Blackpool youth justice service

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Blackpool youth justice service (YJS) is a multi-agency team that sits within Blackpool's wider adolescent service.

We are a statutory service that works with children under the age of 18 to prevent and reduce offending behaviour. Blackpool youth justice service takes a child first, restorative and trauma informed approach to support children and their families; striving to reduce the impact of youth crime on victims and communities by ensuring children achieve and maintain positive, health and pro-social futures.

The partnership is made up of the following services:

- Children's social care
- Probation
- Health
- Police
- Education

Responsibilities

Children's social care

We work closely with colleagues in social care to ensure that the children we are working with are kept safe.

Probation

We have close links with the national probation service who support children who are turning 18 and still on a court order and need ongoing support from probation.

Health

We have close links with health who offer health assessments and can sign post to services for ongoing support. They also help children and families to access the health services that they need.

Police

We work with the police who support the assessment and delivery of out of court disposals (see section below)

Education

Our education and training officer works closely with education, training and employment providers to ensure that children can access their statutory right to an education at the correct number of hours. Where a child is no longer of school age, they support them to secure appropriate training or employment.

Prevention and diversion

What is prevention?

Prevention is support and intervention with children (and their parents/carers) who are at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour. The aim being to address unmet needs, safeguard, promote positive outcomes and stop children entering the formal youth justice system.

All support should be proportionate, aimed at addressing unmet needs and supporting prosocial life choices.

What is diversion?

Diversion is where children have committed an offence and require extra support to stop them from entering the criminal justice system. This may involve the youth justice service delivering support/intervention that may or may not be voluntary and/or signposting children (and parent/carers) into relevant services. All support should be proportionate, aimed at addressing unmet needs and supporting prosocial life choices.

What happens when you're arrested - Appropriate adults (AA)

If you are arrested and taken to the police station or you attend for a voluntary interview, you meet the custody sergeant on the desk, told what your rights are and held in the child friendly area of the custody suite.

The police are responsible for making sure that you have an appropriate adult who will make sure you are okay - they call this a welfare check.

You also need to have an appropriate adult when you are interviewed by the police. An appropriate adult needs to be over the 18, they cannot be a police officer or employed by the police. Ideally this should be your parent or carer as they know you best. If your parent/carer cannot act as appropriate adult the youth justice service has an internal service that can support, you. They are available 7 days a week.

Their role is to make sure that you know your rights and entitlements, are treated fairly and have breaks should you need them. They will also advocate on your behalf making sure that any issues are addressed. Appropriate adults are not there to give legal advice that is the role of your solicitor.

If you would like to know more about appropriate adults

Out of court resolutions

Youth resolutions - what are they?

If you commit certain types of offences and you admit it, you may be able to get a youth caution or youth conditional caution instead of going to court. These are also known as **out of court resolutions** - this is a way of dealing with an offence without going to court. They allow the police to deal quickly and fairly with low level, often first-time offending.

Youth cautions and youth conditional cautions are formal warnings that are kept on record by the police.

To decide if a caution or conditional caution is the best thing to do, the police will refer you to the child resolution panel made up of youth justice staff, police and other relevant agencies.

To help with the decision, a member of the youth justice service may contact you or your parents/carer(s) to arrange meeting with you. If you are under 16, your parent or carer must be at this meeting.

There are a few things that can happen when a child is arrested by the police for committing an offence and you have admitted that you have done it.

Youth caution

A youth caution is a formal out of court disposal that can be given to children under the age of 18. You could be asked to do some work with the youth justice service (YJS) around the reasons that you got into trouble. This is voluntary, however, if you do not work with them and get into trouble again, it could impact on what happens next.

It is not a conviction, but it will show on an enhanced record check. This could impact on where you work in the future.

Youth conditional caution

A youth conditional caution is a formal warning that is kept on record by the police. It can be given to young people under the age of 18 who have committed a criminal offence.

If you receive a youth conditional caution, it will include at least one condition that you have to complete. This is not voluntary and you must attend all the sessions with your youth justice officer. If you do not complete the programme, you might have to go to court.

Examples of what can be part of a youth conditional caution are:

- Doing some community work to make up for your offence
- Drugs or alcohol work
- Writing a letter of apology
- Victim awareness
- Positive activities
- Access to other services

Future disclosures

Youth cautions and youth conditional cautions are not convictions but are formal criminal justice disposals.

Youth cautions come under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offences Act 1994 and do not need to be disclosed unless you have been specifically asked if you have ever received a caution.

Youth conditional cautions also do not have to be disclosed after 3 months, if the conditions are met, unless you have been specifically asked if you have ever received a caution.

However, if you are asked to complete a full Disclosure and Barring Service, for example if you are working with children or vulnerable people, a youth caution or youth conditional caution will show up.

Youth court

Some offences cannot be dealt with by using out of court resolutions and you may have to go to court where you could receive a court order. This will mean you have to work with the youth justice service. For more information see the court section.

Going to youth court - What to expect

If you have been charged with an offence, it means that the Crown Prosecution Service have enough evidence to convict you. This will be done in a youth court. We know that going to court can be scary and daunting but try not to worry. We have youth justice officers who attend court regularly and will be there to help and support you and your family and talk you through what to expect.

Who will I see in court

- Usher
- Solicitor
- Magistrates or district judge
- Legal advisor
- Youth justice service
- Crown Prosecution Service

Usher

An usher will be there (they wear a long black coat) they will show you into the court room and tell your family or carers where they should sit.

Solicitor

You might sit next to your solicitor or have to stand in the dock depending on what the court ask you to do - they will tell you when you are there so try not to worry about this. They are there to speak for you in court.

Magistrates and district judge

At the front of the court there will either be three magistrates or 1 district judge. These are the people who listen to your solicitor, the Crown Prosecution Service and youth justice service and make a decision about what will happen.

Legal advisor

In front of the magistrates or district judge there is a legal advisor. This person records what happens in court and sometimes they advise magistrates about the law and what they can do when sentencing you.

Crown Prosecution Service

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will also be there. Their job is to tell the court about what the police and victim have said and tell the court what they think should happen to you.

Victims

The victim of your offences can attend court if they want to. They can talk to the court about how your actions have affected them. Their statement can be read out in court.

The press

There may be times where the press can be in court and can report on the trial or sentencing. They have to apply to do this; however, they cannot name you unless the court says they can.

After you have been in court the youth justice officer will talk to you and your parents/carers about what has happened to make sure you understand what will happen next. These are the sentences available at court:

- Referral Order
- Youth Rehabilitation Order, often referred to as a YRO
- Detention and Training Order (custody)

Some very serious offences have to be heard at the crown court where a judge has the option of giving a long custodial sentence. These are called Section 90/91 sentences. If this is a possibility for you then your youth justice officer will talk you and your family/carer(s) through this.

Bail and remand

Bail

There are different types of bail. The police can give you bail; this is normally to attend the next available youth court; court can also give your bail. These are normally conditional bail and unconditional bail.

Unconditional bail

The court can give you unconditional bail. This means that you have to come back to youth court on the date and time they tell you. There are no other restrictions - so you can go about your daily life as normal.

Conditional bail

The court can also give you conditional bail. This means that there will be things that you have to do and stick to before your next court hearing. These conditions can be things like:

- Seeing a youth justice officer to prepare a report
- Electronically monitored curfew
- Not being able to enter certain areas

- Not being able to contact victims

If you fail to stick the conditions, you can be arrested and bought back before the youth court. Breach of bail is not a criminal offence; however, the court can change the conditions and, in some circumstances, remand you into secure accommodation.

Remand

It could be that your offence is so serious that the youth court remand you into custody. There are strict conditions that have to be met before any court can remand a child into custody. The youth justice officer and youth court will work together with your solicitor to see if you meet this condition.

If you do meet these conditions then the youth justice service will advocate for alternatives to secure accommodation, where they assess that it is safe to do so.

Remand to custody (Youth detention accommodation)

This means that you will go to secure accommodation until your next court hearing. This means that you will not be able to go home until the court decide you can. After each hearing you may have to go back to secure accommodation until you are sentenced. The nearest places to Blackpool are:

- Barton Moss - Manchester (under 15)
- Weatherby YOI - Yorkshire (15 and over)

Remand to the local authority

If you stay in the community, you will still have strict conditions and you will have a home provided by the local authority. This might not be in Blackpool. If you do not stick to these conditions, you will go back to court and may have to go into secure accommodation.

When you are remanded, you become a looked after child. You will have a social worker and an independent reviewing officer. They will make sure that all your needs are met.

Referral orders

A Referral Order is usually made when a child appears in youth court for the first time and pleads guilty to an offence. A Referral Order can last anywhere between 3 and 12 months, the court decide on the length of the order.

At the Referral Order panel meeting the offence will be discussed and the panel will look at how you can make up for the offence(s). Victims will have the opportunity, if they wish, to say how they have been affected by the offence, ask questions, receive a letter of apology and discuss how you can make up for your offending behaviour. At the end of the panel a contract will be agreed between you and the panel which includes the work that you will have to do.

The contract is an individual plan of the interventions that will be undertaken. These interventions aim to repair the harm that has been caused and support you to make positive changes and not get into trouble again. A contract could include:

- Supervision sessions with a youth justice officer
- Restorative Justice, including reparation
- Referrals to other agencies such as substance misuse
- Programmes and interventions specific to the offence

If you do not stick to the contract or do not attend your appointments, you can be sent back to the court by the panel.

Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO)

A Youth Rehabilitation Order, sometimes called a YRO is a community sentence that is usually given after a Referral Order.

It can last between 3 months and 3 years and the youth court will decide on how long the order will last based on the seriousness of the offence and what the youth justice service tell the court.

Your youth justice officer will complete and assessment and write a pre-sentence report which will tell the court all about you and the reasons you have offended. This helps the youth court to make a decision about what your YRO will look like.

The youth court has the option of 15 different requirements that they can add to your YRO which means that the order is tailored to meet your individual needs and strengths. Here are some of those requirements:

- Supervision requirement - This means that you have to meet with your youth justice officer on a regular basis
- Activity requirement - This means that you will have to carry out an activity with the youth justice service
- Programme requirement - This means that you will have to carry out a programme linked to your offending behaviour, for example, knife crime. Full list of requirements

If your do not stick to all of your appointments or carry out what the court, ask you to then you could be in 'breach' of your order. This means that you could have to go back to court where they can decide to re-start the order.

Detention and Training Order (DTO)

A Detention and Training Order, sometimes called a DTO is a custodial sentence for 12-to-17-year old's.

It combines detention with training and will be used for young people who commit a serious offence or commit a number of offences. Half of the sentence will be spent in custody, and the other half will be supervised by the youth justice service (YJS) out in the community.

What will happen if I receive a custodial sentence?

1. When you have been sentenced you will be taken to the court cells. The youth justice court officer will come and see you, make sure you are OK, make sure you understand what has happened and tell you about what will happen
2. You will be taken to the secure accommodation by a secure van
3. When you arrive, you will be met by prison officers, they will take some information and give you a prison number. You will be given clothing to wear and some essential items. You will then be taken to the induction wing
4. You will then go to your cell, sometimes called a 'pad'. You might have to share this with someone else
5. Your family can visit you in the visitor center. Your youth justice worker will also come and visit you within 10 days of being sentenced
6. You will have regular sentence planning meetings that will decide on what you will do whilst you are in custody. These meetings will also plan for your release from custody back into the community

Where will you go

12-to-14-year-olds will usually go to a Secure Training Unit - this is normally Barton Moss

15 to17 year olds will go to a Young Offender Institution - this is normally at Wetherby YOI

How long will you be there

The court can sentence you to between four months and two years. You will spend the first half in secure accommodation, and the second half will be supervised by the youth justice service in the community - this is sometimes referred to as being 'on license'.

Seeing your family/carers

The youth justice service will come and see you on a regular basis and they can bring your family. They will also support your family/carer(s) to get to where you are living so that they can see you on a regular basis.

Getting out

Before you are released from custody the governor of the secure accommodation will set license conditions. These are proposed by your youth justice officer and will support you back into the community but also make sure that victims and the community are safe.

Your youth justice officer will also make sure that you have somewhere to live, access to education and training and positive activities to help you to stay out of trouble. They will also help you to build your confidence and self-esteem so that you can have a successful life on your release.

What happens if you do not work with the youth justice service

When you are in the community you will be expected to stick to your license conditions. However, if you do not do this, then you will be in breach of your license and this means that you could be returned to custody for either 3 months or the remainder of your sentence, whichever is the shortest.

Victims and restorative justice

Offending behaviour by children can affect the lives of those harmed in a range of ways. It is the responsibility of Blackpool youth justice service to ensure that the needs of those who have been harmed by the offending behaviour of children are met thought restorative justice processes.

Restorative justice is a process which supports the victim of a crime and the person responsible to communicate, repair harm, and find a positive way forward. It focuses on making the person responsible aware of the harm they caused and helps them to make reparations.

Blackpool youth justice service has a dedicated victim and restorative justice worker. Where a victim has given the police consent, they will forward the victim's information to the victim and restorative justice worker who will in turn make contact with the victim. They initially do this via a telephone call but do make home visits where requested.

Their role is to support the victim, gathering their views and feelings about what they have been through. They will write a victim statement with the victim that will guide the work of the youth justice officers working with the child. The victim can request specific pieces of work to be undertaken by the child such as reparation or a letter of apology.

If you have worked with our restorative justice and victim worker, we would really appreciate your feedback.

Contacting the youth justice team

You can contact the Blackpool youth justice service at:

Youth justice service
Central Family Hub
Gorton Street
Blackpool
FY1 3JW

Telephone: 01253 478320
Email yot@blackpool.gov.uk

Office hours: 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00am to 4.30pm on Fridays.

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↑ Back to top

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