

## National Youth Justice Conference June 2016

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This month's Info Sheet highlights practice learning points from the workshops at this year's national youth justice conference. Full presentations can be found at [www.cycj.org.uk](http://www.cycj.org.uk)

### Preventing homelessness; reducing offending

Michelle Harrow, Linda Bulle & Dougie, *Shelter Scotland*

The link between housing needs and reoffending is well established, yet [2015 research](#) found 49% of Scottish prisoners lose their tenancy and 30% do not know where they will live on release. Shelter Scotland have been providing advice, support, guidance and training in prisons since 1999. They have a dedicated worker in HMYOI Polmont, where key issues are: relationship breakdown leading to homelessness; fear of going into hostels on release; tenancy abandonment; and pressure from landlords to terminate tenancies on entry to custody. It costs £26,000 for an individual to lose their tenancy and be rehoused - this should be avoided where possible through family work, liaising with landlords, establishing plans to repay arrears and addressing benefit entitlements. Where this is not possible homeless legislation enables an application to be made eight weeks prior to leaving custody - if the local authority fails to accept or act on this they are also failing to uphold that individual's legislative rights. The [CYCJ Practice Guidance](#) has further information on this.

### Learning Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System

Kenny McKay & Darren Wood, *SOLD/People First (Scotland)*

All professionals, at all stages of the justice system, should seek to identify and support people with learning disabilities. The experiences of the SOLD User network highlight too often this is not the case. In this workshop a range of strategies to address this were suggested, including:

- Referring to guides such as [People with Learning Disabilities and the Criminal Justice System](#), particularly regarding good communication skills;
- Providing training to professionals across justice services;
- Utilising appropriate adults and communication experts;
- The use of screening tools such as the 'Do It' tool which has recently been piloted in HMYOI Polmont;
- Making reasonable adjustments throughout the system and ensuring the same court disposals are available to people with learning disabilities

## Why are we still getting it wrong for girls?

*Carole Dearie, Good Shepherd Centre & Maureen Roberts, North Lanarkshire Council*

One of the key reasons we are still getting it wrong for girls is because we are still basing our assessments of need and risk, and our services, on research derived from a young male population. Instead we need to understand girls' behaviour in the context of [Crick's relational theory](#) which highlights that relational aggression (behaviours that harm others by damaging relationships) is particularly important for understanding the difficult behaviours girls present with. Once we truly understand the underlying causes, we can then start to review our service provision by amending our policies, assessment processes, interventions and the manner in which we relate to girls. From more information see [CYCJ practice guidance](#) and information on [training](#).

## Named Person Pilot

*Julie Muir & Grace Fletcher, East Ayrshire Council*

East Ayrshire carried out a pilot between November 2015 and February 2016 in relation to Named Person and Early and Effective Intervention, in preparation for the implementation of the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#). Two learning communities, with different social and economic needs, took part in the pilot, which was initially established to take the offending related concern forms and test the systems i.e. a Named Person secure mailbox. Key learning points from this workshop included:

- The pilot was expanded to include all concern reports as there was a low number of offence related reports;
- Named Persons were not overwhelmed with the additional information received;
- Good working relationships were key in the success of the pilot

## Getting It Right for Every Child-Recorded Police Warnings for 16 and 17 year olds

*Chris Wright, Dundee City Council, James Devoy & Sarah Marshall, Police Scotland*

The Recorded Police Warning Scheme, launched in January 2016, made changes to the use of warnings by Police Scotland for adults who offend, following the issue of revised Lord Advocate's Guidelines to the Police. As Recorded Police Warnings also apply to 16 and 17 year olds, a system was introduced to include additional safeguards for those under 18 years of age. This is designed to ensure that wellbeing information is captured for all those under 18 who receive a Recorded Police Warning, and that wellbeing concerns continue to be shared proportionately and appropriately through existing local arrangements. This will form part of the wider response to offending through Early and Effective Intervention and Diversion from Prosecution. Guidance for partners is currently being developed.

## How does society recognise the harm a young person may have caused to another young person or adult if society states a crime has not been committed?

*Michael Salkow, Victim Support Scotland.*

This workshop discussed the potential increase in the age of criminal responsibility and the effects this may have on potential victims, if under legislation the young person has not committed a crime. In actual fact, most incidents may never be reported, some never recorded as crimes, and some suspects will never be identified or prosecuted. However, there can still be a victim and support should still be offered. The impact of an incident can also affect people differently and does not necessarily correlate to the severity or seriousness of what has taken place, but the impact it has had on the individual. As professionals we need to offer support to anyone who has been a victim or refer them to an appropriate organisation that can. Victim Support Scotland provides [training](#) including on the [Impact of Crime](#).

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