

National Youth Justice Conference 2019 Event Report

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1. Introduction

The National Youth Justice Conference is the biggest event of the year for the Scottish youth and criminal justice sector. Organised by the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ), the Scottish Government and the National Youth Justice Advisory Group (NYJAG) the conference took place across two days on June 19 and 20, 2019 at the Stirling Court Hotel.

This event brought together practitioners to hear about the latest youth justice research and developments, share best practice and reflect on the views of young people who have experienced the youth and criminal justice system. This year's theme of 'Youth Justice through the Ages' focused on the ways in which the systems respond to young people at conflict with the law at different stages of their lifespan, as well as looking back at the changes that have occurred, and ahead at what's to come. The conference allowed attendees to hear from several experts in the field through a range of lightning talks, performances and speakers including:

- The Right Hon Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk and President of the Second Division of the Court of Session
- Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland
- David Harvie, COPFS
- Keith Gardner, Community Justice Scotland
- Stuart Allardyce, Expert Group on Preventing Sexual Offending
- Tim Bateman, Deputy Chair of the National Association for Youth Justice
- Professor Nancy Loucks OBE, Chief Executive of Families Outside and Vonnie Sandlan, Co-Chair of the Independent Care Review
- Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Scotland
- Ross Gibson and Debbie Nolan, CYCJ
- Fergus McNeill, University of Glasgow and Donna Maciocia, Vox Liminis
- The Close, Kibble Education and Care Centre
- Martin Dorchester, Includem
- Chief Inspector Lex Baillie, Police Scotland
- Pamela Graham, Staf

In addition, delegates attended one workshop per day, choosing from a wide range of topics including:

- The Age of Criminal Responsibility
- Formulation in Practice
- Reflect and Learn – Inclusion as Prevention
- Prison certainly destroys relationships: it doesn't help them
- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy in Residential Childcare
- Developing Capacity and Improvement in a Youth Justice Setting
- A Structured Sentencing Court for Young People
- Talking Hope, Building Bridges
- No Knives Better Lives
- STOP (Sacro Tackling Offending Prejudices) Dealing with Discrimination and Hate Crimes in Schools

- Power Threat and Meaning in Youth Justice

There were approximately 240 delegates in attendance over the two days - 95 were representatives from Scotland's local authorities. The following report is an accurate representation of the 68 responses received from delegates who completed and returned evaluation forms that were provided to each delegate within their conference packs.

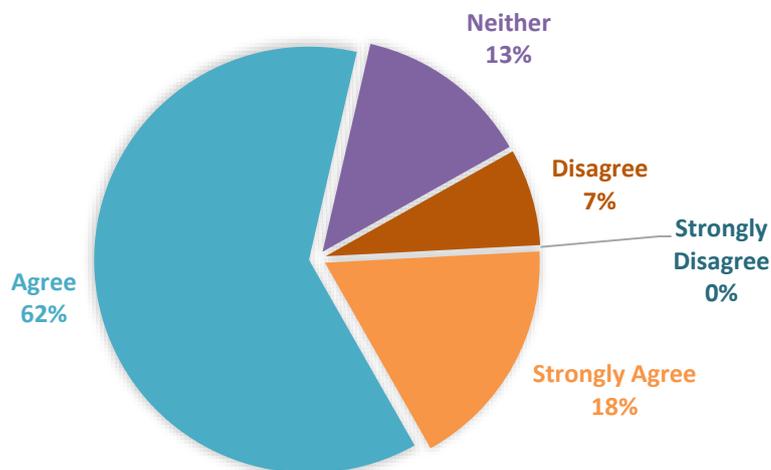
The presentations and materials from the conference can be accessed [here](#).

2. Evaluation Feedback

2.1 Prior Knowledge

Attendees were asked whether prior to the conference they would describe their knowledge of the topic as 'good'. The chart below demonstrates that the vast majority (80%) would either agree or strongly agree with this statement. A small proportion (7%) felt they had little knowledge prior to the conference and 13% stated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

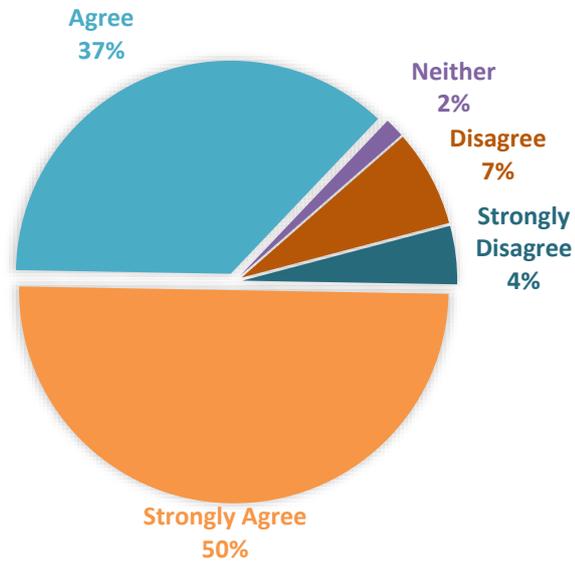
CHART 1 - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE



2.2 Previous Experience

Attendees were asked to describe their previous experience of working within this area. The chart below shows that the majority (87%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they did. Eleven percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 2% answered neither.

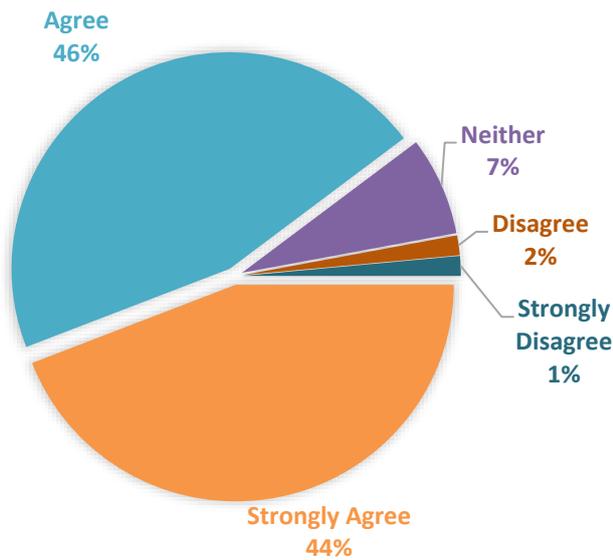
CHART 2 - PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE



2.3 Gained Understanding

The chart below highlights that almost all attendees agreed that they gained a greater understanding of the topic from the event – with 90% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. Seven percent answered that they neither agreed nor disagreed, and a small proportion (3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

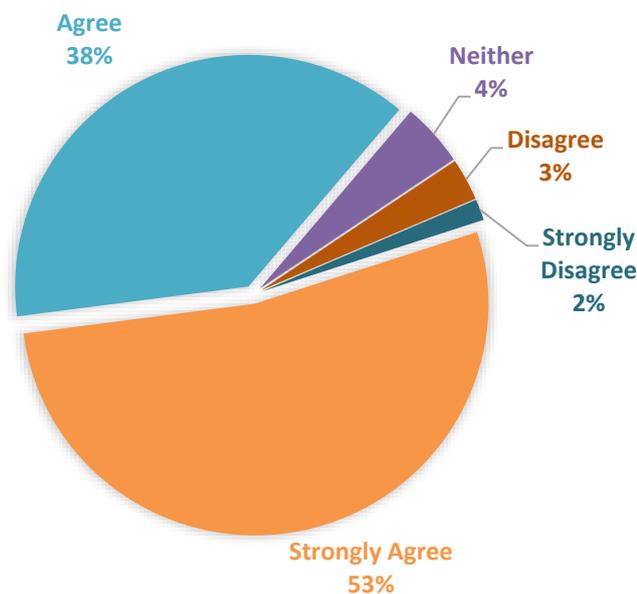
CHART 3 - GAINED UNDERSTANDING



2.4 Impact on Practice

The attendees were asked if they gained any knowledge from the event that would impact on their practice. As illustrated in the chart below, a high proportion (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that knowledge gained from the conference would impact on their practice. A small section of 5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, and 4% responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

CHART 4 - IMPACT ON PRACTICE



3. Event Impact and Learning

Overall, the feedback from the event was exceedingly positive. Sixty three of the 68 respondents identified something important they felt they had learned as a result of the event. Nine respondents mentioned that information in relation to the Age of Criminal Responsibility was the most important insight they had gained from the conference:

- “[I am] more informed about the changes being implemented in regards to the new ACR bill”
- “[The most important thing I learnt was] the continued development around outcomes for increasing the age of criminal responsibility”
- “[The most important thing I learnt was] the complexity of increasing the age of criminal responsibility to 12. The afternoon workshop which was very insightful”

Furthermore, for several respondents the conference’s emphasis on the importance of relationships when working with children and young people was particularly beneficial:

- “Every conference should be highlighting the importance of relationships, great to see this being emphasised over the two days - stopping to think about the role of families and friends in relation to reintegration.”
- “[The most important thing I learnt was] that you can’t separate youth justice from children and families. The basis of any work with young people and the significant people in their lives is good relationships.”
- “Affirmed that relationships are key to all the work we do.”

In addition, many respondents detailed that the conference was beneficial in highlighting the extent of work going into Scotland’s youth justice sector and what has been achieved so far:

- “[The most important thing I learnt was] that there is a great deal of work going into youth justice throughout Scotland. That a lot of people care about this matter from all walks of life/job roles/government to judges to workers and most importantly young people”
- “[The most important thing I learnt was] that people are working hard in all sorts of areas to keep progressing the work of youth justice to help young people”
- “[The most important thing I learnt was] the great work going on in youth justice sector - sense of confidence and commitment from those involved in work with young people”

Respondents were also asked to detail what they felt worked well during the conference. The lightning talks proved to be very popular, with 30 of the 68 respondents identifying them as an aspect they enjoyed. Many highlighted that they were particularly effective in providing information about a range of different topics in a short period of time:

- “The lightning talks were really good - focussed and varied so easy to listen to and take on board.”
- “The lightning talks - great way of getting more speakers in.”
- “Lightning talks were great to get brief overview of topics/pieces of work.”
- “Lightning talks - very informative whilst not too long.”

The diversity of sessions within the programme was also identified by 17 respondents as something that worked well:

- “The whole event worked well - superb balance of inputs/creative reflection/research findings and workshops.”
- “All worked well - good mix of presentations, workshops and lightning talks.”
- “Fantastic range of speakers and workshops, not too long/short inputs - really well organised.”

- “Nice mixture between ‘talking head’ stuff and arts based presentations.”

Furthermore, the ‘Rewind, recover, rewrite the scenes: Rethinking re/integration creatively’ session by Fergus McNeill and Donna Maciocia on day two of the conference was mentioned frequently by respondents as an aspect they felt worked well:

- “Music session - this was very engaging as it is the stories of young people.”
- “Enjoyed the music presentation - very engaging.”
- “Fergus McNeil and Donna were brilliant.”
- “Input from Fergus McNeil - showing from a child-centred position.”

Respondents were then asked what they thought about the input from young people at the conference. Many detailed that they thoroughly enjoyed it, and that their involvement in the conference was vital:

- “Loved it - it’s so great to see and hear directly from young people about what works/doesn’t. Thank you to them for taking the time to see us.”
- “Very inspirational! The best bit. Their experiences and positive outcomes is why we work in this sector.”
- “Very good to have two [young people] there. The voices of young people in the workshop on structured deferred sentences were very powerful.”

However, many (22 respondents) also highlighted that they would have liked more from young people, and suggest their involvement in the conference is extended in the future:

- “Excellent - suggest even more integration with maybe a co-produced programme and young person led workshop.wrg”
- “In respect of this conference I think it could be improved by having children and young people actually involved. The young people from Kibble were brilliant.”
- “Aside from the co-chair (who was brilliant) this [involvement of young people] was limited on the day from what I could see - maybe more co-production with young people in the workshop could have worked well - although young people’s views and voices were included and given priority which was great.”
- “Not enough [involvement of young people], don’t feel their voice was heard during the day.”

Respondents were then asked what improvements they felt could be made to the conference. 48 of the 68 respondents chose to answer this question. More workshops

throughout the day was frequently suggested, with 10 respondents identifying this as something which could be improved upon. Several also identified that the ability to sign-up for workshops in advance would be beneficial:

- “More than 1 workshop in the afternoon - learn a lot from the discussions in smaller groups”
- “One workshop in the morning and one in afternoon would have been better”
- “The workshops only occurring once a day - I would have liked to attend more”
- “I wish we could have picked workshops prior to the event. There should be less speakers and more workshops”
- “Sign up for workshops was hard - both days the choices were limited by the time I arrived - could this be done in advance?”

Other respondents also mentioned that the lengthier presentations could have been broken up more, with breaks or workshops in-between to ensure delegates can remain focussed:

- “Maybe break up the morning inputs a bit, especially on the first day it felt a bit long to me.”
- “I think two speakers, then a break would be better. Three is pushing attention and ability to absorb all information.”
- “The morning was personally difficult to keep focused due to staying in the same place listening to different speakers.”
- “Breaks in between the speakers - too many speakers in a row. Break it up with workshops in between. Workshops in AM and PM.”

4. What next?

Respondents were asked if there was any further training or support that they felt they could benefit from following the event, with 31 out of 68 responding to this question. Responses were varied, with training requested in areas like Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, FRAME, Child Protection Guidelines and how Brexit will affect the youth justice sector. Several also specified that they would like to see more training around the Age of Criminal Responsibility:

- “Input re implementation of bill to raise criminal responsibility - training on guidance of act.”
- “Greater focus on ACR in practice following implementation.”
- “Training will be required in Police Scotland on implementation of ACR bill. Guidance on stats required for any future review.”

In addition, some respondents also highlighted that they would like specific training sessions in the future on the topics covered in the workshops:

- “Focused days from the workshops offered.”
- “Workshop topics delivered to different organisations as part of training programmes as well as on conference agenda.”

Planning is now underway for 2020. Please contact cycj@strath.ac.uk if there is anything you would like to see covered at this conference.