high percentage of youth offences leading to a disposal as a result of ‘Violence against the person’ at 22 per cent (as a percentage of all local youth offences).
- Neath Port Talbot had the lowest percentage of youth offences leading to a disposal result from ‘Violence against the person’ at 8 per cent (as a percentage of all local area youth offences). Followed by Swansea, Ceredigion and Merthyr Tydfil where youth offences leading to a disposal as a result of ‘Violence against the person’ were all at 11 per cent (as a percentage of all local area youth offences).
- Merthyr Tydfil had the highest percentage of disposals leading to custody at 8 per cent (as a percentage of all local area youth disposals). Wrexham also had a higher percentage of disposals leading to custody at 6 per cent (as a percentage of all local area youth disposals).
- Pembrokeshire, Powys and Ceredigion had the lowest percentage of disposals leading to custody at 1% (as a percentage of all local area youth disposals).

	Offences of ‘Violence Against the Person’ resulting in a disposal as a percentage of all offences resulting in a disposal	Disposals leading to Custody as a percentage of all disposals
Wales	17%	3%

Merthyr Tydfil	11%	8%

NB_ Percentages have been rounded up or down to nearest point

Analysis of the data that is publically available suggests therefore that Merthyr Tydfil had the highest percentage of disposals leading to custody (as a percentage of all local area youth disposals) in Wales. At the same time Merthyr Tydfil had a lower percentage of disposals resulting from the offence of 'Violence against the Person' (as a percentage of all local area youth offences) than many other local areas in Wales.

The table below provides data in relation to each youth offending team area for comparison.

Offence of 'Violence Against the Person' and Disposals resulting in Custody in Wales

NB- Disposals leading to Custody do not necessarily relate to offence of 'Violence Against the Person'

Youth Justice Board Data 2007-08

NB_ Percentages have been rounded up or down to nearest point

Youth Offending Teams	Number of Offences resulting in a Disposal	Offences of 'Violence Against the Person' resulting in a disposal as a percentage of all offences	Total number of all Disposals	Disposals leading to Custody as a percentage of all disposals
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		resulting in a disposal		
Wales	15,157	17 % (n=2534)	11,278	3% (n=378)
Blaenau, Gwent and Caerphilly	1,631	17% (n=273)	1,061	3% (n=32)
Bridgend	610	20% (n=123)	423	5% (n=20)
Cardiff	2,238	14% (n=307)	1,315	5% (n=66)
Carmarthenshire	938	14% (n=135)	754	3% (n=21)
Ceredigion	301	11% (n=32)	233	1% (n=3)
Conwy and Denbighshire	982	18% (173)	773	3% (n=24)
Flintshire	447	17% (n=76)	356	4% (n=13)
Gwynedd Mon	751	23% (174)	888	2% (n=17)
Youth Offending Teams	Number of Offences resulting in a Disposal	Offences of 'Violence Against the Person' resulting in a disposal as a percentage of all offences resulting in a disposal	Number of Disposals	Disposals leading to Custody as a percentage of all disposals
Merthyr Tydfil	232	11% (26)	182	8% (n=14)
Monmouthshire and Torfaen	994	16.5% (n= 165)	801	2% (n=16)

Neath Port Talbot	626	8% (n=53)	411	4% (n=17)
Newport	807	17% (n=136)	607	4% (n=22)
Pembrokeshire	696	15.5% (n=108)	505	<1% (n=4)
Powys	451	22% (n=98)	389	1% (n=5)
Rhondda Cynon Taff	1028	20% (n=205)	733	3% (n=22)
Swansea	960	11% (n=110)	684	4% (n=26)
Vale of Glamorgan	680	23% (n= 154)	509	3% (n=17)
Wrexham	785	24% (n=186)	654	6% (n=39)

ⁱ The Independent, May 12, 2009

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/children-in-jail-lottery-of-justice-is-revealed-1683112.html>

ⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government (2009) *Local Crime in Wales 2008 –statistical release* <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2008/081211sa25en.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Youth Justice Board, (2009) *Offences resulting in a disposal 2007-08*

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/MonitoringPerformance/WorkloadData/>