



**University of Dundee**

### **Problem-solving courts**

Mentzou, Aikaterini; Mutebi, Natasha

*DOI:*  
[10.58248/PN700](https://doi.org/10.58248/PN700)

*Publication date:*  
2023

*Licence:*  
Other

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Mentzou, A., & Mutebi, N. (2023). *Problem-solving courts*. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. <https://doi.org/10.58248/PN700>

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# Problem-solving courts



## Overview

- Problem-solving courts (PSC), seek to involve judges in the rehabilitation of individuals. PSC include a range of distinct approaches that can be found in adult criminal courts, family courts and youth courts.
- In June 2023, the Ministry of Justice launched three courts with problem-solving components referred to as Intensive Supervision Courts (ISC).
- Key elements of PSC include intensive intervention programmes that seek to address underlying social and health issues through regular judicial monitoring and cross-governmental collaborative efforts.
- Evidence suggests that PSC in criminal courts can enable better rehabilitation and reduced re-offending. In family courts, PSC can help parents to retain care of their children.
- Although there is a substantial international evidence base, there is limited evidence about the effectiveness of PSC in the UK due to inconsistent implementation and evaluation.
- Challenges to PSC implementation can include costs, lack of funding, limited evidence, procedural issues and lack of widespread judicial engagement.
- Opportunities for effective PSC implementation include use of existing resources, multi-agency partnerships, advocating for specialist services and a change in culture within the judiciary.

## Background

Problem-solving courts (PSC) are a problem-solving approach targeting the complex needs of individuals within the criminal or family justice systems.<sup>1</sup> PSC aim to use engagement with the justice system to motivate and provide accountability for people who engage with support. This can address personal, social and structural factors that lead to offending or involvement in care proceedings, improving long-term life outcomes.<sup>2,3</sup> Although there have been locally driven efforts and pilots for implementing PSC, these have not been widely used across the UK.<sup>4</sup>

In September 2020, the UK Government published its 'A Smarter Approach to Sentencing' White Paper.<sup>5</sup> The paper identified PSC as a key approach to addressing offenders' individual needs with the aims to reduce re-offending and improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation in the justice system.<sup>5</sup>

As of summer 2023, PSC commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) are referred to as Intensive Supervision Courts (ISC). The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act \(2022\)](#) made amendments to the [Sentencing Act \(2020\)](#) and provided legislative powers to pilot formally recognised ISC in England and Wales.<sup>6</sup>

The UK Government's Drug Strategy (2021) set out plans to combat increased levels of drug and alcohol-fuelled crime.<sup>7</sup> Proposals include £8.25 million towards the launch of three ISC pilots in England (focused on substance abuse and female offenders).<sup>2,7</sup> The MoJ funding commissioned independent evaluations for each pilot to provide a stronger UK evidence base.<sup>8</sup>

Crime and justice are devolved policy areas in Scotland and Northern Ireland; this POSTnote will focus primarily on England and Wales.

## Defining problem-solving courts

Over the last 20 years, PSC have been introduced into the UK to address factors underlying behavioural issues that often contribute to re-offending, for example, substance misuse.<sup>3,4</sup> By placing judges and magistrates at the centre of rehabilitation, PSC target individuals, as well as families, with complex needs, who might not benefit from standard court proceedings and supervision.<sup>2,3,9</sup>

Focusing on rehabilitative outcomes, PSC combine intervention programmes with judicial oversight through regular reviews.<sup>5</sup> Graduated sanctions and incentives can be implemented to encourage intervention compliance.<sup>5</sup> After successful completion of the intervention programme, individuals are encouraged to access community services for ongoing support needs.<sup>10</sup>

## Key elements

Problem-solving approaches to justice operate within adult criminal courts, family courts and youth courts. These approaches adopt key components to court proceedings, which may include:

- specialisation of court approaches for specific target groups (for example, female offenders) or specific issues (for example, substance misuse)

- multi-agency delivery of support tailored to individuals’ needs, including from probation, police, health and social care services, and third sector organisations
- regular judicial monitoring through review hearings with the same judge or magistrates, where rapport with the offender is built
- procedural justice, by having individuals and their immediate relatives directly involved, understanding the court process, and having a voice in court hearings, which promotes fair and transparent decision-making.<sup>3,9,10</sup>

## Implementation of PSC

Several ongoing PSC and courts with PSC elements exist across England and Wales, including the three ISC pilots (Table 1). This section outlines the implementation of different PSC approaches relevant to the UK.

**Table 1. Ongoing problem-solving court approaches in England and Wales as of summer 2023**

	Number	Geographical Area
Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts	40-60	Exact locations not documented (but include London, Devon, Nottingham)
Family Drug & Alcohol Courts	14	Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan, Birmingham & Solihull, Black Country (Walsall, Sandwell & Dudley), Coventry & Warwickshire, East Sussex, Gloucestershire, London, Leeds, North East (Newcastle, Gateshead & North Tyneside), Milton Keynes & Buckinghamshire, Southampton, Bedfordshire, Wiltshire, Greater Manchester (Stockport, Wigan & Manchester)
Substance Misuse Courts	2	West Midlands, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire
Women’s Courts	1	Greater Manchester
Pathfinder Courts	2	North Wales, Dorset
Youth Panels	1	Northamptonshire
MoJ’s Intensive Supervision Courts* Substance Misuse (2) Women (1)	3	Liverpool, Teesside, Birmingham

\*Intensive Supervision Courts (ISC) pilots launched by the Ministry of Justice on 26 June 2023.<sup>2</sup>

# 1 Adult Criminal Courts

In 2022, 1.2 million individuals were prosecuted by the criminal justice system in England and Wales.<sup>11</sup> The UK has one of the highest prison populations in Europe per capita, with approximately 84,940 people.<sup>12–16</sup> PSC in adult criminal courts target low-level prolific offenders with complex needs (for example, substance misuse, mental health).<sup>5,17</sup> PSC are proposed as a way to reduce re-offending and the use of short custodial sentences\* whilst promoting rehabilitation.<sup>5,17,23</sup>

## 1.1 Community Justice Courts

Community Justice Courts offer an alternative to standard low-level sentencing by building links between the community and the delivery of justice.<sup>3,24,25</sup>

Evidence suggests that custodial sentences often fail to rehabilitate offenders.<sup>5,26–28</sup> Short prison sentences are linked with higher rates of proven re-offending than community orders.<sup>29–31</sup> The adult reoffending rate is 24.4% in England and Wales.<sup>32</sup> Estimated economic and social costs of reoffending are £18.1 billion.<sup>5,33</sup> Social consequences of crime include emotional harm, fear and weakened public confidence in the justice system.<sup>5,26,33,34</sup>

Focusing on a specific geographical area, Community Justice Courts aim to address local problems and the impact of anti-social behaviour on communities.<sup>3</sup> Offenders placed on community orders access community services for intervention programmes while having regular progress reviews with the same judge.<sup>24</sup> Preventative and social services are also delivered to local residents (for example, housing advice, substance misuse support).<sup>17,35</sup> Community members are also consulted to determine the unpaid work undertaken by people serving community orders (for example, graffiti removal, outdoor clean-up).<sup>17,36</sup>

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\* There are many types of sentences that a judge or magistrates can pass. The following are mentioned in this POSTnote:

Individuals can get a **community order** if they are convicted of a crime by court, but they are not sent to prison. A community order, as an intermediate sanction, incorporates some form of punishment with activities carried out in the community (for example, up to 300 hours of unpaid work, keeping to a curfew).<sup>18</sup> It can include a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement which is a requirement that the offender participates in activity to reduce the prospect of reoffending (for example, alcohol and drug misuse treatment).<sup>19</sup>

Individuals can get a **custodial sentence** (imprisonment) if they are convicted of more serious offences. The length of the prison sentence and release arrangements depend on the seriousness of the offence.<sup>20</sup>

Individuals can get a **suspended sentence order** if they are convicted of a crime by court and they receive a short-term custodial sentence between 14 days and 2 years (or 6 months in the magistrates' court).<sup>21</sup> The judge or magistrates can choose to suspend this sentence for up to 2 years.<sup>21</sup> This means that offenders do not have to serve the custodial sentence unless they fail to comply with the requirements of the sentence.<sup>21</sup> There are 13 requirements that can be set by the court and can include unpaid work, curfew and Rehabilitation Activity Requirement.<sup>21,22</sup> If offenders do not comply with the requirements, they serve the original custodial sentence.<sup>21</sup>

### Box 1. Case Study: PSC in the US

PSC first emerged in the US in the 1980s and quickly became implemented across different states.<sup>37</sup> Various PSC models have been implemented (for example, domestic violence courts, veterans' treatment courts, mental health courts) promoting widespread justice innovation.<sup>37</sup>

For instance, the Red Hook Community Justice Court has had global recognition and provided the foundations for the implementation of PSC in the UK.<sup>38</sup> The Center opened in 2000 in the Red Hook neighbourhood of Brooklyn, which had high rates of drug-related violence.<sup>36</sup> It aimed to transform the community and reduce low-level crime (for example, shoplifting, minor drug possession) by offering offenders support for substance misuse and lifestyle needs.<sup>39,40</sup> The programme includes substance misuse treatment, academic or vocational training and mandatory community service.<sup>41</sup>

Community service within the neighbourhood aims to make a tangible contribution to the local environment.<sup>41</sup> The court also handles youth crime cases, hears landlord-tenant disputes and offers community programmes to local residents (for example, housing and legal assistance).<sup>38,39</sup>

Evaluation of the Center has shown positive outcomes with offenders involved in the programme being 20% less likely to be re-arrested.<sup>39</sup> Data showed that it increased the sense of procedural fairness and community confidence in the justice system.<sup>41,42</sup> Cost-benefit analysis indicated that the total benefits exceed the total costs in a ratio of nearly 2 to 1, with a net benefit of \$6,852,477.<sup>41,43</sup>

## Outcomes

Inspired by approaches in the United States (Box 1), the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre operated between 2005-2014.<sup>17,24</sup> The Centre had a dedicated building outside Liverpool Magistrates' Court, where a multi-agency team was located (including probation, police, community services) and was presided by a sole judge.<sup>24,36</sup> North Liverpool was chosen because of higher than average crime rates and levels of deprivation.<sup>24</sup>

Another example was the Salford Community Court, which operated between 2006-2011. This aimed to explore whether elements of community courts could be implemented within an established magistrates' court.<sup>12</sup>

The evidence base for these community justice courts appears inconclusive, focusing mostly on the first years of operation.<sup>17,24</sup> Official evaluations provided no decisive evidence on the courts' effectiveness in terms of re-offending rates, seriousness of future convictions and community confidence in the justice system.<sup>35,44,45</sup>

Community justice courts no longer operate in the UK and there is no [longitudinal](#) research on their impact.<sup>36</sup>

## 1.2 Substance Misuse Courts

Substance Misuse Courts aim to address the substance-related issues underlying criminal behaviour. They have been adopted in different jurisdictions (Box 2). In England and Wales, 2,552,616 drug-related offences were recorded between 2003-2015.<sup>46</sup> In the UK, around 50% of violent incidents in public are associated with

alcohol misuse.<sup>47,48</sup> Alcohol-related harm is estimated to cost NHS England £3.5 billion each year.<sup>49</sup> Between 2019-2020 there were 99,782 NHS admissions with a drug-related diagnosis.<sup>50</sup>

Substance Misuse Courts aim to make more effective use of the Drug Rehabilitation Requirement and Alcohol Treatment Requirement components of community or suspended sentence orders made under the [Criminal Justice Act 2003](#).<sup>9</sup> Eligible individuals are 'fast-tracked' to an intensive intervention programme delivered by a multidisciplinary team (for example, addiction support workers, probation officers, police, doctors/nurses). Dialogue between individuals and the multi-agency team is supported by judicial continuity, progress reviews, substance testing and use of sanctions (for example, custodial sentences) and incentives (for example, personal development).

## Box 2. Substance Misuse Courts in other jurisdictions

There has been growing evidence on PSC internationally.<sup>51-55</sup> Well-established examples outside England and Wales include:

**Glasgow Drug Court:** Operating since 2001, it aims to break the cycle of repeat offending for individuals with long-term drug misuse issues through an intensive program of drug treatment, weekly drug testing and court reviews.<sup>56,57</sup> The key elements have been the 'fast-tracking' of offenders to treatment, a specialist support team, a non-adversarial approach and regular reviews of offenders.<sup>53,58</sup>

**Belfast Substance Misuse Court:** The Northern Ireland Department of Justice implemented a problem-solving approach in 2018 to help offenders when substance abuse is an underlying problem.<sup>59-61</sup> Eligible individuals are placed on deferred sentences while engaging in an intensive treatment programme.<sup>59,60</sup> On average, individuals spend 31 weeks on the programme, participating in 37 counselling sessions, 11 substance tests and 18 court hearings.<sup>60</sup> Evaluations show positive results on re-offending risk, substance-related problem behaviour and abstinence.<sup>60,62</sup>

**US Drug Courts:** There are currently more than 3,800 drug courts across the US.<sup>63</sup> They were initially established in Florida during the 1980s to address high numbers of drug-related offences and arrests.<sup>54</sup> Nationwide evidence suggests that 72% of individuals engaging with PSC do not re-offend within 2 years, 56% abstain from substance use and there is a net economic benefit of approximately \$2 for every \$1 invested.<sup>64-67</sup>

## Outcomes

The first Substance Misuse Court pilots in England and Wales started in Leeds and London in 2005, followed by pilots in Barnsley, Bristol, Cardiff and Salford in 2009.<sup>4,68</sup> Most pilots ended in 2010.<sup>4,68</sup> These courts targeted offenders who committed low-level crime related to substance use. Programmes focusing on prolific burglary convictions related to substance misuse have been implemented in West Midlands (since 2018), Hertfordshire (since 2007) and Bedfordshire (since 2011).<sup>69,70</sup>

Two process and impact evaluations exist for the first six pilots. These found that judicial continuity, self-selected judiciary and specialist multi-agency team were key components.<sup>68,71</sup> There was limited data to effectively assess re-offending and abstinence rates.<sup>4,71</sup> Existing data appears limited with no conclusive evidence on effectiveness and outcomes of previous or ongoing courts.<sup>4</sup>

The UK Government recently launched two Substance Misuse ISC pilots (Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

## 1.3 Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts

Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts (SDAC) were developed to support domestic abuse victims during trials and bring more perpetrators to justice.<sup>72</sup>

Between 2021-2022 approximately 2.4 million adults experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales.<sup>73</sup> Domestic abuse cases involve victims experiencing severe trauma.<sup>74</sup> The majority of victims are often reluctant to provide evidence to court because of complex relationship dynamics with perpetrators.<sup>75,76</sup> These evidential difficulties are an important factor for closure of domestic abuse cases.<sup>73,77</sup>

Implemented in magistrates' courts, SDAC try to offer a coordinated court process that considers victims' needs and safety.<sup>3,72</sup> SDAC improve specialist multi-agency partnerships in preparation of and during the day of court hearings, aiming for all the relevant information to be gathered in a manner sensitive to victims' experiences.<sup>78,79</sup>

SDAC also focus on improving experiences of justice for victims through witness care and special measures (for example, physically safe courtrooms, remote hearings, use of restraining orders).<sup>75,80</sup> There is no post-sentence intervention and monitoring for either perpetrators or victims, which differs from other PSC.<sup>3</sup>

### Outcomes

SDAC were initially piloted in the early 2000s in Cardiff, Derby, Leeds, West London, and Wolverhampton.<sup>81</sup> Nationwide implementation resulted in 141 courts by 2010.<sup>75</sup> The data suggests SDAC have not had sustained implementation. Currently, there are at least 40-60 courts across England and Wales.<sup>75,82</sup>

Evidence suggests that SDAC have increased the numbers of domestic abuse convictions, improved victims' satisfaction and increased public confidence on the justice system.<sup>75,83,84</sup> There are no nationwide procedural and outcome evaluations of UK SDAC.

## 1.4 Women's Courts

Women's Courts aim to address gender-specific needs underlying offending, such as domestic abuse, exposure to traumatic experiences, substance misuse, sexual exploitation and involvement in sex work.<sup>85-89</sup>



Female offenders<sup>†</sup> represent around 4% of the UK prison population and they are more likely to be sentenced for non-violent, low-level crimes and receive shorter custodial sentences.<sup>14–16,90</sup> The MoJ's Female Offender Strategy 2018 prioritised reducing the number of women in prison and a greater use of community orders.<sup>85,91,92</sup> Evidence suggests that the complex needs of female offenders require a multi-agency and tailored approach to achieve reduction in offending.<sup>86,87,90,91,93</sup>

In Women's Courts, eligible individuals are identified in pre-sentence assessments and are placed on a community order or suspended sentence order.<sup>9</sup> Women are allocated a probation officer and a keyworker while being referred to specialised women's support centres in the community (for example, providing assistance with housing and benefits, mental health, substance misuse).<sup>85,94,95</sup> Regular reviews take place with the judiciary, where rapport is built and women are encouraged to comply with their order.<sup>9</sup>

## Outcomes

The Women's Court in Greater Manchester has been operating since 2014. The UK Government launched a Women's ISC pilot in Birmingham in June 2023.<sup>2,8</sup> In Scotland, a Women's Court has also been implemented in Aberdeen Sheriff's Court since 2015.<sup>96</sup>

Government data from 2021 shows the rate of re-offending for women in Greater Manchester's PSC was 15% while the national percentage was 20.1%.<sup>32</sup> This reduction has been interpreted as an indication of the positive impact of the Women's Court.<sup>97</sup> Additional positive outcomes include increased compliance with community orders and multi-agency partnerships (including police, probation service, women's centres).<sup>95,96</sup> Although outcome evaluations show promising results, this is an emerging research area.

## 2 Family Courts

In the year ending 2020, the UK Government estimated that 478,000 children in England were living with a parent with alcohol or drug addiction.<sup>98</sup> A report by the Cardiff local authority showed that 55% of care proceedings involved parental substance misuse.<sup>99</sup> Parental substance misuse has serious consequences for children's wellbeing, which can result in neglect, abuse and exposure to crime, leading families into the public family law system<sup>‡</sup>.<sup>99,102,103</sup> Severe parental conflict

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<sup>†</sup> Official statistics present data according to sex (for example, female). Courts specifically targeting female offenders are referred to as 'Women's Courts'. For this reason, the terms women and female are used interchangeably in this POSTnote.

<sup>‡</sup> Public family law is about child protection in cases where there are concerns by local authorities of possible child abuse and/or neglect.<sup>100</sup> The local authority can start care proceedings if they are worried about a child's welfare, which can involve the child being removed from the family and placed in care or adopted by an alternative family.<sup>101</sup> Public family law cases are brought to court by local authorities to protect the child and ensure they get the care they need.<sup>100</sup>

and domestic abuse can be present in private family law proceedings that negatively impacts some families that go through divorce<sup>§, 104</sup>

## 2.1 Family Drug and Alcohol Courts

The Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) are an alternative form of care proceedings in public family law in cases where parental substance misuse is a factor in initiating care proceedings.<sup>105</sup> FDAC includes parental support provision and consistent judicial monitoring, in the form of non-lawyer review hearings between a specially trained judge, parents and support workers.<sup>105</sup>

Led by a multidisciplinary support team of substance misuse specialists, social workers and clinical psychologists, FDAC aims to address complex needs (for example, mental health challenges, trauma, domestic abuse) that drive parental substance misuse.<sup>105,106</sup> After being referred to FDAC by local authorities, eligible parents commit to a 'Trial for Change', where they participate in a 26-week intervention programme.<sup>105,106</sup> The judge has a central role in building rapport with families. The same judge monitors progress in regular hearings, where parents discuss their progress.<sup>99</sup> Where parents are unable to make sufficient changes within the timeframe of the proceedings, the court is able to make a swift decision regarding alternative placement.<sup>107</sup>

### Outcomes

The first UK FDAC started in London in 2008.<sup>99,108</sup> Following this pilot, the FDAC has received further rounds of central Government support, most recently from the Department of Education's 'Supporting Families, Investing in Practice' programme in 2019-2021.<sup>107,109</sup> There are currently 14 ongoing FDACs working with 36 local authorities across England and Wales.<sup>107,110</sup> The Welsh Government implemented an FDAC pilot in Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan to operate between 2021-2023 and engage with 15 families per year.<sup>99,105,111,112</sup>

Existing UK evidence seems robust with several studies showing that FDAC has a beneficial role in addressing parental drug and alcohol misuse, mental health and family stability while reducing the need for children to enter long-term care.<sup>105,113-116</sup> There appears to be limited evidence for outcomes on pregnant women who have their children removed.<sup>117-120</sup> Findings on whether the positive outcomes following FDAC, such as consistent access to community services, avoidance of relapse and further care proceedings, are sustained in the longer term appear limited.<sup>103,121</sup> A nationwide FDAC evaluation will be published in summer 2023.<sup>122</sup>

Cost-benefit analysis by the Centre for Justice Innovation showed that 30 FDAC cases cost £3,090,133 while the same cases in standard care proceedings cost £3,859,349<sup>102</sup>. The estimated net saving included reduced legal (for example, fewer contested hearings) and post-proceedings (for example, recurrent care placements) costs.<sup>102,123</sup>

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<sup>§</sup> Private family law is about disputes or disagreements between parents regarding child arrangements and finance during a divorce.<sup>100</sup> Private law concerns court cases between two or more private individuals who are trying to resolve a dispute.<sup>100</sup>

## 2.2 Pathfinder Courts

Following Government recommendations for a reformed Child Arrangements Programme in private law cases, Pathfinder Courts introduce problem-solving approaches to private family law.<sup>124,125</sup> In 2022, the MoJ launched Pathfinder Court pilots in North Wales and Dorset to support victims of domestic abuse.<sup>126</sup> They aim to improve the way in which family courts respond to allegations of domestic abuse in child arrangement proceedings.<sup>9</sup> These pilots also provide more opportunities for the children to express their experiences.<sup>126,127</sup>

Pathfinder Courts enable parents to reach an agreement by improving information sharing between agencies (for example, police, local authorities, family courts).<sup>104,125,126</sup> This includes the sharing of sensitive and risk assessment information with judges before the case goes to court to avoid disclosure, which could induce traumatising experiences and increased conflict.<sup>9,126</sup>

There are no evaluations of the effectiveness of problem-solving approaches in private law proceedings in England and Wales.

## 3 Youth Courts

Due to efforts to divert youth cases away from court, there has been a 79% reduction in the number of children going through youth courts in the last 10 years to 13,800 children in England and Wales for 2023.<sup>128,129</sup> The majority of those in the system today are involved in serious offences (for example, violence, drug-related crimes) and are likely to have experienced severe adversities (for example, economic deprivation, childhood abuse, care placements).<sup>130–132</sup> Re-offending rates of juvenile offenders are estimated to be 31.6% (2021) in England and Wales.<sup>32,133</sup>

Elements of problem-solving are already embedded within youth courts in England and Wales. For example, the use of youth panel reviews (see below) and the holding of hearings in specialist magistrates' courts, with a less formal layout to promote engagement with children.<sup>9</sup> Stakeholders have called to further increase the use of problem-solving approaches in the youth justice system.<sup>131,134,135</sup>

### 3.1 Youth Panel Reviews

Youth Panel Reviews have been established in Northamptonshire since 2014, adopting PSC elements to deliver out-of-court reviews of Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO, the youth court equivalent of community orders). YRO require juvenile offenders to follow rehabilitative requirements through an intervention programme that addresses children's complex needs (for example, adolescent mental health, drug dependency, education needs).

In Youth Panel Reviews, specialist-trained magistrates encourage and support children to comply with the requirements of YRO, usually lasting between 6-24 months. Regular informal reviews are held within the Youth Offending Service\*\* with magistrates and support workers, where children's experiences are heard, good

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\*\* The Youth Offending Service is located within local authorities and provides multi-agency interventions and supervision to children in the youth justice system.<sup>136</sup>

progress is acknowledged, and children are encouraged to feel ownership of their intervention plans. These reviews aim to increase children's feelings of being fairly treated, and to enhance their compliance with the law.<sup>137,138</sup>

## Outcomes

There is limited evidence on the outcomes of Youth Panel Reviews. Some stakeholders suggest that adopting PSC elements, which have been found to positively influence how adults respond to the authority of the court, might also have a beneficial role for children.<sup>9,23,138</sup> Two evaluation studies report the beneficial role of perceptions of fairness in supporting children's engagement with YRO.<sup>130,138</sup> A study interviewing 25 young people (2019) about their perceptions of youth courts found that understanding of the court process, having a voice and feeling respected were key elements to build trust in the justice system.<sup>137</sup>

## Challenges to PSC implementation

PSC have not always had sustained or expanded implementation. Stakeholders have identified several barriers to fully implement PSC and their approaches, which are likely to be interrelated.

### Cost and funding

PSC can be more resource-intensive than standard court proceedings, because of multi-agency engagement.<sup>23,123</sup> Stakeholders suggest that a lack of funding is a challenge to sustaining PSC, and local authorities may not be able to fully fund PSC without central government support.<sup>10</sup> Long-term cost-savings are unclear as the only UK cost-benefit analyses conducted were for the London FDAC.<sup>102,107,123</sup> Third sector stakeholders suggest cost-savings are demonstrated across agencies (healthcare, social services, criminal justice) and the lack of cross-departmental funding options is a challenge.

### Limited evidence base

Evaluations have been limited in quantity and methodology.<sup>4,1</sup> There is inconclusive evidence relating to long-term outcomes, the role of eligibility criteria in successful programme engagement, and program completion rates. Existing evaluations focus on re-offending and abstinence rates while unclear evidence exists on 'soft' measures of success (for example, progressive lifestyle changes, homelessness, coping skills, employment rates).<sup>69,139</sup> Post-intervention outcomes, and whether offenders have long-term access to community services, remain unclear.<sup>27,140</sup>

### Procedural issues

Cases that would not normally involve court proceedings might eventually lead to a custodial sentence if non-compliance sanctions are applied ('up-tariffing').<sup>79</sup> Intervention programmes are intensive, requiring strong commitment from the individuals involved.<sup>70</sup> The nature of offenders' needs means that intervention overload may result in non-compliance and sanctions.<sup>69</sup>

## Individual factors

Sustained implementation of PSC may rely on self-motivated efforts of individual judges or magistrates.<sup>51,23</sup> Effective judicial monitoring relies on judges' and magistrates' interpersonal skills to build rapport with offenders.<sup>4,51,68</sup> Stakeholders suggest that the efforts of some individuals may depart from best-practice standards or international models, which may inhibit effective implementation.<sup>4,24,141</sup>

# Opportunities for effective implementation

Stakeholders have identified several opportunities for more effective implementation of PSC across England and Wales.

## Use of existing resources

Stakeholders identify that current PSC can use existing resources to achieve cost-savings.<sup>142</sup> Arrangements of dedicated court rooms, timeslots and recruitment of specialist-trained staff can operate within existing judicial processes.<sup>9</sup> Efficient use of existing resources is likely to be supported by multi-agency partnerships beyond court.<sup>142</sup> Sustained availability and efficient use of local and national specialist resources to support individuals is also important.

## Multi-agency partnerships

Long-term implementation relies on designing approaches to the local context and availability of community services'.<sup>10</sup> Collaboration across Governmental departments, local authorities and community services can connect provision of specialist support across justice, health and social care services enabling safe and effective supervision and rehabilitation.<sup>142</sup> Efficient partnership between judicial leadership and local services can reduce administrative and operational issues within court processes.<sup>10</sup>

## Specialism

Addressing intersectional needs is a complex and lengthy process that requires PSC models to be specialised to local social issues.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, collaborative multi-agency specialist programmes of treatment and supervision are likely to be important.<sup>10</sup> Researchers suggest further opportunities for specialised support targeting the needs of individuals with protected characteristics (for example, ethnic minorities, older offenders).<sup>85</sup>

## Culture and attitudes

Support for problem-solving approaches may require cultural changes and support towards innovation within the judiciary.<sup>27</sup> Rigorous evaluation and concrete outcomes might lead to greater support by reducing scepticism within the judiciary.<sup>4,23,51</sup> Wider implementation of training on PSC components can increase awareness of the relevance and social implications of problem-solving approaches in the justice system.<sup>4,10,143</sup>

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## Contributors

POST is grateful to Aikaterini Mentzou for researching this briefing, to the Nuffield Foundation for funding her fellowship, and to all contributors and reviewers. For further information on this subject, please contact the co-author, Natasha Mutebi

Members of the POST Board\*

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Dr Gemma Birkett, City University of London

Professor Mavis Maclean CBE, University of Oxford

Dr Anna Kawalek, Leeds Beckett University\*

DS Sandy Thompson, West Midlands Police

Fiona Deacon, HM Prison & Probation Service\*

Dr Sheena Webb\*

Dr Mike Shaw, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust\*

Sheriff Lindsay Wood, Glasgow Drug Court

Aaron Arnold, National Association of Drug Court Professionals\*

\* denotes people and organisations who acted as external reviewers of the briefing.

Sheriff Lindsay Wood, Glasgow Drug Court

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58248/PN700>

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