



# Measuring effectiveness in Ireland's youth justice system: Technical Report 2022

John Reddy, Sean Redmond

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An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice

RESEARCH  
EVIDENCE INTO  
POLICY PROGRAMMES  
AND PRACTICE



# MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS IN IRELAND'S YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

Technical Report 2022



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice



## The Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) Project

As a strategic research partnership between the Department of Justice and the School of Law at the University of Limerick, the REPPP extends and improves the evidence-base for policy, programmes, and practice reform in relation to youth crime in Ireland. REPPP implements focused research studies which link to youth justice policy priorities, are informed by multiple evidence sources, and focus on better outcomes for children. While REPPP emphasises the *policy* relevance of research evidence, it is cognisant of the relevant issues of *programmes and practice* and recognises that reform in human programmes requires change across all three areas to achieve substantial traction.

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For further information, please contact:

Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) Project, School of Law, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland.

Tel: 0035361234829

Email: REPPP@ul.ie

Web: <https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/reppp>

TW: @REPPP4

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## Acronyms

ACTS	Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service
AGS	An Garda Síochána
CCTS	Criminal Case Tracking System
CEHOP	Oberstown's assessment framework – for care, education, health, addressing offending behaviour and preparation for leaving (detention)
CMS	Case Management Systems
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSOL	Courts Service Online
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DPER	The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DJ&E	Department of Justice and Equality
DoJ	Department of Justice
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GISC	Garda Information Services Centre
GSAS	An Garda Síochána Analysis Service
GUI	The Growing Up in Ireland Study
GYDB	The Garda Youth Diversion Bureau
GYDPs	Garda Youth Diversion Projects
HSE	Health Service Executive
JLO	Juvenile Liaison Officer
JTC	Journey Through Care Forms
MST	Multi-systemic Therapy
PULSE	Police Using Leading Systems Effectively
TOC	Theory of Change
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
YAP	Youth Advocate Programmes
YJAP	Youth Justice Action Plan
YPP	Young Person's Probation

## Chapter 1 : Introduction

This report examines data processes and reporting in Ireland's youth justice system. It follows on from research of data processes in international youth justice (Reddy and Redmond, 2019) and identifies potential data opportunities in the system. The International Study found that system-wide and standardised data processes were common in youth justice systems and were implemented to (1) assure the quality and performance of justice interventions and (2) maintain good governance processes and evidence standards. The Study recommended coordinated approaches to data, including shared data processes, consistent (digital) data collection, and whole system reporting (enabling system-wide analyses of performance).

### 1.1 Research methodology

#### The objectives of the report are:

- To describe data collection and measurement processes in the youth justice system.
- To detail the types of data collected and analysed, how data is used, shared, and reported by agencies, and what if any data gaps may exist.
- To identify potential data and reporting opportunities for the youth justice system.

#### The report is informed by:

- A. Research findings from a study of data processes and reporting in international youth justice.
- B. Interviews with 17 data experts from Irish government departments, justice institutions, and service agencies.
- C. An analysis of published and unpublished government and service agency reports.

### Analysis

We applied a logic model analytical framework to the ex-post examination of youth justice data. Using the model as a diagnostic tool provided the capacity to categorise data produced by service agencies into 'context,' 'inputs,' 'outputs,' and 'outcomes and 'impact' types. The framework acted as a list of pre-set codes assisting the organisation and synthesis of primary and secondary research data. Research findings coded into appropriate domains categorised the types of data collected. As well as providing the capacity to describe how agencies measure and report on the effectiveness of services and programmes, the framework allows for comparative analyses across a system. Appendix A describes the research methods, analysis process, and study outputs.

### Report structure

After a brief overview of youth justice in Ireland, Chapter 2 summarises the findings of the International Study, focusing on the utility of system-wide and systematic approaches to measurement. Chapter 3 describes the primary data sources, types, and processes in the Irish youth justice system. In Chapter 4, findings from a case study of data use in the system







### Box 1: The Views of International Youth Justice Experts

- System-wide measurement supports accurate and complete assessments of youth justice policy.
- Data from each part of a system is required for standard assessments of service provision. Such analyses help to ensure accountability and efficient resource management.
- Standard assessments of service provision are required to align responses with the needs and risks affecting young people.
- The capacity to assess youth offender data by multiple categories and time points is required for targeted and flexible responses to youth crime.
- Effective national and local partnerships are required to implement efficient monitoring processes. This involves negotiating data access and balancing system goals with local priorities.
- Up-to-date reporting and accessible (and user-friendly) justice databases help to inform practice. Challenges exist, however, in ensuring local compliance with system data requirements – e.g., provider autonomy, local prioritisation in data collection, and fragmented data processes.
- Disjointed data processes and the limited research capacity of some agencies make system-wide assessments in youth justice difficult. Data can be unstructured (e.g., textual), incomplete or inputted incorrectly, and misinterpreted or understood differently by stakeholders.
- Practitioner confidence in system measurement is of vital importance. Practitioners utilise data processes more when they consider them as informing practice and the outcomes for young people.

### 2.3 Measuring effectiveness in Ireland's youth justice system

Ireland collects and reports youth crime and offending data, programme referral data, and the recorded outcomes of treatments and interventions provided. Service agency monitoring processes, periodic independent evaluation of interventions, formal tendering, and the increasing presence of evidence-informed practice, all are evident in the system. Government departments and service providers regularly publish research and practice reports, statistical updates, and annual reports (on agency/department websites). Box 2 lists what experts viewed as important in the continued development of data processes in the system.

## Box 2: The Views of Irish Experts

- There is a need for a broader, aggregate analysis of data collected in the youth justice system.
- The capacity to track/monitor (individual) youth interaction in the criminal justice system (e.g., a universal identifier) would aid the implementation of responses to youth offending.
- Interagency partnership on data is a key element in the development of integrated measurement.
- Processes that provide information specific to youth crime and evidence of unreported crime (e.g., youth crime monitors and youth surveys) can improve our understanding of youth offending.
- There is a need to develop data protocols and standards to allow greater data sharing in the system.
- Practitioners need to be made more aware of the need for and the value of 'data' in developing the youth justice system.
- An evidence-informed youth justice system requires effective leadership and support (from Government departments and service agencies).



The Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) reviews data inputted by Gardaí into Pulse (ODPC, 2014). Data from those under 18 years of age is recorded in a *Pulse Youth Referral*. A youth referral may include detections and intelligence data including offence, location and demographics, and social and economic background information. The Garda Síochána Analysis Service (GSAS) provides assessments of Pulse data for the Diversion Programme. This includes information about diversion referrals, demographics, the number and type of offences by children, and decisions made by Gardaí (e.g., informal, formal caution, not suitable for caution).

Since 2003, the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme has overseen the Programme and the interagency collaboration facilitating its implementation. The Committee’s Annual Reports detail programme developments, review its operation, and identify any resources required for improvements, e.g., training, evaluation and monitoring methodologies – and challenges and/or risks to the programme (AGS, 2016). Annual Reports include statistical information about youth crime and referrals to the Diversion Programme, GYDPs, and restorative interventions (AGS, 2016). Table 1 details the types of data collected, how it is reported, and with whom data is shared.

Table 1: The Diversion Programme – Data Processes

Collection Processes & Sources	Data Collected and Reported	Reporting Mechanisms	Data Sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulse (Youth Referral) System</li> <li>GSAS</li> <li>GISC</li> <li>JLO case file reports and notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of cautions issued, and those that are suitable and unsuitable for GYDP</li> <li>Number and type of offences</li> <li>Location of crime/suspected incident</li> <li>Local area crime/antisocial behaviour data and recorded trends</li> <li>History of criminal/antisocial activity and victimisation (including self-reported crime and antisocial behaviour)</li> <li>Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity variables of YP</li> <li>Parent/ guardian details</li> <li>Project referrals and service interaction</li> <li>Substance misuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly Reports</li> <li>GYDP Annual Plans (includes intervention logic models)</li> <li>Suitability reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AGS – GSAS – JLO - GISC</li> <li>IYJS/DoJ</li> <li>Communitybased Organisations implementing GYDP interventions</li> </ul>

### 3.2.1 Garda Youth Diversion Projects

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) support young people who are under the supervision of a JLO (primary participants) and young people deemed to be at risk of offending (secondary participants). GYDPs work with JLOs to address the risk factors affecting referred young people in their localities to reduce their offending. Projects aim to address a young person’s behaviour problems by engaging them in personal and educational development. Most GYDPs provide a range of supports to improve self-esteem and pro-social skills including parent training and counselling, addiction support, mentoring and advocacy, employability, and offender reintegration assistance (REPPP, 2019).

Data is collected from young people in admission and risk assessment procedures (GYDP, 2018). This information informs offending/reoffending estimates and intervention decisions and includes the number and types of offences and/or antisocial activity committed by youth, referral and youth service interaction data, and participant demographics. Information collected may include family/parenting circumstances, education and employment, peer relationships, substance misuse, attitudes and orientation, self-esteem, personal distress, intellectual capacity, physical and mental health, learning development and disability, and motivation and culture (GYDP, 2018).<sup>1</sup> GYDPs also receive information from the DoJ concerning youth crime and antisocial behaviour happening in its catchment area, including the availability of alcohol and drugs. This information is supplemented with local area demographics to provide up-to-date assessments of local offending rates and needs of young people.

Young people's data is used to inform treatment and case planning decisions and for internal reporting. A young person's assessed risk (of offending) level is considered important in understanding how a system is performing for youth (JCJC, 2013). The logic underpinning standardised assessment is that high-risk youth receive more intensive intervention. Lower-risk youth are diverted to other non-justice service options. This approach is child-centred and risk-appropriate and considered more cost-effective as low-risk youth avoid interacting fully with the justice system e.g., court involvement, detention and/or supervision (Weber et al., 2018). Table 2 details the data collection processes used in GYDPs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory standardised assessment tool is used by the Young Person's Probation service since 2006, at Oberstown Children Detention Campus since 2010, and in GYDPs since 2016.

Table 2: Garda Youth Diversion Projects – Data Processes

Collection Processes & Sources	Data Collected and Reported	Reporting Mechanisms	Data Sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulse System</li> <li>GISC</li> <li>Garda Youth Diversion Bureau</li> <li>GYDP risk assessment and case management</li> <li>GYDP case file reports and notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of cautions issued, and those that are suitable and unsuitable for GYDP</li> <li>Number and type of offences</li> <li>Location of crime/suspected incident</li> <li>Local area crime/antisocial behaviour data and recorded trends</li> <li>History of criminal/antisocial activity and victimisation (including self-reported crime and antisocial behaviour) of GYDP participant</li> <li>Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity variables of YP</li> <li>Socio-economic and accommodation</li> <li>School attendance and education</li> <li>Family environment and social/peer relationships</li> <li>Youth behaviour and engagement in justice interventions</li> <li>Attitudes to crime and antisocial behaviour</li> <li>Development, disability, and psychological wellbeing</li> <li>Health and leisure activities</li> <li>Project referrals and youth service interaction</li> <li>Substance misuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme</li> <li>DoJ website publication outputs – research reports/ systems reviews/ presentation outputs</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly Reports</li> <li>GYDP Annual Plans (includes intervention logic models) and Annual Performance Reports</li> <li>Suitability reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Garda Síochána – The Diversion Programme Bureau – GISC – GSAS</li> <li>DoJ / DCEDIY</li> <li>Communitybased Organisations implementing GYDP interventions</li> </ul>

### 3.2.2 The Courts Service

The Courts Service of Ireland collects and compiles data on young offenders (received from the Garda Pulse system) to facilitate Court processes (see Table 3). In terms of data processes, the Service supports the Government’s ICT Strategy 2015 ‘Build to Share Model’ and is committed to extending public sector data sharing and exploiting innovative technologies and online services (Courts Service ICT Strategy Statement 2016-2018). In 2019, the Courts Service Online (CSOL) for electronic case processing was updated.

Table 3: The Courts Service – Data Processes

Collection Processes & Sources	Data Collected and Reported	Reporting Mechanisms	Data Sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulse System</li> <li>Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS) (however, juvenile data is manually recorded and not electronically)</li> <li>CSOL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geographical region of case</li> <li>Offence/arrest data</li> <li>Summons, charges data</li> <li>Parent/guardian’s name</li> <li>Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity variables of YP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual report (some juvenile crime statistical data reported)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AGS (some senior divisions have access to the CCTS)</li> <li>Judges</li> <li>The Probation Service (to specific case enquiry only, and have access to the CCTS)</li> <li>DoJ (specific enquiry)</li> </ul>





Table 4: The Probation Service (YPP) – Data Processes

Collection Processes & Sources	Data Collected and Reported	Reporting Mechanisms	Data Sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal Case Tracking System</li> <li>• Risk assessment and case management</li> <li>• Probation service case file notes (operational use and not used to assess services/outcomes for young people)</li> <li>• Community service management applications</li> <li>• Community projects governance data</li> <li>• Probation Service Research Committee</li> <li>• Data collected by community-based projects (stored in a Business Management System)</li> <li>• Business process group (to govern existing/potential data needs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographical region of case</li> <li>• Arrest and offence data (primary and reoffending if applicable).</li> <li>• Referral information and sentence data</li> <li>• Court orders, community order data</li> <li>• Crime/referral/recidivism trends – national and regional</li> <li>• Service interaction Assessment / case mgt.</li> <li>• Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity</li> <li>• Socio-economic and accommodation</li> <li>• School attendance and education</li> <li>• Family environment and social/peer relationships</li> <li>• Youth behaviour and engagement in justice interventions</li> <li>• Attitudes to crime and antisocial behaviour</li> <li>• Psychological health/wellbeing</li> <li>• Substance misuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Probation Service Website</li> <li>• Point in Time Statistical Updates (includes numbers of under 18- year-olds under supervision, however, other information includes totals that include adults under supervision)</li> <li>• Annual Reports</li> <li>• Irish Probation Journal (some youth focused articles)</li> <li>• Other periodic research / evaluations/reviews outputs (primarily focused on services for adults)</li> <li>• Probation ‘Recidivism Reports’ published by the CSO (uses CCTS and AGS Pulse data)</li> <li>• The Probation Service Research Strategy 2018 – 2020</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly management reports</li> <li>• Assessment reports to assist the courts</li> <li>• Reports for the Parole Board, the Department of Justice and Equality, the Irish Prison Service, and other bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oberstown</li> <li>• The Courts Service (NB no direct access to CCTS)</li> <li>• Irish Prison Service</li> <li>• The CSO</li> <li>• AGS</li> <li>• DoJ/DCEDIY</li> </ul>

**NB:** Data only shared with other justice agencies and departments on a case-by-case basis and no individual specific ‘raw’ data is shared.

### 3.2.4 Oberstown Children Detention Campus

Oberstown Children Detention Campus has developed the CEHOP framework to record the individual needs of children across five themes: care, education, health, addressing offending behaviour, and preparation for leaving detention. In addition to administrative and risk assessment processes, multidisciplinary clinical teams undertake ongoing assessments with young people committed/remanded to detention. Monthly/six weekly Placement Planning Meetings review progress for each young person and are used to plan the next steps in meeting their needs under CEHOP.

Oberstown’s Case Management System (OCMS) is used to record data about the care of young people in detention and to generate reports (‘Journey Through Care’ forms) for oversight and publication. Data from the OCMS informs Oberstown’s policy, strategy, and statistical reports. Since 2017, *Key Characteristics of Young People in Detention* reports have provided analyses of youth in detention in the first quarters of consecutive years. The reports track service use and young people’s circumstances at designated time points. Table 5 details Oberstown’s data processes.

Table 5: Oberstown – Data Processes

Collection Processes & Sources	Data Collected and Reported	Reporting Mechanisms	Data Sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OCMS</li> <li>Risk assessment</li> <li>Charge sheets / detention orders / journey through care forms (JTCs)</li> <li>Oberstown’s multidisciplinary case planning meetings (audits completed and spreadsheets updated monthly and digitalised via OCMS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity variables of YP</li> <li>Admissions and case management data, number of and frequency of placement meetings</li> <li>Offence / arrest / remand and sentence data (e.g., history of offending, whether being remanded or committed, length of sentence, court information)</li> <li>CEHOP data – care history, education (attendance, engagement in), health, addressing offending behaviour and preparation for leaving (detention)</li> <li>Family circumstances and parent / child relationships (e.g., bereavement)</li> <li>Service interaction history</li> <li>Accommodation / homelessness</li> <li>Substance misuse</li> <li>Behaviour (positive and negative) of a young person during placement – daily reports</li> <li>Verbal interactions with a young person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oberstown CDC Website</li> <li>Annual reports</li> <li>Statistical Updates - <i>Key Characteristics of Young People in Detention</i> reports</li> <li>Other research/ / reviews/ inspections outputs</li> <li>Policy submissions</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Placement planning reports</li> <li>Daily reports (daily rating for behaviour, interaction, engagement based on information collected by practitioners)</li> <li>Multidisciplinary case planning meetings</li> <li>Reports by agencies commissioned to deliver interventions for Oberstown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AGS</li> <li>The Courts Service</li> <li>Probation service (Case by- case)</li> <li>Tusla (case-by case - social work, clinical services)</li> <li>DCEDIY</li> </ul>

### 3.2.5 Tusla, Child and Family Agency (Special Care Service)

Child protection and welfare are the primary priorities for Tusla. Special Care is short-term an individualised programme of support and skilled therapeutic intervention to enable a child (12 to 17 years) to stabilise and then move to a less secure placement based on assessed needs (Tusla, 2017). While not in the criminal justice system, children in Special Care are part of a common population with complex youth justice and child welfare problems. Irish research has suggested these children are more likely than others to have had contact with the justice system, experienced homelessness and poverty, and other social harms (Moran et al., 2016; Buckley, 2003; Stein et al., 2000). In this context, we have included a description of data gathered in Special Care services so that any potential expansion of the youth justice database is inclusive of this cohort of children.

Special Care collects demographic, background, and education information from children including placement data and information about the reason(s) for admission into care (and involvement in criminal incidents). As a placement proceeds, education, treatment, and intervention information are collected on an ongoing basis and when children are exiting care. Practitioners complete a daily journal, for example, documenting a young person’s placement experience. To develop an intervention plan for each child, a multidisciplinary team assesses children across a range of clinical areas – including psychological, psychiatry,

speech and language, childcare, social work. Information also is collected about children missing from care and children who abscond or engage in physical and/or verbal aggression, violence, and/or substance misuse (while in placement).

Data (in Table 6) is used for operational reasons rather than assessing the effectiveness of service provision and outcomes for children. In 2019, Tusla was developing an electronic data recording system (to commence in 2020). The electronic system is aimed at providing enhanced capacity for data sharing between Tusla services and departments. This includes the Social Work Department, which was described by practitioners as being of key importance for case management and reporting.

**Table 6: Tusla – Special Care Services – Data Processes**

Collection Processes & Sources	Data Collected and Reported	Reporting Mechanisms	Data Sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Plan (Social Work individual plan for a young person)</li> <li>• Placement Plan (goals of the Special Care intervention with a young person)</li> <li>• Multidisciplinary case planning meetings</li> <li>• Childcare reviews, case file reports and notes</li> <li>• Risk assessment form used for a specific incident (developed by Tusla)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity</li> <li>• Geographical region of case</li> <li>• Referral information</li> <li>• Behaviour of a young person</li> <li>• Education, treatment, and intervention information</li> <li>• Antisocial behaviour/assault/violent incidents by a young person (significant events notifications)</li> <li>• Substance misuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance and Activity Data Reports</li> <li>• Research reports – Tusla website Operational reporting</li> <li>• Incident reports</li> <li>• Daily logbook</li> <li>• Social workers report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tusla (internally)</li> <li>• Oberstown (case-by-case basis)</li> <li>• AGS (informally and with other agencies as part of multidisciplinary teamwork – ACTS, HSE Psychiatric Services)</li> </ul>

### 3.2.6 Other sources of youth justice data and information

The *Growing up in Ireland* – The National Longitudinal Study of Children – collects self-report information from children including information about contact with the criminal justice system – relating to drug, tobacco, and alcohol misuse (Murray et al., 2015). The bi-annual *State of the Nation's Children* report also provides information concerning youth interaction with the Diversion Programme and includes information about child substance and alcohol misuse. Other sources of information about youth offending include monitoring and evaluation processes implemented by service providers (e.g., in interventions implemented under the Diversion Programme, the Young Person's Probation Service, and the Bail Supervision Scheme).

### 3.3 Measurement in youth justice: Summary

We now summarise the primary data sources and the types of data in the system, highlighting common data usage and where data use differs across agencies and programmes. Youth justice information is gathered using the Garda Pulse system, by the Courts, and in service assessment, case review, and management processes (see Table 7). The data is mostly used to manage and monitor service provision and inform interventions with young offenders. Case planning and review data are stored in youth offender case files (e.g., on the Probation Service’s Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS), Oberstown’s Case Management System).

Table 7: Data Sources in Youth Justice

Processes & sources of data	The Diversion Programme / GYDPs	The Probation Service	The Courts Service	Oberstown	Tusla (Special Care)
Pulse System	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Courts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Risk assessment and case management processes	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Multidisciplinary committees/practitioners – case notes	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Operational data processes – project reporting and evaluation	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Research/oversight committees and/or departments	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

Criminal offence data is used extensively by agencies to support the delivery of services to young people in their communities, or when in detention or Special Care. Agencies share offence and referral data with other justice agencies, typically on a case-by-case basis, to inform case management processes. Offence and referral data also is used to report crime and youth referral trends in agency statistical updates and annual reports (See Table 8).

Table 8: Criminal Offence Data Collected in Youth Justice

Processes & sources of data	The Diversion Programme	GYDPs	The Probation Service	The Courts Service	Oberstown
Number and type of offence(s)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
History of offending	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offence/caution location	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Court and sentencing information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crime trends/patterns over time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Intervention data

A range of data is collected by agencies for operational and internal reporting purposes. This data includes regional and local crime and antisocial behaviour information, programme location and area demographics, project referrals, and youth interaction with services (see Table 9). In addition to data collected on admittance, agencies gather information from young people as they engage in and complete interventions. The data is assessed and used to review progress and to plan treatments and interventions. Information also is recorded in internal management and assessment reports, progress and incident reports, case planning reports, and daily logs and some is published in statistical updates and annual reports.

Table 9: Intervention Data Collected in Youth Justice

Types of Data	The Diversion Programme	GYDPs	The Probation Service	Oberstown	Tusla (Special Care)
Referral information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Placement information and location	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
History of interaction with services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local area crime/antisocial behaviour data and recorded trends	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Engagement in interventions (pos/neg behaviours, violence)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

Data collected from young people

Data collected on entry to a service or programme can include a young person’s personal, economic, and family circumstances (see Table 10). Information about education, employment and training, substance use, and engagement and behaviour while involved in interventions, is commonly used by agencies in case management and review processes. Several agencies also use assessment procedures to gather data about a young person’s (self-reported) experiences of and attitudes to crime, antisocial behaviour, and victimisation. This data is generally used for case management and is not published.

Table 10: Data Collected from Young People in Youth Justice

Types of Data The	The Diversion Programme	GYDPs	The Probation Service	The Courts Service	Oberstown	Tusla (Special Care)
Demographics, gender, and race/ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical/mental health and wellbeing	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Family circumstances/ parental/guardain relationships	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation/homelessness	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Social and peer information	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Education/employment/training	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Substance misuse	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Attitudes to crime and antisocial behaviour (stored in case files)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Victimisation (experence of)	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓

## Chapter 4: Data Reported in the Youth Justice System in 2017 : A Case Study

### 4.1 Introduction

We now present the findings of a case study of youth justice information published across the system in 2017.<sup>2</sup> First, we describe how (and with what data) youth crime and offending was reported, before detailing the information about programmes and interventions (the inputs and outputs of services/programmes) reported by agencies. Finally, how agencies reported the impacts and outcomes of youth justice provision are outlined.

### 4.2 The context of youth justice in 2017

In Census 2016, approximately 375,000 children were aged between 12-17 years, an increase of 7.7 percent on Census 2011 (CSO, 2017). While most children are very unlikely to become involved in the criminal justice system, Garda figures do, however, indicate that annually around 3 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds commit an offence (DCEDIY, 2021). These offences tend to be public order in nature and associated with alcohol and drug use (Naughton et al., 2020).<sup>3</sup>

In 2017, there were 20,006 criminal offences and incidents involving children.<sup>4</sup> Publications reported the age range, gender, social and economic background of young offenders and how referrals to the Diversion Programme were managed. For example, of the 20,006 referrals made, 7,551 (38%) received an 'informal caution', 3,940 (20%) a 'formal caution', and in 5,891 (29%) cases, the child was deemed unsuitable for diversion. Further information was requested for 1,307 (7%), 'no further action' was taken in 840 (4%) referrals, and 477 (2%) received a restorative caution. Figure 3 provides the numbers and types of youth offences reported in 2017.

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2 See Appendix C for a list of the publications included.

3 Public order, theft, and damage to property and the environment are the three main categories of offences involving children (AGS, 2019).

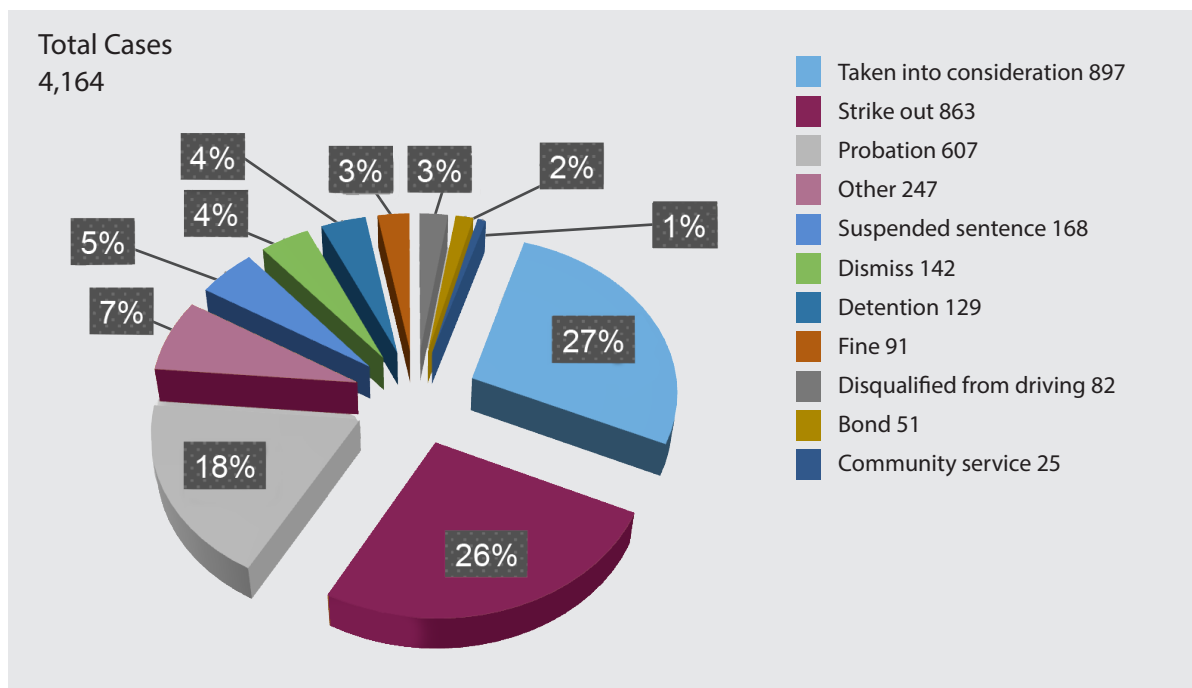
4 This represented 10% of total adult/youth offences in 2017.







Figure 6: Outcome of Cases before the Children’s Court in 2017



In addition to the numbers of children subject to Remand Orders and Detention Orders, the 2017 Progress Report compared (with data from 2016) the gender and age range of children and the average length of time spent by children in detention (as in Table 11).

Table 11: Children Remand and Detention Orders in 2017

	Male	Female	Total
Number of Remands - Ave length 21 days	170	6	176
Age 13-14	7	2	9
Age 15-16	91	3	94
Age 17	72	1	73
Number of Committals - Ave length 93 days	45	0	45
Age 13-14	2	0	2
Age 15-16	21	0	21
Age 17	22	0	22

In 2017, Oberstown published reports describing the context of young people in detention. ‘Key Characteristics of Young People in Detention’ and ‘Point in Time Analysis’ reports use data from admission, assessment and review processes (i.e., data recorded in charge sheets, detention orders, journey through care forms, social work reports, and information from case planning meetings). Statistical reports include the number, age, gender, and origin of young people in detention (see Figure 7) and detailing many received remand or detention



54 were recorded as having substance use problems, and 49 had not been engaging in education in the period before detention.

### 4.3 Youth justice: Inputs

Service provision (inputs) is widely reported in government (DoJ/DCEDIY) and service agency publications and on associated websites. Annual reports provide information about the costs of responses to youth crime. In 2017, for example, approximately €48.5 million was spent by the State on youth justice. 123 Garda staff were assigned to work in the Diversion Programme in the year (AGS, 2016). This number increased to 142 with the appointment of 19 JLOs. Based on these estimates, Diversion Programme staff costs were almost €10 million (€9,973,859).<sup>5</sup> €12 million was also allocated in 2017 to 101 GYDPs supporting 3,765 young people (DCYA, 2017). However, it should be noted that, in publications, expenditure on youth justice services is, in many instances, incorporated into overall justice (adult) and welfare spending by departments and agencies.

In 2017, Young Person's Probation (YPP) was allocated €5.05 million by the State and provided programmes to approximately 600 young offenders (DCYA, 2017). The Probation Service's Bail Supervision Scheme also received funding (of €489,352) in 2017 (Extern, 2018). However, YPP staff costs were not available in publications and YPP funding figures refer to probation service/voluntary service provider partnerships and do not include the cost of Probation Service staff working with young people.

In 2017, Oberstown received €21 million – €16m for salary and €5m non-salary related costs – and supported 135 detained young people.<sup>6</sup> External services supporting the needs of children at Oberstown included Extern, the National Forensic Mental Health Services, Youth Advocate Programmes (YAP), An Crinan, Empowering People in Care (EPIC), Le Chéile, ACTS, the Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative, the Ombudsman for Children, Tusla, The Probation Service, and An Garda Síochána (OCDC, 2017). Figure 8 reports youth justice expenditure in 2017.<sup>7</sup>

5 Using the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines, we calculated (1) mid-point of pay range of 136 Gardaí and 6 Garda Sergeants + (2) the estimated employers PRSI at 2.01% + (3) pensions costs (16% for Gardaí) + (4) overheads calculated at 25% of salary. See The Public Spending Code: E. Technical References: <https://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/e-01-calculation-of-staff-costs/>

6 The redevelopment of the Oberstown Campus was completed in 2016/2017 at an overall cost of €57 million.

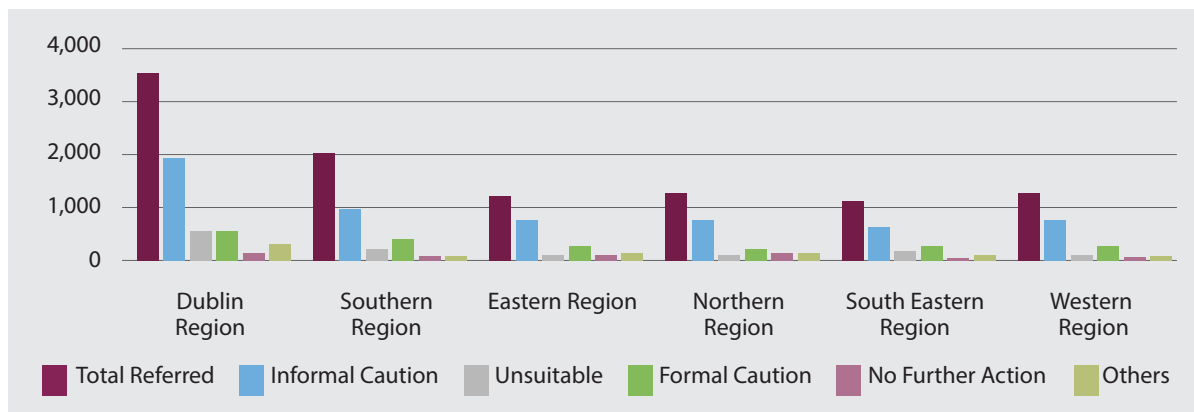
7 This is an oversimplified calculation based on available data published by agencies and departments in 2017. Unit costs were calculated by dividing the number of individual young people by total expenditure. NB. some staff costs were not available in reports and are not included in the expenditure estimates.





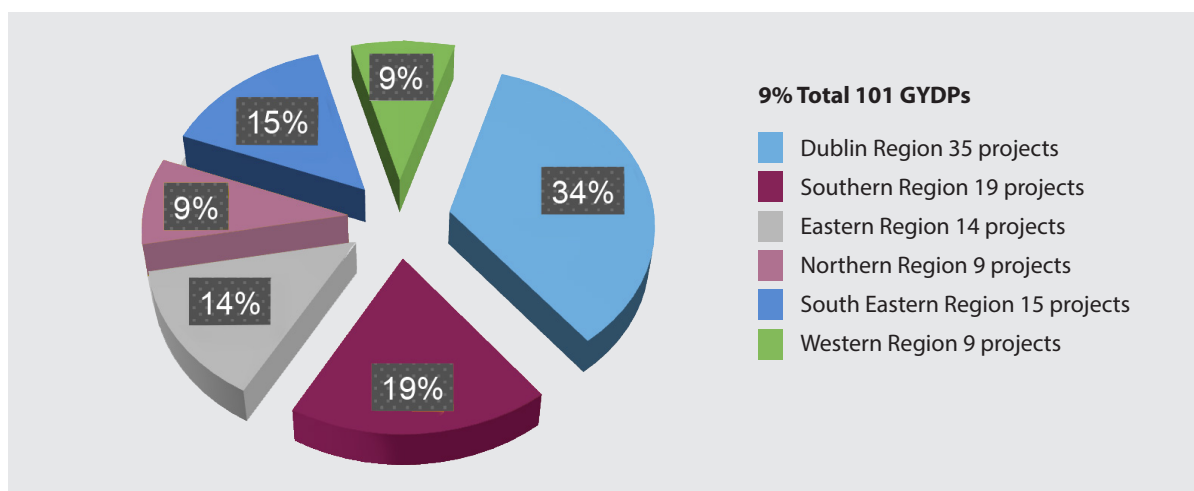
Descriptions of the level of provision and distribution of children in the system is important for quantifying system activities (see Figure 11). In 2017, youth justice publications compared children referred to the Diversion Programme by region and Garda division, recording the type of referral received, and noting changes with 2016. Reports indicate that 3,432 children referred to the Programme lived in the Dublin Region, 2,062 in the Southern Region, 1,389 in the Eastern Region, 1,254 in the Northern Region, 1,167 in South-eastern Region, and 1,303 in the Western Region.

Figure 11: Children in the Diversion Programme in 2017 by Region and Referral Type



Publications also provided year-on-year analyses of GYDPs. In 2017, 101 GYDPs were in operation countrywide (as in Figure 12), with a further 10 youth justice projects working with high-risk youth. In 2017, 3,765 young people participated in GYDPs, 75% of whom were boys and 1470 were ‘new entrants’ in the year (Government of Ireland, 2018; IYJS, 2017).

Figure 12: GYDPs by Region in 2017







recorded, which is required to attribute any changes to the activities of the youth justice system.

Such anomalies highlight knowledge gaps existing in youth justice. This is similar to reporting practices in the jurisdictions included in the International Study, where attributing positive or negative outcomes for young people with system activities generally is difficult. Increasingly, however, youth justice programmes are being evaluated. For example, Le Chéile's mentoring service (2017), The Probation Service's J-ARC initiative (2018), Diversion Programme initiatives (Egan, 2019), and the Bail Supervision Scheme for youth (Naughton et al., 2019) have been subjected to recent evaluation.

#### 4.6 Summary

In 2017, the youth justice system was assessed using Pulse system offence and referral data and input and output data produced by agencies. Publications described the levels and types of youth crime in a specific period, comparing trends in offending and the level of service provision over time. Reports describe criminal offence, youth demographics, youth justice funding, and programme and intervention provision. Publications detail the quantity and locations of criminal incidents and offences, offence types, court orders made to young people, and sanctions received, diversion/probation referral recommendations, and the types and locations of programmes. Publications by Oberstown use data from youth case files to describe the background and circumstances of youth remanded and detained by the Courts.

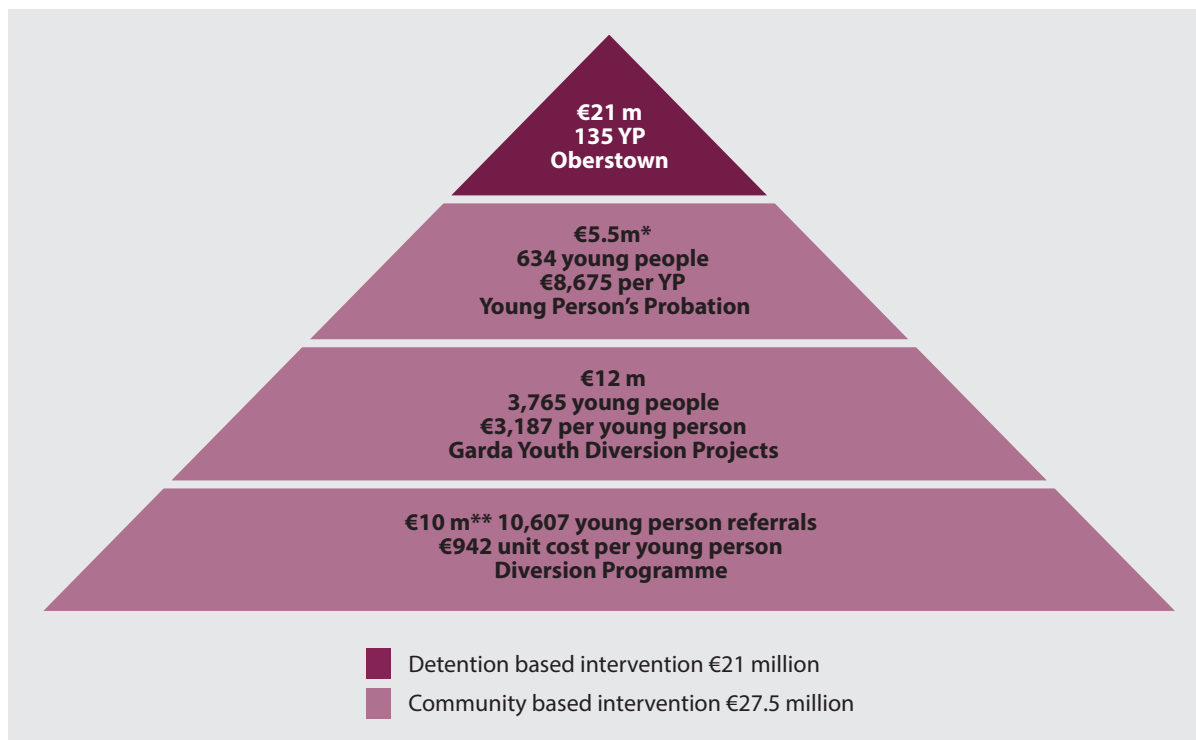




## Inputs – Data about youth justice actions

In 2017, approximately €48.5 million was spent by the State responding to youth crime. For example, €10 million was spent in 2017 on Garda staffing in the Diversion Programme and €12 million was allocated to support 101 Garda Youth Diversion Projects with 3,765 youth participants. In 2017, €5.05 million was allocated to 16 Young Person’s Probation projects working with approximately 600 youth nationwide. In terms of detention, Oberstown received €21 million in 2017 and provided supports to 135 detained young people. Figure 15 provides a cost breakdown for the primary youth justice interventions in 2017.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 15: Estimated Costs of Youth Justice Interventions in 2017



\* Does not include main grade probation staffing \*\*Includes staffing only

## Outputs – Data about what was provided by the youth justice system

Understanding youth justice provision and young people’s interaction with services is necessary if interventions are to be effectively developed, implemented, and governed (Reddy and Redmond, 2019). From publications in 2017, we know the number and type of interventions implemented – diversion, restorative, probationary/supervisory – where most are located, and the levels of admissions to a service or programme in the year. We also know the age range and gender of children requiring supports, the number and type of referrals children had received, and whether these were new or multiple referrals.

<sup>8</sup> This is an oversimplified calculation based on available data in reports published by youth justice agencies and Government departments in 2017 (see Section 4.3 for calculations). In some instances, expenditure was incorporated into overall justice (adult) spending, thereby restricting a complete analysis of costs in the youth justice system.

Analyses compared with previous reporting periods showing trends in offending and service provision and use – identifying gaps in provision and future needs in the system.

Comparisons of published data and data routinely collected but unpublished by agencies, however, indicates that while much is known about what is provided in the system, less is known about young people’s engagement in or experience of services and programmes. Table 14 details the types of input and output data included in publications and highlights (shaded in blue) information collected and not regularly published.

Table 14: Input and Output Data in the Youth Justice – Published / Unpublished in 2017

Data	Div Prog / GYDPs	Probation	Courts	Oberstown	Tusla SC
<b>INPUTS</b>					
Expenditure/funding data (youth)	✓	✓	✗	✓	N/A
Referral/admissions to justice interventions/ programmes/detention	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A
Secure and Special Care placements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓
<b>OUTPUTS</b>					
Number of programmes/services implemented	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓
Number and location of intervention/ programme/service	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓
Data about a young person’s engagement with and completion of justice interventions	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
History of youth interaction with support services (stored in case files)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

\*Blue shaded portions denote data collected by agencies and not regularly published.

### Outcomes and Impacts – Information about what was achieved

It is important to bear in mind that responses to youth crime are difficult to measure. Significant levels of unreported crime make assessing youth offending and reoffending difficult (Reddy and Redmond, 2019). In addition, and of critical importance, is that assessments of how a system performed are only of value if they can be attributed in some way to the contribution that services and programmes made to justice policies. Increased monitoring, independent evaluation of interventions, and the use of evidence-based practices and formal tendering processes are evident in the Irish system and provide evidence to assess the outcomes for children of youth justice interventions. Table 15 describes the impact and outcome data types in youth justice.



The Growing Up in Ireland Study (GUI) has reported on young people's contact with the criminal justice system, including attitudes to law enforcement and experience of drug, tobacco, and alcohol misuse (Murray et al., 2015). However, other potential sources of self-reported justice information, for example, the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey of Crime and Victimization, and CSO Recidivism Reports, are based on adult data only. Within the justice system, GYDP service providers use admission and assessment procedures to gather data about children's (self-reported) experiences of and attitudes to crime, antisocial behaviour, and victimisation. This data is used for case management purposes and is not published.

#### **5.4 Additional non-invasive suggestions to improve effectiveness reporting**

Bearing in mind these findings and those of the International Study, REPPP suggests three data options to improve effectiveness reporting.

##### **1. Whole system reporting**

Whole system reporting details the flow of children (aged 12-17 years) through the youth justice system. Reports use anonymised data to present a cross-agency analyses of youth justice. For example:

- Analyses of offending and incidents involving children.
- Analyses of service provision and coverage – diversion, probation/supervision, detention.
- Child-specific assessments (separate from adult data).
- Analyses that compare data with findings from previous reporting periods.
- Assessments of performance (i.e., the effectiveness of the system in achieving justice policy goals).

##### **2. An evidence-informed Practice Accreditation Committee**

An expert committee to evaluate programmes and practices to determine whether they help, or may help, to reduce or prevent crime and/or reintegrate offenders into society. The committee would provide up-to-date and validated inventories of evidence-based and promising practices in the areas of youth justice, child welfare, and child mental health.

##### **3. A youth crime and victimisation survey administered with GYDP participants.**

A survey of young people in GYDPs to increase current understanding of youth crime and victimisation. Surveys would provide information (bi-annually) from a vulnerable cohort of youth about involvement in (and attitudes to) crime, antisocial behaviour, and victimisation.



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## Appendix B: Potential Improvements in Data Collection Processes and System Measurement

The International Study suggests several options that may help to broaden the scope of youth crime data and to improve the level and type of information available. These included a need for:

- Data processes that provide information specific to youth justice and evidence of unreported crime to improve understanding of youth offending and victimisation (e.g., youth crime and victimisation monitors and self-report youth surveys).
- An analysis of data routinely collected by court services provides up-to-date information about the timeliness of case processing involving youth and judgements regarding the performance and credibility of the youth justice system. Analyses of court process data can facilitate case-specific comparisons and assessments of system progress at local level. Information about the duration of youth residential placements and detention also is common in international youth justice.
- The development of protocols and standards (regarding data protection) to allow greater integration of data collection and analysis in the system. The capacity (e.g., a universal identifier) to track/monitor (individual) youth interaction with the criminal justice system was identified as important in the provision of effective responses to youth crime and offending.
- Processes leading to greater practitioner awareness of the need for and the value of data collection and analysis in developing Ireland's youth justice system.
- Effective and sustained leadership and support (from Government, department, and service agency management) in implementing an evidenced-informed youth justice system.

Potential areas of development and improvement in system measurement were identified according to the scale of implementation challenge – low, moderate, and difficult – and potential benefits. The recommendations identify practical and achievable methods and actions that build on current data and research capacities to improve evidence-informed practice and decision-making in the youth justice system. For example, the following processes are considered **low to moderate** in terms of implementation challenges:

1. The development of a comprehensive **theory of change** (TOC) data framework for youth justice to explain the collection, categorisation, and data analysis processes necessary to improve routine reporting and overall assessments of system-wide effectiveness. A TOC also could provide a basis to configure youth justice data in a more structured way to facilitate impact and process evaluation of youth justice interventions.
2. Convening of a **committee** to monitor the implementation of agreed recommendations on data processes. The sub-group would work to increase awareness among service providers/practitioners of the need and value of using evidence in youth justice; ensure delivery of recommendations to agreed timescales; identify further gaps and development needs and highlight challenges and opportunities.





## Appendix C: Data Sources: Youth Justice Agency Publications in 2017

The Diversion Programme / GYDPs	The Probation Service	The Courts Service	Oberstown CDC	Tusla (Secure/Spec Care)	Youth Orgs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme 2017</li> <li>Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018</li> <li>Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018: Progress Report 2017</li> <li>DCYA Annual Report 2017</li> <li>Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2017 (no data specific to YP found)</li> <li>Department of Justice and Equality Annual Report 2017</li> <li>State of the Nation's Children Report December 2016 becomes available in 2017</li> <li>Garda Annual Report 2017</li> <li>Report of the Garda Inspectorate 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report 2017/2018</li> <li>Point in Time Statistical reports 2017</li> <li>IASIO Review, June 2017</li> <li>Critical Review of Initial Evaluations on 3 J-APC Pilot Projects Sept. 2018</li> <li>Individualising Justice: Pre- Sentence Reports in the Irish Criminal Justice System, July 2017</li> <li>Mental Health (Criminal Law) Review Board Annual Report 2017 (no data specific to YP found)</li> <li>DCYA Annual Report 2017</li> <li>Probation Service Recidivism Study 2008-2013 (CSO)</li> <li>Probation Service Research Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2020</li> <li>Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014- 2020: Mid-Term Evaluation – Final Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courts Service Annual Report 2017</li> <li>The Courts Service Strategic Plan 2017-2020</li> <li>Accountant of the Courts of Justice Report and Financial Statements 2017 (no specific youth data)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report 2016 / 2017</li> <li>Key-Characteristics Reports 2017</li> <li>Point in Time Analysis reports 2017</li> <li>Oberstown Summary Report of External Reviews 2017</li> <li>DCYA Annual Report 2017</li> <li>Board Response to the Recommendations of the Operational Review 2017</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Strategy 2017-2020</li> <li>Living our Strategy: A Review of the Oberstown Strategic Plan 2017-2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DCYA Annual Report 2017</li> <li>Tusla 2017 Annual Report</li> <li>Tusla Child and Family Agency Business Plan 2017</li> <li>Annual Financial Statements 2017</li> <li>Tusla Monthly Management Data Activity Report 2017</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foroige Annual Report 2017</li> <li>Youth Work Ireland Annual Review 2015</li> <li>Extern Group Annual Report 2017/18</li> </ul>







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Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) Project,

School of Law, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland.

t: 0035361234829 | e: REPPP@ul.ie | w: <https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/reppp> | twitter: @REPPP4