
**Catch22 Submission to the Communities and Culture Committee Enquiry
'Youth Justice in Wales'**



Catch22

Catch22 is a national charity working in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to help young people out of difficult situations. We believe every young person deserves the chance to get on in life no matter what. So we help young people, their families and their communities wherever and whenever they need it most; in schools, on the streets, in the home, at community centres, shopping centres, in police stations, and in custody.

We work with 37,000 young people, helping them to learn, earn, find a safe place to live, steer clear of crime and give something back. Our 2,000 staff and volunteers deliver over 100 services across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Before we became Catch22, we were Rainer and Crime Concern, two national charities that merged in 2008.

Catch22 welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We will focus on the section of the consultation that asks whether further action is needed to reduce use of custody and to promote alternative measures to detention for children in conflict with the law. This briefing will cover the work of Catch22 Wales, but will also draw on our experience of what works to stop young people offending or re-offending through our work across the UK.

Summary of Submission

1. Catch22 in Wales: YIPs, YISPs, Communities that Care
2. Youth Crime: background and trends
3. Prevention
4. Custody vs community sentences
5. Restorative Justice

1. Catch22 in Wales

Catch22 works across Wales to steer young people away from crime into positive activities and mainstream services. We do this through Youth Inclusion Programmes and Youth Inclusion Support Panels. We also run the national Communities that Care Programme in Wales - an evidence-based approach identifying the risk and protective factors that predict problems and matching tested strategies and programmes to reduce risk and increase protection.

Catch22 Cardiff Youth Inclusion Project

This project was established in 2000 under the first tranche of Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs) brought about by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The aim of all YIPs is to reduce the number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System.

The Cardiff YIP works with 40 young people aged 12 to 17years old in the east of the city and 10 young people aged 8 to 11. This is duplicated in the west of the

city. Young people are referred to the project by many agencies. All young people assessed looking at risk and protective factors. Then Action Plans are produced which look at diversionary activities and issue based work

Cardiff Youth Inclusion Support Panel

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) aim to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending by 8 to 13-year-olds who are considered to be at high risk of offending.

Catch22 delivers a YISP in the East and West of the Cardiff City. Young people are referred, with their consent and their parents/guardians consent, to a multi-agency panel that puts together an Individual Support Plan for the young person.

This plan will be delivered by the partners that sit on the Panel. Panel members include YOT, Police, Social Services, Health, Education, Family Circle, Housing, Schools, Youth Service, Action for Children.

Merthyr YIP

Merthyr Youth Inclusion Project was established August 2004. The project works with 50 young people aged 12 to 17, who are in the catchment area of Penydre High School and 10 young people from the Gellideg area aged 8 to 11. Merthyr YIP works to the same model as Cardiff YIP. **The Merthyr YIP was the best performing YIP in Wales 2008/09 and in the top 10% percent nationally in the last YJB Inspection.**

Communities that Care in Wales

Communities that Care (CtC) has been running in Wales since 1997. To date CtC has worked with 8 local authorities in Wales (Swansea, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan and Flintshire).

Communities that Care works to reduce youth crime & antisocial behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, academic failure and school age pregnancy. We do this using an evidence-based approach by identifying the risk and protective factors that predict problems and identifying tested strategies and programmes that reduce risk and increase protection.

CtC is about reducing problem behaviours in the next generation. It is about recognising that there are some things in a child's life that increase the chance of future trouble and other things that reduce the odds. But is it not about identifying individual children and labelling them as 'at risk'. It is about looking at a whole community and seeing which aspects of that community support its young people and which hinder them.

We measure the risk and protective factors using our youth survey. This gives us information on young peoples lives, experience, behaviour and attitudes. The results of this survey are then used to work with local communities and strategically with local authorities to create a strategy to reduce risk and increase protection for future generations of young people.

We have recently resurveyed Flintshire and are in the process of disseminating the results, and we are preparing a revised survey for Merthyr Tydfil which will also look at parental condoned truancy and map the differences in risk levels for those young people who are kept home from school by their parents compared to those who attend school regularly and/or truant without their parents knowledge.

We have recently launched a joint report with Children in Wales, using information gathered from our youth survey, on the impact of the father/child relationship on young people's use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. The report was launched by Brian Gibbons AM, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government. The Minister praised the report for giving detailed information about the lives of young people in Wales and commented: "The report challenges us to review what we are doing ... It's key messages strike a chord with the Welsh Assembly Government's drug and alcohol strategy, preventing harm and supporting and protecting families in particular ... and is of practical importance in developing policy".

2. Youth Crime: Background and Trends

Catch22's experience tells us that prevention is the most effective way to tackle youth crime, yet almost ten times as much is spent on custody as is spent on preventative programmes.¹ There are several key factors that should cause a re-think of certain aspects of youth crime policy:

- The record numbers of young people in custody mean that the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales currently spends two thirds of its budget on just 6 percent of the young people it works with.²
- There are almost 3000 juveniles aged 15–17 in custody. This includes 1,835 under sentence, 599 on remand, 256 in Secure Training Centres and 220 in Secure Children's Homes.³
- Behavioural and mental health problems are particularly prevalent amongst children in prison. Of prisoners aged 16-20 around 85% show signs of a personality disorder and 10% exhibit signs of psychotic illness such as schizophrenia.⁴
- Over a quarter of young people in custody over school age have the literacy and numeracy levels of an average 7-year-old.⁵
- It costs around £53,000 per year to keep a young person (under 18) in custody. Despite this expense, juvenile reoffending rates are 76 per cent for boys leaving custody.

3. Prevention

Tackling youth crime early on not only saves money in the long term, it saves lives. If we get in early to work with young people before they get drawn into crime we can prevent tomorrow's robbery, vandalism or even murder victims ever becoming victims. The risk factors that predict involvement in crime also predict other problems such as substance misuse and young parenthood. Intervening early with young people facing these risks can prevent a whole range of problems for them and for their communities. The Communities that Care Programme is an example of model for identifying these community risks and protective factors.

However, we need to make sure that 'getting in early' doesn't mean dragging more young people into the youth justice system. Targeted early work should be part of children and young people's services. Young people committing low level offences and anti social behaviour should be kept out of the criminal justice system wherever possible. Similarly, only those who commit violent or very serious offences should be taken into custody.

React sees independent Catch22 youth workers placed in police stations and local authorities to provide intensive support to young people aged 5-13 who are engaged in anti-social behaviour or truancy, or at risk in some other way. React works closely with police officers to identify those young people who need support and to intervene at an early stage, before they have become active or persistent offenders. This early intervention and the quick response time (an individualised plan is developed for each young person within five days of referral) are crucial to the programme's success.

Once a young person has been identified as in need of support, a React support worker meets with them in their own home, with their parents or carers and siblings to talk about what help they need. Depending on the situation, they may offer individual counselling, anger management work, mentoring and educational activities. Where there is a need the React worker will put young people in contact with more specialist services, such as drug treatment.

The React model is based on an original pilot project which was known as 'RAP' which won a special merit award at the Howard League for Penal Reform's Community Sentences Cut Crime conference in London in July 2008.

4. Community Sentences vs Custody

Greater emphasis should be given to community sentences in tackling youth offending in Wales, particularly in conjunction with education, training and employment opportunities. Sentencers often state that they send young people to custody only after they've exhausted other options. But if the quality of community sentences were higher, fewer young people would come back to court. For the same reason, careful consideration should be given to responses to young people breaching community orders. While the terms of orders intended to protect the public or prevent further crime have to be adhered to, breaches for late or missed appointments may unnecessarily drive up the numbers returned to court and therefore the numbers going to custody.

Sentencing clearly plays a central role in custody rates. The number of people (all ages) found guilty by courts has stayed constant between 96 and 2006 but custodial sentences at magistrates courts have almost doubled. The overcrowding in our prisons means that staff are forced to focus on security and enforcement at the expense of programmes – such as education and training - that could help young people to move away from crime when they are released.

The distance that many young prisoners are held from home also makes a significant difference to rehabilitation. One in four boys (under 18) in custody are held more than 50 miles away from their home and more than half of girls are (partly because of the smaller number of specialist female YOIs). Catch22's experience tells us that local custodial facilities are better able to support the needs of individual offenders. Local prisons with good links into the local community can aid rehabilitation and resettlement e.g. by using local volunteers to help mentor young people and by helping young people maintain links with their families. Clearly this has significant implications for Welsh children in custody who are held in English establishments. Catch22 would prefer to see custodial facilities that allow more access to family, and can help direct young people into mainstream services as they leave the custodial estate.

Catch22 Northamptonshire offers a bail supervision and support service to young people who have been charged with serious or prolific offences. The service works with young people from their arrest through to their final court appearance. Where possible they will ensure that young people are held in the community while on bail rather than in prison. The service also provides emergency accommodation and transports young people to court. The main aim of the work is to reduce and prevent offending by young people on bail and young people in the community identified as being at high risk of offending. In the words of the service manager:

“We provide young people with support from the moment they are charged through to their court appearance, and often beyond. It’s a highly intensive way of working and we personalise the support to fit the needs of the young person. This might include housing, education, health, anger management; if we can’t offer it directly then we refer them to the services that can.

“Not many other organisations work like this, but the fact that 96 per cent of the young people we work with do not offend while on bail shows we are getting it right.”

5. Restorative Justice

Catch22 supports the expansion of restorative justice schemes for young people. Research carried out by the Youth Justice Board has shown that 79 percent of victims involved in Restorative Justice felt able to put the offence behind them and 70 percent felt that young people understood better the effects of their offending. Restorative Justice projects can bring together victims, members of the community and young offenders to look at ways that young people can be held accountable for their actions and ‘repair’ the harm they have done.

Catch22 delivers Restorative Justice programmes in Hampshire and Suffolk which bring together victims, members of the community and young offenders to look at ways that young people can be held accountable for their actions and ‘repair’ the harm they have done. This may involve either meeting with their victim, engaging in ‘reparations’ for their crime or both.

The Catch22 Restorative Justice programmes also engage volunteers from the local community to work with young people – both in a practical sense when they are carrying out reparations but also to act as positive role models.

Julie’s Story *

Julie, 16, was detained in custody over a weekend after injuring a police officer. The police had taken her to hospital under the mental health act after she had swallowed a number of paracetamol.

Julie had recently been moved from a children’s home she liked into a hotel in a nearby city town centre. Her mother was addicted to heroin and had abandoned Julie after they had both moved from Scotland. Lisa had got into using drugs and was being forced to sell them by her suppliers. She was also self-harming.

In court agencies decided early intervention was needed to prevent a remand into custody and to give her the best chance at overcoming the issues she was facing.

A support plan including accommodation, health, education, training and employment was agreed with Julie. She was referred to specialist health workers

in the Youth Offending Team.

Julie has stopped using drugs and self-harming and is on a Beauty Therapy course at college. She is in contact with Catch22 on a daily basis.

(*Names have been changed. Please only case study use with express permission of Catch22).

¹ *10 Years of Labour's Youth Justice Reforms: An Independent Audit*, CCJS Briefing, published 21 May 2008. <http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/pryouthjusticeaudit.html>

² YJB Annual Report and Accounts, 2006/07.

³ Ministry of Justice Statistics on Population in Custody, October 2007.

⁴ Singleton, N et al (2000) *Psychiatric Morbidity amongst young offenders in England and Wales*, London: Office for National Statistics.

⁵ Prison Reform Trust Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile, December 2007, based on Youth Justice Board information.