



WIG

The Whitehall & Industry Group
connecting the sectors



'Society' Series

Challenges of COVID-19 recovery in the youth justice system

Expert Insight

We were joined by Keith Fraser, Chair of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to discuss the role of YJB, and in particular how they are working to overcome the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable young people in the UK. He touched upon points including:

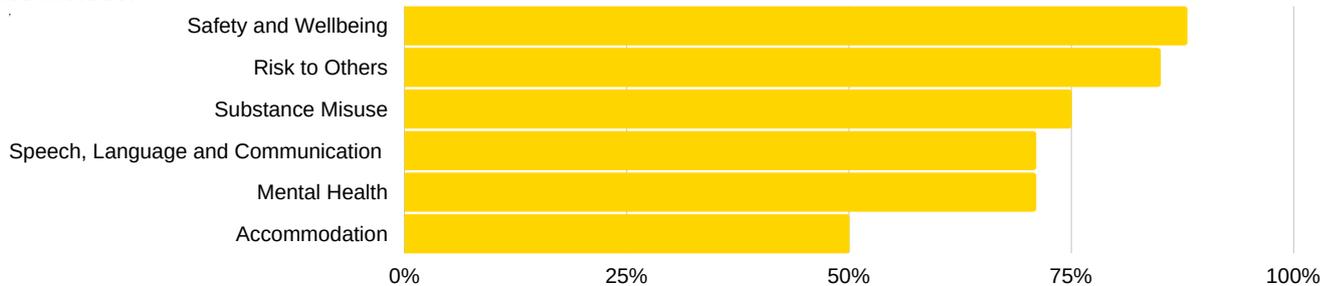


- The majority of children who are either in the youth justice system, or are at risk of entering, have multiple, complex needs.
- Challenges faced by YJB during the pandemic have included: court delays and virtual hearings, less access to education and exercise for children in detention, no visits, and reduced face to face time with youth offending teams.
- One of Keith's key areas of focus as chair is reducing the over-representation of children from specific groups, and ensuring their fair treatment within the youth justice system.
- The YJB aims to take a 'child first' approach, involving holistic consideration of children's needs.
- Meeting the YJB's aims requires collaboration with key stakeholders in the system, as well as wider partners. Many of the barriers to increased collaboration have been overcome during the COVID-19 response.

Presentation Spotlight

There are a total of 19 concern types and 70% of children were found to have at least 5 of 19 concerns.

Examples include:



Our members' questions

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in. They posed some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- Working effectively with both local authorities and non-statutory partners to divert disadvantaged children and young people away from crime into positive programs, particularly in areas that have been impacted by austerity.
- How the private sector can support better outcomes for young people, for example through targeted interventions around digital poverty and training provision.
- How the YJB is working with HMPPS and MoJ to reduce the amount of time children spend in cells during the ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery period.

WIG members can listen to Keith's presentation [here](#)

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