



The Association of Youth Offending Team Managers (AYM) response to Youth Custody Service (YCS) Accommodation Escalation Process

About the AYM

The AYM is a professional association representing the majority of youth offending teams (YOT) and their managers in England.

Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the co-operation of the named statutory partners to form a YOT. Section 38 (1, 2) identifies the statutory partners and places upon them a duty to co-operate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area. These statutory partners are the local authority, police, the probation service, and health. To support the YOT, additional partners may also be recruited to the joint strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people.

The Association is able to draw on the wealth of knowledge and the breadth of members' experience to promote public understanding of youth crime issues and to play its part in shaping the youth crime agenda.

Our members run services providing community-based supervision for children and young people who offend. We also work with children in custody and work closely with staff in secure units and young offender institutions to ensure that young people receiving custody experience as smooth a transition as possible into custody and back in to the community.

The AYM welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the updated Youth Custody Service (YCS) Accommodation Escalation Process.

Having reviewed the PowerPoint process, the following comments have been provided:

- Welcome the introduction of some set escalation timescales that can support focussing Local Authorities and standardising expectations.
- An 8-week escalation point feels appropriate to enable services to respond.
- Unclear what the role of Barnardo's is within this specific process and suggest this is clearly outlined.
- While the expectation to have accommodation identified for all children at a 6-week point is right, the process does not recognise the complex challenges for some children/national placement market; in addition, while local authorities will agree placement retention placements, the suggested 5 week and 4-week escalation point does not appear to recognise the challenges/cost implications

of this in a collaborative way. In current form, these escalation points I would foresee increasing community services time being put into 'escalation' responses, that could impact on services ability to progress accommodation hurdles.

- The escalation process does not state what the role and function of each escalation should achieve and the role of function of Howard Lead, Safeguarding Partnership Chair and Children's Commissioner; suggest that feedback to these groups could be done through an annual return.
- The process does not reflect the complexities of accommodation provision for children in care and care leavers (where not going to a family home); there may be instances where the locality is known or provider, but exact address confirmed through retention payments (as specified above). Equally, process does not reflect 'unplanned' changes; for example, family breakdown/or changes to risk meaning planned accommodation is no longer suitable.
- The section referencing 18+ is unclear; these arrangements will be locally defined regarding YJS/Probation agreements; given the decision to retain 18-year-olds in the youth estate was a YCS/HMPPS decision, I'd suggest this needs to be reconsidered.
- The process needs to align with the upcoming YJB Custody and Resettlement Case Management Guidance
- Overall, it is unclear from the process what the defined 'issue' is regarding not meeting early identification of accommodation for children and how the escalation points offer a collaborative approach to improving outcomes for children; this may be reflected elsewhere, but considering the powerpoint in isolation.