

The views of children and young people supervised by English and Welsh youth offending services

The HMI Probation eSurvey 2014/2015

January 2016

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1. Introduction

This report presents findings from HMI Probation's first annual eSurvey, undertaken with 5,302 children and young people supervised by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) between March 2014 and February 2015. The survey was designed to capture the respondents' own views regarding their needs, the support provided through the YOT and the progress made.

It is vital that the voices of service users are heard and taken into account when designing and seeking to improve public services to ensure that they are fit for purpose. With this in mind, at the end of 2014/2015, HMI Probation provided each YOT with an analysis of the surveys completed in their area alongside an average comparator. The data is also being used by the Inspectorate to help determine the priority areas for inspection and to provide useful contextual information in the inspection of youth offending work.

2. Approach

In 2014/2015 HMI Probation commissioned The Viewpoint Organisation to provide YOTs with an online facility enabling them to capture the views of their service users. The resultant eSurvey was designed to be as simple as possible, with advice being sought from speech and language professionals and from children and young people themselves.

YOTs were asked to facilitate completion of the survey by a minimum of 20% of the children and young people whom they had supervised in the community or after release from prison for between three to six months. While HMI Probation strongly encouraged YOTs to meet this target, it was not mandatory. Reliance was placed on the individual YOTs to encourage children and young people to complete the survey – the way in which this was done was variable across the YOTs.

In the final 2014/2015 sample of 5,302 survey returns, there was good coverage of YOTs nationally, although 6 of the 157 YOTs did not provide any returns and a further 7 YOTs provided fewer than 5 returns. Those returns that did not include any responses beyond the initial profiling questions were excluded from the final sample.

Whilst the large number of surveys completed give the findings value, it cannot be considered to be a truly representative sample and the findings may not be generalisable to all children and young people being supervised by YOTs. Nevertheless, this is a unique national survey and gives valuable insights into the views of children and young people under supervision.

2.1 Profile of survey respondents

Each survey provides a profile of the child or young person, covering gender, age, ethnicity and current sentence. The categories were chosen to suit ease of completion by a broad age range from 10 through to 17 years old. The profile of those who completed the questionnaire is shown in the following charts (Figures 1 to 4). Comparing this profile to the national workload data for 2013/2014 (the latest available at the time of writing), the gender and ethnicity profiles were broadly similar, albeit the eSurvey was completed by a slightly higher proportion of girls. The age profile was not directly comparable, although it is clear that the eSurvey was completed by a higher proportion of the oldest age group. Sentence type data was also not directly comparable, since the eSurvey could only be completed by those currently in the community and not those in custody. Even so, nationally the numbers of Referral Orders and Youth Rehabilitation Orders are similar, whereas the eSurvey was completed by a substantially higher number of those on Referral Orders (commonly used with children and young people who have offended for the first time and have pleaded guilty) compared to Youth Rehabilitation Orders.

Figure 1: Gender of respondents

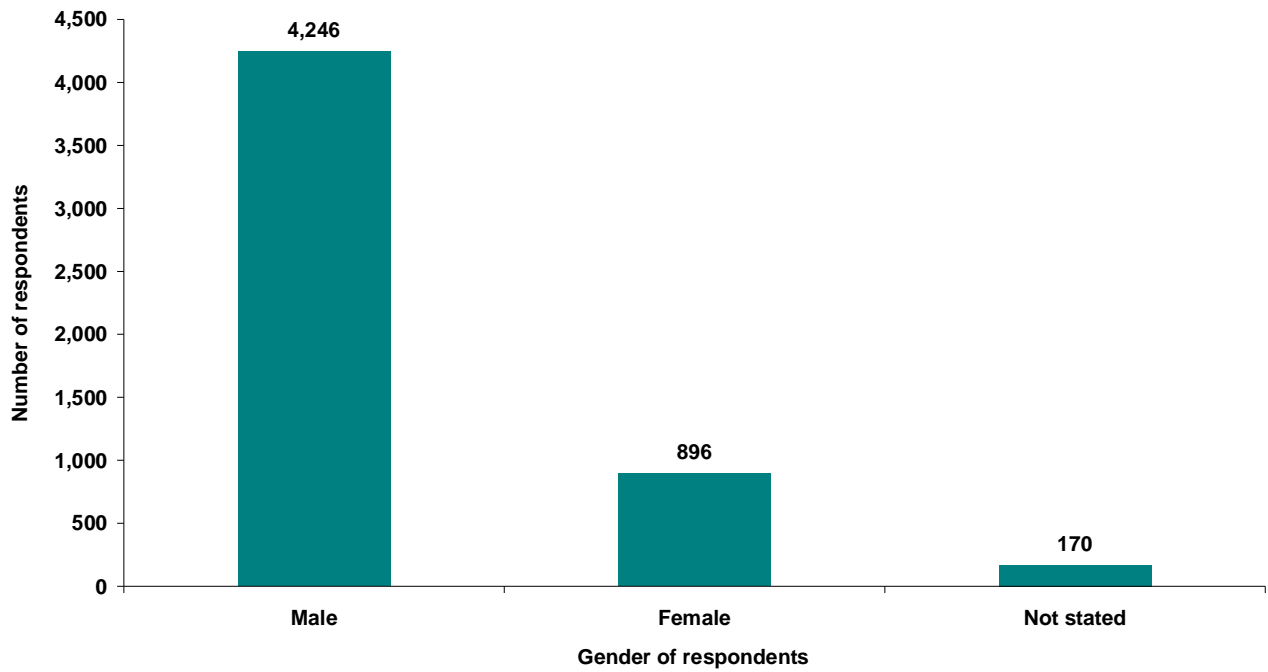


Figure 2: Age band of respondents

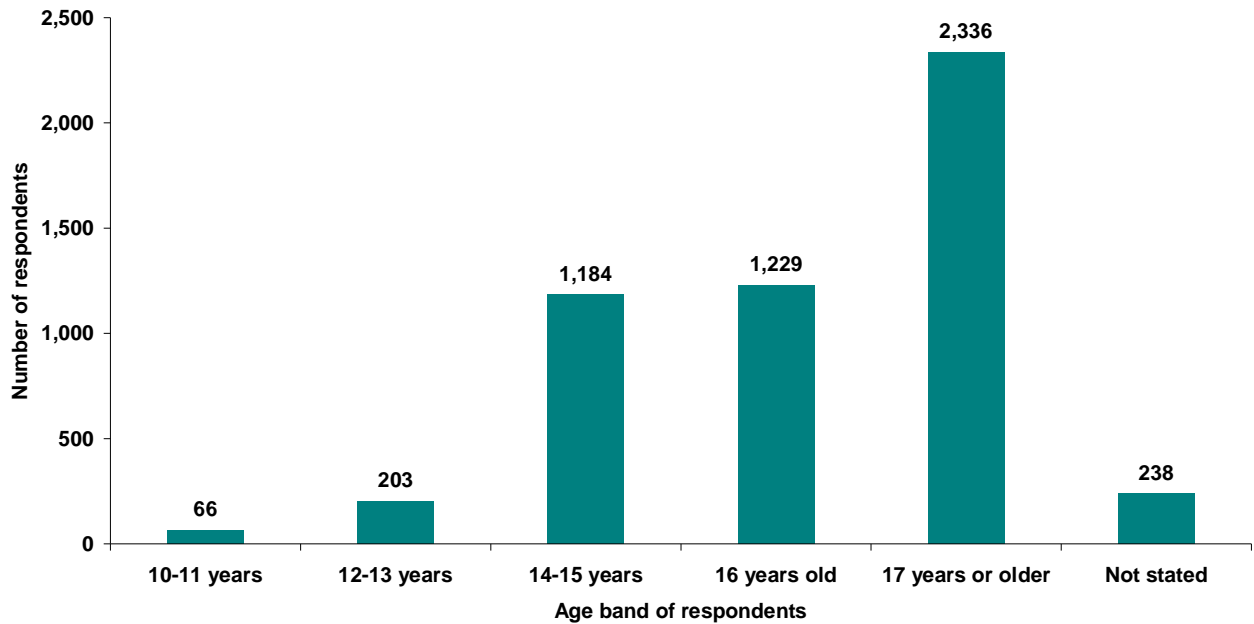


Figure 3: Ethnicity of respondents

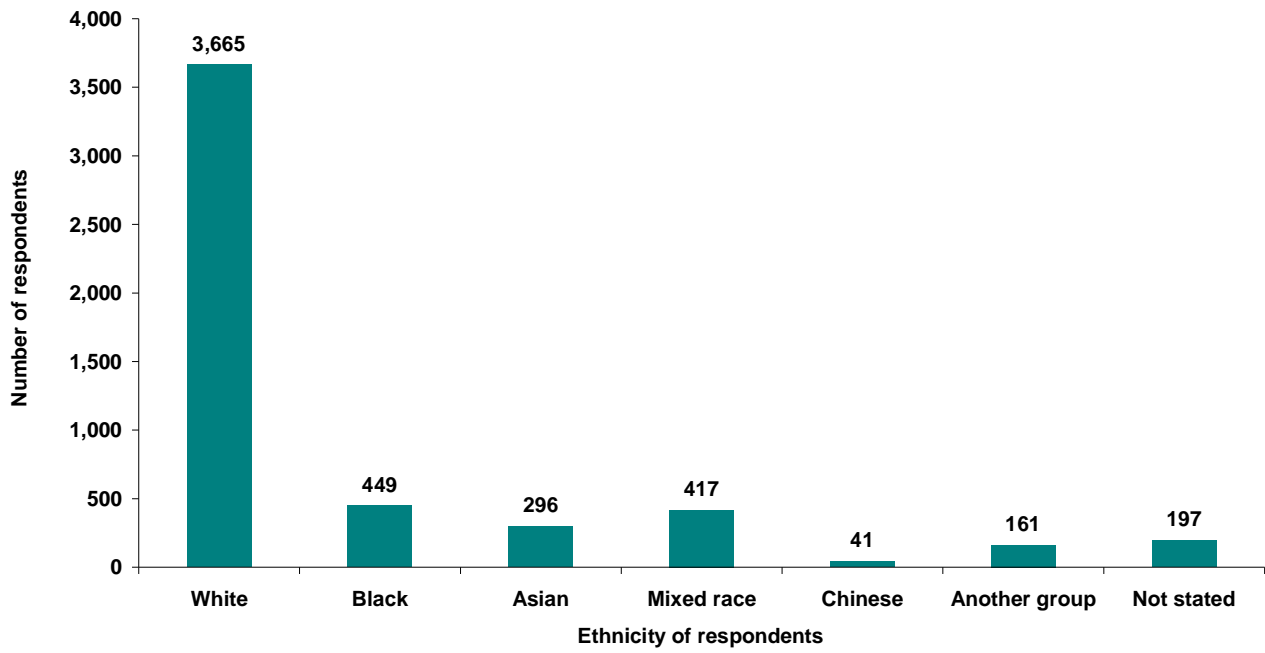
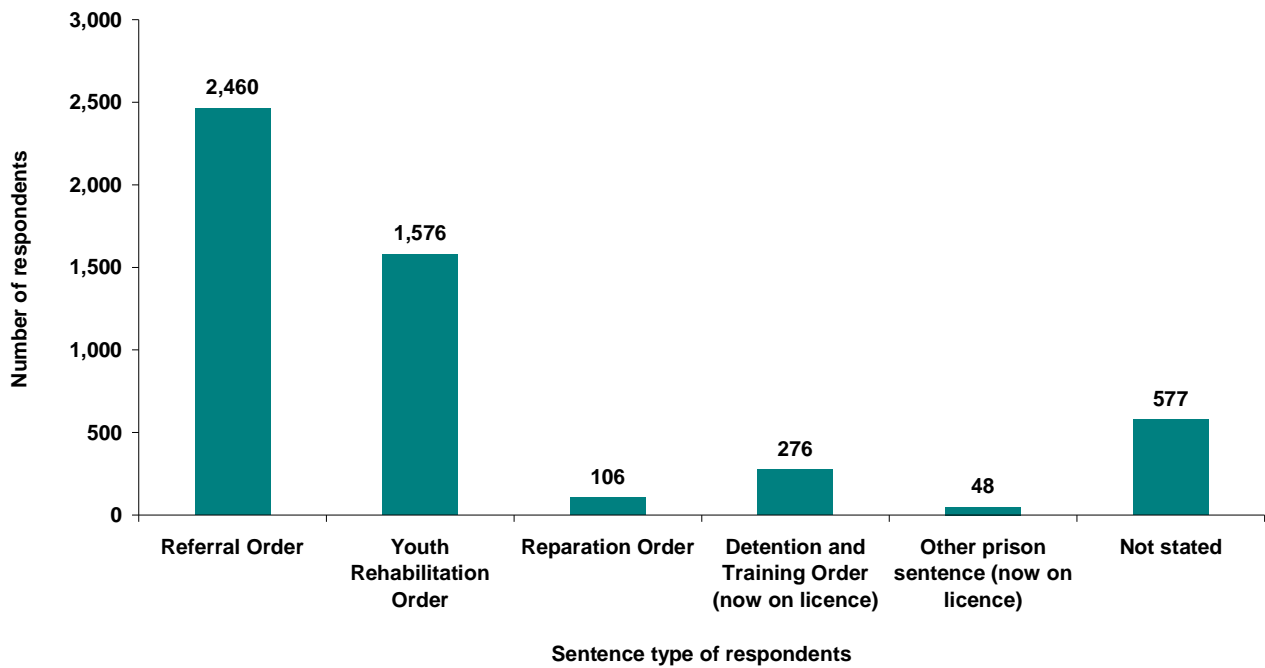


Figure 4: Sentence type for respondents



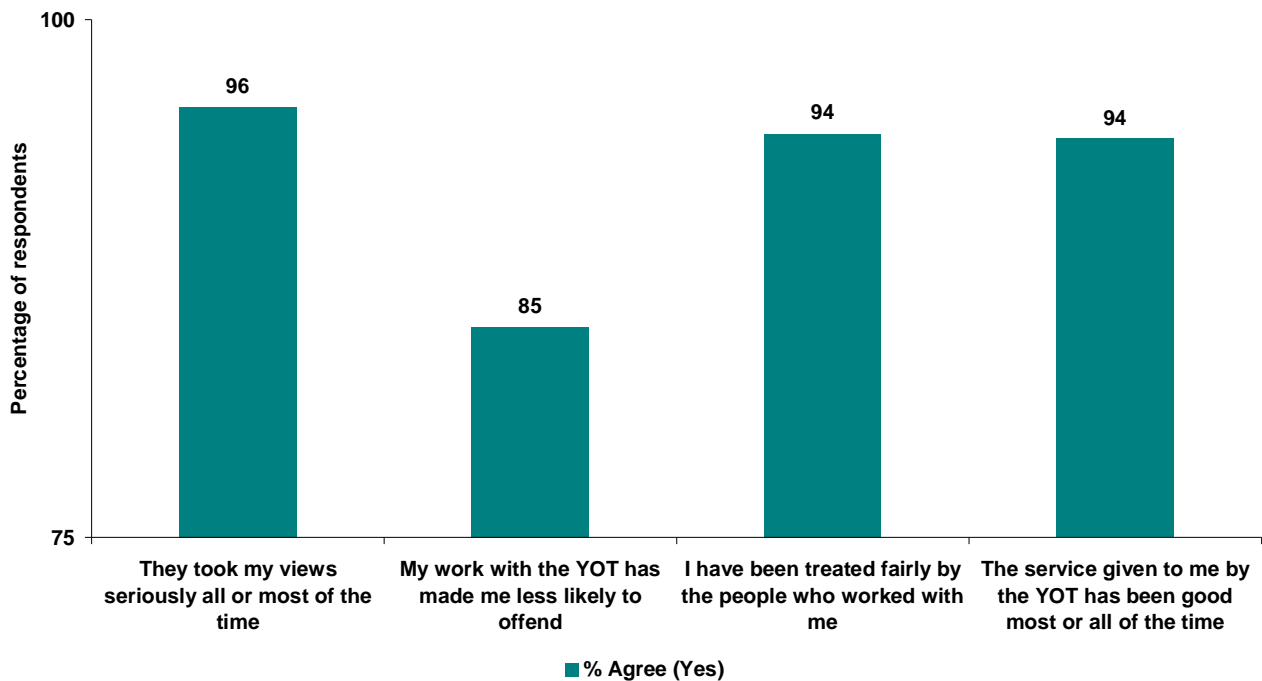
3. Findings

3.1 *Headline findings*

Respondents were asked a number of questions about their overall view of the YOT and whether it had helped them to stop offending. As shown by Figure 5, children and young people were overwhelmingly positive. There were no significant differences in responses according to the type of sentence.

Note: In this and all subsequent reporting, those who opted not to give an opinion on a particular question are excluded. Appendix A presents the breakdown of responses to all questions and indicates how many were invalid because they were not applicable to the particular case or because the child or young person preferred not to answer.

Figure 5: Headline findings



Quotes from children and young people

"My YOT worker always listened to me and when she said "no" I knew she meant it, even if I didn't like it."

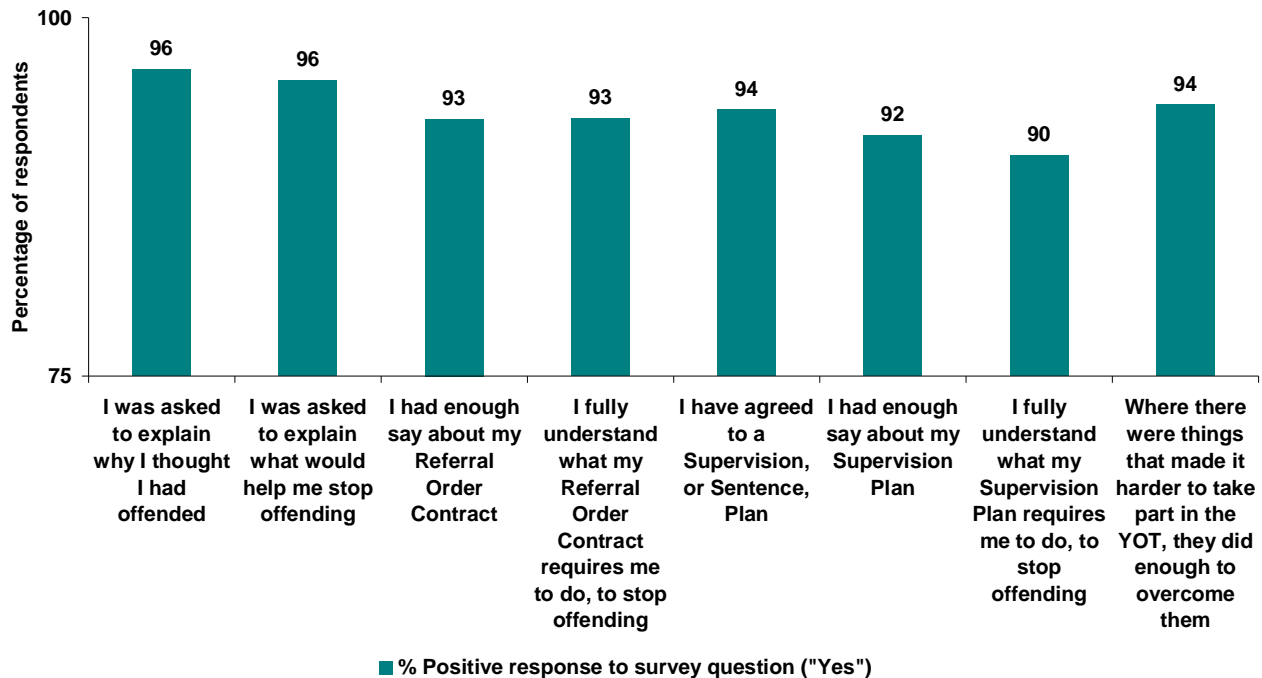
"I'm very grateful for all the hard work that my YOT worker has put in with me, helping me to get my life back on track when I thought everything was at its worst."

3.2 *Understanding and engagement*

There is an expectation that the child or young person will be asked challenging questions about why they offended and what the YOT can do to help them stop offending. It is critical that the child or young person is fully engaged in developing the plan of work and understands what is expected of them.

As shown by Figure 6, the views of the children and young people in the sample as a whole were overwhelmingly positive (but see later sub-sections for differences between sub-groups).

Figure 6: Understanding and engagement



Quotes from children and young people

"We talked about a lot of things and what me and mum thought would be good for me."

"Yes my view was listened to; they helped me reduce my cannabis use as I was getting into trouble."

3.3 Progress on factors related to offending

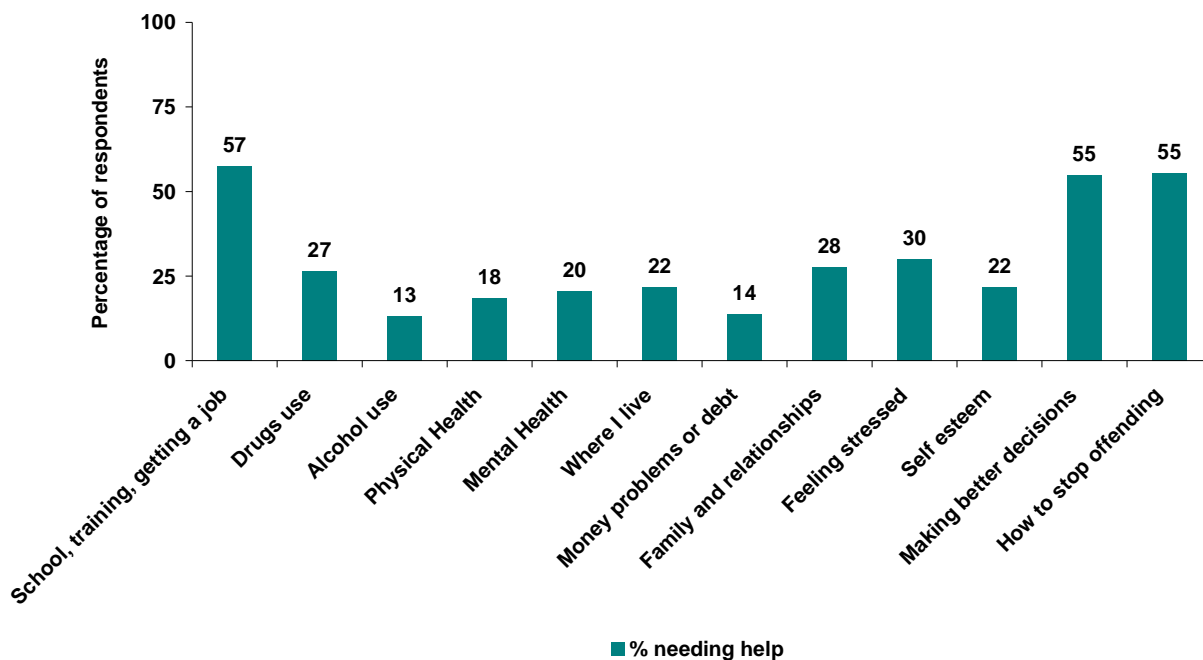
The children and young people were asked whether enough help had been provided on a range of factors that are often pathways to offending, such as:

- school, training or getting a job
- alcohol and drug misuse
- physical and mental health
- housing
- money
- family and relationships
- stress, self-esteem and decision-making.

More specifically, the respondents were asked whether the issue was a problem for them, whether they asked for help, whether they got help and finally whether there had been an improvement.

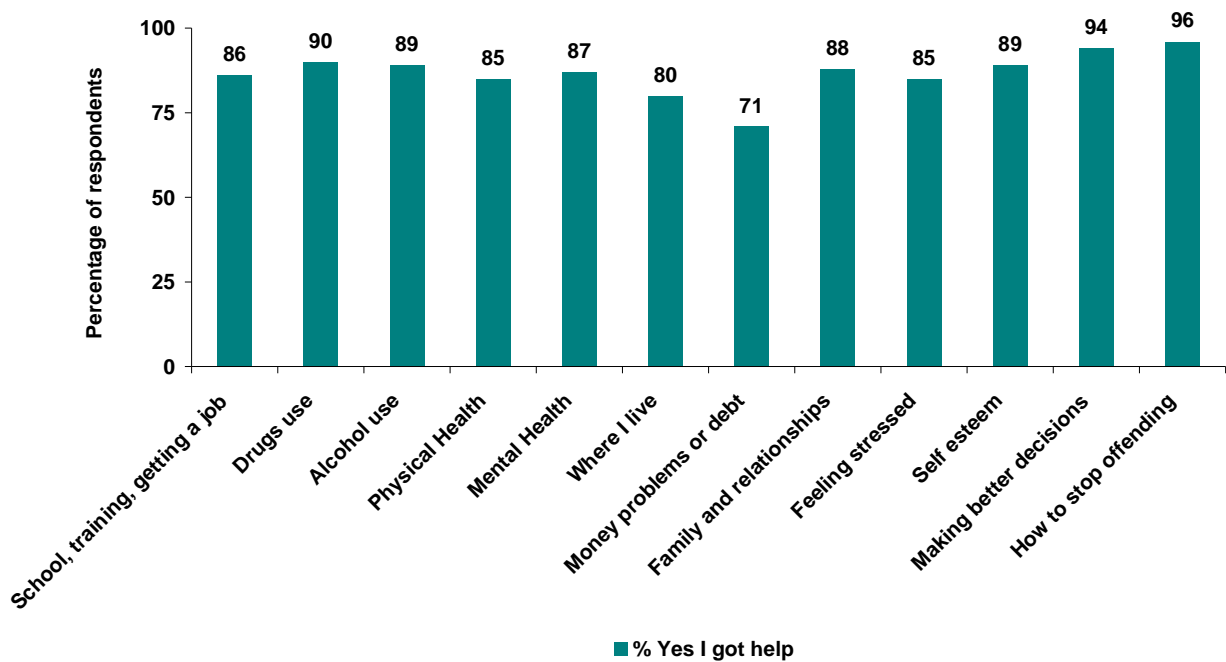
The areas where children and young people recognised they needed help most often were with school, training or getting a job, making better decisions and understanding how to stop offending (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Offending related areas where children and young people said they needed help



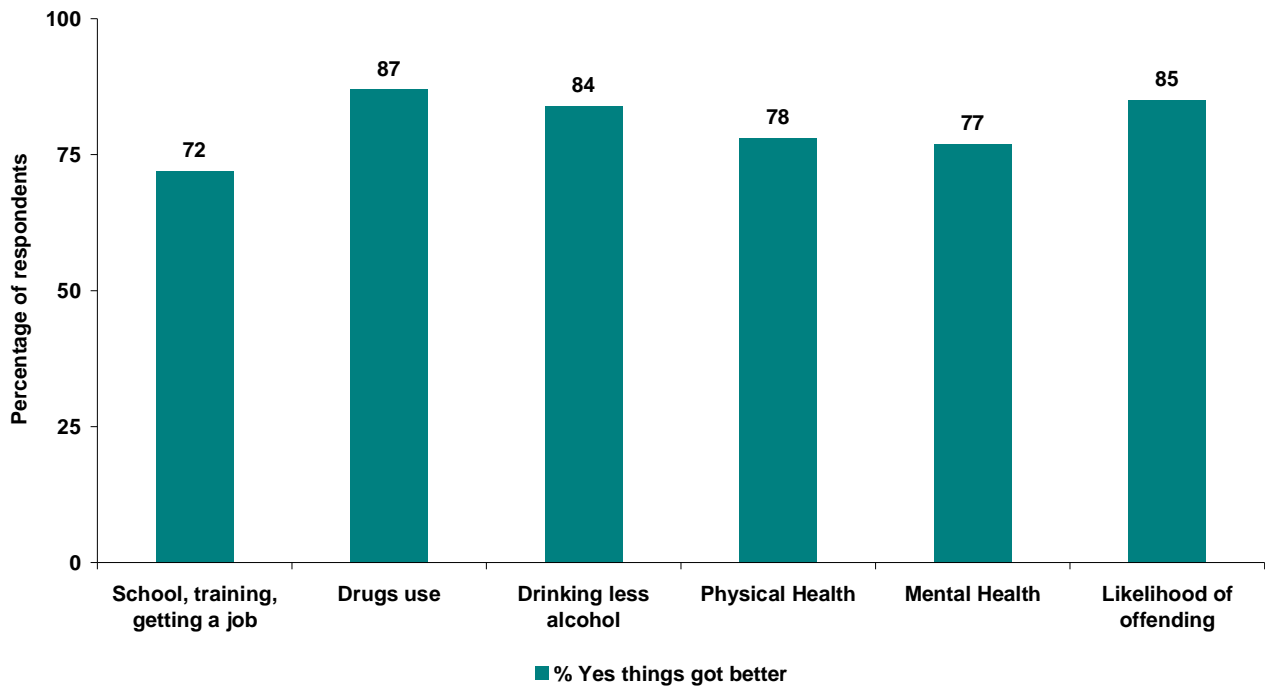
As shown by Figure 8, there were clear majorities who believed the YOT had helped them with a problem. YOTs were most likely to have provided enough help on drug misuse, family and relationships, making better decisions and helping children and young people to understand how to stop offending. YOTs were less likely to have provided enough help with money problems or problems with living arrangements.

Figure 8: Was enough help provided on the problem areas identified by children and young people?



Most children and young people who received help with a problem related to their offending believed that there had been an improvement in that factor (Figure 9). The least reported progress was on help with school, training and employment.

Figure 9: Has there been improvement in offending related factors?



Quotes from children and young people

"I'm making a film on drugs and it has opened my eyes to what I am doing to myself."

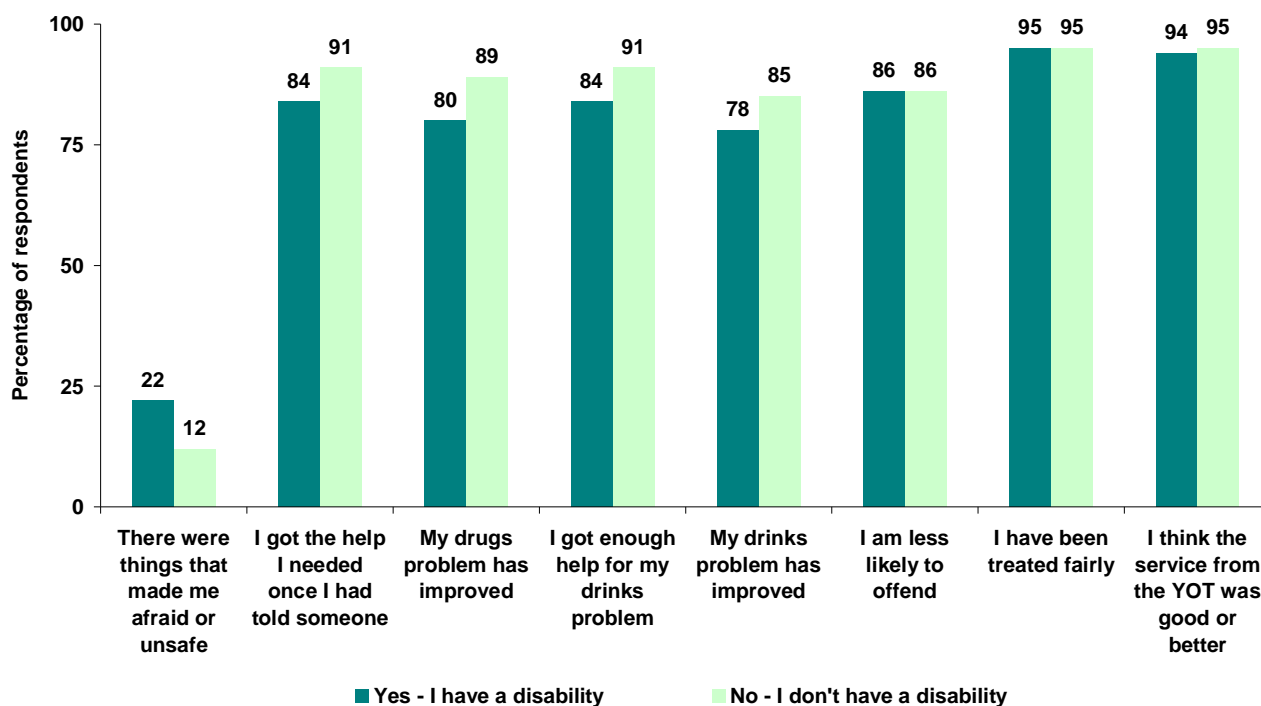
"I now have a diagnosis for Asperger's syndrome. YOT helped me with a referral to find this out. As a result I get my needs met at school."

3.4 Disability

683 respondents (14% of those who answered the question) reported that they had some form of disability. This primarily related to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD; reported by 56% of respondents with disabilities) and learning (31%) or communication difficulties (34%).

Figure 10 summarises responses to key questions. As shown, for some questions there are noticeable differences between the answers given by those who disclosed a disability and those who said they did not have a disability. However, it is encouraging to note that, in terms of the main offending outcome and the overall views of the service received, there was no appreciable difference between those who were disabled and those who were not.

Figure 10: Headline findings by disability status



Quotes from children and young people with declared disabilities

"I know why what I did was bad now and how not to do it again."

"At the start I did not think I needed any help [with drugs] but I said yes to it anyway. Now that I have started the work I can actually see the value in it."

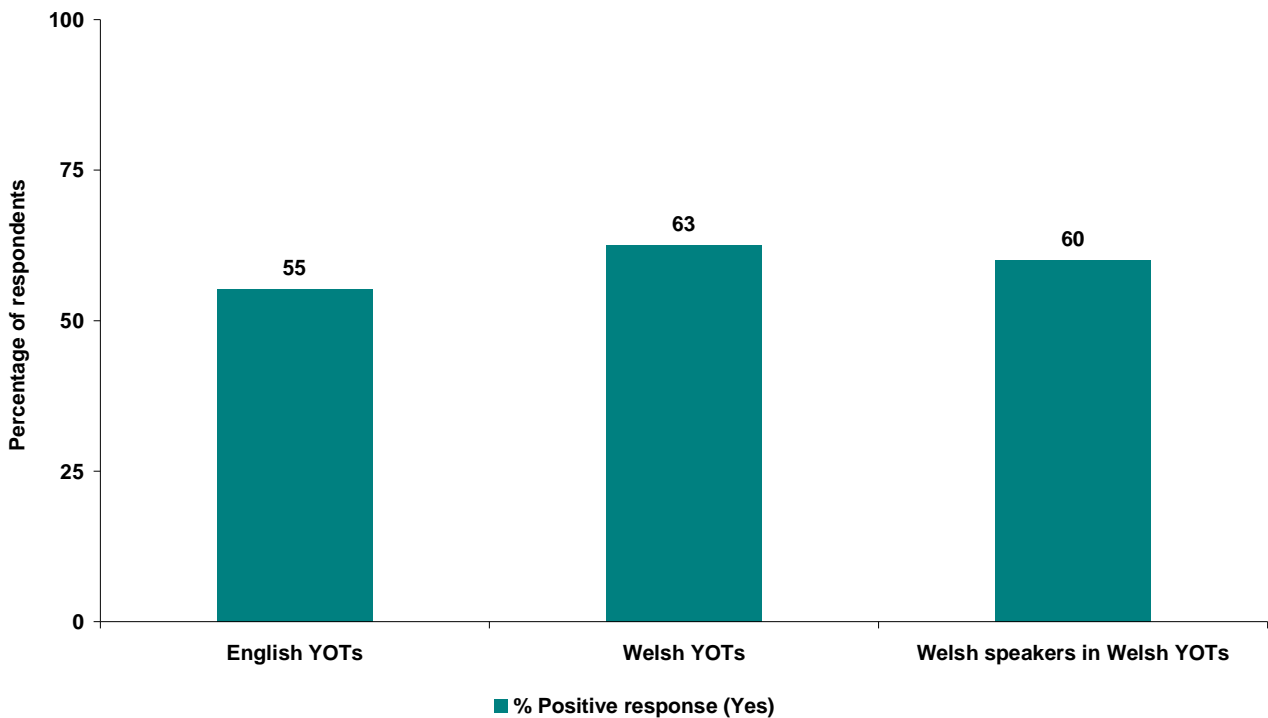
3.5 Wales

329 surveys (6%) were completed by children and young people being supervised by YOTs in Wales. Notably, there were no statistically significant differences in service ratings between respondents from Wales and those from England.

In Wales there is a requirement for public services to be delivered using the Welsh language where this is requested. In the eSurvey, the children and young people were asked for their preferred first language. For those whose preferred language was not English, it was checked whether the YOT had asked that same question and whether the child or young person was then able to work using their preferred language. As shown by Figure 11, YOTs in Wales were better than those in England at checking the preference of those whose first language was not English. However, this check was done in less than two-thirds (63%) of cases; for those who stated that they would have preferred to use Welsh, it had been checked in three-fifths (60%) of cases. Once they had been asked, all but one young person who preferred to use Welsh had been able to do so.

The survey was available in both English and Welsh, but only five surveys were completed in Welsh.

Figure 11: I was asked which language I preferred to use



3.6 Ethnicity

Almost 1,400 surveys were completed by respondents who described their ethnicity as something other than White. A breakdown of the ethnicity categories is shown above in the profile section (Figure 3).

There were some interesting patterns in ethnicity when plotted against age. The proportion that completed the survey and identified themselves as White increased substantially in the older age groups (61% of those aged 10-13; 74% of those aged 17 or older). There was a similar pattern with those who identified as Black, increasing from 6% of those aged 10-13 to 9% of the eldest group. Conversely, those from an Asian background made up a larger proportion of the youngest

age groups (16% of those aged 10-13; 5% of the older groups). The proportion that was of a Mixed ethnicity or Chinese also decreased in the older age groups.

A substantially higher proportion of Black and Asian respondents lived with a parent, whereas a higher proportion of those of Mixed ethnicity lived with carers, in children's homes or on their own compared to other backgrounds. Those who recorded their ethnicity as 'other' were least likely to live with parents.

Figure 12 shows cases where the respondent had a preferred language other than English. It shows that Asian respondents were more likely to have their preference checked, and those of a Mixed ethnicity were least likely. However, once asked, this group were likely to be able use their preferred language. Those of 'other' ethnicities were more likely to have a non-English language preference.

Figure 12: Consideration given to preferred language where this was not English

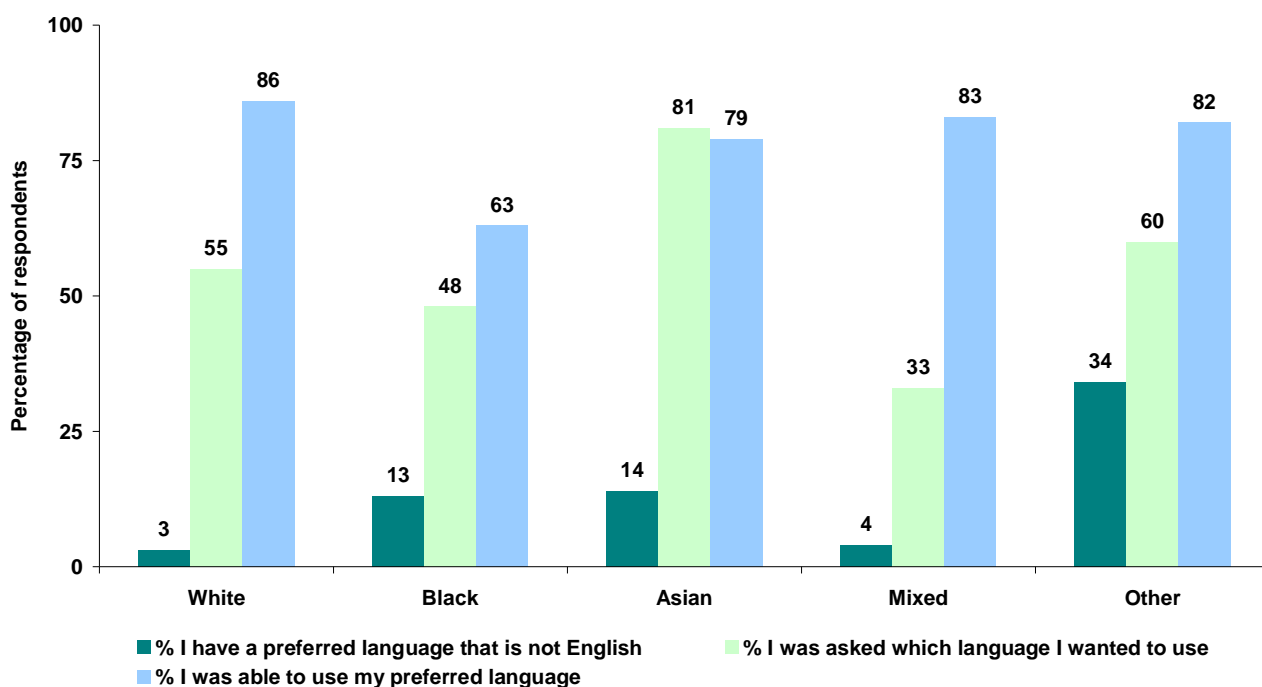


Figure 13 shows a breakdown of selected key questions by ethnicity, indicating no strong associations between ethnicity and service quality or performance.

Figure 13: Selected questions presented by ethnicity

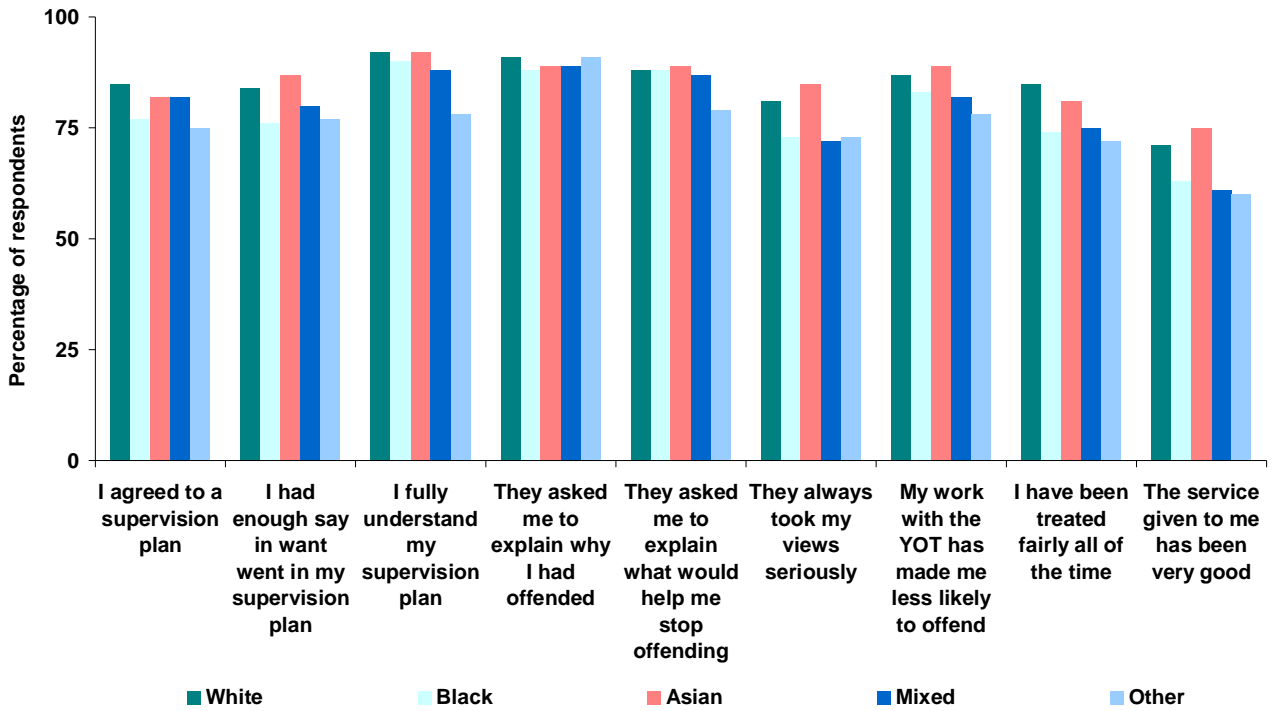
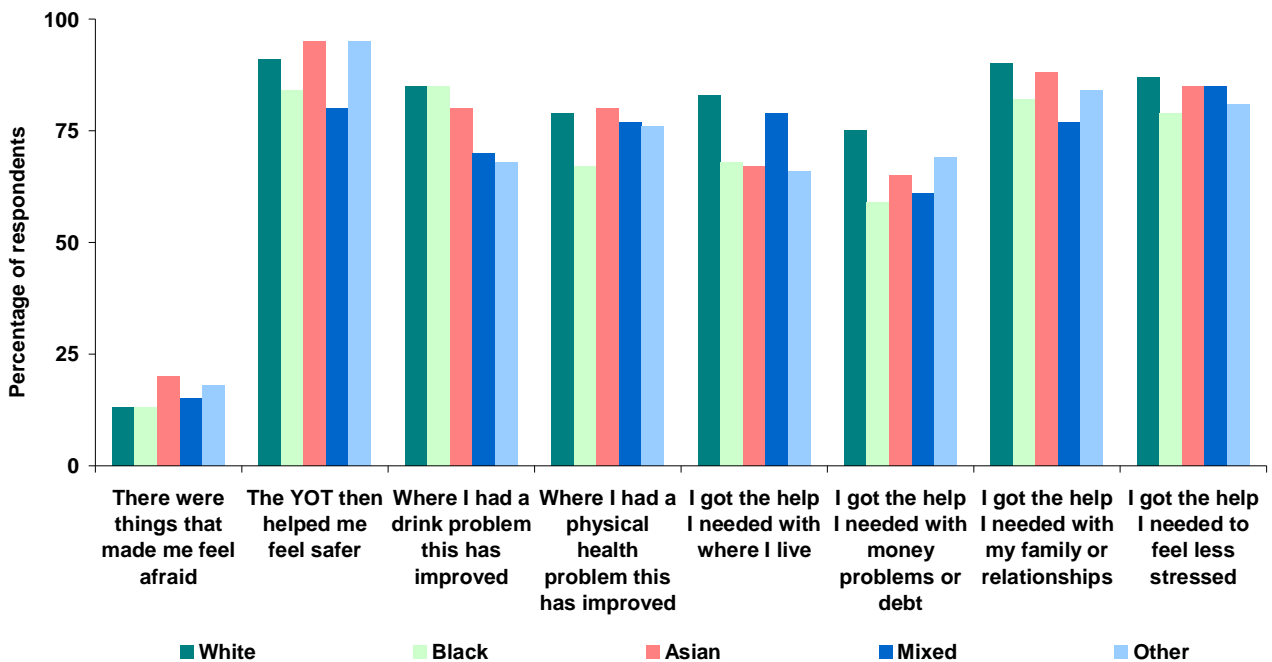


Figure 14 examines those who had identified specific problems in their lives and shows how frequently the required help was provided or improvements achieved. No clear associations were found between these responses and ethnicity.

Figure 14: Actions taken and progress when specific concerns had been identified by ethnicity

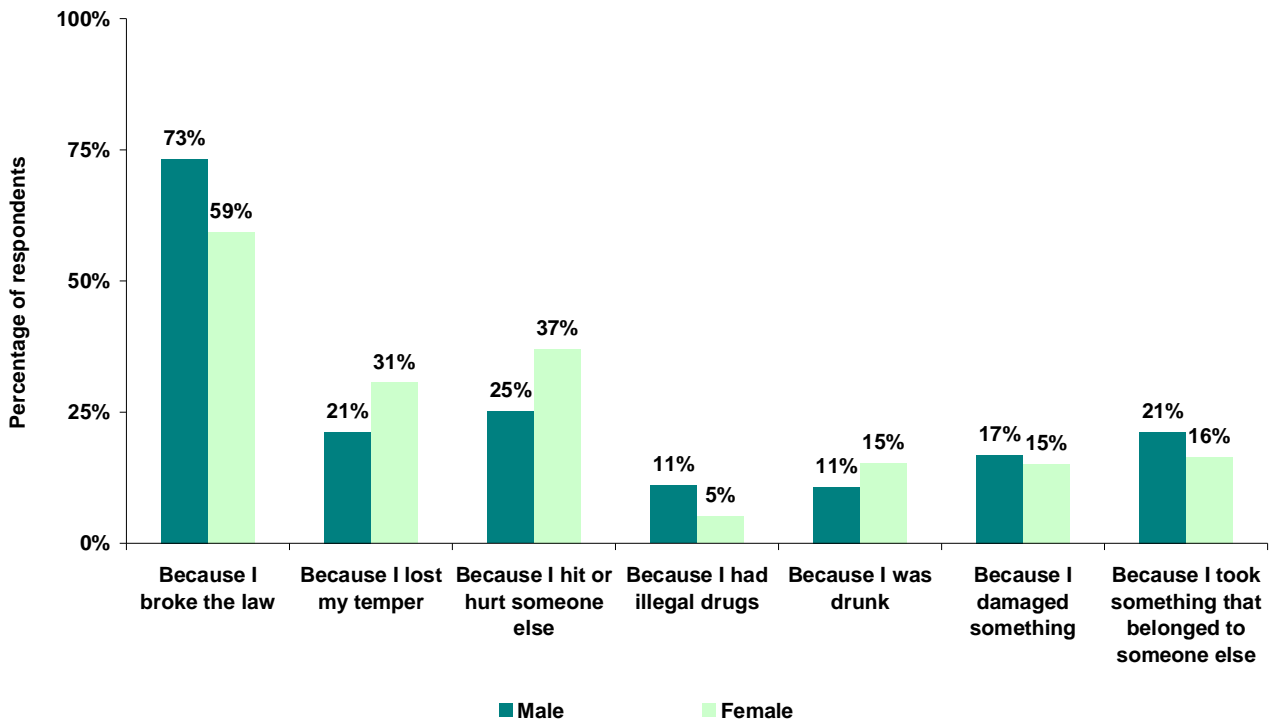


3.7 Gender

Almost 900 surveys were completed by girls and young women. In most cases, the survey findings were similar to those for male respondents. However, it was noticeable that girls and young women were more likely to be living on their own (11% female; 6% male) or in other non-familial arrangements and were less likely to be living with parents (58% female; 73% male).

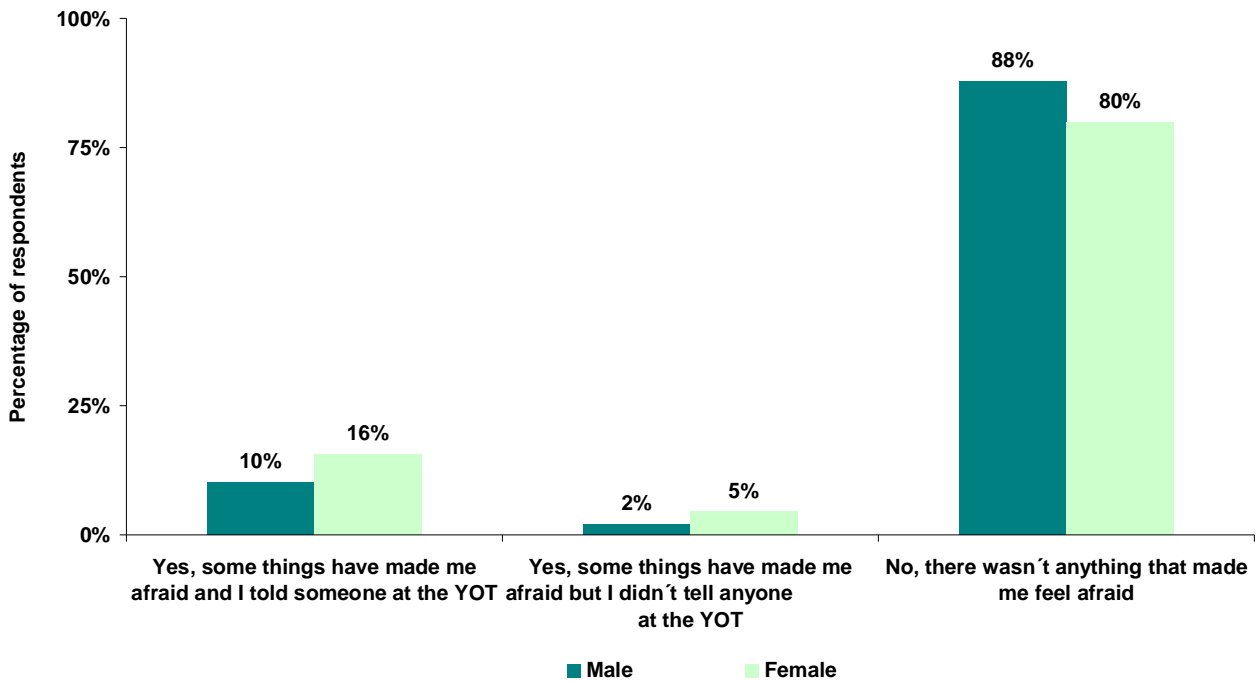
As shown by Figure 15, girls and young women were less likely to consider that they were with the YOT because they had broken the law, used illegal drugs, or stolen things. Conversely, they were more likely to recognise that they had lost their temper or hurt someone.

Figure 15: Reasons for coming to the YOT by gender



Almost double the proportion of girls and young women (21% female; 12% male) said there were things that made them feel less safe (Figure 16).

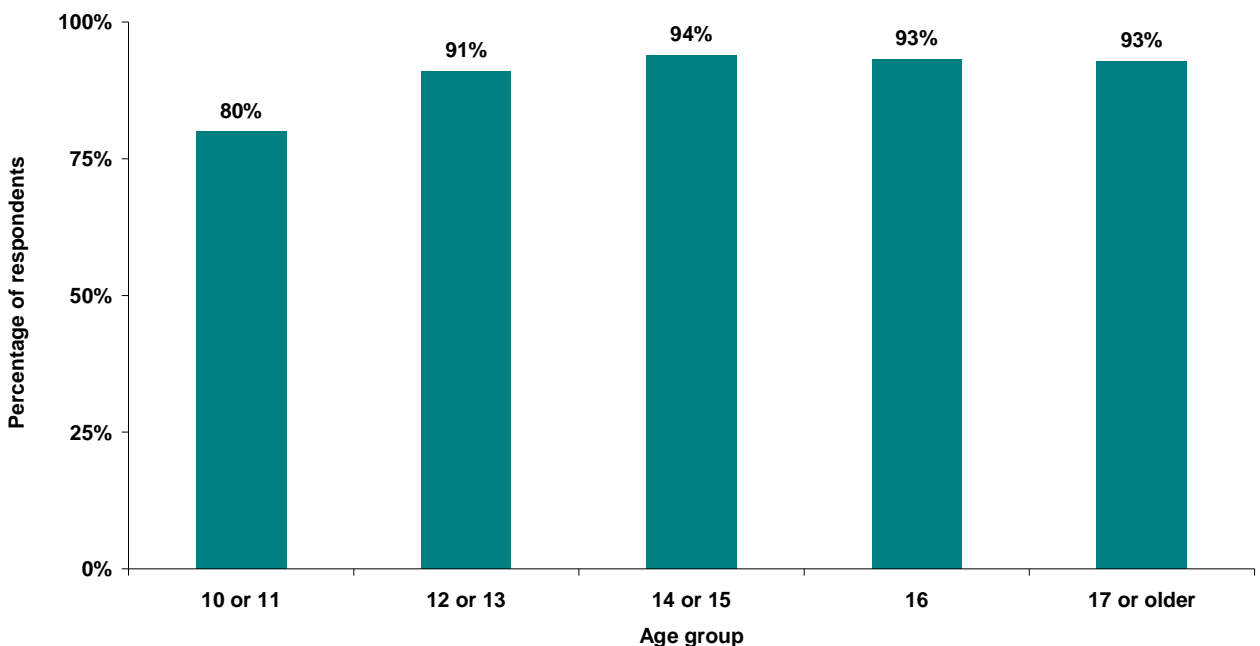
Figure 16: Feeling afraid or unsafe by gender



3.8 Age

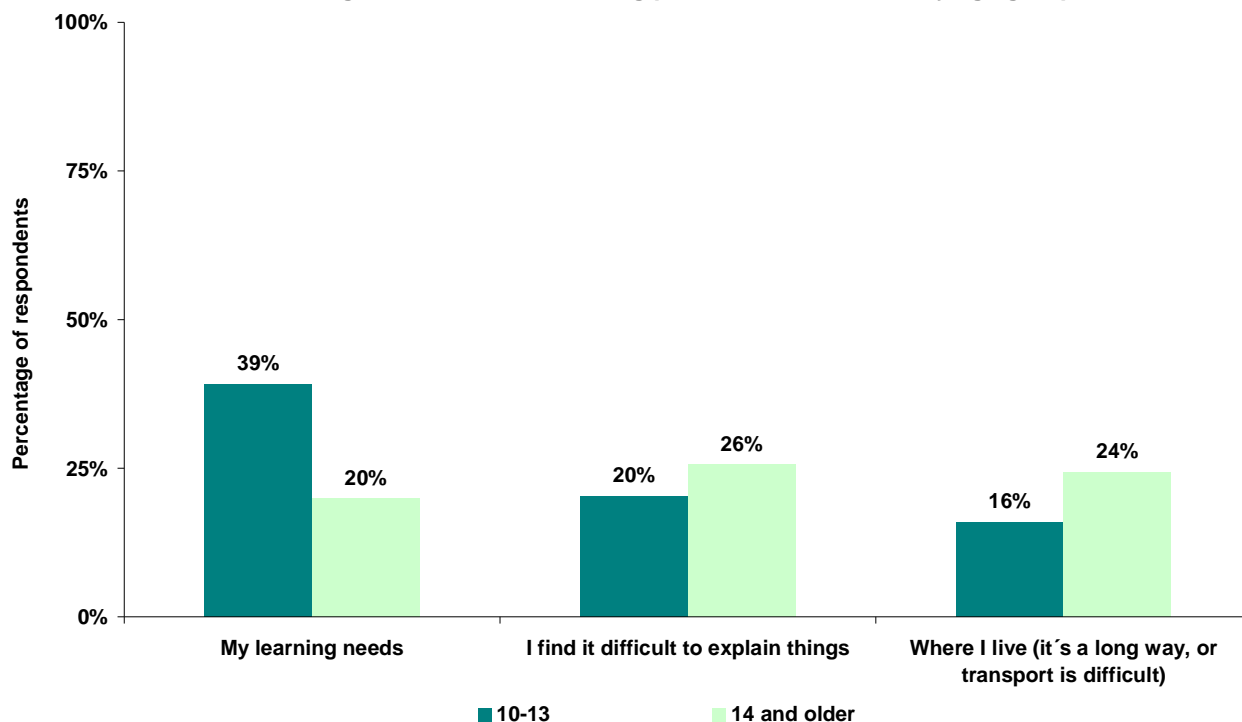
Respondents in the youngest age groups were more likely to report that they had not had enough say in what went into Referral Order Contracts (see Figure 17) and to report that they did not fully understand these. This pattern was not repeated with supervision plans, suggesting that more attention needs to be given by community panels to ensuring that younger children and young people are fully engaged with them.

Figure 17: "Enough say" in what went into my Referral Order Contract, by age group



Respondents were asked to identify barriers to their taking part in work with the YOT. As shown by Figure 18, a higher proportion of younger respondents who identified issues listed learning needs as one of the factors. Older respondents found it more difficult to explain things. A higher proportion of older children and young people identified transport problems or distance from the YOT office as barriers.

Figure 18: Barriers to taking part in work with YOT, by age group



While 10-13 year olds were almost as likely to report a drugs problem, they were substantially less likely to report that this had improved (10-13 79%; 14-16 87%; 17 or older 89%). Conversely, a higher proportion of those aged 10-13 who reported strange or upsetting thoughts said they had not received the help they needed (20% of 10-13 respondents, compared to 13% of older respondents), but then once help was provided, they were more likely to report improvement compared to other groups (81%, compared to 76%). Otherwise there were no substantial differences between age groups.

Quotes from children and young people

"Other youths attending the YOS often upset me due to their attitude and behaviour towards me. I am concerned that I may respond inappropriately."

YOT service user aged 14 or 15

"I spoke to my YOT worker about various issues I have had with other people and he has helped me to feel safer on the streets."

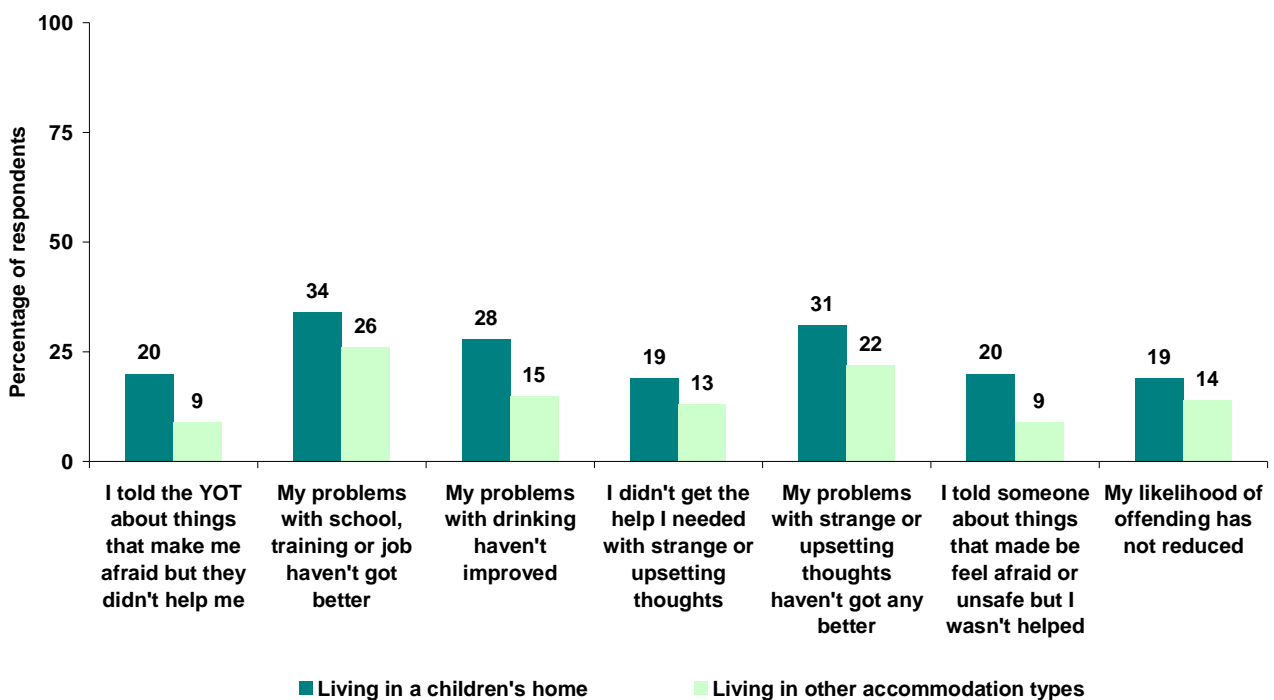
YOT service user aged 16

3.9 Living arrangements

Responses were analysed according to the living arrangements reported by the respondents. The main categories were: living with parent(s); living with carer(s); living in a children's home and living on their own. Those living on their own (35%) or in a children's home (36%) were much less likely to be on a Referral Order than those living at home (54%). Conversely, those living in a children's home or on their own were much more likely to be on a Youth Rehabilitation Order (44% and 41%) compared to those living with parents (29%). These groups were also more likely to have served a custodial sentence.

Over 300 children and young people who lived in a children's home answered the survey. As shown in Figure 19, those living in children's homes were more likely to feel that they needed more help than they had received.

Figure 19: Key questions by children's home status



However, large proportions of those living in children's homes felt that they were helped, as reflected in the following quotes.

Quotes from children and young people in children's homes

" Things have got better for me, I know now that drinking makes me violent."

" I self harmed when I got into trouble. My officer helped me and I stopped. I never did this before I got into trouble."

4. Conclusions

The first year of the eSurvey has provided a wealth of information to individual YOTs about the views of their own service users. This report, in collating the findings across all YOTs, summarises the opinions of a sizeable sample and provides some important messages. Overall, the survey presents a positive picture of the work undertaken by English and Welsh youth offending services. Hidden within the detail, however, are a number of challenges that need to be addressed at both strategic and operational levels. Particular attention can be drawn to the lower levels of satisfaction among those children and young people living in children's homes. Those in children's homes are a vulnerable group, it is critical to a YOT's ability to reduce reoffending and improve the life chances for children and young people that they have the ability to engage with children and young people in children's homes and effectively meet their needs.

The eSurvey is being repeated in 2015/2016 and HMI Probation will continue to integrate survey findings into inspection processes.

Acknowledgements

HMI Probation would like to thank the children and young people who took part and all the YOT staff who facilitated the eSurvey.

For further details

For information about the eSurvey contact Oliver Kenton, Research Officer:

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Appendix A: Breakdown of responses for full sample

5: Are you male or female?	#	%
Male	4239	80%
Female	894	17%
I'd rather not say	169	3%

6: How old are you?	#	%
10-11	64	1%
12-13	203	4%
14-15	1180	22%
16	1227	23%
17 or older	2335	45%
I'd rather not say	238	5%

7: My ethnicity is most closely described as...	#	%
I am White	3658	70%
I am Black	449	9%
I am Asian	295	6%
I am mixed race	417	8%
I am Chinese	41	1%
I am from another group	161	3%
I'd rather not say	196	4%

8: My first (preferred) language is...	#	%
English	4787	92%
Welsh	58	1%
Other	224	4%
I'd don't want to say	134	3%

9: The YOT asked me which language I wanted to use with them.	#	%
Yes, I was asked	146	36%
No, I wasn't asked	115	28%
I don't know / I can't remember	147	36%

10: I was able to work with the YOT in my chosen language.	#	%
Yes, I used my preferred language	112	81%
No, I didn't use my preferred language	27	19%

12: I have a disability.	#	%
Yes, I have a disability	683	13%
No, I do not have a disability	4061	79%
I don't know / I would rather not say	371	7%

13: My disability means that I have difficulty with:	#	% of disabled respondents
Seeing things	56	8%
Hearing things	50	7%
Another physical disability	38	6%
Strange or upsetting thoughts	61	9%
ADHD	381	56%
Reading things	161	24%
Learning things	209	31%
Understanding what others mean	131	19%
Explaining things to others	102	15%
Other	293	43%

14: I live...	#	%
With a parent	3526	69%
With a carer	361	7%
In a children's home	320	6%
On my own in a hotel, bedsit or flat	356	7%
I live somewhere else	292	6%
I'd rather not say	244	5%

15: The YOT staff explained to me what would happen, when I first came to the YOT.	#	%
Yes, they explained things enough	4528	90%
No, they didn't explain things enough	105	2%
I don't know / I can't remember	410	8%

16: The sentence that I received is...	#	%
Referral Order	2458	49%
Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO)	1575	31%
Reparation Order	105	2%
Detention and Training Order (part prison part home)	275	5%
Other prison sentence	48	1%
Other	298	6%
I don't know	275	5%

18: I have agreed to a Referral Order Contract (if you have one, it would have been agreed at a panel meeting. It explains what work will be done to help you stop offending and pay back for the harm you may have caused).	#	%
Yes, I agreed to a referral order	2384	97%
No, I haven't agreed to a referral order	27	1%
I don't know what one is	40	2%

20: I had enough say in what went into my Referral Order Contract (that means you were asked what needed to go into the contract, your views were listened to, and the things you needed went into the contract).	#	%
Yes, I have had enough say in what went into my Referral Order Contract	2152	91%
No, I haven't had enough say in what went into my Referral Order Contract	164	7%
I don't know what one is	44	2%

21: I understand what my Referral Order Contract requires me to do, to help me stop offending.	#	%
Yes, I understand it fully	2188	93%
Yes, but I only understand it partly	127	5%
No, I don't really understand	38	2%

22: I have agreed to a supervision, or sentence, plan (if you have one, it explains what work will be done to help you stop offending).	#	%
Yes, I agreed to a supervision plan	1990	81%
No, I haven't agreed to a supervision plan	137	6%
I don't know what one is	315	13%

24: I had enough say in what went into my supervision, or sentence plan (that means you were asked what needed to go into the plan, your views were listened to, and the things you needed went into the plan).	#	%
Yes, I had enough say	1637	82%
No, I didn't have enough say	147	7%
I don't know	201	10%

25: I understand what my supervision or sentence plan requires me to do, to help me stop offending.	#	%
Yes, I understand it fully	1786	90%
Yes, but I only understand it partly	137	7%
No, I don't really understand it	51	3%

26: The reasons I have had to come to the YOT are:	#	# of surveys
Because I broke the law	3673	69%
Because I lost my temper	1186	22%
Because I hit or hurt someone else	1409	27%
Because I had illegal drugs	522	10%
Because I was drunk	604	11%
Because I don't work	134	3%
Because I damaged something	855	16%
Because I took something that belonged to someone else	1051	20%
Because I was driving a car or motorbike badly	268	5%
Other	344	6%
I'd prefer not to say	302	6%

27: Someone at the YOT asked me to explain why I thought I had offended.	#	%
Yes, they asked me to explain why I had offended	4370	89%
No, they never asked me to explain why I had offended	165	3%
I don't know	365	7%

28: Someone at the YOT asked me to explain what I thought would help me to stop offending.	#	%
Yes, they asked me to explain	4229	87%
No, they never asked me to explain what would help me to stop offending	193	4%
I don't know	466	10%

29: The YOT took my views seriously.	#	%
Yes, they always took my views seriously	3505	72%
Yes, they took my views seriously most of the time	747	15%
No, they rarely or never took my views seriously	130	3%
No, because they didn't me ask what I thought	54	1%
I don't know / I can't remember	439	9%

31: There were things that made it harder for me to take a full part in my sessions with the YOT.	#	%
Yes, there were things that made it harder to take part	1395	29%
No, there was nothing that made it harder to take part	2929	61%
I don't know / I don't want to say	516	11%

32: The things that made it harder for me to take part were:	#	% of Q31: Yes
My learning needs	296	21%
My race or ethnicity	26	2%
English is not my first language	46	3%
English is not my parents' first language	29	2%
I find it difficult to explain things	356	26%
I find it difficult to understand things	212	15%
My gender	24	2%
A disability	78	6%
Where I live (it's a long way, or transport is difficult)	332	24%
To get there I have to go through places I don't feel safe or not allowed	119	9%
My sexuality	21	2%
My religion	21	2%
I have to care for someone else (child or adult)	48	3%
Another reason	451	32%

33: My YOT worker did enough to help me take part in the YOT work.	#	%
Yes, they did enough to help me take part	1219	88%
No, they didn't do enough to help me take part	79	6%
I didn't want any help	90	6%

37: There have been things that made me feel afraid or that I was not safe, while I have been in contact with the YOT.	#	%
Yes, some things have made me afraid and I told someone at the YOT	511	11%
Yes, some things have made me afraid but I didn't tell anyone at the YOT	114	2%
No, there wasn't anything that made me feel afraid	3924	82%
I would rather not say	212	4%

38: The YOT helped me to feel safer.	#	%
Yes, they helped me	429	84%
No, they didn't help me	51	10%
I didn't want any help	28	6%

40: I needed help with my school, training or getting a job.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	2329	49%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	391	8%
I didn't want any help	2015	43%

41: Things have got better for me, at school, at college, or in getting a job.	#	%
Yes, things have got better	1965	72%
No, things haven't got any better	752	28%

43: I needed help to cut down my drugs use.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	1126	24%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	126	3%
I didn't want any help	3465	73%

44: Things have got better for me about my use of drugs.	#	%
Yes, things have got better	1093	87%
No, things haven't got any better	160	13%

46: I needed help to be able to drink less alcohol.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	551	12%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	65	1%
I didn't want any help	4086	87%

47: Things have got better for me so that I drink less.	#	%
Yes, things have got better	515	83%
No, things haven't got any better	102	17%

49: I needed help to improve my health or things about my body.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	736	16%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	127	3%
No, I didn't want any help	3835	82%

50: My health has improved whilst I've been at the YOT.	#	%
Yes, things have got better	675	78%
No, things haven't got any better	188	22%

52: I needed help to deal with strange or upsetting thoughts.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	829	18%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	128	3%
No, I didn't want any help	3733	80%

53: I have got fewer strange or upsetting thoughts since I've been at the YOT.	#	%
Yes, things have got better	738	77%
No, things haven't got any better	218	23%

55: I needed help with where I live.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	802	17%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	206	4%
No, I didn't want any help	3653	78%

56: I needed help with money problems or getting out of debt.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	451	10%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	181	4%
No, I didn't want any help	4026	86%

57: I needed help with my relationships or things about my family.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	1128	24%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	152	3%
No, I didn't want any help	3373	72%

58: I needed help to feel less stressed.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	1196	26%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	203	4%
No, I didn't want any help	3251	70%

59: I needed help to feel happier about what I think of myself, or what others think of me.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	894	19%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	114	2%
No, I didn't want any help	3641	78%

60: I needed help to be able to make better decisions.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	2385	51%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	155	3%
No, I didn't want any help	2106	45%

61: I needed help to understand how to stop offending.	#	%
Yes, and I got the help I needed	2466	53%
Yes, but I didn't get enough help	108	2%
No, I didn't want any help	2070	45%

63: My work with the YOT has made me less likely to offend.	#	%
Yes, I am a lot less likely to offend	3945	85%
No, it has made no difference	614	13%
No, I am more likely to offend	73	2%

65: I have been treated fairly by the people who worked with me.	#	%
Yes, all the time	3761	81%
Yes, most of the time	601	13%
No, not really	158	3%
No, not at all	95	2%

66: I think the service given to me by the YOT has been...	#	%
Very Good	3173	69%
Good most of the time	1174	25%
Not very good	142	3%
Poor	123	3%

68: I answered these questions on my own.	#	%
Yes, I answered them on my own	3603	79%
No, I had some help to answer them	967	21%

69: I needed help to:	#	% of Q68: No
Read the questions	399	41%
Understand the questions	572	59%
Type my answers	479	50%
Some other help	84	9%

70: The person who helped me to answer these most was...	#	%
My YOT Worker	570	59%
Someone else from the YOT	319	33%
Parent or carer	34	4%
Someone else	41	4%