

Alternatives to Custody

Developing specialist fostering for children in conflict with the law

The Alternatives to Custody Project – Europe

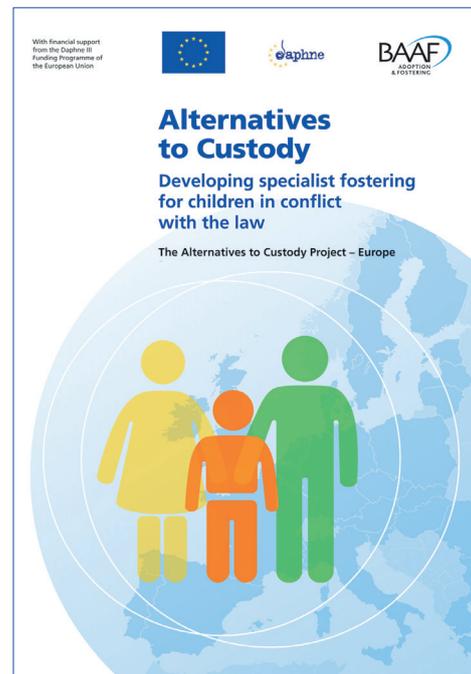
The majority of European countries provide informal ways of dealing with youth offending through diversionary measures, and by giving priority to alternative sanctions over deprivation of liberty. But the practice is variable, and in many countries custodial sentences are far too common. What role could foster care play in response to juvenile offending? At present, it has a limited role and in the majority of countries there are no legal provisions for foster care as a response to offending, or the provisions exist but are not applied in practice. However, fostering can play a critically important role in delivering child-friendly justice, offering a direct alternative to custody by providing safe care, nurturing relationships, boundaries and structured care giving.

With contributions from experts from across the European Union, this book explores these issues in depth. It is one of the main outcomes of a two-year pan-European project, funded by the European Commission's Daphne III programme, on developing intensive and remand fostering programmes for young people in conflict with the law, who might otherwise be in custody.

The first part sets out a context and examines the limited role that foster care currently plays in youth justice, and the potential for its greatly expanded use. An overview sets out the key international and European juvenile justice and children's rights standards, the EU policy context,

and the components found in effective youth justice systems, including prevention, diversion and community-level services.

The second part contains policy overviews from Italy, Bulgaria, England and Hungary, containing each country's achievements, needs and shortcomings in youth justice, and an assessment of the prospects for implementing an extended role for foster care in youth justice in the future. Chapters on setting up and operating a fostering service for children in conflict with the law and setting out a quality standards framework offer practical tools. A training programme to prepare and train prospective foster carers for the task of fostering children in conflict with the



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law comprises the third section. Presented in a clear and practical way, it offers a preparation course that is informative and equips prospective foster carers with knowledge and skills.

Alternatives to Custody makes a powerful case for the role that intensive and remand fostering can play to bring about significant positive effects for young people in conflict with the law, and is essential reading for policy makers and practitioners involved in fostering and youth justice services.

With financial support from the Daphne III Funding Programme of the European Union.

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