

Creating developmentally appropriate responses to young adults at risk of, or **involved** in, **offending**



10 things for Police and Crime Commissioners to include in their Policing and Crime plans



Produced by New Generation Campaigners with the Revolving Door Agency for the Transitions to Adulthood Alliance with the support of Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Police Foundation, Criminal Justice Alliance and the Centre for Justice Innovation.

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The Transition to Adulthood Alliance run by the Barrow Cadbury Trust has funded a collection of projects to build the evidence base on effective engagement with young adults at risk of, or involved in, offending. The Alliance has worked in partnership with the Revolving Doors Agency, the Centre for Justice Innovation, the Police Foundation and the Criminal Justice Alliance to examine policing practice and identify evidence-based and emerging approaches being delivered by the police and/or funded by Police and Crime Commissioners.

Revolving Doors Agency is working in partnership with OPCCs across the country to tackle the trauma, poverty and racism that drive the revolving door of crisis and crime and develop ways to support young adults away from the criminal justice system. Following the recent elections, there is an opportunity for PCCs to communicate their priorities and highlight the approaches they will take to recognise that young adults require a distinct approach to ensure that services respond appropriately to their developmental status.

This briefing seeks to assist PCCs to include evidence-led priorities focused on young adults in their Policing and Crime Plans to facilitate the prevention and reduction of crime. Plans should support young adults to develop and provide the best platform to support them in their shift to creating positive adult identities and crime-free futures.

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
Effective engagement.	<p>Young adults require a distinct approach to engagement by PCCs, both regarding their views on local criminal justice priorities and in commissioning and designing developmentally appropriate services. Engaging effectively with young Black, Asian or minority ethnic background young adults and young adult women is also important.</p> <p>Some PCCs have established Youth Commissions on Police and Crime, to provide platforms for young people aged 14-25 to influence the future of policing and crime prevention in their local areas by working in partnership with their PCCs and police forces to tackle urgent issues such as reducing youth offending, transitions to adult services, relationships with the police, and support for young victims and witnesses.</p>	<p>We will ensure that young adults’ perspectives as members of the community and people involved in the criminal justice system (as victims, perpetrators, or both) are reflected in our consultation plans. This includes providing opportunities for those with lived experience to engage in local discussions about criminal justice priorities and co-design services where appropriate.</p>

“PCCs could make a commitment to young people as well. They [PCCs] should hear it from young people directly - it makes it more humanising and bridges the gap.”

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
<p>Building trust to improve reporting of crime.</p>	<p>While many young adults broadly agree on the value of police in maintaining law and order and serving the public, a significant minority do not¹. A recent survey found that over half of young adults did not think that the police consistently act in line with their own beliefs and values (54%) or that the police understood young adults' circumstances or acted compassionately towards them (53%).</p> <p>Young adults who do not have trust in the police can be reluctant to engage with criminal justice agencies, including to report offences to the police as victims or providing information as witnesses. This can make the polices' job harder in solving and tackling crimes. Young adult women are particularly reluctant to report sexual offences. This means that crime which affects young adults may not be fully represented in local reporting data and young adult victims might not be getting the support they need.</p> <p>One way of building trust is to ensure scrutiny mechanisms to over-see police powers are effective. Some forces such as Hertfordshire, actively target universities, colleges and youth centres to recruit scrutiny panel members and changed meetings times to ensure young people could attend.</p>	<p>We will undertake work to understand and address disparities in the public's trust of the police among different age groups, races, and genders, including young adults. This includes improving the effectiveness of our scrutiny mechanisms to help build trust and confidence, including ensuring young adults are able to be meaningfully involved in holding the police to account.</p>

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
<p>Managing relationships with maturity training.</p>	<p>Some young adults feel targeted by the police in their local areas². Mutual negative stereotyping can undermine relations between young adults and the police and face-to-face encounters can be fraught. How the police handle encounters with young adults—many of whom may be vulnerable due to their maturity and life experiences, even if they do not appear it—has important implications for police legitimacy. This includes the willingness of young adults to cooperate and their trust and confidence in the police.</p> <p>Young adults are more likely than any other group to be subject to stop and search. In particular, young adult men from minoritised ethnic groups are up to seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than their white counterparts and consequently hold the most negative views of the police.</p> <p>The police receive limited training on managing encounters with different members of the community, defusing difficult situations, power imbalance, or how best to improve legitimacy amongst young adults. Such training can help foster the trusting relationships which are essential for reducing crime. Young people can also help design and deliver training.</p>	<p>We will ensure that the police and local partner agencies have access to training on developmental maturity, as well as associated issues such as mental health and learn how to engage effectively with young adults so that frontline officers and partners are maturity aware by default.</p>

Key priority**Evidence****Draft line for Policing and Crime plan****4
Developing tailored diversion approaches.**

The acquisition of criminal records can undermine the prospects of young adults developing positive identities, having crime free futures, and realising their full potential. Out of court disposals can offer a rehabilitative alternative to prevent reoffending or reduce escalation of offending. Introducing triage and other approaches to divert young adults away from crime helps prevent them from stigmatising involvement in the criminal justice system³.

Many of the levers for early intervention and diversion lie beyond PCCs' specific powers so this requires close partnership working with a range of community services. This might include, for example, funding to schools, arts, music, sports and providing young adults with the skills they need to become independent and develop positive adult identities.

Deferred prosecution and distinct, developmentally appropriate approaches for diversion and out of court disposals interventions have been proven effective. For example, initiatives such as Checkpoint have reduced reoffending rates⁴.

However research shows that unequal access to diversion schemes maybe contributing to racial disparities in the criminal justice system⁵.

We will work with our partners to develop a tailored approach to working with young adults who commit low level offences who can then be safely and more effectively be diverted from the criminal justice system. This will include providing grant funding for small organisations able to meet the diversity of young adults' needs and aspirations in creative ways.

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
<p>Addressing multiple needs and facilitating effective transition between child and adult services.</p>	<p>There is often a divide between victim support strategies and reducing reoffending strategies, with little or no recognition of the links between victimisation and offending/reoffending⁶.</p> <p>Too many young adults come into or stay in the criminal justice system because of multiple unmet needs. For example, poverty, trauma, homelessness and mental health needs make young adults vulnerable, but also more likely to come into contact with the police⁷. Nevertheless, adversity-informed practice does not often reach beyond those focused on children. For example, youth offending services take a preventative approach to reducing crime, whereas adult criminal justice services focus more on managing risk and have less capacity for providing support.</p> <p>When these needs are unmet, they create demand on the police and other agencies through repeated contact. Providing coordinated support for the usually small number of these ‘revolving door’ individuals is an important way to reduce further, predictable, demand. For example, it can allow officers to spend more time on frontline duties tackling serious or organised crime as well as reduce crime in local areas and prevent future victims of gangs and exploitation.</p> <p>Facilitating responses to problems that overcome silos between agencies will enable more preventative and flexible approaches that meet young adults’ needs more effectively. PCCs can help to bring key health and local authority partners together on a preventative agenda, working closely together to jointly commission services for shared benefit and acknowledging the overlapping issues which drive demand across public services. This should include drug, alcohol, and mental health provision either within a young adult service or with appropriate pathways to other services capable of providing developmentally appropriate responses.</p> <p>Northumbria Police’s Get Connected programme targets 14-25 year-olds involved in contact with the criminal justice system, working with charities to provide mentoring focused on pathways out of the system⁸. MOPAC is establishing a young adult hub to provide specialist support, including drug and mental health provision, for 18-25-year-olds under probation supervision and 17-year-olds transitioning from youth justice services⁹.</p>	<p>We will seek to improve responses for young adults with multiple needs in contact with the criminal justice system as part of a wider public service reform agenda with partnerships at a strategic level. This will include pooling funds around shared challenges for this cohort, fostering a shared understanding of the needs of young adults and implications of maturational development, and redesigning services to ensure that a developmentally appropriate approach is taken which is ‘distinct by default’.</p> <p><i>“What’s going on in the young people’s communities? Circumstances are important around young adults needs like families, communities, peers.”</i></p>

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
<p>Developing restorative justice at every stage of the criminal justice process.</p>	<p>Research commissioned by T2A suggests that restorative justice may work particularly well for young adults involved in and at risk of being involved in offending who are yet to reach full maturity. Nevertheless, restorative practices are much more commonly used for children than for adults where its effectiveness in reducing recidivism is well documented. There is scope for these practices to include families, schools and the wider community and to be accessible through routes other than criminal justice responses.</p> <p>The processes underlying brain maturation mean that restorative justice may be particularly successful in supporting young adult offenders to desist¹⁰ if coupled with support to address multiple disadvantage. For example, it could help to develop a sense of personal responsibility and self-efficacy, which is conducive to the building of social bonds and attachments and encourages compliance by being perceived by participants to be more procedurally-just than court-based processes.</p> <p>Various organisations work with young adults across a range of settings including housing, education, health and prisons using restorative practices and approaches to prevent as well as de-escalate and address harm and conflict. For example, the Remediation mentoring service uses a restorative approach to working with young adults in the criminal justice system. Restorative interventions already offered in the youth justice system could be usefully extended to young adults.</p> <p>Young adult victims can also benefit from restorative justice as research shows it helps to improve victim satisfaction and well-being. Therefore, victim services should also consider maturity. Those that specialise in working with children, such as the PCC funded Young Victims Service in Thames Valley, could be a model for similar schemes working with young adult victims. Organisations such as Redthread work with young adult victims of violent crime and exploitation including providing trauma-informed services in hospitals.</p>	<p>We will commission age-appropriate, sustainable and meaningful restorative services, taking into account the needs of young adults involved. This could include restorative practices in education, family and community settings as preventative measures and ongoing support, as well as part of out of court disposals to divert young adults from the criminal justice system, as part of community sentences and alongside custodial sentences. We will ensure there are age-appropriate victim services to meet the needs of young adult victims.</p> <div data-bbox="1129 1467 1500 1915" style="border: 2px solid #800000; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><i>“Restorative justice needs to be more than just a tick box exercise. It needs to be meaningful and include education, awareness and support.”</i></p> </div>

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<p>Considering maturity as part of the decision-making process on arrest, charge and prosecution.</p>	<p>The brain remains in an active state of development until between approximately 25 and 30 years of age. In particular, emotional and social development is ongoing in young adulthood and the last parts of the brain to mature are responsible for emotional regulation and impulse control which has implications for both behaviour and vulnerability.</p> <p>The commission of serious violent and sexual offences can be indicative of this stage of maturational development, compounded by challenges perpetrators face in their lives either at that time or stemming from their childhood, including unassessed trauma or neurodisabilities. There is a cohort of young adults in the criminal justice system who have not had the traumatic previous experiences which impact on their maturity recognised or addressed. For example, they are either too old or too advanced in their offending to have benefited from recent measures to improve early intervention, implementation of Child First youth justice approaches and recognition of the impact of child sexual and violent exploitation and modern slavery on involvement in the criminal justice system, including youth violence intervention programmes.</p>	<p>We will ensure that the police understand how to take into account the maturity of young adults, and make appropriate decisions about diversion, arrest, charge and referrals for prosecution, including whether there are any vulnerabilities related to childhood experiences and neurodiversity which have not yet been addressed.</p>

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Creating gender sensitive services.

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
	<p>Young adult women in contact with the criminal justice system face health and social inequalities that are different from males and older women¹¹. The majority of those involved in offending are also victims of crime, including domestic abuse.</p> <p>Despite this, as a minority in the criminal justice system, young women have limited access to support which is both age- and gender-specific¹². The lack of continuity between the youth and adult systems is destabilising. Arbitrary cliff-edges in support mean that young women in transition are at risk of ‘falling through the gaps’ across a range of systems and services without tailored support to meet their needs. Young adult women from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background can face ‘double discrimination’ and their intersectional needs are often overlooked¹³.</p> <p>Local leadership is key to improving responses and there is potential for a change in emphasis to services based on needs rather than age. Where possible local leaders should ensure that there is access to women only provision—like a local women’s centre—into which young adult women can be referred at all stages of the criminal justice process.</p> <p>For example, West Midlands PCC funds New Chance for women who have been identified by the police as someone who might benefit from extra support. This includes practical and emotional help delivered by a group of local charities. The Minerva WrapAround service funded by MOPAC provides enhanced support to women and girls, aged 15 and above, with multiple and complex needs who have committed crime and are at risk of re-offending¹⁴. The service is a “whole system” response, operating through a diverse referral process, and includes keyworker support, group-work, mentoring, and other specialist support.</p>	<p>We advocate a women-specific approach—which includes addressing the particular needs of young adult women—and improving responses to women involved in and at risk of being involved in the criminal justice system as a key local partnership priority.</p>

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Creating racially and culturally sensitive services.

Key priority	Evidence	Draft line for Policing and Crime plan
	<p>Government data shows that Black young adults are significantly more likely to be dragged into the criminal justice system for relatively low-level and non-violent offences, such as theft or minor drug offences. Rather than being given the support they need, they are swept into the criminal justice system¹⁵.</p> <p>Ethnic and racial inequalities in the criminal justice system must be addressed. Black young adults (aged 18-20) are twice more likely to be arrested, and more likely to be held in custody on remand. A black young adult is 8.4 times more likely to receive a conviction for a non-violent offence compared to a white young adult. There are also questions around proportionality regarding ethnicity and the use of diversion and OOCs which cannot be answered by the current data.</p> <p>Some PCCs have established hate crime forums, and community scrutiny panels to monitor the proportionality of use of force and stop and search. For example, Avon and Somerset has established an independent Lammy Review Group to take a local data investigation-based approach to race disparity in criminal justice processes¹⁶. West Midlands PCC has developed a Fairness and Belonging Plan¹⁷. The force’s Fairness in Policing initiative includes a ‘brave space’ for officers to discuss disproportionality and involves reflective practice. Members of the public, including Black young adults, are invited to officers’ training to speak about their experiences of police use of force¹⁸.</p>	<p>We will ensure that we look at the intersection of race and age (as well as gender) using robust data analysis to ensure young adults from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are considered in designing and delivering services.</p> <p>This will be supported by accessible and meaningful complaints processes.</p>

“Stop and search is so heavy handed and it can be embarrassing in front of friends. There needs to be more around de-escalation rather than letting it get heightened and end up in restraint.”

Key priority**Evidence****Draft line for Policing and Crime plan**

Promoting careers and employment pathways for young adults as a route away from crime.

Socio-economic constraints, poverty and contact with the criminal justice system have an impact on the maturation process, preventing young adults from becoming fully independent. Young adults also face challenges in moving on from involvement in the criminal justice system due to issues with Universal Credit, securing housing, recovery from substance misuse, and finding stable employment.

Rising levels of unemployment and poverty because of the pandemic are likely to increase the demand on policing driven by young adults who are already disadvantaged in terms of the reduced level of minimum wage and benefits entitlements.

Support with pursuing career goals, navigating the impact of criminal records, and entering sustainable employment are key to reducing crime through initiatives such as DIVERT¹⁹ in London and New Leaf CIC in Birmingham²⁰, for example.

We will work with partners to commission appropriate support to help young adults in contact with the criminal justice system to build confidence, identify their career goals and access training and development and fulfilling, long-term employment.

We will lead by example by being a 'Ban the Box' employer²¹ and promoting this to other employers. We will collaborate with colleges, universities, employers, the New Futures Network and the National Probation Service to maximise opportunities for young adults with criminal convictions to move into education, training and employment.

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