

A Baseline Analysis of Garda Youth Diversion Projects: Considering Complexities in Understanding Youth Crime in Local Communities in Ireland

Sean Redmond*

Summary: The National Youth Justice Strategy was launched in 2008. Its first strategy covers the period 2008–2010 and has five high-level goals. One of these goals – *to work to reduce offending by diverting young people from offending behaviour* – has been the focus of a baseline analysis of practice undertaken by the Irish Youth Justice Service during 2008/2009. The baseline analysis that focused on Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) is the first step in an improvement programme for this critical intervention designed to positively impact young people at the onset of offending behaviour. The baseline analysis and the issues it raises are the focus of this paper. The intended changes advanced in the analysis will aim to ensure that each local GYDP aligns its efforts to take account of data regarding youth crime patterns within its locality and develops a clear evidence-based rationale to articulate how its activities will contribute to reducing crime. The Irish Youth Justice Service intends to support improvement in effectiveness by investing in targeted training of core staff, developing a learning community to exploit the knowledge across the network of GYDPs, making better strategic use of local information and leading five trial sites to put these ideas into practice.

Keywords: Youth crime, change strategy, evidence-based, crime reduction.