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Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme 2023

A copy of this report is available on the Garda website www.garda.ie

Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau

GNYDB, J Block
Garda Headquarters,
Phoenix Park, Dublin
D08HN3X

01-6663866
www.garda.ie
youthdiversion@garda.ie

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Glossary of Terms

BPDT	Best Practice Development Team
BPI	Best Practice Initiative
CBOR	Community Based Organisation Representative
CIC	Children in Care
CMI	Case Management Inventory
DMR	Dublin Metropolitan Region
FPN	Fixed Penalty Notice
GISC	Garda Information Services Centre
GNYDB	Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau
IMS	Investigation Management System
JLO	Juvenile Liaison Officer
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
PAF	Performance Accountability Framework
PULSE	Police Using Leading Systems Effectively
REPPP	Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice Project
UTCO	Unsuitable This Case Only
YJOG	Youth Justice Oversight Group
YJW	Youth Justice Worker
YLS	Youth Level Service
YDP	Youth Diversion Project

Glossary of Terms

Admission to Programme (Section 23 Children Act, 2001)

A child may be admitted to the Programme if he or she—

(a) Accepts responsibility for his or her criminal behaviour, having had a reasonable opportunity to consult with his or her parents or guardian and obtained any legal advice sought by or on behalf of him or her,

(b) Consents to be cautioned and, where appropriate, to be supervised by a juvenile liaison officer, and

(c) Is of or over the age of criminal responsibility and under 18 years of age,

but paragraph (b) shall not apply where the Director is satisfied that the failure to agree to being cautioned or supervised is attributable to undue pressure being brought to bear on the child by any person and, in that event, the child shall be deemed to have consented for the purposes of that paragraph.

(2) The Director shall be satisfied that the admission of the child to the Programme would be appropriate, in the best interests of the child and not inconsistent with the interests of society and any victim.

(3) The criminal behaviour for which the child has accepted responsibility shall not be behaviour in respect of which admission to the Programme is excluded under any regulations made pursuant to section 47, unless the Director of Public Prosecutions directs otherwise in a notification to the Director.

(4) When the admission of a child to the Programme is being considered any views expressed by any victim in relation to the child's criminal behaviour shall be given due consideration but the consent of the victim shall not be obligatory for such admission.

(5) For the purposes of subsection (1) (c), the age for admission to the Programme shall be the age of the child on the date on which the criminal behaviour took place.

Decision to admit to Programme (Section 24 Children Act, 2001)

(1) It shall be a function of the Director to decide whether to admit a child to the Programme and the category of caution to be administered to any child so admitted

(2) Where the Director decides that a child should be admitted to the Programme, he or she shall direct a juvenile liaison officer to give notice in writing to the parents or guardian of the child specifying the criminal behaviour in respect of which a caution is to be administered, whether the caution is to be formal or informal and the time and place where it is to be administered and stating that the parents or guardian are obliged to attend its administration.

Cautions (Section 25 Children Act, 2001)

1) A caution shall be administered to every child admitted to the Programme.

(2) A formal caution shall be administered in a Garda Síochána station or, in exceptional circumstances, elsewhere by—

(a) A member of the Garda Síochána not below the rank of inspector, or

(b) A juvenile liaison officer who has been trained in mediation skills,

in the presence of the parents or guardian and, if the caution has been administered by such a member of the Garda Síochána, a juvenile liaison officer.

(3) An informal caution shall be administered by a juvenile liaison officer in a Garda Síochána station, in the child's normal place of residence or in exceptional circumstances elsewhere, in the presence of the parents of guardian of the child.

(4) In this section—

"Formal caution" means a caution to be administered to a child where—

(a) No previous caution has been administered, or

(b) One or more than one informal or formal caution has been previously administered,

and the Director considers that the child's criminal behaviour was of such a nature that it could not be adequately dealt with by way of informal caution;

"Informal caution" means a caution to be administered to a child where—

(a) No previous caution has been administered, or

(b) One or more than one informal caution has been previously administered,

and the Director considers that the child's criminal behaviour was not sufficiently serious to warrant a formal caution.

Restorative Caution (Section 26 Children Act, 2001)

The Director may invite any victim whose views in relation to the child's criminal behaviour have been considered pursuant to section 23 (4) to be present at the administration of a formal caution.

(2) Where any victim is so present, there shall be a discussion among those present about the child's criminal behaviour.

(3) The member of the Garda Síochána administering the formal caution may invite the child—

(a) To apologise, whether orally or in writing or both, to the victim, and

(b) Where appropriate, to make financial or other reparation to him or her.

Conference (Section 29 Children Act, 2001)

A Section 29 Conference is defined in Section 29 in Part 4 of the Children Act, 2001:

'A "conference", in relation to a child, means a meeting held pursuant to this Part of persons concerned with the child's welfare, and such a conference shall have the following functions:

(a) To bring together the child in respect of whom the conference is being held, his or her parents or guardian, such other family members, relatives and other persons as appropriate and the facilitator with a view to—

(i) establishing why the child became involved in the behaviour that gave rise to his or her admission to the Programme,

(ii) discussing how the parents or guardian, family members, relatives or any other person could help to prevent the child from becoming involved in further such behaviour, and

(iii) where appropriate, reviewing the child's behaviour since his or her admission to the Programme;

(b) as appropriate and in accordance with this Part, to mediate between the child and the victim;

(c) to formulate an action plan for the child; and

(d) to uphold the concerns of the victim and have due regard to his or her interests.

Message from the Chairperson

Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman – Chair of the Monitoring Committee

Dear Commissioner,

As Chairperson of the Monitoring Committee appointed under Section 44 (1) of the Children Act, 2001 to monitor the effectiveness of the Diversion Programme, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2023.

The purpose of the Committee is to ensure that the efficacy of the Diversion Programme is sufficiently monitored, and improved upon where possible. In 2023, this involved monitoring the progression of recommendations made by the Committee in 2022, making recommendations for actions to be implemented in 2024, and monitoring the delivery of training to Garda personnel involved in delivering the Programme.

Working together in partnership with stakeholders in Youth Justice is essential to develop and implement sustainable and effective solutions to respond to the diverse needs of both the children, who have been referred to the Diversion Programme, and the victims and communities impacted by their behaviour. As outlined in this report, 2023 saw continued inter-agency collaboration in the delivery of evidence based initiatives demonstrated by the continued work of the Greentown Programme, Bail Supervision Scheme, Youth Joint Agency Response to Crime (YJARC) and the work of the Youth Diversion Projects Research & Development Team.

It is important to acknowledge Principal Officer Rose Sweeney, Superintendent John Finucane, Director of the Diversion Programme and all personnel attached to the Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau for their continued commitment to the administration and delivery of the Programme. I also wish to acknowledge the work of Divisional Juvenile Liaison Officers and Youth Diversion Project staff for their dedicated contribution and commitment throughout the year. Thank you also to the Garda Síochána Analysis Service for the provision of the Diversion Programme statistics for 2023.

Finally, I wish to extend my gratitude to the members of the Monitoring Committee, to Dr Sean Redmond, Dr Salome Mbugua and PO Rose Sweeney, for their support, and commitment throughout the year.

Paula Hilman

Chair of the Monitoring Committee

Overview of the Committee

Section 44 of the Children Act, 2001 provides that a committee is appointed to monitor the effectiveness of the Diversion Programme.

The terms of reference of the committee are to:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the Diversion Programme.
- Review all aspects of its operation.
- Monitor all ongoing training needs of the facilitators.
- Present an annual report to the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána on its activities during the year.

The tasks of the Committee are to:

- Examine the management and effective delivery of the Diversion Programme.
- Identify best practices in the administration of the Programme.
- Assess best practices for the training of facilitators and monitor training delivery
- Put in place methodologies for the evaluation and measurement of the Programme's effectiveness.

Overview of the Committee

The current members of the Committee are:

Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman

Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman has 40 years' service in policing. She is responsible for Roads Policing and Community Engagement within An Garda Síochána, this includes strategic oversight of GNYDB. Assistant Commissioner Hilman was appointed Chairperson of the Monitoring Committee in 2020.

Principal Officer Rose Sweeney

Principal Officer Rose Sweeney is responsible for the GNYDB. She has over 30 years' experience in the area of education, justice and interagency working.

Dr. Sean Redmond

Dr. Sean Redmond is an Adjunct Professor of Youth Justice in the School of Law at the University of Limerick. He is employed by the Department of Justice, seconded to UL.

Dr. Salome Mbugua

Dr. Salome Mbugua is a commissioner member with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. She has over 20 years' experience of working with under-represented groups in particular women, children, and young people. Dr. Mbugua is the founder of AkiDwA.

Executive Summary

Diversion Programme

The objective of the Programme is to divert children from committing further offences. The child must accept responsibility for their criminal behavior. The objective is achieved primarily by administering a caution to the child and, where appropriate, by placing them under the supervision of a Juvenile Liaison Officer and convening a conference to be attended by the child, family members and other concerned persons.

Statistics

Statistics for this report are provided by the Garda Síochána Analysis Service from PULSE data as of 2nd April 2024. There were 15,813 referrals to the Diversion Programme in 2023, which represents an increase of 1% compared to 2022 (15,719 referrals).

71% (5,534) of children referred to the Diversion Programme in 2023 were referred only once. 68% (3,348) of informal cautions were issued to children who received only one referral to the Diversion Programme in 2023.

The majority of referrals to the Division Programme in 2023 were under the offence category of Theft and Related Offences, and accounted for 31% (4,902) of referrals. There were 4,971 theft and related offences referrals, an increase of 5% compared to 2022 (4,719 referrals).

The Burglary offence category had the highest increase in referrals from 450 referrals in 2022 to 643 referrals in 2023, an increase of 43%.

Drugs offence categories had the highest decrease in referrals from 1,881 in 2022 to 1,607 in 2023. This is a 15% decrease. The Public Order Offence category also had a decrease of 13% in referrals in 2023, from 2,626 in 2022 to 2,284 in 2023.

Road Traffic offences accounted for over 10% (1,679) of total referrals in 2023. Road safety is crucial for young people as they are among the most vulnerable road users due to their inexperience and propensity for risk-taking behaviour.

Youth Diversion Projects

Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs) work to divert children from entering or remaining within the justice system. YDPs work with children and their families in their communities, taking a strengths-based approach to support positive change, enabling them to reach their full potential and improve their long-term outcomes.

Restorative Justice Cautions

There were 312 restorative cautions in 2023, which is 45% lower than the number reported in 2022 (568). A total of 404 restorative cautions were directed by GNYDB in 2023, which if all had been administered, would have resulted in a 29% decrease from 2022. However, 92 directions for restorative cautions were subsequently updated to a formal caution/UTCO. The primary reasons for this were victims not engaging with the restorative process or the child subsequently not accepting responsibility for the offence for which they were referred to the Diversion Programme.

Efforts to address the decrease in restorative cautions will continue in 2024 and will involve further Restorative Justice training for JLOs with an increased emphasis on communication with victims on the positive outcomes that can be achieved as a result of Restorative Justice and on supporting the victim throughout the process. The Committee also recommends the development of a Garda Youth Diversion Bureau Restorative Justice Forum to further support JLOs in the delivery of Restorative Cautions in addition to being a member of Restorative Practices Ireland.

GNYDB Governance and Monitoring Unit

The GNYDB Governance and Monitoring Unit plays a role in ensuring the efficient and effective operation of the Diversion Programme. The purpose of the unit is to support, advise and assist Gardaí in progressing youth referrals, monitor Youth Referral Key Performance Indicator reports in order to identify and highlight issues at Divisional level, and to engage with Divisional Performance Assurance Functional Area Teams. Its responsibilities also include liaising with IT in relation to PULSE updates and development of youth referral reports, reviewing and updating infographics and information guides on youth referral processes, and engaging with Divisional Youth Diversion Liaison Inspectors.

Training and Competitions

In 2023, Restorative Justice Training was delivered to newly appointed JLOs. In addition, Restorative Justice Refresher Training was delivered in the DMR North, Limerick Cork and Galway West Division. The roll out of refresher training continues in 2024.

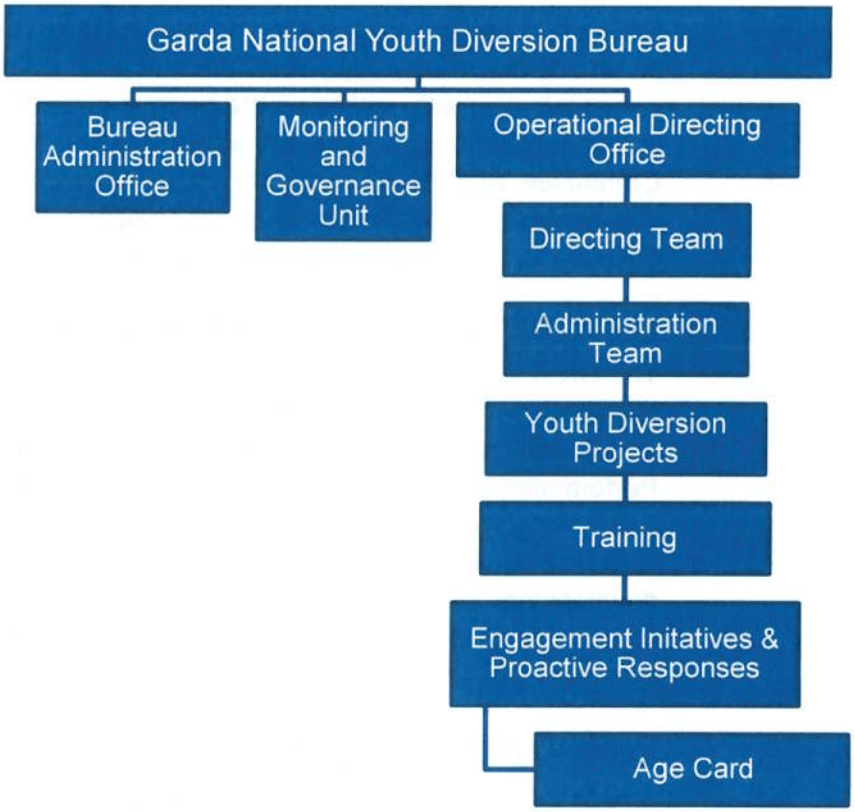
Together Stronger training was delivered to JLOs and Youth Justice Practitioners jointly. This training focuses on the development and maintenance of effective partnerships between JLOs and Youth Diversion Project Practitioners.

The GNYDB delivered training on the Diversion Programme and GNYDB to nine Sergeant Promotion and five Inspector Promotion Courses in 2023.

GNYDB Structure

GNYDB

The GNYDB is the national office tasked with administration of the Diversion Programme under Part 4 of the Children Act, 2001. The GNYDB continues to work closely with the Department of Justice, and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.



The Director

As stipulated in the Children Act, 2001, the Diversion Programme is managed by a member of An Garda Síochána not below the rank of Superintendent who is assigned to the role by the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána. The Director may, delegate any of the functions assigned to the Director to a Garda Inspector.

Overview of Statistics

Statistics for the review period 2023 are provided by An Garda Síochána Analysis Service. Figures are based on PULSE data (Youth Referrals created in respect of youths aged 12 to 17) as of 2nd April 2024.

A) Annual Referrals	•There were 15,813 referrals to the Diversion Programme in 2023 which represents an increase of 1% compared to 2022 (15,719 referrals).
B) Children Referred	•There were 7,843 children referred in 2023 which is 7% fewer than in 2022 (8,404 referred).
C) Children Unsuitable for admission to the Diverson Programme	•There were a total of 1,200 children deemed unsuitable for admission to the Programme in 2023. This is the same as in 2022 (1,200).

**% figures in some cases may not total 100% due to rounding of values.*

Any comparison with 2022 is a direct comparison with the statistics as provided for the 2022 Diversion Programme Statistics Report (i.e. 2022 data was based on PULSE as of 31st March 2023). This is to ensure that similar data sets are used for both years.

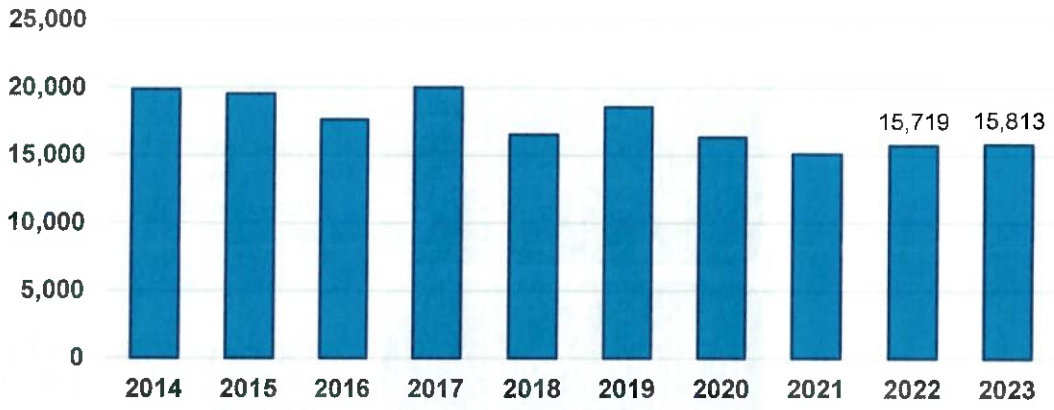
Any figures lower than 10 are not published and are denoted tables as (<10).

In certain instances, other figures may have to be withheld to avoid the disclosure of volumes less than 10. These are denoted with an asterisk (*) symbol.

Annual Referrals

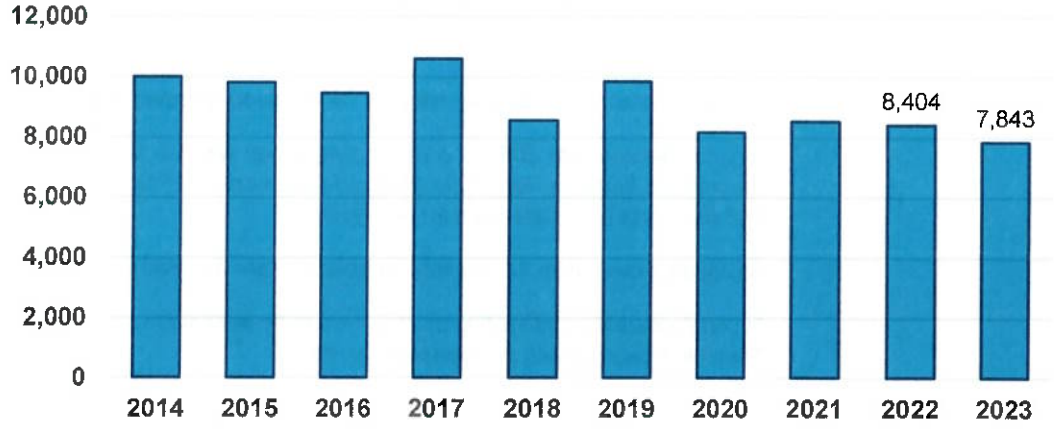
There were **15,813** referrals to the Diversion Programme in 2023, which represents an increase of 1% compared to 2022 (15,719 referrals).

Number of Youth Referrals 2014 - 2023 by Year



There were **7,843** children referred in 2023 which is 7% fewer than in 2022 (8,404 referred)

Number of Children Referred 2014 - 2023 by Year



Referral Data

The breakdown of the recommendations made on the 15,813 referrals to the Diversion Programme in 2023 is as follows:

Recommendation	Total	%	%± 2022
Informal Caution	4,924	31%	-10%
Formal Caution	3,904	25%	+7%
Unsuitable	5,194	33%	+10%
Restorative Caution	312	2%	-45%
*Others	1,479	9%	+16%
Total	**15,813**	**100%**	**+1%**

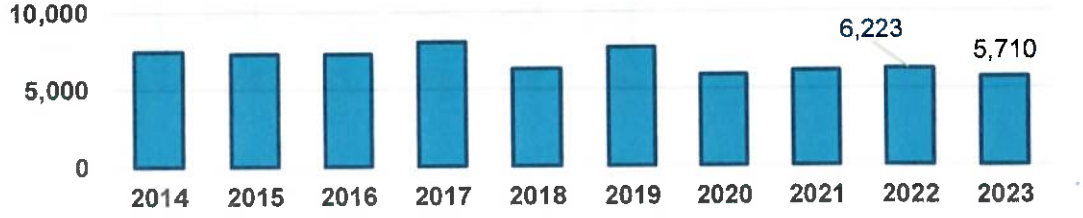
** 'Others' included 899 incomplete referrals at the time of analysis while 580 referrals had a recommendation of 'Criteria Not Met'*

** The 'Criteria Not Met' are; no prima facie evidence exists in the case, the matter is statute barred, no statement from injured party/ statement withdrawn, dealt with sufficiently at scene, on grounds of welfare and other e.g., health reasons.*

Children Receiving Informal or Formal Cautions in 2023

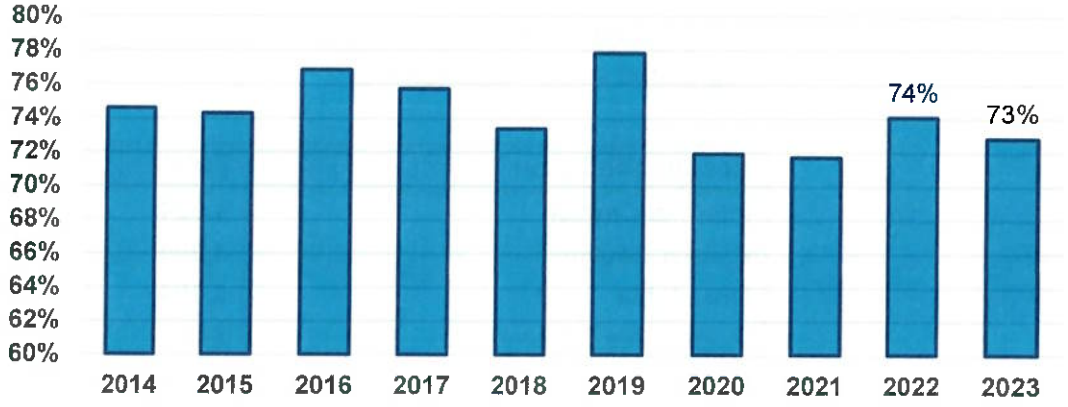
5,710 children received informal or formal cautions in 2023. This represents a decrease of 8% from the 2022 total (6,223).

Number of Children with Informal/Formal Cautions 2014-2023
(based on most recent referrals in 2023)



73% of children received an Informal or Formal Caution in 2023. This is 1% lower than in 2022.

% Children with Formal/Informal Cautions 2014-2023

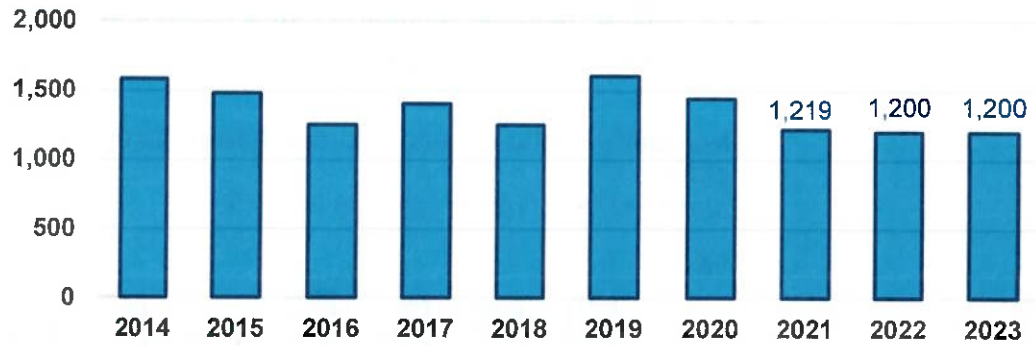


Children Deemed Unsuitable for Admission to the Diversion Programme

A total of 1,200 children were deemed unsuitable for the Programme in 2023, which is the same as in 2022 (1,200).

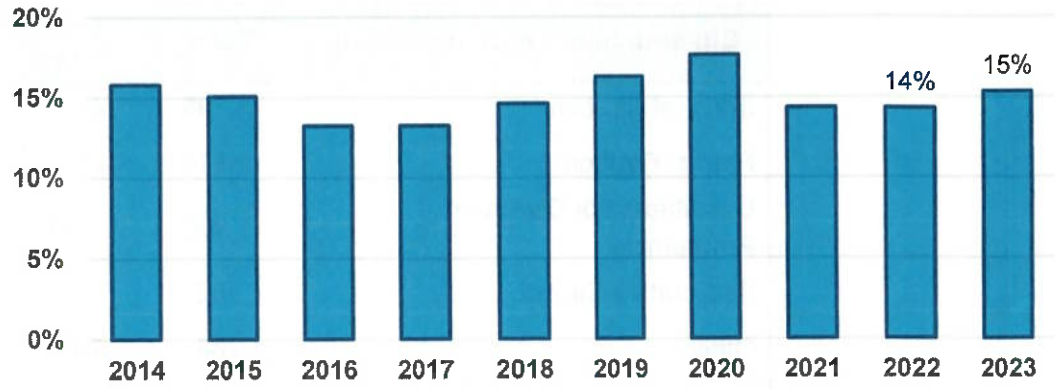
Number of Children Unsuitable for Programme 2014-2023

(based on most recent referral in 2023)



The proportion of children deemed unsuitable for the Programme was 15% in 2023. This represents an increase of 1% compared to 2022 (14%).

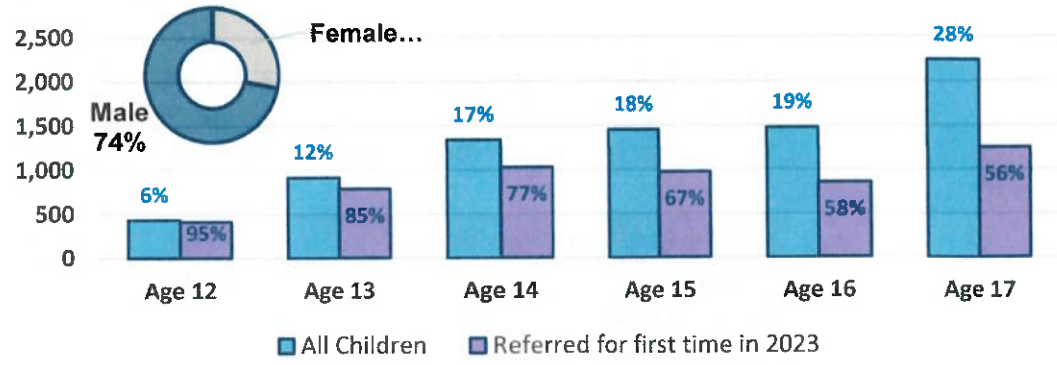
% Children Unsuitable for Programme 2014-2023



Age & Gender of Children Referred in 2023.

The proportion of children referred for the first time in 2023 decreased as their age increased. 74% of children referred to the Diversion Programme in 2023 were male.

Figure 3: Age and Gender of Children Referred in 2023



Note: % value on blue bars represent the proportion of all children referred in 2023. % value on purple bars represent the proportion of children per age year that were referred for the first time in 2023 (Eg: 6% of children aged 12-17 referred in 2023 were age 12. 95% of children aged 12 who were referred in 2023 were referred for the first time in 2023.

Children Referred in 2023 by Recommendation

Females who were referred to the Diversion Programme primarily received an informal caution (39%). This proportion was over twice as high as other types of recommendation (14%-17% female).

Children (most recent referral)	Total	% of Total	Vs 2022	Male	Female
Informal Caution	3,796	48%	-13%	61%	39%
Formal Caution	1,914	24%	+3%	86%	14%
Unsuitable For Diversion Programme	1,200	15%	+0%	85%	15%
Restorative Caution	165	2%	-32%	83%	17%
Others	768	10%	+4%	85%	15%
Total	7,843	100%	-7%	74%	26%

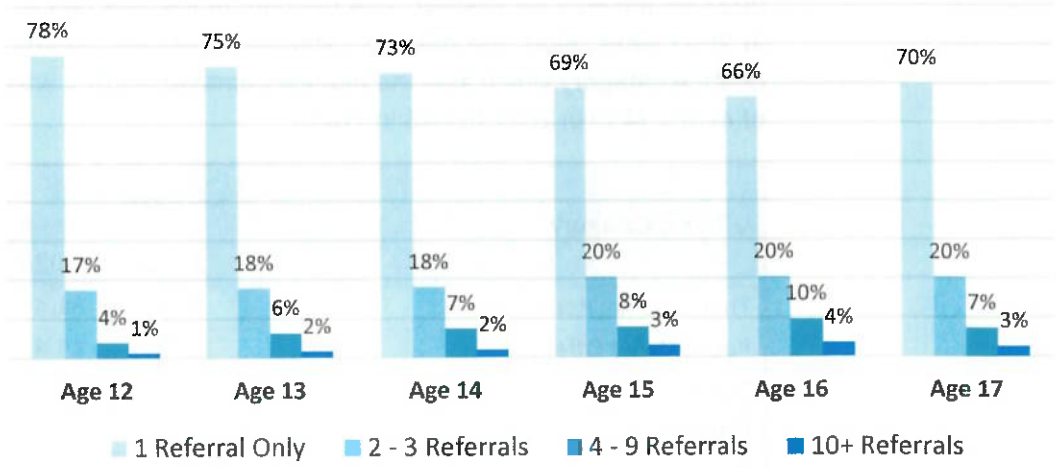
Children Referred in 2023 by Frequency of Referrals Received in 2023

71% of children received just one referral in 2023. Of these, 69% were male and 31% female. 10% of children received four or more referrals in 2023. In general, the higher the number of referrals received, the more likely the person was to be male.

Number of Referrals in 2023	Total	% Total	Male	Female
1 Only	5,534	71%	69%	31%
2-3 Referrals	1,524	19%	82%	18%
4-9 Referrals	588	7%	85%	15%
10+ Referrals	197	3%	92%	8%
First Referral in 2023	**5,285**	**67%**	**68%**	**32%**

For all ages, the majority of children received one referral only but this proportion decreased slightly with age (approximately 77% of 12/13 year olds and 70% of 14-17 year olds received one referral only).

Referrals Received in 2023 by Age and Referral Frequency



Children Referred by Frequency of Referrals Received in 2023 by Recommendation

68% of Informal Caution recommendations were issued to children who received just one referral in 2023. For all other recommendation types, the majority of children were those who received more than one referral in 2023. In 90% of referrals resulting in an unsuitable recommendation, the person had received two or more referrals.

	Proportion of Referrals 2023	
Referral Type	**One Referral**	**2 or More Referrals**
Informal Caution	**68%**	32%
Formal Caution	28%	**72%**
Unsuitable For Diversion Programme	10%	**90%**
Restorative Caution	34%	**66%**
Others	32%	**68%**

Note: Values refer to proportion of referrals issued (not individual children).

Example: 68% of all referrals with a recommendation of 'Informal Caution' were issued to children who only received one referral in total in 2023. 10% of referrals with a recommendation of 'Unsuitable' were issued to children who only received one referral in total in 2023.

Youth Referral Incident Categories

The below table displays Incident Categories associated with youth referrals created in 2023 on the PULSE system. The majority of the referrals to the Diversion Programme in 2023 were under the offence category 'Theft and Related Offences' at 4,971. The offence category which saw the highest increase in 2023 was Burglary with an increase of 42.9% (450 in 2022 to 643 in 2023).

Offence Category	Referrals 2023	% Total 2023	Referrals 2022	% (+/-) v 2022
Theft and Related Offences	4,971	31.4%	4,719	+5.3%
Public Order Offences	2,284	14.4%	2,626	-13.0%
Traffic	1,634	10.3%	1,506	+8.5%
Drugs	1,607	10.2%	1,881	-14.6%
Assault	1,588	10.0%	1,486	+6.9%
Criminal Damage	1,396	8.8%	1,336	+4.5%
Burglary	643	4.1%	450	+42.9%
Sexual Offences	452	2.9%	439	+3.0%
Weapons Offences	382	2.4%	445	-14.2%
Fraud/Economic Crime	379	2.4%	358	+5.9%
Robbery	235	1.5%	215	+9.3%
Homicide	87	0.6%	86	+1.2%
Drivers Under The Influence	45	0.3%	38	+18.4%
Court Related Offences/Bail	30	0.2%	35	-14.3%
Harmful Communication**	18	0.1%	n/a	n/a
Animals	18	0.1%	16	n/a
Liquor Licensing	16	0.1%	29	n/a
Domestic	10	0.1%	16	n/a
Others*	18	0.1%	38	n/a
Total	**15,813**	**100.0%**	**15,719**	**+0.6%**

** 'Others' includes any offence category for which there were fewer than 10 referrals in 2023. This included Gaming/Betting, Escape Prison, Street Trading and Miscellaneous. As the offence categories classified as 'Other' can vary from year to year, the value is not comparable between 2022 and 2023.*

*** 'Harmful Communication' was recently introduces as an offence category on PULSE and there is no comparable data for 2022. %(+/-) v 2022 is only calculated if there were 30 or more referrals in 2023.*

Theft Offence Category

The majority of referrals to the Division Programme in 2023 were under the offence category of Theft and Related Offences and accounted for 31% of referrals. There were 4,971 theft and related offences referrals, an increase of 5.3% compared to 2022 (4,719 referrals). 3,437 referrals of the theft incident category were for Theft from Shop, which accounts for 69% of the category.

Public Order Category

The Public Order Offence category had a 13% decrease in referrals from 2,626 in 2022 to 2,284 in 2023. While general Public Order offences account for 62% (1,416) of referrals under this category, 604 (26%) of these referrals were for the offence of Trespassing in a Yard or Curtilage and 187 referrals were for Affray/Riot/Violent Disorder.

Traffic Offence Category/Road Safety

There were 1,634 referrals to the Diversion Programme in 2023, this in a 9% increase from 2022 (1,506 referrals). 390 (24%) referrals under the Traffic offence category were for Dangerous Driving. Dangerous Driving causing Death or Serious Bodily Harm accounted for 12 referrals to the Diversion Programme.

Drugs Offence Category

Drugs offence categories had the highest decrease in referrals from 1,881 in 2022 to 1,607 in 2023, a decrease of 15%. 1,009 (63%) of these referrals were for Simple Possession and 496 (30%) for Possession of drugs for Sale or Supply.

Burglary Offence Category

The Burglary offence category had the highest increase in referrals from 450 referrals in 2022 to 643 referrals in 2023, an increase of 43%. Out of these 643 referrals, the offence of Aggravated Burglary accounted for 12 referrals and Possession of an Article (Burglary or Theft) for 135 referrals.

Restorative Justice

Definition of Restorative Justice

Section 26 of the Children Act, 2001 provides for the presence of a victim at a formal caution. This enables a process whereby the young person accepts responsibility for their offending behaviour and becomes accountable to those they have harmed. The victim is given the opportunity to have their views represented, by either meeting the young person face to face, or having their views represented by someone else. This means that instead of focusing on a criminal justice outcome for a child who has admitted an offence, repairing the damage to the victim and reintegrating the child back into the community becomes the primary focus. By validating the victim's experience and by reintegrating the child back into their community, restorative justice is associated with better outcomes for the offender, a reduced risk of reoffending, more positive outcomes for victims and is in practice, more cost effective and better associated with practitioner well-being and improved community relations.

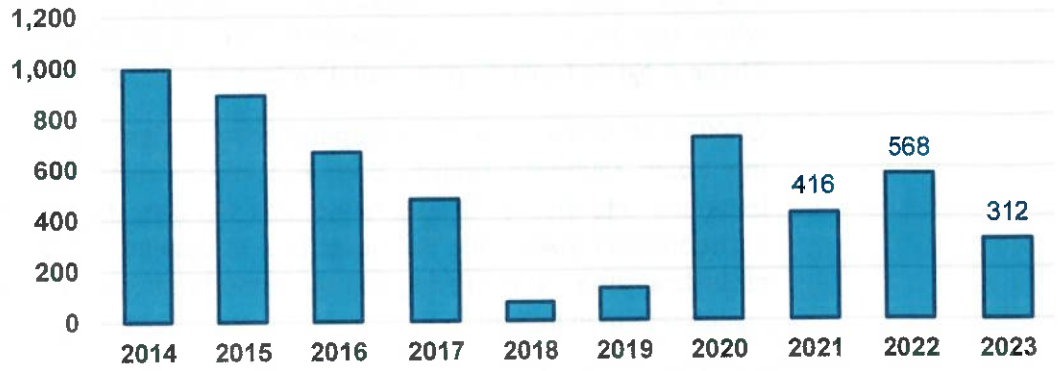
Objective of Restorative Justice

Where the Director of the Diversion Programme directs a restorative caution to be administered, it is an opportunity for a child's behaviour to be addressed in a way that holds the child accountable, while ensuring that the victim experiences validation and recognition for the harm.

There were 312 restorative cautions in 2023, which is 45% fewer than the number of Restorative Cautions issued in 2022 (568). A total of 404 restorative cautions were directed by GNYDB in 2023, which if all had been administered, would have resulted in a 29% decrease from 2022. However, 92 directions for restorative cautions were subsequently amended to a formal caution/UTCO. The primary reasons for this were victims not engaging with the restorative process or the child subsequently not accepting responsibility for the offence for which they were referred to the Diversion Programme.

To address the decrease in restorative cautions, further Restorative Justice JLO training will continue in 2024 with an increased emphasis on communication with victims on the positive outcomes that can be achieved as a result of Restorative Justice and on supporting the victim throughout the process. It is also recommended by the Committee to develop a Garda Youth Diversion Bureau Restorative Justice Forum to further support JLOs in the delivery of restorative cautions in addition to being a member of Restorative Practices Ireland.

Number Youth Referrals Resulting in Restorative Caution 2014-2023



Restorative Justice and Practices Community Initiative

A collaborative Restorative Practice Community of Practices (RPCOPs) has been established in the DMR North Central Division, which involves the holding of a monthly meeting organised and facilitated by the JLO Sergeant within the Division. Members of the community 'tell their story', have it acknowledged, and then as a community, discuss how to move forward together. The objective of the initiative is to build community relationships and to establish and develop the practice of Restorative Practice within the community. Local Gardaí can then call on the members of the community who attend these meetings to attend Restorative Conferences for children involved in the Diversion Programme for Section 26 and Section 29 Conferences.

As part of the work being undertaken by GNYDB to address the decrease in restorative cautions, GNYDB will monitor this practice which has been established within the DMR North Central and review the successes being achieved at local level and explore the possibility of replicating the initiative in other Divisions.

Youth Diversion Projects

The 106 Youth Diversion Projects are community based youth development projects which seek to divert young people from entering or remaining within the justice system. These projects facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility.

GNYDB works closely with the Department of Justice, Community Based Organisations, the Youth Diversion Project Best Practice Development Team and the Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP). REPPP is a research collaboration between the School of Law in University of Limerick and the Department of Justice aimed at improving the evidence base in relation to youth crime and youth justice reform in Ireland.

Youth Diversion Projects Research & Development Team

2023 saw the establishment of the Youth Diversion Projects Research and Development Team under the leadership of REPPP. It is an amalgamation of the Youth Diversion Project Best Practice Development Team and three youth justice research fellows from the former Action Research Project team in REPPP.

The purpose of the Youth Diversion Projects Research and Development Team is to improve outcomes for children and families connected to the Youth Diversion Projects network, by supporting the development and implementation of practice, based on local and international evidence. In partnership with Youth Diversion Projects and other stakeholders, the role of the team is to generate new research and provide training with the aim of reducing youth offending and creating safer communities. Going forward, the combined team will support the needs of the network through research and practice development as listed in Key Action 1.2.2 (f) of the Youth Justice Strategy 2021 – 2027.

Research activities coordinated by the Youth Diversion Projects Research and Development Team in 2023 include:

- **Implementing the Relationship Model**

In 2018, REPPP commenced a project to gather and collate the international research evidence on the frontline professional / young person relationship. In 2023, the relationship study report was drafted and the accompanying training material has been developed for dissemination in 2024. Members of the Relationship Mastery Group of practitioners (14) will test the data gathering technology for the relationship model implementation study also in 2024.

- **Further Education**

15 Department of Justice (DOJ) funded students successfully completed the MA in Human Rights in Criminal Justice in 2023 (2021-2023 cohort). The students included Youth Justice Workers and members of An Garda Síochána. These students were supervised by REPPP staff. 16 new students joined the 2023-2025 MA cohort.

- **Youth Diversion Projects Training**

The following training was provided by the Youth Diversion Projects Research and Development Team in 2023 to the Youth Diversion Projects as per Key Action 1.9.4 of the Youth Justice Strategy 2021 – 2027:

  - **Restorative Practices Training**
    - Seven YDP bespoke Restorative Practice trainings (three and a half days per training) took place with 71 practitioners attending.
    - Three YDP Refresher workshops for those trained in 2022 or before (one day) took place with 21 practitioners attending.
    - Four Line Manager Workshops (one day) were held with 35 managers attending.
    - Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory Tool 2.0 (YLS/CMI 2.0) (Risk Assessment Tool – the baseline assessment used for all young people referred to Youth Diversion Projects)

  - **Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI)**
    - Six YLS/CMI Screening Version training courses were delivered to 75 practitioners.
    - Seven YLS/CMI 2.0 training courses (two days) were delivered to 87 practitioners.
    - A Community Based Organisation managers (CBOR) /Line manager workshop took place with 11 managers.
    - Quality assurance- A YLS/CMI inter-rater study took place to measure the level of consistency of the risk/need assessment tool across the YDP network.

  - **Foróige's - A Life of Choices Programme**
    - One training course (two days) took place with 20 practitioners in attendance.

  - **Motivational Interviewing (MI)**
    - Three introduction level (two days) training sessions took place with 40 practitioners.

- One Intermediate level (two days) training session took place with four practitioners.
- Two skills development (one day) training sessions took place with 25 practitioners.
- One day training was provided for five practitioners on the MI Support/Training Team.

- **Early Intervention**
  - A second iteration of the Guidance for Early Intervention Work in a YDP, was disseminated in June 2023 following consultation with 35 Youth Justice Practitioners.
  - One-day EARL-V3 Screening Version training (Risk Assessment Tool) took place for those who already received the EARL-V3 training with 20 practitioners.
  - Two EARL-V3 training sessions took place with 40 practitioners.

- **Together Stronger**
  - Two Together Stronger for Youth Justice Workers (YJW) and Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLO) events took place in 2023, with 63 practitioners.

- **Planning for Success**
  - 25 YDPs received individual one to one sessions to support projects to prepare for the completion of their YDP Annual plan.

GNYDB- Training and Competitions

JLO Training

The following training was delivered to JLOs throughout 2023:

- A six-day Mediation Skills training course was delivered to newly appointed JLOs in 2023.
- Restorative Justice Training was delivered to newly appointed JLOs in 2023 by the GNYDB and the Youth Diversion Projects Research and Development Team.
- "Together Stronger" training was delivered to JLOs and Youth Justice Practitioners jointly.
- Restorative Justice Refresher training for qualified JLOs was delivered in 2023 aimed at refreshing knowledge, practice and re-energising and promoting the use of Restorative Justice in the context of young people admitted to the Diversion Programme. This refresher training took place in the DMR North, Limerick, Cork and Galway West. The roll out of refresher training for all JLOs will continue in 2024.

Training delivered to Sergeants and Inspectors Promotion Courses

The GNYDB delivered training on the Diversion Programme and the role of GNYDB to nine Sergeant Promotion Courses and five Inspector Promotion Courses throughout 2023.

JLO Vacancies and Competitions

In 2023, the following numbers of JLOs retired and competitions were held in 2023 to fill operational vacancies. Some vacancies were carried over from 2022.

JLO Gardaí Retired in 2023	New JLO Gardaí appointed 2023
4	**7**
JLO Sergeants Retired in 2023	New JLO Sergeants appointed 2023
2	**1**

GNYDB- Proactive Engagements and Responses

Garda Síochána Operating Model

The GNYDB has engaged with the Strategic Transformation Office (STO) in relation to the nationwide rollout of the Operating Model including designing new processes for dealing with youth crime, JLO allocation and reporting structures.

Youth Diversion – Guidelines and Updated HQ Directive

A working group has been established at GNYDB to examine an updated HQ Directive and guidance for Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs) in relation to the operation of the Diversion Programme. Work is ongoing to finalise a new guideline document for JLOs and HQ Directive on the Diversion Programme.

Drugs Working Group

The drugs working group was established to examine what delays exist in the processing of drug offences within An Garda Síochána for those aged under 18 years of age at the time of detection. While work commenced on this examination in 2023, it will continue in 2024 to identify and address causes of delays of youth referrals to the Diversion Programme for drug related offences.

Children in Care Working Group

An internal working group was set up to address an area of concern and effective practice with regard to the diversion of young people within the care system. This work will progress in 2024 where engagement with stakeholders will commence.

Sexual Offences Working Group

An internal working group was set up to examine the law and practice in relation to 'peer to peer' sharing of intimate images and training requirements for JLOs in relation to dealing with the children who have been referred for sexual offences. Work will continue in 2024 to address training requirements and development of guidelines for JLOs to assist them in dealing with children who have been referred for sexual offences.

Greentown Programme

The Greentown Programme is an evidence-informed and design-led targeted community intervention, which aims to reduce the influence of criminal networks on children. The Programme was designed by the REPPP Team in the University of Limerick with the assistance of international experts. The Programme is informed by a significant evidence base, which includes multiple primary studies, evaluation findings and deliberation with international academics in the area of organised crime, and

national experts in the areas of youth justice, child welfare, policing and community development.

Stakeholders involved in the Programme include TUSLA, HSE, Probation Service, NGOs and An Garda Síochána. There are currently two trial sites where the Programme is in operation (locations are confidential).

Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing and Community Engagement, oversees An Garda Síochána's involvement in the Greentown Programme. The objective of the programme is to reduce the capability of criminal networks to recruit children to commit crime. The programme also aims to provide an exit route for children who are already engaged in crime. Local Gardaí and JLOs are proactively involved in the implementation of the Greentown Programme.

In 2023, the Programme was extended to the end of 2026 by the Minister for Justice. The Minister included a number of conditions for the extension, including development of network disruption strategies, the development of an evaluation framework for the whole Programme and identification of effective components within the Programme that can be scaled out.

Bail Support Supervision

The Bail Supervision Scheme promotes collaborative practices on joint working with young people to whom the court has granted bail with conditions between An Garda Síochána (AGS), Extern Bail Supervision Scheme (BSS), Young Person's Probation (YPP), Oberstown Children Detention Campus (Oberstown) and Tusla. The Programme is operating in Dublin, Limerick and Cork.

The GNYDB leads An Garda Síochána's involvement in the Bail Support Supervision Programme. Work will continue in 2024 to review and develop current operating procedures.

Youth Joint Agency Response to Crime (YJARC)

The Youth Joint Agency Response to Crime (YJARC) Strategy is an agreement between An Garda Síochána, Probation Service, Irish Prison Service, Oberstown Children Detention Campus, Department of Justice & Equality, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which aims to:

- Develop and further strengthen a multi-agency approach to the management of crime
- Prioritise offenders in order to develop initiatives which will address their behaviour
- Reduce crime and increase public safety in local communities

As a group, YJARC works from a child centred, strengths based perspective that allows creative and quality solutions to be identified in collaboration with the young person, their family and relevant support services. These aim to address the presenting criminogenic risks and needs in the individual young person. Through YJARC, interagency professional best practice works to empower the young person and their family to support change and assist him/her to desist from criminal behaviour. The GNYDB is the organisational lead in YJARC.

While Youth JARC was operational in two locations, Cork and Blanchardstown, in 2023 it was extended to Dublin North Central. The Dublin North Central YJARC focuses on youths referred for selection under the four following strands:

1. Prevention - Youths within the family which are of concern and risk of grooming
2. Intervention - Youths in the Garda Youth Diversion Programme
3. Crisis Intervention - Prolific youth offending
4. Continuum - Youths in and post detention

FAI – AGS Youth Diversion Project Late Night League Pilot

FAI – AGS Youth Diversion Project Late Night League Pilot is a diversionary programme incorporating football leagues at various locations across Ireland since 2008. This initiative from the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and An Garda Síochána is based around the concept of using football as a tool for problem solving in communities through social inclusion and learning. It is aimed at encouraging 'at risk' young people to participate in meaningful activities, thus reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour. The Late Night Leagues are open to young people aged 13-18 and aim to take place during peak anti-social hours such as Friday and Saturday nights.

In 2023, the Football Association of Ireland and the Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau piloted a youth diversion late night league over a four-week period in Quarter 4 in 20 Districts nationwide. A review of the pilot is to be undertaken in 2024.

Progress on the Recommendations of the Monitoring Committee for 2023

Rec.	Update
1.	**Youth Diversion Projects** **1.1 Contribute to the implementation of the recommendations from the evaluation of the Youth Diversion Projects.** GNYDB contributed to implementation through its continued engagement on the National Youth Diversion Advisory Committee. The GNYDB participated in Two Together Stronger events in 2023, with 63 practitioners and are central to the development of a Guidance document for Chairpersons of Projects.
2.	**Governance and Policy** **2.1 Develop a singular Directive and Policy document with regard to Garda Youth Diversion** A working group was established to review the current HQ Directive and policy document regarding youth diversion. Work will continue in 2024. **2.2 JLO Engagement with the Monitoring Committee.** The GNYDB held 4 regional meetings nationwide in 2023 with JLOs and Divisional Inspectors with the responsibility for youth justice/youth diversion. Feedback was provided to the Monitoring Committee through the Head of Bureau.
3.	**Training** **3.1 Training of new JLOs and ongoing development of continuous training for existing JLOs.** • Mediation Skills and Restorative Justice training was delivered for newly appointed JLOs in 2023. • Restorative Justice refresher training was delivered to qualified JLOs in 2023 in DMR North, Limerick, Cork and Galway West. The roll out of refresher training for all JLOs will continue in 2024.

	• There were nine Sergeant Promotion Courses and five Inspector Courses held in the Garda College. In total, the GNYDB delivered to approximately 300 supervisors on these courses. **3.2 Convene a Juvenile Liaison Officer Training Conference in 2023.** JLO Training Conference was not held in 2023, however, four Regional training seminars took place in Quarter 4 2023. **3.3 Hold a seminar for all Inspectors with a responsibility for Youth Justice.** Four Regional Seminars were held for all inspectors with the responsibility for Youth Justice. **3.4 Training of Performance Accountability Framework (PAF) administrators on their role in the referral process.** Content for online training of the Diversion Programme for PAF Administrators has been developed for roll out in 2024.
4.	**Proactive Engagements and Responses** **4.1 Identify and respond effectively to emerging crime trends and types through a proactive approach.** • In 2023, the Football Association of Ireland and the Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau piloted a youth diversion late night league over a four-week period in Quarter 4 in 20 Districts nationwide. • The JLOs are engaged locally in organisational initiatives such as the Garda Schools Programme and Garda National Youth Awards. • An internal working group was set up to examine the law and practice in relation to 'peer to peer' sharing of intimate images and the training requirements for JLOs in relation to youths and sexual offending. • A drugs working group was established to examine what delays exist in the processing of drug offences within An Garda Síochána for those aged under 18 years of age at the time of detection.
5.	**Engagement Initiatives** **5.1 Continued support of oversight and implementation of Bail Support Supervision, YJARC and Greentown initiatives.** The GNYDB continues internal and external stakeholder collaborative work in relation to YJARC, Bail Support Supervision and Greentown initiatives. This

	involves the development of process and procedures to ensure collaborative engagement. **5.2 Further development of the Children in Care Initiative.** An internal working group was set up to examine an area of concern with regard to the diversion of young people within the care system. The working group met on five occasions in 2023 to identify effective practice and the diversion of young people in the care system.
6	**Data** **6.1 Contribute to the Youth Justice Whole System Report.** • GNYDB continue to engage with the Youth Justice Whole System process. • Data sharing agreement for the Greentown Project was approved. • In consultation with the Garda Research Team, GSAS and the Data Protection Officer, data sharing agreements and research requests were developed and further work will continue in 2024.

Recommendations of the Monitoring Committee

Having assessed the recommendations for 2023, and the updates and statistical analysis provided in the report, and to ensure alignment with the Youth Justice Strategy 2021 – 2027, the Committee provides the following recommendations for 2024:

Rec.	Update
1.	**Youth Diversion Projects** 1.1 Continue to support REPPP in the development of the Youth Diversion Projects. 1.2 Ensure national consistencies and support the role of the Chairperson of the Youth Diversion Committees nationally. 1.3 In consultation with the Department of Justice, address issues arising with regard to the Diversion Projects to ensure engagement and effectiveness of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme. 1.4 Inclusion of other initiatives to divert youths from crime.
2.	**Governance and Policy** 2.1 Publish the singular Policy and Procedure document with regard to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and communicate it across An Garda Síochána. 2.2 Ensure a consistent approach to the Diversion Programme nationally. 2.3 In consultation with An Garda Síochána Analysis Service, review and digitally enhance Divisional Monitoring Report. 2.4 Develop a Garda Youth Diversion Bureau Restorative Justice Forum to further support JLOs in the delivery of restorative cautions. 2.5 Consider the impact of new legislation on the Diversion Programme and develop policy where applicable.
3.	**Training** 3.1 Training of new JLOs and ongoing development of continuous training for existing JLOs. 3.2 Identify areas for Restorative Justice Training and deliver same. 3.3 Training for JLOs in Sexual Crimes. 3.4 Convene a Juvenile Liaison Officer Training Conference in 2024. 3.5 Hold Regional seminars for all Inspectors with a responsibility for Youth Justice.

Recommendations of the Monitoring Committee

	3.6 Roll out training of Performance Accountability Framework (PAF) administrators on their role in the referral process.
4.	**Proactive Engagements and Responses** 4.1 Identify and respond effectively to emerging crime trends through a proactive approach. 4.2 Progress the Sexual Crime Working Group to include other agencies. 4.3 Map trends and data with regard to Youth Diversion, youth crime and engagement in each Division under the Garda Operating Model. 4.4 Continued support of oversight, development and implementation of the Bail Support Supervision Scheme. 4.5 Continued support of oversight, development and implementation the Greentown trial sites with a focus on network disruption. 4.6 Progress the Children in Care Working Group outcomes through engagement with external stakeholders. 4.7 Collaborate with the Garda National Community Engagement Bureau with regard to crime prevention intervention and the diversion of youths.
5.	**Engagement Initiatives** 5.1 Complete evaluation of the Youth Diversion Late Night Leagues and submit recommendations. 5.2 Continue to support local engagement initiatives. 5.3 Share Divisional effective engagement initiatives.
6.	**Data** There is a growing recognition of the value of routinely collected administrative data for strategic planning and research and evaluation purposes. Data collected can provide significant insights into geographical and historical trends and patterns and the performance of various interventions in the youth justice system. This data is of value to the diverting of youths from crime in keeping with the collaborative objectives of the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027, for the system as a whole. 6.1 In consultation with the Garda Research Unit and Data Protection Office, engagement with youth justice partners to contribute to the design of a whole system report. 6.2 Develop joint agency data sharing initiatives as required and permissible to meet recommendation 6.1.