

Library of Birmingham Archives & Collections

JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Not until the early nineteenth century, was it recognised that children could not be treated as adults, and the system of treating children reformed: children under 7 were presumed incapable of committing a crime, children aged 7 – 14 presumed innocent of the intention to behave criminally, unless evidence suggested otherwise. Separate courts for juveniles were not established until the beginning of the twentieth century, and did not become mandatory until 1908.

With the Youthful Offenders Act (1854) and Industrial Schools Act (1857), both of which were amended and consolidated, particularly in 1866, several types of institutions were set up to care for juvenile offenders or potential offenders. These institutions could be set up either by the local authority or by voluntary organisations or religious groups. In Birmingham, the Barrow Cadbury family was particularly influential in setting up juvenile courts and in building remand homes. Institutions set up for juveniles were:

- Industrial Schools for children under 14 who were not criminal, but who were likely to fall into crime. Once sent to an Industrial School, the child would remain there until the age of 16.
- Reformatory Schools for children under the age of 16 who had been convicted of a crime. They usually still had to serve an initial sentence of 2 weeks in prison, followed by 3 to 5 years in the Reformatory School.
- Approved Schools which replaced the Industrial and Reformatory Schools in 1933.
- Borstals (from 1908) for convicted young adults aged between 16 and 21.
- Remand Homes set up as a result of the Youthful Offenders Act (1901) which allowed courts to commit a child on remand or committal before trial.

Following the Children and Young Persons Act (1969) approved schools and remand homes became Community Homes, and were called Community Homes (with Education) if education was provided within the establishment.

Records relating to Juvenile Offenders in Birmingham City Archives

MS 244	Saltley Reformatory (later Norton Approved School)	1848-
MS 253	Gem Street Industrial School General Committee, Governors' Committee and House Committee minutes	1847-1973
MS 994	Gem Street Industrial School (later Tennial School)	1868-
BCC	Shustoke Industrial School (acc. 1991/18 and XX/248)	1868-
MS 1345	Forehill House Remand Home	1957-1987
PS/B 1/1/8/	Juvenile Court Records	1905-1968
PS/B 4/2/1/1	Magistrates' Industrial and Reformatory School committee	1867
BCC	Watch Committee and Education Committee Children's Committee (Approved Schools & Remand Homes Sub-Committee) Social Services Committee	1903-1948 1948-? ?-present

Note: MOST RECORDS ARE CLOSED FOR 100 YEARS
See Archive staff for details on access to these records

See also, Source List: Children's Homes and Children in Care