CYCJ

Children and Young People's Centre for Justice

Stakeholder Survey

2021

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Introduction

The CYCJ Stakeholder Survey is a biennial exercise designed to gather the views of key stakeholder groups: practitioners; children and young people; parents and carers; and communities (via community councils). The purpose is to help shape both *what* we do by informing the content of the CYCJ annual workplan, and *how* we do it, by gathering views on our modes of delivery.

In 2020 it was decided to postpone the survey, as the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced capacity within the CYCJ team and created additional pressures for many of our stakeholders, that we did not wish to add to. By 2021, many of these pressures had not gone away. We were also aware of consultation fatigue among our stakeholders. For these reasons we decided to simply issue a brief online stakeholder survey to our key stakeholder groups, with four separate surveys linked by one survey access point. The surveys were designed to be appealing and accessible to their target audience, although we are mindful that an online approach is not ideal for everyone, and we aim to return to a multi-modal approach in the next iteration of the Stakeholder Survey.

The survey was distributed via our social media channels, e-bulletin and practitioner networks between November 9 and December 12, 2021. In total 266 responses were received, but when these were cleaned to only include surveys where the respondent had completed at least one substantive answer a total of **157** responses were retained.

The majority of responses were from the workforce (130), with smaller numbers from children, young people, parents and carers, or community councils.

Practitioner / workforce	130	82.8%
Child / young person aged 12-18	15	9.6%
Parent / care	6	3.8%
Community council	6	3.8%
Total	**157**	**100%**

Workforce

Out of the 130 practitioners who responded, the majority were involved in the CHS in some way (either as a Panel Member or in another role).
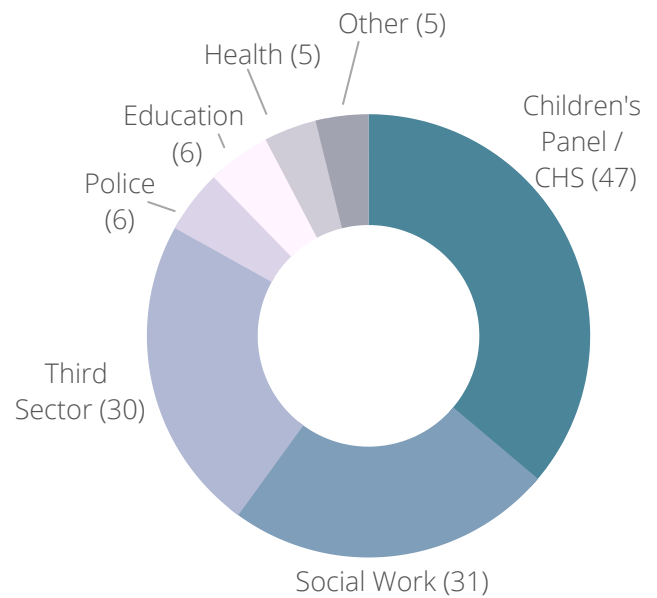
Most Pressing Issue

When asked what was the most pressing issue in youth justice right now, all 130 professionals responded and the most common suggestions were:

▶ A lack of resources and inadequate funding for services (26 responses)

▶ Mental health and trauma and a lack of supports or trauma-informed practice (19 responses)

▶ A lack of equality in society, lack of fairness and consistency in the system (11 responses)

▶ The criminalisation of children and a low age of criminal responsibility (9 responses)

▶ Substance use (drugs) (7 responses)

Other (5)
Health (5)
Education (6)
Police (6)
Children's Panel / CHS (47)
Third Sector (30)
Social Work (31)

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RESORCES

Lack of resources, services, adequate funding

Practice Needs

The workforce described their most challenging practice issues as:

▶ A lack of resources and services, especially in prevention and early intervention or in specialist provision (43 responses)

▶ Delays and bureaucracy, especially within the court system (17 responses)

▶ Lack of understanding towards young people and their behaviours, or attitudinal and cultural issues (17 responses). Policing practices were mentioned separately, but linked to this response (11 responses)

▶ Lack of access to mental health supports and trauma informed services (16 responses)

▶ How to better engage with young people and families (12 responses)

▶ Issues related to partnerships and multi-agency working (i.e. lack of communication, understanding) (12 responses)

▶ Issues relating to parents (parenting practices or parenting supports) (11 responses)

▶ Ongoing Covid restrictions (mainly virtual hearings, but also the impact on young people and support services) (10 responses)
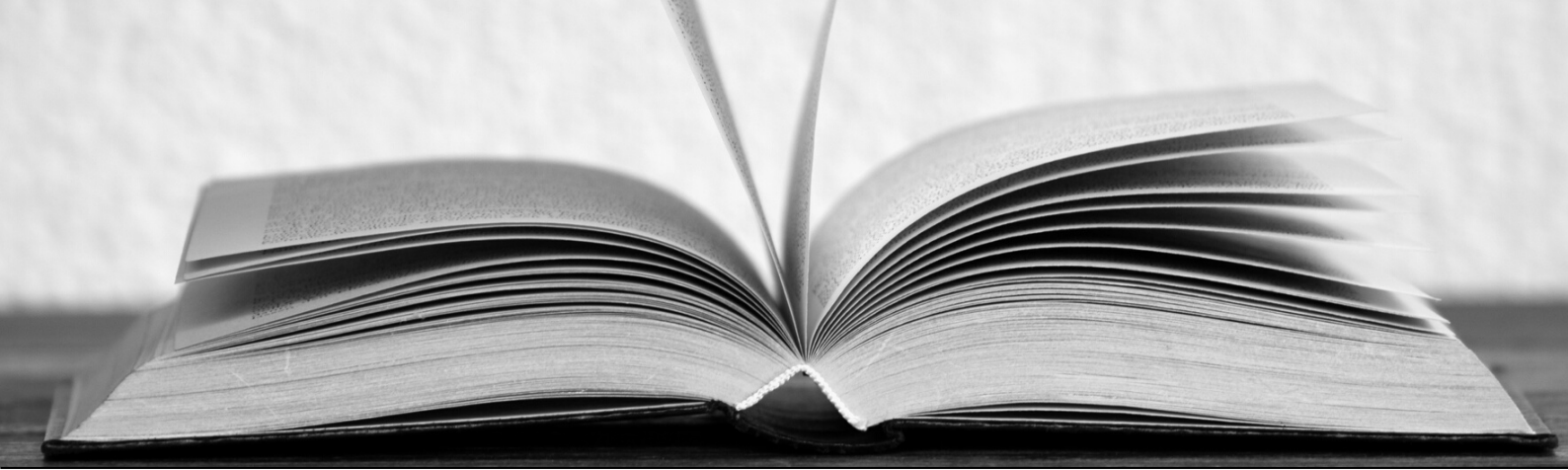
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RESOURCES

Lack of resources, services, esp. preventative and specialist

BUREAUCRACY

Delays and bureaucracy, esp. within courts

Knowledge Needs

The workforce described their most common knowledge needs as:

▶ What effective practice and effective services look like (27 responses)

▶ What supports are available both locally and nationally (20 responses)

▶ Information on legal or justice processes and decisions (18 responses)

▶ What children's views and experiences are and how to support them to increase their voice (15 responses)

▶ Why children become involved in offending; what their backgrounds and needs are (11 responses)

▶ Effective practice for early intervention and prevention specifically (11 responses)

▶ What longer term strategies and plans there are for children and young people in conflict with the law (8 responses)

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

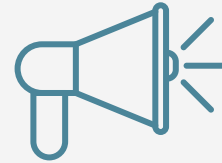What effective practice / effective services look like

SUPPORTS AVAILABLE

What supports are available locally and nationally

What can CYCJ do to support the workforce?

More training (inc. webinars).
Routes into offending; mental
health/trauma; effective
interventions, gangs etc.
(20 responses)

Support young people's
voices/lived experience
(11 responses)

Lobby/influence
Government, especially in
relation to securing funding
and resources
(11 responses)

Provide information and
resources
(9 responses)

Provide research and
evidence on effective practice
(8 responses)

·Professional networking/fora
(7 responses)

Children and Young People

Fifteen children and young people responded, with an average age of 15 years (range 12 to 18). Nine were female, four were male, and two did not specify a gender. Most (nine) lived in urban areas (a city or big town) and three lived in rural areas.
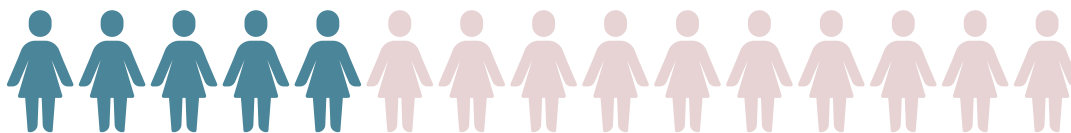
Is offending by children an issue in your community?

Most (nine) felt that offending by children was an issue in their community at least some of the time, five were not sure and one said it was not an issue. Of those who said 'yes', all lived in an urban area.

Some or all of the time

Not sure

No

Feeling Safe

Children generally felt safe at school, rating this as 6.2 on average (where 0 was not safe at all, and 10 was very safe). However, this was variable and ranged from 3 to 10. Slightly more than half (five out of nine who responded) rated themselves in the upper half in terms of safety (6 or above). Two ratings of '0' were excluded as it was assumed that the slider used to rate their answer had simply been returned to the base (0) position. If these were genuine responses then this score overestimates how safe children felt at school.

Children felt safer (7.5 on average) in their communities during the day than they did at school. Again there was a substantial range, from 5 to 10, and two zero ratings were excluded for the reasons given above. Nine out of the 11 who responded rated their safety as 6 or above. Two children rated their communities at the mid-point (5) but no children rated themselves in the bottom half in terms of safety.

Children felt less safe in their communities at night (5.3 on average), but there was notable variability, ranging from 3 to 10. More children (seven out of 11) rated their communities as unsafe (in the bottom half) at night. This included both urban and rural communities.

How safe do you feel (0 not at all safe, 10 very safe)?

At school	Community by day	Community by night

Supporting children in conflict with the law

Most children and young people understood that children who get involved in offending often face adversity in their backgrounds. Factors such as lack of parental care and mental health issues were mentioned by many (six out of nine). Others mentioned peer pressure and a lack of things to do as key factors in offending behaviour.

When asked what young people should do to prevent or stop offending behaviours, many of the responses were beyond the control of the individual, but related to social support and service provision (i.e. have a nicer family, have strong support networks, better mental health support etc). Actions that young people could take themselves included getting a hobby and occupying their time.

Children thought that adults could educate children, listen to them and provide safe spaces for children to hang out or access support.

Parents and Carers

Six parents or carers completed the survey. On average their child had been aged 14 when they came into contact with the justice system. This excludes one parent/carer whose child was aged five on first contact (this meant contact with the Children's Hearings system, although at the time it was not possible for a referral to 'officially' be made on offence grounds until age eight).

Children had had contact with various parts of the justice system. Two had been stopped and searched, two had received a verbal warning, three had been placed on a Compulsory Supervision Order, four had been referred to the Children's Report, three had received a Compulsory Supervision Order. Three had been to court, and one had been to a YOI.

Experience of Justice

Parents described this experience as shocking and frightening. Most mentioned that they had not had support at all, or it was too little too late. Many described unhelpful treatment in the system, using words as 'pompous' or 'disgusted'. One described the delays due to Covid as unhelpful. Others felt there was a lack of understanding about their child's needs or their situation.

Understanding of Justice

Most parents and carers felt that they did not have a great understanding of the justice process as their child went through it: two had a good understanding, one had some understanding and three very little understanding. Parents viewed their role as being to offer support and to protect their child and know their rights. Parents wanted professionals to be empathetic and trauma informed (they felt that this had not been the case), and to better engage their child in supports.

When asked what CYCJ could do to help most suggested training for professionals, and also providing advice and information on sources of support.

Community Councils

Six community council members responded. Four were from the same Local Authority area (although it is not clear if they were from the same community council). Half said antisocial behaviour was the biggest issue facing their community. Three stated a lack of facilities and services. One said regeneration.

All communities stated that a lack of facilities and things to do was the biggest issue facing young people in their communities. All bar one respondent said that offending by young people was an issue in their community (two 'a lot and three 'a little'), with the solution identified as having access to safe spaces and prosocial activities in communities.