

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 5 January 2011

Report calls for major change to youth justice system

Young offenders facing prosecution should be dealt with by restorative community conferences – where victims are actively involved in agreeing what consequences they face for their crimes – instead of traditional youth courts, according to a report published today by the Independent Commission on Youth Crime.

The report presents an international comparison of responses to offending by children and young people and concludes that restorative justice conferences would be likely to reduce reoffending, improve victims' confidence and result in considerable savings in court time and the costs of custody.

The report is based on research undertaken by JUSTICE, the all-party law reform and human rights organisation, and independent charity The Police Foundation for the Independent Commission on Youth Crime. The Commission is funded by the Nuffield Foundation.

Sally Ireland, Director of Criminal Justice Policy at JUSTICE, said:

Restorative conferences – which have been so successful in Northern Ireland and around the world – offer the best chance to change behaviour in young offenders and improve the confidence of victims and wider public in the youth justice system. We believe that it is time for the government to act on the evidence and make this change as part of its intended reforms to sentencing.

For further information and interview requests please contact Sally Ireland at sireland@justice.org.uk or on (020) 7762 6414.

Notes to editors:

1. The report, *Time for a New Hearing: A comparative study of alternative criminal proceedings for children and young people* is attached to this press release and is also available (together with its annexes) from www.youthcrimecommission.org.uk and from www.justice.org.uk. Hard copies are available on request.
2. The study informed the conclusions of the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (www.youthcrimecommission.org.uk) whose report *Time for a Fresh Start* was published in July 2010. The Commission called for the use of restorative justice conferences with young offenders as an alternative to prosecution and as a sentence of the youth court in all but the most serious cases.
3. The Government's Green Paper on punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing was published in December seeking views on the best use of restorative justice "to prevent offending by young people and ensure they make amends".
4. JUSTICE and The Police Foundation are grateful to the Nuffield Foundation for funding the research project and publication.



The Nuffield Foundation is an endowed charitable trust that aims to improve social well-being in the widest sense. It funds research and innovation in education and social policy and also works to build capacity in education, science and social science research.

The Nuffield Foundation has funded this project, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation. More information is available at www.nuffieldfoundation.org.



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The Police Foundation is an independent charity focused on developing people's knowledge and understanding of policing and challenging the police service and the government to improve policing for the benefit of the public. It acts as a bridge between the public and the police and government, while being owned by none of them. See www.police-foundation.org.uk.