

Referral Order

The Referral Order is a unique sentence directly involving the local community by means of the volunteer youth offender panel members holding the young offender to account for their actions.

Where a young person is before a court charged with a criminal offence for the first time and pleads guilty, the Court must pass (in most cases) a referral order. The Magistrates also have the authority to award subsequent Referral Orders dependant on certain criteria being met.

Referral Orders are made for a period of not less than 3 months and not longer than 12 months. The young person is ordered to appear before a Referral Order Panel accompanied by their parent if they are under 16 years old. The Referral Order aims to prevent re-offending by ensuring that the young person is made aware of the impact and consequences of their behaviour

Referral Order Panel Meetings involve specially trained volunteer panel members, the young person and their parent/carer, a Youth Offending Team (YOT) Officer and in some cases the victim of the offence. All parties meet to negotiate a Referral Order contract designed to help prevent further offending and give the young person the opportunity to make amends for what they have done.

Under the terms of the Referral Order the young person's progress and compliance with the contract is monitored by the panel through regular review meetings. In the event of non-compliance or where the young person refuses to agree a contract, the Panel can refer the young person back to the court which has the power to then re-sentence the offender.