

Business Plan

2022-2023

The Youth Justice Board
for England and Wales

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Who we are

The role of the YJB is set out in section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998². We have responsibility, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Justice for the administration of funding for the local authority core grant to deliver youth justice services.

Our vision

A Child First youth justice system that sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. This will prevent offending and create safer communities with fewer victims. We see a system where all services:

1

Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children

Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society

2

3

Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers

Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system

4

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/41>

Our mission

The Youth Justice Board is the only statutory body to have oversight of the entire youth justice system. We provide independent, evidence-based advice and leadership to drive improvements that increase children's positive outcomes and prevent offending.

Our statutory functions

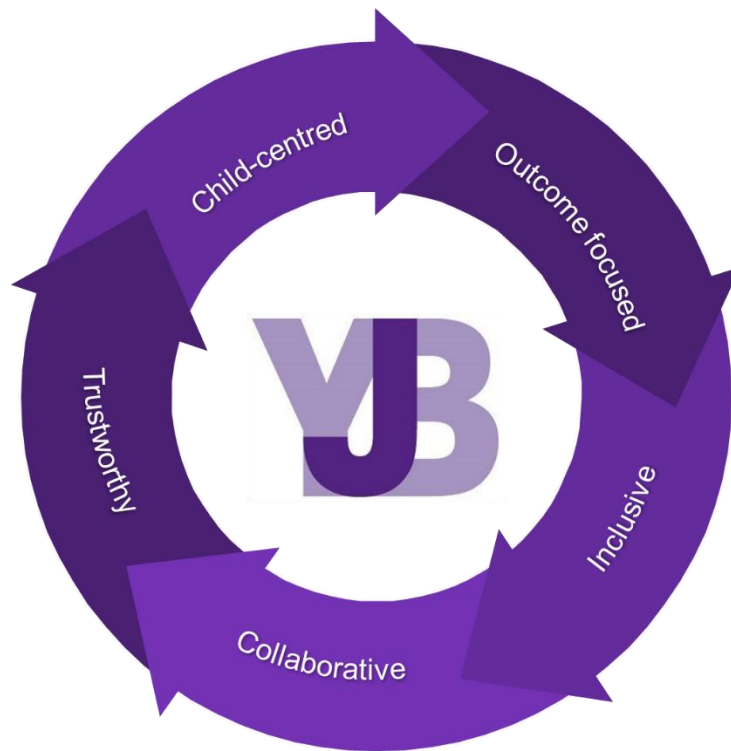
As an independent public body appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice, we have a statutory responsibility to oversee the whole of the youth justice system. We have a unique role providing evidence-based advice and guidance on the provision of youth justice services. The effectiveness of our advice is driven by our statutory functions to:

- monitor the youth justice system to understand how it is operating
- distribute grants to local services
- support the provision of IT services for youth justice services
- collate and publish information
- commission research to support practice development
- identify and share evidence-informed practice across the sector

As well as how we:

- promote the voice of the child, including taking advice from our youth advisory panel of children and young adults who have current or previous experience of the youth justice system
- use information and evidence to form an expert view of how to get the best outcomes for children

Our values



Our values are important to us, they reflect who we are as an organisation and inspire us to do our best for each other and for every child who needs us. They remind us that our common purpose is doing the best we can for children, their families and communities. We will review our values as an organisation to ensure they help us to deliver and help us to drive system improvement.

Child-centred

We champion the needs of children wherever they are in the youth justice system and ensure we give them a voice. We strongly believe that children can, and should be, given every opportunity to make positive changes.

Outcome focused

We provide leadership and expertise and promote effective practice across the youth justice workforce to maximise positive outcomes for children, their families and victims.

Inclusive

We strive to challenge discrimination and promote equality, and we work with others to try to eliminate bias in the youth justice system.

Collaborative

We actively encourage, facilitate and engage in partnership working to help meet the needs of children, their victims and their communities.

Trustworthy

We endeavour to act with integrity in everything we do.

Our strategic pillars



In line with our vision, we want children to be as successful as they possibly can be – this benefits not only them but the communities in which they live. We want them to have positive outcomes that include a stable home, that they are loved, educated, trained, safe and that their rights as outlined in the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)³ are met. We want to make sure that children are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerabilities and the challenges they face. In our strategic plan 2021-2024⁴ we set out three strategic pillars to support us to achieve this vision.



To be an **exemplary public sector organisation and employer**

Pillar 1



To effectively deliver our **unique statutory oversight function**

Pillar 2



To Drive **system improvement**

Pillar 3

³ [UNCRC summary-1_1.pdf \(unicef.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [YJB Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Pillar 1

As an exemplary public sector organisation and employer, we will build the YJB to be the most effective public sector organisation and employer it can be. This is essential to delivering our vision. Through transitioning out of the pandemic, and beyond, we will focus our efforts on building our organisational capability and resilience to ensure that our staff are best equipped to deliver our vision for children.

Pillar 2

Our statutory responsibility to oversee the operation of the youth justice system plays a huge part in our vision. To effectively deliver our unique statutory oversight function we will use the information we collect and share to report on the youth justice system's status. This has a vital role in making sure that children and the services they receive are on the right track and that when there are concerns, they are escalated as necessary. We are committed to enhancing this as needed to ensure that we always have a real-time understanding of the youth justice landscape. Our administration and distribution of grants to those who provide these services is therefore even more valuable. Ensuring that we look towards improvement and innovation, we will strengthen the way we conduct our oversight of the youth justice system.

Pillar 3

Our leadership and guidance, informed by our oversight, is fundamental to our strategy. The YJB's role in the youth justice landscape means that we play a pivotal role. We have committed to increasing this, so that we can provide sound and reliable leadership to the sector and strategic partners. We will as a result, be better placed to drive forward changes within the youth justice system, creating real improvements for children and enabling them to lead their best lives. We want to see a system that is informed by the most up-to-date, accessible evidence. This will be supported by a culture that promotes the participation of children.

Pathfinders



Sharing effective practice is one of our statutory functions. In 2019/20 we set up pathfinder projects to do just this. Pathfinders are evidence-based projects which are targeted at areas of strategic priority set by the Board. The underlying principles of pathfinders are that they should be evidence-based and sector-led. Funding is granted for recipients to develop innovative practice, which is sustainable, and to share the practice across the sector to aid system improvement.

Since the scheme began, we have launched 32 pathfinders

This year we will take some time to understand how best to target pathfinder funding to maximise the effective practice benefits in an efficient and cost-effective way. We have reviewed pathfinders ensuring lessons learned from previous pathfinders will evolve our approach.

Existing project delivery will continue but we will not be establishing any new pathfinders this year so we can shape how we deliver targeted funding for the 2023-24 financial year. This an opportunity for us to make pathfinders more strategically focused. We think there should be fewer pathfinders, and they should be larger scale and forward looking as a cohesive programme of work. We believe the pathfinder programme should measurably contribute to a continuum of change that takes the system forward from its current state to the end state set out by the YJB vision. This should be evidence and intelligence driven; drawing on sector knowledge and expertise as well as information harvested by system mapping and horizon scanning. There is an opportunity to develop a cohesive, and clear narrative of systemic change which will help others see how we will move forward toward our vision.

Systems mapping and stakeholder engagement



In 2021-22 we held large stakeholder engagement systems mapping events to develop a map of the current system and help us to understand where improvements can be made. Attendees considered what helps children in contact with the system to move on to positive, offence-free lives.

The outputs from the sessions were put into a systems map which gives us a baseline of the current state of the youth justice system from which to work from and to generate ideas for potential improvements. The map helps us make sense of the complexity of the youth justice system. It can help us to identify potential ways we could make lasting improvements. It identifies some key themes: education, victims, identity, workforce, police, courts, health, policy, social care, family and relationships.

Suggestions that came through from the workshops have been captured and will be shared to encourage people across the sector to make positive improvements as part of their business planning and delivery. Our focus in the next business year will be to consider what the map tells us about how we can realistically drive improvements in the 'here and now' and share what can be done in the longer term with policy colleagues and stakeholders. We will consider how these potentially improvements can be incorporated into our business plans and delivery.

Our stakeholder strategy in Wales will be developed and informed by the Welsh systems map.

We will share the map externally in Autumn 2022.

Custody, resettlement and transitions

Our strategic choice to focus more of our resource in early help and prevention means that we will need to change our approach and we will determine what this looks like as part of our new sense of purpose change programme. However, it remains that children in custody are some of the most vulnerable children in the system, often with complex needs. It is vital that we continue to work to ensure children do not ever reach custody and that those that do have their safety and wellbeing cared for and are supported to return to the community and go on to make positive contributions to society. We will complete commissioned research on pre-sentence reports and bail package reports aiming to better understand how written documents and information supplied to judicial decision makers influences their decisions. We will continue to work with the sector to deliver the existing pathfinder projects focussed on resettlement and accommodation.

We will change our relationship with the Youth Custody Service (YCS) and focus on strategic engagement that influences direction and to a role which is supportive, constructive and acts as a critical friend rather than a focus on operational monitoring within an already crowded space.

Our commitments 2022/2023



As we deliver our programme of change, we must also continue to focus on delivering our statutory functions, core work and looking after our people. By 2023/24 we aim to be ready as an organisation to fully deliver on our new sense of purpose, with strong governance and with all our staff having the skills they need to deliver the ambitious outcomes we will set ourselves. We want to be clear on what is delivered with the grant funding provided to local authorities and have a clear view on what our targeted funding will look like for 2023/24.

We will also be more assertive on the delivery of the national standards for children in the youth justice system and progress against self-assessments, we will further develop our role in performance improvement and will have this clearly defined by the end of this business year.

Throughout the pandemic we have supported the sector, often being looked to for leadership and advice, we will strengthen the standards we set for local youth justice services (YJS) through revised terms and conditions of grant which will include greater attention to delivery of the standards for children in justice and progress on how services are delivering against their youth justice plans. We have been clearer in our vision against what YJSs consider for their youth justice plan this year, however, we have continued to make a strong case to the Ministry of Justice for investment in YJSs and used our influence for more resources to support the sector.

In 2022/23 we will:

- Continue to provide advice to ministers about the system to support decision making
- Continue to work with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to clarify our distinct roles and how we most effectively work together to achieve the best for children
- Support the MoJ to deliver the Turnaround programme, an additional investment for services targeted at early intervention
- Design and deliver an increased focus on oversight of the system focused on the community
- Work with services on improvement activity, working with the sector to drive standards and performance
- Complete and publish all sections of the revised case management guidance

- Complete the analysis of standards for children in the youth justice system self-assessments and agree our future programme of work
- Continue engagement and relationships with partners across the system to support oversight and improvement
- At the direction of ministers, review the local authority youth justice grant formula and provide advice on a revised fairer funding formula
- Review the terms and conditions of grant for the local authority youth justice grant, to take effect in October 2022, which incorporate new Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and consider their role in improving outcomes and driving standards
- Continue to work alongside our Board to identify clear positions on a range of key youth justice matters, drawing upon all available evidence. These will be used to provide clear leadership and to influence partners in evidence-driven ways
- Complete commissioned research on pre-sentence reports and bail package reports aiming to better understand how written documents and information supplied to judicial decision makers influences their decisions
- Complete commissioned research on ethnic disproportionality and reoffending. We expect interim findings in 2022, with a full report by Autumn 2023
- Analyse the outcome evaluation of AssetPlus, develop an understanding of where we can make improvements to AssetPlus for assessment, and deliver improvements within the financial parameters in which we are working
- Continue to deliver our statutory requirement for the supply of IT to YJSs through the retender of the Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF) contract and a programme of YJAF enhancements and explore opportunities for developing Commercial revenue from YJAF Intellectual Property
- Continue to use data and evidence to inform where change needs to be driven
- Deliver the project which brings together all of our information and intelligence and use this to help shape this system and drive outcomes
- Develop and deliver a new internal accountability framework which will enhance our ways of working and help us to form a strong basis to move towards delivering our new sense of purpose.
- Continue to understand and work with partners on the issues around the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and Release Under Investigation (RUI) for children and understand the impact of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act on these areas

- Understand more about the issues around counter terrorism and lend our influence across government departments and partners to advocate for the needs of children
- Deliver our innovation and practice strategy
- Develop our relationship and collaborate with the six what works centres for children
- Deliver our stakeholder engagement in the best possible way to deliver our business and delivery plans, and to respond to the needs of the sector as they arise and take forward the next steps of our systems mapping activity
- Develop and deliver our internal and external communications strategy to support the delivery of our business and delivery plans
- Design and deliver a youth justice sector event
- Work together with other government departments, including the MoJ, to collaborate, influence and strengthen our relationships with them and Welsh Government. One way we will do this is to continue to enhance and develop the Youth Justice System Oversight Group (YJSOG) and the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel (WYJAP)
- In Wales, we will continue to support the Welsh Government's focus on prevention, pre-court diversion and understanding the issues on poverty
- Continue to lead on the workstreams allocated to us in the Welsh Blueprint, these are 'community' and 'resettlement and transitions' and support the delivery of the other workstreams primarily led by Welsh Government
'prevention', 'pre-court diversion', 'custody' and 'system oversight'.
- Continue to develop and deliver our people strategy to ensure our members of staff are supported to develop and motivated to ensure we continue to be an exemplary public sector organisation and meet the demands of our new sense of purpose. This includes the recruitment and induction of new Board Members
- Contribute as required to the COVID-19 inquiry

Our risks

We identify, monitor and mitigate risk through the YJB Risk Management Framework. Strategic risks are reviewed on a monthly basis by our Senior Leadership Group, with the Finance, Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee providing assurance that risk is being managed appropriately.

Our main risks for 2022-23 are shown below and each has a detailed control and mitigation plan in place:

Our Strategic risks	Context
Insufficient evidence base to provide sound advice and have effective oversight of the youth justice system	The YJB requires a sufficient evidence base to support the advice provided to ministers.
YJB technology systems not fit for purpose	Failure or weakness in YJB information technology (ICT) systems may impact negatively on the youth justice system (including cyber risks to online services)
Cyber risk to YJB online services	Failure or weakness in YJB information technology (ICT) systems may impact negatively on the youth justice system (including cyber risks to online services)
The YJB fails to have continuity of appropriately skilled senior leaders	A lack of succession planning and/or lack of leadership capability may negatively impact on the YJB's performance and retention of staff.
Decline in resource capacity, availability and wellbeing	The global COVID-19 pandemic, and associated social distancing measures, have impacted on the availability, capacity and wellbeing of our staff.
YJB's programme of change may not evidence benefits	If an effective benefits management culture is not established, the YJB may be unable to demonstrate return on investment from project activity.
The YJB may overcommit to change activity	The YJB is embarking on a significant period of change, with a finite resource. This must be carefully planned and managed to ensure effective delivery of the business plan.

Monitoring and evaluating our performance



Good corporate governance is fundamental to any effective and well-managed organisation

The YJB Board's corporate responsibility is to ensure that the YJB fulfils its statutory functions to provide strategic direction and ensure the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources. The Board is supported by three standing sub-committees, the Finance, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (FARAC), the Performance Committee, the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel and an ad hoc Remuneration and Personnel Committee.

In addition to the Board committee structure, the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) meets weekly with meetings focussed on strategic, people, finance and operational matters in rotation. Part of the function of the strategic SLG meeting is to review information which is to be presented to the Board and its sub-committees. Once a month the Assurance & Exceptions Delivery Board (AEDB) sits, at which projects, change activity and progress against objectives are reviewed.

We will continue to work with the MoJ as they develop key performance indicators that will measure the performance of youth justice partnerships. We also know we need to develop our internal tracking and will take some time to look at internal key performance indicators, benefits management, deliverables and tracking. We will review our YJB measures and develop five-year indicators that will help us to measure our performance.

Our people

**As of March
2022, we are an
organisation of
102 people**

This year we will refresh our People Strategy for 2022 onwards. We will continue to build an organisational culture that encourages diversity in its workforce and in its thinking; is inclusive and supportive and, critically, is delivery focused.

Our people are our most important asset and are vital to the successful delivery of our strategic and business plans.

We will continue to build an inclusive culture and environment in which we can attract and retain highly skilled, knowledgeable and motivated people. We aim to build a culture of outstanding public service, where everyone's efforts are focused on completing the activities in our delivery plan and can develop their skills and behaviours to reach their potential. We intend to become an organisation not only of high performers, but of the highest standards, where excellence is a by-product of the behaviours and values of our people.

Leadership, at all levels, will be founded on a decisive focus on delivery and consistency of character. Through strong leadership, clear communication and listening to people we will foster an outcome-focused, supportive and empowering environment, recognising the strengths and positive contributions of all. To enable transparent and open communication we will invest in the necessary forums and mechanisms to promote the active participation of everyone who works for the YJB.

We will refresh our people strategy and we will continue to:

- Recruit and retain a diverse workforce with the skills, knowledge and capability to deliver our statutory functions and organisational priorities
- Develop the skills, abilities and knowledge of our staff to enable the YJB to have maximum positive impact on the youth justice system and to engage our stakeholders in our vision
- Deliver an equality, diversity and inclusion action plan which encourages an open and inclusive culture where all feel welcome, empowered and can reach their potential
- Develop our leadership skills, at all levels of the organisation, to ensure change and resources are managed effectively and communications are clear and decisive

- Ensure our financial and governance processes and procedures are enablers in our aim to be an outstanding public sector organisation and employer
- Develop reward strategies which attract, motivate, engage and retain high performing, skilled and knowledgeable people
- Prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff through careful planning and consideration of the impact of our work and initiatives on our workforce
- Ensure we have manageable and actionable business continuity plans in place which enable us to respond to changing priorities and situations
- Engage our people to develop systems, processes and structures for improved intelligence and information collation and dissemination and collaborative working across the organisation