

Understanding Complexity: The Challenge for Youth Justice

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th September 2014

The 9th Biennial Conference on Children, Young People and Crime in the UK and Ireland took place at Cardiff Metropolitan University in September 2014 and was attended by a number of agencies from Northern Ireland.

The conference, first held in 1998, is supported by the Governments of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Scotland. It was originally started to encourage sharing of good practice between jurisdictions and to examine differences in policy across the UK and Ireland. It is funded through contributions from each jurisdiction.

The conference continues to provide a significant platform for debate on youth justice policy and practice across the jurisdictions and delegates included key academics, practitioners and policy makers involved in the areas of children, young people and criminal justice from each of the five jurisdictions.

The conference theme in Cardiff was 'Understanding Complexity: the Challenge for Youth Justice' and examined how good outcomes for children and young people could be ensured through policy, practice and research.

One of the key aims of the conference was to establish networks between conference participants to promote better sharing of information between and across jurisdictions.

The Cardiff conference comprised a mixture of keynote speakers presentations, ([link to programme](#)) workshops ([link to descriptions of workshops](#)), structured group discussions and youth participation.

The conference was addressed by the Welsh First Minister, Rt Hon Carwyn Jones who observed that "all children are reachable".

A shared common theme across the nations was the recognition that while there was a smaller cohort of young people in the youth justice system they presented a range of very complex problems. The workshops illustrated excellent examples of engaging with and helping very troubled young people.

There was also a shared recognition that the needs of this cohort of young people could not be met by Youth Justice Agencies alone and many of the workshops illustrated excellent examples of co-working.

Nicola Carr from QUB gave an input to the conference entitled 'Moving on? Young people's experiences of justice and transitions from custody'. The presentation was based on findings from a qualitative longitudinal study exploring young people's entry into and transition from the Juvenile Justice Centre in Northern Ireland. The study used a life-history approach to explore the routes into custody and the challenges of transition from custody from the perspectives of young people. The study sample was derived from the population of young people detained in the Juvenile Justice Centre in 2013 and 2014 ([http://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/activities/5-nations-youth-justice\(f4071d63-2db3-4aa6-9572-2c789677f053\).html](http://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/activities/5-nations-youth-justice(f4071d63-2db3-4aa6-9572-2c789677f053).html))