



Strategic Framework for Youth Justice

Action Plan

2022 - 2027



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa



Action Plan

TIMEFRAME

ST	Short Term (under 1 year)
MT	Medium Term (2-3 years)
LT	Long Term (4-5 years)

Relevant PfG Outcomes

- 1 Our children and young people have the best start in life
- 7 Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other

Key Outcome		Priority Activities	Actions		Lead	Key Partners	Time Frame
1.	Children are exited from the criminal justice system at the earliest point, with appropriate support	To work collaboratively with other statutory and third sector partners to help children avoid entering, or moving further into, the formal justice system.	1.1	Develop and deliver Earlier Stage Diversion, in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations, in order to exit children from the criminal justice system at the earliest possible stage, with appropriate support.	YJA	DOJ, PSNI, PBNI, V&C orgs	Ongoing
			1.2	Evaluate the rollout of the Children's Diversion Forums to ensure children throughout Northern Ireland have equitable access to multi-agency support aimed at preventing them from moving further into the formal justice system.	YJA	Social Services, Education, PSNI	MT
			1.3	Explore proposals for the development of a diversionary disposal which does not attract a criminal record.	YJA	DOJ, PSNI, PPS, NICTS	MT



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2. Positive outcomes for children, families, victims and communities affected by offending	To simplify and streamline the current provision of community orders	2.1 Introduce a new flexible order to replace the existing 7 community orders based on current evidence and best practice.	DOJ	YJA, PSNI, PBNI, PPS, NICTS, OLCJ	LT
		2.2 Develop a pilot for child-friendly youth court hearings, informed by problem solving approaches, here and in other jurisdictions.	DOJ	YJA, PPS, PBNI, NICTS, PSNI, OLCJ	MT
	To deliver enhanced engagement and support for the most complex cases	2.3 Develop and deliver an Enhanced Case Management framework for children who pose a high risk of significant harm and/or who have complex needs.	YJA	PSNI, PPS, NICTS, OLCJ, Social Services	ST
	To develop and deliver Model of Practice work streams for continuous service improvement	2.4 Develop a rolling programme of service developments that improve supports for children who have offended and help reduce reoffending. In the short-term, this will focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling out the YJA-HSC joint CAMHS service across NI to provide effective access to mental health support services for children in the justice system (subject to budget availability); Improving employability among 16 and 17 year olds in the justice system by developing a wider set of partnerships and improving connections to existing services; and Improving support for the families of children in the justice system both through direct delivery by YJA and improving referral pathways to services already funded by Health, Education and others. 	YJA	HSCB, DE, EA, DfC, DfE, VCS, Employers	ST



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3.	Children will only ever be placed in custody as a last resort	To introduce legislative reforms on bail and remand during the next Assembly mandate.	3.1	Improve arrangements for bail and remand for children through amendment to primary legislation.	DOJ	YJA, PSNI, PBNI, PPS, NICTS	MT
		To support the development and implementation of a Regional Care and Justice Campus in partnership with the Department of Health	3.2	Work in partnership with Health to implement a new Regional Care and Justice Campus. As part of this joint work, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider alternative arrangements for “place of safety” admissions to the new secure care centre; • implement the NI Framework for Integrated Therapeutic Care for all care experienced children; and • develop and implement a new model of education, training, health and therapeutic care for children within the secure care centre 	Regional Facilities Programme Team	DOH, DOJ, DE, YJA, PSNI, HSCB, EA, Social Services	MT



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4. Working in partnership to deliver wider systemic change to improve the lives of children	<p>To explore the potential reform of wider systemic issues, in the best interests of children</p> <p>To deliver agreed recommendations from the Independent Reviewer of Criminal Records</p> <p>To deliver a streamlined youth justice legislative framework which is simpler and more easily understood</p> <p>To improve transitions for young people</p>	4.1 Consult on increasing the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility to 14 years in Northern Ireland.	DOJ	YJA, PSNI, PPS, NICTS	ST
		4.2 Conduct research to determine the key obstacles to delays in progressing youth justice cases in courts, with a view to developing solutions to address the causal factors identified.	DOJ	YJA, PSNI, PPS, NICTS	MT
		4.3 Carry out a review of specified offences which may be disclosed as part of criminal records checks.	DOJ	YJA, PSNI	MT
		4.4 Introduce primary legislation to underpin current filtering arrangements for youth diversionary disposals	DOJ	YJA, PSNI	MT
		4.5 Develop a new Children's Justice Bill which will consolidate and simplify criminal justice legislation relating to children and modernise the delivery of youth justice in Northern Ireland.	DOJ	YJA, PSNI, PBNI	MT
		4.6 Develop further understanding of the factors contributing to over-representation of certain groups in the youth justice system and work with partners to develop actions to address the issues identified.	YJA	DOJ, PSNI, Social Services	MT
		4.7 Further develop partnerships with DfC and Trusts to find additional ways to prevent homelessness amongst young people (16-18 years) who offend.	YJA	Social Services, DfC, NIHE, PBNI, VCS	Ongoing

