

## Press release

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# Minister of State with responsibility for Youth Justice, James Browne, launches Evaluation Report on Youth Diversion Projects

From [Department of Justice \(/en/organisation/departments-of-justice/\)](/en/organisation/departments-of-justice/)

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Minister of State James Browne has today launched the first evaluation report of the Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs).

The evaluation is the first of its kind and was undertaken by Research Matters Ltd over the period between December 2021 and November 2022. The overall purpose of the evaluation was to generate policy-relevant knowledge concerning the structure, conduct and impacts of the YDPs. The report shows that YDPs are performing well in many areas and are known to impact positively on reducing crime.

Welcoming the report, Minister Browne said:

“I’ve been lucky enough to visit YDPs the length and breadth of the country over the last few years and have seen first-hand the tangible, positive impacts that these projects have on their local communities and the lives of young people at risk of criminality. There is very good work undertaken by YDPs, social workers, Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers and others involved in these projects and this evaluation recognises this.

"It recognises that there is alignment between Irish Youth Justice policy and the objectives of the YDPs and that diversion continues to be 'at the core' of the Irish youth justice system. In addition, Governance at national level is well-structured and supports the work of individual projects.

"For me, these findings speak to a commitment and willingness among all participants to work towards a shared purpose, centred on the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

"I want to thank everyone, from officials in my department, the Garda Youth Diversion Bureau and the YDPs to the young people and their families, who provided their time, insights and experiences to this evaluation."

Individual projects have been reviewed and assessed prior to this report, however, this overall evaluation of the projects will inform future progress and direction of the overall enterprise.

Minister Browne added:

"The evaluation report listed some of the characteristics of Youth Diversion Projects that are likely to work best. Namely these are that they are embedded in their community, they respond to local needs, they're delivered by experienced and well-educated personnel and, crucially, they provide an accessible service that young people want to engage with.

"This evaluation presents us with an opportunity to really appreciate the impact that youth diversion has, as well as offering us insights into what can be improved on.

"The report has made a number of valuable recommendations for areas of improvement relating to governance, access to administrative data, YDP budgets and interventions around substance misuse and crime.

"These present us with an opportunity to further develop and future-proof the structures and processes for Youth Diversion Projects.

"I look forward to considering and progressing those recommendations contained in the report as we move forward."

The report noted the very positive work ongoing in the YDPs already, including the strong governance and high levels of engagement from participants and their families. Several areas for improvement were also identified, including better availability of YDPs at weekends, and maximising the use of administrative data and other research to inform services.

The full report, including the full list of recommendations, can be viewed at: [Youth Diversion Projects Evaluation Report](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/66d89-youth-diversion-projects-evaluation-report). (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/66d89-youth-diversion-projects-evaluation-report>).

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## Notes

YDPs are community based, multi-agency, youth crime prevention initiatives which primarily seeks to divert young people involved or at risk of becoming involved in criminal/anti-social behaviour away from the criminal justice system by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects.

YDPs act as a vital support to the statutory Garda Youth Diversion Programme and aim to bring about the conditions whereby the behavioural patterns of young people towards law and order can develop and mature through positive interventions and

interaction with the projects.

The projects are primarily targeted at 12-17 year old “at risk” young people in communities where a specific need has been identified and where there is a risk of them coming into contact with or remaining within the justice system.

By doing so, the projects contribute to improving the quality of life within communities and enhancing Garda and Community relationships.

The engagement of community organisations and locally based agencies, working in partnership, is vital to service delivery across the YDP network.

There are currently 106 YDPs across the State, with a further 4 due to be established by end of year to expand the service provision to every young person who needs it.

Additionally 6 collaborative commissioning Diversion Projects are also due to be established in 2023.

These Projects will draw relevant statutory bodies together with local partners to map our separate funding schemes against a local needs assessment, will identify gaps in priority services needed and will agree with local service providers how to meet these needs in a coordinated and integrated way.

In Budget 2023, a further €2.5 million in funding was allocated to youth justice services, increasing the total budget allocation for the YDPs and other youth justice projects to just over €30 million. This funding will be deployed with the assistance of the best available research and expert evidence to keep young people away from crime.

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