

Tackling Youth Crime

The Youth Offending Team represents a new approach to fighting youth crime and will play a major role in contributing towards the South Gloucestershire Community Safety Strategy. It brings together professionals from a range of organisations – the Police, Social Services, Probation, Health, Education. Working together in a single team, they aim to cut crime committed by and against young people by intervening when trouble first starts, whether it is in the home, at school or in the community.

This leaflet gives you a broad outline of the Yot's role and its main objectives.

Preventing Offending

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduces a range of new powers to help reduce youth crime. The Act requires local authorities to set up Youth Offending Teams working towards clearly defined Government objectives:

- Reducing the time from arrest to sentence
- Confronting young offenders with the consequences of their offending and helping them to develop a sense of personal responsibility
- Working to combat the factors that often underlie offending behaviour such as personal or family problems, social and educational difficulties or health issues
- Making the punishment proportionate to the seriousness of the offence
- Encouraging reparation to victims by young offenders
- Reinforcing the responsibilities of parents
- Instead of dealing with young offenders whose behaviour has been allowed to escalate out of control, Youth Offending Teams will intervene early and effectively to prevent young people committing offences and re-offending.

Punishing Offending

Justice needs to be administered swiftly, in ways that make young people take responsibility for their actions and the harm they cause to their victims, their families and their communities. Challenging the young offender's behaviour will therefore be central to the work of the Yot.

As well as emphasising the effect on victims, it will highlight the impact a criminal record has on young offenders.

To this end, the police and courts will have new powers at their disposal including `final warnings` and `reparation orders`. The Yot will be responsible for organising reparation work and will co-operate closely with the courts, providing supervision for young offenders in the community, in custody and on their release.

The public has a right to protection against the most serious and persistent offenders and where necessary offenders will be removed from the community.

But punishment is not an end in itself. The aim of custodial and community sentencing is to change behaviour and improve the chances of young offenders staying out of trouble once they are released.

Protecting the Public

The Yot will work in partnership with other local agencies to deal with the multiple problems young offenders experience – For example; drug and alcohol misuse, difficulties at school or at home. It will aim to reduce the risk to the community and to young people themselves.

We need to remember young people are also victims of criminal and anti-social behaviour. As a group they are at much greater risk from personal crime and violence and therefore have as great an interest in tackling crime as the rest of the community. The Yot will, for example:

- Help young offenders who are truanting back into school or making other arrangements to meet their educational needs.
- Work in partnership with employment and training agencies to ensure that young offenders have access to the same opportunities as all young people.
- Address the health care needs of young offenders, providing advice on 'healthy lifestyles', sexual health, and drug or alcohol issues.
- Refer young offenders to agencies which can help with mental and physical health problems.
- Help young offenders find suitable housing.
- Work in partnership with other agencies already involved with the young person e.g. Social Services

The Facts

Burglary, Criminal Damage, Assault, Robbery, Shoplifting, Taking Vehicles without Consent, Drug Related Offences

These are the main types of crime committed by young offenders.

South Gloucestershire has a youth population (10yrs-17yrs) of over 24,000, which is predicted to rise substantially over the next ten years. Young people commit about a quarter of all chargeable offences and young males commit the vast majority of these.

Most crimes committed by young people are one-off offences. Nobody underestimates their seriousness but persistent young offenders – those who have three or more convictions – represent much greater cause for concern. Although fewer in number, they are responsible for a significant proportion of youth crime.

Crime and fear of crime are important issues for everyone in South Gloucestershire and the Community Safety Partnership aims to reduce both over the coming years.

Partner Agencies

The main partner organisations working together in the Youth Offending Team are South Gloucestershire Council, Avon and Somerset Police, Avon and Somerset Probation Service, Avon Health Authority. The Yot also has strong partnership links with other local charity organisations and agencies including:

Victim Support
The Connexions Service
South Gloucestershire Housing Department
Local Schools
The Drug Action Team
Priority Youth Housing
Downend Clinic

The Yot also has a Mentoring Scheme, which aims to prevent re-offending by bringing together a young person and an older mentor, who can befriend, help and advise the young person.

You can contact the Youth Offending Team at:

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Filton,
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A local partnership under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 between South Gloucestershire Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Avon and Somerset Probation Service and South Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust.

Yot/Admin/general/Tackling Youth Crime leaflet