

Merseyside Operation Inclusion deferred prosecution programme – evaluation findings

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Description of Operation Inclusion

- Operation Inclusion is a deferred prosecution scheme delivered across Merseyside by youth justice services in collaboration with Merseyside Police.
- Offers children the opportunity to engage in an intensive intervention to address their needs and build upon their strengths.
- Critically, upon successful completion of the intervention the child does not receive a formal criminal record.
- If children decline the opportunity, do not engage, or reoffend their case can/will be returned to the police/out of court panel.

“[Operation Inclusion] it's different in relation to it offers that intervention that you would get in the statutory environment, but at a preventative level.” YJS Staff 1

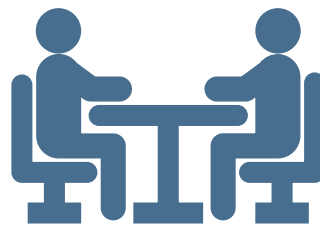
“Should they not engage or should they reoffend, we've still got the option of going back to where we were. So you've not lost anything... It's not a case of we're just giving them an NFA... That's not, it's not what it's about.” Police Officer 4

Evaluation methods

Review of
Operation
Inclusion
programme
documentation.



Interviews
with key
stakeholders
(n=18), from YJSs
and Merseyside
Police.



Interviews
with children/young
people involved in
Operation Inclusion
(n=3) and one
parent (n=1).

Analysis of
youth justice
monitoring data
from January
2021 to
December 2025.



Facilitators of programme success



- Relationship between YJSs and Merseyside Police.
- Extra time to work with child.
- Building positive trusting relationships with children.

“Another thing that’s good is like the way like they speak to you. Like they speak to you like you are like a friend – so you can actually, like open up to them and have, like, a real, like, genuine conversation.”

Young person 1

Barriers to programme success

- Statutory time limits for certain offences.
- Perceptions of other partners' roles and perceptions around YJSs.
- Children's family members acting as a barrier to engagement.

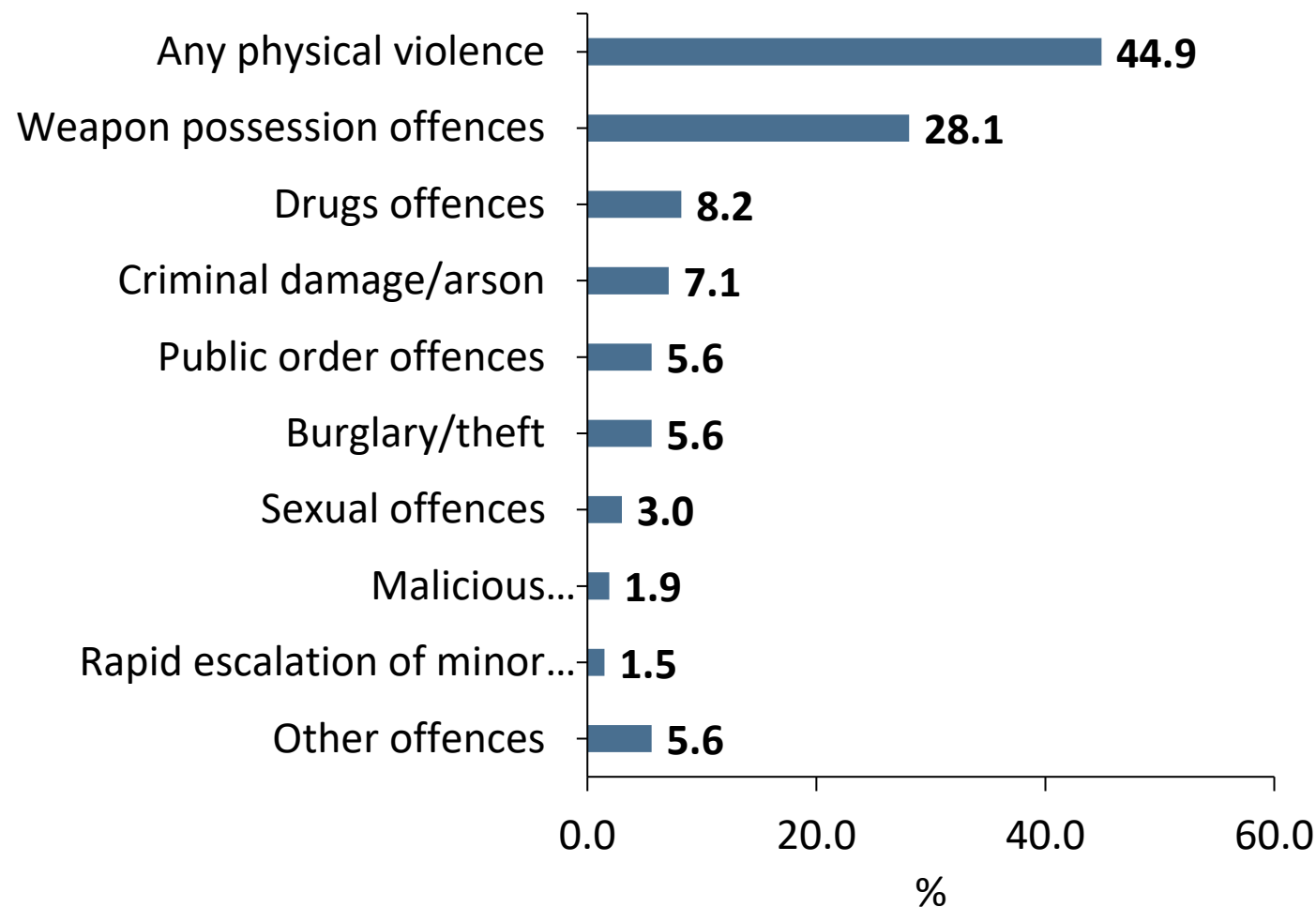


Programme reach



- From January 2021 to December 2025, 342 children were enrolled onto Operation Inclusion across Merseyside.
- The majority of children (78.3%; n=267) fully completed the programme. Smaller proportions partially completed (7.6%), did not complete (5.3%), or were still receiving support (8.8%).
- Among the 267 children who fully completed, the majority were male (78.3%; n=209), and White British (85.4%; n=228).
- Just under half (45.7%; n=122) of those who completed Operation Inclusion were aged 10-14 years.

Initial offending



- Most common offence types Op Inclusion used for was any physical violence and weapon possession offences.
- A significantly higher proportion of females (69.0%; n=40) compared to males (38.3%; n=80) had a physically violent offence ($p<0.001$).
- A significantly higher proportion of males (32.1%; n=67) compared to females (13.8%; n=8) had a weapon possession offence ($p<0.05$).

Outcomes and impacts – Qualitative



- Education outcomes.
- Decision making skills.
- Reassurance for family members.
- Police / YJS systems.

“You do worry as a parent that [child]’s going to get a record... For a parent it’s really beneficial to have that programme because you don’t want to be going through the court system with them, and you don’t want it to hinder their chances.”

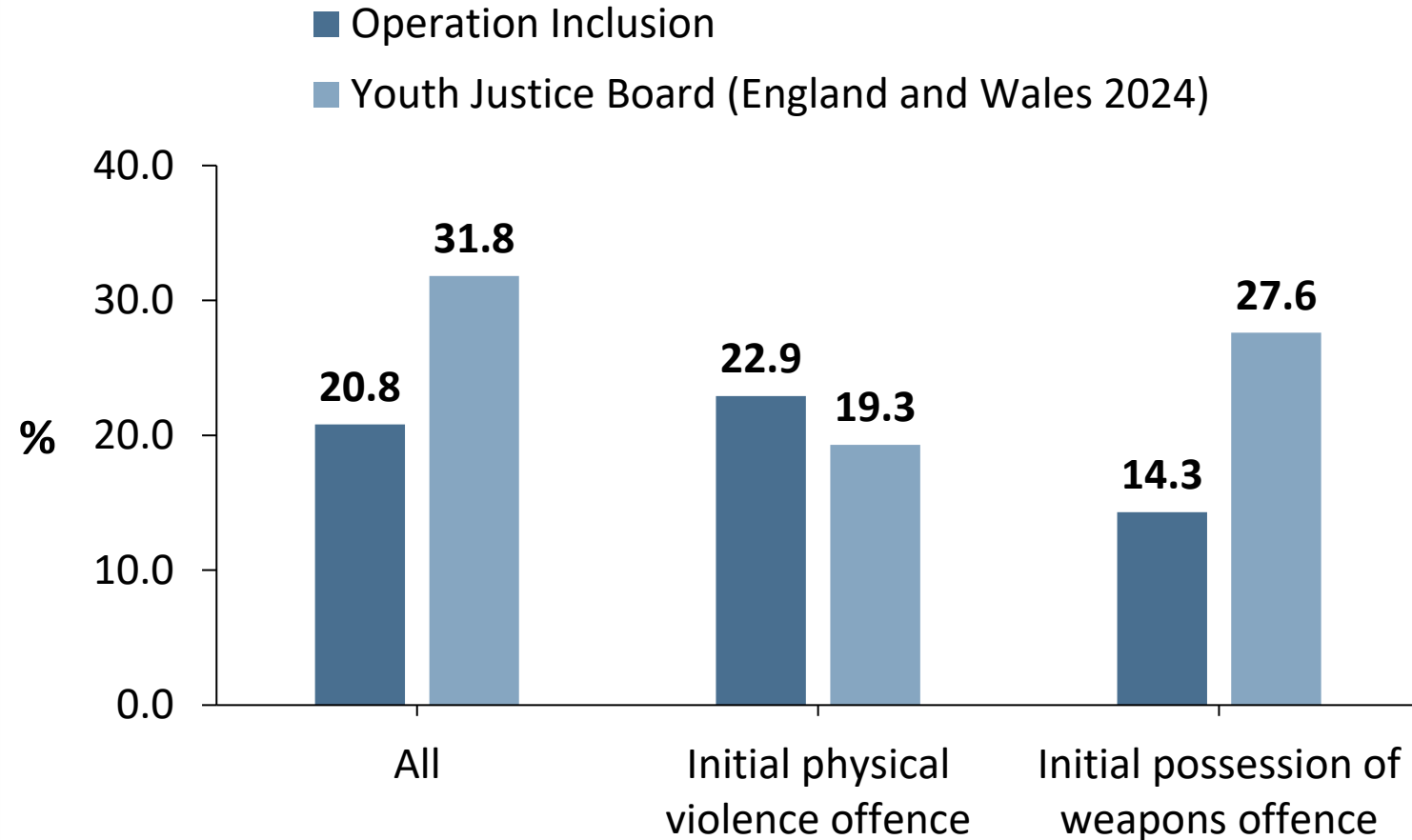
Parent 1

“I really think about like my actions now. How it may affect someone. How it may affect something and yeah really reflect on the actions that I do now, day-to-day basis.”

Young person 3

Outcomes and impacts – Reoffending

- A smaller proportion of children who completed Operation Inclusion had reoffended compared to YJB data nationally.
- Particularly the case for those who had an initial possession of weapons offence.
- A slightly larger proportion who had an initial physical violence offence who reoffended compared to national YJB data.
- However, there are limitations to these comparisons!
- Positive impacts may not be equivocal across all children – so still work to do.



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

ANY QUESTIONS?

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