



# Exiting Youth Detention

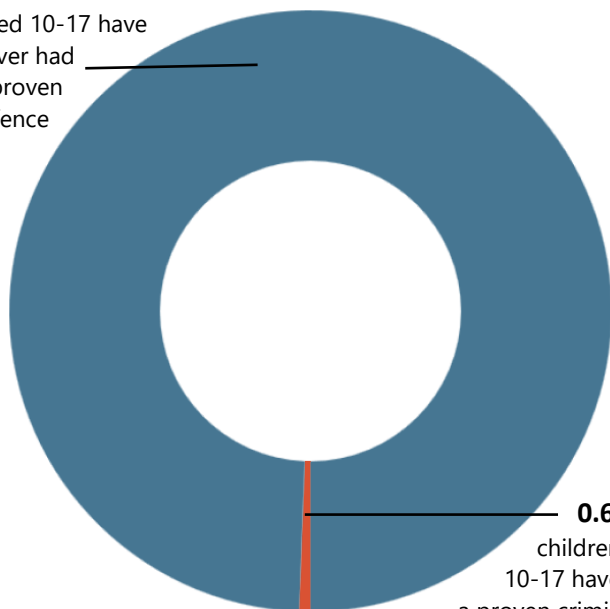
### Preventing crime by improving post-release support

**To support young people after leaving detention, we can learn from listening to their voices and involving them in the solutions.**

This report sought to hear directly from young people, family members and workers to understand what they need for effective change in their life course after leaving detention.

To thrive, young people need to have the basics in place – a safe and stable home, nurturing and supportive adults and community, access to good nutrition and health care when it’s needed, engaged schooling and other social opportunities to develop strong social and emotional wellbeing no matter where they live. For children and young people who haven’t had access to these things, moving into a socially productive adulthood is much more challenging, and for a minority of young people this can lead to actions that can bring them to the attention of the criminal justice system. In 2023-24 out of all Queensland children aged 10-17, only 0.6% had a proven criminal offence.

**99.4%** of children aged 10-17 have never had a proven offence



**0.6%** of children aged 10-17 have had a proven criminal offence

For most, the youth justice system, which includes several alternative pathways such as early intervention, warnings, and community service, is successful in ensuring that young people don’t reoffend. Overall, rates of unique young offenders in Queensland have been trending down since 2013–14, albeit with a small increase in rates between 2021–22 and 2022–23. The small group of young people, who face more serious charges and who are admitted to a youth detention centre, have the most complex needs and are most likely to reoffend within 12 months from release. For this small group of young people, change can only be achieved through recognising and addressing the root causes of their offending. One key to this is to ensure responses build on strong connections for young people back to their families and communities. Meaningful programs and initiatives that do this well rely on a trusted and stable relationship with a worker that can build these broader connections for young people.

The young people we interviewed described the many reasons that contributed to reoffending. These reasons included poverty, lack of stable housing, family breakdown and experiences of domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol use and dependence. Sadly, young people spoke about their feelings of being shunned by their communities – they are acutely aware that some members of the community express hate and fear toward young offenders. Without feeling a sense of belonging to the community, young people do not experience the mutual respect that is needed to reduce the likelihood of their reoffending.



Where a young person has experienced a period of time in custody, effective transition planning is essential. This involves thoughtful and intentional mechanisms to strengthen opportunities for connection to culture and belonging, education or employment, and activities that promote sport and recreation, life skills and practical support in their communities.

Young people told us that current transition planning did not help make successful transitions from detention to the community. There was not enough support for them to build strong relationships with either existing family members or workers, and some felt that the plans were completely ineffective at helping to address the root causes of their offending or to forge connections with services and people in the community.


Hearing the voices of young people involved in the justice system and their families is a powerful

contribution to the community debate in Queensland. They hold the truth about how they came to offend and what they need now and for their future – we need to listen to them.

**The QFCC has made two recommendations about how this can be addressed.**

- 1. We need to strengthen post-detention transition programs for a dedicated 12-month period.**
- 2. These programs need to form part of a broader developmental approach to crime prevention to invest in supports and services to families to address the factors that lead young people to offend.**

**We all hold responsibility and benefit when young people thrive as active and engaged members of their communities. Government, community and individuals each play a part in creating the experiences, environments, systems and services that ensure that all young people and children are loved, valued and have their rights upheld.**



**“ We need support that can actually help us like getting jobs and getting houses and stuff...like stuff that we actually need. We need people who are actually willing to help us because they come in and say they are going to help us get jobs and stuff but they don't actually help us. ”**  
- young person