



# **Northamptonshire Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny Panel**

**Annual Summary 2018/2019**

## **1. Brief overview of OOCB arrangements in Northants**

There are several alternatives to formal charges available to police and CPS when dealing with adults and youths who have committed relatively low serious offences. These include cannabis and khat warnings, penalty notices for disorder, community resolution, cautions without conditions and conditional cautions. Collectively these are known as out of court disposals (OOCD's).

An out of court disposal may be considered by the police in consultation with the victim as their preferred option for the offender. While the victim's wishes will be sought, they have no obligation to take part in the process, and the officer looking into the case will have the final say on how to deal with the offender. The offender must also admit their guilt and agree to the offence being dealt with via an out of court disposal.

The Northants Out Of Court Disposals Scrutiny Panel has been set up to independently scrutinise the local use of OOCB's. This is in response to national recommendations following concerns about their appropriate use.

The role of the panel is to ensure that the use of OOCB's is appropriate and proportionate, consistent with national and local policy, and considers the victims' wishes where appropriate.

The panel review and discuss anonymised case files as a group and conclude one of four categories:

- Appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines
- Appropriate with observations from the panel
- Inappropriate use of out of court disposal
- Panel fails to agree on the appropriateness of the decision made.

Decisions reached by the panel on each case are recorded, together with observations and recommendations to inform changes in policy or practice.

## **2. Brief overview of agencies represented on Scrutiny Panel**

The Northants OOCB Scrutiny Panel is chaired by John Baker, JP, the Deputy Chair of the Northamptonshire Bench and includes representation from the Crown Prosecution Service, Police, sentencers (Magistrates), Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, the National Probation Service, the Youth Offending Service (Youth panel only) and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

## **3. Number of Scrutiny Panel meetings held proceeding year**

During the financial year 1 April 2018 to end March 2019 the Northants Scrutiny panel has met on four occasions; sitting twice as an Adult Panel and twice as a Youth Panel.

#### **4. Number of cases reviewed by Panel in preceding year**

During the 12 months between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 the Panel has reviewed 40 cases; 20 adult cases and 20 youth cases.

#### **5. Breakdown of cases reviewed – adults/youth and male/female**

Of the 40 cases reviewed, the breakdown is as follows -

20 adult cases

20 youth cases

33 male cases

7 female cases

#### **6. Analysis of Scrutiny Panel review decisions**

Of the 40 decisions scrutinised -

13 (32.5%) were assessed as appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines

17 (42.5%) were assessed as appropriate but with observations from the panel

10 (25%) were assessed as inappropriate

There were no cases that the panel failed to agree on the appropriateness of the decision made.

#### **7. Conclusion**

75% of the out of court disposals scrutinised were judged by the panel to be appropriately made. In the 10 cases where the panel felt the OOCDC was inappropriate detailed feedback was given by a police manager to the officers concerned and, where appropriate, Force wide guidance was issued.

This is the first report of its kind so there is no local benchmark against which to judge the above figure, however future reports will be benchmarked against the 2018/2019 performance

Neil Moloney

Criminal Justice Delivery Manager

Northants OPFCC April 2019