

Custody Navigators for young people

Supporting young people in custody and helping steer them away from reoffending.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Diversion Reoffending
Topic	Crime prevention Offender management Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	Cleveland Police
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Region	North East
Partners	Police Local authority
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	August 2023
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Children and young people Offenders
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Aim

- To reduce reoffending
- To explore and understand the underlying reasons for offending behaviour
- To divert young people away from crime and violence
- To use relevant support agencies and encourage multi-agency working

Intended outcome

- Reduce reoffending for individual young people
- Reduce reoffending rates in Cleveland
- Increase referrals to local support services
- Increase targeted support for those involved in, or at risk of, serious violence
- Improve multi-agency and partnership approaches to serious violence

Description

The Cleveland Police Custody Navigator scheme launched in 2023. The initiative started as a pilot in the force's main custody suite in Middlesbrough. The Custody Navigators now work across Teesside covering Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton and Hartlepool.

The four custody navigators are based at the youth focused custody suite in Middlesbrough police station. Their role is to engage with young people aged between 10 and 25 years old who are either involved in, or at risk of, serious violence.

The initiative begins when the young people enter the criminal justice system through police custody. The custody navigators engage with the young people and offer support at a 'reachable, teachable' moment – a timepoint when the otherwise hard to reach demographic are away from their usual environment and are potentially more willing to engage with offers of support.

The navigators support the young people in several ways. The support includes:

- Holding one-to one conversations with the young person somewhere where they feel comfortable – such as at home or school. Here they can discuss any issues in the young person's life.
- Signposting the young person to support services. These services can assist with problems such as substance misuse, housing, education and employment.
- Agreeing a bespoke package of help which aims to address the underlying reasons for participants becoming involved in serious violence. These reasons can include alcohol, drugs or mental health.
- A 24-hour follow-up call after initial engagement.
- A follow-up home visit within five working days of initial engagement.
- Attending multi-agency meetings (where appropriate) for young people already known to services. Other attendees at these meetings include social services and education providers.

The custody navigators are employed by South Tees Youth Justice Service (YJS) and are funded by the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) as part of national funding provided for Violence Reduction. CURV and YJS work together to employ the team of navigators.

While the navigators work 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and Saturday 9am to 5pm, any young people that come into custody outside of these hours are still screened by the navigators.

Evaluation

An evaluation is on-going and is being led by Cleveland Police. The evaluation is assessing the impact of the custody navigators on reoffending.

Overall impact

Within the first year of launch, the Cleveland custody navigators have:

- worked with 764 young people
- worked with 203 first-time offenders
- worked with 126 young people who were not previously open to another service
- attended approximately 250 multi-agency meetings for young people already known to services
- seen only a 6% reoffending rate for first time offenders

Learning

- The custody navigator role requires some key skills. Most importantly, they need to be passionate and knowledgeable about working with some of the most vulnerable members of the community. A background in working with young people is required. The navigators also need to be able to establish the root cause of a young person's offending, plus have the skills to encourage them to live a life away from crime and violence.
- The custody navigators form part of a multi-agency approach to supporting young people in Cleveland. The force see multi-agency working as vital to adopting a consistent, long-term approach to tackling crime and serious violence.
- It is important that custody navigators are not just deployed within the custody setting. They also need to be available for the young people back in the community. The navigators can provide this community support through attending multi-agency meetings and community-based sessions.
- The 'reachable, teachable' element of the custody navigator programme is key to its success. It's important for navigators to engage with the young people at a point when they may be receptive to receiving the support which could steer them towards a life free from serious violence.

Best available evidence

Further information about navigator schemes see the [accident and emergency navigator](#).

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