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# Northern Ireland Youth Re-Offending: Results from the 2006 Cohort

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## NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

### KEY FINDINGS

This bulletin documents the results from the 2006 cohort on Youth Re-offending in Northern Ireland. The key findings are as follows:

- ◆ The overall one-year re-offending rate for persons aged 10 to 17 was 41.8% in 2006 compared with 39.3% in 2005.
- ◆ The one-year rate for all youths discharged from custody was 70.7%.
- ◆ Looking collectively at non-custodial sanctions, the one-year re-offending rate was 40.7%.
- ◆ The one year re-offending rate for community-based disposals (including combination order, community service order, probation order, attendance centre order, community responsibility order and reparation order) was 52.1%.
- ◆ Youth conferencing had an overall re-offending rate of 37.7%; analysed separately the rates were 47.4% for court ordered conferences and 28.3% for diversionary conferences.
- ◆ Within six months over three fifths (61.0%) of those discharged from custody had re-offended on at least one occasion whilst this was the case for 25.8% of those given a youth conference order and 34.7% of those given other non-custodial disposals.
- ◆ 43.9% of the 2006 cohort were aged 17 and of this group, 39.2% re-offended within one year. However, those aged 14 had the highest re-offending rate at almost a half (48.5%).
- ◆ 43.7% of males went on to re-offend within the year whilst the rate for females was much lower at approximately three tenths (29.5%).
- ◆ For the total cohort, approximately three tenths (29.9%) of those with no previous convictions re-offended within one year whilst the figure was almost two thirds (66.0%) for those who had nine or more previous convictions.

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# NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

## INTRODUCTION

This bulletin presents an analysis of youth (10-17) re-offending in Northern Ireland for those sentenced to a non-custodial court order, or discharged from immediate custody in the calendar year 2006.

This is the second analysis of youth re-offending in Northern Ireland, previous analyses having been limited to the measure of reconviction. The analysis includes consideration of re-offending rates for various disposals; it looks at re-offending intervals and the effect of offence type and offender characteristics on re-offending. Where appropriate, comparisons are made between 2006 and 2005.

A higher proportion of cases were disposed of through diversionary youth conferences in 2006 than in 2005. However, as each year re-offending is based on a different cohort of young people with different characteristics and different offending behaviour, it is difficult to make comparisons between the two cohorts.

Other factors may also have an effect on re-offending rates such as the length of time from date of offence to date of conviction. If this decreases, this could potentially increase the re-offending rate.

Throughout the interpretation of this analysis, small numbers in some subsets should be borne in mind and the reader will note that in some cases re-offending rates are not calculated for this reason; instead they are marked with a '-'.

## NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

### 1. Re-offending rates by baseline disposal

Re-offending rates vary considerably by type of disposal, but this is largely explained by differences in the characteristics of offenders given each disposal. For example those given pre-court disposals are generally at a lower intrinsic risk of re-offending, whilst those given more severe sentences such as custody are more likely to be at a high risk of re-offending. For this reason re-offending rates cannot be used to judge the effectiveness of different disposals.

Table 1 shows 2006 youth re-offending rates by baseline disposal, that is, the court order to which the young person was sentenced in 2006. The overall one-year re-offending rate for the 2006 youth cohort was 41.8% compared with 39.3% in 2005.

The reader is however advised to bear caution when comparing data across the two years as each year's re-offending rate is based on a different cohort of young people with different characteristics and different offending behaviour.

In addition the proportion of cases which have been disposed of through court ordered and diversionary youth conferences has increased from 15.0% of all disposals in 2005 to 38.1% in 2006. Diversionary youth conferences are generally used for first time offenders or those who have committed less serious offences. This means that other disposals will be used for offenders who have committed more serious offences or are persistent offenders. The latter group have a higher risk of re-offending and therefore this could result in an increase in the re-offending rates of other types of disposal.

The re-offending rate was highest for those discharged from custody – 70.7%.

Looking collectively at non-custodial sanctions (*including* youth conferencing), the overall re-offending rate was 40.7%. Excluding small categories, the probation order had the highest re-offending rate at 58.6%, followed by the community responsibility order at 50.0%. The lowest rate was for those given a diversionary youth conference, at 28.3%.

Looking collectively at community based disposals (including the combination order, community service order, probation order, attendance centre order and community responsibility order) the one-year re-offending rate was 52.1%.

Youth conferencing had an overall re-offending rate of 37.7%, though when considered separately, the two types of conference had markedly different re-offending rates: 47.4% of those given a court ordered conference had re-offended within a year compared with 28.3% of those given a diversionary conference.

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**Table 1: Re-offending rates by baseline disposal – 2006 and 2005**

Baseline Disposal	2006			2005		
	Number re-offending within one year	Total	% re-offending 2006 <sup>(2)</sup>	Number re-offending within one year	Total	% re-offending 2005 <sup>(2)</sup>
Young Offenders Centre (YOC)	2	5	-	14	17	-
Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC)	24	31	-	26	38	-
Custody Probation Order	3	5	-	3	4	-
<b>Total Immediate Custody</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>70.7</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>72.9</b>
Suspended YOC	0	0	-	18	44	40.9
Combination Order	6	9	-	7	16	-
Community Service Order	15	30	-	18	54	33.3
Probation Order	51	87	58.6	63	127	49.6
Attendance Centre Order	45	97	46.4	53	104	51.0
Community Responsibility Order	21	42	50.0	12	22	-
Court Ordered Youth Conference	102	215	47.4	43	97	44.3
Diversiory Youth Conference Order	63	223	28.3	23	75	30.7
Fine	51	178	28.7	85	308	27.6
Conditional Discharge	60	174	34.5	72	182	39.6
Bound Over	31	35	-	10	43	23.2
Other	7	20	-	5	19	-
<b>All non-custodial disposals</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>1,091</b>	<b>37.5</b>
<b>Community based disposals<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>138</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>47.4</b>
<b>ALL DISPOSALS</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>39.3</b>

(1) Includes combination order, community service order, probation order, attendance centre order; and community responsibility order

(2) Re-offending rates have not been calculated for some subsets due to small numbers involved (n<40)

## NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

### 2. Analysis of re-offending intervals

To give more background to the re-offending rate, the relationship between time and first proven re-offence is considered. Table 2 and Figure 1 show the percentage who first re-offended within one month, two months and so on, broken down by disposal groupings as follows:

- ◆ **Custodial:** YOC, JJC, custody probation;
- ◆ **Non-custodial:** suspended YOC, combination order, probation order, community service order, community responsibility order, attendance centre order, fine, conditional discharge and bound over, but excluding court ordered and diversionary youth conference orders;
- ◆ **Youth Conference:** diversionary and court ordered youth conference orders.

Three months after custody discharge, over a half (53.7%) had re-offended on at least one occasion. For those commencing a youth conference order, 16.0% had re-offended within three months; for the other non-custodial group the proportion at three months was 23.8%.

By six months, over three fifths (61.0%) of the custodial cohort had re-offended on at least one occasion. Around one quarter (25.8%) of those given a youth conference order had re-offended within 6 months, whilst for the remaining non-custodial group the rate was just over a third (34.7%).

By one year post-discharge, 70.7% of the custodial group had re-offended. After 12 months, 37.7% of the youth conference cohort had re-offended, and 42.7% for the other non-custodial group.

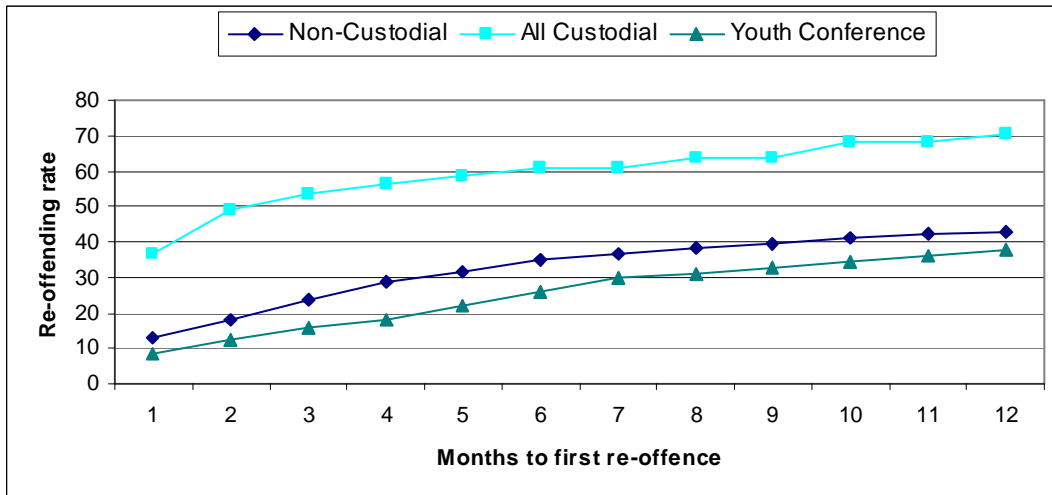
## NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

**Table 2: Re-offending rates by re-offending interval and Baseline Disposal Group – 2006**

Month	Non-Custodial <sup>(1)</sup>	Custodial	Youth Conference
1	13.0	36.6	8.4
2	18.3	48.8	12.6
3	23.8	53.7	16.0
4	28.7	56.1	18.0
5	31.5	58.5	21.9
6	34.7	61.0	25.8
7	36.6	61.0	29.7
8	38.4	63.4	31.1
9	39.6	63.4	32.9
10	41.1	68.3	34.5
11	42.3	68.3	36.3
12	42.7	70.7	37.7

(1) Non-Custodial excludes Youth Conference disposals

**Figure 1: Re-offending rates by re-offending interval – 2006**



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### 3. When did re-offending take place?

Table 3 and Figure 2 give details of when youths re-offended in the 12-month period after being given a baseline disposal by the courts. One month after discharge from custody, 51.7% of this cohort had re-offended.

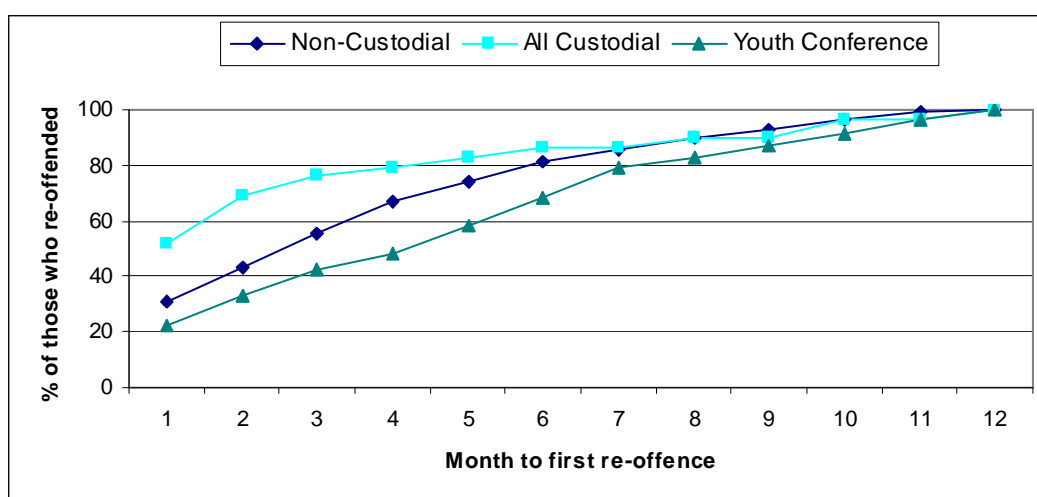
Just over a fifth (22.4%) of those who received a youth conference disposal re-offended within one month from the date of this baseline disposal. For those who received a non-custodial sentence 31.0% re-offended within one month of receiving these disposals.

**Table 3: Analysis of the re-offending subset by time to first re-offence**

Month	Non-Custodial <sup>(1)</sup>	Custodial	Youth Conference
1	31.0	51.7	22.4
2	42.9	69.0	33.3
3	55.7	75.9	42.4
4	67.2	79.3	47.9
5	73.9	82.8	58.2
6	81.2	86.2	68.5
7	85.7	86.2	78.8
8	89.9	89.7	82.4
9	92.7	89.7	87.3
10	96.2	96.6	91.5
11	99.0	96.6	96.4
12	100.0	100.0	100.0

(1) Non-Custodial excludes Youth Conference disposals

**Figure 2: When re-offending took place**



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### 4. Re-offending by age at baseline disposal

Table 4 shows that almost 43.9% of the 2006 cohort were aged 17 and of this group, 39.2% had re-offended within one year; however, those aged 14 had the highest re-offending rate at almost a half (48.5%).

45.8% of young people in the non-custodial cohort were aged 17 at date of sentence. The one-year re-offending rate for this group was 36.4%. Again, the highest re-offending rate was for 14 year olds – 53.6%. The re-offending rate for the age group 10-13 was 38.7%.

The youth conference cohort showed 17 to be the most common age to be given a conference. This age group also had the highest-offending rate for this age group (42.0%).

Due to the small numbers discharged from custody, re-offending rates for age groups have not been calculated. It is however interesting to note that 39.0% (n=16) of this cohort were aged 17 at date of discharge.

**Table 4: Re-offending rates by age at baseline disposal**

Total Cohort			
Age	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended
10-13	16	45	35.6
14	50	103	48.5
15	83	193	43.0
16	134	305	43.9
17+	198	505	39.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>41.8</b>
Non-custodial			
Age	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended <sup>(2)</sup>
10-13	12	31	-
14	30	56	53.6
15	44	95	46.3
16	89	182	48.9
17	112	308	36.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>42.7</b>
Custodial discharge			
Age	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended <sup>(2)</sup>
14	5	7	-
15	7	9	-
16	7	9	-
17	10	16	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>70.7</b>
Youth Conferencing <sup>(1)</sup>			
Age	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended <sup>(2)</sup>
10-13	4	14	-
14	15	40	-
15	32	89	36.0
16	38	114	33.3
17+	76	181	42.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>37.7</b>

(1) Includes 42 young persons aged 18 at date of baseline disposal

(2) Re-offending rates have not been calculated for some subsets due to small numbers involved (n<40)

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### 5. Re-offending by gender

Table 5 shows that the 2006 cohort was predominantly male (86.4%), and this group had a one year re-offending rate of 43.7%. In comparison, almost three tenths (29.5%) of females went on to re-offend within a year.

**Table 5: Re-offending rates by gender and baseline disposal group**

<b>Total Cohort</b>			
Gender	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended
Male	435	995	43.7
Female	46	156	29.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>41.8</b>
<b>Non-custodial</b>			
Gender	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended
Male	255	573	44.5
Female	32	99	32.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>42.7</b>
<b>Custodial discharge</b>			
Gender	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended
Male	-	-	-
Female	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>70.7</b>
<b>Youth Conferencing</b>			
Gender	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended
Male	153	383	39.9
Female	12	55	21.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>37.7</b>

(1) Analysis by gender is not given by those given a custodial discharge due to the small number of females in this group as there is a risk of identify individuals.

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### 6. Re-offending rates by Baseline Offence Class

Re-offending rates often vary considerably between different types of offence. It should not be assumed that offenders re-offended in the same offence category as their original offence; in fact research indicates that offenders on the whole do not specialise.

Due to small numbers in some cell sizes below, it is quite difficult to draw firm conclusions.

**Table 6: Offender Numbers and re-offending rates by baseline offence class – 2006**

Non-custodial			
Offence Group	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended <sup>(1)</sup>
Non-indictable	42	161	26.1
Violence against the person	59	136	43.4
Sexual offences	2	7	-
Burglary	16	32	-
Robbery	1	1	-
Theft	38	87	43.7
Fraud & Forgery	4	7	-
Criminal Damage	31	68	45.6
Offences against the state	9	21	-
Drug offences	15	33	-
Other-Non Drugs	70	119	58.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>42.7</b>
Custodial discharge			
Offence Group	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended <sup>(1)</sup>
Violence against the person	7	8	-
Sexual offences	1	2	-
Burglary	1	3	-
Robbery	3	3	-
Theft	7	9	-
Criminal Damage	6	7	-
Other-Indictable	4	9	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>-</b>
Youth Conferencing			
Offence Group	Re-offended within 1 year	Total	% re-offended <sup>(1)</sup>
Non-indictable	10	24	-
Violence against the person	33	95	34.7
Burglary	16	32	-
Robbery	2	2	-
Theft	28	88	31.8
Fraud & Forgery	1	2	-
Criminal Damage	35	89	39.3
Offences against the state	33	76	43.4
Drug offences	5	23	-
Other-Non Drugs	2	7	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>37.7</b>

(1) Re-offending rates have not been calculated for some subsets due to small numbers involved (n<40)

## NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

### 7. Re-offending rates by offending history

Generally, the re-offending rate increases rapidly as the number of previous convictions increases (Table 7). Particularly notable is the jump in the re-offending rate from those who have no previous convictions (this group constituted 52.7% of the total cohort) to those with at least one previous conviction: for the total cohort, three tenths (29.9%) of those with no criminal history re-offended within one year whilst the figure was almost a half (48.0%) for those who had one to four previous convictions.

Of those with nine or more previous convictions, almost two thirds (66.0%) went on to re-offend within a year.

As with the baseline offence information in the preceding section, Table 7 gives further insight into offender background, as well as the likelihood of re-offending. For example, the non-custodial group comprised almost two thirds (66.4%) of offenders with no previous convictions; for the youth conference cohort the proportion was 36.6%; there were no offenders in the custodial group without a criminal history.

**Table 7: Re-offending rates by criminal history**

<b>Total Cohort</b>			
<b>Number of previous convictions</b>	<b>Re-offended within 1 year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% re-offended</b>
No Previous	181	606	29.9
1 to 4 Previous	143	298	48.0
5 to 8 Previous	64	105	61.0
>=9 Previous	93	141	66.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>41.8</b>
<b>Non-custodial</b>			
<b>Number of previous convictions</b>	<b>Re-offended within 1 year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% re-offended</b>
No Previous	155	446	34.8
1 to 4 Previous	71	123	57.7
5 to 8 Previous	28	43	65.1
>=9 Previous	33	60	55.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>42.7</b>
<b>Custodial discharge</b>			
<b>Number of previous convictions</b>	<b>Re-offended within 1 year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% re-offended <sup>(1)</sup></b>
1 to 4 Previous	3	6	-
5 to 8 Previous	2	4	-
>=9 Previous	24	31	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>70.7</b>
<b>Youth Conferencing</b>			
<b>Number of previous convictions</b>	<b>Re-offended within 1 year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% re-offended</b>
No Previous	26	160	16.3
1 to 4 Previous	69	169	40.8
5 to 8 Previous	34	58	58.6
>=9 Previous	36	50	72.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>37.8</b>

(1) Re-offending rates have not been calculated for some subsets due to small numbers involved (n<40)

## NI YOUTH RE-OFFENDING: RESULTS FROM THE 2006 COHORT

### METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

The results are based on the analysis of offenders discharged from custody or commencing a non-custodial sentence during 2006. Three sources of data were used:

(i) Details of young offenders discharged from custody into the community were taken from the Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC) Database, which is maintained by the JJC in conjunction with the NIO Statistics & Research Branch. This data was refined to remove any duplicate records within the baseline year – in measuring re-offending it is important that we only capture details of an offender's first sentence or discharge from custody in the baseline year. The resultant dataset was then matched to the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Integrated Criminal Information System (ICIS) in order to track criminal history and monitor re-offending. The data matching routine adheres to the 'National Statistics Protocol on Data Matching' and looks at offenders' surnames, initials and date of birth.

(ii) The non-custodial dataset, excluding information on court-ordered and diversionary youth conferencing (see below for further explanation) was drawn directly from the ICIS database. Again, the first sweep of data for those sentenced during 2006 was refined to include only an offender's first sentence at court in that year.

(iii) Due to sentence coding issues within ICIS, which in particular make the identification of diversionary youth conferences very difficult, a manual data collection exercise was undertaken by staff within the Youth Conference Service (YCS) to produce the third data source. Information relating to those sentenced to a diversionary or court ordered youth conference order and for which the referral had been ratified was taken from the YCS Database and matched to criminal record information held on the Causeway Criminal Record Viewer. The dataset was then independently validated by the NISRA statistician working within the Youth Justice Agency.

(iv) The proven element of re-offending measurement requires a 'confirmation period' to allow time for offences to be resulted at court. This study uses a confirmation period of three months beyond the one-year follow-up period.

(v) It should be noted that due to current data limitations, this study does not take account of pre-court disposals (i.e. cautions, informed warnings etc) when marking re-offending. It is anticipated that future youth re-offending analyses will seek to include such information if possible, due to the volume of young people dealt with in this way.

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H Dawson, S Dunn and V Morgan *March 2009*

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