

# Helping you to value youth diversion

## Why divert young people from the criminal justice system?

There is considerable evidence indicating that if young people are formally involved in the justice system too early, it can actually increase their offending and lengthen their criminal careers. Smart use of diversion – that is, addressing low-level behaviour without escalating use of the justice system – can generate better outcomes for young people and their communities. But current provision is piecemeal and often precariously funded.

We believe that YOTs, and other operators of youth diversion schemes, have the opportunity to make a convincing case for continued investment. There is a **strong evidence base**, a **compelling financial case**, and, in many areas, **years of successful operation**.

## How we can help

We have developed a toolkit for practitioners involved in or considering creating a point-of-arrest diversion scheme for young people. The toolkit outlines the research case for diversion and discusses what this means in practice. It includes guidance on messaging and a method to help you demonstrate local cost-effectiveness via a separately available tool. We can also work with you in the following ways:

### Making the case for diversion

- **Explaining the toolkit:** talking you through its contents and how to use them.
- **Explaining the evidence:** talking you through the research base, and what it tells us about the benefits of youth diversion.
- **Developing messaging:** deciding who you need to share the evidence with and the best way to present it.

### Designing an effective scheme

- **Clarifying good practice:** talking you through what the evidence says about the principles of youth diversion and the effective components of diversion schemes.
- **Developing a specification:** providing expert advice on components that should feature in the service model.
- **Identifying criteria:** providing local analytical support to work out which young people could benefit from the scheme.
- **Devising a theory of change:** facilitating workshops to identify outcomes and activities.
- **Preparing to evaluate:** giving advice on how to set up an evaluation.

### Funding and sustainability

- **Engaging partners:** helping facilitate conversations with the police and other necessary partners.
- **Sense-checking:** looking over your results from the tool and checking you have reached accurate figures.
- **Analysing:** discussing your figures with you so you are clear on what they mean and what you can say about them.
- **Preparing communications:** using your results to develop appropriate messages for commissioners and others.

The toolkit is freely available to download here:

<http://www.justiceinnovation.org/youth-diversion/valuing-youth-diversion-toolkit>

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