

# We're Doing What Now?

Youth Justice Practice and Policy Change

# A potted history: some main drivers shaping practice

- The political salience of economic ideas
  - Keynesianism
    - Post WW2 welfare consensus
    - Professionalism and bureaucracy
  - Ascendency of economic liberalism
    - Managerialism, professionalism and bureaucracy
    - Austerity

# Youth Justice now

## Discontinuities:

- Local labour force contraction
- Service reorganisation and shifting centrifugal / centripetal forces
- Destabilising and destabilised professional rationales
  - Risk professionals?
  - Diversion and decriminalisation?
  - Welfare and holistic approach?
  - Vulnerability and the return of social ecology?

# Youth Justice now

## Continuities:

- Managerialism
  - Feeding the information systems
  - The need to monitor
- Engagement
- Evaluation

# Contested Areas

- What is policy? Whose policy? At what level is policy implemented?
- What is practice? How should we understand the distinction made between 'paperwork' and 'face-to-face work'?
- Whose professionalism – which professions?

# Practitioners' eye view

- What are the main forces shaping practitioners' day to day lives?
- What are the implications for substance misuse work?

# External context

Youth crime rate falling

## Number of FTE by Gender by Year





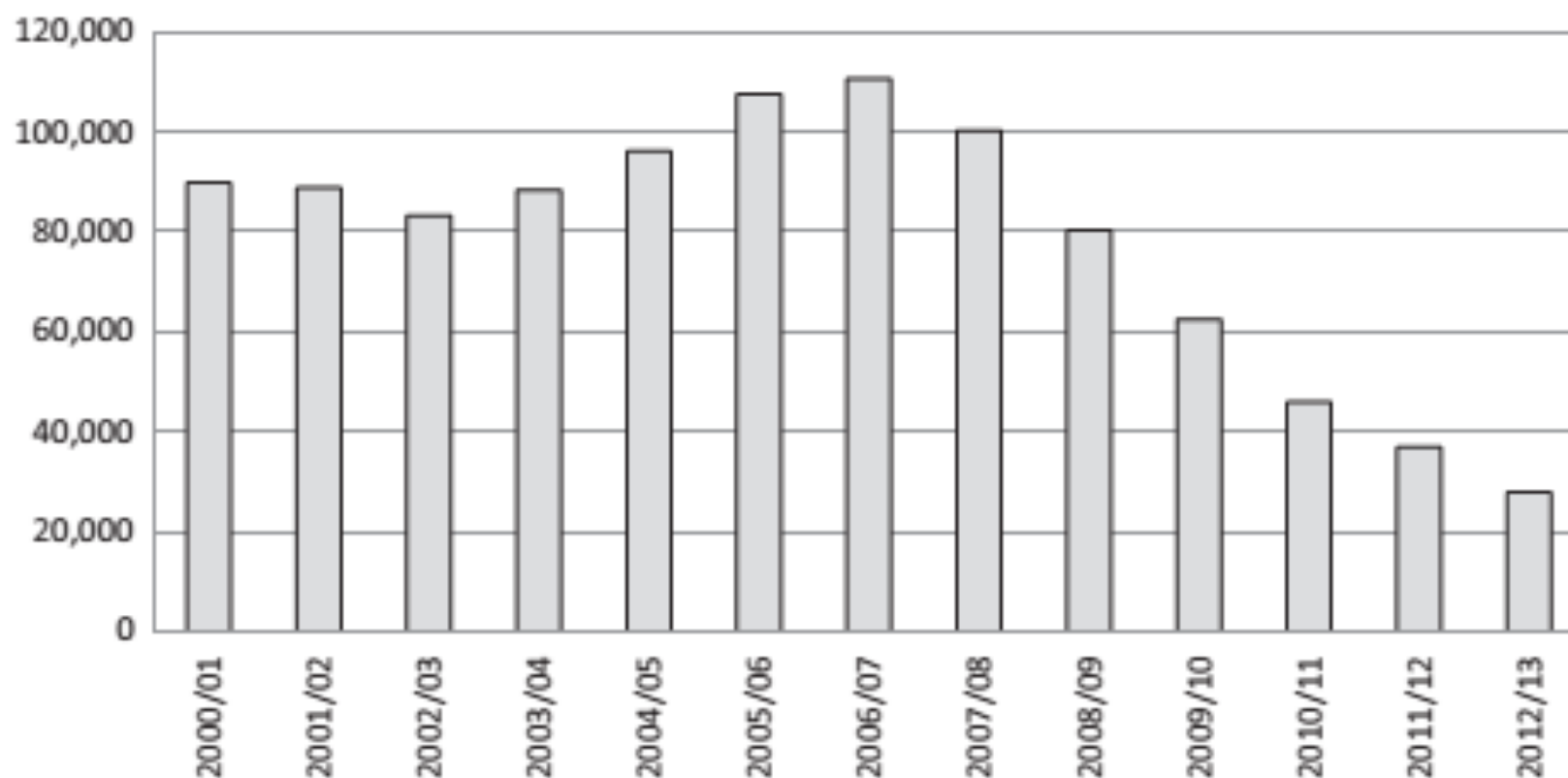
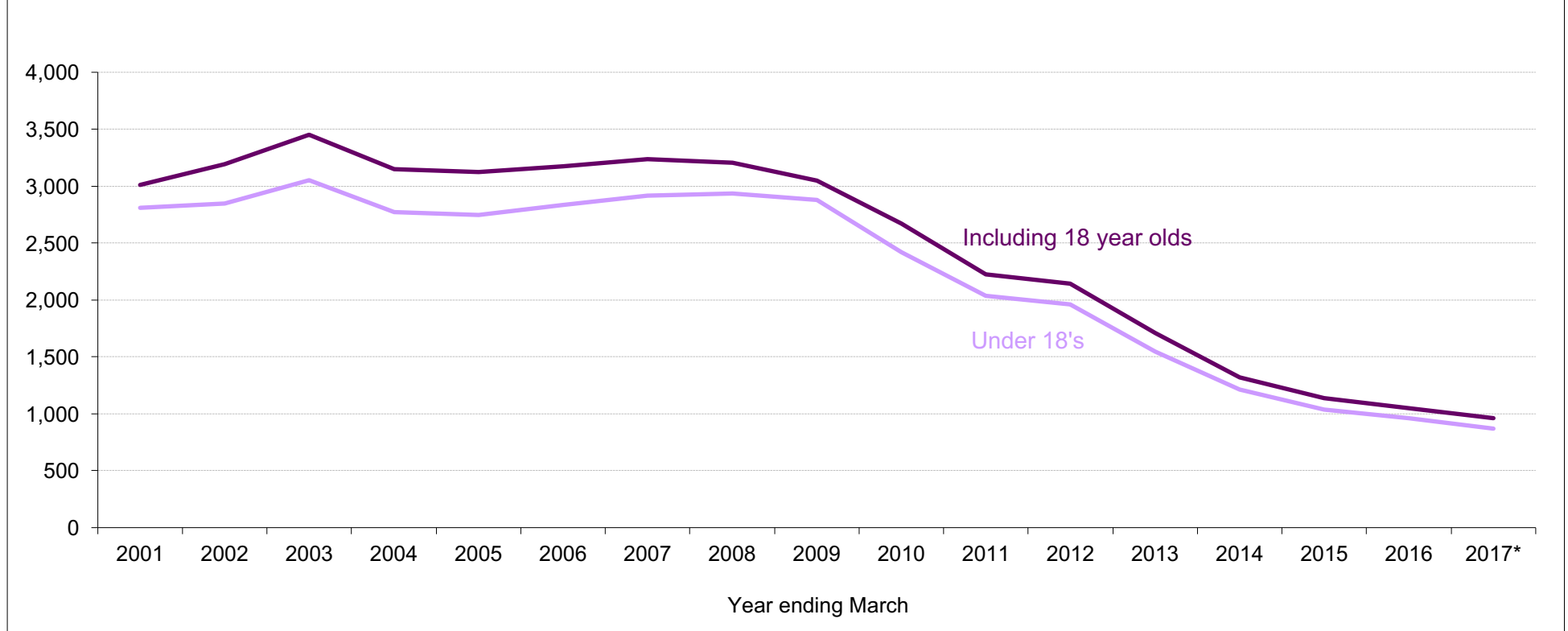


FIG. 1 First time entrants (aged 10–17) 2000–13. Source: Youth Justice Annual Statistics 2012–13 (MoJ, 30th January 2013); Youth Justice Annual Statistics 2008–09 (MoJ, 27th May 2010).

### Average Secure Estate for Children and Young People Population, 2000/01 - 2016/17\*

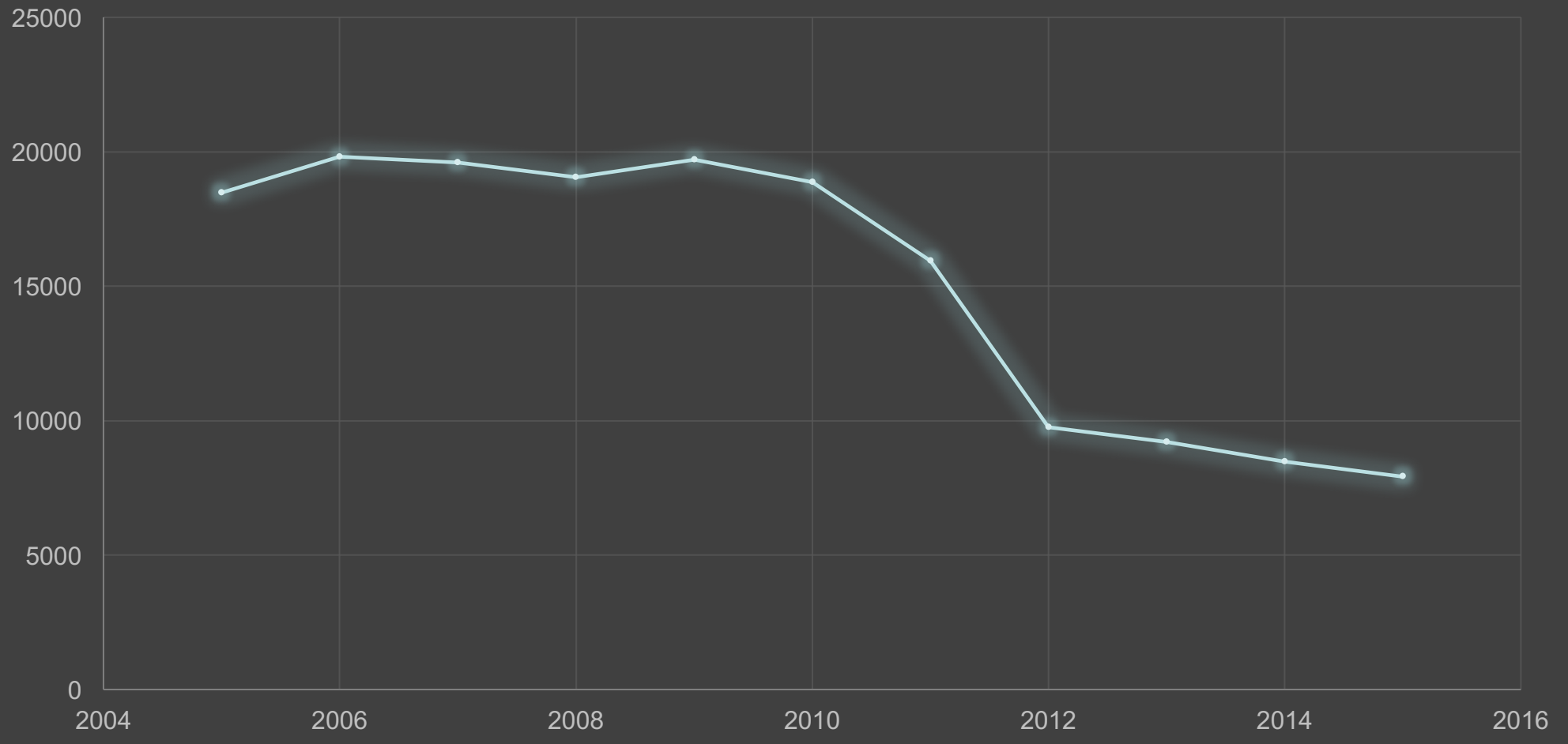


Source: Youth Justice Board [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/608310/youth-custody-report-february-2017.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608310/youth-custody-report-february-2017.xls) (accessed 20 April 2017)

## The Rise of Austerity

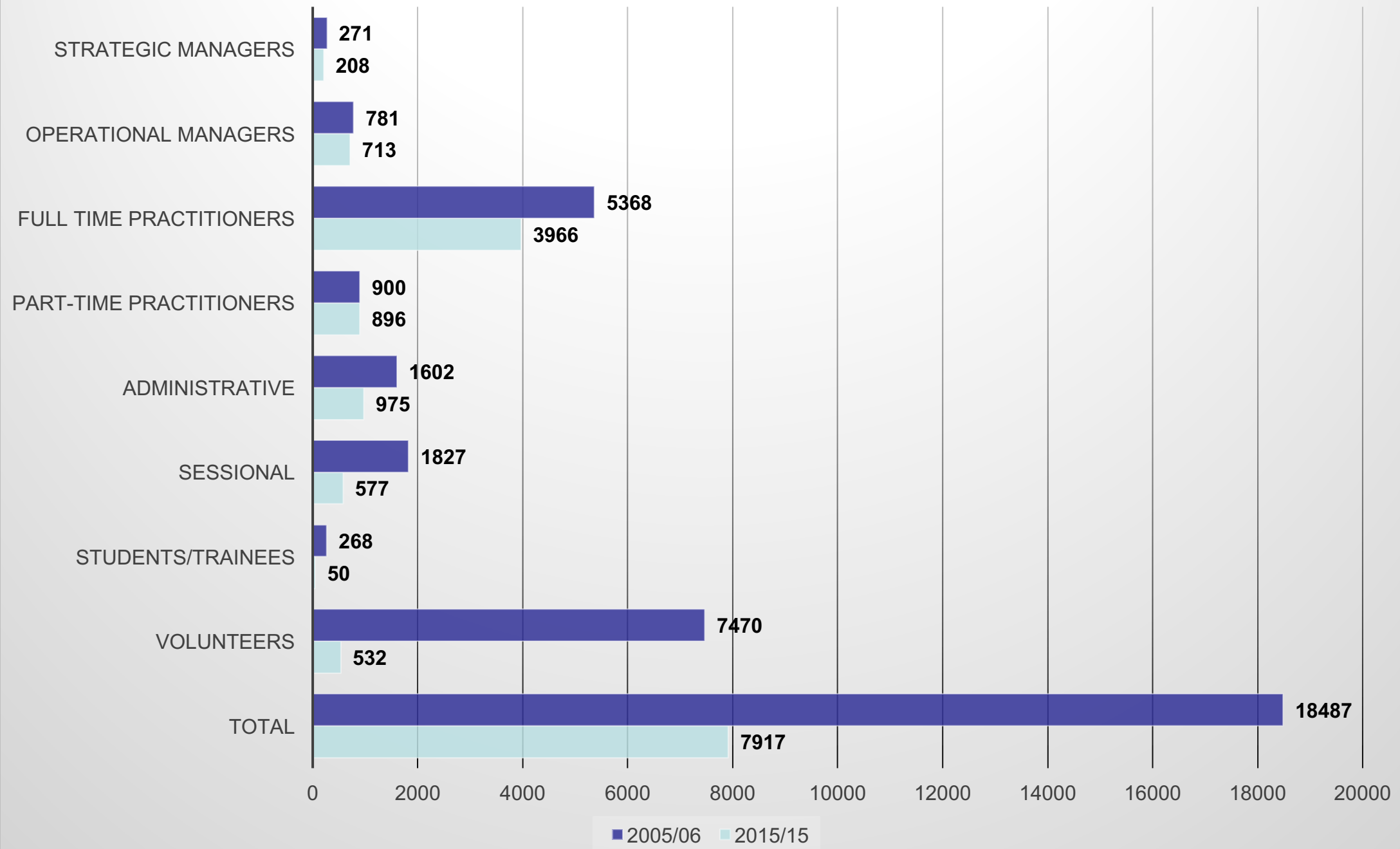
- 2008
- Coalition government and the 'promise' of austerity measures
- Rise of localism

## Total Numbers of YOT Staff (incl admin, sessional practitioners and managers)

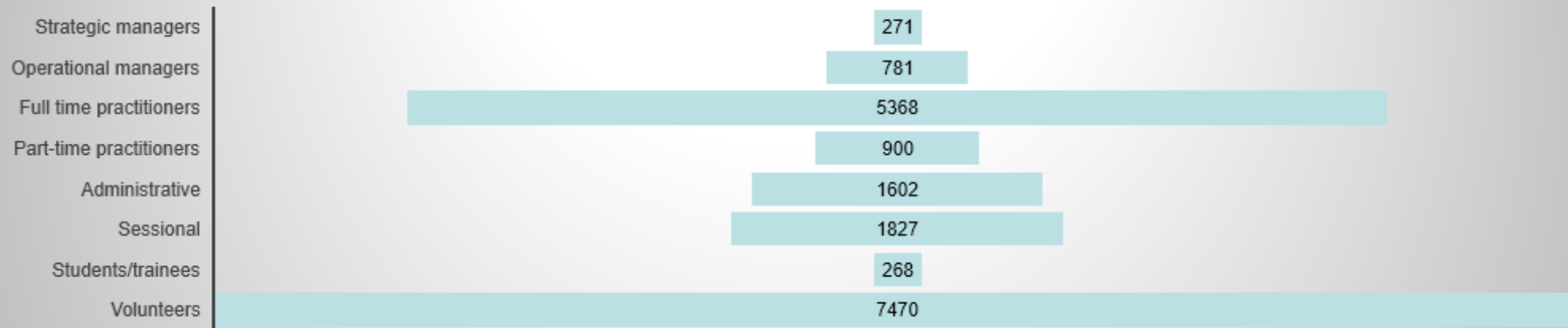


Source: YJB, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140715125548/http://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice> accessed 20/04/2017 and YJB, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics> accessed 20/04/17

# YOT staffing by contract 2005/6 and 2015/16

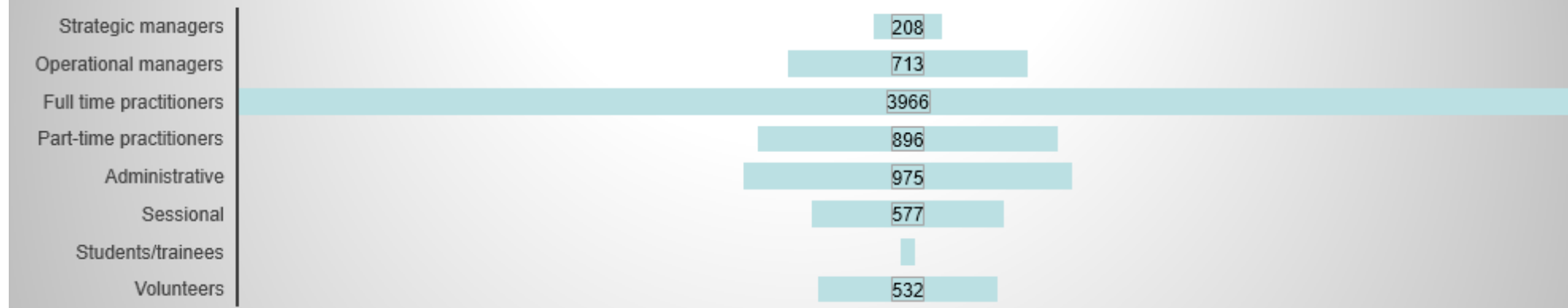


### YOT staffing by contract 2005/06



Source: YJB, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140715125548/http://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice> accessed 20/04/2017

### YOT staffing by contract 2015/16



Source: YJB, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics> accessed 20/04/17

# Youth justice services now

- Smaller
- Dealing with more complex cases
- Dealing with professional roles and boundaries

- **More for less, Loss of staff:** “When I started there was three times as many people sat upstairs there really was. And people have left due to retirement and you know illness and things like that and then the Council obviously tried to make cutbacks so people took early retirement.” (A21)
- **Accommodation issues for services:** “...for various reasons a combination of size, cost and the building didn’t lend itself to what we wanted to do and a decision was made that wherever they put us was going to cause us problems. We tend to do a lot of our work going out anyway so where we’re based is not such a big issue so put us here 'cause it was the best of a bad job.” (A26)



# New times, new work

- **More complex cases:** “...the caseload we have got it might few, fewer than what we had [but they] seem to be very high risk young people. They carry a lot more hours and for the supervising officers especially they need to be seen three times a week compared to the once a fortnight that some are.” (A21)

# Organisational Context

- Limited change to structures and governance with increased need to demonstrate success
- Ambiguous Organisational Priorities
- Proliferation of Process and Policy Changes

“A23 is really good with that stuff and has put us in for loads of awards and [raised our profile] with the YJB and with the County Council and our Management Boards certainly. Politically to me it looks ... the ‘height of stupidity’ to start cutting away something that’s showing as working and has been seen as good practice within an organisation because you need to make cuts. I keep saying to the people that I line manage that ‘We are at hard times there are no two ways about it. It’s been heavily noted that we’ve got 400 odd thousand pounds to lose that may well mean staff. But if you look at our statistics and our achievements over the last few years they are such that it would be politically quite difficult to try and get rid of us especially at a practitioner level.”

# Organisational Context

- Ambiguous Organisational Priorities and Ambiguous professional role
- Proliferation of Process and Policy Changes

- *Multiple tasks*: distinction between ‘paperwork’ and ‘face-to-face work’
- *Multiple roles*: record keeper, analyst, motivator (engager?!), teacher, advocate, peer supervisor (and gatekeeper), manager
- *Multiple goals*: prevention, law enforcement, restoration, diversion... and ‘making a difference’ (welfare)
- *Multiple methods and methodologies?*

“The assessment process is taking an increasing amount of time. We’re getting pressured more and more to make sure that we’re using more and more bits of information. So at the moment there’s a lot of focus around speech and language, communication assessments and problems ... We’ve got to do learning styles.” (A29)

“Yeah, we use Site B Assessments as well now with some of our work so the [diversion scheme]. We don’t do a full ASSET it’s sort of a briefer one, it can be briefer it just depends how much you write in there. It’s not quite as prescriptive in the way it is set out like in the way it asks questions in the ASSET.” (B23)

- Dealing with young people ‘holistically’:
  - “I take a more holistic view when I’m filling out any assessment now [that the service is integrated]. You do look... a much broader perspective because now I’ve got some understanding and some experience of what that means, the housing thing means, what the Child in Need thing means, what the PETE thing means. I’ve got some understanding of that so it can be included.” (B30)
  - “We’ve still got the National Standards in Youth but we have got more flexibility. If they’re not at their home we’ll go out looking for them, there’s not that ‘Well no, you’ve missed an appointment’. Your mum not reminding you is an acceptable explanation in Youth, that’s not an acceptable explanation in adult [probation], it’s very much about their responsibility. Where we look at a much more holistic approach, we have much more involvement with the whole family.” (A29)

- What is the nature of the day to day job?
  - With new people and priorities comes new work (new assessments, and new things to be assessed, monitored, referred and reviewed)
- Job remains broadly the same
  - Face to Face: encouragement, engagement
  - Evaluation: signposting, identification of / referral into appropriate activities
  - ‘Feeding the computer’: information production



- “All that stuff [policy change] is there and there’s no getting away from it and I’ve got to do it but I can’t achieve any of that without having that relationship [with the young person] so I’ve got to get in there and build that relationship...” (B24)
- “Q: Does [policy] change what you do on a day to day basis? A: No, I think it just adds obstacles at times. “ (A29)

- “Yes, I think the... You see the targets as being used to monitor you, don't you, that's the way I do, that's the, that's the somebody external, isn't it, being able to go show me. It's being able to evidence what you do, isn't it, it's very difficult to say 'Well the staff are happy, and the kids are happy and the parents are happy' that's quite hard to prove. Whereas the targets is your hard data isn't it really? So that's what the targets are for, I think.” (A28)
- “We are measured on young people getting into provision but we don't seem to have a measure. Maybe we do but it's not publicised, it doesn't have the same thing about it as to whether or not young people have reduced their offending. The measures are all about ASSETs completed on time.” (B32)

## How practitioners make sense of their professional role and responsibilities is shifting

- Refined rhetoric of risk (youth justice workers as risk technicians as opposed to youth justice work being working with risk(y young people))
- Fuzzy logic of welfare (better outcomes)
- Rise of social ecology (family, communities)

- “[My role] Has something to do with the young person and hopefully the point of it being is to educate support, advise the parent/carer to reduce the risk of further offending behaviour so you’re trying to change their parenting to increase a better outcome for their child, children and themselves.” (A30)
  
- “I think the whole ethos of the service is really up there with managing and helping and supporting young people and constantly evaluating what they’re doing so there’s better outcomes at the end. So yeah I think we do that really well.” (B26)

- “Originally I would’ve said, before I came I would’ve said to look at public protection, to supervise young people through the requirements of a court order to help them to stop getting into trouble to try and reduce the risk of reoffending, however, having done the role I would say it’s a lot more about managing their vulnerabilities and their social circumstances to make sure they’re supported in the right way by bringing agencies in to ensure that they’re not in a position where they feel they have to commit crime. And so it’s managing all of what I’ve just said about reducing the risk of further offending and look at risks to the public but also it’s that element of vulnerability as well. Which you don’t tend to get with the adult arena” (A1)

- “Well for me practice is much more about outcomes now than it ever was and it’s far broader than it ever was in terms of a young person’s experience of the service because we now not just, we never did just look at their offending behaviour, there was a lot of welfare stuff that went on around that as well, but never as much as now.” (B30)

## Individual choice

- “Cause at the end of the day it doesn’t matter what I do, the young person has to choose to accept the help. So if they’re not ready then it’s never going to work but we do reduce reoffending in some people. It can be very demoralising.” (A29)
- “No, because [the welfare approach] sometimes it might be almost excusing some behaviour, which you need to make that separation actually yes, things being really shit for them, and yeah, it can’t be easy but things can be really shit for someone else as well and they’ve managed to not go on to offend.” (B22)

# What is the day to day job like?

- Individual behaviours
  - ‘Arse-covering’ liability yet also genuine belief in passing the work on
  - Limited control over workload, yet also freedom over time
  - Changes in the administration of managerialism bad, managerialism itself not bad



# Janus-faced youth justice practice

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE SERVICE

Doing things right (i.e. the need to follow process, procedure and policy in order to construct a good case file)

Creating better outcomes (i.e. the need to do work that ensures that the service can show that it is efficient and effective)

Evidencing practice (i.e. the necessity of engaging in a variety of tasks that can be auditable)



## MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Doing the right thing (i.e. the need to provide 'support' for young people in order to do good case work)

Producing better outcomes (i.e. penal repression of young people does not produce better outcomes)

Protecting ourselves (at all levels from the macro and meso forces bearing down on youth justice)