

Public Interest Submission

Administrative Failures in Youth Justice Supervision and Restorative Justice Processes

(Identifying details removed to protect the young person involved)

Overview

This document outlines concerns regarding the administration of a youth justice supervision order involving a young person (“the young person”) and the management of associated restorative justice processes.

The purpose of this document is not to identify or criticise individual officers but to highlight potential **systemic weaknesses in administrative practice**, particularly in the areas of:

- verification of residential addresses
- communication with supervising parents
- restorative justice process integrity
- inter-agency oversight

The issues described below raise broader questions about how youth justice agencies manage supervision orders when young people disengage from their families and begin residing in potentially unsafe environments.

Background

A young person subject to a youth justice order relocated from the family home to another property. The supervising parent had previously raised concerns about the suitability of this location.

The young person reportedly notified the department of the change of address via SMS communication with a caseworker.

The department subsequently recorded this address within its internal case management system.

However, the supervising parent remained unaware that the department had formally accepted this address and continued communicating with the caseworker regarding concerns about the location.

No indication was provided during these communications that the department had already recorded the address as the young person’s residence.

Address Verification and Risk Assessment

The acceptance of the address raises several administrative questions.

These include whether:

- the department verified that the young person was actually residing at the address
- any suitability or safety assessment of the premises was conducted
- concerns raised by the supervising parent about the location were documented or assessed

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

These events raise questions about the adequacy of risk assessment procedures when a youth justice client relocates to a new residence.

Communication with the Supervising Parent

During the period immediately following the address change, the supervising parent maintained active communication with the assigned caseworker.

Messages exchanged during this period included discussions about supervision arrangements and concerns about the property where the young person was staying.

Despite this communication, the caseworker did not indicate that the department had already received notification of the address change from the young person.

This creates uncertainty regarding how information about residential arrangements is communicated to supervising parents and how parental concerns are incorporated into case management decisions.

Restorative Justice Process

A restorative justice conference had previously been convened in relation to a family-related matter.

The agreement resulting from that conference was later finalised by the department after the young person attended an initial session with the restorative justice provider.

The supervising parent, who was also the affected party in the conference process, was not subsequently engaged before the agreement was closed.

While the department may have acted in accordance with the literal wording of the agreement, the situation raises broader questions regarding the integrity of restorative justice processes when key participants are not actively engaged during implementation.

Restorative justice is generally intended to facilitate dialogue and resolution between parties. Where this engagement does not occur, questions arise about whether the intended purpose of the process has been fulfilled.

Administrative Oversight

The sequence of several administrative decisions raises further questions about internal oversight and review processes.

These include:

- the acceptance of a residential address through informal notification channels
- the closure of a restorative justice agreement
- the continuation of supervision arrangements linked to the same address

These actions may each be procedurally valid in isolation. However, taken together they highlight potential weaknesses in coordination and risk management.

Public Interest Considerations

The issues described here extend beyond the circumstances of one family. They raise broader questions relevant to youth justice systems generally, including:

- how agencies verify the living arrangements of young people under supervision
- how parental concerns are incorporated into decision-making
- how restorative justice agreements are implemented and monitored
- how risk is assessed when young people disengage from family supervision

These questions are particularly important where young people may be vulnerable to unsafe environments or criminal influence.

Conclusion

This document raises concerns regarding administrative practices in youth justice supervision and restorative justice processes.

The circumstances suggest potential gaps in:

- address verification procedures
- communication with supervising parents
- engagement of participants in restorative justice agreements
- oversight of supervision arrangements when young people relocate

The intention of this submission is to encourage examination of these processes in order to strengthen safeguards for young people and improve accountability in youth justice administration.

Youth Justice Navigator

A Proposal for Cross-Agency Coordination in Youth Justice Case Management

(Public Interest Version – Identifying Details Removed)

1. The Problem This Role Solves

When a young person on a statutory youth justice order has multiple agencies involved in their case — Youth Justice, non-government service providers, Child Safety, Education, Legal Aid, the courts, and Police — each agency defines its responsibility narrowly.

Each organisation may be individually compliant with its statutory obligations while the **combined effect of their actions produces unsafe outcomes for the child**.

No current role within the youth justice system is responsible for **coordinating these agencies and managing the cumulative impact of their decisions**.

The result is a predictable structural pattern:

- Agencies disclaim responsibility for decisions made by other agencies
- Legal guardians are excluded from decisions made about their child across multiple agencies
- Risk warnings from families remain siloed within individual departments
- Material aid may inadvertently sustain unsafe placements because no agency holds the full picture
- Complaints escalate slowly through institutional processes while risk continues in real time
- Police may engage a young person on a statutory order without notification to Youth Justice or legal guardians

A documented case examined during preparation of this proposal illustrates these structural problems with unusual clarity.

Over several months:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2. The Youth Justice Navigator Role

2.1 Core Purpose

The **Youth Justice Navigator** is a senior coordination role — not a caseworker — responsible for ensuring that where multiple agencies are involved with a young person on a statutory order, a **named officer with cross-agency visibility and authority** is accountable for the child’s overall safety and progress.

The Navigator does not replace existing caseworkers.

Instead, the role operates **above the individual agency level**, holding the coordination function that currently falls between organisational boundaries.

2.2 How the Navigator Differs From Existing Roles

Function	Current Position	Navigator
Agency alignment	Caseworkers operate within a single agency	Cross-agency coordination authority
Guardian engagement	No requirement to share cross-agency information	Guardians receive structured weekly updates
Conflict resolution	Disputes escalate slowly through management chains	48-hour escalation pathway for resolution
Material aid oversight	Aid may be issued without guardian notification	Navigator notified before assistance sustaining a residence
Risk ownership	Risk reports remain within one agency	Navigator tracks risk notifications across agencies
Police coordination	Police engagement may occur without notification	Police engagement recorded and guardian informed
Cost profile	Costs absorbed separately across agencies	Prevention-focused coordination reduces downstream costs

2.3 Navigator Functions

Cross-Agency Coordination

Maintains a complete record of all agency involvement for each young person in the Navigator’s caseload.

Identifies gaps or overlaps in service delivery and escalates where the combined effect is unsafe.

Guardian-Facing Communication

Provides legal guardians with a **weekly summary** including:

- agencies currently involved
- actions taken during the week
- upcoming appointments or decisions
- changes to placement or supervision arrangements

Guardian notification may only be suspended where a **documented safety risk** exists.

Conflict Resolution Authority

Where agencies hold conflicting positions affecting the child's placement or safety, the Navigator escalates to a designated senior officer for resolution within **48 hours**.

All positions and decisions are documented.

Material Aid Oversight

The Navigator is notified before material assistance — such as financial support or vouchers — is provided where it sustains a residential placement.

The Navigator confirms:

- whether a suitability assessment of the premises has occurred
- whether guardians have been notified or a safety exemption recorded

Suitability of Premises

Triggers a formal **Suitability of Premises assessment** when a young person relocates from their court-recorded address.

The outcome is documented and shared with guardians unless a safety exception applies.

Police Coordination Protocol

Establishes a protocol that **police engagement with a young person on a statutory order must be recorded and communicated to the Navigator**.

The Navigator ensures:

- guardians are informed
- a risk assessment is completed
- the interaction is documented

Young people subject to statutory orders should not be engaged as intelligence sources without documented assessment of their wellbeing and capacity.

Escalation Pathway

The Navigator has direct escalation access to senior departmental leadership and may refer child protection concerns directly to relevant authorities.

3. Pilot Design

Parameter	Proposal
Pilot regions	Two regions selected for case complexity and service network diversity
Duration	12 months with 6-month interim evaluation
Caseload	Approximately 20 cases per Navigator
Staffing	One full-time Navigator per region
Governance	Reporting to regional executive leadership
Evaluation metrics	Guardian satisfaction, response time to risk notifications, re-offending rates, school attendance, placement stability, inter-agency resolution times
Legislative basis	Can be piloted through policy instruments and service agreements without primary legislation

Following evaluation, legislative amendments may embed the coordination obligation in statute.

4. Illustrative Case Application

A documented case examined during preparation of this proposal demonstrates how a Navigator could have altered outcomes.

What occurred	Navigator response
Repeated family warnings about an unsafe residence received no coordinated response	Navigator would track and escalate each risk notification
Service providers supplied material assistance sustaining the placement	Navigator would verify premises suitability before aid was issued
Youth justice scheduling conflicted with education commitments	Navigator would identify the conflict and require resolution
The residence was operationally treated as the child's home without assessment	Navigator would trigger a suitability review
Police engaged the young person without notifying guardians or Youth Justice	Navigator would require notification and risk documentation
Restorative justice processes concluded without guardian engagement	Navigator would flag the coordination failure

5. Connection to System Reform

The Navigator model directly addresses several systemic issues frequently raised in youth justice reviews:

- fragmented accountability across agencies
- exclusion of families from decision-making
- lack of coordination between police and youth justice supervision
- slow complaint and escalation mechanisms
- insufficient early intervention when young people disengage from family environments

6. Contribution to Pilot Design

The author of this submission is available to contribute to pilot design in the following areas:

- case-based insight to inform program design
- development of the Navigator role description
- evaluation framework design
- stakeholder engagement with agencies and community organisations