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Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

Youth Justice Strategy, 2021-2027

2024 Implementation Statement

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1. Background to the Youth Justice Strategy, 2021-2027

The Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 was officially launched by the Minister of State for Law Reform on 15 April 2021. Its development was guided by inputs from a public consultation process and overseen by an expert Steering Group established in 2019. Membership of the Steering Group was drawn from a broad variety of key stakeholders with experience in the field of Youth Justice.

The purpose of the Strategy is to build on progress which had been made in the implementation of the Youth Justice Strategy 2008 and the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018. To better underpin this work, which involves identifying and addressing the pressing issues being experienced by children, young people and their families at risk of involvement or already involved in the Criminal Justice system, the Strategy sets out a framework of strategic objectives and actions to be completed during its seven year lifetime. This framework has and continues to enable enhanced collaboration between Government Departments, State agencies, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), members of the academic community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Depending on their areas of focus and expected outcomes, the Strategy's objectives and actions are divided and presented under one of three thematic headings:

i) Governance Monitoring and Support
ii) Services for Children and Young People
iii) Criminal Justice System and Processes

The Strategy also commits to the preparation and publication of annual progress reports. These reports, referred to as Implementation Statements, are intended to provide an overview of advances made by the Department and its partner agencies in a given year to achieve the Strategy's main objectives. Previously, Implementation Statements were prepared for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.

2. Governance, Oversight and Consultation

Strategic Objective 1.1 – *We will provide enhanced oversight of Youth Justice policy and its implementation to ensure that a strong ongoing focus on addressing the factors underlying crime and anti-social behaviour, diversion away from crime and Criminal Justice processes which, as far as possible, promote desistance for further offending.*

As per Appendix 2, the Youth Justice Oversight, Governance & Strategy and Advisory Groups continued to meet throughout 2024 to provide strategic direction and leadership for the Youth Justice Strategy's implementation.

Over the course of the year, a total of four Oversight Group meetings, three Governance & Strategy Group meetings and two Advisory Group meetings were chaired by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration. Ongoing work discussed by the Groups' members at these meetings included:

- Provision of enhanced capacity-building and training opportunities to the YDP network to better address the needs of specific cohorts of young people, including those engaged in prolific offending (otherwise known as 'Harder-to-Reach'), members of the Travelling and Roma communities or at risk of school avoidance;
- Implementation of the joint commissioning/'No Wrong Door' approach in collaboration with local Youth Justice-related stakeholders in six pilot areas, which were identified through a service mapping exercise carried out in 2023;
- Application of Empowering Children In Care's (EPIC's) six recommendations with regards to children with experience of State care and/or the Criminal Justice system;
- Efforts to empirically prove the role of YDPs in reducing young people's recidivism;
- Development of a third-level qualification for successful Youth Diversion Project (YDP) participants who have reached adulthood and are seeking to become Youth Justice Workers; and
- Changes to the reporting processes used by the Garda Youth Diversion Programme Monitoring Committee to allow for the introduction of a new evidence-based system of reporting on the whole Youth Justice system.

To facilitate continued cooperation with colleagues involved in Northern Ireland's Criminal Justice system, a further two meetings of the North South Youth Justice Advisory Group were also held in 2024. Items of note which were discussed at these meetings included:

- Amendments to relevant legislation in both jurisdictions, including Northern Ireland's Justice Bill 2024 and the Republic of Ireland's Children (Amendment) Bill 2024;
- Exchange visits between Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre and Oberstown Children Detention Campus;
- Publication of various reports on the Criminal Justice systems of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole, such as the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Report and the evaluation of Children's Diversion Forums;
- Shared approaches to mainstream Restorative Justice and trauma-informed practices; and
- Extension of the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Community Resolution Notices.

a) Expansion of the Youth Diversion Projects Network to Achieve National Coverage

Action 2.9.2 – *Expand the existing [YDP] network to achieve full availability of youth diversion projects throughout the State within 2 years.*

Further to the establishment of four new YDPs in South Monaghan, Claremorris, South and East Wicklow and West Cork in 2023, efforts to complete this action through the provision of two final projects in North Tipperary and East Clare continued throughout 2024.

Consultations between the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration and local youth-related services in both areas were conducted in July and August 2024. This was done to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to highlight the unique needs of their communities and input into the design of the official call for Expressions

of Interest (EoIs) from CBOs to establish these new projects. At these sessions, an overview of the joint commissioning exercise – which is due to be implemented in six trial sites including North Tipperary and East Clare – was also shared with participants. The importance of ensuring strong links with other local youth-related services are established at an early stage in the projects' development was emphasised by both groups of stakeholders during discussions. Contributors included representatives from An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service, Tusla (including their Child and Family Support Networks), local County Councils, regional Education & Training Boards, Children and Young Person Services Committees and the University of Limerick's Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) team.

The official call for EoIs was published on 28 August 2024. Submissions were accepted from registered charities – both individually or as a consortium – who were able to demonstrate a strong track record of delivering programmes of support for challenging young people, as well as sound corporate governance and financial management capabilities. All EoIs were required to include details as to how dedicated interventions or Youth Justice Workers to address the needs of children aged between 8 to 11 years who are at increased risk of becoming engaged in criminal activity, close family members of project participants and typically Harder-to-Reach young people will be provided as part of these projects' service delivery.

A total of six EoIs were received by the closing date of 27 September 2024. Three related to North Tipperary and three related to East Clare. Once the deadline for initial EoIs had passed, the relevant CBOs were then asked to provide comprehensive proposals by 31 October 2024 for review by Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration officials. Data relating to the Youth Crime Profiles of the two areas and proposed Garda Operational Areas in which the projects are expected to function, which were provided by the Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau (GNYDB), were also used to inform the Department's initial assessment process.

To facilitate selection of the successful applicant, two meetings of local assessment committees were convened in late 2024 and early 2025. Both discussions were chaired by local senior members of An Garda Síochána and attended by representatives from the Probation Service, Tusla, regional Education & Training

Boards, the Tusla Education Support Service and the REPPP team in the University of Limerick. During these sessions, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration presented their assessments of each proposal and invited panellists to offer their own observations on the material provided. A final verdict on each of the proposals was then agreed.

The results of these consultations were then submitted to the Minister for Justice for his consideration. Following his approval of the decision, the successful applicant was announced in February 2025. It is anticipated that both projects will be up-and-running by the end of 2025.

b) Nationwide Rollout of a Court Accompaniment Scheme to Support Young Defendants

Strategic Objective 3.3 – *Ensure provision of effective specialised representation and appropriate information services to assist young persons throughout the Courts process; and*

Strategic Objective 3.6 – *We will provide a range of options for the Courts for sentencing, and prior to sentencing and as already specified in the Children Act 2001, detention will only be considered as the final option.*

In 2024, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration made significant progress towards introducing a nationwide court accompaniment scheme for young defendants before the Courts on criminal charges.

Currently, the Department funds a range of NGOs who offer similar services to victims of crime, most notably Victim Support at Court (V-SAC). The role of these organisations is to explain legal terminology and court proceedings in layperson's terms and provide support to vulnerable witnesses. Their role does not, however, involve advocacy or representation, as that is the role of the defendant's legal representative. Using this model as a basis for the scheme, the Department engaged with various stakeholders involved in the youth and Criminal Justice systems – including the Ombudsman for Children, members of the judiciary and the Community Based Organisations responsible for the oversight of various YDPs – over the course

of 2024 to measure the level of need among young defendants for a similar service and whether the delivery of these supports could be facilitated via the YDP network.

By introducing this scheme, Youth Justice Workers will be tasked with accompanying young people before the Courts and providing informal support and explanations of court procedures as necessary. In instances where the young person is already known to a YDP, this may be the catalyst that allows the young person to come to terms with their behaviour and benefit fully from a further diversion opportunity for a specified period of time, which the Court will have the option to recommend as an alternative to proceeding to hearing in appropriate circumstances. In situations where this option is pursued, the case could later be finalised in light of how successful the young person was in participating in the relevant YDP's programmes.

Outside of Dublin, many YDPs cover an entire county, which makes it easy to identify the relevant project in a particular area. Even where this is not the case, the YDP catchment areas tend to correspond with the boundaries of Garda Operational Areas. Through local Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs), An Garda Síochána will be able to advise and make contact with the relevant YDP in each case.

Several YDPs have expressed their interest in being part of the first wave of the scheme's introduction and are willing to provide this service in a number of locations nationwide, including Dublin, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick, Laois, Sligo, Clare and Leitrim. It is anticipated that the service will be fully rolled out by year-end 2025. To reach this goal, a training package to equip Youth Justice Workers with the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake this work has been jointly developed by V-SAC and the Solas Project and is being offered to interested project staff on a phased basis throughout 2025.

c) Youth Justice Strategy Mid-Term Implementation Review

Action 1.1.5 – *A mid-term review of implementation of the Strategy will be carried out after three years.*

In accordance with this action, an event to facilitate an implementation review of the Youth Justice Strategy at its midway point was held on 12 December 2024 in the

Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration's headquarters at 51 St. Stephen's Green. This consultation was arranged to provide policymakers with an opportunity to identify ongoing, new and emerging issues in the field of Youth Justice through discussions with key stakeholders involved in the Strategy's implementation, with the ultimate aim of feeding into the development of the successor Strategy.

Preparation for the event took place throughout 2024. Early on, it was determined that an external consultant should be engaged to both oversee the proceedings on the day and draft a report on the event's findings. A series of discussions between the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration, the external consultant and colleagues in the REPPP team to establish the format of the consultation, identify the key questions which should be posed to attendees and reflect on logistical considerations – including the venue, running order and method of recording of stakeholders' key inputs for inclusion in the final report – were then held between May and November 2024.

The consultation itself ran for a full day and was well attended by representatives from a number of Youth Justice-related organisations, including An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service, Tusla, the Irish Prison Service, the Tusla Education Support Service, the Department of Education, the Department of Children, Disability & Equality (DCDE), CBOs responsible for administering the Youth Diversion Projects and various academic institutions. Individual discussions were facilitated by colleagues from the REPPP team, with officials from the Department's Criminal Policy and Transparency Functions taking high-level, anonymised notes of the conversations throughout the day. A total of six thematic areas the Strategy seeks to address, which were identified by members of the REPPP team during their discussions with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration and the external consultant, were examined by stakeholders. These included:

i) Better alignment with policies and frameworks across sectors;
ii) Improved interagency collaboration at national and local level;
iii) Emphasis on the need for early intervention and prevention, with attention to the Harder-to-Reach cohort;

iv) Improved practice through research, programme development, improved networking, and specialised workforce training;
v) Improved protocols and governance arrangements to support better outcomes for young people and safer communities; and
vi) Reinforcing child and youth-centred approaches and family support through improved stakeholder engagement and by listening to the views of those in the system and victims.

Participants were assigned two of these thematic headings – one in the morning and one in the afternoon – and asked to consider what elements of the Strategy relating to each theme had been successfully implemented, what and where issues in delivery exist and what actions should be targeted as priorities for the remainder of its lifetime. An open question was also posed at the end of each session to allow attendees to provide insights which could not be easily categorised under the headings provided.

The external consultant submitted their report on the event to Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration officials in early 2025. It is expected that the final version of this document will be published before year-end 2025.

d) Review and Amendment of the Children Act, 2001

Strategic Objective 1.7 – *We will amend [...] the Children Act 2001 as required (and other legislation as necessary) to give effect to the objectives in this Strategy, aligned with reforms to the Child Care Acts and forthcoming community safety legislation.*

Building on progress made in 2022 and 2023 in this area, work by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration to draft amendments to the Children Act 2001 continued in 2024.

Several consultations between the Criminal Legislation and Criminal Policy Functions of the Department were held throughout the year to allow for in-depth discussions of the draft Heads of the Children (Amendment) Bill. Observations were also sought from an An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on a number of proposed legislative changes.

Engagement to finalise the revised provisions of the Children (Amendment) Bill is expected to be ongoing throughout 2025. Further discussions with members of the judiciary to allow policymakers and legislators to gain a more comprehensive understanding as to how the 2001 Act is applied in practice are also being considered.

e) Accreditation of Evidence-Informed Youth Justice Practices

Action 1.2.2 – *Agree initial work programme to inform the work of GSG and Governance Framework, through research on complex problems and assessment of the effectiveness of policy implementation, including:*

- *Facilitate sharing of best practices and development of collaborative communities of practice, including innovative programmes (e.g. Planet Youth) and informed by the What Works initiative in relation to thematic areas such as hard-to-reach groups, mentoring, mental health, access to training and employment, including social enterprise.*

A significant milestone reached by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration in 2024 was the official rollout of the accreditation process for YDP interventions.

Recognising the need for a standardised system to formally recognise evidence-informed programmes across the Irish Youth Justice system, a subgroup of the YDP National Advisory was brought together in 2023 to examine the feasibility of introducing an appropriate methodology through which YDP programmes could be accredited. If successful, it was envisioned that accredited examples of evidence-informed practice could be passed on to the European Union Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) and disseminated to organisations and agencies operating in the wider Youth Justice field.

There are three stages to the accreditation process as it applies to YDP programmes. They are:

i) Identification of an appropriate practice example and submission of a written proposal to an assessment panel for review. In accordance with criteria set by the EUCPN in their 2011 paper, ‘Towards Evidence-Based Crime Prevention in the EU’, the initiative being considered for accreditation must

provide clear descriptions of the crime problem(s) the activity wishes to address and the way in which the intervention addresses the identified problem(s) and why it is expected to be effective, demonstrate a robust and positive outcome evaluation and provide sufficient information about the nature of the intervention, its original context, and the implementation of the activities to help practitioners select, replicate or innovate from it. Following deliberation, the assessment panel may invite the relevant CBO to participate in the second stage of the process or recommend that the CBO resubmit their proposal with amendments suggested by the panel. The engagement of a Critical Friend – someone who can offer their independent view on the proposal in addition to relevant knowledge and expertise – during the drafting of the submission is strongly encouraged.

ii) Presentation of the proposal to the assessment panel. This affords the CBO an opportunity to tease out any issues with the proposal and answer any questions the panel members may have for them. At this stage of the process, a significant emphasis is placed on demonstrating the replicability of the practice example and its value to other projects.

iii) Communication of result and post-submission dissemination. If submissions are successful at the panel stage, they will be accredited as exemplars of evidence-informed practice. If the CBO is interested, support is then offered by the REPPP team to produce a summary of the programme to be shared with members of the academic community or other audiences. This write-up is then submitted as a promising Youth Justice model from Ireland to the EUCPN. The CBO is also invited to present on their accredited programme as part of a showcase at the YDP Annual Conference. Unsuccessful CBOs are invited to use the learnings gained from their experience with the process to improve upon and resubmit their proposal during the next assessment cycle.

Once the process and relevant documentation (including an application form and guidance document) were approved by all members of the subgroup, two CBOs who had agreed to submit pilot proposals were invited to present their initiatives to an assessment panel on 26 April 2024. During the full-day session, which was held on-

campus at the University of Limerick, both submissions were deemed successful. Panellists also concluded that written submissions should be subjected to greater scrutiny, presentations should be used to build on the written submission rather than repeat its content, more time should be provided for oral presentations and the guidance document should be refined and made more user-friendly as a result of this sitting. Finally, members of the REPPP team indicated that they would be willing to act as Critical Friends, if needed, to encourage CBOs to avail of the resource in the future.

Following its official sign-off at the final meeting of the subgroup in May 2024, the accreditation initiative was formally launched at the YDP Annual Conference by Dr. John Bamber. The process will be piloted for one year and assessed by the members of the subgroup at the end of 2025.

f) National Youth Diversion Projects Annual Conference, 2024

An important event in the calendars of Youth Justice Workers around the country, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration's Annual YDP Conference provides project staff with an invaluable opportunity to connect with their colleagues, showcase best practices developed to address the specific needs of their YDP participants, and have their dedication, expertise, and efforts to improve pro-social outcomes for young people in Ireland acknowledged by policymakers and State agencies on a national stage.

In 2024, the YDP Conference was once again hosted in the Hogan Suite at Croke Park on Tuesday, 19 November. The theme of the Conference was "The Youth Justice Strategy: Progress at the Midway Mark", which was selected to reflect the commitment in the Strategy to review progress made to implement its strategic objectives in the three years since its initial publication. The event was attended by almost 500 individuals. Invitees included YDP staff, members of An Garda Síochána, colleagues from the REPPP and YDP Research & Development (R&D) Team, key stakeholder organisations involved in the administration and oversight of the Youth and Criminal Justice systems, representatives from other Government Departments, colleagues in the EU Commission responsible for administering the European Social Fund Plus in Ireland and YDP participants.

Following the publication of a call for EoIs to participate in the Conference's project and participant showcases in September 2024, a total of 4 YDPs were chosen to present at the event. Additionally, Gaisce, Empowering People in Care and CoderDojo were invited to host stands spotlighting their work in local communities at the Conference. Other presentations included addresses by the Executive Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust and the President of the District Court, a demonstration by Dr. John Bamber on the YDP accreditation initiative, an exhibition on the Department's court accompaniment scheme for young defendants provided by one of the flagship projects intending to participate in the service, a summary of the YDP R&D Team's achievements in 2024 and an overview of the DCEDIY's 'Opportunities for Youth: National Strategy for Youth Work' policy document. During their presentation, the YDP R&D Team also presented a dissertation award to one of the students enrolled in the University of Limerick's Master's in Law, Human Rights and Criminal Justice. The award was allocated based on three key criteria:

i) Relevance to the Youth Justice Strategy;
ii) Quality of content, structure, critical analysis, writing, referencing and depth of knowledge; and
iii) Innovative engagement with the subject area.

An external consultant was once again engaged to attend the Conference and produce a report based on the day's events. The Department intends to publish this report by year-end 2025.

g) Diversionary Approaches for Young People aged 18 to 24 Years

Action 2.6.3 – *We will examine that necessary steps to establish a diversion process for those aged 18-24, aligned with the development of the Health Diversion approach and relevant community supports [...] and with due regard to issues concerning categories of offences, any legal constraints and with a view to developing initial pilot approaches.*

As per this action, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration is committed to examining the possible extension of diversionary approaches currently used

throughout the State to address the offending behaviour of young people within the 18- to 24-year-old age cohort in certain limited circumstances. The ultimate aim of this work is to improve outcomes for this age demographic and reduce their offending behaviour.

To help identify which diversion processes would be most appropriate for young adults between the ages 18 to 24 who come into contact with the Criminal Justice system, a discussion document for public consultation on diversion paths for these young adults was published by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration in November 2022. Following this, the Department held two separate Open Policy Forums with members of An Garda Síochána and Youth Justice Practitioners in November 2023 to gather their views on the matter.

From the responses gathered during these consultations, it was clear that this is a sensitive and complex issue which required continued engagement with stakeholders. As such, the Department made the decision to host a final closed consultation on this matter on Thursday, 21 November 2024 in 51 St. Stephen's Green. The event was subsequently deferred to Thursday, 28 February 2025 due to its proximity to 2024's General Election.

The event was held in a world café style over the course of a full day, with approximately 40 invitees from An Garda Síochána, the Youth Justice Strategy's oversight, governance and advisory groups, and the CBOs which administer the State's Youth Diversion Projects attending to offer their inputs on the discussion topics. These were:

1. Diversion Approach for 18-24 Year Olds;
2. Considering Diversion;
3. Diversion and Personal Development;
4. Participation;
5. Rehabilitative challenges experienced by offending young adults (e.g. mental health and substance abuse);
6. Expanding the Adult Caution Scheme; and

7. Oversight of Scheme

Following this event, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration will present a revised paper with policy options to the Minister of State for Law Reform and Minister for Justice before year-end 2025.

3. Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice and Youth Diversion Projects Research & Development Team

a) REPPP Governance and Oversight

In 2024, a Programme of Work for 2024 to 2026 and accompanying budget and grant agreement was agreed and signed. REPPP provided updates on its work to the following Youth Justice governance structures, as outlined in Table 1.

Governance Structure:	*Youth Justice Oversight Group*	*Youth Justice Governance and Strategy Group*	*Youth Justice Advisory Group*	*REPPP Advisory Group*
Dates of Meetings:	30/01/2024 23/04/2024 27/05/2024 03/10/2024	15/02/2024 10/06/2024 22/10/2024	16/05/2024 12/11/2024	21/06/2024 05/12/2024

b) Programme Activities

Greentown

Strategic Objective 1.2 *– We will continue the UL REPPP as a research partnership for Youth Justice, to support implementation of this Strategy and carry out an agreed work programme, including action research and cooperative engagement with service delivery and coordination mechanisms to monitor progress, identify difficulties and help assess the contribution of Youth Justice policies and programmes in pursuit of the Vision and overall Outcomes described in this Strategy;*

The Greentown Programme aims to reduce the influence of criminal networks on child offending and improve pro-social outcomes for children involved in criminal networks. It does so by implementing 4 interrelated pillars – Network Disruption, Community Efficacy, Intensive Family Support, and Pro-Social Opportunities – in two trial sites.

Activities and outputs of the Programme in 2024 included:

- Implementation of the Greentown Programme in two trial sites (Whitetown and Yellowtown) continued in 2024, with REPPP providing ongoing scientific research and implementation support to the two sites' Local Advisory Committees (LACs). The LACs met approximately every six weeks, with joint meetings held to progress common issues, for example the development of the Evaluation Framework and progression of the Network Disruption pillar.
- The Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration committed to funding the Greentown programme until the end of 2026. The provision of this funding is conditional on:
    i) The development of the Network Disruption pillar;
    ii) Replication of the Twinsight research exercise;
    iii) Development of the Evaluation Framework; and
    iv) Sharing of learning from the Greentown Programme to address needs of other communities experiencing criminal network activity.

  The above actions are standing items in the LACs to monitor progress.
- A draft Evaluation Framework for the Greentown Programme is being developed and will be presented to the LACs.
- A Greentown Programme Standard Operating Procedure (S.O.P.) document was developed. The aim of the S.O.P. is to ensure that there are clear lines of communication and promote collaborative practices between the programme parties (Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration, An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service, Tusla, CBOs and the University of Limerick) on a 'need to know' basis and that the relevant information is shared appropriately and in a timely manner so that vulnerable young people can be identified and engaged. The S.O.P. also ensures that the Programme is delivered in line with its aims and desired outcomes.
- A Research Protocol (ethics application) to repeat the Twinsight process in the two trial locations was prepared and submitted to An Garda Síochána. This will allow for the updating of the crime network maps in the two trial sites. Discussions with An Garda Síochána to secure ethical approval for the further application of Twinsight are ongoing.

- A Social Network analysis of the Greentown Programme to assess, map and confirm network connections was undertaken using data gathered from the Yellowtown trial site.
- Members of the Team were part of a multi-agency delegation to The Hague and Tilburg in The Netherlands as part of a knowledge exchange with the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security and staff of the Dutch Prevention with Authority initiative. A return knowledge exchange visit is scheduled for March 2025.
- The Greentown Programme informed the development of a successful Tender Proposal to the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) for REPPP to work with other European States to establish a new multi-disciplinary Community of Practice focused on designing and developing interventions for the recruitment of young people into drugs markets. Building on the work of the Greentown Programme, the new EUDA-funded project is reviewing existing research and interventions, identifying possible facilitators or barriers to the implementation of programmes and developing a conceptual framework and model to inform development and implementation of future interventions.
- The Greentown Project won a Higher Education Authority (HEA) Research Impact Award in 2023. The funding from this award was used to establish a new multi-disciplinary Centre for Implementation Research in the University of Limerick in 2024, the first of its kind in an Irish Higher Education Institute.

Youth Diversion Projects Research and Development Team

Strategic Objective 2.9 – *We will continue the development of the existing network of Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs), aligning their activities and operational areas according to local needs, working collaboratively with local services and other community partners; and*

Action 1.9.4 – *We will continue to support the provision of training for Youth Justice Workers to support them to engage effectively with the children and young people they work with.*

The purpose of the R&D Team is to improve outcomes for children, young people and families connected to the Youth Diversion Projects (YDP) network. The Team do this by supporting the development and implementation of practice, based on local and international evidence. In partnership with the YDPs, the role of the R&D Team is to generate new research, utilise practice wisdom, provide training and build capacity, with the overall aim of reducing youth offending and creating safer communities.

Activities and outputs in 2024 included:

- Following the amalgamation in 2023 of the previous YDP Best Practice Team and the REPPP Action Research Team into the new REPPP R&D Team, the Team engaged in a process of review and planning to develop an integrated work programme for the year. The Team met monthly throughout 2024 to develop, review and report on workplans.
- Eight in-person events were held in Limerick, Sligo, Kilkenny, Drogheda, Dublin, Cork and Portlaoise to disseminate the new Relationship Model of Practice which was developed from the Relationship Model Action Research Study. Each event comprised of a one-day workshop with YDPs to bring them through the Relationship Model and facilitate discussion and idea sharing.
- Facilitated workshops were held with YDP staff to collaboratively design a new visual format for the Relationship Model guidance and related resources. The designs will be finalised in Q1 2025.
- Strategies to support the scaling out and implementation of the Relationship Model across the YDP network have been developed. These include awareness-raising and capacity development initiatives, tailored events for project management staff and engaging Youth Justice Workers in the development of materials and resources. A Mastery Group of YDPs has also been established to provide expert advice to improve implementation efforts.
- An extensive training and capacity building programme was delivered to the YDP network in 2025, and included courses, workshops, and events on:
    i) A Life of Choices – Train the Trainer (two-day course);
    ii) Annual Planning Workshop;
    iii) EARL-V Information Session for YDP Line Managers;

iv) EARL-V training for Early Intervention (two-day course);
v) Motivational Interviewing – Introduction (two-day course);
vi) Motivational Interviewing – Intermediate (two-day course);
vii) Motivational Interviewing – Skills Development;
viii) Outcomes Focused Planning Design;
ix) YDP Restorative Practices (two-day course);
x) YDP Restorative Practices Core Training (three-day course);
xi) YDP Restorative Practices Line Manager Workshop;
xii) Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) 2.0 (two-day course); and
xiii) YLS/CMI Community of Practice, Refresher and Screening Version.

- A call for EoIs for new YLS/CMI trainers was issued with four new trainers commencing in 2025.
- A call for EoIs for new Restorative Practice trainers was issued with four new trainers commencing in 2025.
- Three new members joined the Motivational Interviewing Support/Training Team and will support the delivery of training and support to the network.
- A survey of Family Support Workers was undertaken to gather feedback on their experience of how guidelines support and align with practice.

Improving Data Useability in the Youth Justice System

The Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 aims to maximise the use of data and research to inform Youth Justice policy. To support these objectives, REPPP is developing a Whole of System Report (WSR) to demonstrate the value of a detailed analysis of de-identified project-level administrative data from Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs).

Activities and outputs in 2024 included:

- De-identified YDP Annual Performance Report datasets for 2016-2023 and YDP Annual Plan Reports for 2021 to 2023 were transferred by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration to REPPP and underwent a process of data cleaning and organisation in preparation for analysis.

- A Data Study Handbook detailing the scope of the study and potential analyses of YDP datasets and REPPP project data was produced.
- The code for statistical analyses was developed.
- Three Data Study Reports are in development:
    i) Report 1, which is currently in draft form, summarises the participation of 18,731 young people in YDPs from 2016 to 2023, including demographics and circumstances, youth offending and referral patterns and interventions implemented by YDPs. It also contains initial analyses of YLS/CMI data.
    ii) Report 2 will present analyses of YLS/CMI data for young people with multiple assessments.
    iii) Report 3 will examine the significant relationships between variables in the dataset.

Implementation Studies

The REPPP programme includes several projects which explore issues of implementation policy and practice:

- *Implementation of the Relationship Model Guidance* – Led by the R&D Team, this study is exploring the uptake and implementation of the new Relationship Model. Methodologies for data collection have been developed for a study involving a sample of YDPs and will commence in early 2025. The YDPs will test three data-gathering methods to track and document progress in the phased implementation process.
- *Implementation of the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027* – A study entitled, "How can a Published Strategy Better Contribute to the Implementation of Youth Justice policy intentions? A Case Study of the Irish Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027" is aiming to establish the degree to which the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 has been implemented in its second year among a specific group of stakeholders in a sample of four geographical locations. A survey of the members of the Youth Justice governance and oversight structures identified what the members of these structures believed to be the key messages, projects and implementors of the Strategy. The findings from the study were

then explored with a sample of local level implementors and young people in four locations across the country to test the extent to which the intent of the policy is being realized on the ground.

- *No Wrong Door Project* – The aim of the No Wrong Door Project is to explore the needs of young people at risk of being in contact with the Criminal Justice system and identify potential collaborative responses based on the "No Wrong Door" principle. The study will inform the implementation of a policy of joint commissioning of services to young people with complex needs. Meetings were held with project stakeholders throughout 2024, including with local stakeholders in the six geographic sites for the research, to introduce and discuss the methodological approaches and options for the study. A data impact assessment was undertaken and ethics applications submitted to the relevant stakeholder ethics committees. Discussions are ongoing with project stakeholders – An Garda Síochána and Tusla – in relation to methodological approaches and data sharing requirements, which has significantly delayed the commencement of this work.

Local Leadership Programme

REPPP's Local Leadership Programme brings together professionals working in public service organisations who can contribute leadership and influence to tackling 'wicked' or complex problems. The aim of the Local Leadership Programme is to bring about tangible improvements for service users and local communities by enhancing the capacity of professionals working in, managing, funding or supporting public service organisations to tackle complex, multi-layered problems.

Activities and outputs in 2024 included:

- Evaluation data from 2023 programmes was analysed and a report on the background, development and implementation of the Local Leadership Programme was produced for publication.
- A proposal for the Local Leadership methodology to be adapted and incorporated into the No Wrong Door study was developed and presented to local stakeholders in the six trial locations across the country.

- A masterclass on the Local Leadership Programme was delivered to the EU Citicess project group, an EU Partnership project involving seven cities/regions across Europe who are sharing information and knowledge about new and innovative approaches to developing and delivering services to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Stable Lives Safer Streets

Funded under the North South Research Programme and administrated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), researchers from REPPP, Queens University Belfast, and the Centre for Effective Services are collaborating to deliver the following work packages as part of this initiative:

- Consolidating existing research on Youth Justice;
- Responding to emerging Youth Justice policy priorities;
- Developing a standardised pragmatic self-report Measurement Tool;
- Translating and implementing evidence-informed policy into practice; and
- Developing a multi-stakeholder Implementation Model.

Activities and outputs in 2024 included:

- A study on child criminal exploitation was completed and published: https://doi.org/10.34961/researchrepository-ul.26780503.v1
- Studies are ongoing in the following areas:
  i) Transitioning from Care, Supports Systems and Contact with the Justice System;
  ii) Developing a pragmatic self-report Measurement Framework;
  iii) An exploration of the feasibility of using virtual reality to objectively measure psycho-social factors associated with youth offending;
  iv) A study of how a published strategy can better contribute to the implementation of Youth Justice policy intentions – a case study of the Irish Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027; and

v) No Wrong Door: Exploring Service Delivery and Complexity through the Voices of Young People, Parents, and Frontline Practitioners.

Accreditation Subgroup

As part of the Accreditation Subgroup, REPPP supported the development of an Accreditation Process for Youth Justice Interventions. The aim of the process is to highlight practices within the Youth Diversion Programme that are worthy of being referred to as 'evidence-informed'. The process was trialled with two projects in 2024 and has since been approved by the YDP National Advisory Committee. The first call for applications to the process will be issued in early 2025.

Harder-to-Reach Survey

Strategic Objective 2.8 *– We will identify and support at an early stage those young people, at risk of becoming serious offenders, (currently estimated as in the region of 1,000 children), including provision of appropriate family supports, where necessary, to address the needs of these children.*

In support of the work of the Harder-to-Reach Subgroup, REPPP undertook a national survey of the YDP network to gather feedback on a definition of 'Harder-to-Reach' young people from YDP practitioners and establish an estimation of the size of this cohort.

Enhancing Youth Justice Policy Knowledge – MA in Human Rights in Criminal Justice

Each year, bursaries are provided by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration to fund sixteen YDP Youth Justice Workers to complete a two-year Master's Programme (MA) in Human Rights in Criminal Justice in the University of Limerick. The graduating class of 2024 was supervised by the REPPP Team as they completed dissertations on topics relevant to the Youth Justice Strategy and sector. A new cohort of sixteen Youth Justice Workers commenced the MA in September 2024. Members

of the REPPP team delivered modules as part of the MA on the topics of *Youth Crime* and *Evidence to Improve Societal Outcomes in the Real World.*

4. Garda Youth Diversion Programme

a) Activities of the Garda National Youth Diversion Bureau and Garda Youth Diversion Programme Monitoring Committee

2.4.1 – *An Garda Síochána will mandate a strong central resource within An Garda Síochána, to:*

- *Oversee the operation of the Garda Diversion Programme;*
- *Design Garda policies and procedures for Diversion of children and young people from offending;*
- *Inform Garda practice and procedures to incentivise, as far as possible, positive interaction between Gardaí and young people;*
- *Drive the design of Garda training and best practices, on age appropriate interaction with children and young people, including the use of general policing powers and, with regard to disadvantage and diversity issues, people, including in relation to Schools Programmes and Community Policing generally; and*
- *Guide the ongoing development of community initiatives such as the Garda Schools Programmes and Community Policing generally.*

2.5.1 – *An Garda Síochána will implement the recommendations arising from the 2019 Garda Youth Referral Examination Report and equip the Garda National Bureau of Youth Diversion to ensure:*

- *Efficient decision-making on cases referred to it;*
- *Ready access to specialist legal or other professional resources;*
- *Access to appropriate IT or other technical supports;*
- *Consistent application of decision-making policies; and*
- *Transparent decision-making and communication with those who are the subject of referral for Diversion.*

2.7.1 – *Ensure centralised Garda oversight of cases and that all appropriate actions are taken to a conclusion, in line with procedures, including implementation of the recommendations from the 2019 Garda Youth Referral Examination Report.*

Dedicated governance structures are in place for the operation of the GNYDB and activity under the Diversion Programme is detailed in the reports of the Monitoring Committee appointed under Section 44 of the Children Act 2001.

The GNYDB provides a central office, led by a Principal Officer, which considers the applicability of Diversion measures for all youth crime incidents, operating in accordance with Part 4 of the Children Act 2001. Decisions on whether to admit a child or young person to the Diversion Programme are made by the Director, who is a Superintendent within the GNYDB. Almost 16,000 crime incidents were processed by the GNYDB in 2023.

Implementation of Actions 2.4.1, 2.5.1 and 2.7.1 of the Youth Justice Strategy is supported by practice guidelines developed by the GNYDB which cover various aspects of the assessment, monitoring and processing of cases which are referred for consideration for admission to the Diversion Programme, as well as key functions such as the administration of cautions and supervision by JLOs.

A range of initiatives by the GNYDB were conducted and continued in 2024 including:

The Greentown Programme

The GNYDB coordinates An Garda Síochána's involvement in the Greentown Programme and there is an Inspector appointed in each 'trial site' to support the programme. The Programme is currently in operation in two trial sites, the locations of which are confidential. A representative from both the local Garda Division and GNYDB attend meetings of the Local Advisory Committees. 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.

The programme intends to achieve its objectives by operating four contributory interventions in parallel. Three of the interventions, Community Efficacy, Intensive Family Support and Pro-Social Opportunities, have been developed over the last two years and can be considered reasonably fully operational. While disrupting criminal networks has always been a focus for An Garda Síochána, work is now underway to develop specific strategies for interrupting the relationships between lower status members of the criminal networks who are 'grooming' children to commit crimes such as holding, transporting and sales of drugs.

In 2024, further work was carried out in designing and implementing the Network Disruption pillar of the Programme. To do so, the University of Limerick has submitted further research requests to the Garda Research Unit. The Garda Síochána Analysis Service also commenced work on network maps for each trial site for Garda internal use only. The proposed further research and internal network maps will used to inform the delivery of the Network Disruption Pillar.

In 2024, An Garda Síochána also participated in a field visit to the Ministry of Justice in the Netherlands to enhance their knowledge of the Dutch programme 'Prevention with Authority'. The Dutch programme is also focused on providing an exit route to children involved in criminal networks and attendance provided an opportunity to exchange information, learnings and best practice.

Youth Joint Agency Response to Crime (Y-JARC)

Y-JARC is a multi-agency approach to managing and addressing prolific offending and criminal behaviour of young people. The GNYDB is responsible for the coordination of An Garda Síochána's involvement in Y-JARC.

In 2024, the Y-JARC Diamond Project opened in the DMR North Central Division. Work is ongoing in 2025 to further develop Y-JARC.

Bail Supervision Scheme

On behalf of An Garda Síochána, the GNYDB has oversight for the Bail Supervision Scheme. In 2024, the GNYDB engaged with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration to conduct a review of the processes and procedures of this scheme. Work is ongoing in cooperation with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration and relevant agencies with a view to further development in 2025.

Youth Diversion Late Night Football Leagues (LNLs)

The LNLs is a community youth diversion and engagement initiative used as an opportunity for An Garda Síochána to build better relationships with young people in specific areas. This initiative from An Garda Síochána and the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) in partnership with external agencies is aimed at encouraging young people to participate in meaningful activities, thus reducing youth crime and anti-social behavior.

In 2023, the GNYDB, in cooperation with the FAI, piloted the Youth Diversion LNLs. By partnering with the community, YDPs, Probation Projects, other youth-related engagement and the FAI, JLOs and Community Gardaí increase the chances of success of this initiative for long-term sustainable solutions in communities. Problem-solving means using the LNLs as a tool to tackle youth crime and anti-social behaviour by running the league at peak times and days, usually Friday and Saturday nights.

Local at-risk youth were selected within Districts/Divisions where they were referred to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and where there were YDPs, Probation Projects or another relevant youth project. Partners were identified at a local level which included YDPs, Probation Projects, youth groups, alternative education projects, Youth Reach and other relevant groups engaging with young people in that particular area.

Youth Diversion Leagues continued in 2024 in selected areas nationally and continue to be supported by the GNYDB.

Other Organisation-Level Activities

GNYDB continued to promote the Garda Youth Diversion Programme throughout the organisation by undertaking the following activities in 2024:

- Continuing to work with the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) to develop a training seminar for Performance Accountability Framework administrators;
- Continuing to engage with the Garda College to deliver presentations to newly promoted Sergeants and Inspectors on their role in the Diversion Programme. Presentations were delivered to all newly promoted Sergeants and Inspectors in 2024;
- Providing Restorative Justice Refresher and Mediation Skills training to all newly appointed Garda JLOs;
- Increasing the use of Restorative Justice and involving the victim as part of the caution process under the Diversion Programme;
- Continuing to contribute to the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 during 2024 by focusing on actions requiring engagement from An Garda Síochána at all levels. The GNYDB is represented at the Youth Justice Governance & Strategy Group and Youth Justice Oversight Group;
- Supporting the development of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration's National YDP Conference 2024 at both the planning and facilitating stages;
- Collaborating closely with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration, CBOs and Garda management locally in the development and expansion of the YDP network, thus supporting the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration's targets for nationwide availability of the programme within the Youth Justice Strategy;
- Supporting the review and finalisation of the new Operational Requirements for YDPs to take account of developments in YDPs as a consequence of Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration investment in line with commitments in the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027. The new Operational Requirements will include guidance on Early Intervention, Harder-to-Reach and Family Support programmes;

- Delivering ‘Together Stronger’ workshops focused on guidelines for effective partnership between Garda JLOs and YDPs. These workshops were delivered by GNYDB and the YDP R&D Team;
- Developing support for YDP Community Based Organisation Representatives (CBORs) and Garda Committee Chairpersons alongside the YDP R&D Team, which relates to the operations of the YDP Project Committees; and
- Continuing to implement recommendations from the 2019 Garda Youth Referral Examination Report and meet service development objectives. Work in this area continues to support efficient and transparent decision-making with regard to the Youth Diversion Programme and the further development of community initiatives to encourage positive interaction between Gardaí and young people across the whole of An Garda Síochána.

5. Young Persons Probation Support

a) Encouraging Cooperation between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

Action 1.3.2 – *We will engage with Departments and Agencies in Northern Ireland to enhance cooperation and share evidence of effective approaches, including in relation to early intervention and diversion as well as policing, probation and Criminal Justice systems.*

Through Young Persons Probation (YPP), the Probation Service has engaged with Northern Ireland's Youth Justice Agency with the purpose of sharing practices and strengthening effective approaches to young people before the Courts. Key areas of focus within these cross-border meetings have included developing shared training opportunities, understanding service and systemic differences across Youth Justice and sharing models of practice across jurisdictions. Joint training initiatives have been explored and will commence in 2025. The Youth Justice Agency and Young Persons Probation have established quarterly cross-border meetings throughout 2024.

b) Provision of Supports to Probation Officers

Action 1.9.3 – *We will continue to support and resource the deployment of suitably qualified Probation Officers to engage effectively with children and young people before the Courts and those under Probation Service Orders in Oberstown and in the community.*

The Probation Service works within the framework of the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 to maximise opportunities to promote positive behavioural change through the development and delivery of opportunities for vulnerable children at risk or already engaged in the Criminal Justice system.

YPP is an Operational Region of the Probation Service with a national footprint. The YPP Region is resourced by four dedicated YPP teams, located in areas identified as best supporting the demands and needs for our work with children – Dublin North, Dublin South, Limerick/Clare and Cork. There are twelve Probation Officers, three

Senior Probation Officers and three Probation Assistants. These are in addition to Probation Officers within regional teams who work to meet the needs of young people in their catchment.

In 2024, 764 children and young people were referred to YPP. There were 690 Supervision Orders given through the Courts this year.

YPP has also placed a Probation Officer two days per week in Oberstown Children Detention Campus, offering assessments for Courts, working with young people on Orders and offering group work interventions for young people remanded and sentenced on charges related to sexual offences.

In 2024, training was provided to Probation Officers on the use of specific youth-focused risk tools (YLS/CMI) and report writing skills. The development of a bespoke orientation and induction training package for Probation Officers working with children was commenced. Three Probation Officers were also trained in the use of the AIM 3 assessment tool, bringing the total to 25 Officers across the Service.

c) Continued Participation in Youth Joint Agency Response to Crime, Community Supervision and the Bail Supervision Scheme

Action 2.7.2 – *Establish clear interagency procedures, working with community partners and appropriate assistance from the Probation Service, to address the situation of children and young people involved in offending behaviour, especially those unsuitable for Diversion, incorporating pilot project and programme initiatives and including (as appropriate in each case)*:

- *Development and adaptation of Community Supervision approaches including Probation Supervision, Y-JARC and Bail Supervision, working to address individual circumstances, including appropriate measures for those aged 18 – 24 years, aligned with development of the Adult Caution Scheme and other relevant systems and provisions.*

Probation Service

In 2024, alongside colleagues in An Garda Síochána, statutory bodies and CBOs, an additional Y-JARC project began operation in Dublin's North Inner City. The development of the additional Y-JARC was in response to a high-profile incident in which it became evident that young people whom were offending at a level of significant risk to others were not being afforded an effective interagency response. This initiative will be led by the Probation Service and An Garda Síochána and is currently working with twenty children and young people aged between 12 and 24 years. The model takes a whole-of-system approach tailored to the specific local cultural and community needs.

The Y-JARC model is currently under review by An Garda Síochana and the Probation Service to ensure it is aligned with shifting profiles and needs and functioning as intended, with a focus on delivering a more streamlined response. Consideration was given in 2024 to the need to review the multiple interagency initiatives in place around Ireland to ensure there is not duplication of responses or models in certain areas and/or a dearth of responses in others.

The Probation Service supports young persons and their families in their own communities, whilst at the same time holding them to account to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour and the consequences of it. The Service funds seventeen CBOs that work directly with young people. Probation Officers make direct referrals to these CBOs and the services they provide include education and training, respite, counselling, mentoring and outdoor pursuits. Annually, approximately 912 young people avail of support from Probation Service-funded CBOs.

The Probation Service has strong links with the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, working closely with JLOs and Garda Case Managers. In 2024, YPP supported the training of Garda Case Managers in the Y-JARC programme. Probation Officers also have ongoing engagement with YDPs funded by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs & Migration. A number of Probation Service-funded CBOs and YDPs work collaboratively, at times accepting referrals from one to the other, on a case-by-case basis, where it is the view that the needs of a particular service user may be more appropriately met by the alternate project.

The Probation Service also work closely with the Bail Supervision Scheme across all three sites.

Young Persons Probation

Referrals to YPP generally come through the Children's Court, which is at a District Court level. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in young people before the Circuit and Central Courts.

Young Persons Probation is seeing an increase in the complexity of cases coming before Courts, with numbers of children presenting with care and welfare needs increasing, along with young people with cognitive and communication difficulties.

Probation Officers use a child-centred approach, focusing on the ability of the child to change and to make better choices. The Probation Officer analyses the child's offending behaviour in the context of their life, while identifying risk factors for further offending by applying the YLS/CMI tool. This is a specific tool, used across the Youth Justice system, to assess risks and needs and gauge appropriate levels of intervention. All Probation Officers working with young people are trained on the application of this tool.

In keeping with the ethos of the Children Act 2001, every child/young person that the Probation Service works with is afforded the opportunity for engagement at the lowest level of intervention possible to keep them and their community safe. Probation Officers supervise young people as directed by the Courts, including making referrals to appropriate services to help address their risks and needs.

In 2024:

- 764 Court referrals were made to the Probation Service for young people;
- 683 Pre-Sanction Reports were prepared by the Probation Service for the Courts;
- 51 Pre-Sanction Reports to consider Community Service were requested;
- 8 reports were requested by the Central Criminal Courts; and
- 690 Supervision Orders were given.

d) Collaboration with Oberstown Children Detention Campus and Tusla – The Child and Family Agency

Action 2.12.1 – *We will align, as far as possible, national policies on Children in Detention and in State Care, within "Better Outcomes Brighter Futures -The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 -2020," and successor frameworks; and*

Action 2.14.1 – *We will pursue enhanced, timely and effective services in preparing children (under 18) for their safe return to the community.*

Probation Service

The Probation Service and Oberstown Children Detention Campus have an agreed protocol, specific to Probation Officers and campus staff, to ensure the effective management and thorough care of children and young persons on remand and in detention.

The Probation Service, along with colleagues in Oberstown Children Detention Campus and Tusla, have rolled out a group work response to young people detained for sexual offences. This commenced in January 2024 and ensures that young people detained are not disadvantaged in their access to specialist treatment and rehabilitation which would otherwise have been available in the community. The Tusla services involved in this approach are the National Inter-Agency Prevention Programme (NIAPP) and Assessment Consultation Therapy Service (ACTS).

Currently, five Probation Officers are seconded one day per week to work with the NIAPP. These Probation Officers co-facilitate treatment programmes with NIAPP for young people who have exhibited sexually harmful behaviour or sexually offended in Cork, South Dublin, North Dublin, Meath, Limerick and Oberstown Children DetentionCampus. In addition, the Probation Service funds a part-time NIAPP position in Kerry.

Young Persons Probation

As part of its work on-campus, the YPP provides an in-reach service to Oberstown Children Detention Campus two days per week. There is a dedicated YPP Probation Officer in this role, holding both detention and community cases. This Probation Officer co-facilitates offence-focused programmes with young people in detention and completes individual work with children in detention.

Restorative Justice & Community Service

Requests from the Courts in 2024 for greater consideration of restorative justice approaches was responded to by the Probation Service through the provision of bespoke training to all YPP staff on the assessment and delivery of restorative justice throughout the country. Throughout 2024, YPP did not see a significant increase in the numbers of referral for restorative justice. However, a small decrease in the number of Community Service assessments requested by the Courts for young people aged 16-18 years, which was down from 52 in 2023 to 51 in 2024, was observed.

6. Oberstown Children Detention Campus

Strategic Objective 2.11 – *We will assess service needs, accommodation and operational requirements at Oberstown to address likely future demands; and*

Strategic Objective 2.12 – *We will align, as far as possible, national policies on Children in Detention and in State Care, within "Better Outcomes Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 -2020," and successor frameworks.*

a) Assessing Future Demands on Service Provision

Action 2.11.1 – *We will:*

- *Implement a research-based assessment of likely demands for Detention places and services and the consequent resource requirements over a 5 year period to inform future strategic options as well as ongoing planning, budgeting and service development.*
- *The outcome of this assessment should inform the approach to the long-term use of the Oberstown Campus.*

The DCDE, in consultation with Oberstown Children Detention Campus, began work on a research-based assessment of likely demands for detention places and services in 2024. This is to inform medium- and longer-term planning, budgeting and service development.

b) Upholding the Children's Rights Policy Framework

Action 2.11.2 – *We will continue to build on the existing Oberstown Children's Rights Framework to describe for each individual case [the] intended outcomes, the services/ support required to help achieve those outcomes and the methodology for measuring what is achieved, from a period in Detention and from Post-Detention support.*

Oberstown Children Detention Campus continued its work to embed the Children's Rights Policy Framework into all aspects of life on its grounds in 2024. Particular focus was given to the provision of training opportunities to young people during their

detention period and linking these to supported entry to careers post-detention. With partner organisations, Oberstown Children Detention Campus worked with a range of employers to create these links, as part of the implementation of the 'Preparation for Leaving' pillar of its model of care. A highlight of this work in 2024 was the hosting of a Careers Fair on the campus in November, which was attended by employers and young people.

c) Enhancing Collaboration with Key Youth Justice Stakeholders

Action 2.12.2 – *We will continue to build on existing interagency procedures to address the needs of children and young people subject to detention through effective interagency case management and through care (including those transitioning to adulthood), informed by robust assessment of the risk and need in each case. Gaps in procedures and/or practice will be identified and appropriate measures put in place to address these.*

The DCDE, in partnership with Oberstown Children Detention Campus, hosted a multi-stakeholder roundtable on youth detention in December 2024. This brought together senior representatives of Youth Justice stakeholder organisations to discuss the application of the principle of last resort in the detention of children.