

Definitions for Prevention and Diversion

What is prevention?

Prevention is support and intervention with children (and their parents/carers) who may be displaying behaviours which may indicate underlying needs or vulnerability. In practice this involves a tiered approach of **early** and **targeted prevention**. The aim being to address unmet needs, safeguard, promote positive outcomes and stop children entering the formal youth justice system.

What are the tiers of prevention?

Early Prevention is support for children (with no linked offence) to address unmet needs / welfare concerns, usually delivered by mainstream and voluntary sector services. The YJS Management Board may have an oversight role in monitoring and advocating on behalf of vulnerable children. YJS's may also share youth justice / adolescent expertise to improve outcomes for children.

Targeted Prevention is specialist support for children who have had some contact with criminal justice services but are not currently being supported through diversion, an out of court disposal or statutory order (this could include children who have had previous YJS intervention). This is to address unmet needs / welfare concerns. The aim is to improve outcomes through positive interaction while minimising harmful experiences for children.

How is prevention delivered?

Prevention Schemes are local partnership approaches developed between services aimed at providing early and/or targeted prevention to support children (and their parents/carers) who may be displaying behaviour associated with offending, antisocial behaviour or vulnerability. Intervention aims to safeguard children and promote positive outcomes to stop them entering the formal youth justice system. This should be provided by the service(s) within the partnership most suitable of meeting children's individual needs.

What is diversion?

Diversion is where children with a linked offence receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record, avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system and associated stigmatisation. This may involve the YJS delivering support / intervention that may or may not be voluntary and/or signposting children (and parent/carers) into relevant services. All support should be proportionate, aimed at addressing unmet needs and supporting prosocial life choices.

What are the diversion options?

When dealing with offences committed by children the police have a range of outcomes available that avoid criminalising them, as per sections 135-138 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012. These include (there may be variation in local terms used by YJS's and Police to describe these outcomes):

- **Community Resolution (Out of Court Disposal):** A diversionary police outcome that can only be used when children have accepted responsibility for an offence. It is an outcome commonly delivered, but not limited to, using restorative approaches.
- **No Further Action:** An outcome used when the police decide not to pursue an offence for various reasons. This may be because there is not enough evidence, or it is not in the public interest. Voluntary support may be offered to children to address identified needs.
- **No Further Action – Outcome 22:** A diversionary police outcome that can be used when diversionary, educational or intervention activity has taken place or been offered, and it is not in the public interest to take any further action. An admission of guilt or acceptance of responsibility is not required for this outcome to be used.
- **No Further Action – Outcome 21:** A diversionary police outcome used when further investigation, that could provide sufficient evidence for charge, is not in the public interest. This includes dealing with sexting offences without criminalising children.

How is diversion delivered?

Diversion Services are local approaches developed between the Police, YJS and other partners aimed at supporting children who have committed an offence(s) to avoid a criminal record and escalation into the formal youth justice system. This involves multi-agency decision-making to support the consideration of referrals into the service to determine the outcome for children, proportionate to their assessed level of need.