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Addressing Regional Variation in First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System

Dear Dame Meg,

On 21 November, in the Public Accounts Committee hearing on 'Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents', the committee asked for an explanation for the regional variation of First Time Entrants (FTEs) into the youth justice system. Whilst responsible for youth custody, I committed to write and have obtained information from others to inform this response. The question followed the NAO's report highlighting the difference between North Tyneside and Nottingham with the former having the lowest, and the latter the highest, number of FTEs.

The changes in the number of FTEs have taken place against a background of wider social and policy changes and there is no single reason for variation in FTEs. Differences in geographic and demographic factors including deprivation levels, lead to inevitable levels of variation in terms of overall caseloads. Variations in police stop-and-search practices, pre-court decision-making and post-arrest police decision-making between different force areas are also among some of the reasons for variations.

For North Tyneside and Nottingham, it is first worth setting out that the government draws on HM Inspectorate of Probation and the Youth Justice Board to oversee, support and drive the performance of local Youth Offending Teams, which are the responsibility of local authorities and therefore independent of government. In their most recent inspection reports:

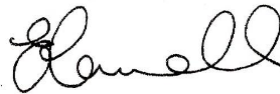
- in July 2021, North Tyneside Youth Justice Service received an [overall rating of 'Outstanding'](#), with HMIP particularly noting the area had "well-established partnership working";
- in March 2020, Nottingham City Youth Justice Service received an [overall rating of 'Requires Improvement'](#). The report highlighted two main areas for improvement:

leadership and governance, and the service's work with children and young people outside the formal court system.

We know that the Youth Justice Board is working closely with Nottingham on a number of initiatives to make improvements. The MoJ has asked the YJB to expand its work on this form of intervention with local areas where there are performance concerns.

To strengthen oversight, the MoJ recently revised the Key Performance Indicators used to monitor YOT performance. We have now added a number of additional metrics that seek to monitor the effectiveness of local partnership working, and also the local efforts to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour. For example, we have included a new KPI looking at how many children on a YOT caseload also have an Early Help or child protection plan or are classified as a Child in Need or a looked after child. This will help us understand how well joined up YOTs are with early help services, and ensure children continue to get the right ongoing support at the end of their engagement with the YOT. The KPIs should strengthen links across local agencies and encourage them to work together to address the needs of a child coming into contact with the youth justice system at the earliest stage.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Cornmell', written in a cursive style.

ED CORNMELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE