

08/09/2023

Court in Action programme evaluation Final report

CF
EY | The Centre
for Education
& Youth

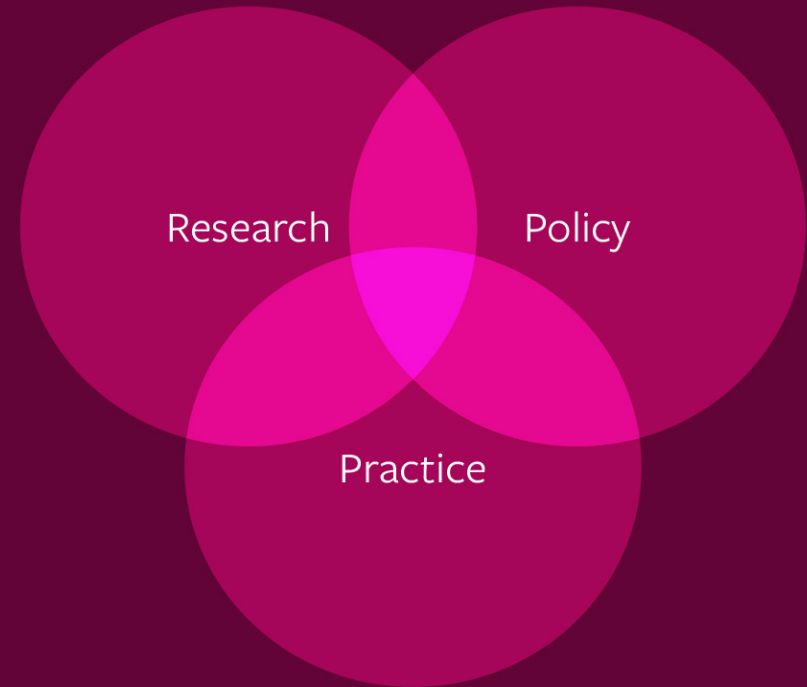


Who are we?

The Centre for Education and Youth is a **think** and **action-tank** that provides timely and accessible research, support and tools for policymakers, organisations and practitioners supporting young people.



With our team of former teachers, youth workers, academics and civil servants, CfEY sits at the intersection of research, policy and practice.



Court in Action programme

'Court in Action' is a pilot project delivering education and awareness about the criminal justice system for young people from across Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly.

The project focussed on bringing students face to face with a working court and the wider criminal justice system to **improve understanding of, confidence in, and trust in the criminal justice system.**



The pilot involved:

- Young people aged 11-16, in schools in crime 'hot spots', e.g., Truro and Bodmin
- Court visits and activities
- Downloadable classroom resources
- A classroom mock trial pack
- Video resources and resources to support teaching about the criminal justice system
- Supporting activities with legal volunteers

The evaluation involves:

- Baseline and endpoint surveys looking into level of engagement and knowledge gained
- Focus groups with students and interviews with teachers looking at impact, engagement and use of resources
- Interviews with key stakeholders (2 judges, court managers)
- Overall evaluation of project delivery, engagement and impact

Contents

This slide deck contains our evaluation findings, including statistical analyses of the baseline and endpoint surveys, and fieldwork findings from the interviews with various stakeholders and focus groups with students. These are set out as follows:

1. Recommendations
2. Overall evaluation
3. Quantitative findings
 - a) Methodology
 - b) Participating schools
 - c) Teacher baseline and endpoint survey results
 - d) Student baseline and endpoint survey results
4. Qualitative findings
 - a) Methodology
 - b) Participating schools
 - c) Students' knowledge and faith in the criminal justice system; experiences in the programme
 - d) Teachers' experiences of delivery: barriers and successes
 - e) Other stakeholders' opinions of the programme (judges, court staff and legal volunteer)
5. Summary

Recommendations for future iterations (can also be found at the end of the report)

Based on the evidence and the evaluation, we make the following recommendations to ensure an effective and positive delivery.

Regarding school resources and in-school delivery

- Schools lacked time and support to embed lessons with enough lead time during this pilot due to the late start. Future iterations should ensure programme rollout starts ahead of the academic year, perhaps in the Summer term, to enable full integration and training for inset days and planning for scheduling activities.
- Teacher engagement could improve from more embedded, ongoing support like regular check-ins and support with accessing resources.
- Teachers reported that schools struggled to find staff who were best suited to deliver sessions. Although Young Citizens really values offering flexibility for delivery, schools could benefit from some guidance on where the programme can fit, e.g., saying it fits with the English or Citizenship department.
- School engagement could be improved by committing to minimum delivery expectations at enrolment to ensure that teachers are accountable for delivering the required content ahead of court visits

Regarding court visits

- Court managers highlighted staff struggled with the workload associated with court visits. Future iterations should ensure that all stakeholders are made aware in advance of the minimum standard actions associated with visits and agree with them to preserve a trauma-informed practice and safeguarding approach.

Recommendations for future iterations

Regarding court visits

- Future iterations or similar programmes should engage all stakeholders and associated staff with an induction to ensure that everyone understands the scope, aims and purpose of the programme. This is to increase engagement and improve buy-in.

Regarding faith and trust in the criminal justice system

- It was discussed at the end of the evaluation that improving faith and trust in the criminal justice system is a wider goal that should be addressed explicitly and in a focussed manner. The current Court in Action programme was not successful in influencing this but it was also not the focus of the content.
- As faith and trust in institutions are built over time, we believe that addressing them would require a dedicated programme with an associated Theory of Change about how increased awareness of processes and institutions influences trust in them.

For the delivery organisation

- Embed ongoing support and relationship-building for schools, teachers, court staff and wider stakeholders to ensure higher commitment to the programme, and clear and responsive communication throughout. This would look like providing more regular communication, and some logistical support. Similarly, engaging in post-activity debriefs or reflections to address pain points immediately.

For wider stakeholders

- When committing to a programme with similar goals, ensure that all participants and stakeholders are made aware of the purpose, motivation and limitations ahead of time so that support (financial and goal-oriented) is continued. This could improve perceptions of cost-benefits or comparison with other similar programmes.

Delivery

The Court in Action programme delivery consisted of lesson resources being used in schools, and court visits being arranged by Young Citizens, teachers and courts.

Given that so many actors were involved, there was some friction, and especially the lesson resources ended up being underutilized by teachers.

Court visits were mostly successful. In the few cases where a cancellation was necessary, it resulted in friction and additional workload for court staff and Young Citizens staff.

“for us it's much easier to deliver content to a whole assembly than to have to find a lesson, get the students that are interested, pick them out of lesson, set up a separate session, find a teacher...”

- Teacher

- The Court in Action programme successfully delivered lesson resources to schools and arranged court visits for students involved.
- Teachers faced a number of barriers to deliver the lessons in school:
 - A delayed start of the programme
 - Not having enough time to deliver lessons
 - Not clear who was best placed to deliver them
 - Some user friction related to accessing and downloading the resources
- Teachers valued that they could pick and choose what material to teach
- Court visits were overall successful, but last-minute cancellations, or a lack of appropriate cases resulted in additional workload and strain for teachers, court staff and Young Citizens

Engagement

Young people found the content of the resources and the court visits highly engaging and useful for their education.

Teachers were also happy to have taken part and deliver parts of the programme and reported a positive impact on their students after taking part.

**“I thought it was brilliant. They were buzzing. They were absolutely delighted when they left court that they'd had such brilliant experience” -
Teacher**

- Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 students found the content engaging and interesting. For the younger students, things that stood out the most were the court visits, and learning about criminals, sentencing and speaking to the judges. For older students, the programme seemed to have an aspirational value.
- Teachers were happy to have delivered the lessons, and happy to have attended the court visits
- The different stakeholders (judges, volunteers and court managers) recognised the value of the programme and were happy to be involved. Some concerns were raised about the added workload to court staff.

Impact

The programme had a positive impact on young people's knowledge of the criminal justice system. It did not influence beliefs about fairness and justice of the system, but it did increase student confidence in careers in law.

The court visits successfully invited critical thinking and led students to evaluate the challenges of making decisions about fairness and justice.

“I think before the court visit, I had a slight doubt there could be corruption but, after visiting, I think it's quite clear that everyone follows a strict protocol and doesn't really leave much room for any error” – Student

- Taking part in the Court in Action programme resulted in improved understanding of the criminal justice system and meant that students gained knowledge about different roles in court.
- Regarding perceived knowledge, the two topics where students gained the most knowledge were: how the police support victims and witnesses, and how legal aid works.
- Taking part in the programme did not influence beliefs about fairness and justice of the criminal justice system, but it did increase student confidence in being involved professionally in the future.
- At endpoint, the teachers reported “Improving pupils’ knowledge of the criminal justice system” and “Introducing pupils to careers within the criminal justice system” to have been the top two areas where the programme had a positive impact.

2. Quantitative findings

Methodology

To track teacher and student's engagement and experience in the programme, we designed and conducted baseline and endpoint surveys for both teachers and students.

1. For teachers, we looked at a range of factors including reasons for engaging with the programme and confidence in delivering the resources. For students, we looked at faith and confidence in the criminal justice system, as well as knowledge gained from the programme.
2. Once baseline and endpoint surveys were complete, we conducted descriptive statistical analyses to explore the outcomes described above.
3. Teacher responses were low. Baseline and endpoint surveys were only both filled by seven teachers. For this reason, in our analysis we do not compare overall impact of the programme on teachers, but rather frame a snapshot of teachers at the start of the programme, and at the end of the programme. The baseline teacher sample consists of 74 responses, while the endpoint consists of 16 responses.
4. For the student surveys, we conducted a matched-sample analysis, and comment on any impact or change, with a sample of 43 students (254 responses at baseline, 75 at endpoint).

Participating schools - surveys

Our quantitative findings incorporate data from teachers and students across the region.

At baseline, we received 74 responses from teachers, and 237 from students. Most of the participating schools were in Devon (17) and Cornwall (11).

By endpoint, we received 16 teacher responses and 75 student responses. Only 7 teachers and 43 students answered both surveys.

- Participating schools with the highest responses to both surveys came from:
 - Devonport (8)
 - Exeter (6)
 - Bodmin (6)
 - and Truro (4).



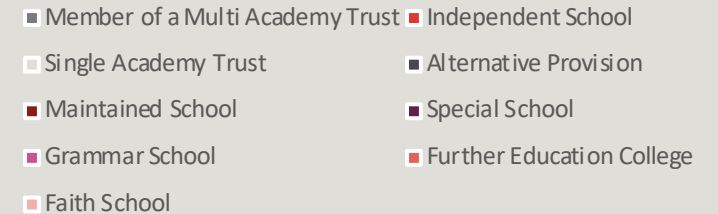
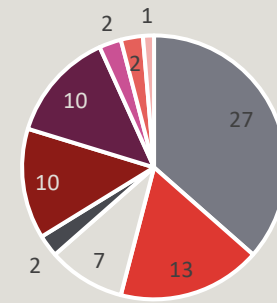
What we learned from teachers' surveys

- Over half of teachers reported that their main reasons for participating in the Court in Action programme were to “improve pupils’ knowledge of the criminal justice system”, followed by wanting to “introduce pupils to careers within the criminal justice system”.
- Teachers reported at baseline and endpoint feeling most confident teaching about how laws are made in England. Teachers reported having strong or very strong knowledge about the role of the prosecution and the defence at both baseline and endpoint.
- Teachers reported not feeling confident and having little knowledge about how legal aid works both at the start and end of the programme.
- At endpoint, the teachers reported “Improving pupils’ knowledge of the criminal justice system” and “Introducing pupils to careers within the criminal justice system” to have been the top two areas where the programme had a positive impact.

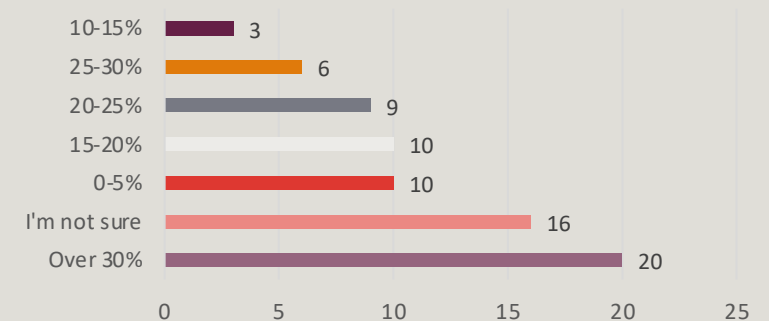
Characteristics of participating schools

- At baseline, most of the teachers worked in Multi Academy Trusts (27/74), independent schools (13/74), maintained schools (13/74) and special schools (10/74).
- Over half of the teachers reported their school had been graded as *Good* (41/74) in their most recent Ofsted inspection, followed by 14/74 who reported being graded as *Requires Improvement*. Only 3 participating schools had been graded as *Unsatisfactory* or *Special measures*.
- 20/74 reported their school to have over 30% of pupils receiving Free School Meals. Using teacher estimated FSM rates is a statistic regularly reported on.
- Teachers reported that their main reasons for participating in the Court in Action programme were to “*improve pupils’ knowledge of the criminal justice system*” (40/74), followed by wanting to “*introduce pupils to careers within the criminal justice system*” (23/74). Only 5 reported “*Helping your pupils to appreciate the negative consequences of involvement in crime*” as their main reason to participate.

Which of these best describes your school?
Baseline (n = 74)



To the best of your knowledge, what percentage of your school’s pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals?
Baseline (n =74)



Teacher intentions of usage

- At baseline (n = 74), over half of respondents replied they were planning to use the Court in Action lesson resources with Key Stage 3 (39/74) and Key Stage 4 (41/74), and a quarter of the teachers planned to use them with Key Stage 5 (21/74).
- In contrast, teachers were more likely to plan to attend court visits with Key Stage 4 (45/74) and Key Stage 5 (26/74).
- At endpoint (n = 16), teachers used the Court in Action resources with Key Stage 3 and Key stage 4 pupils similarly: 8/16 said to have used them with KS3, and 9/16 said to have used them with KS4.
- Only 6 teachers said to have used the resources with KS5, and 2/16 said to have not used the resources at all.
- **This indicates that teacher intentions of use (teachers stating they planned on using the resources) at the start of the programme were likely to have been reflected on actual use (teachers actually using the resources).**
- **Regarding the court visits, 11/16 teachers said they took their KS4 groups, followed by 6/16 who said to have taken their KS5 groups.**

Knowledge and confidence teaching about the criminal justice system

Baseline n = 74

- At baseline, **over half of the teachers reported having strong or very strong knowledge** about *“the role of the prosecution and the defence”* (39/74), followed by *“how observers of a court proceeding should behave”* (38/74), and *“how laws are made in England”* (36/74).
- Conversely, **the topics teachers felt their knowledge was the weakest** were *“how to organise a court visit for my school”* (38/74), *“how legal aid works”* (30/74), and *“the role of probation and pre-sentencing reports”* (25/74).
- **Teachers reported feeling the most confident** teaching about *“how laws are made in England”* (34/74) and *“the role of the prosecution and the defence”* (34/74).
- **Teachers reported feeling the least confident** teaching about *“the role of probation and presentencing reports”* (32/74) and *“how legal aid works”* (32/74).

Endpoint n = 16

- At endpoint, **teachers reported having strong or very strong knowledge** about *“the role of the prosecution and the defence”* (13/16), and *“how laws are made in England”* (13/16).
- Conversely, **the topics teachers felt their knowledge was the weakest** about *“how legal aid works”* (4/16).
- **Teachers reported feeling the most confident** teaching about *“how observers of a court proceeding should behave”* (14/16) and *“the role of the judge and how they determine sentences”* (12/16).
- **Teachers reported feeling the least confident** teaching about *“how legal aid works”* (4/16).

Perceived impact of the programme, and student confidence in the criminal justice system

Perceived positive impact

- At endpoint, teachers reported *“Improving pupils’ knowledge of the criminal justice system”* (9/16) and *“Introducing pupils to careers within the criminal justice system”* (3/16) to have been the top two areas where the programme had a positive impact.

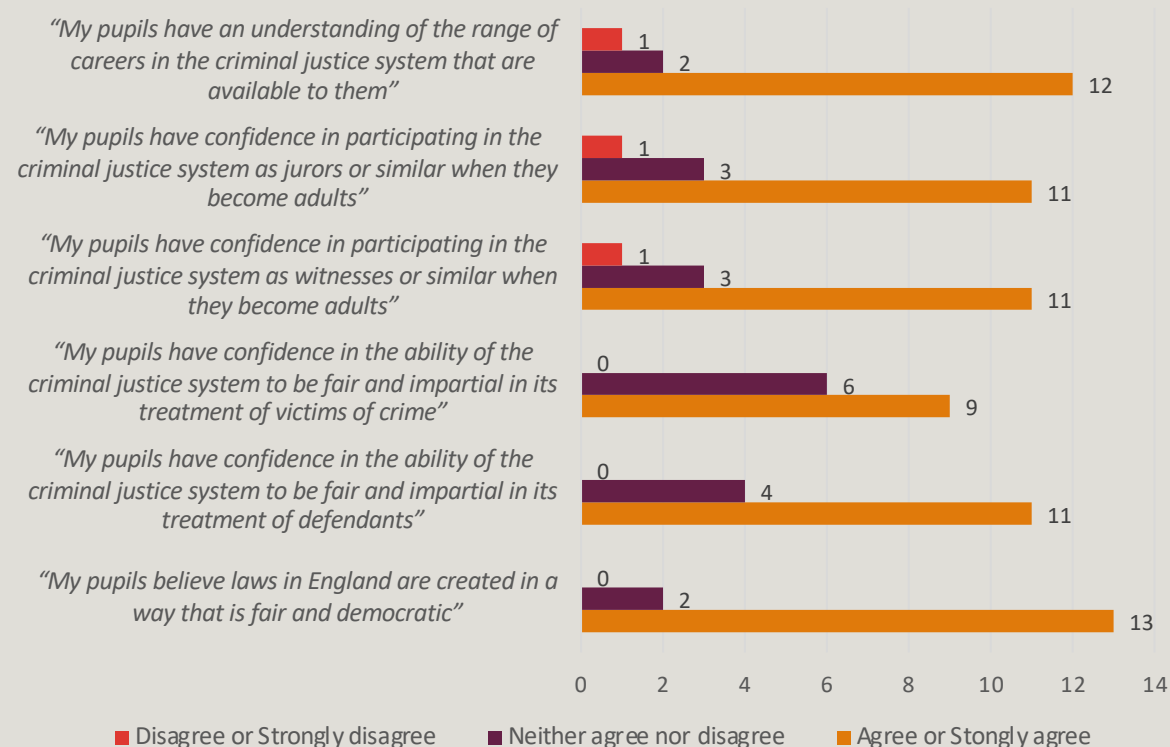
Perceived student knowledge

- Regarding the Court in Action topics, teachers identified *“how laws are made in England”* (12/16) and *“the role of the judge and how they determine sentences”* (12/16) to be the areas where pupils had the strongest knowledge following the programme.
- Conversely, students’ knowledge was weakest for *“how legal aid works”* (8/16).

Perceived confidence in the criminal justice system

- Overall, teachers evaluated students’ confidence in the criminal justice system positively, with pupils *“believing laws in England are created in a way that is fair and democratic”* (13/16) and *“have an understanding of the range of careers in the criminal justice system that are available to them”* (12/16) as the highest rated.

At present, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about your pupils’ confidence in these areas related to the criminal justice system and the ‘Court in Action’ programme?



Successes and challenges to delivery

Court in Action lesson resources

- One teacher highlighted that their group **“enjoyed the police powers, stop and search material - good discussions and knowledge/confidence extended”**
- Another, that **“lesson plans are flexible and work well across key stages and mixed ability groups”**
- Three teachers highlighted the lack of time available to deliver the Court in Action lessons
- Two teachers pointed out they would have liked to have more SEN-appropriate resources, with one saying **“some of the language is hard to make sense of for young people with ASD and other complex learning needs”**

Court in Action court visits

- Almost all teachers (14/16) commented positively on the court visits. Some of the feedback is below:
 - “An excellent, informative and inspirational experience”**
 - “It was just brilliant, the resources prepared us very well for the visit and Teresa and the judge were exceptionally open and helpful in explaining matters and answering all our Qs, while the trainee solicitor was very valuable as a way of balancing their perspectives on legal roles”**
- One teacher identified the low number of students allowed to attend as a challenge, due to high interest
- One teacher said that cancellations made attendance difficult: **“Postponement was difficult due to the nature of our school, pupils and staffing structure. there has also been a challenge in getting surveys completed due to it being blocked by our firewall and so paper copies would have been helpful and more accessible for our young people with specific learning needs.”**

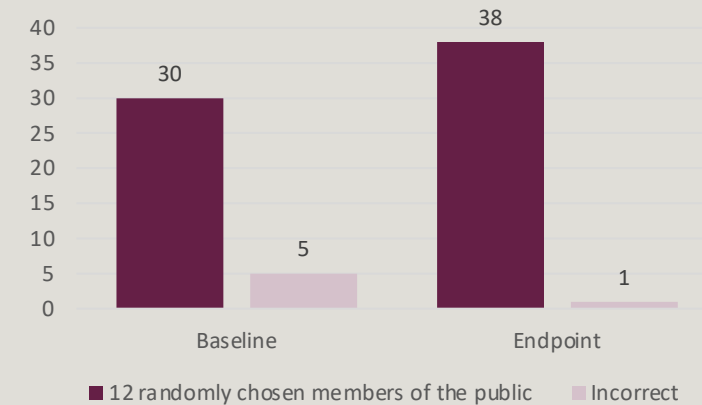
What we learned from students' surveys

- It is reasonable to suggest that taking part in the Court in Action programme resulted in improved understanding of the criminal justice system and meant that students gained knowledge about different roles in court.
- Regarding perceived knowledge, or how much students believe they know about different topics, the two topics where students gained the most knowledge were: how the police support victims and witnesses, and how legal aid works.
- Some items in these questions had low response levels at endpoint and so it is not possible to say whether taking part in the programme had a positive or negative influence.
- Taking part in the programme did not influence beliefs about fairness and justice of the criminal justice system, but it did increase student confidence in being involved professionally in the future.
- In the endpoint survey, most students enjoyed the programme lessons and the court visits. Similarly, most students thought taking the programme lessons and attending court were useful experiences.

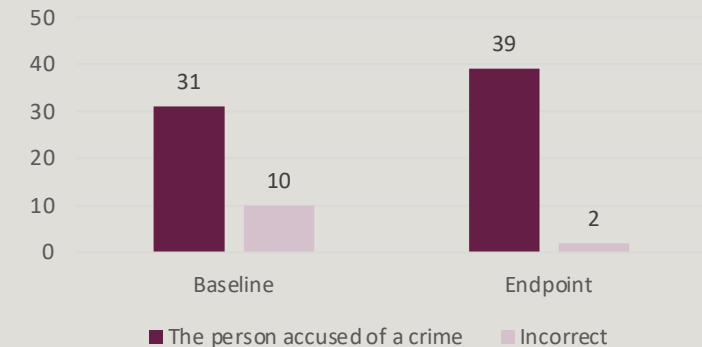
Knowledge test about the roles in court

Question	Results
To the best of your knowledge, who sits on a jury?	At baseline, 30 students selected the correct answer, and 5 students answered incorrectly. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively, with 38/43 students selecting the correct answer and only 1 answering incorrectly.
Which of the statements below describes what a 'legal right' is?	At baseline, 30 students selected the correct answer, and 9 students answered incorrectly. By endpoint, these numbers did not change.
Which of the statements below best describes what a 'defendant' is in a court?	At baseline, 31 students selected the correct answer, and 10 students answered incorrectly. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively with 39/43 students selecting the correct answer and only 2 answering incorrectly.

To the best of your knowledge, who sits on a jury? (n = 43)



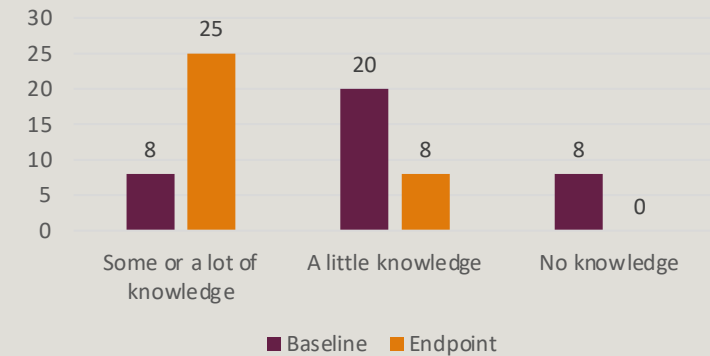
Which of the statements below best describes what a 'defendant' is in a court? (n = 43)



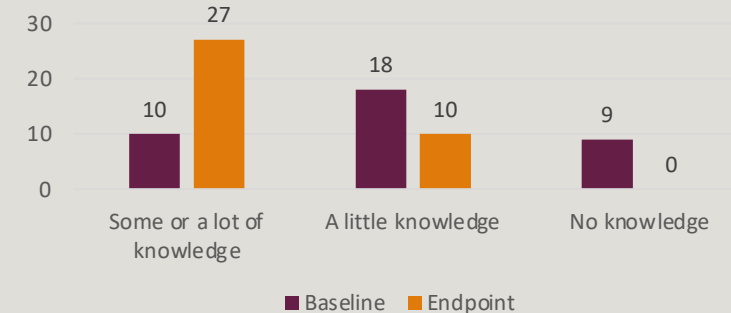
Perceived knowledge gained (n = 43)

Court in Action topic	Results
How laws are made in England	<p>At baseline, 16 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic. 13 reported having a little knowledge and 4 reported having no knowledge.</p> <p>By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. Over half of students reported having some or a lot of knowledge (24), 8 reporting a little knowledge, and only 1 reported no knowledge. This means that 32 pupils reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 29 at baseline.</p>
How the police bring a prosecution case to court	<p>At baseline, 8 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic, 20 reported having a little knowledge, and 8 reported having no knowledge.</p> <p>By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. Over half of students reported having some or a lot of knowledge (25), 8 reported a little knowledge, and no students reported having no knowledge. This means that 33 pupils reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 28 at baseline.</p>
How the police support victims and witnesses	<p>At baseline, 10 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic, 18 reported having a little knowledge and 9 reported having no knowledge.</p> <p>By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. Almost two thirds of students reported having some or a lot of knowledge, 10 reported having a little knowledge. This means that 37 pupils reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 28 at baseline.</p>

At the moment, how much would you say you know about how the police bring a prosecution case to court? (n = 43)



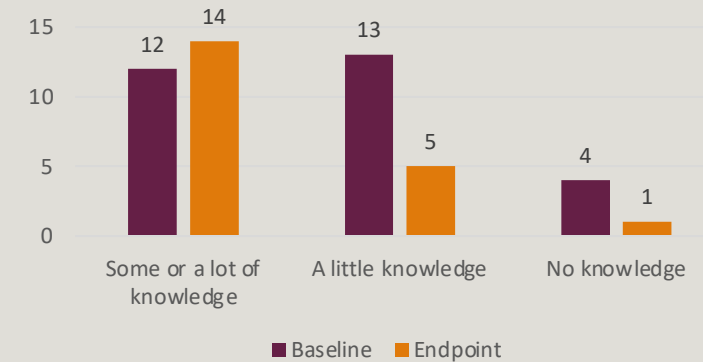
At the moment, how much would you say you know about how the police support victims and witnesses? (n = 43)



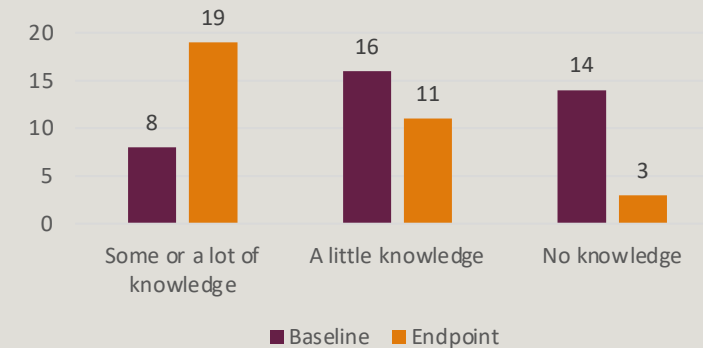
Perceived knowledge gained continued

Court in Action topic	Results
The role of the judge and how they determine sentences	At baseline, 21 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic. 11 reported having a little knowledge and 4 reported having no knowledge. By endpoint, these numbers decreased. Only 13 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge, 2 reporting a little knowledge, and no students reported no knowledge. Due to low response numbers in this question, only 15 students reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 25 at baseline.
The role of the prosecution and the defence	At baseline, 12 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic. 13 reported having a little knowledge and 4 reported having no knowledge. By endpoint, these numbers increased slightly. 14 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge, 5 reporting a little knowledge, and 1 student reported no knowledge. Due to low response numbers in this question, only 19 students reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 25 at baseline.
The role of probation and pre-sentencing reports	At baseline, 8 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic, 16 reported having a little knowledge and 14 reported having no knowledge. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. Nearly half of students reported having some or a lot of knowledge (19), 11 reported having a little knowledge, and only 3 reported no knowledge. This means that 30 pupils reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 24 at baseline.

At the moment, how much would you say you know about the role of the prosecution and the defence? (n = 43)



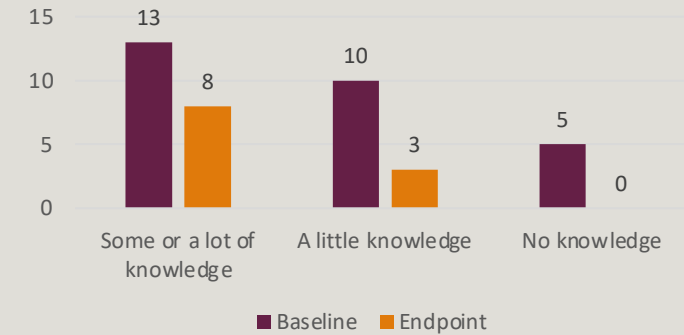
At the moment, how much knowledge would you say you have about the role of probation and pre-sentencing reports? (n = 43)



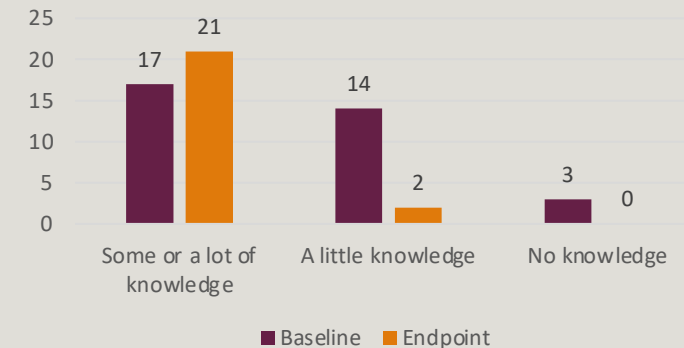
Perceived knowledge gained continued

Court in Action topic	Results
How legal aid works	At baseline, 8 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic, 12 reported having a little knowledge and 17 reported having no knowledge. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. Half of students reported having some or a lot of knowledge (23), 11 reported having a little knowledge, and only 2 reported no knowledge. This means that 34 pupils reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 20 at baseline.
How observers of a court proceeding should behave	At baseline, 13 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic, 10 reported having a little knowledge and 5 reported having no knowledge. By endpoint, these numbers decreased. 8 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge, 3 reported having a little knowledge, and no students reported no knowledge. Due to low response numbers in this question, only 11 students reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 23 at baseline.
Careers in the criminal justice system	At baseline, 17 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge about this topic, 14 reported having a little knowledge and 3 reported having no knowledge. By endpoint, these numbers did not increase. 21 students reported having some or a lot of knowledge, 2 reported having a little knowledge, and no students reported no knowledge. Due to low response numbers in this question, only 23 pupils reported having knowledge about this topic, compared to 31 at baseline.

At the moment, how much knowledge would you say you have about how observers of a court proceeding should behave? (n = 43)



At the moment, how much knowledge would you say you have about careers in the criminal justice system? (n = 43)

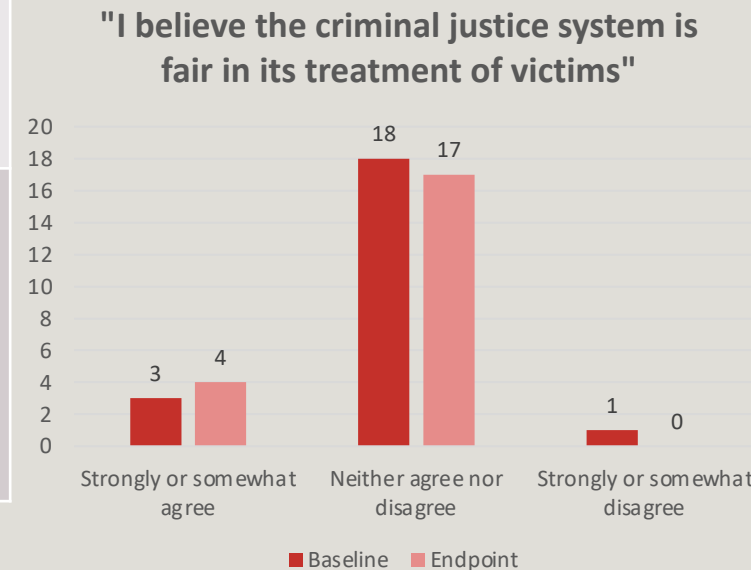
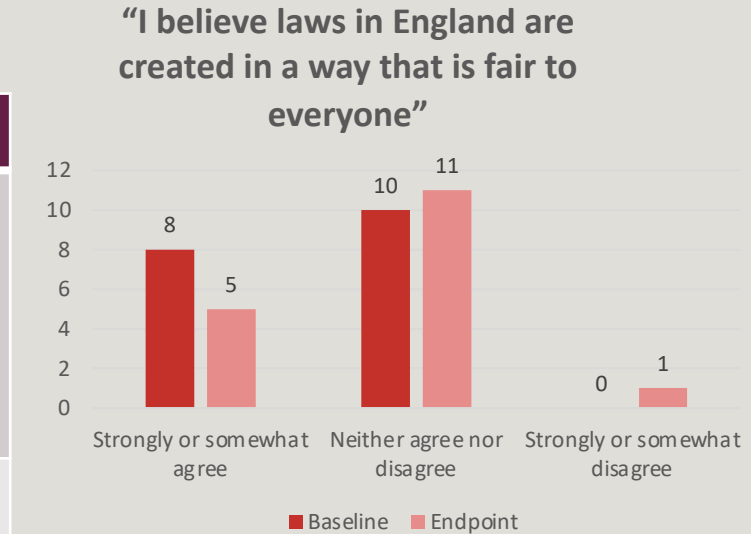


Evaluation of results

- **It is reasonable to conclude from our findings that taking part in the Court in Action programme resulted in improved understanding of the criminal justice system and meant that students gained knowledge about different roles in court.** For example, who are the members of the jury, and describing the role of the 'defendant'. Students seem to have already had a good understanding about what a 'legal right' is at baseline, and therefore the programme did not influence these results.
- Regarding perceived knowledge, or how much students believe they know about different topics, **taking part in the Court in Action programme may have positively influenced student knowledge over a range of topics.** These are: how laws are made in England, how the police bring a prosecution case to court, and the role of probation and pre-sentencing reports. The two topics where students gained the most knowledge were: how the police support victims and witnesses, and how legal aid works.
- **Some items in these questions had low response levels at endpoint and so it is not possible to say whether taking part in the programme had a positive or negative influence.** These are: the role of the judge and how they determine sentences, the role of the prosecution and the defence, how observers of a court should behave, and careers in the criminal justice system.

Faith in the criminal justice system

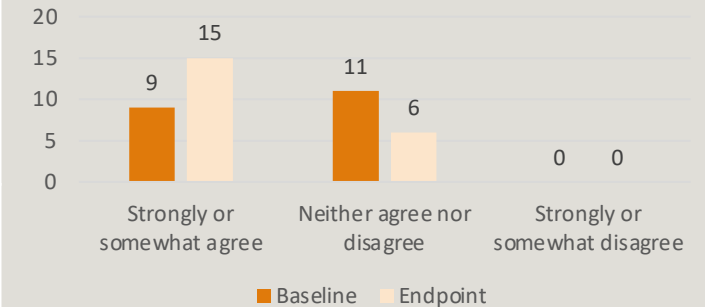
Statement	Results
“I believe laws in England are created in a way that is fair to everyone”	At baseline, 8 students agreed with the statement, 10 neither agreed nor disagreed, and no students disagreed with the statement. By endpoint, these numbers decreased but only by 2 students. 5 students agreed, 11 neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 1 disagreed. This means that taking part in the programme did not positively influence students in this.
“I believe the criminal justice system is fair in its treatment of criminals”	At baseline, 4 students agreed with the statement, 17 neither agreed nor disagreed, and no students disagreed with the statement. By endpoint, these numbers decreased. 3 students agreed, 13 neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 1 disagreed. This means that taking part in the programme did not positively influence students in this.
“I believe the criminal justice system is fair in its treatment of victims”	At baseline, 3 students agreed with the statement, 18 neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 1 disagreed with the statement. By endpoint, these numbers increased but only by 2 students. 4 students agreed, 17 neither agreed nor disagreed, and no students disagreed. This means that taking part in the programme did not positively influence students in this.



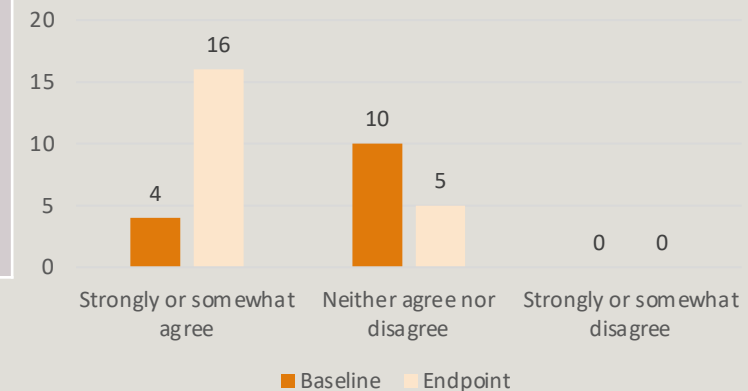
Confidence in participating in the criminal justice system

Statement	Results
“When I grow up, I think I would feel confident participating in the criminal justice system as a witness”	At baseline, 5 students agreed with the statement, 12 neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1 student disagreed with the statement. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. 13 students agreed, 9 neither agreed nor disagreed, and no students disagreed. This means that taking part in the programme may have positively influenced students in this.
“When I grow up, I think I would feel confident participating in the criminal justice system as a member of a jury”	At baseline, 9 students agreed with the statement, 11 neither agreed nor disagreed, and no students disagreed with the statement. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. 15 students agreed, 6 neither agreed nor disagreed, and none disagreed. This means that taking part in the programme positively influenced students in this.
“I know about the different types of jobs open to me in the criminal justice system”	At baseline, 4 students agreed with the statement, 10 neither agreed nor disagreed, and none disagreed with the statement. By endpoint, these numbers increased positively. 16 students agreed, 5 neither agreed nor disagreed, and no students disagreed. This means that taking part in the programme positively influenced students in this.

“When I grow up, I think I would feel confident participating in the criminal justice system as a member of a jury”



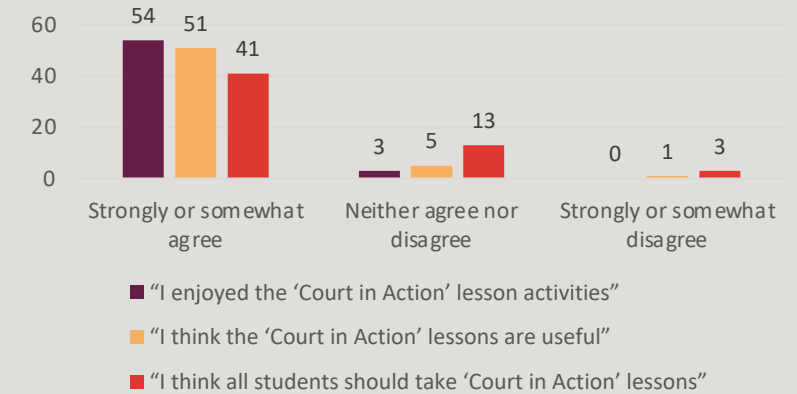
“I know about the different types of jobs open to me in the criminal justice system”



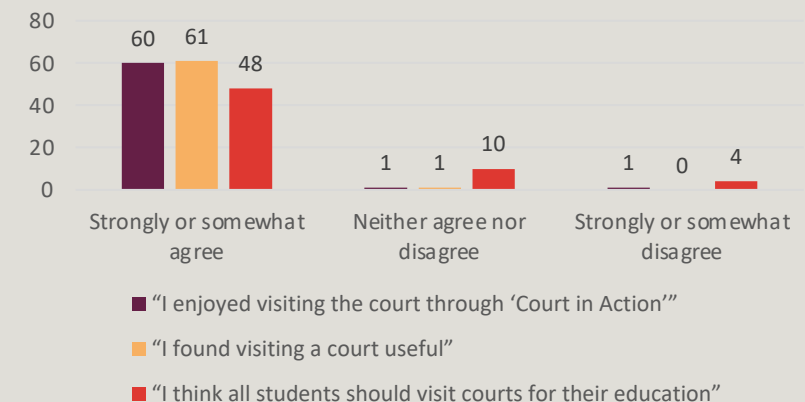
Satisfaction with the programme

- Looking only at endpoint responses, and those students who stated having taken part in Court in Action lessons (n = 57) and attending a court visit (n = 62), we asked about enjoyment, if they found it useful, and if they believe other students should also take part. S
- Regarding the programme lessons, nearly all students replied positively about enjoying the resources (54/57) and thinking that the lessons are useful (51/57).** In contrast, only 41 students agreed that all students should take these lessons, and 13 answered they neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Similarly, **for the court visits, nearly all students reported enjoying visiting the court (60/62) and found it useful (61/62).** However, only 48 thought that all students should visit courts for their education, 10 neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4 disagreed.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements in relation to the 'Court in Action' lessons (n = 57)



To what extent do you agree with the following statements in relation to 'Court in Action' court visits? (n = 62)



3. Qualitative findings

Methodology

To understand schools, young people and teachers' experiences with the programme, we carried out four focus groups with young people taking part in the programme, and with teachers involved in the delivery.

We also interviewed two participating judges and court managers.

We carried out four focus groups with 30 young people (15 boys, 15 girls) aged 14-17, from four different schools.

Focus group discussions examined students':

- Understanding of the criminal justice system
- Experience of the court visits and activities
- Understanding of the roles in court

We interviewed teachers from five schools, where we explored:

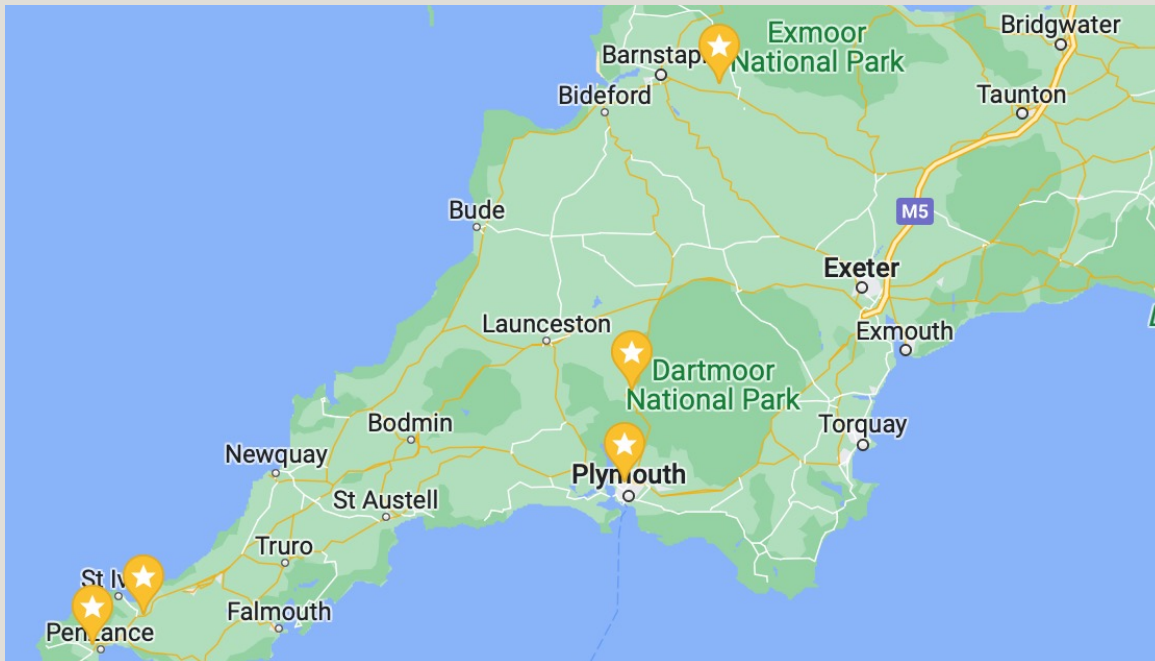
- Experience using the programme resources
- Opinions on the court visits
- Opinions on engagement and impact from the programme
- Barriers or successes of delivery.

We also carried out interviews with two judges, covering their involvement in the programme, their positive and negative experiences, and considerations over sustainability, and four court managers

Participating schools - fieldwork

Our qualitative findings incorporate data from teachers and students from five schools, of which two are academies, and three are independent schools.

The sample covers the Devon and Cornwall region and includes both rural and urban schools.



Through our sampling, we aimed to gather insights from a range of schools. We looked at school size, Ofsted rating, type of school, intention to use Court in Action resources and % of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. The table below summarises the spread of schools over Ofsted rating and % of pupils eligible for FSM.

School	Ofsted	% eligible FSM
1	Outstanding	0
2	<i>Independent</i>	0
3	Outstanding	15.4
4	Requires improvement	44.5
4	<i>Independent</i>	0

Fieldwork – headline findings

What went well?

- Court visits are high-impact events
- The Q&A sessions with the judges influenced students' aspirations and their understanding of the role of the law in society
- Mock trial activities can promote critical thinking and enable pupils to understand nuances in the criminal justice system

Where could the programme have performed better?

- The introduction of the Court in Action programme happened when the schools had already developed their calendars
- The programme resources should be more scaffolded to provide immediate insight for teachers
- Teachers require more support embedding the lesson resources: timetable squeeze (PSHE? Citizenship? English?)

Knowledge of criminal justice system

During the court visits, students had a chance to have a Q&A session with judges, to witness trials or court sessions in most cases, and take part in activities like a mock trial where teams would take prosecution and defence roles. What students found most useful about them is learning about the processes and understanding the way things take place.

- Students learned the basic underpinnings of the criminal justice system, all the way through understanding the implications behind regular processes.
- There was a level of critical thinking attached to their reflections. Especially regarding fairness and justice, and the consequences of imprisonment:
 - **“The activities in court were informative because we had to enact the roles of the court. It was like even if you thought that the person was innocent on a certain team, you had to try and prove them guilty. So, it's like trying to find the little details to pick out” – Y10 student**

Faith in criminal justice system

Court visits were a high-impact event as part of the programme. Most students had something to say when asked about their faith in the criminal justice system, and whether all young people should learn it at school.

- Some students found the programme useful in case they ever had experiences with the law.
- Others suggested it could serve as a deterrent for future crime.
- Overall, there was consensus over the fact that learning about the law and courts is important because:
 - **“We use it in society every day and it helps you to respect it if you know more about it” – Year 9 student**

Experiences in the programme

- Teachers recognised the value the visit brought to students' understanding of the criminal justice system, inclusion, and what engaging with this aspect of civil society can do to prepare them for the future.

“We were in the room, and they were all having an opinion. They were, ‘well I think this’ and, ‘I really don't want him to be found guilty because of this’ and, we could have those conversations that we had as a result of it were conversations our kids usually don't have.” – Teacher

- Encountering different roles at court can support in aspirations being formed, and dispelling misconceptions about careers in law: some students expressed a heightened interest in careers related to the criminal justice system. Two pupils expressed being interested in joining the police, one in learning about the law for politics, and around 4 or 5 expressed an interest in studying law.

“I cannot praise it enough for being such an overall positive learning experience for our students.” - Teacher

Aspects of delivery

Most of the schools we interviewed had expressed the intention to use the lesson resources in October but had not done so by their court visit. Although steps were taken to prepare students last-minute, like sharing videos on the different roles in court some students expressed missing out on the experience for lack of context.

- Some teachers shared their frustration given the lack of time to prioritise delivering the lessons, while others felt it was unclear who could deliver the lessons.
- One teacher suggested a different format to optimise the time and delivery of the content, for example, an assembly, which is easier to organise.

We conducted an additional interview with a teacher who had delivered the lessons during lunch-time club:

- They found them engaging, adaptable and easy to deliver.
- They also found planning the delivery of the lessons in tandem with the court visit helpful, and received support from Young Citizens to prioritise:
 - **“With support from YC, we planned the court visit date first and then we worked backwards from there. I asked YC’s advice on which ones would be good to have before we came on the court visit. And I think there were three and it worked out well. We ran those in half-hour lunchtime sessions” – Teacher**

Successes of delivery

- In the case of the teacher who had delivered most of the lessons, they are the careers lead in the school, and was able to use 30-minute slots on Thursday lunch for it. This resulted in the creation of a Law club with pupils from year 8 to year 12.
- This staff member found the lessons engaging, adaptable and easy to deliver:
“Yeah, totally confident, it was all really well put together, quite simple and clear. I know though some of them were planned for longer periods of time, I felt able to deliver them within the time we had available.” – Teacher
- They also found planning the delivery of the lessons in tandem with the court visit helpful, and received support from Young Citizens to prioritise:
“I really enjoyed it. I was able to ask YC, we planned the court visit date first and then we worked backwards from there” – Teacher
- As evidence of whether students found the lessons engaging or not, they shared:
“They've all kept coming back when it is not compulsory. So, I think that's the evidence.” – Teacher

Judges' perspectives

Two judges took part in our interviews as stakeholders. We explored their opinions on the programme, their level of involvement, what they felt is working well and what could be improved. We also enquired about their perceived value for money.

Both expressed having been involved with similar court visits arranged by another organisation, and feeling like this other organisation had stronger links with schools and required less time from court staff.

Opinions on involvement

- Both judges felt positively about being involved in the programme and taking part in the activities
- They find the activities rewarding, especially the Q&A, although they are aware they have time pressures and cannot have a higher level of involvement.
- They expressed interest in receiving students at primary level, as well as secondary

“I really have enjoyed the Q&A sessions that I've done, and I think school visits are really valuable. In a vacuum, I would say more involvement would be good. In reality, I don't have time.”

“When students talk to us, they don't think, I think by the end of the meeting we're not the strange mystery figures that we perhaps were. So, watching students appreciate that we're human beings as well is, is quite a good thing to do.”

Successes

The judges highlighted two key benefits from the programme. On the one hand, they value the deterring potential, and on the other, they value the aspirational potential.

“I think it's a good idea because as I understand it, and correct me if I'm wrong here, there is a degree of targeting of at-risk children for participation.”

“I think that the positives are that it's obvious as you talk to the students that they are learning from what's happening. I think there's a mystery of the Crown Court that there's a shroud, or a veil I should say, that has been lifted”

Challenges

The judges expressed some concerns regarding the time pressure court visits put on the running of the court, as well as the administrative time required by Young Citizens to plan the court visit

- One judge acknowledged that court staff were having to use time beyond the court visit, particularly providing information about cases the day before:

“there is no member of court staff here whose job it is to run the program from the court's perspective. All the administration and time required to do it has to be carved out of their actual job.”

- The judge also shared they found court visits stressful considering everyone else’s time
- Finally, judges had been made aware of court staff concerns regarding logistical implications of having children visiting:
“[court staff] have raised as a concern that there was an expectation as to how students would be met and where within the building they would go and, and how much clerk time would be required to actually make all of that happen”

Perceptions of benefits

Judges referenced alternative programme having run court visits in the past. They commented that in their experience, the number of court visits had been reduced since then. However, court managers felt that court visits were historically inconsistent and lacked enough educational content. Since the Court in Action programme is supported by educational material that extends the content beyond a school visit or a careers day, it was expected to address this gap.

- Judges expressed concerns regarding the cost of the project, in contrast to their past experiences of previous court visits. However, this came as a result of judges not having a full picture of the programme, and lacking awareness about the additional activities going on in schools.

“I don't see why it costs this sort of money to organise or organise this kind of activity, when we were doing it for free beforehand.”

- There was a tension between some of the stakeholders (court staff, judges, the local criminal justice board) about what is desirable from such programmes, and what is achievable.
- Judges’ perceptions are an example of such gaps in perception across the sector. Future programmes could benefit from raising programme awareness with all stakeholders to increase engagement and buy-in.

Court managers' perspectives

We interviewed six Operations managers from different courts, including Truro, Plymouth and Devon. Their level of involvement with the programme varied across courts and went from being involved solely in setting it up, all the way through being involved in managing cancellations and rescheduling court visits.

Some positive experiences they wanted to highlight included the willingness of court staff to participate, despite this adding to their workload:

“We've had positive feedback from staff at the court of the fact that the visits have been really positive’; they've evolved in a way that there are custody staff now on site and, where they can show the students some areas if they're able to do so and give them a little bit of a chat”

“Some of our local barristers have also done the same, it's kind of got a little bit bigger than it was first envisaged, but in a way that's been very positive with students”

Some negative experiences related to the workload involved in arranging the cases that would be on display the day of visits:

“We get a lot of cases which are not suitable for a group of vulnerable students. So, we do careful planning, which does take some time to consider. I have to say the feedback that I've had from the staff member that does the planning is that young citizens can sometimes require lots of information in advance.”

Overall, the operations managers seemed happy to have taken part but recognized the level of involvement required from court staff. Some changes they suggested for future iterations of the programme included reviewing (and increasing) the number of pupils allowed per visit, therefore reducing the number of visits per school, as well as having information about room requirements in advance to avoid issues on the day.

Law student volunteer's perspective

We interviewed one of the law students volunteering to support Young Citizen's court visits. Their involvement with the programme included supporting Young Citizens to deliver in-court workshops, assist in mock trial activities, and do Q&A sessions with students thinking of a career in law.

Some of the positive experiences they had in the programme included sharing their knowledge of the criminal justice system with eager students, and getting to take part in the judges' Q&As.

“The judges have been so helpful. It's kind of an experience that you wouldn't get unless you were involved in the program. You can't just go up to a judge and kind of ask them 1,000,001 questions and expect them to answer”

One thing they found challenging was preparing students ahead of the court sessions, depending on the severity of the crime.

“I found it challenging having to explain to them when we do go into the courtroom and hearings, some of it might be uncomfortable. We are there to make sure that we are not ever sat in a trial that involves sex offenses. But obviously a lot of them do involve like assault and stuff like that. And when reading out the evidence, um, some of it can be quite disturbing. But so far, we haven't had any students that have been affected by it.”

Out of 33 visits, five were made by independent schools. The three visits that were supported by law students coincided with visits by independent schools. The 28 state school visits were supported by legal professionals and law students over the age of 16 - with nine of these visits being supported by both a barrister and a law student.

Summary points

- The Court in Action programme consisted of lesson resources being used in schools, and court visits being arranged by Young Citizens, teachers and courts.
- Given that so many people were involved in the delivery (including delegates, law professionals, volunteers, court staff and managers, judges, etc.), there was some friction due to the balancing required for time, effort, workload management, class scheduling.
- The lesson resources ended up being underutilized by teachers.
- Teachers were also happy to have taken part and deliver parts of the programme and reported a positive impact on their students after taking part.
- Young people found the content of the resources and the court visits highly engaging and useful for their education.
- The programme had a positive impact on young people's knowledge of the criminal justice system. It did not influence beliefs about fairness and justice of the system, but it did increase student confidence in careers in law.
- The court visits successfully invited critical thinking and led students to evaluate the challenges of making decisions about fairness and justice.

Recommendations for future iterations

Based on the evidence and the evaluation, we make the following recommendations to ensure an effective and positive delivery.

Regarding school resources and in-school delivery

- Schools lacked time and support to embed lessons with enough lead time during this pilot due to the late start. Future iterations should ensure programme rollout starts ahead of the academic year, perhaps in the Summer term, to enable full integration and training for inset days and planning for scheduling activities.
- Teacher engagement could improve from more embedded, ongoing support like regular check-ins and support with accessing resources.
- Teachers reported that schools struggled to find staff who were best suited to deliver sessions. Although Young Citizens really values offering flexibility for delivery, schools could benefit from some guidance on where the programme can fit, e.g., saying it fits with the English or Citizenship department.
- School engagement could be improved by committing to minimum delivery expectations at enrolment to ensure that teachers are accountable for delivering the required content ahead of court visits

Regarding court visits

- Court managers highlighted staff struggled with the workload associated with court visits. Future iterations should ensure that all stakeholders are made aware in advance of the minimum standard actions associated with visits and agree with them to preserve a trauma-informed practice and safeguarding approach.

Recommendations for future iterations

Regarding court visits

- Future iterations or similar programmes should engage all stakeholders and associated staff with an induction to ensure that everyone understands the scope, aims and purpose of the programme. This is to increase engagement and improve buy-in.

Regarding faith and trust in the criminal justice system

- It was discussed at the end of the evaluation that improving faith and trust in the criminal justice system is a wider goal that should be addressed explicitly and in a focussed manner. The current Court in Action programme was not successful in influencing this but it was also not the focus of the content.
- As faith and trust in institutions are built over time, we believe that addressing them would require a dedicated programme with an associated Theory of Change about how increased awareness of processes and institutions influences trust in them.

For the delivery organisation

- Embed ongoing support and relationship-building for schools, teachers, court staff and wider stakeholders to ensure higher commitment to the programme, and clear and responsive communication throughout. This would look like providing more regular communication, and some logistical support. Similarly, engaging in post-activity debriefs or reflections to address pain points immediately.

For wider stakeholders

- When committing to a programme with similar goals, ensure that all participants and stakeholders are made aware of the purpose, motivation and limitations ahead of time so that support (financial and goal-oriented) is continued. This could improve perceptions of cost-benefits or comparison with other similar programmes.

08/09/2023

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us:

Anamaria@cfey.org

Baz@cfey.org



The Centre
for Education
& Youth

