

Crime children 'under court age'

Nearly 350 criminal offences have been committed by children in the East Midlands who were too young to be prosecuted, new figures show.

The offences range from burglary and arson to robbery and fraud, according to figures obtained by the BBC under the Freedom of Information Act.

East Midlands police forces recorded a total of 344 offences in 2006 committed by children aged nine or under.

The law says children under 10 are too young to be criminally responsible.

The four youngest offenders, aged four, were involved in racially aggravated common assaults and causing criminal damage.

In Nottinghamshire, police recorded 83 cases of criminal damage, 73 physical assaults and a number of crimes involving air guns committed by children who cannot be prosecuted.

Children in Derbyshire were responsible for more than 50 thefts and nearly 60 physical assaults.

Leicestershire police recorded eight arson attacks, five burglaries and two indecent assaults by boys and girls aged nine and under.

In Lincolnshire three cases of arson, an indecent assault and a car theft were committed by children.

Officers in Lincolnshire said they were working with families and schools to try to stop children offending.

Leicestershire's youth offending team said it was using toys in a scheme with eight-year-olds who have committed crimes.

The figures were obtained by the BBC's social affairs correspondent for the East Midlands, Jeremy Ball.



Police are working with schools to try to stop children offending

OFFENCES BY CHILDREN IN 2006

Derbyshire 97

Leicestershire 127

Lincolnshire 25

Nottinghamshire 95