

# **An overview of the Youth Offending Service**

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# Legislation & Background

- Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) have been established under section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- Responsibility for their operation is with Local Authority Chief Executives in partnership with other agencies, who provide resources.
- Ten is the age of Criminal Responsibility.

- Action to prevent children and young people offending should not start or finish with the youth justice system. The first objective of any youth crime reduction strategy should be to stop children and young people ever becoming offenders

(Home Office 1998)

# Aims & Objectives

- “It shall be the principle aim of the Youth Justice System to prevent offending by children and young people”. Section 37 Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

# Six Key Objectives

- To reduce delay
- To confront young people with the consequences of their offending.
- To intervene to tackle risk factors
- To ensure punishment is appropriate to the crime.
- To encourage reparation to victims.
- To reinforce the responsibilities of parents.

# The team

- Representatives from social services, probation, police, education, health.
- Located in 2 offices- Bedford & Dunstable.
- A total of 30 staff plus other who work with us to provide a range of project work as part of the services we provide.
- Delivery and co-ordination of services for all who need them.

- Bedfordshire has a population of 35 thousand 10-17 year olds.
- An average of 800 young people commit approximately 1600 recorded offences each year in the county.
- Up to 90 young people are permanently excluded from school each year. Half of these will have criminal records.

# Types of Offences

- The most common type of offence committed by young people is property related
- Violent offences and “expressive” offences also feature highly amongst young people
- Drug and substance misuse is an increasing factor in all offending



# **Factors that contribute to offending in young people**

- Family factors: low income, poor parental supervision, harsh discipline, abuse, conflict, parents with anti-social attitudes
- School: low attainment, aggressive & disruptive behaviour, truancy
- Community: access to drugs, deprived neighbourhood, listlessness in the community

- Individual factors: hyperactivity, impulsivity, attitudes that condone offending, early involvement in crime (under 14)

# Positive Factors (Howell et al., 95)

- Social bonding: good family bonds, attachment
- Healthy beliefs: when families, schools and behaviour norms in the community guide children away from crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour
- Opportunities: when there are opportunities to access a range of positive services