



**Children and Families Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**
15 December 2009

**Report from the Director of Children
and Families**

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Youth Crime Prevention: the work of the Youth Offending
Service**

1.0 Summary

This report outlines the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) including the changes recently introduced to the youth justice system as a result of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 and new approaches to working with young offenders. It also details the restructuring of the YOS since the last Scrutiny Report in early 2008 and updates the profiles of young offenders and trends in offending. It includes illustrative information about the work being undertaken with those young people on court-ordered sentences and the role of the YOS in prevention programmes for those at risk of offending as well as recent developments in the service.

2.0 Recommendations

Members may wish to consider establishing a Task Group to explore in more depth specific issues detailed in the report. Possible topics are indicated at the end of the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Youth Offending Service

Brent YOS has been operational since 2000 and is a multi-agency service working primarily with children and young people who have become involved with the criminal justice system aged 10-17 and resident in Brent. Preventative work is also undertaken with children from the age of 8. The service includes representatives from the police, the Probation Service, health, drugs and alcohol misuse services, as well as staff who are qualified social workers and teachers.

The principal aims of the service remain:

- To prevent crime and disorder by children and young people
- To work positively to reduce the fear of crime in the local community
- To assist children and young people to become active young citizens making a full contribution to the community

In its primary direct work with young offenders, the YOS works wholly within a framework of statutory requirement. Other strands of work include the development of a range of preventive services which support both the Every Child Matters and Common Assessment Framework agenda. The YOS also plays a key role in the borough's inclusion and safeguarding work, retaining a dual role across both the local crime prevention and welfare agendas.

3.2 Youth justice and youth crime and disorder prevention

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a duty on local authorities with education and social services responsibilities, chief officers of police, police authorities, probation committees and health authorities in England and Wales to establish youth offending teams and ensure that appropriate youth justice services were available in their area for children and young people aged 10 to 17 who offended, or were accused of offending.. Within the local authority, the YOS reporting line is in the Department of Children and Families and the service is a part of the Social Care Division, but there is full local recognition of wider partnership arrangements, governance and accountability for the service. Senior members from the agencies with a duty to cooperate under the 1998 Act are represented on the YOS Management Board as is the local Magistrates' Court. The YOS reports to the Crime Prevention Steering Group and the Head of Service is also a key member of the Borough Criminal Justice Group. The work is governed by National Standards established by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) which is also the source of a substantial proportion of the funding for the service. The YOS is a fundamental part of the borough's Youth Crime Prevention Strategy and the Youth Crime Strategic Group, which seeks to mobilise across a range of agencies to prevent offending and re-offending by young people, is chaired by the Head of Service. There are also key strategic links to the Community Safety Team and strategic and operational links with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

3.3

Brief overview of services provided by the YOS and recent changes to the Youth Justice system

When young people first get into trouble, or commit minor offences, they can usually be dealt with by the police and local authority, outside of the court system, using a variety of orders and agreements. These may include *Reprimands* or *Final warnings*.

A *Reprimand* is a formal verbal warning given by a police officer to a young person who admits they are guilty of a minor first offence. This is usually undertaken at the police station.

A *Final Warning* is a formal verbal warning given by a police officer to a young person who admits their guilt for a first or second offence. Unlike a Reprimand, however, the young person is also assessed to determine the causes of their offending behaviour and a programme of activities is identified to address them. This is usually delivered at the YOS by the Police officer seconded to our service.

Whilst both of these are pre-court disposals, the details of the young person's offence will nevertheless be entered onto the Police National Computer and will be recorded

subsequently if checks are undertaken such as those for the CRB. The figures for First Time Entrants (FTE's) to the Youth Justice System also include young people who are subject to one of these disposals. Our efforts to reduce FTE include a new programme known as Triage which is explored in more detail below.

A *Referral Order* is given to a young person who pleads guilty to an offence when it is his/her first time in court. The only exceptions to this are if the offence is so serious that the court decides a custodial sentence is absolutely necessary, or the offence is relatively minor (i.e. a 'non-imprisonable' offence such as fare evasion), in which case an alternative such as a fine or an absolute discharge may be given. The orders are overseen by community volunteers who act as Youth Offender Panel members and with whom young people sign a contract specifying the work which will be undertaken to meet the terms of the order. Young people are supervised by YOS staff and engage in various activities and programmes which may include reparation to the community, tackling education non-attendance, employment or family issues and work around consideration of victim issues and the reasons that led to offending.

Following the passage of the *Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008* we are in the process of a number of changes in how we work with young offenders. In the case of *Referral Orders* the courts have been given more flexibility in their use of these, including discretionary powers to impose a Referral Order on young offenders convicted for the second time of an offence in certain circumstances. The intensity of the work undertaken with the young person can also be varied in line with the *Scaled Approach* explained below.

Of particular significance in these changes is the *Youth Rehabilitation Order* (YRO) - a new community sentence for young offenders introduced with effect from the 30th November 2009. The YRO will replace nine existing community sentences and will simplify the juvenile sentencing structure, enabling sentencers to tailor sentences to individual risk and needs.

The YRO is a robust sentence providing a 'menu' of interventions for tackling offending behaviour. Guided by the Pre Sentence Report provided by the YOS where the court has requested it, sentencers are able to attach a range of requirements to a YRO for example:

- Activity Requirement
- Curfew Requirement
- Education Requirement
- Unpaid Work Requirement (16/17 years)
- Attendance Centre Requirement
- Supervision Requirement
- Electronic Monitoring Requirement
- Prohibited Activity Requirement
- Drug Treatment Requirement
- Programme Requirement
- Intensive Supervision and Surveillance

There are no restrictions on the number of times an offender can be sentenced to a YRO and courts would be expected to use this disposal on multiple occasions, adapting the menu as appropriate to deal with the offending behaviour. The clear intention of this is to minimise the use of custody for young people. Perhaps most significantly, it represents a more individualised risk and needs-based approach to community sentencing allowing us to tailor interventions to the nature of both the offender and the offence.

In parallel with this, the Youth Justice Board is introducing what is known as *The Scaled Approach*. The Scaled Approach also aims to ensure that interventions are tailored to the individual and based on an assessment of their risks and needs. The intended outcomes are to reduce the likelihood of re-offending for each young person by:

- tailoring the intensity of intervention to the assessment
- more effectively managing risk of serious harm to others

The *Scaled Approach* is now being used by the YOS to determine the level of intervention required when a child or young person is subject to YOS intervention through a Referral Order contract, a YRO or during the community element of a custodial sentence. The level of intervention which can be *Standard*, *Enhanced* or *Intensive* is informed by the assessment process. Evidence tells us that interventions are more effective when their intensity is matched to an assessment of the likelihood of the person re-offending, and are focused on the risk factors most closely associated with their offending. The key benefits are that interventions can be better targeted and, ultimately, offending and risk of serious harm can be reduced. This new way of working will also have the benefit of allowing us to direct time and resources to young people appropriately, in accordance with their risk assessment. In common with a number of other London YOS's however, we do tend to have a higher number of young people who will meet the criteria for *Enhanced* or *Intensive* interventions- and we are concerned that this will lead to an increase in the levels of demand for contact by about 13%.

Custodial support, and post-release supervision:

If a young person is placed in custody this may be at a YOI (Young Offender Institution) or at an STC (Secure Training Centre) depending on both their age and vulnerability. Most of those sentenced to custody will be on a Detention and Training Order (DTO) in which half of the sentence is served in the secure estate, the other half in the community. During their period in custody YOS Staff retain contact with the young offender and with the institution and are involved in the process of planning for their release. Subsequently, they will continue to be supervised by our service for the remainder of their sentence and we aim to re-integrate them successfully back into the community, thereby minimising the risk they may pose and enhancing the prospects of them not re-offending.

Post-release support:

In addition, the YOS offers dedicated support programmes to help the transition into the community and to provide ongoing support when the YOS engagement formally ends. This is provided via a reshaped programme which is now known as the Intensive Resettlement Service (once known as Resettlement and Aftercare Programme or RAP). A significant part of this work is delivered by volunteer mentors specifically recruited and trained for this purpose.

Parenting support and programmes

The YOS is also engaged in the provision of support to parents/carers of the young people we work with. Some parents may be sentenced to a Parenting Order which is a court-ordered sentence obliging them to engage with our service to address matters deemed to have contributed to their children's offending. However, most parents engage with us voluntarily and may receive one-to-one help or participate in a Parenting Programme run by our service if they wish to. The value of the latter is that parents may then establish longer term supportive networks between them.

3.4 Preventative programmes

The YOS also has a preventative arm, funded in part by the YJB and also via Brent's Preventive Services (previously Children's Fund)

Children's Support Panel (CSP)

This service is sited within the YOS and engages with young people, aged 8-16 and their families to reduce the potential for offending and to improve educational outcomes. The programme works intensively with young people displaying multiple and/or complex needs. The majority have at some point been involved with social services, many have experienced fixed term and permanent exclusions or are regular truants. Each of the children will have Individual Support Plans (ISPs) or Action Plans drawn up in partnership with the child and their family. Activities / interventions are then developed or commissioned to meet the needs identified. Some referrals come via the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the CSP work in partnership with them to draw up an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC). Increasingly, referrals to this service come through the CAF process.

As indicated above, we have also recently begun a *Triage* scheme using the resource offered by our preventions staff in the CSP to pilot a reduced version of the full scheme. The Triage model was first proposed in the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) and has been successfully trialled in a number of areas, including London boroughs with similar profiles to ours in Brent. Triage takes place at the point that a young person enters police custody following arrest. The concept, taken from the hospital triage model, seeks to act as a 'gateway' whereby all young people entering custody can be rapidly assessed to ensure that they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. When functioning as per the model, YOS staff is present at police custody suites to assist with decision making. By improving collaboration at this point the intention is to arrive at interventions which are more targeted and proportionate and mean that young people are not drawn into the criminal justice system unnecessarily. In other words, are not given a *Reprimand* or *Final Warning* unless necessary. Conversely, for those young people guilty of more serious offending the process is designed to allow for early identification of risks posed, leading to a swift and effective criminal justice response.

Brent was not in receipt of YCAP funds, nor have any additional monies been identified to deliver the programme. Given that research in the YCAP Triage pilot areas has shown very clear positive outcomes on NI 111 (reducing First Time Entrant to the youth justice system, one of Brent's LAA targets) we were anxious to introduce the approach and are piloting a version which tries to have some impact from within existing resources. The police have agreed that where they are considering either a *Reprimand* or *Final Warning* the young person and their parent/carer have consented, the young person will be bailed and a referral sent to the CSP. If the young person is assessed by our staff as a suitable participant and then does engage with the programme, the police will then take no further action.

Unfortunately our scheme does not allow for all of the benefits associated with the full model. That includes a possible impact on disproportionality, a stated intention in the scheme run by one of the London pilots. Our own statistics on First Time Entrants reveal that Black Caribbean and Black African males are over-represented in this cohort by more than 100%. Nor does it allow us to identify risk and share relevant information across police, CPS and YOT on more serious / persistent young offenders swiftly at the point of arrest. We do hope that it will impact positively on NI 111, but remain concerned about the increased workload for CSP staff and the

possible reduction in their capacity to engage more fully in preventions work with young people who have not yet come to the attention of the police.

- Youth Inclusion Project (YIP)

The YIP is a locality-based project that since 2003 has been delivering neighbourhood based, structured interventions- for five evenings per week and some weekends, to young people from Church End and Roundwood.

The senior arm (for 13–17 yr olds) is currently funded via the YJB with match-funding from local agencies and a contribution from Area Based Grant monies and caters for 50 young people. The junior arm (for 8-12 yr olds) engages a minimum of 26 children at any one time and is currently funded via the Brent Preventative Services.

JYIP has an educational emphasis which includes provision of a homework club two evenings per week and visits to places of cultural and historical significance such as museums and theatrical performances. Other providers such as the police, Victim Support, and the Community Safety Team, have delivered bespoke sessions on a wide range of crime reduction themes such as healthy relationships, personal safety, and gang awareness. Young people are currently working with the Wizard Theatre Company to create and act in their own film.

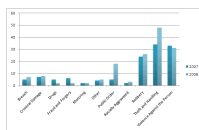
In 2008, YIP young people assisted the animated film makers Bold Creative, to create an animated feature as part of a Nickelodeon anti bullying campaign. They spoke frankly about their encounters with bullies and the harm that bullying causes. One these accounts, based on the experience of a 12 year old JYIP member was selected to feature in the made for television production. The resulting film 'Marcus's Story' was a part of the 'See Something, Say Something' anti bullying campaign which was shown on the Nickelodeon channel last year - the West End premiere of the film was attended by both 'Marcus' and his mother. On the 8th of July, the feature won the 2009 UNICEF Best Short Film Award. It was recently announced that the film has been nominated for a BAFTA. Since the JYIP commenced in 2003, only three out of approximately 150 former participants have gone on to enter the criminal justice system; two of whom were part of the earliest programme intakes. The funding for the JYIP for this year was identified as the result of an under-spend. The programme has no funding (or funding streams) identified for the year to come so that its continuation is in jeopardy.

The delivery of educational sessions is also a key service priority for the SYIP. Additional emphasis is placed on assessing the needs of the client group and the provision of individual support. Some of the more recent SYIP achievements include young people assisting in the delivery of stop and search training at the Hendon Police Training Centre, working with Transport for London photographers to create a YIP photo exhibition that will be installed at Wembley Park underground station, and developing business awareness and enterprise skills through participation in the Young Entrepreneurs Skills 4 Success Programme, which was delivered in Church End, specifically for SYIP young people.

3.5 Profile of Young Offenders in Brent and research findings on Disproportionality.

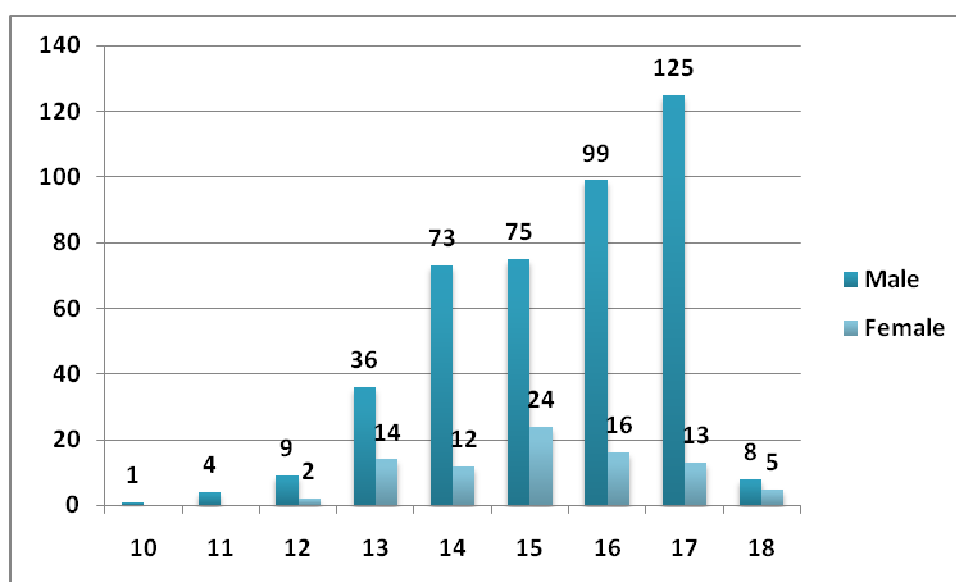
The overwhelming majority of young offenders in the borough are male – this year the figure stands at 80%. The percentage of female offending has shown a rise over the lifetime of the service and is up fairly considerably since the last Scrutiny Report when females accounted for 14% of our client group.

As will be apparent from the chart below, the key offences for which there has been an increase is for theft and handling and public order offences.



Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is 10 years of age the majority of young offenders supervised by the YOS are in the older age ranges, as can be seen below.

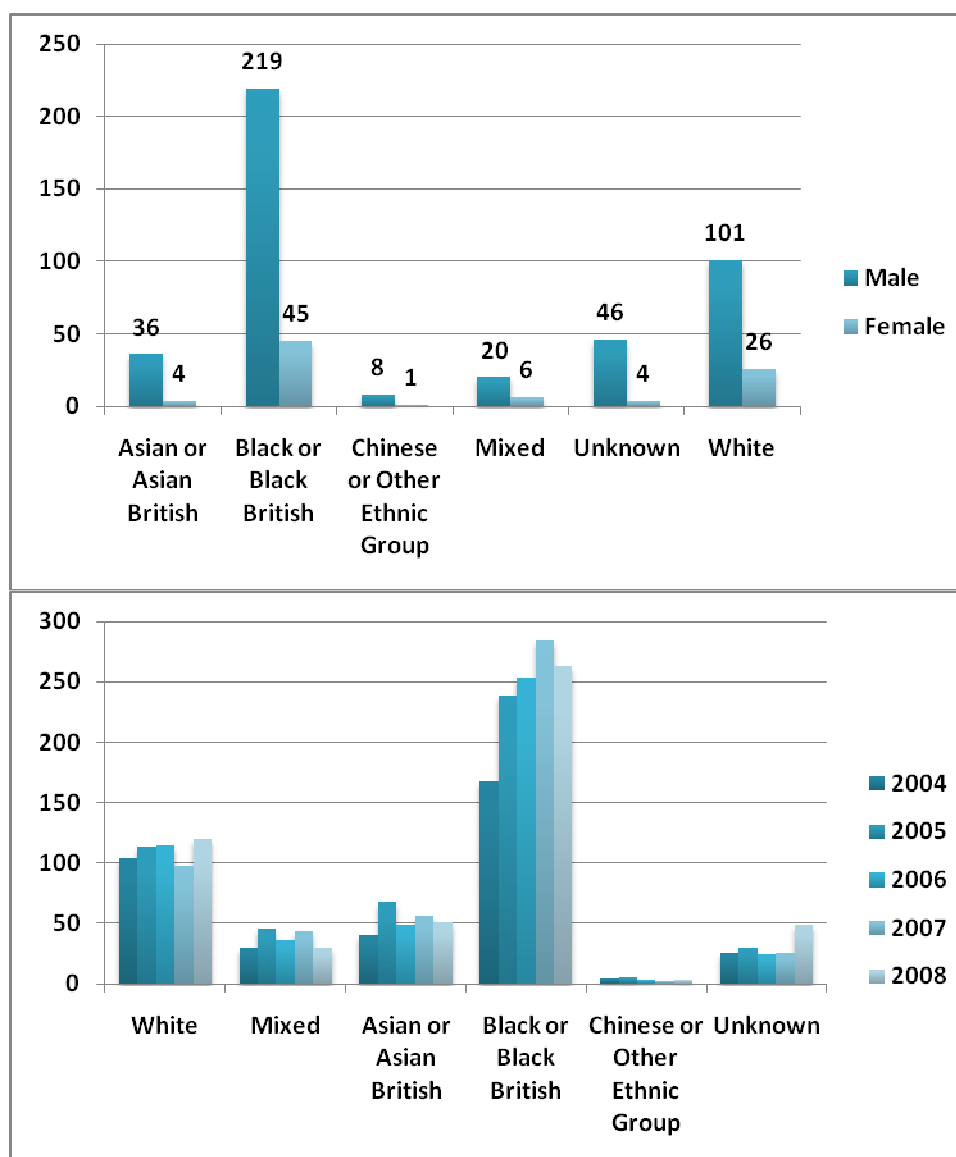
Age at date of sentencing 2008



Please note – the figures are low for 18+ as cases in this age group are transferred to the Probation Service)

As can be seen from the charts below, the YOS data reveals a disproportionate representation of young people of Black/Black British heritage.

Ethnicity data 2008



Young men of Black Caribbean and Black African heritage are over represented in the criminal justice system nationally. In the last report to the Scrutiny Committee we indicated that we planned to undertake some in-house research, aiming to better understand the extent to which this disproportionality applies to Brent young people; particularly in relation to re-offending, escalation of offending, and the subsequent likelihood of remands and custodial sentences in the hopes that the findings would contribute to our understanding of over-representation and assist the YOS to provide service users with best practice crime prevention interventions.

The study employed comparative analysis to identify similarities and differences between young people from Black Caribbean and Black African heritage groups, and young people from White heritage groups and was presented to both the Improving Outcomes Board and the Crime Prevention Strategic Group (CPSG). In order to better understand and address issues of disproportionality, the research aimed to answer the following question:

Does the experience of young Brent residents from Black Caribbean and Black African heritage groups who have been involved in the criminal justice system differ to young Brent residents from White heritage groups?

In 2007/8, 47% of the first time entrants to the criminal justice system in Brent came from Black Caribbean and Black African heritage groups. Fifteen percent were from White heritage groups, and 12% were of Asian descent. Using Youth Justice Board ethnicity classifications, the remaining 26% of first time entrants were from 'mixed', or 'Chinese other' backgrounds.

The extent of disproportionality within the youth justice system becomes more evident when comparing these figures to the Brent secondary school population: young people from Black Caribbean and Black African heritage groups formed only 22% of the 2007 Brent secondary school population. Fourteen percent of pupils came from White heritage groups, and a further 20.6% were of Asian origin. The remaining forty four percent of the school population came from 'other' backgrounds. Although these figures do not include Brent young people who are not registered at school or are schooled outside the Borough, it is widely accepted that they are a more accurate measure of youth population than the increasingly dated 2001 Census.

In the same year (2007-08) 58% of young offenders supervised by Brent YOS who were given custodial sentences, came from Black Caribbean and Black African heritage groups, compounding the disproportionality apparent from the figures for first time entrants.

Whilst the sample we were able to analyse in the course of the research was too small to make definitive statements about the wider population, young black people randomly selected for this study were less likely to be cautioned, more likely to face criminal proceedings and receive custodial sentences, and be considered persistent young offenders, even though they committed less serious crimes on average. These are issues then not simply for the YOS, but are of significance to other partners in the criminal justice system.

The research confirmed that disproportionality in engagement with youth justice is at its most glaring in relation to the numbers of young people entering the system as first time entrants. Prevention of this is a critical aim shared across the Children and Families Department, with the council as a whole and our partner agencies in the LSP. We hope that the Triage programme will also begin to address some of this disproportionality, although there is research evidence which suggests that the reduced version of the programme we are currently implementing may be less effective in this regard than the full model.

The research did not look at the educational careers of the young people, nor did it explore whether they were known to Social Care, or indeed whether they were Children in Care. We know from national statistics that a history of school exclusion /disaffection is closely linked to youth offending. It is also estimated that four out of ten young people in custody have been in care at some point in their lives and a substantial majority of young offenders are known to the Social Care system. Without looking at these variables it is difficult to offer a rich interpretation of the data. We do know however, that our local findings chime with those of national and international research into ethnicity and criminal justice.

Most Common Offences Committed by Young People in Brent 2006 – 2008

Offence Type	Offences included in these types	2006	2007	2008
Robbery	Robbery, Attempted Robbery, Robbery with Firearm or Imitation	12%	13.20%	18.20%
Violence Against the Person	Common Assault, Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm, Assault on a Police Officer	9.70%	16.30%	15.60%
Drugs	Possession Controlled Drugs - Class B - Cannabis, Possession of Controlled Drugs with intent to Supply - Class A, Possession Class C Drugs	10.30%	9.60%	11.40%
Motoring	Driving Otherwise than in Accordance with Licence, No Insurance, Driving While Disqualified	21.50%	15%	9.50%
Public Order	Causing Harassment Alarm Distress by Threatening Words or Behaviour, Threatening, Abusive or Insulting Words or Behaviour, Drunk and Disorderly	3.50%	4.60%	5.60%
Criminal Damage	Criminal Damage, Possession with Intent to Commit Criminal Damage,	6%	8.50%	5%

(The % figure shows what proportion this type of offence is of all offences known to the YOS).

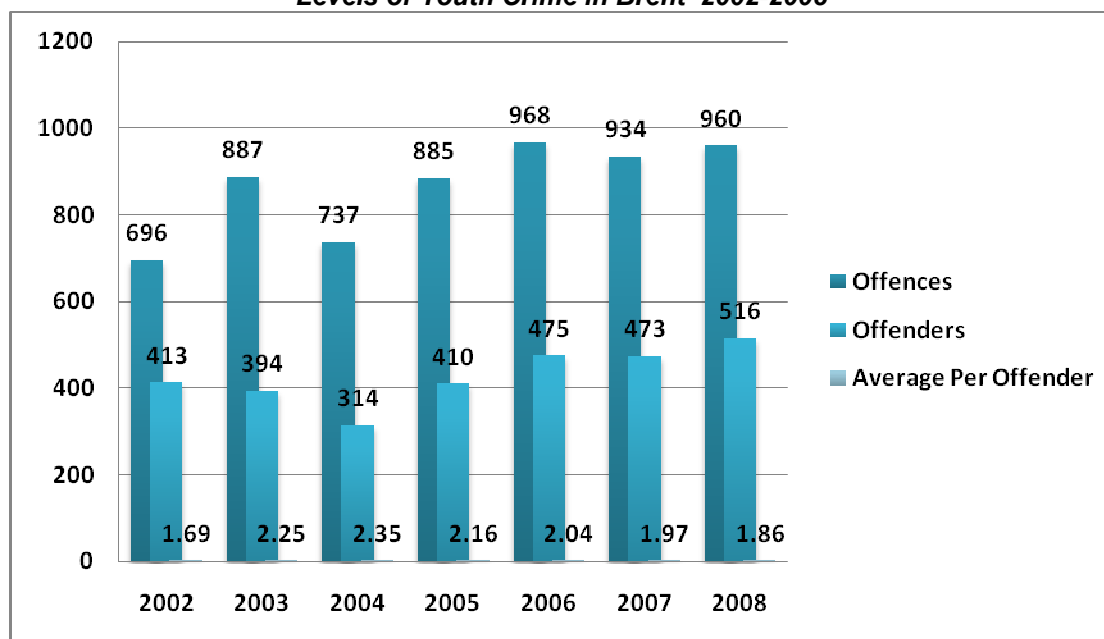
As may be obvious from the table above there has been reduction in particular offence types (e.g. motoring offences) whilst others have remained fairly constant over the past couple of years.

3.6 Trends in youth offending

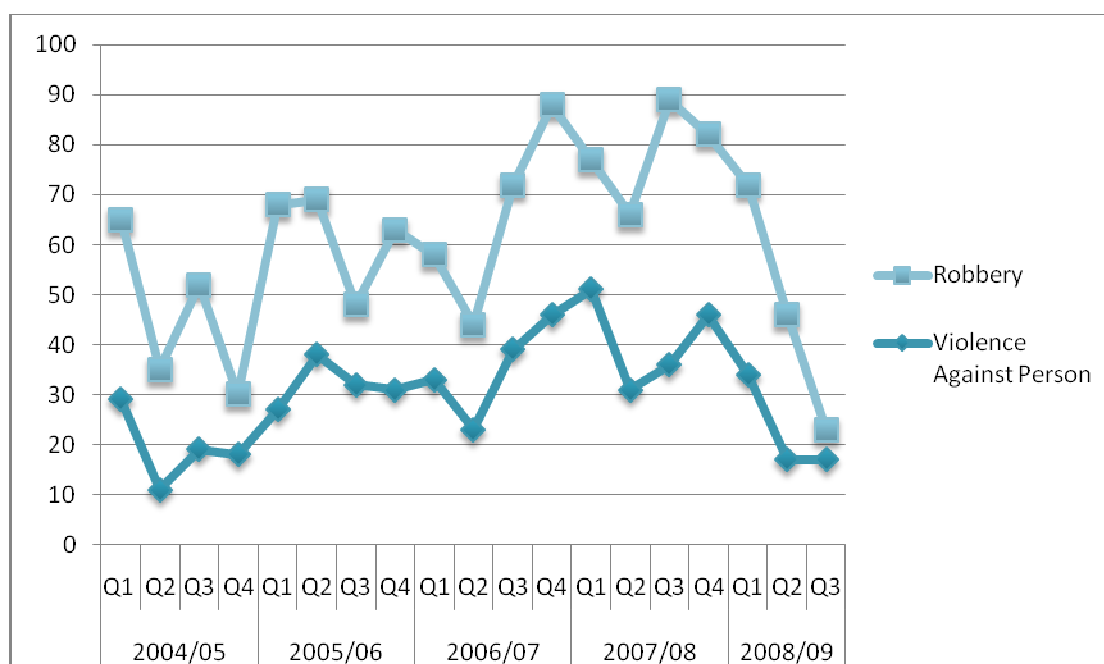
Over the longer term, there have been some differences in the way in which data is collected and analysed, making it necessary to add a caveat to comparisons across the following and preceding tables. For example the way that the police categorise crime types has changed over time so that offences which might previously been detailed as snatch thefts have been redefined as robberies – a more serious offence and one which adds to the figures for levels of violent crime. The apparent increase in the numbers of young offenders for last year indicated in the table below is a reflection of the increased accuracy of data collection about young people given police reprimands rather than those serving court ordered sentences. This was as a consequence of changes to the way in which the police notify the YOS of such disposals.

In addition, our statistics are largely derived from our database (Youth Offender Information System) and are a reflection of those arrested and brought to justice, rather than levels of offences committed. If we focus on the past three years in particular it does seem to be the case that the levels of offending and the numbers of offenders have remained relatively stable. Given the increase in the numbers of young people in the relevant age range (which whilst not reflected in official statistics, is reflected in the rising numbers requiring secondary school places) we do seem to be holding to a standstill position.

Levels of Youth Crime in Brent 2002-2008



Trends: Violent offending and Robbery



Please note –

- The data refers to the month in which the offender was found guilty rather than that in which the offence happened.
- The two offences are closely mirrored because those found guilty of robbery are also often, simultaneously, found to be guilty of violence against the person

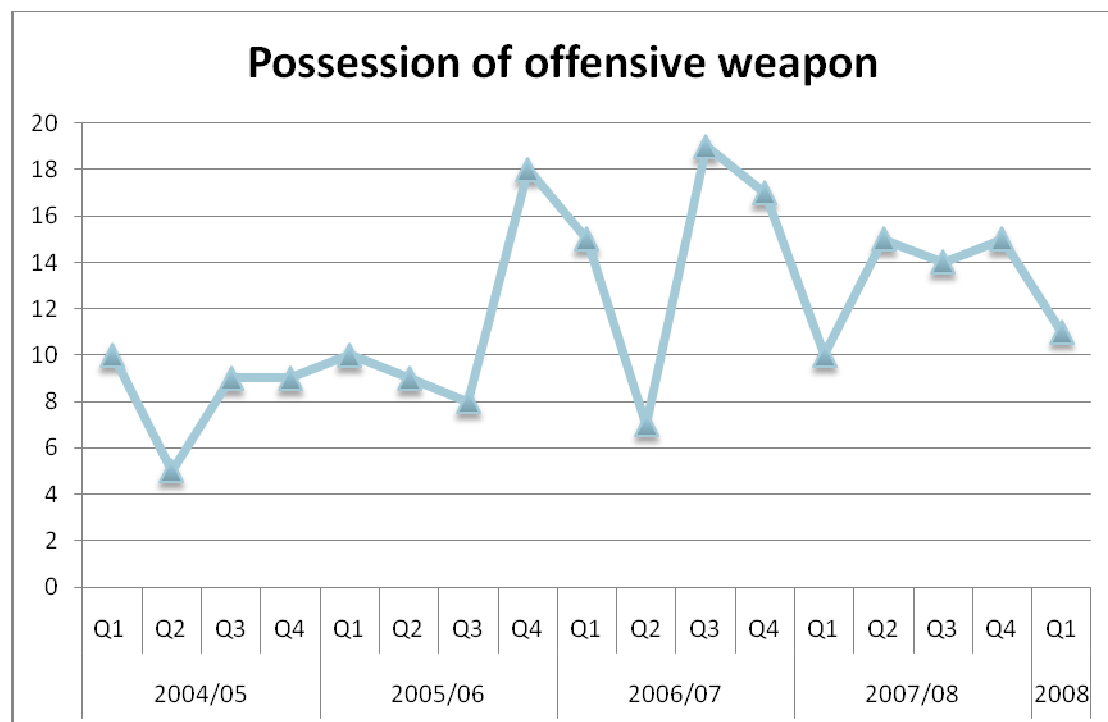
As is apparent, there are peaks and troughs in this offending and the most recent verified data indicates a real drop in this type of offending – mirroring a borough wide reduction in this offence type for both youth and adult offenders in the last year .

Knife Crime

Following the recent concerns about knife carrying by young people, the YJB has rolled out national programme intent on addressing this issue – the Knife crime Prevention Programme. Brent was amongst the 20% of YOTs who were already delivering a bespoke programme targeting this type of offending and we have had a project officer employed by the charity Catch 22 (previously Rainer) and funded through the Bridge House Trust's Fear and Fashion (anti-knife crime) Initiative based at the YOS since April 2007. The focus of the officer's work is to reduce the carrying of knives and other weapons by young people known to Brent Youth Offending Service working with them both individually and in group work programmes as well as working collaboratively with the police's Community Youth Engagement Service officers.

Knife Crime Prevention Group Work Programme

- **Attitudes to knife carrying** – Exploring attitudes to carrying knives and the rules young people apply to their lives, fear of crime, territoriality, gangs
- **The law** – The legal implication of the use of knives
- **Health** – Medical implications of using a weapon, first aid element. Raising awareness pictures of knife injuries etc
- **Social Implications of weapon carrying** – impact on family, community
- **Managing conflict**, helping young people understand their experience of youth violence, mediation skills
- **Victim Interaction** – testimonies from victims of knife crimes.
- **Public space awareness** – enabling young people to keep themselves safe in their community.
- **Peer education** – ex offenders presenting their own experiences and learning's.



The data in the chart above shows the numbers of young people who have been convicted of possession of any offensive weapon – rather than just knives - and does not show if the weapon was used in the commission of an offence. It does show a decrease over peaks in 2006 and 2007 and this chimes with recent Brent police data. Police 'Stop and Search' powers have been used fairly extensively to look for weapons in both youth and adult stops but increasingly without weapons being found. The emphasis on how seriously carrying offensive weapons will be viewed by the police and judiciary does seem to be having the desired effect.

Serious Youth Violence

Figures produced in July of this year showed Brent as having the 7th largest youth population in London, but having a ranking of 26th in the incidence of Serious Youth Violence (SYV) despite being one of the 15% most deprived areas in the country. The data below is provided by MPS and the category SYV includes any offence of Most Serious Violence, Gun Crime or Knife Crime, where the *victim* is aged 1-19. Unlike the data derived from YOS sources, the measure counts the number of victims of offences, rather than the number of offences, or the number of offenders. More recent figures from this source show an increase in the incidence of SYV with the 12 month rolling figures showing an increase from 121 incidences to 133. Part of this is accounted for by changes in the way in which crime types are categorised, but it also reflects a recent spate of disturbances, particularly in and around the more deprived estates in the south of the borough.

Youth Violence	Brent Rolling Year May07-Apr08	Brent Rolling Year May08-Apr09	Brent Rank in MPS (1=worst)	MPS Rolling Year May08-Apr09
Rate per 1,000 youth population	10.9	9.3	26 th	11.3
Rate per 1,000 total population	2.8	2.4	25 th	2.7

Gangs and Territorially based groups

The YOS is aware of territorial tensions between groups of young people on our estates, particularly in the south of the borough and have established a forum including partners from both the police and the Community Safety Partnership to monitor what is happening, ensure effective information sharing and to develop policies and procedures to address the issues presented by this.

Increasing public concern about 'gangs' fuelled by media interest has led to what may be a somewhat distorted view of the scale of the problem in Brent. In order to look at the question more dispassionately and identify the scale extent and nature of any such activity in the Borough, funds were identified to research the issue and London Metropolitan University were commissioned for this purpose. This research is currently underway – the first phase having included a mapping exercise using various sources to draw up a picture of what is already known to agencies and verifying that with police data. It also included questionnaires for young people. For the purpose of the research the academically resilient Hallsworth and Young (2004) definition of gangs, peer groups and criminal networks has been utilised. These

definitions are recognised by the MPS and other agencies including the Probation Service.

Organised Criminal Group: members are professionally involved in crime for personal gain operating almost exclusively in the grey or illegal marketplace.

Gangs: "Relatively durable, predominantly street based groups of people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernable group for whom crime and violence is integral to the groups identity"

Peer Groups: "Relatively small, unorganised and transient groups composed of peers who share the same space and a common history. Involvement in crime will be mostly non- serious in nature and not integral to the identity of the group".

The researchers have now embarked on the second phase of the research which is more qualitative, interviewing key contacts across the borough including staff from the Police's Borough Intelligence Unit, Youth Offending Service, Probation, NAD Community Group and Operation Trident as well as seeking to interview individuals who have identified gang or peer group involvement. Having experienced some delays the research findings are now due to be ready in January 2010 and we hope that this will assist us, alongside partners, to develop appropriate interventions.

3.7 Working across services and agencies: Recent developments

YOS and Social Care Protocol

Although the YOS is sited within the Social Care division of the department, there are differences in the main drivers for the services delivered by the YOS and those of colleagues elsewhere in Social Care. These derive both from legislation and the guidance governing the work involved, and this has the potential to give rise to conflicts at times in the joint working relationship. Young people come to the attention of either youth offending or social care for a variety of reasons. Whilst the 1989 Children's Act does define a child who offends as a Child In Need (CIN), since offending will impact on their welfare or may be a consequence of or symptomatic of welfare concerns, most referrals can be broadly defined as primarily welfare or justice concerns. Welfare concerns cover issues from child protection to general support for a young person and / or their family. Justice concerns are as a result of offending, or the risks of offending, by the young person.

We do need to work together to maintain the balance between 'care and control'. In order to facilitate this, we have recently undertaken a review of the protocol between the YOS and Social Care Social Work (SCSW) services and have, in addition, had a number of meetings focused on enhancing joint working. This review of the protocol has been undertaken to update the terminology employed, reflect changes in work practices and revise procedures.

A key focus of the protocol is to ensure improved partnership working when children and young people are receiving services from both partners. Where the work required is purely of a justice or welfare nature, the case management is clear. Welfare cases are the responsibility of SCSW Teams; justice cases are the responsibility of the YOS. However, where the issues are less easily defined, the case management responsibility is more complex. This protocol aims to make such roles and responsibilities clear to all practitioners.

This protocol outlines the roles and responsibilities of practitioners who find themselves involved in cases known to another team. In such cases it will help to provide the type of care that good practice dictates. The protocol is designed to assist in developing a positive attitude towards collaborative and complementary models of social work, encouraging clearer understanding of each team's roles and constraints and facilitating information sharing. This, in turn, will benefit the children and families with whom we work. In addition, the protocol covers arrangements for co-working and the transfer of cases between the teams, helping to produce a standard of service consistent with the quality of care that practitioners strive to deliver.

Family Intervention Project

Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) are part of a series of measures aimed at improving outcomes for families and are one of the delivery mechanisms for the Think Family approach. This approach is aimed at transforming the way we work with families, seeking to move towards inter-agency and inter-departmental approaches to service delivery, placing families at their centre. FIPs have been piloted in a number of areas and have proven to be a cost-effective way of delivering positive outcomes for the most difficult and chaotic families.

FIPs offer a programme of intensive work with families, each of whom have a dedicated key worker with a small case-load who is able to offer an intensive focus on the family concerned. The programme requires whole family assessments which give rise to a contract signed by both the family and the service outlining the changes that are expected, the support that will be provided and possible consequences if changes are not made. Key methods in this approach are that the work with both the family as a whole and with individual members is persistent and assertive. Whilst seeking to empower the family, the contract will include sanctions where necessary. A prerequisite for success is that there are effective multi-agency arrangements in place – particularly around information sharing. This includes a commitment from the agencies and departments concerned to offer strategic level support to the FIP. It demands a move towards joint commissioning across adults' and children's services and improved integration between them, as well as improved multi-agency working.

The Brent FIP is in the process of becoming operational as this report is being written and it is intended that work will begin with the families in December. The selection process will be based on referrals of families who meet a number of the following criteria; although the first two are weighted since the express intention of this programme in Brent is to reduce youth offending.

FIP Selection Criteria

- Young person known to the YOS or Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Teams
- A significant adult or sibling is subject to a custodial disposal
- A parent has mental health problems
- A parent has long standing illness, disability or infirmity,
- There has been a recent significant bereavement or sudden incapacity leading to family crisis
- A parent is a substance misuser
- Housing providers have cause for concern likely to lead to eviction for ASB
- History of Domestic Violence
- Children have a history of suspension and exclusion from school or are frequent non-attenders

The national evaluation of FIPs has indicated that whereas the average cost of services to families in the FIP programme is between £8,000- £20,000 the amount spent on comparable ones outside of the programme is between £250,000 and £350,000. For those involved there has been a halving of the number of families facing a range of enforcements and a massive reduction in involvement ion ASB for families successfully exiting the programme. The proportion of families reported to have issues with domestic abuse was reduced from 26% to 8% and the proportion of families reported to have educational/learning issues was cut from 37% to 21%. Poor parenting was assessed to be down from 60% to 32% and very significantly, the number of families reported to have child protection issues was halved by the time they left the project.

3.8 Restructuring and resources

The funding of the YOS reflects its status in that more than 50% of the budget is derived from non-council sources; the bulk of it coming from the YJB, but contributions are also made in both cash and in kind by the Police, Probation and Health Services. These external funds are largely ring- fenced for specific outcomes required by the funding body and it is the core budget, coming from the LA, which is utilised to deliver the main business of supervising young people on court ordered sentences as well as the key costs of maintaining the service.

In the last report to the Scrutiny Committee, the issue of greatly increased case-loads for staff and the concomitant concern about the YOS's ability to deliver a safe service was raised. At that point, we had also embarked on a restructuring of the service which was being drafted within the existing staff cost parameters. Subsequently the Children and Families Department agreed that there would be an increase in the budget allocation to the service allowing us to increase our staffing establishment by three staff. The effect of this has been that we now have two additional case officers and a dedicated post holder working with young people who are on remand or on a bail package. The increase in the number of case officers has allowed a reduction in average case loads, so that although they remain higher than ideal, front-line staffs are able to work more effectively and safely with the young people they supervise than previously. We are concerned that the probable increase in demand for contact time that the Scaled Approach will instigate may have a negative impact on this.

The intention of the restructuring was to prepare the service for the changes in the youth justice system detailed above, to allow for a greater level of quality assurance and to retain experienced staff. Prior to this, case officers were arranged in teams which reflected the severity of the sentence type. All case officers now manage a generic case-load allowing for better use of resources, more closely aligned to the needs of the YRO and the Scaled Approach, but fundamentally also allowing for consistency in the supervisory relationship with young people. Bringing us into line with other services within the Social Care Division, we now have a Principal Officer able to support the Head of Service, strengthening the management structure and, in the case of the YOS with a specific remit for performance management. In addition, we have introduced a layer of Senior Practitioners who are able to focus on particular areas requiring developmental support (for example on our Court Services and on Parenting). By creating a career path within what was a very flat structure, we have been very successful in retaining experienced and highly qualified staff.

3.9 Possible issues for a Task Group

Members may wish to explore these issues in more depth

- The outcome of the research currently underway by London Metropolitan University into the question of gangs and how the Children and Families Department can work with partner agencies to respond to the issues identified.
- The likely impact of the 'Think Family ' approach on how we are able to deliver services to reduce youth offending and re-offending alongside other unwanted outcomes for children and young people.

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