



Seminar 6A

Violence Fixated Individuals: the effectiveness of current laws, systems and orders – Legal powers and offline disruption

Cheryl de Freitas – Chief Operating
Officer

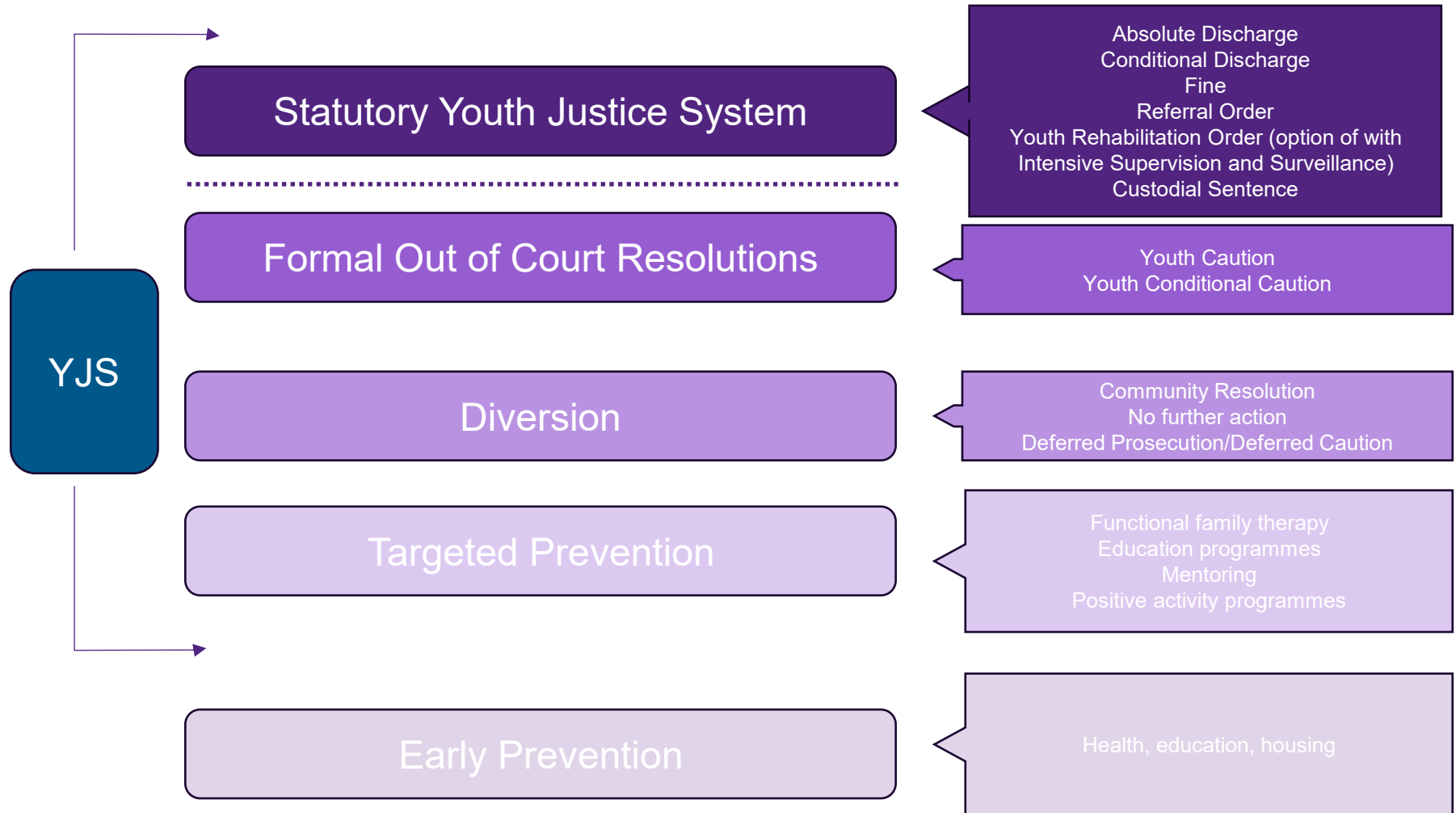
Kate Langley – Director of Operations
(South)



Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

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The Youth Justice System



Early Intervention, Prevention & Assessment



Early Intervention Routes

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASH) would be the most appropriate mechanism for addressing concerns relating to a child who has not met a clear safeguarding, mental health or terrorism threshold.

Where the MASH panel deemed that the child did not have some form of unmet need but was still of serious concern, a referral to a youth justice prevention and diversion service could be made. **The youth justice service is not currently named as the duty holder for this group of children.**

Evidence indicates that early, proportionate and relationship-based interventions delivered through these approaches can reduce offending and prevent escalation where implemented effectively.

Prevention and Turnaround provide important opportunities for intervention but do not provide full visibility of all children who may raise concerns locally.

Prevention

A system focused on identifying and managing individuals only once they are deemed 'violence-fixated' is inherently reactive.

The Prevention offering from youth justice services is potentially key. Participation is voluntary, but it is important to understand that this is because the evidence shows interventions are more effective when a child engages willingly.

YJS practitioners assess the child and identify factors to support positive outcomes for the child such as inclusion in education and access to health provision, identify safety and well-being concerns, identify the child's strengths, interests, activities, and support networks which can help them to develop a pro-social identity. This culminates in the creation of a plan with the child.

Examples of prevention programmes

The programmes are only part of what makes a prevention model effective. The YJS model of bringing multi-agency services together under one roof, where resources allow, means that a child's wider needs are often addressed for the first time. This can include fast-tracked access to support such as mental health practitioners, educational psychologists and other specialist services.

Positive Intervention
Programme – West
Berkshire Youth
Justice Support Team
(April 2026)

Virtual Decisions:
preventative
intervention
programmes –
Sutton Youth Justice
Service (April 2026)

Functional Family
Therapy – Cornwall
Youth Justice Service
and Brighton & Hove
Adolescent Service
(November 2025)

Turnaround
Programme overview
– Southwark Youth
Justice Service
(November 2025)

Structured Assessments

Youth justice services identify children and young people who may present a risk of serious violence through structured assessment, professional judgement and multi-agency information sharing.

YJS practitioners use the **Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT)** to assess the child and identify factors to support positive outcomes for the child such as inclusion in education and access to health provision, and identify safety and well-being concerns.

There are some variables in the **PDAT** which, used in combination, act to identify the depth and risk of violence:

- Has the child previously or currently experienced radicalisation (tick box)?
- What, if any, are the safety and well-being concerns to others as a result of the child's potential behaviour and why? (Response options are 'low, medium, high, very-high'. The question also asks respondent to 'Please identify who and explain why')
- Does the child have access to the internet and how do they use it? (Open text question, which would be more complex to analyse on a centralised basis)

Structured Assessments

AssetPlus requires practitioners to gather, analyse and assess information relating to offending behaviour, behaviours of concern, vulnerability, safety and wellbeing, and risks of harm to others.

AssetPlus also includes consideration of indicators such as:

- violence in home, school or community settings
- involvement in hate-based behaviour
- threats to cause serious harm to others
- behaviour driven by obsessions fantasies or problematic interests
- indications of planning or preparing to commit offences

Where concerns are identified, youth justice services work within local safeguarding and public protection arrangements to ensure information is shared appropriately, risks are understood collectively and proportionate interventions are put in place. Where appropriate, risk management may also include Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to support coordinated planning and oversight.

Different youth justice
outcomes:
how suitable are they
for children
presenting an extreme
violence risk?



Sentencing and post-sentencing measures

The following sentences are available for the courts in England and Wales to use with children:

1. Absolute discharge
2. Conditional discharge
3. Fine
4. Community court orders
5. Custodial sentences

Once a child has been convicted of an offence, the following can be imposed by the Youth Court:

1. Absolute discharge;
2. Conditional discharge;
3. Fine;
4. Referral Order;
5. Youth Rehabilitation Order;
6. Youth Rehabilitation Order with an Intensive Surveillance and Surveillance (ISS);
7. Detention and Training Order (of up to 24 months).

Diversion

Diversion: these children can come into contact with the youth justice service through both formal and informal out-of-court resolutions (OOCRs).

Formal OOCRs, issued by the police, comprise Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions, which would be categorised as part of the youth justice service's statutory caseload.

Informal OOCRs include Community Resolutions, Deferred Prosecutions and Deferred Cautions, **do not form part of the statutory caseload.**

A Youth **Cautions** may be given by the police for any offence where:

- the child makes a full admission
- there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute

Referral Orders

Referral Orders: are based on the principles of restoration, reparation and reintegration with professionals delivering interventions with children to support this.

A referral order is mandatory, unless the court is considering an absolute discharge, conditional discharge, Mental Health Act order or a custodial sentence where:

1. the offence is an imprisonable offence,
2. the child pleaded guilty to the offence and to any connected offence, and the child has never been -
 - i. convicted by or before a court in the United Kingdom of any offence other than the offence and any connected offence, or
 - ii. convicted by or before a court in another member State of any offence.

Youth Rehabilitation Orders

A Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO) is an order imposing one or more youth rehabilitation requirements. These are set out in Section 174 of the Sentencing Act 2020:

- activity requirement
- extended activity requirement
- supervision requirement
- unpaid work requirement
- programme requirement
- attendance centre requirement
- prohibited activity requirement
- curfew requirement
- exclusion requirement
- residence requirement
- local authority residence requirement
- fostering requirement
- mental health treatment requirement
- drug treatment requirement
- drug testing requirement
- intoxicating substance treatment requirement
- education requirement
- electronic monitoring requirement

A YRO with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) means a YRO youth rehabilitation order which imposes:

1. an extended activity requirement
2. a supervision requirement, and
3. a curfew requirement (which can be electronically monitored)

Discussion points: Referral Orders and Youth Rehabilitation Orders

Referral Orders

Potential strengths

- Can be tailored to address interests in violence and associated unmet needs.
- Designed around the child's individual needs and circumstances.
- Progress and compliance are reviewed through the Referral Order panel process.

Points for discussion

- Available only after offending has occurred.
- Limited to children meeting the statutory criteria for a Referral Order.
- Effectiveness depends on how activities and interventions are tailored and delivered.

Youth Rehabilitation Orders

Potential strengths

- Allow a wide range of requirements to be tailored to the child's circumstances and risks.
- Programme, supervision and prohibited activity requirements can be used to respond to concerns relating to extreme violence.
- Can sit alongside wider safeguarding and public protection arrangements, including MAPPA where appropriate.

Points for discussion

- Available only after conviction and sentencing.
- Requirements must remain proportionate to the seriousness of the offence
- Effective risk management relies on wider multi-agency arrangements rather than the order alone.

Operational challenges



Operational Challenges

Youth justice services operate within a multi-agency framework and rely on effective collaboration (including information sharing) with police, children's social care, education, health, probation and safeguarding partners. However, operational challenges can arise where a child presents emerging violence-related concerns that engage more than one agency's responsibilities:

- Agencies may apply different thresholds for intervention, referral and support.
- Inconsistent referral pathways can make it difficult to identify the most appropriate route for children with emerging concerns.
- Limited proactive information sharing can affect the ability of agencies to develop a complete picture of risk and need.
- Gaps in provision, vacancies in specialist roles or limited engagement from partner agencies can delay access to support.
- Incompatible IT systems can create practical barriers to coordinated working.
- The absence of a clearly defined and consistent framework for identifying and assessing children presenting unclear or mixed motivations means practitioners often rely heavily on professional judgement.
- It is often the case that no single agency is clearly responsible for coordinating activity across partners

Collectively, these factors can make it more difficult to establish clear ownership of risk, sustain coordinated multi-agency responses and ensure children receive timely and appropriate support.

Phase One learning: trust must lead to action

Our Phase 1 engagement suggests that trusted relationships, coordinated multi-agency support and earlier intervention can help address barriers to timely and effective support

What we learned

- Parents often identify escalating concerns before children come to the attention of statutory services.
- Trusted relationships with practitioners are often the key factor in enabling disclosure and engagement.
- Guidance alone is unlikely to secure reporting if families lack confidence that services will respond quickly, consistently and without blame.

Where the system struggles

- High thresholds, fragmented pathways and delays in accessing support can leave needs unaddressed until risks escalate.
- Information, assessments and referrals do not always translate into a coordinated response across agencies.
- Parents/carers and frontline practitioners closest to children are not consistently heard or given a clear route to action.

What our engagement suggests

- A named and trusted professional who can coordinate support and provide continuity.
- Integrated models for adolescent services, bringing together youth justice expertise, social care, youth work and access to specialist support.
- Earlier access to support that addresses underlying education, mental health, neurodiversity and exploitation-related needs.
- Relationship-based practice was consistently identified by parents and practitioners as helping children and families engage with support.

Learning from engagement and case reviews

What we observed

- **Risk accumulated over time:** neglect, domestic abuse, exploitation, mental-health needs, SEN or neurodiversity, substance use and education disruption often overlapped.
- **Children were often vulnerable themselves,** including exploitation or harm at home, while also presenting risk to others.

Where responses weakened

- **Many agencies were involved,** but plans, assessments and referrals did not always form one sustained response.
- **Continuity could be lost** through case closure, redirected referrals, limited engagement, unstable education or placement changes.

Implications for earlier action

- **Assess cumulative risk,** join information across agencies and over time, rather than treating each concern in isolation.
- **Maintain a trusted lead** with shared ownership and oversight through transitions and after risk appears to reduce.
- **Act on unmet need,** secure timely education, mental-health, neurodiversity and exploitation support; adapt the approach when engagement falls away.

Supporting Evidence



Multi-agency case studies (1 of 2)

Child A & B

- Child A: long-standing Children's Services contact; CiN at the incident and a previous neglect CPP. A specialist school placement ended and the child was NEET; contextual safety, substance use and sibling offending were considered. NRM threshold was not met.
- Child B: prior CSC referral and s17 assessment for contextual safeguarding and potential exploitation, including substance use, older peers, weapon imagery and a missing episode. The case closed after risks were assessed as reduced.

Child C & D

- Child C: known for neglect and parental substance use; multiple CiN plans and a care episode; CiN at the incident. Severe mental-health concerns involved sporadic CAMHS engagement; a NRM returned Conclusive Grounds.
- Child D: similarly known; prior CiN plans, a CPP and care under s20. The child had SEN, was NEET and received a NRM Conclusive Grounds decision.

Child E

- Open to Children's Services; subject to a CiN plan and accommodated under s20 because of intra-familial harm concerns.
- Placed in semi-independent accommodation.
- Referred to CAMHS through a Referral Order for self-harm and suicidal ideation; CAMHS signposted the child to the NHS-led Vanguard Programme for complex or unmet needs.

Multi-agency case studies (2 of 2)

Child F

- Moved between education, exploitation, mental-health and youth-justice services after exclusion, with concerns about criminal exploitation, substance use and high-risk peers. Supported by the Child Exploitation Team and recognised as a victim through the NRM.
- Education remained unsettled; possible neurodiversity was not assessed. A family CAMHS referral was redirected to the trauma pathway, while earlier counselling ended after limited engagement.

Child G

- Known to Children's Services because of domestic incidents, parental cannabis use and repeated weapon concerns linked to the father; subject to a CiN plan. Behaviour, peer associations and exclusion risk emerged.
- Referred to the Locality Inclusion Panel and supported by an Early Help Inclusion Key Worker and SENCO. A VRU referral followed an altercation; positive progress was reported on a reduced timetable.

Child H

- Known to the Local Authority for domestic abuse, physical chastisement, neglect, poor supervision, possible radicalisation, poor attendance and missing episodes.
- Received repeated Early Help and CiN support; CPPs were followed by PLO proceedings and an Interim Supervision Order. Two younger siblings were in foster care.
- YJS identified vulnerability to exploitation, while recording no direct evidence of exploitation or known gang affiliation.

