

ANNEX A - Background to Junior Attendance Centres

Attendance Centres were originally established by legislation in 1948. Under Section 60 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000, Courts were enabled to direct an offender, depending upon their age, to spend between 12 and 36 hours at an Attendance Centre, over a set period of time for offences punishable by imprisonment, for breaches of a range of court orders and for non payment of fines. The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 reframed the sentencing provision for young people making Attendance Centres available as a requirement within a Youth Rehabilitation Order. Attendance Centres are intended to help prevent the escalation of more serious offending by providing rehabilitative and reparative programmes, cognitive and life skills courses. Their main role is in the discharge of Attendance Centre Orders.

The use of the Attendance Centre requirement is targeted at offenders at the lower end of the risk continuum for likelihood of re-offending and potential to cause harm to the public as follows:

- As a stand alone requirement where the level of their offending is not so serious as to justify a more restrictive penalty and/or where they are assessed as capable of diversion from offending without more intensive intervention.
- Alongside other requirements of a Youth Rehabilitation Order or other sentence, either to make the Order more onerous as a consequence of failure to comply or to provide a comprehensive sentencing package to reflect seriousness of the offence and meet offender need.
- Where relevant within conditional cautioning and other similar local multi-agency initiatives to divert offenders from prosecution and / or deter them from offending.

Although Attendance Centres may traditionally have been seen as a punishment through restriction of liberty in a controlled environment, the regime is also designed to strengthen desistance factors among those attending thereby meeting both the punishment and rehabilitation aspects of sentencing purposes, including, social education and life skills training and reparative activity where possible to:

- Increase employability and re-engagement into education
- Maintain physical and mental health (including being aware of the effects of alcohol and drug misuse)
- Promote successful relationships
- Enable participants to deal effectively with high risk situations (including first aid, risks of carrying weapons and gang culture)

JAC's are designed not to replicate but add value to YOT provision.

The proposed changes –

In November 2012 the Government decided to review responsibility for the provision of JAC's and look to move it into the Youth Justice Sector rather than placing it into the open market competition arrangements. This position was supported by recommendations made by the Triennial Review of the YJB which was published in November 2013. This called for JAC's to be moved into Local Authority control and for the YJB to measure the effectiveness of JAC's so that an informed assessment could be made about the long term future of JAC's.