

Early Interventions to Reduce Youth Offending



RESEARCHER

Dr Gareth Norris

THE OVERVIEW

Working collaboratively with Ceredigion Youth Justice and Prevention Services (CYJPS), Dr Norris developed the Ceredigion Youth Screening Tool (CYSTEM), a bespoke risk assessment tool which changed the practice of assessment for young people referred across the four Dyfed-Powys Youth Offending Teams. CYSTEM supported the diversion of over a third of low-risk offenders from formal criminal justice involvement and enabled resources to be targeted at higher risk individuals who were most likely to benefit from targeted interventions. Alongside the impact on individual local stakeholders, the expertise generated informed policy for the Youth Justice Service (YJS), Police, Youth Justice Board (YJB), and the Home Office, both in the UK and overseas.



THE RESEARCH

CYSTEM was designed and implemented through a funded collaboration with CYJPS, to take a pragmatic approach to the diversion of young people out of the formal Youth Justice system. The pre-screen tool has been used by Ceredigion Youth Justice Practice Services since April 2016, and was further adopted for use with all referrals to the Youth Justice Service across the Dyfed-Powys force area from April 2018. The tool was also used in selecting candidates for Home Office funded projects targeting risk of Organised Crime involvement. The project was twice shortlisted for an award with the Howard League for Penal Reform.

“ The development of the Ceredigion Youth Screening Tool (CYSTEM) has been a major driver of change in the way in which we assess and process young people referred to the service. CYSTEM has allowed us to focus resources on the most critical individuals and avoid stigmatizing the very low risk cases; figures show that this has had an impact on the number of young people re-entering the system over the past two years. ”

HEAD OF CEREDIGION YOUTH JUSTICE, 19 JULY 2019

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THE IMPACT

A 'CHILD FIRST' APPROACH WAS ADOPTED AND APPLIED TOWARDS YOUNG PEOPLE IN CEREDIGION AND DYFED-POWYS

This reduced the stigmatisation/ labelling of young people referred to the service, which further reduced the chances of later offending for low-risk offenders. The number of referrals in Ceredigion was reduced by approximately 30% in terms of total case load. The wider preventions work has been reviewed across Wales as part of the Youth Justice Pathfinder project.

DELIVERED SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS, IN STAFF TIME AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Using CYSTEM can save between three and five hours per referral in terms of assessment and potentially 150 and 200 hours per year, per caseworker. By limiting the need to formally assess very low risk young offenders significantly reduced demand for resources and freed up case workers' time to provide intervention work with the higher-risk category.

BENEFITING THE WIDER PUBLIC THROUGH CRIME REDUCTION

By enabling resources to be targeted at medium to high-risk individuals, the group most likely to benefit from high quality intervention work.

