



Ministry
of Justice



Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuentid

**SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE MOJ AND YJB
SURVEY ON YOUTH JUSTICE: PREVENTION OF
OFFENDING**

NOVEMBER 2017

Executive summary

In December 2016, the Government published Charlie Taylor's independent review of the youth justice system alongside the Government response. The response acknowledged that the best way to reduce the level of youth crime is to intervene early to prevent children and young people offending in the first place. Therefore, a commitment was made to conduct an audit of prevention initiatives and collate best practice across the youth justice system.

This report summarises responses to an online survey, sent to the Chair of the Management Board of all 153 Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) across England and Wales. A response rate of 68% was achieved (104 YOTs responded to the survey).

Key findings

- Two thirds of respondents to the survey reported that the YOT funded prevention initiatives in their area and that YOTs were the most common delivery agent for these interventions.
- YOTs were asked what percentage of their caseload was not part of their statutory work. There was a substantial variation in answers to this question and the average (median) response was that nearly a third of YOTs' caseloads was non-statutory.
- Responses also showed that YOTs were heavily involved in diversion, with the majority of respondents indicating that their YOT was involved in pre-out of court disposal delivery. The majority also indicated that intervention plans were put in place for all or some young people diverted from the youth justice system.
- Respondents were asked to describe the different prevention initiatives undertaken in their area. The answers to this question varied and it was interesting to note how many YOTs have continued to deliver prevention programmes, such as Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs), despite these no longer receiving central government funding. Parenting programmes also featured strongly in the responses.
- YOTs highlighted the need for effective screening and assessment to facilitate successful delivery. The importance of delivering bespoke interventions and developing good engagement with the young person and their family was also noted.
- Respondents were asked about the barriers to delivering an effective prevention intervention in their area. Overall, lack of resources/investment was the most common barrier, followed by the lack of a central prevention strategy. Furthermore, less than half of respondents reported that they had carried out any kind of analysis to provide evidence for investment in prevention.
- Learning from other YOTs was reported as the most important way to identify new prevention initiatives. The Youth Justice Board's Resource Hub was indicated as a key way for YOTs to identify new ideas.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In December 2016, the Government published Charlie Taylor's independent review of the youth justice system alongside the Government response¹. In the response the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) acknowledged that the best way to reduce the level of youth crime is to intervene early to prevent children and young people from committing offences in the first place.
- 1.2 A commitment was made to carry out an audit of prevention initiatives and then collate best practice across the system to inform further preventative work at national and local levels. This audit included a survey to all YOTs as well as several round table events and telephone interviews.
- 1.3 The situation in Wales is different to that in England. Wales has a national approach to prevention work, largely supported by Welsh Government funding. As such, every YOT in Wales has a prevention and diversion scheme in place. Where Welsh answers to the survey varied substantially to those received from England this has been highlighted throughout the report.

Methodology

- 1.4 An email was sent to the Chair of the YOT Management Board of all 153 YOTs, across England and Wales, inviting them to complete an online survey. The survey opened on 13th July and closed on 11th August 2017. A response rate of 68% was achieved (104 YOTs responded to the survey).
- 1.5 The survey contained content on both courts and sentencing as well as prevention initiatives. This report covers only the prevention content.
- 1.6 The answers to the survey's open-ended questions were coded according to the main reported themes and key findings are reported to complement the responses to the closed-ended questions where relevant.

Definitions

- 1.7 For the purposes of the survey, "prevention" was defined as work carried out to engage with young people and their families/carers who are on the cusp of offending, to help prevent them from entering the youth justice system. Prevention was used as an umbrella term for:
 - a. Prevention where no proven offence has been committed, but the young person is at risk of offending for other reasons (e.g. being excluded from school);
 - b. Diversion where a low-level offence has been committed but the young person is diverted from the formal justice system (pre-formal out of court disposal).
- 1.8 Respondents were told that prevention initiatives are not rigidly defined. When answering, they were asked to consider any range of provision where youth offending services or partnership organisations are actively contributing to the prevention of offending by children and young people.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>

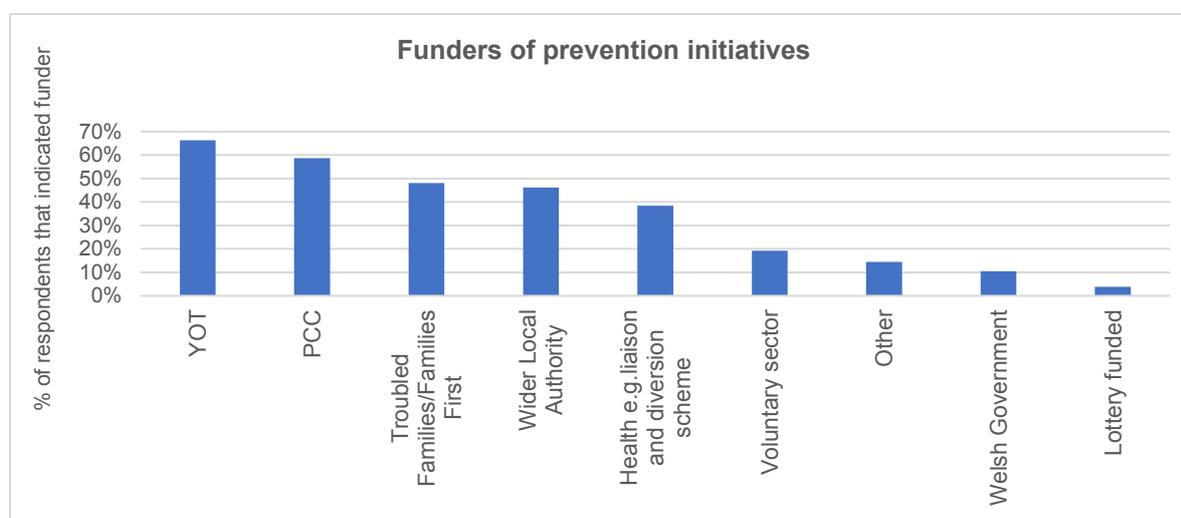
1.9 For the survey, “area” was defined as the local authority/authorities to which the YOT Management Board is accountable. “Prevention initiative” was defined as the specific activity undertaken with the aim of preventing a child or young person from offending and could include a diversion scheme which leads to no formal action.

2. Strategy and Funding

Funding

- 2.1 The vast majority (97%) of survey respondents indicated that their area delivered prevention initiatives to divert young people from the justice system^{2,3}.
- 2.2 Respondents indicated a wide range of funders of prevention initiatives in their areas. Figure 1 shows that 66% stated that the YOT funded prevention initiatives in their area, 59% the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), 48% the Troubled Families/Families First programmes, and 46% the wider local authority (within which half of respondents indicated children’s services specifically).
- 2.3 Respondents were then asked who provided the largest source of funding for prevention initiatives. Based on approximate amounts of funding in the last financial year, nearly a third (31%) reported the wider local authority as the largest funder, followed by the YOT (23%) and PCC (11%). In Wales, every respondent indicated the Welsh Government as the largest funder. See Figure 2 below.

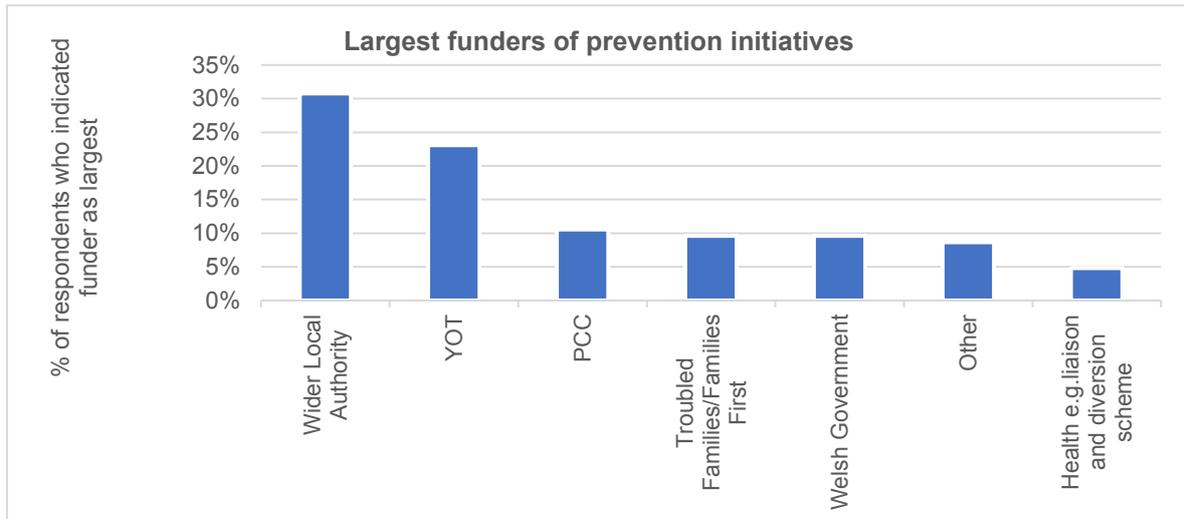
Figure 1 – Funders of prevention initiatives



² Core YOT responsibilities are set out the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and involve 1. assessment of young persons and the provision for them of rehabilitation programmes 2. providing reports or other information required by courts in criminal proceedings against children and young people 3. delivery of community sentences 4. supervising young people on licence following release from custody. Non-statutory work may include early intervention and prevention of offending.

³ To note some YOTs that responded “no” or skipped this question answered other questions later in the survey which suggested that they did, in fact, deliver prevention initiatives in their area.

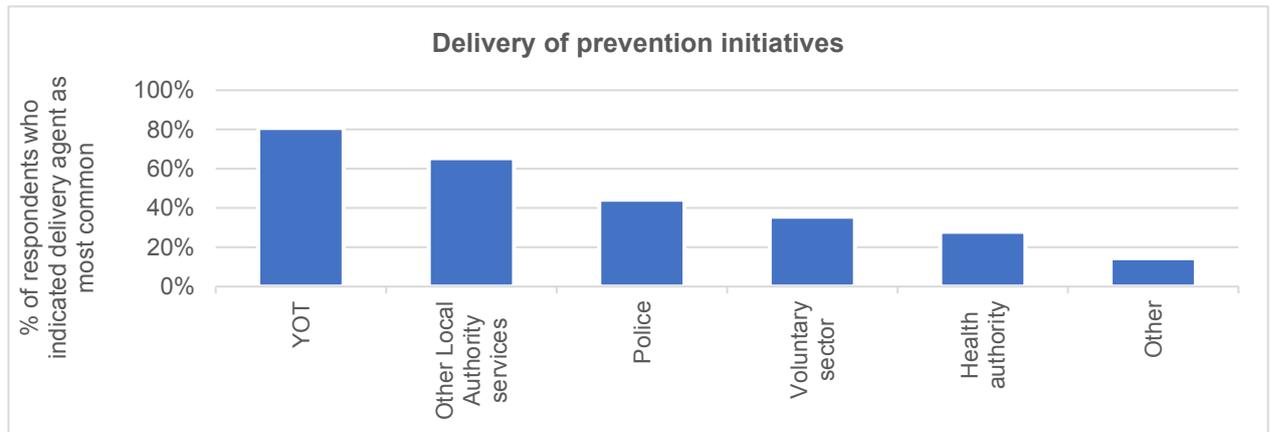
Figure 2 – Largest funders of prevention initiatives



Delivery

- 2.4 Figure 3 shows that respondents indicated the most common delivery agent for prevention initiatives as the YOT, followed by other local authority services and then the police.

Figure 3 – Delivery of prevention initiatives

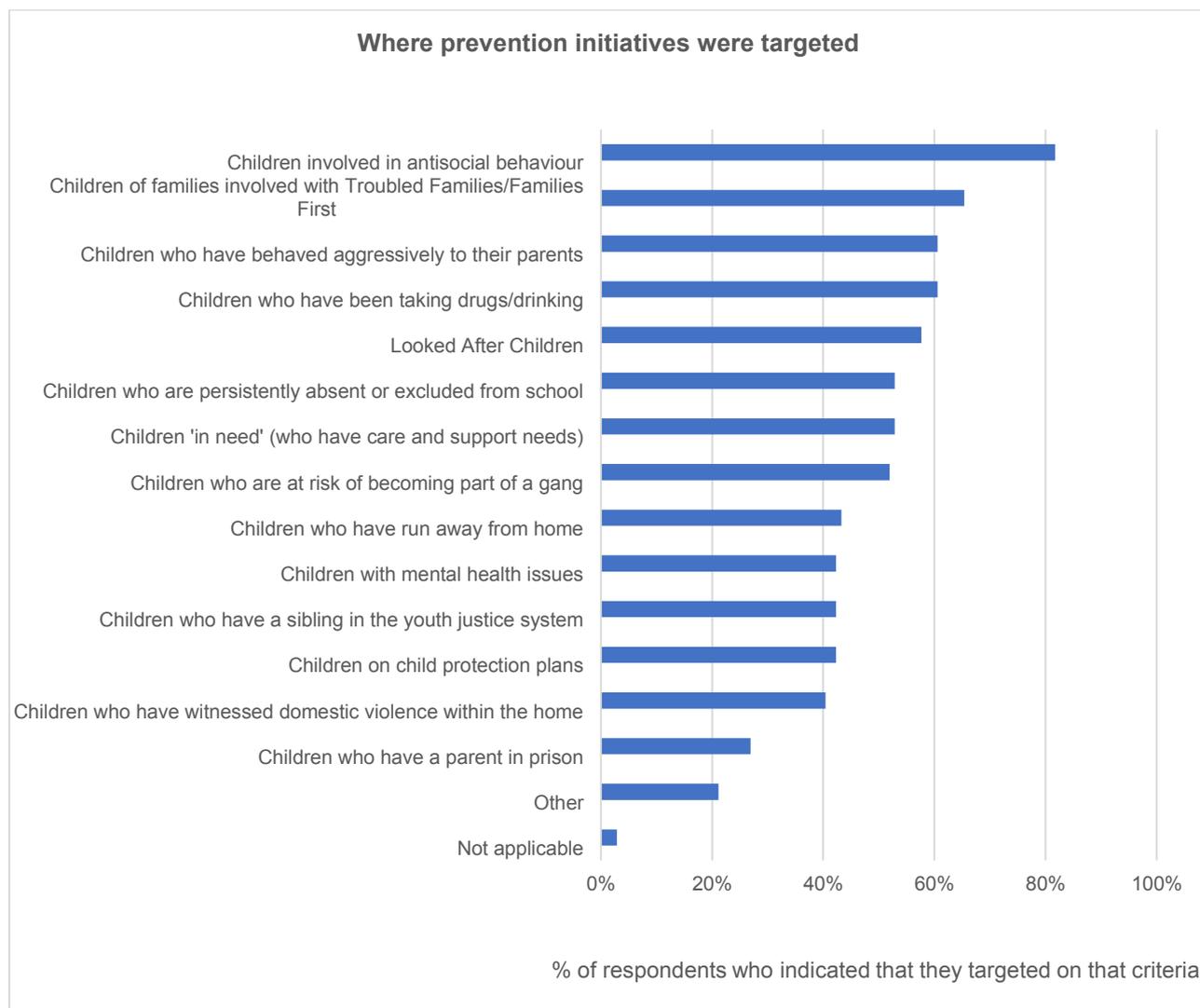


3. Operation

- 3.1 Figure 4 demonstrates the groups for which respondents indicated that they provided targeted prevention initiatives. Children involved in antisocial behaviour were most likely to be targeted⁴, followed by those involved with the Troubled Families/Families First programme, children who had behaved aggressively to their parents, and children who had been taking drugs or drinking alcohol.

⁴ An error in the survey meant that 'children involved in antisocial behaviour' was listed twice. One set of responses has therefore been discounted.

Figure 4 – Where prevention initiatives were targeted

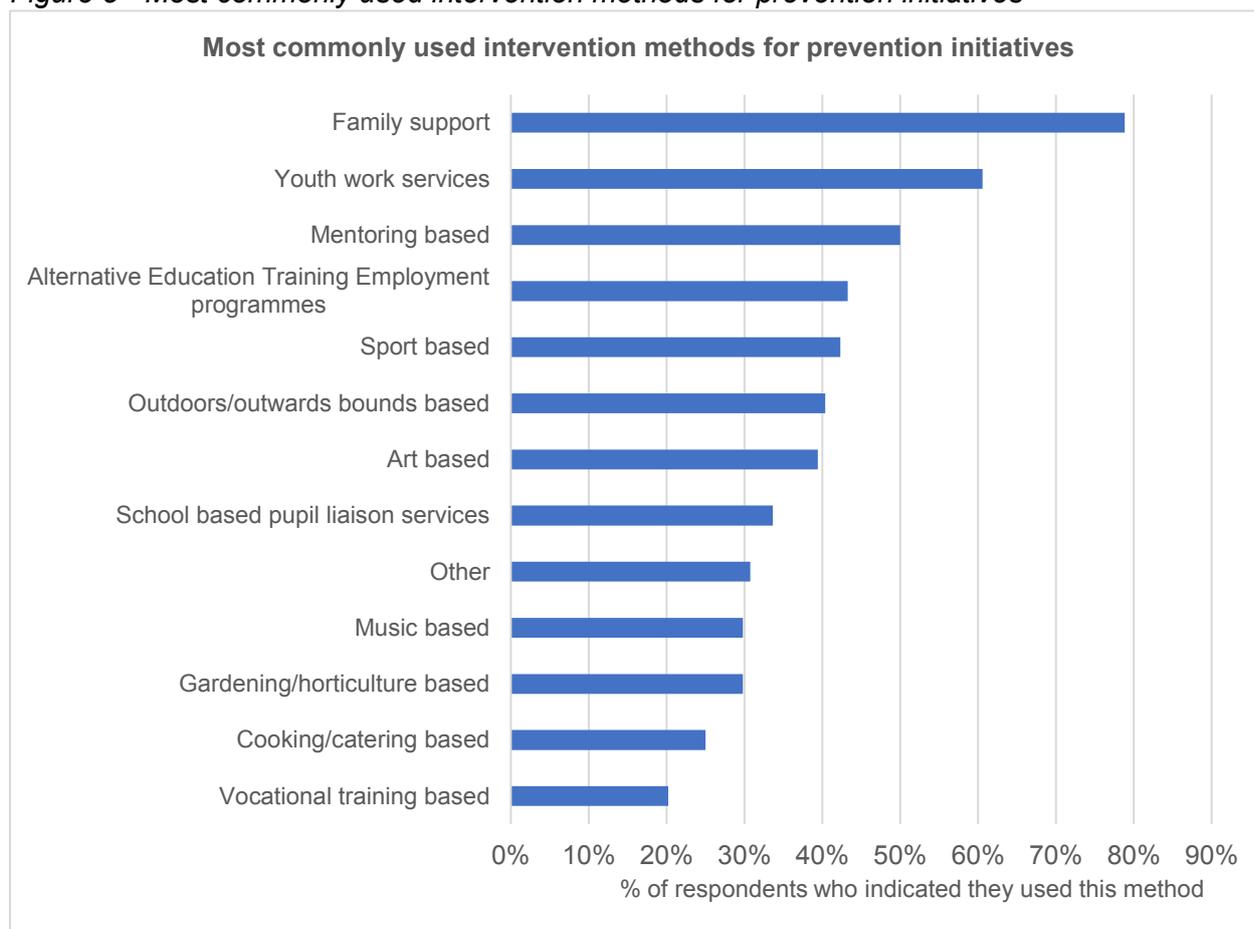


3.2 The most common risk factors reported in the “other” answer option were: children at risk of sexual exploitation; those demonstrating harmful sexual behaviour; and children who are homeless.

Prevention methods

3.3 Figure 5 demonstrates the most commonly used intervention methods for prevention initiatives, with family support being the most widely used method. Around a third (31%) of respondents indicated “other” types of initiatives. Many of these answers referred to interventions that were based on assessments of individual need and were tailored to the young person.

Figure 5 - Most commonly used intervention methods for prevention initiatives



Caseload

- 3.4 Respondents were asked about their YOT's current caseload (including non-statutory work) at the time of completing this survey. YOT caseloads varied considerably, which would be expected as this will depend on the population size of the area covered by the YOT and its demographics. The lowest caseload reported was 20 and the highest 705. The median caseload was 140 young people.
- 3.5 Respondents were also asked what percentage of their YOT's caseload was not part of their statutory work. There were a range of responses to this question with 22% of YOTs indicating their non-statutory caseload was less than 10%, and 12% of YOTs indicating that their non-statutory caseload was over 50%. The average (median) response was that 30% of YOT caseload was non-statutory⁵.
- 3.6 YOTs were asked what percentage of young people invited to attend prevention interventions during the last 12 months had taken up this offer. The average (median) response was 83% and given that attendance is voluntary this is a high rate of engagement.
- 3.7 Respondents were also asked what percentage of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the youth justice system (in the last 12 months) had previously participated in a prevention intervention. The average (median) was 20%. There were, however, six

⁵ A 2015 stocktake of YOTs, carried out by Deloitte, also found that 30% of YOT time was spent on non-statutory work.

YOTs that indicated that over 70% of their FTEs had previously participated in a prevention initiative.

4. Diversion from the Youth Justice System

YOT involvement in diversion

- 4.1 In general, respondents to the survey showed that YOTs were heavily involved in diversion:
- 89% of respondents indicated that their YOT was involved in pre-out of court disposal delivery (e.g. triage provision or direct referrals from Community Resolution outcomes);
 - 85% of YOTs were always or mostly aware of young people diverted from pre-out of court disposals (e.g. by the police);
 - 88% of respondents carried out a formal screening or assessment for all or some young people diverted from the youth justice system;
 - 90% of respondents indicated that intervention plans were put in place for all or some young people diverted from the youth justice system. Where the YOT did not offer an intervention, 58% of respondents indicated that any assessment was shared with relevant partners (e.g. children's social care) to enable their involvement.

Design of prevention initiatives

- 4.2 The YOTs who responded to the survey reported engaging with young people or their parents/carers in the design of the prevention initiative (62% and 69% respectively). A range of engagement methods were highlighted with the most common method of engagement relating to assessment for both young people and parents/carers.

5. Nature of prevention initiatives

- 5.1 Respondents to the survey were asked to describe the different prevention initiatives undertaken in their area. Due to the different approaches to prevention taken in England and Wales⁶, the responses to this question are summarised separately.

England

- 5.2 There are 138 YOTs in England of which 84 responded to this survey question (61%). The findings are outlined below.
- 5.3 Most respondents described using YOT case workers to carry out prevention initiatives. A small number of YOTs had specialist prevention workers and some involved local youth workers. Also, some reported they commissioned prevention services from the voluntary sector.

⁶ The Welsh Government and YJB Cymru have a joint youth justice strategy for Wales
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-justice-strategy-for-wales-children-and-young-people-first>

- 5.4 Nearly all the respondents described good links with their children's services' Early Help team⁷. However, it was also suggested by some respondents that the criminogenic risk factors associated with offending behaviour would be best dealt with by staff trained in youth justice.
- 5.5 There were various examples of YISPs⁸ being used.
- 5.6 Some respondents indicated that triage or gatekeeping of children coming to police attention for low-level crime and antisocial behaviour was carried out by youth justice services. This included the police issuing children and young people out of court disposals such as community resolutions or youth restorative disposals and notifying YOTs for information.
- 5.7 Around a quarter of YOTs referred young people to their Troubled Families programme.
- 5.8 A key theme emerging from the survey was the use of parenting programmes as an approach. One example was a targeted family learning programme for families experiencing teen to parent violence and abuse. This was described as a 12-week programme for children aged 11 upwards, which could be delivered on either a one to one basis, or as group work programme.
- 5.9 Some YOTs described actively being involved in the Liaison and Diversion scheme funded by NHS England⁹. Prevention screening includes health, speech, language and communication difficulties and then young people are diverted away from the formal youth justice system and signposted on to prevention support services.
- 5.10 Many respondents indicated that their YOTs had extended their use of the AssetPlus tool to assess non-statutory prevention cases as well.
- 5.11 Responses indicated that Restorative Justice (RJ) was commonly used in interventions with opportunities for RJ being offered to victims.
- 5.12 Survey respondents also indicated that Targeted Youth Support (TYS)¹⁰ is still used as part of prevention services. For example, in one YOT in the north of England, the YYS team, managed by the YOT Manager, does most of the preventative work with priority focused on young people at risk of antisocial behaviour, offending, school exclusion, and who are on the cusp of becoming looked after children. The YYS team works in partnership with a wide range of agencies such as Community Safety,

⁷ Early help teams will vary between local areas but generally they will work with children and families where problems are emerging but below the statutory threshold for children in need/at risk.

⁸ YISPs were funded by the YJB between 2003 and 2010 and were crime prevention panels, made up of local agencies which identified and provided support to young people aged 8 to 13 years of age at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour. An evaluation, published by the YJB in 2007, reported there was promising evidence for YISPs: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-inclusion-and-support-panels-preventing-crime-and-anti-social-behaviour-executive-summary>

⁹ An evaluation (2012) of six youth schemes indicated that these schemes were associated with significant reductions in overall health needs, levels of depression and self-harm but reoffending rates were similar between the intervention and comparison sites:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215118/dh_133007.pdf In 2016, a process evaluation suggested that practitioners expressed positive views concerning implementation. Over half of the young people referred had no identified mental health need and about third were already known to mental health services:

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1283/RAND_RR1283.pdf

¹⁰ Targeted Youth Support was an initiative previously funded by the Department for Education. It aimed to ensure that the needs of vulnerable teenagers are identified early and met by agencies working together effectively and in ways that are shaped by the views and experiences of young people themselves.

Neighbourhood Management, and the area policing teams to manage young people's involvement in antisocial behaviour, crime-related incidents and with safeguarding teams to deal with low to medium levels of welfare and vulnerability issues. The service is often commissioned by external partners to provide prevention programmes.

Wales

- 5.13 There are 15 YOTs in Wales, of which 11 responded to this survey question (73%). The key findings are set out below.
- 5.14 Three Welsh YOTs took the approach of YISPs¹¹ for 8 to 13 year olds. Other YOTs mentioned delivering prevention services with similarities to YISPs, such as delivering to an older age group (14 to 17 year olds). All YOTs either delivered interventions directly or signposted to other services.
- 5.15 Two Welsh YOTs operated an approach based on 'Prevent and Deter'¹². This focused on young people who have come to the attention of the police or other agencies because of antisocial behaviour.
- 5.16 YOTs cited carrying out a number of other activities, such as working with welfare based initiatives, undertaking preventative activity in schools and residential settings (children's homes), and working with the police to reduce antisocial behaviour through youth outreach services in evenings and weekends in crime 'hot spot' areas.

Evidence for investment

- 5.17 Of all 104 respondents to the survey, 48 (46%) advised that they had undertaken wider local research or analysis to evidence whether/why they should invest in prevention activities.
- 5.18 Where applicable, respondents were asked to describe what format the analysis took and key findings. Various analyses and evaluations were described, ranging from broader thematic reviews and needs assessments, to more specific cost/benefit or social return on investment assessments. Some analyses were undertaken "in house". Several YOTs detailed external evaluations of their work, which were undertaken by universities, specialist private companies or other government bodies.
- 5.19 Some YOTs gave broader answers than the question specified, describing evaluations they had undertaken about "how" to invest in prevention activities, rather than "whether/why" to invest in them. Such answers featured analyses about the characteristics of young people who offend, gaps in current systems or the root causes of problems before they reach crisis point.
- 5.20 English YOTs reported that the key elements of successful interventions included experienced staff who had the skills to challenge behaviour and support diversion from offending, good early information from the police through an effective triage process, and that bespoke intervention was based on a holistic assessment of need and risk.

¹¹ The Welsh Government continues to fund this approach in some areas of Wales.

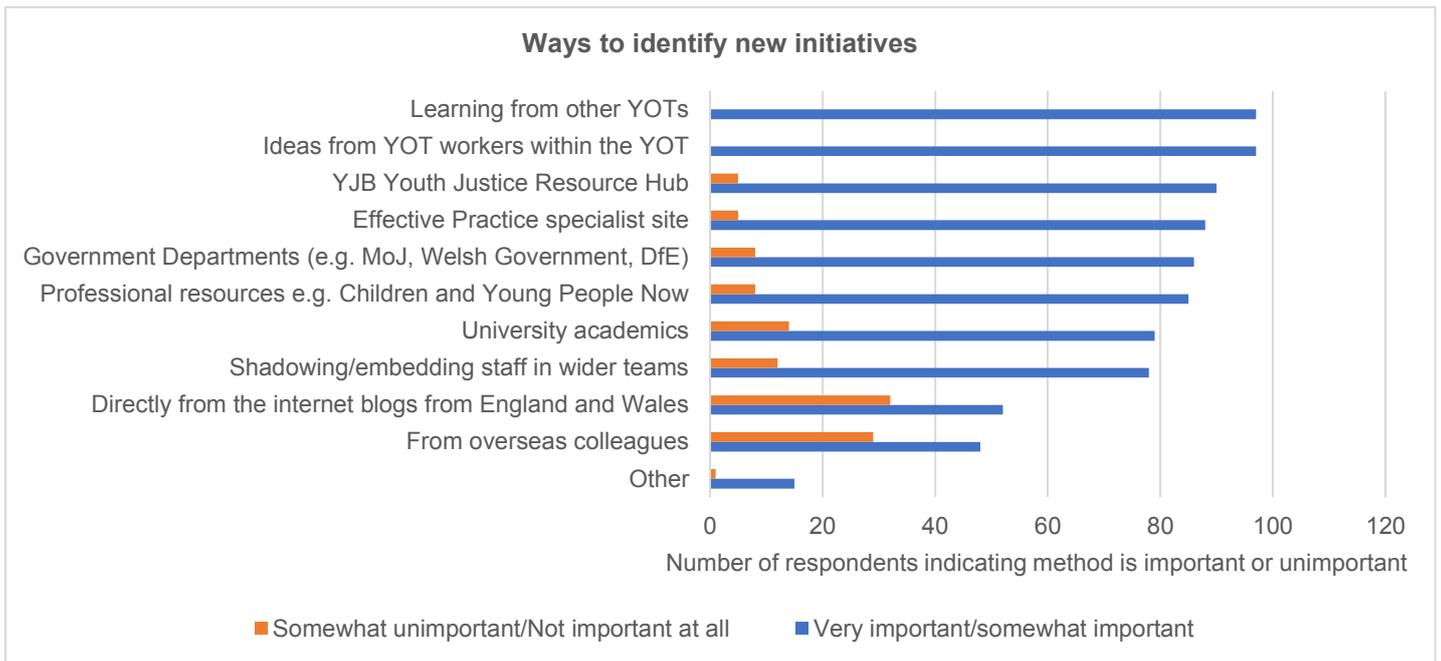
¹² Prevent and Deter was a Home Office initiative in 2004 (part of the Prolific and Other Priority Offender programme) which focused on young people likely to become prolific offenders in the future. The lead agency was the YOT, which worked closely with the police to identify young people (most at risk of offending) and to offer appropriate community-based interventions.

- 5.21 There was a consensus among Welsh YOTs that the key components of a successful initiative included effective screening and assessment. The importance of delivering bespoke interventions, which were tailored to the needs of the individual, and being able to access a range of services to meet different needs was also emphasised. Also, strong engagement with the young person and their family was highlighted, alongside the use of multi-agency approaches.
- 5.22 One YOT had been involved in substantial evaluation of its prevention activity. It suggested that interventions which focused on improving cognitive functioning had proved to be effective, resulting in other positive outcomes such as re-engagement with community groups and improvements in well-being. The YOT was working with academics to evaluate its prevention screening tool and to predict which young people referred to its prevention services were likely to enter the criminal justice system in the future. It used the screening tool to determine where to effectively target help and support.
- 5.23 Many respondents provided figures and focused on either economic benefit or the impact of prevention on reducing the number of FTEs. One YOT in the South East, and another in the Midlands, reported the findings of independent external assessments that identified a £2.50 return for every £1.00 invested in prevention activity in their respective local areas. One Welsh YOT estimated a potential cost saving in excess of £1 million a year. While most YOTs produced positive data about their impact on FTEs, one North Eastern YOT's review discovered that "the majority of FTEs had not been offered a prevention programme".
- 5.24 The need to evaluate activity to determine impact was generally recognised as necessary. That said, some YOTs indicated that it was challenging to assess the impact of the prevention activities given that many young people identified had not committed a proven offence.
- 5.25 Some responses provided a counterpoint, with one remarking that "*...families did not want the plethora of professionals involved in their cases and that services need to intervene earlier in their children's journeys*" and another claimed that "*unfortunately funding decisions are now based on what we have a statutory requirement to deliver rather than what the evidence/research suggests*".

Identifying initiatives

- 5.26 Figure 6 shows that survey respondents perceived that learning from other YOTs and ideas from workers within the YOT were the most important ways to identify new prevention initiatives. The YJB's Youth Justice Resource Hub was also indicated as an important potential way to identify new initiatives.
- 5.27 Respondents giving an answer under the "other" category mentioned, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP)'s thematic inspections, training events, listening to the views of young people, and wider teams within the local authority.

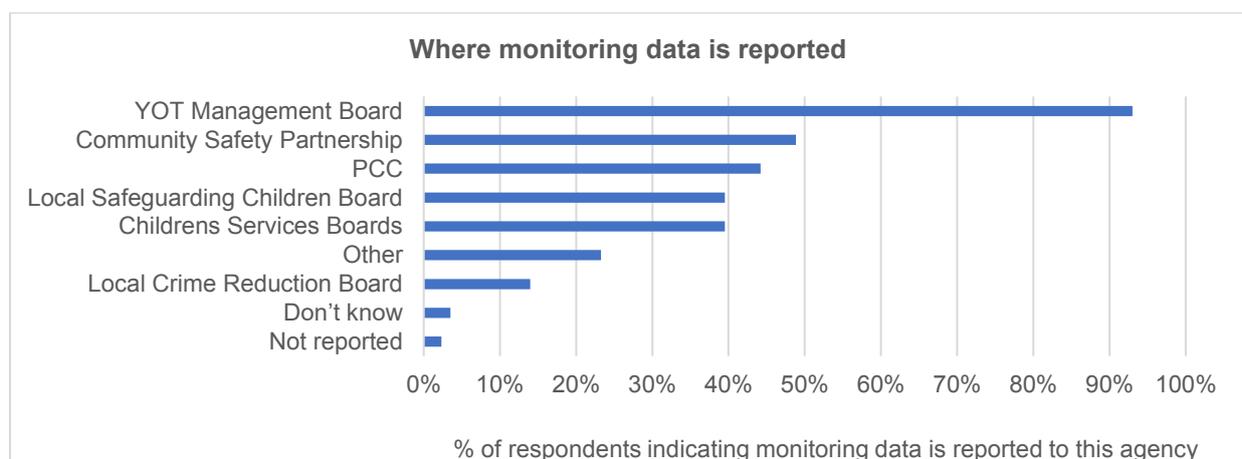
Figure 6 – Ways to identify new initiatives



Monitoring Data

- 5.28 The majority (83%) of respondents indicated that they collected monitoring data on young people undertaking prevention initiatives in their area. Figure 7 shows that, of those who collected this data, 93% reported it to their YOT Management Board, 49% to their Community Safety Partnership, and 44% to the PCC.
- 5.29 Respondents who indicated “other” mentioned reporting to a variety of other teams within the local authority structure such as Early Help (see Figure 7).

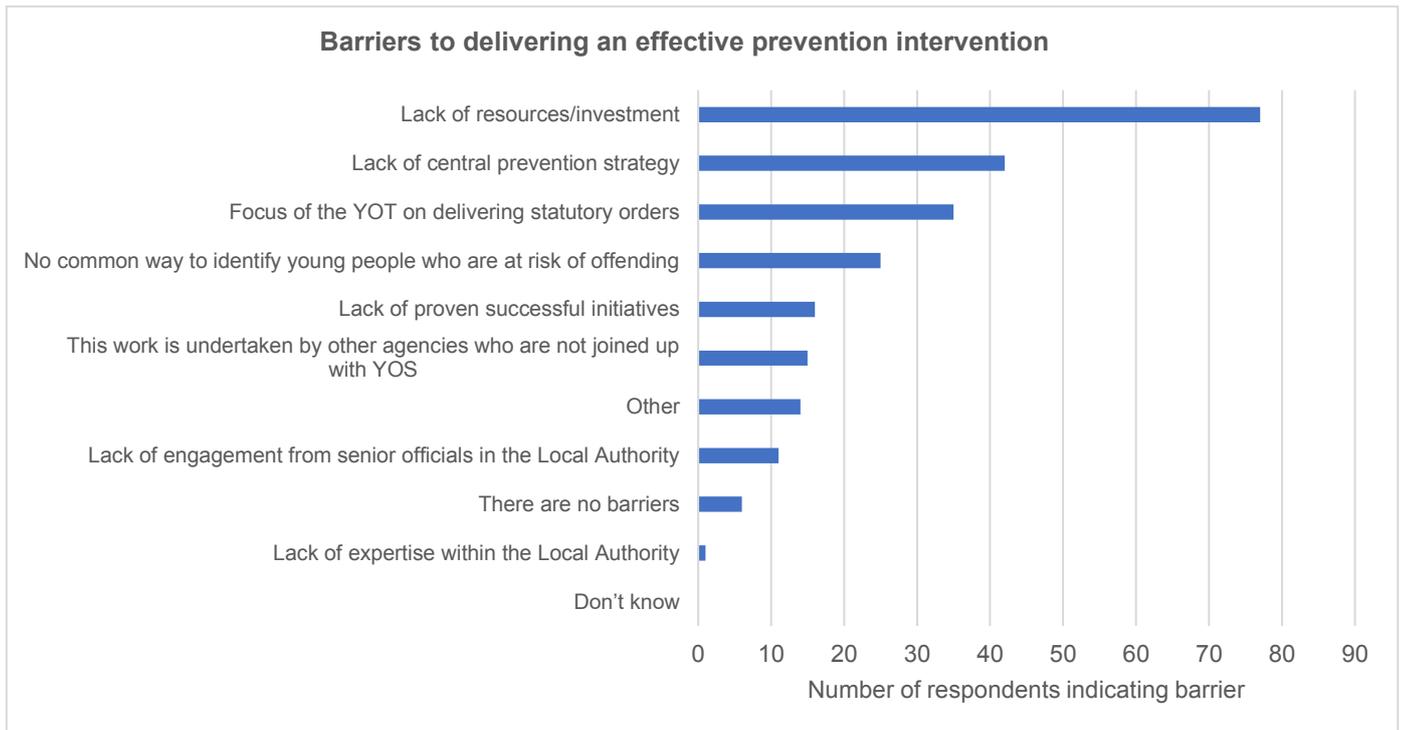
Figure 7 – Agencies to which monitoring data is reported



6. Barriers

- 6.1 Respondents were asked what the barriers were, if any, to delivering an effective prevention intervention in their area. Figure 8 shows that, overall, a lack of resources/investment was the most commonly indicated barrier (77%), followed by lack of a central prevention strategy (42%) and the focus of the YOT on delivering statutory orders (35%).

Figure 8 – Barriers to delivering an effective prevention intervention



- 6.2 As shown in Figure 9, a lack of resources/investment was ranked as the most problematic issue. Lack of a central prevention strategy and a lack of cost/benefit analysis were also seen as key issues by respondents.

Figure 9 – How problematic barriers were perceived to be

