

Association of Youth Offending Team Managers: Survey of Members and Heads of Service, July 2012

Background

At its 2012 AGM, the board of the Association of Youth Offending Team Managers (AYM) agreed to commission a survey in order to help ascertain the level of support for the association and views about its future direction. The chair of the board drew up a set of ten questions and the board then commissioned Phil Sutton, a retired head of youth offending services, to ask these questions via telephone interviews with all members, and all non-members who have responsibility for the functions of a YOT manager in local authority areas in England. AYM board members and YOT managers in Wales were excluded from the survey.

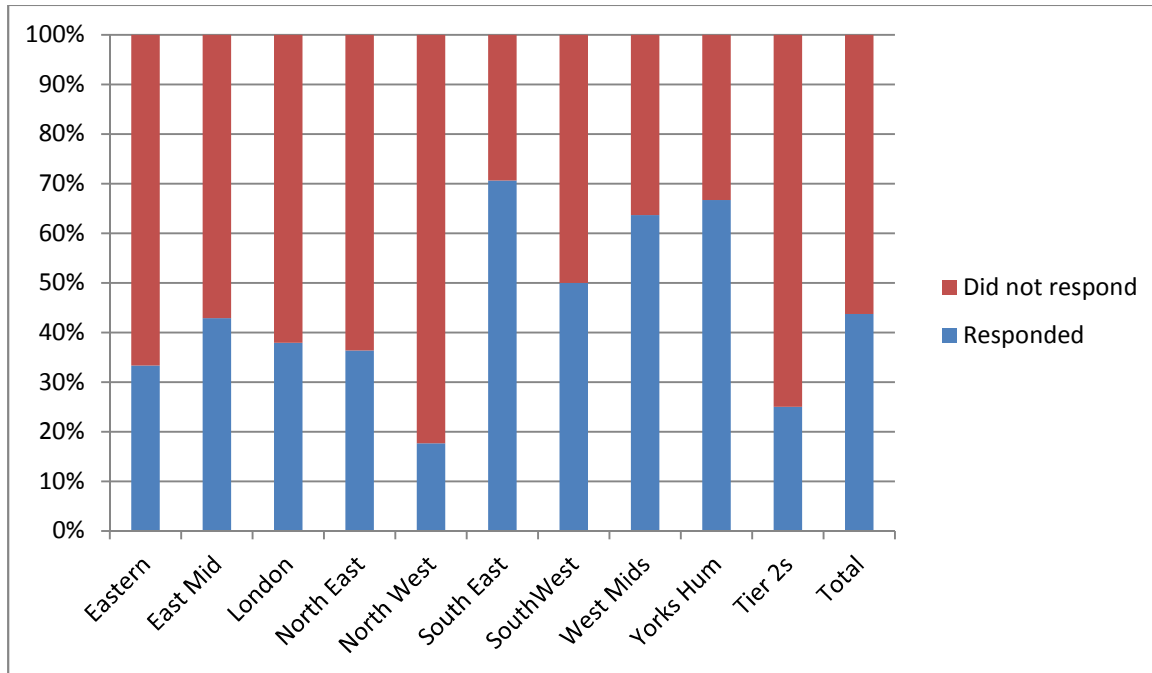
The interviews took place over a three week period in July 2012. Prospective interviewees were sent an explanatory email from the chair of AYM explaining the rationale for the survey, together with the AYM's current aims. Phil Sutton sent emails inviting interviewees to offer times when they would be free to take a call. Follow-up emails were sent to those who did not respond to the initial invitation, and board members assisted by emailing colleagues who had been slow to respond. Unless they responded to an earlier email, all heads of service received a total of three invitations to contribute in addition to the initial letter from the chair. The ten questions were sent out in advance once appointments were arranged. Most of those who responded gave full and detailed answers and were well prepared for the interview. A number of heads of service asked to see the questions but declined to take a phone call. They were offered the opportunity to respond to the questions in writing. There were a total of 63 responses, 48 of which were given through full telephone interviews. The remaining 15 were written responses, of which three were incomplete, in that they responded to fewer than half of the questions. Of the 63 responses, 59 were from heads of service (the designated YOT manager) and four from second tier managers who are members of AYM.

The following tables show the responses from heads of service broken down by region, and the national total for second tier managers who are members of the AYM.

Note 1. Two mailing lists were used: the YJB/MoJ's list of YOT managers and the AYM's list of members. Neither of these showed where posts were vacant or where the post holder was on long term leave of absence. Where such posts were identified in the course of the survey, these unoccupied posts are not counted among the number of possible interviewees in the tables. AYM Board members are also excluded from the number of potential responses.

Note 2. The AYM mailing list does not include second tier managers in those YOTs who indicated that they have a "group membership" arrangement for all their managers. Therefore the number of potential interviewees among second tier managers is limited to those who have taken out individual membership.)

Region	Potential responses from Heads of Service	Actual responses from HoS	Potential responses from second tier managers	Actual responses 2 nd tier
Eastern	9	3	1	1
East Mids	7	3	2	1
London	29	11	0	0
North East	11	4	0	0
North West	17	3	1	1
South East	17	12	3	0
South West	12	6	7	1
West Mids	11	7	0	0
Yorks Hum	15	10	2	0
Total	128	59	16	4



The remainder of this report summarises the responses to each of the ten questions. Sections in italics are direct quotations taken from the interviews and written responses.

1. What is your job title and area of responsibility?

Job Titles

Head of Group , Service Manager, or Principal Manager for Youth Offending Services or YOT Manager (inc. interim managers): **49**

Head of IYS and YOT: **5**

Head of Operations/ Operations Manager: **4**

Deputy Head Youth Support Services: **3**

Unit Manager within Integrated Youth Services **1**

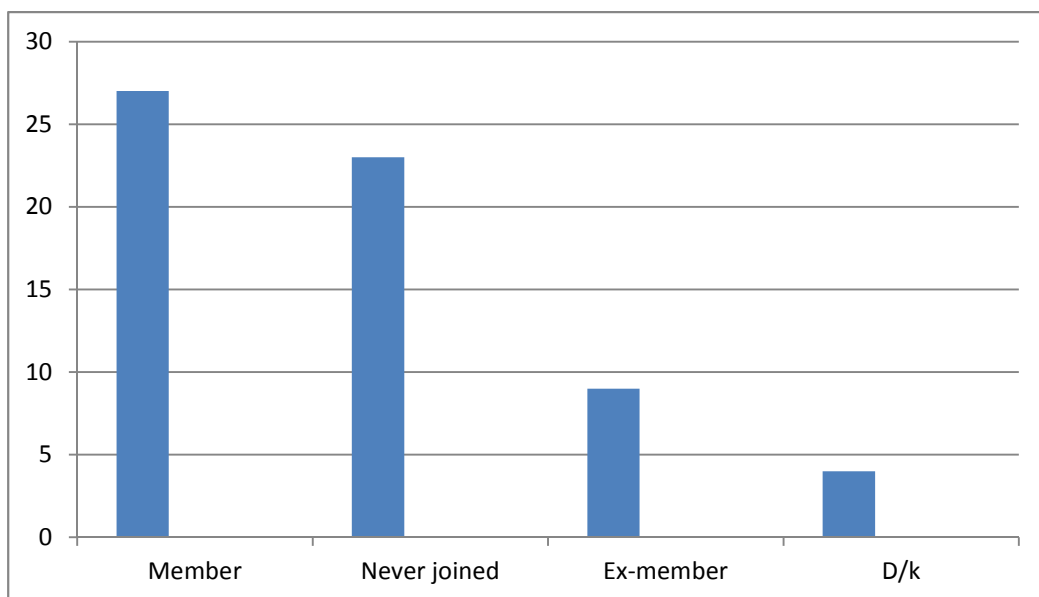
Not given: **1**

Areas of Responsibility

Youth offending/ youth justice services only (with or without either direct or indirect responsibility for delivering or commissioning youth crime prevention services): **49**

Youth offending/ youth justice services with additional services including Family Intervention, Targeted Youth Support/ Integrated Youth Services/ Troubled Families/ Substance Misuse/ Services for victims of sexual abuse and/or domestic violence: **14**

2. Are you a member of the Association of Youth Offending Team Managers (AYM)?



If a member, what has the AYM done for you?

Positive comments:

Kept me informed, especially through the work of my regional representative

Given YOT managers a voice

Provided an additional network

Been a filter for consultations so that I don't feel I always have to respond myself, because it will be done well by AYM

Organised some good conferences

I haven't needed anything, but it's reassuring to know that it's there if and when I need it

Negative comments:

My involvement has lapsed over the last two years and communication appears to have dried up

The organisation does not feel transparent any longer. It doesn't consult me when it's responding to consultation documents

The website is out of date

I can't access the website because I have forgotten my logon details

I joined last August and have heard nothing since. I feel I have paid for nothing

The lack of a regional rep in my area has had an impact

I don't know whether my subscriptions have been paid. Reminders are never sent

I actively supported AYM when it was helping YOTs to improve case management systems but have lost interest since this stopped

There was a lot of passionate debate at the AGM but it seemed the organisation had not adapted well to the modern world

What have you done for the AYM?

Just paid my fees

Happy to be a passive sub-member

Ensured that my second tier managers all joined via group membership

Attended conferences

Offered to be a regional rep

The size and scope of my job prevents me from being more involved

If not a member why not?

AYM behaves like the rump resistance to the Crime and Disorder Act

We have a strong regional network and I don't feel that I need another network

It is too south-centric

It feels elitist and distant: a cosy club for bored YOT managers

I don't know what it stands for and it doesn't speak for me

It campaigns on issues which are not always ones that I can support

I have been a YOT manager for over a year, but had never heard of AYM until I got the email about this consultation exercise

My emotional attachment to AYM ebbed away over the politics of the case management service

My local authority was no longer prepared to pay subscriptions for me

I left because of the lack of communication from AYM: not even minutes of committee meetings

What do you know about the AYM?

I don't know what it does or what it stands for

It is the voice of YOT managers

I tried to find out more about it from the website but found it to be of limited help

It's not clear to me who can be a member and who cannot. Some YOTs seem to have group membership but this has not been offered to mine

I went to a conference last year where a woman from AYM shared a platform with John Drew. Her speech was inspirational and made me think about joining

I didn't know about it until this consultation and have now decided to join

What would it take for you to take up membership?

Regular communication that is relevant and useful, and shows that AYM is having a real influence on policy

Seeing the AYM at the "top-table" with as much influence on youth justice as ACOP has on policing

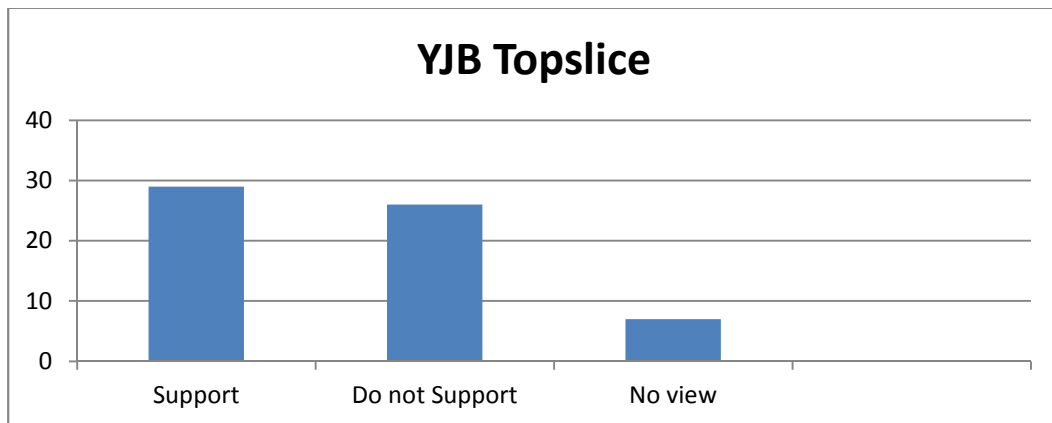
I would not join. I don't need it as I get all the support I need locally

If it was an expectation of my role that I become a member and fees are covered

Moving the AGM from Stratford

3. How do you feel about the YJB top slicing the Youth Justice Grant for automatic membership to the AYM?

Views on top-slicing were evenly balanced in terms of overall numbers. However, whereas those in favour cited mainly the administrative convenience of deduction of source and were moderate in their support, many of those who were opposed to the idea were passionate in their opposition and would be likely to resist it strongly. Two of the three partial responses to the survey were from heads of service who were indignant about the proposal to top-slice the grant; that was the only issue that they commented on.



In favour:

This seems an ideal solution

Better than haggling locally over a relatively small payment

We need as many members as possible

Extra revenue would help to develop a proper infrastructure

The YJB's endorsement of the value of a YOT managers association would be invaluable

Would be comfortable with a deduction of 0.025% to 0.05% from the grant

Without the wholesale sign-up of YOTs it's difficult to see how AYM can have a meaningful existence

If we developed something with the degree of influence that ACPO has, this would be a good investment

Against

This is fundamentally wrong and totally unacceptable. I am angry that it is even being considered

I already have to pay to belong to professional bodies and cannot justify paying for another. It flies in the face of localism

Politically damaging to reduce budgets further from the centre

The YOT grant is for services not for any other purpose

I am opposed to all top-slicing and think this could set an unhelpful precedent

AYM needs to retain its independence: this could compromise it

Mandatory membership leads to organisational complacency. AYM needs to sell itself so well that people want to join it.

Maybe

I would need to be satisfied that the organisation was providing value for money

I value the freedom to be able to resign if I feel strongly that the organisation is heading in the wrong direction

There would need to be an opt-out clause for managers who don't want to be part of this

Membership should be opened up to more potential members, possibly including practitioners

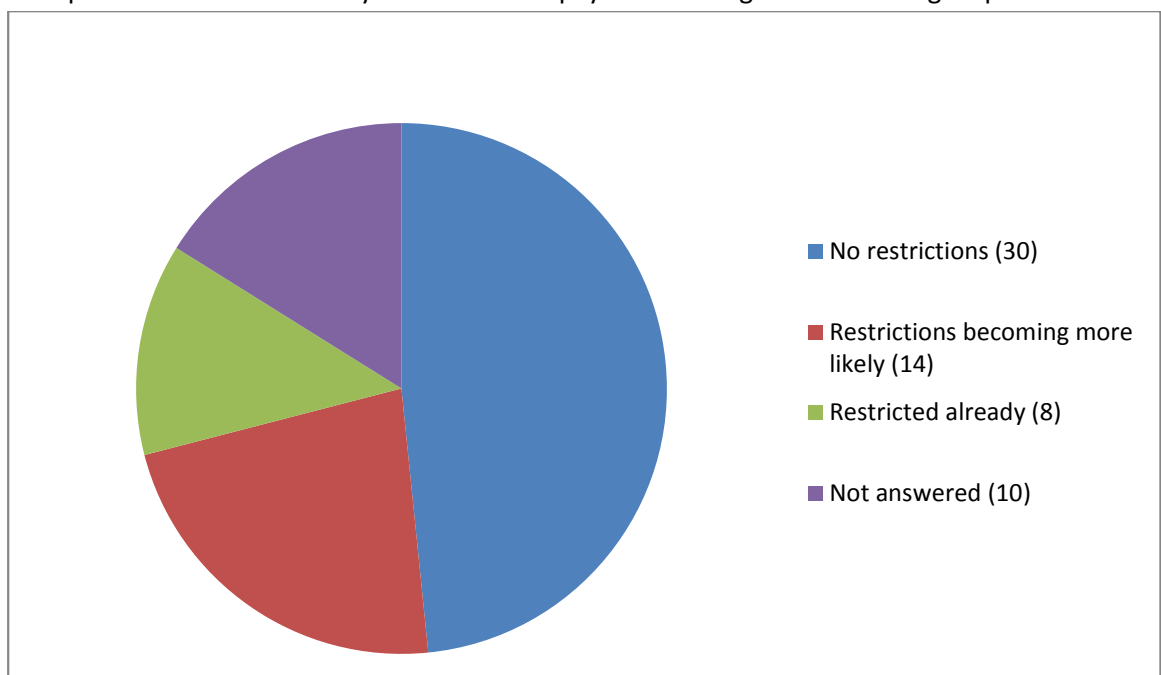
YJB should support AYM from its programmes budget, not from the YOT grant budget

4. How do you think the AYM should be funded? How much are you prepared to pay? Are you restricted by your local authority?

There were no other suggestions for funding apart from subscriptions, whether paid voluntarily or via top-slice. No-one argued that current subscriptions were excessive. A majority indicated that they would find it difficult to support an increase in subscriptions in the current financial climate, although one member thought that a subscription of up to £250 would not be unreasonable if the organisation provided good value.

Of the members, all bar one indicated that subscriptions are currently paid from the YOT budget (one is self-funded as a matter of personal principle). Many appear to justify the expense as being a small contribution to their professional training and development. Some managers commented that they were unclear on the organisation's rules for group memberships and second tier manager membership.

The question of local authority restrictions on payments brought the following responses:



5. We are looking to provide a package of information resource and support with our membership, what else would you look for?

We need to get the basics right: a proper process for responding to requests for information and using the membership to help. We need more members to be able to respond authoritatively

We need to employ a commercial manager for a year to help us identify new opportunities

We need a re-launch with a stronger regional structure, and we should pay for the work of regional coordinators: they can't be expected to do this on top of day jobs

This proposal reflects the paternalism that caused me to leave AYM: we should use the resources of the membership more, and the executive less

The organisation needs to have real clout in budget discussions, not just with YJB but with the national representative bodies of the YOT partners

To be involved at the start of new thinking in government so that YOT managers can shape policy rather than merely respond to other people's ideas

Promote debate on policy changes, and get accurate information out to YOTs promptly so that we don't all have to read everything in detail for ourselves

A regular briefing in the style of ADCS or YJB briefings, with links to research articles and relevant law reports

An effective strategy for internal and external communication

A strong voice in the media that competes with the voice of the Magistrates Association and NAPO, and which strikes a chord with the public

An induction pack for new managers which explains what AYM has done to support YOTs

Regional meetings and events for networking and sharing good practice; YJB has pulled back significantly from this, and when it does call meetings, it has its own agenda

More information on line as I cannot send managers away to conferences any more

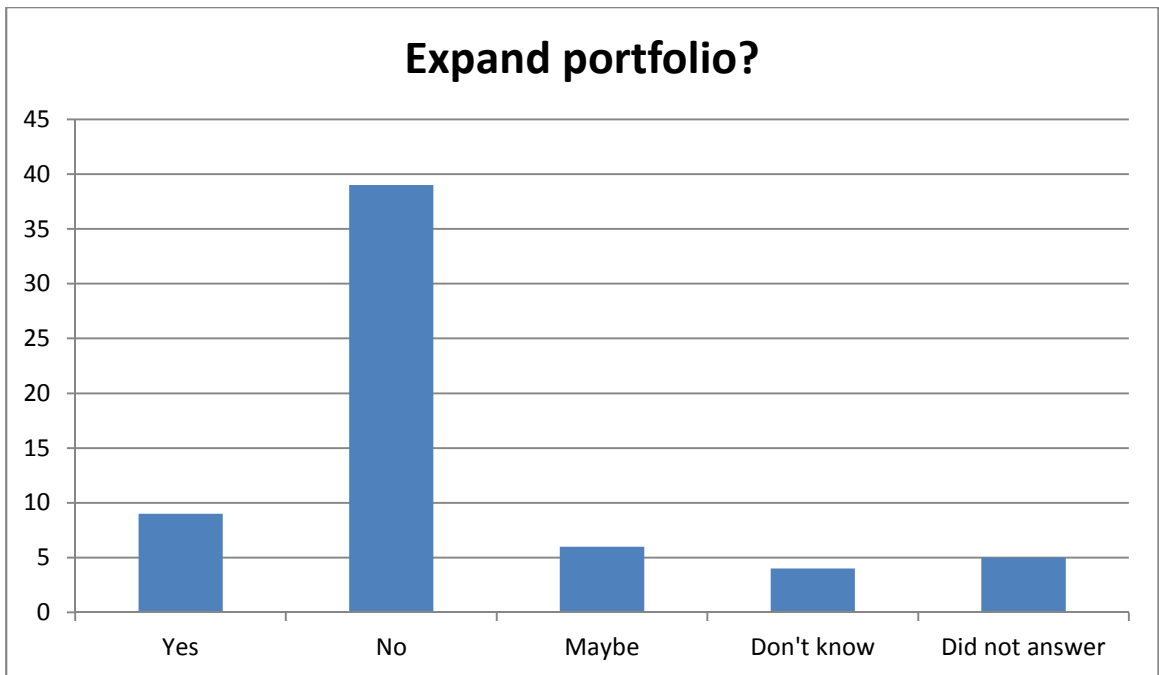
Support and assistance around YOT inspections

Personal support in a quasi-trade union fashion if I run into conflict with my local authority.

Help to develop staff. Lobby for a nationally recognised professional qualification in youth justice. Talent spot and help to develop potential senior managers

6. AYM advocates on Youth Justice issues, we recognize however that those responsible for Youth Offending Teams have had their portfolios expanded to take on additional responsibilities (e.g. troubled families, youth services). Do you feel that the AYM should expand its portfolio or stay ring fenced to Youth Justice matters?

There was a strong majority in favour of AYM retaining a very clear focus on the youth justice system as its principle purpose. Many of these also took the view that AYM could legitimately comment on wider initiatives that have a significant impact on young people in the justice system, such as the Troubled Families initiative. The minority view was that YOT managers would be better served by working within a larger organisation which has a more powerful voice.



In favour of expansion:

Most of us are dealing with young people at risk of offending. We must expand into this area and have agreed policies on youth crime prevention

We can't ignore the changing world; we should help each other deal with change effectively rather than fight it

We should negotiate with other organisations like ACPO and CHYPS in order to assess the prospects for some joint working

Against expansion

YOT is a successful brand. We dilute the brand at our peril

If we expand we lose focus. We uniquely sit between welfare and justice

The treatment of young people in custody is the key issue. Who else is in a position to comment on the management of these young people?

New initiatives come and go as frequently as new governments, but youth justice is the permanent core and we should concentrate on the core

We barely have enough people to comment effectively on core youth justice. If we expand the focus we will stretch the organisation beyond breaking point

We should bang the drum for the success of YOT partnerships and speak out against the abandonment of the YOT model in some local authority areas

There is a direct threat to YOTs as discrete autonomous teams; we need to remain focussed to counter this threat

We need to demonstrate that we are the experts in evidence-based practice in youth justice and not dilute our focus

Maybe

Stay ring-fenced to youth justice while we redevelop the organisation and review in two years

Once the tipping point is reached and a large majority of YOT managers manage additional services, then we should expand

7. How would you prefer us to communicate with you in the future?

Many respondents observed that a clear internal and external communications plan was one of basic requirements for the organisation.

We need to get the basics right and communication is key

Communication is a big problem for us. We have become too executive-centric and lack an effective engagement with the membership

YOTs should hear from AYM first about new policy proposals and new developments in youth justice, not from Children and Young People Now

There should be a concerted effort to draw out the opinions of YOT managers, especially those working in more remote areas

The biggest single demand (21 references) was for a regular electronic briefing in the style of the YJB's YOT bulletin.

We need reliable, factual, up-to date information about what's going on in the world of youth justice

The benefit of an e-bulletin is that I can forward it to staff in my team

We could offer to take over the YJB's YOT bulletin

I recognise it's a lot of work, but it needs to come out to a predictable timetable

The current website content (14 references) came in for some criticism. It was felt to be out of date and to lack depth.

I would expect to be able to search for research articles and for information about new initiatives in other parts of the country

It would be good to see some more research-based articles on effective practice

An annual conference would be valued

The conference needs to have a training component in order for me to justify the expense

Email threads were valued (9 references) as a means of exchanging views quickly, and three members were enthusiastic for the potential of social networking, especially Twitter

Regional meetings (although not necessarily co-terminous with government regions) were supported (6 references), although in some areas it was felt that these meetings occur spontaneously without any AYM support.

We should rejuvenate the regional meetings, as YJB is less able to support them

Regional meetings are the place where we can share practice and support each other. They provide a forum to explore ideas

We already meet as a regional group. If AYM meetings were to serve any purpose they would need to go beyond regional boundaries

8. Are the current aims of the AYM fit for purpose?

There was a very limited number of responses to this question. There was some confusion between the “aims” (as sent out in the introductory email) and the “objects”, which some managers had looked at on the website.

Six respondents said that the current aims were perfectly adequate, but 13 felt that they should be updated because they were *too aspirational, naïve, lacked sharpness and written in a style from a previous era.*

One member undertook to begin the process of refreshing the aims and sent me a first draft.

Another thought that a fundamental review was warranted:

AYM exists to promote the interests of YOT managers not to prevent offending. Our terms of reference do not reflect this.

Other comments included:

There needs to be a regular conversation with the membership to ensure that the membership understands what we stand for

We should be wary of becoming a campaigning organisation or another pressure group: campaigns polarise the membership

What would you add?

There appears to be insufficient emphasis on developing services in response to the voice of the service users.

More emphasis on public protection issues is needed

To support YOT managers in a changing landscape. To give them the tools and support to be effective managers in the youth justice system

To give a national direction to a localism agenda

9. What issues would you like us to raise in the future?

Three issues were raised by more than one third of respondents:

- The gradual erosion of the YOT model so that it has become a small part of the thinking of some local authorities and statutory partners:
We should remind people of what youth justice was like before YOTs existed and go back to ‘Misspent Youth’ to re-learn those lessons
- The battle to secure adequate funding for services, and in particular the difficulties to planning caused by uncertainty over grants from YJB:
The YJ grant is becoming more of a hassle than an opportunity because of the timing of it
- The advent of Police and Crime Commissioners and the impact they may have on YOTs’ budgets

Other issues raised included:

We need to work at a high level as well as at a local level to keep statutory partners engaged in youth justice (5 responses)

We need to listen more to research, make better use the data that is contained in our systems (and which YJB no longer uses) to develop policies and define effective practice (5)

Assess the impact of new prevention initiatives on the attitudes to the “failures” of prevention. Will they become the new ‘undeserving poor’? (3)

Assess the impact of outsourcing and privatisation of services (3)

Highlight the disparity in levels of responsibility and pay scales for YOT managers in different parts of the country (3)

Support the development of professional training and career progression for YOT practitioners (3)

Ensure AYM has a seat on key policy development fora and is recognised as the voice of the profession (2)

Become more media friendly. Ensure our voice is heard (2)

Provide national feedback on the inspection process and contribute to its improvement (2)

Help us to understand what’s going on outside our region. What are the reasons for and the expected benefits of YOT mergers and disaggregations? (2)

Assess the impact of localism: have YOTs been thrown to the wolves? (2)

Promote awareness of what happens to YOT cases at age 18

Promote volunteering in youth justice, and advocate restorative justice

Formalise relationships with YJB/ ADCS/ ACPO and other in order to avoid duplications and fill gaps

Campaign for changes to the age of criminal responsibility and for courts to take more account of young people’s intellectual capacity and learning difficulties

Contribute to improvements to the serious incident reporting process

Help YOTs to focus both on targeted youth crime prevention as well as on their statutory work

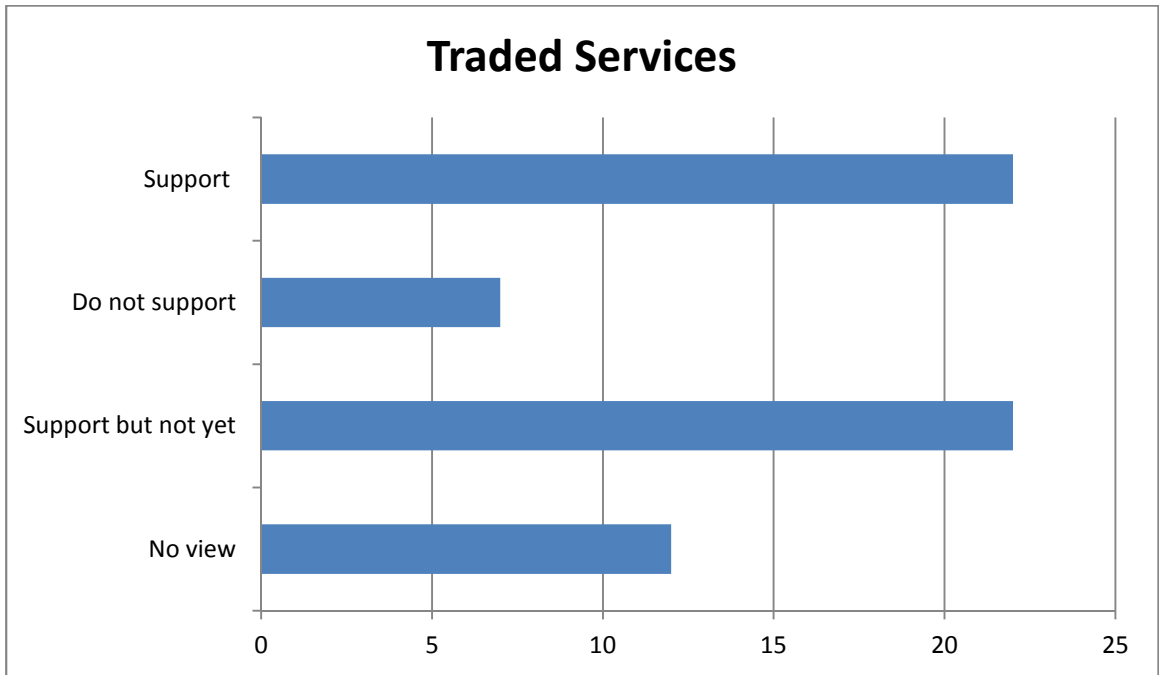
Assess the impact of absorption of youth justice into children’s service

Helping to keep YOT managers as members of local safeguarding children boards

Help us understand the health agenda and its implications for us

10. AYM are exploring all sorts of options included traded services. Do you agree with this course of action? What are your views?

This question was only dealt with effectively in telephone interviews. Those who gave a written response appear to have been unfamiliar with the concept or with the way the concept was expressed in the question. The concept of AYM developing a trading capacity, perhaps for training, or for YOT support, was broadly supported, although many of those who supported it felt that it should be a longer-term aspiration.



In favour:

I read this as an opportunity to trade services between YOTs which could be developed through regional fora

This fits well with the concept of peer review, which should be led by YOTs not by YJB

AYM could develop a bank of consultants with up-to-date and relevant experience

We will need to do this if we are to survive

Some existing training is of poor quality; AYM could provide some quality assurance

Not yet:

We are struggling to maintain our membership and that should be our priority

There is less money around for training and consultancies

I would like to see a properly worked business case

There needs to be an open dialogue with YJB to establish what the gaps are

Against:

I see lots of risk for the AYM including potential conflicts of interest and a threat to its independence

There is insufficient infrastructure in the organisation to support this development

The market is small and it's already a crowded market

We should be sharing our experiences freely with colleagues, not selling them.

PJS 31.07.12