

REOFFENDING

Introduction

The data from which this analysis is made is drawn from two re-offending toolkits produced by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) respectively.

The YJB kit looks at the historical data (2009-2011) that informs the current performance measure, (always over a year behind due to the measure being calculated by waiting a further 12 months for offences to occur and an additional six months for offences to be proved).

The LCJB toolkit contains more up to date data (2011 – 2014) and assumes that a detected offence will subsequently be admitted and become a re-offence. It is therefore less accurate than the YJB toolkit but the differences do not appear to be significant enough to interfere with macro trends. Thus making it a useful proxy instrument for measuring progress.

Analysis

Reoffending is a key priority for both Ministers and the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB). Both binary and frequency rates for reoffending by young people in England and Wales have increased year on year, and rates for young people are relatively high when compared to the adult population.

In Rotherham whilst the binary re-offending rate remains below national and regional comparators, it has increased over time and margins have narrowed. Such that we are beginning to approach national and regional rates. Of more concern is that frequency rates are showing a steady increase and starting to match national and regional rates.

Reductions in the number of first time entrants have meant that over time the YOS has seen a decline in the number of young offenders within the Youth Justice System. However the decline in numbers has not been matched by a decline in re-offending and those left in the system are re-offending more often. In addition case managers are reporting that young people are more difficult to engage and the occasions on which the YOS has to resort to breach are increasing

These figures above and the other factors suggest that the YOS now has a group of young people whose characteristics mean they are more likely to reoffend, they may have more complex needs and may be more demanding to support and turn away from offending behaviour than in the past.

In order to reduce reoffending rates, there is a need to understand the characteristics of those that go on to re-offend in order to identify local practise issues that need to be addressed and prioritised in order to align with the needs of the current cohort.

Those who offend in Rotherham are mainly White; the 2011 census identified the 10-17 population as being 91% White, 6% Asian, 2% Mixed, and 1% Black. The youth offending cohort has effectively mirrored this balance since the census, and although there has been an increase in the number of young people identifying as “other” in 2012/13 this is not significant enough to skew re-offending data at present. Rotherham is not therefore seeing the pattern of other areas of the country where there is a disproportionate number of minority ethnic young people within the youth justice system.

Unsurprisingly as this is a well-established historic trend, those who offend tend to be male making up on average 82% of the offending cohort. Similarly males are more likely to reoffend than females accounting for a rate of 32% reoffending rather than the 15% exhibited by young women.

The YJB toolkit shows that those in the 15-17 age bracket have been most likely to reoffend in the period 2009 to 2012 at an average rate of 36%, and the LCJB tool enables this to be broken down more usefully for 2012/13 and 2013/14, (to date).

Apr 12 – Mar 13

	Age 10	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17
RATE	0%	9%	36%*	5%	32%	29%	39%	34%

(*The apparent spike in re-offending by 12 yr. olds can be discounted due to the small numbers involved)

Apr 13 – Mar 14 (12 months has not elapsed to capture offending during a full year hence these figures are depressed in relation to others).

	Age 10	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17
RATE	0%	0%	0%	27%*	22%	13%	28%	19%

(* Age 13 - Low numbers at this point).

Since 2009/10 the 15 to 17 age group has increased in size from 68.6% of the YOS case load to 76.6%, with 17 year olds being the majority accounting for over a third of the group, but 16 year olds offending at a higher rate. There also appears within the last two years a spike in offending by 14 year olds, this is discussed later.

That the overall cohort is more likely to offend is illustrated by the average number of re-offences moving from 2.39% to 2.77% with Theft being the most likely type of re-offence that is committed, accounting on average for just over a third of re-offending, (33.6%). Re-offending involving violence against the person is relatively low and stable, accounting for 1.6% of re-offending on average, but serious acquisitive re-offending has increased from 4.45% of reoffending to 6.50%.

Both toolkits also indicate that young people are more likely to reoffend within a few months of their original offence e.g. April 2012 to March 2013:

	< 1 MON TH	< 2 MONT HS	< 3 MONT HS	<4 MONT HS	< 5 MONT HS	< 6 MONT HS	< 7 MONT HS	< 8 MONT HS	< 9 MONT HS	<10 MONT HS	< 11 MONT HS	< 12 MONT HS
%	21%	20%	13%	11%	12%	7%	2%	7%	3%	2%	0%	1%

Reoffending begins to tail off over time which is some indication that the YOS does have an impact, but benefits slowly accumulate. Some early offending is as a result of offences catching up with young people once they have been convicted and may inflate the figures slightly, but this is in the minority.

The overall reoffending cohort for the YOS is comprised of both Court Orders and Pre Court disposals e.g. Youth Cautions, (previously reprimands) and Youth Conditional Cautions, (previously final warnings). Reoffending rates for the pre court population appear to be increasing, and this is concerning because the majority of these will not benefit from a YOS intervention, although some will receive a preventative service. Young people receiving a pre court intervention are more likely to be younger and offending amongst this cohort is the reason for the spike in reoffending behaviour noted above.

Year	Pre Court Reoffending
2009/10	31.03%
2010/11	41.80%
2011/12	37.03%
2012/13	38.27%
2013/14	40.74%

The increase seen in 2013/14 may be related to the introduction of new pre court disposals but further time would need to elapse before coming to any firm conclusions.

Recommendations

The YOS Management Board is requested to consider the following recommendations:

As reoffending occurs relatively soon after the initial offence, earlier engagement with those who offend is likely to have an impact on the binary rate of offending. The YOS should therefore:

1. Review preventative services, with the aim of reviewing the effective interventions, and considering earlier intervention amongst pre court cohorts.
2. Review of YOT engagement for the first few months of the order, with the aim of engaging with young offenders earlier.

Targeting the 15-17 cohort is most likely to have an impact on the frequency of offending. The YOS should therefore

1. Consider exit strategies for this group particularly in relation to provision within Integrated Youth Support Services.
2. More robustly review orders at the point at which reoffending occurs.
3. Closely engage with the YJB introduction of AssetPlus , (a new end-to-end assessment and planning interventions framework, which assesses young people against an enhanced range of factors), and utilise early practise materials as they are produced.

Paul Grimwood

August 2014