

Net-Widening

Criminal Justice

How a reform meant to divert people out can pull more people in.

A documented pattern in diversion and monitoring schemes.

How it happens

A lighter option is used for new cases

Conditions attached where none existed

Breach creates a route back into court

Recording pulls informal cases in

Capacity that is created gets filled

How to test for it

Compare totals, not just the new disposal

Track who would have got nothing before

Measure breach and recall volumes

Follow cohorts, not annual snapshots

Check whether custody actually fell

Educational reference. Net-widening is a recurring finding in evaluations of diversion, not an inevitability in every scheme.