

PRESS RELEASE



EMBARGO: 00:02 Thursday 6 July 2017

Call for greater urgency in response to children who offend

Following the release of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report *Managing children who offend*, VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) says that a sense of urgency is long overdue on this critical issue in the care and support of looked after children.

Vivian McConvey, CEO of VOYPIC welcomed the publication of *Managing children who offend*.

“VOYPIC shares the concerns of the Comptroller and Auditor General and agrees with his recommendations - particularly those with key relevance to children in care.”

The report finds that looked after children are still disproportionately represented amongst the population of the Juvenile Justice Centre.

“This report is a timely and clear reminder of the need for change in Northern Ireland’s youth justice system. For several years, reviews and reports have indicated flaws and inefficiencies in a system which responds to some of the most vulnerable and complex young people in our society. The lack of urgency and pace to redress these issues is at best frustrating and, at worst, of grave concern.”

The Comptroller and Auditor General recommends the Department of Justice should establish a specific strategy to address youth offending and reoffending to coordinate the delivery of youth justice services, policy and interventions. VOYPIC agrees with this and adds that prevention and diversion should be the main focus of such a strategy.

Vivian commented that

“The evidence that custody is not used as a last resort for young offenders continues to frustrate me and others who seek to protect the best interests of this group of vulnerable young people. We believe that young people should be supported and managed in a more efficient and effective, not to say, compassionate way. We should learn from the experience of others and from what young people tell us and introduce interventions with proven impact.”

ENDS

For more information and comment please contact Eithne Gilligan, Policy Manager on 028 9024 4888 (office hours) 078 0877 7970 eithne.gilligan@voypic.org