

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

The Youth Justice Strategy:

A New Beginning

YDP Annual Conference 2022

Croke Park

9 November 2022

This report of the YDP Annual Conference 2022 was prepared for the Department of Justice by Dr. Annabel Egan.

Contents

page

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4-5
2. SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS.....	6-18
Keynote address: James Browne, T. D., Minister of State for Law Reform.....	6-7
Presentation: Deaglán Ó Briain, Principal, Criminal Justice Policy (Community Safety), Department of Justice.....	8-9
Presentation: Sinead Carolan, Niamh Skelly, Lorna Osborne-Ryan and Edel Kelly, Best Practice Development Team.....	10-11
Presentation: Eoin O’Meara Daly, Caitlin Lewis and Jackie Dwane, REPPP, University of Limerick.....	12-13
Guest speaker presentation: Rhonda Turner, Principal Clinical Psychologist, National Inter Agency Prevention Programme.....	14-16
Guest speaker presentation: Bronagh Starrs, Director, MSc in Adolescent Psychotherapy, Dublin Counselling and Therapy Centre.....	17-18
3. PANEL DISCUSSION.....	19-22
Seán Redmond, Director, REPPP; Aisling Golden, Justice Programme Manager, Solas Project, Dublin; Naomi Basdeo, Youth Justice Worker, Foróige, Louth; Susan Hopkins, Youth Diversion Project Lead, Crosscare, Dublin; and Superintendent John Finucane, Director, Diversion Programme	
4. GYDP SHOWCASE PRESENTATIONS.....	23-24
CABLE YDP (Co. Louth) Treo Nua YDP (Co. Galway) Port YDP (Co. Laois)	
5. CONCLUSION.....	25
ANNEX 1 Conference agenda.....	26

1. Introduction

The Garda Youth Diversion Projects Annual Conference returned to an in-person format in 2022 and was hosted by the Department of Justice in the Croke Park Conference Centre on 9 November.

The full-day event was very well attended with 356 delegates registered including youth justice workers and members of An Garda Síochána as well as guests speakers, panellists, moderators, members of the event planning team and other relevant members of staff at the Department of Justice.

First and foremost, the conference offered delegates an opportunity to meet face-to-face at a large scale event and collectively consider their own experience of implementing the 2021-2027 Youth Justice Policy for the first time since its launch in April 2021. The conference also provided delegates with an opportunity to consider the approach and priorities set out by Minister of State for Law Reform, James Browne T.D. in his keynote address and by Deaglán Ó Briain, Criminal Justice Policy (Community Safety), Department of Justice in his own presentation. In addition, the conference allowed delegates to update their knowledge of the work undertaken by the REPPP project (Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice) at the University of Limerick and the Best Practice Development Team (BPDT) as well as to engage with and benefit from the expertise of invited moderators, panellists and guest speakers including (in alphabetical order): Naomi Basdeo, ORB Youth Diversion Project (YDP), Dublin; Superintendent John Finucane, Director of the Diversion Programme; Superintendent Paul Franey, Chair, North Fingal Garda Youth Diversion Project; Aisling Golden, Solas YDP, Dublin; Susan Hopkins, Team leader, Crosscare Family Support Service; Clondalkin, Dublin; Colin McAree, Area Manager East, Foróige; Sergeant Damian O'Donovan, JLO; Seán Redmond, REPPP, University of Limerick; Bronagh Starrs, Programme Director, MSc Adolescent Psychotherapy, Dublin Counselling and Therapy Centre; and Rhonda Turner, Principal Clinical Psychologist, National Co-Manager, National Inter Agency Prevention Programme (NIAPP). See Annex I for the full conference programme.

The conference also featured a series of showcase presentations prepared by three very different projects: CABLE YDP (Co. Louth), Treo Nua YDP (Co. Galway) and PORT YDP (Co. Laois).

This report summarises each of the presentations delivered during the conference and sets out the main points raised in the discussions that followed. Section 5 draws together the main themes to emerge from the day.

2. Speaker presentations

Keynote address: James Browne, T. D., Minister of State for Law Reform

“What you do works. It works for families, for communities and for individuals.”

Minister of State for Law Reform, James Browne T.D.

Minister Browne welcomed delegates to the conference and began his presentation by thanking delegates for the work they do helping vulnerable young people and for generously sharing their time and experiences with him during his many visits.

Minister Browne described the 2021-2027 Youth Justice Strategy as a whole-of-government approach that recognises the complexity of youth offending and does not attempt to propose ‘quick fix’ solutions. Rather, the key elements of the Strategy include: prevention, early intervention and diversion.

Minister Browne said that there are now over 100 YDPs across the State and he emphasised the Government’s commitment to ensuring nationwide coverage as a key undertaking. In this regard, Minister Browne said that the Department of Justice is ready to advertise for expressions of interest to create YDPs in four new areas including: South Monaghan; Claremorris and district; South and East County Wicklow; and West County Cork. Minister Browne also said clear evidence that YDPs make a real difference to young people, their families and communities enabled him to champion such projects and secure an annual budget of €30.5 million for youth justice programmes in 2023.

Minister Browne said, while it is not inevitable that trauma would lead children and young people into conflict with the law, he recognised many young people who engage in offending behaviour have experienced significant trauma in their lives. He said nobody is born wanting to commit crime but that their life leads them towards that.

Minister Browne also highlighted early adulthood as a period during which young people faced an increased risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour. As a result, the Programme for Government and the Youth Justice Strategy also committed to developing

diversion-based responses for young people in the 18-24 year-old age bracket. He said that the Department had launched a public consultation on this topic which would be open for submissions until mid-January 2023 and which was accompanied by a discussion document outlining the possible options currently under consideration. Other areas of focus emphasised by Minister Browne in his keynote address included knife crime and misuse of scramblers and quad bikes both of which are being tackled by two subgroups under the Expert Forum on Anti-Social Behaviour which he chairs.

**Presentation: Deaglán Ó Briain, Principal, Criminal Justice Policy (Community Safety),
Department of Justice**

“Our mission is to take what is already excellent service to the next level.”

Deaglán Ó Briain, Department of Justice

Deaglán Ó Briain began his presentation with an overview of the rapid development of the youth justice programme since 2017 when an open call for proposals to develop GYDPs was launched with a budget of €12.6 million. He noted that there are now 106 YDPs in operation around the country with a budget of €28.8 million for 2023.

Mr. Ó Briain said that along with an increased budget, the 2021-2027 Youth Justice Strategy has provided the Diversion Programme with an enhanced mandate that allows expansion into new areas including: early intervention; family support; working with ‘harder-to-reach’ young people; supporting schools; and addressing particular problems such as the misuse of scramblers and quads. He also noted other innovative elements of the strategy such as the emphasis it places on the role of data in ensuring that the approach is supported by a strong evidence base as well as the need for local coordination and nationwide YDP service.

Mr. Ó Briain outlined the approach being taken to the potential development of a diversion service for 18-24 year olds, including the possibility of an adult caution scheme and the need to ensure that structures are put in place to enable young people with mental health issues to be diverted to the appropriate services. He underlined the importance of interagency cooperation in planning and implementing effective responses that see local partners ‘working in lockstep’ with each other to meet the full need of young people. Mr. Ó Briain also outlined the network of mechanisms through which consultation and collaboration takes place including, for example, the YDP Advisory Group and its subgroups, the Youth Justice Advisory Group; and the REPPP Advisory Group in addition to liaison with An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and *ad hoc* meetings with individual community based organisations and projects.

Mr. Ó Briain described evaluation of the Diversion Programme as an ongoing task and a key element of evidence based policy and programming. In this regard, he highlighted the importance of initiatives such as the Action Research Project and the Relationships Project in defining 'what success looks like' as well the role of strategic partnerships in codesigning effective responses such as those involving REPPP, the Best Practice Development Team and a range of other community based organisations.

Mr. Ó Briain outlined the challenge that faces the Department of Justice of supporting the network of 106 YDPs on a comparatively lean budget. He said the purpose of external support was to: support projects to take on new challenges and opportunities, with a particular emphasis at present on working with harder-to-reach children and young people; to provide appropriate training for YDP staff either directly or via commission; to codesign standards; and to assist in resolving problems and addressing issues with compliance when they occur.

With regard to problem solving and compliance, Mr. Ó Briain said that since when difficulties arise projects naturally did not want to 'talk to the funder' as a first step. Therefore, he said it would be very challenging for the Department to intervene early under such circumstances in a way that would be seen as positive and helpful. He said that as a result, further work still needed to be done to effectively separate out this function from the wider role of the Department.

Mr. Ó Briain also emphasised the role of the three REPPP staff members and the four BPDT staff members in providing evidence based external guidance to projects. He said that steps were being taken to combine the REPPP and BPDT into a single team and secure additional resources for the team including a team leader.

Mr. Ó Briain concluded his presentation by setting out the Department's mission with regard to the Diversion Programme which he said was to 'take an excellent service to the next level' by providing the programme with a new mandate and a very significant funding increase and by focusing on value for money, accountability, service standards and performance.

Presentation: Sinead Carolan, Niamh Skelly, Lorna Osborne-Ryan and Edel Kelly, BPDT

“The biggest resource you bring to the network is yourselves. You commit to the relevant paperwork, you are open to elevating your expertise from an evidence based and evidence informed skill set, and you fine tune your practice to build connections and relationships to bring others to a place where they become agents of their own change.” Edel Kelly, BPDT

Sinead Carolan, Niamh Skelly, Lorna Osborne-Ryan and Edel Kelly delivered a presentation outlining the role of the BPDT, its connection to the Youth Justice Strategy and practice developments.

Ms Carolan described the role of the multi-agency BPDT as that of: putting in place capacity building measures and supports to facilitate the development of a standard level of service among all YDPs nationally; supporting the development of a strong evidence base through consultations with REPPP, the University of Ulster and the MHS (YLS/CMI); consulting with the network of YDPs; and piloting and evaluating new practice.

Ms Skelly said that as a multi-agency initiative, collaboration is at the heart of what the BPDT is and does. She described the National YPD Advisory Committee as the key mechanism for BPDT collaboration with a range of stakeholders including: the Department of Justice; An Garda Síochána; REPPP in the University of Limerick; and community based organisations including Foróige, Youth Work Ireland, Crosscare, Extern and those representing YDPs managed by Independent community based organisations.

Ms Skelly emphasised the important role of community based organisations in linking research, policy and strategy and she commended these organisations for their openness and willingness to engage in pilot projects, action research projects, training and development despite being extremely busy with the core work of service delivery. She also welcomed the planned merger of the BPDT and the REPPP which she said would allow more seamless delivery of support to YDPs.

Ms Osborne-Ryan outlined the role of the BPDT in developing guidelines for early intervention and family support in YDPs published in March 2022 and the accompanying referral and consent forms that were distributed in October 2022. She described the purpose of these documents as supporting the work being done on the ground; ensuring that the right people are receiving the service in line with the Youth Justice Strategy; and enabling a standard of practice in terms of referral, assessment and engagement.

Ms Kelly concluded the presentation by highlighting some of the capacity building measures supported by the BPDT including in particular training on Motivational Interviewing and Restorative Practices.

Presentation: Eoin O’Meara Daly, Caitlin Lewis and Jackie Dwane, REPPP

“Time and space for reflection is really important and we need to ask how do we support projects to have that time from now on?” Jackie Dwane, REPPP

Eoin O’Meara Daly, Caitlin Lewis and Jackie Dwane delivered a presentation on the Relationships Project implemented by REPPP.

The speakers opened their presentation by recognising the vital role of the 16 YDPs that contributed to the project. They said that since youth justice workers typically spend 60% of their time developing and building relationships with the young people referred, the purpose of the project was to answer three specific questions:

1. How do relationships with youth justice workers affect young people?
2. How can youth justice workers build relationships that divert young people from crime?
3. How can youth justice workers be supported to implement effective relationships in their work?

With regard to question one, the project found that as a result of their relationships with youth justice workers, young people reported: being more trusting; being more optimistic; being better at navigating their own relationships; having improved coping skills; making better decisions and being more mature; having improved self-worth and confidence.

With regard to question two, the project identified the presence of a safe space/culture in which to develop the relationship as an essential foundational element. The project also identified four other core elements that must always be present including: trust; time; support; and being young person centred. Finally, the project identified seven skills/practices/attributes of youth justice workers that are essential to successfully developing transformative relationships with young people. These include: being fully committed; communicating with empathy; making connections with and advocating for the

young person; being flexible; practicing self-reflection; being honest and challenging constructively; guiding, inspiring hope and building agency.

With regard to question three, the speakers described the experience of working with 16 students and onsite practitioners to pilot and evaluate the relationships model developed by the project. These practitioners were also sponsored by the Department of Justice to pursue an MA in Human Rights and Criminal Justice. The following conclusions were reached through this process: the relationships model works well and should be disseminated and implemented; successful implementation requires time and space for reflection, organisational support and support from the Department of Justice; and there is a clear appetite for further learning and collaboration.

Presentation: Rhonda Turner, Principal Clinical Psychologist, NIAPP

“The good news is: the evidence clearly demonstrates that completion of a programme of specialised community based treatment like what we offer through NIAPP greatly reduces recidivism.” Rhonda Turner, NIAPP.

Rhonda Turner delivered a presentation on her experience as principal clinical psychologist with NIAPP of working with young people who exhibited harmful sexual behaviour. NIAPP is a inter-agency and multi-disciplinary programme that provides a community-based treatment programme for young people who have sexually abused and to their parents and carers.

Ms Turner said that even children in the 3-9 year old age group can exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviour often due to a ‘cognitive error’. But she said that the older a child becomes, the more likely it is that cognitive errors can become core beliefs and therefore very difficult to change.

Ms Turner said it is very important for young people receiving treatment to be aware from the outset of who knows what in relation to their harmful sexual behaviour. In circumstances where there is a well-founded concern but no conviction, she said it was important to work with the young person to enable an admission. Part of this is demonstrating that they will not be treated differently or judged as a result, but rather they will be helped. However, Ms Turner emphasised that prior to making an admission, young people also need to fully understand the obligations of mandated persons

Ms Turner said that when an admission is offered, it was important not to be nervous or uncomfortable with the vocabulary. Rather, the admission should be welcomed as a ‘gutsy’ move. The young person could be asked what made them decide to share it and told that their admission would make things easier for the victim. It was also important to explain that ‘the rules are different’ for young people who exhibit harmful sexual behaviour and that it would be necessary to assess whether or not they posed an ongoing risk to other children or young people and to take steps to manage this if so.

Ms Turner said that there is huge range of sexual harm involving young people as perpetrators, from sexting to contact sexual abuse. She said that most young people do not think of sexting as child pornography. In fact, she said that in her experience a lot of young males think of sexting as part of the courtship process and one that comes before 'meeting' (i.e. kissing).

According to Ms Turner, a small cohort of young people who exhibit harmful sexual behaviour have a self-reported sexual interest in children. In such instances, one or more of the following contributing factors are often present: exposure to pornography; foetal alcohol syndrome or a history of maternal substance abuse during pregnancy; autism; and trauma, although not necessarily sexual trauma. With regard to autism as a contributing factor, Ms Turner explained that young people on the autism spectrum can fixate on particular behaviours when they become sexually curious without considering the harm caused to the other person.

Ms Turner also said that in her experience children and young people do not fully understand consent. In particular, she said many young people do not comprehend the 'freeze' response to unwelcome sexual contact and understood silence and/or freezing as tacit consent. She said that further work needed to be done to ensure that young people understood the interrelated concepts of respect, consent and responsibility. She said that they needed to know the clear boundaries between what is legal and illegal.

Ms Turner said there is clear evidence that completion of a programme of specialised community based treatment such as that offered through NIAPP greatly reduces recidivism. In this regard she referred in particular to an article by James Worling and Tracey Curwen published in the journal 'Child Abuse and Neglect' in 2000. The article reported a recidivism rate of 5.17% for sexual offenses among treated adolescents as compared to 17.8% for adolescents who were not treated/did not complete their treatment. However, Ms Turner also highlighted the absence of indicators that could assess risk and predict the likelihood of recidivism once adulthood is reached. She said these indicators exist for adults who have sexually abused but not for children and young people because of difficulties regarding data protection and consent when they reach the age of 18.

During a questions and answers session moderated by JLO Sergeant Damian O'Donovan, Ms Turner was asked what signals youth justice workers should look out for that might indicate a young person is motivated to engage in sexually harmful behaviour. Ms Turner said one indication was the presence of coercive and controlling behaviours directed at peers or even older teens. For example, an individual might become very pushy or pressurising when they don't get what they want. Poor online behaviour that is clearly crossing a line was another indicator including catfishing in particular.

Ms Turner was also asked about the relationship between pornography and young people engaging in harmful sexual behaviour. She said that the average age at which children first access pornography online is 12 years and that children and young people should be given the facts about pornography. They should be helped to understand that frequent use of pornography can lead to sexual dysfunction. She said that they should also be asked what kind of pornography they were using. Are they watching people in distress? If so, they should be helped to understand that this is harmful to their psychosexual development and that they may need help with it.

Ms Turner also said that consent and respect in general should be part of the conversation from a young age. She said that to make talking comfortable for children and young people, it was better to open a conversation in the car, or maybe when playing a video game or watching TV together. She said that many children and young people find traditional face-to-face 'talks' very uncomfortable.

**Presentation: Bronagh Starrs, Director, MSc in Adolescent Psychotherapy, Dublin
Counselling and Therapy Centre**

“The adult world generates a lot of shame in these kids. Shame free relational contact with adults is so important, and that is something that you as youth justice workers can provide.”
Bronagh Starrs, Adolescent Psychotherapist.

Bronagh Starrs delivered a presentation on how the development of the brain during adolescence can have a profound impact on behaviour.

Ms Starrs described the various regions of the brain with a particular emphasis on the pre-frontal cortex and the limbic system. Ms Starrs said that the pre-frontal cortex is responsible for such things as planning, working memory, organisation, mood control, reasoning and decision-making. By contrast, the limbic system is responsible for the emotional elements in our lives, and is related to memory formation. She also described the role of the chemical dopamine which is released within the limbic system in anticipation of reward and on delivery of reward, leading to feelings of pleasure.

Ms Starrs said that during adolescence, the limbic system develops more quickly than the prefrontal cortex with the result that from the age of about 11, adolescents begin to favour behaviours driven by emotion and reward over rational decision making. She said that while a certain level of limbic activation in adolescents is developmentally appropriate, some limbic activated adolescents are driven to feel the pleasurable effect of dopamine all the time, leading them to act impulsively and engage in risky behaviours such as substance use and unprotected sex.

Ms Starrs said that while most adolescents ‘grow out’ of this phase as the brains matures, impulsivity becomes entrenched in some young people. In this regard Ms Starrs said that entrenched impulsivity can be the result of trauma during adolescence and/or growing up within a limbic activated family culture.

Ms Starrs said that the predominant adult strategies for 'dealing with' limbic activated adolescents are nagging, punishing and lecturing/advising. However, she said that nagging punishing and lecturing often serve only to create shame in limbic activated adolescents, reinforcing their drive to experience pleasure as a way to cope with how they feel in the adult world. At the same time, even gently delivered advice can be wasted on limbic activated adolescents since they learn through experience rather than listening. As an alternative to these strategies, Ms Starrs she emphasised the importance of shame free relational contact and pro social engagement. She also emphasised the role of non-traditional therapies - such as sand box therapy – when working with limbic activated adolescents since in most instances they find talk therapy exceptionally difficult to engage with.

During the questions and answers session moderated by Superintendent Paul Franey, Ms Starrs was asked whether mindfulness practice could work as a strategy to support limbic activated adolescents since this was increasingly being incorporated into school-based wellness programmes. She responded that mindfulness and other practices that aim to activate the parasympathetic nervous system can be beneficial but warned against presenting such practices as a solution prematurely. She said that limbic activated adolescents would need to be provided with a very clear rationale and a lot of support before they could engage. She said that in the absence of this, it was not realistic to expect limbic activated adolescents who are in general chronically under stimulated in school to benefit.

Ms Starrs remarked that teachers do not receive any training in how to build relationships with limbic activated adolescents in order to keep them on board with their schooling and would often not be aware that it is necessary to differentiate the way they work with limbic activated students, frontal lobe activated students and cerebral cortex activated students in order to support each of them reach their full potential.

Ms Starrs concluded by saying that with the right supports, in theory all adolescents could develop into emotionally balanced, frontal lobe activated adults but that this was not possible within the existing system. Instead, she said, we pathologise limbic activated behaviours leading to an exponential increase in diagnoses of ADD, ODD, ADHD etc with boys being much more profoundly impacted than girls.

3. Panel discussion

Colin McAree, Area Manager East, Foróige moderated a panel discussion on the themes of no wrong door, working with harder to reach children and young people, supporting schools and family support. Superintendent John Finucane also contributed to the panel as Director of the Diversion Programme.

No wrong door

Mr. Seán Redmond, Director, REPPP said that the aspiration of the no wrong door approach is accessible pathways, agencies working together and collaboration. In practical terms, he said no wrong door is about agencies saying 'yes' rather than 'no'. He said it is about flipping the presumption to 'yes you are welcome' and then making sure that the services on offer are excellent. He said the ambition is that there would not only be no wrong door but an excellent service behind every door.

Mr. Redmond said that agencies are not being encouraged to work together in order to indulge each other but because this was necessary to achieve the best outcomes for young people. He said that we cannot continue to break the lives of young people down into individual risks that are addressed by different agencies. He said that young people did not ask for the services they need to be segregated in the way that they are and it does not serve them well.

Mr. Redmond welcomed the fact that the no wrong door approach is now an accepted part of the conversation and said that stewardship at the top from the Department and from practitioners made this possible.

Mr. Redmond concluded by saying that while a straw pole on the no wrong door approach might suggest that it does not yet exist in practice, he believed that examples of excellent practice could be found and that over the next few years the REPPP team would be working to do just this.

Harder to reach

Ms . Aisling Golden, Justice Programme Manager, Solas Project introduced the project which she said works with harder to reach young people in Dublin 8 and Dublin 12. She said the project targets prolific offenders often caught in the poverty trap including those involved in the drug trade and gangland crime.

She said the key to engaging with the target group was relentless outreach. She explained that youth justice workers with the project actively pursue the young people being targeted and had come to expect frequent rejection as part of this process in its early stages.

She said the target group was comprised of young people who have not survived in any other service and that it was necessary to take time to slowly build their trust. She said it was crucial for youth justice workers to be honest about what they can provide and then focus on doing exactly as promised.

Ms Golden said that there are no easy wins when working with harder to reach young people. In this regard, she said that when young people participating in the project continue to be involved in serious offending it can be hard to justify why the project is standing by them to the Gardaí and the community. She said that when this happens, youth justice workers need to be very clear about their role and why they are working with harder to reach young people. She concluded by saying that the project has never refused to a case because it is too hard. She said the project was there to work with the hardest of hard cases when none else will.

Engagement with schools

Naomi Basdeo, Youth Justice Worker, Foróige, Louth described the work of the ORB Project in supporting the young people participating to remain in school. She said the success of the project in doing so was based on two factors: the manner in which the project engages with schools, and the way in which the project engages with young people and their families. She said that by making themselves available to schools, attending meetings with JLOs, building strong relationships with principals and teachers and really understanding the often chaotic lives of the young people involved, youth justice workers with the ORB project were in a good position to advocate on behalf of young people with schools.

Ms Basdeo said it takes time to achieve this position and emphasised that it was important to allow the young people concerned to see the link that was being established with their school as this helped them to feel at the centre of the work being done.

Family support

Susan Hopkins, Youth Diversion Project Lead, Crosscare, Clodalkin, Dublin described the way in which the project supports families affected by crime. She said that when young people and their families come to the programme they are very vulnerable and in need of a wrap around service. She said that the project typically works with families for 8-10 weeks with a focus on personal development and providing peer support to parents.

She said that the project has developed a very strong relationship with the local community and with Gardaí locally. She said that a lot of families would be on first name terms with the community Gardaí and self-refer to the project.

She described her work with a particular family following an assault. She said that because the project is embedded in the local community she knows exactly who to ring to obtain the services and support needed when things go wrong. She described how the community police were involved in developing a safety plan for the family involved and would check in with her regularly so everyone could stay on top of developments.

Diversion Programme

The final guest to contribute to the discussion panel was Superintendent John Finucane, Director of the Diversion Programme.

Superintendent Finucane expressed the view that the justice system is structured in such a way that when a law is broken there 'has to be a punishment' but he said that most people end up in prison 'because of their circumstances'. He said that it costs approximately €80,000 per year to maintain a prisoner in gaol which he described as 'a lot of money and a lot of missed opportunities.'

Superintendent Finucane said that the Diversion Programme received about 15,000 referrals a year involving about 10,000 individual children. He said that 75% of these are dealt with through cautions, both formal and informal. The challenge was the remaining 25%, he said. He said that the decision regarding whether or not a child or young person will go to court is set out in a suitability report and hugely dependent on the advice of the responsible JLO.

Superintendent Finucane said that the projects were vital in providing the young people referred with a structure and an outlet. He said that the difference one-good-adult can make in the life of a young person is remarkable. For example, he said that he had interviewed for a JLO position recently and that the applicant was a former participant of a YDP. He also said that there are JLOs and community police in every area and encouraged the youth justice workers present to make contact with them as they were keen to connect with the YDPs.

Superintendent Finucane concluded by thanking the participants for the work they do for which he said 'we are all heavily indebted.'

4. Showcase presentations: Cable YDP, Co. Louth; Treo Nua YDP, Co. Galway; Port YDP, Co. Laois

As in previous years, the work undertaken by YPDs was also featured at the conference in a number of showcase presentation delivered by youth justice workers throughout the day.

The first project featured was the Cable YDP in Drogheda, County Louth. Emily Murray, Senior Youth Officer and Nicole O’Keefe, Youth Officer described the growth of the project from one worker in 2008 to a team of seven currently. They also spoke about the drug feud between rival gangs in the townland of Moneymore, and how it impacted the neighbourhood in which the project is located as well as many of its participants. In this context, they highlighted the importance of the family support and early intervention services provided by the project since funding was increased to meet the need identified in the aftermath of the feud. The presentation also featured video interviews with a number of young people involve in the project who spoke about the ways in which the project had helped them.

The second project featured was Treo Nua YDP in Tuam, Co. Galway. Sylwia Gryczuk, Project Coordinator, Maria Courtney, Youth Justice Worker and Elain Tannian, Duty Social Worker in Tuam Social Work Department said that the project was a good example of the ‘no wrong door’ approach in action. They said that rolling out this approach in practice was greatly aided by the fact that the project was based in a Family Resource Centre and therefore close to other services with whom very strong relationships had developed. The presentation included a video case study with one participant who took part in the project for four years, during which he completely turned his life around with support from TREO Nua and an emotional testimonial from a grateful parent.

The final YDP featured on the day was Port YDP in Mountrath, Co. Laois. Lillian Ashe, Youth Justice Worker described the work of the project, with a particular emphasis on

Restorative Practices. She described a number of cases in which she was involved and said that the training she received in Restorative Practices provided a highly practical framework for relationship building that enhanced her passion for the job and was of great use in her professional life as a youth justice worker.

5. Conclusions

The main theme to emerge from the conference was the expansion of the YDP mandate set out in the Youth Justice Strategy and the work underway as a result to deliver a broader range of targeted services including in particular early intervention, family support and working with harder to reach young people. Alongside expansion of the YDP mandate, realisation of the commitment to provide nationwide YDP coverage was also highlighted on numerous occasions and it was confirmed that expressions of interest for four new YDPs would be sought in the short term.

The need to explore the possibility of working with young people in the 18-24 year-old category was also frequently referenced as was the desirability of a no wrong door approach to service delivery as well as the challenges involved in implementing such an approach within the existing structures.

The importance of evidence based practice and the willingness of youth justice workers to acquire new skills and knowledge relevant to their practice was also evident throughout the day and particularly so in the work presented by the Best Practice Development Team and the REPPP team as well as in delegates' enthusiastic response to the presentations delivered by Rhona Turner and Bronagh Starrs.

ANNEX I CONFERENCE AGENDA

YDP Conference Programme- 9th November 2022

The Youth Justice Strategy: A New Beginning

09.30 am	Arrivals/ Tea and Coffee
10.00am	Introduction and Housekeeping
10.10am	Keynote address by Minister of State Browne
10.30am	YDP Showcasing: CABLE YDP
10.45am	Presentation: Deaglán Ó Briain
11.05am	Q & A
11.20am	Tea/Coffee
11.40pm	Presentation: REPPP & BPDT
12.15pm	Panel Discussion: Seán Redmond: REPPP, Ashling Golden: Solas Project, Naomi Basdeo: ORB Project, Superintendent John Finucane: Director of the Diversion Programme, Sue Hopkins: YDP Family Support Service Dublin West. Discussing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Wrong Door• Harder-to-Reach• Supporting schools Moderated Q & A: Colin McAree
01.00pm	YDP Showcasing: Treo Nua YDP
01.15pm	Lunch
02.30pm	Guest Speaker: Rhonda Turner- Principal Clinical Psychologist (National Inter Agency Prevention Programme National Co-Manager).
03.00pm	Moderated Q & A: JLO Sergeant Damian O'Donovan
03.15pm	Guest Speaker: Bronagh Starrs: Adolescent Psychotherapist
03.45pm	Moderated Q & A: Superintendent Paul Franey
04.00pm	YDP Showcasing: Port YDP
04.15pm	Conference Close
04.30pm	End