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Juveniles in police custody – Ethical Dilemma

September 2024.

In September 2024, draft plans to introduce a pilot scheme that reflects a modern, evidence-based approach to juveniles and police custody within Leicestershire Police have been created and cover, in part, some of the ethical challenges of this topic.

This initiative is informed by national studies and guidance, which emphasise that young people should only be taken into custody for the most serious offences. A key aim of the pilot is to significantly reduce the number of juveniles in police custody by focusing on diversionary tactics and providing tailored support to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour.

A central part of this pilot is the introduction of a Trauma Informed Practice approach, which recognises that many juveniles in custody have experienced significant trauma in their lives. By adopting this approach, Leicestershire Police aim to better understand and respond to the emotional and psychological needs of young people, rather than focusing purely on their criminal behaviour. This involves training officers to identify signs of trauma, adjusting their methods of engagement, and ensuring that interactions with juveniles are supportive and sensitive to their past experiences.

This modern approach is designed to not only reduce the number of juveniles entering custody but also to prevent reoffending by addressing the root causes of criminal activity. The pilot represents a shift towards a more rehabilitative and welfare-focused model, aiming to safeguard the well-being of juveniles while maintaining public safety.

It may be noted that a potential key challenge ahead is shifting mindsets away from punitive views to a more considered, balanced approach, whilst not losing sight on the need to protect and serve our local communities.

Links to:

The Baird Inquiry – [The Baird Inquiry \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

The Kemp Findings - [Examining the impact of PACE on the detention and questioning of young suspects - Nuffield Foundation](#)



Support for Juveniles in custody – Leicestershire Police

In Leicestershire, should there be a necessity for detention in custody to be authorised for a juvenile, the following professional support is available to help to identify areas of focus/concerns, such as CCE & CSE.

- VIP (Violence Intervention Project) - The VIP Project launched at the end of 2019 and has developed significantly since then. Workers are based in Accident & Emergency and in Police Custody and the service aims to deliver interventions in preventing repeat victimisation and recurrences of perpetration for those involved in or at risk of serious violence.
- L&D (NHS – Liaison and Diversion service) – The Liaison & Diversion team will aim see all under 18's to discuss any physical and mental health concerns, either in custody out in the community and can refer to other agencies to help support needs.
- PPN – mandatory requirement for all juveniles arrested – although this is not a custody officer that will complete this as the responsibility falls to the officer in case.
- YOS – both city and county Youth Offending Services will be made aware of an arrest of a juvenile and within the hours of 0800 x 1700, will be utilised as 'Appropriate Adults' as required.
- TAAS (The Appropriate Adult Service) – as YOS, but operating outside of the 0800 x 1700 hours.

Concerns raised or identified within custody are raised with the officer in case to ensure safeguarding measures are identified and put in place to ensure appropriate ongoing support long beyond the end of the 'custody journey'.

This may include the need for a specialised department, such as the CAIU (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) to become involved.