



Business Plan

2021-2022

The Youth Justice Board
for England and Wales

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Foreword



We begin the business year in extraordinary circumstances. As with all sectors, many of the challenges youth justice faced in the last year are still with us and as the recovery takes place, new challenges will emerge. Now, more than ever, we need to have a Child First approach to improve outcomes for all children. We will continue to influence and provide evidence-based advice to achieve this.

Children have faced significant disruption to their lives over the last year, their social interaction has been curtailed, some families have struggled financially or may have lost family members. We are yet to see some of the impacts of the pandemic on children. We must prioritise the needs of children and ensure that our work is child focussed. We will continue to work with our partners so that all children receive the best possible support and we reduce the risk of long-term harm.

This business plan outlines the essential activity the YJB aims to complete during 2021-22. Some is carried forward from last year, when our priority was to respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19. In these unprecedented times, we must remain flexible and respond to needs as they emerge, reviewing our plan as the year progresses.

Foreword (Continued)

We publish this plan on the back of our recently published three-year strategic plan¹. Some of our aims are ambitious and long-term, but we want to push forward our work and progress. We have identified three strategic pillars, to help us achieve our vision which are underpinned by the Child First guiding principle:

Be an exemplary public sector organisation and employer

Effectively deliver our unique statutory oversight function

Drive system improvement

Everything we do is focussed around better outcomes for children. We will deliver this through the following statutory functions and strategic priorities:

- Continue to take forward our over-arching guiding principle of Child First and our long term aim of a Child First youth justice system
- Invest in our staff to encourage excellent behaviours and outstanding leadership
- Develop a resilient organisation
- Use our resources effectively, minimise bureaucracy and enable innovation
- Strengthen and enhance our oversight of the youth justice system
- Effectively distribute grants to improve outcomes for children and their communities
- Promote a holistic approach to address challenges facing children in contact with the youth justice system
- Drive system improvements that see children as children
- Maximise opportunities for improvements for children
- Promote sector-led practice development and strengthen ways to disseminate what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond

¹ Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024 available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-justice-board-for-england-and-wales-strategic-plan-2021-24>

Foreword (Continued)

- Prevent harm caused by exploitation
- Guide the fair treatment of children and reduce over-representation
- Work to influence reduced numbers of children in custody, improve the experience for children in custody and improve resettlement outcomes


A necessary theme this year will also be COVID-19 recovery – both to support the sector, and our future YJB operating model.

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The YJB is being reviewed this year as part of the Triennial Review programme. All NDPBs must be reviewed every three years and we will work with MoJ as the review is undertaken.

We are committed to an ambitious delivery plan, but we also recognise the need to be agile and respond to change. Many children in the system already face complex challenges, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have a responsibility to provide the necessary support so that these children may flourish and grow and move away from offending. We want to make sure that children are treated as children across all aspects of the system.

I would like to thank all YJB staff for their ongoing commitment, determination and hard work. During a time in which we have each had our own personal challenges we have delivered a huge amount and the passion for delivering for children has shone through.

On a closing note, this will be the last time I introduce the YJB business plan as I will be retiring at the end of April. I would like to use this opportunity to recognise the exceptional work which all those working with children in and at risk of coming into the criminal justice system are doing daily. This work safeguards and supports some of the most vulnerable of children in our society. It has been a pleasure to have worked with you. I am proud of what we have collectively achieved. Keep up the amazing work.



Colin Allars
Chief Executive

Resource

Our activity in 2021-2022 is adjusted to the money and people we have available. We will manage this resource flexibly so that we can respond to demands arising during the course of the year whilst delivering our core work.

People

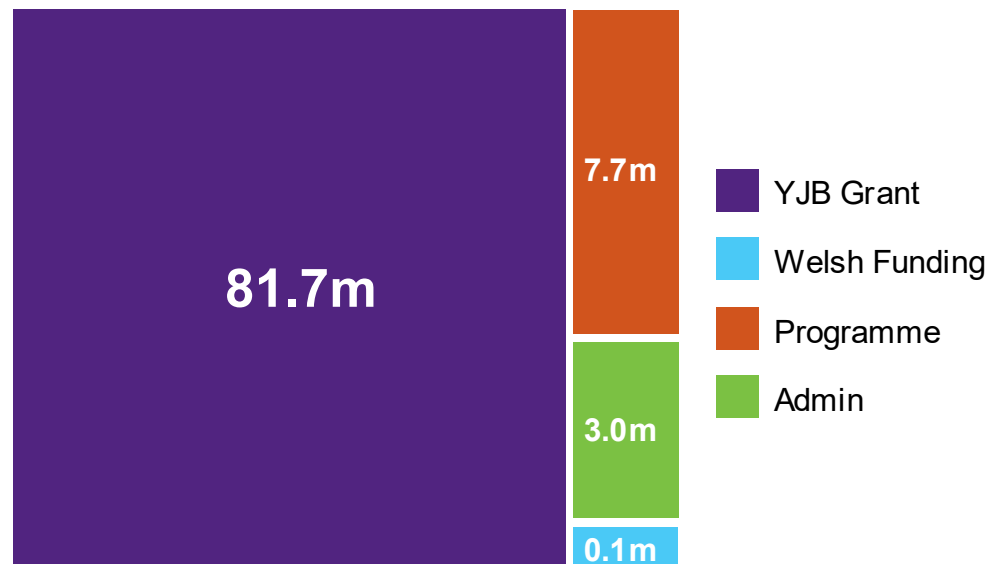
Our business plan will be delivered by our people who are flexible, knowledgeable, skilled and ready to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Where needed, we will support these people to move across the organisation, so that changing or critical business needs are met.

We are a small, but effective, organisation of 99 Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

Finance

We receive our funding from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The MoJ is responsible for setting our budget and formulating the overall justice policy framework within which we operate.

Most of the YJB's spend is directed towards the delivery of frontline youth justice services. This is through a good practice grant to local authorities. The remainder is used to deliver our internal functions and work to support the system to meet its aims.



Our vision: A Child First youth justice system

Our vision is of a youth justice 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
2. 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
3. Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers
4. 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

In this vision we include some small but important amendments. These are to recognise explicitly the structural barriers that children face and the responsibility that we, as adults, have towards them. These were introduced in our Strategic Plan 2021-24.

Whilst ambitious, this vision is grounded in firm evidence. The youth justice system has had many successes over the years. Most notably there is the reductions in children entering the system and the numbers of children in custody. However, if we want to make further progress then system changes are necessary. This change cannot be delivered by us, or the youth justice system, alone. However, we will use our influence with others to help bring about the transformation needed. The benefits of achieving this vision are great, not just for children but for all of us. If children are enabled to reach their potential the benefit for society is obvious. This is not only through reductions in offending but through positive gain for all children. But this change will not happen overnight.

Our vision: A Child First youth justice system (Continued)

This approach is needed, perhaps now more than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges for many children. This includes an increase in poverty, exploitation and violence at home, missed education and a negative impact upon their mental health. These are all factors outside of a child's control, but which will inevitably increase the likelihood of them being drawn into the justice system. Society and government in England and Wales must take steps to prevent this happening. We have a responsibility towards children for doing so.

Child First is a journey for the YJB as much as it is for others across the sector. Evidence which has emerged over the years has challenged our previous thinking. Whilst we have embraced this in recent times, we know that we do not always get things right. We are still learning and building our understanding of the evidence and what this might mean for policy and practice. We are not alone on this journey and we are grateful to those to who have offered their mutual support.

We realise that the change we want will be years in the making. Meanwhile, we are committed to exploring with others how the evidence base might be applied within the existing youth justice system. Working with practitioners, policy makers and academics alike in doing so.

We know that we will not be able to complete this work in the coming business planning year, no matter how strong our desire. Work beginning this year will, without doubt, extend into subsequent years. This is a mark of our commitment.

In the coming year we will:

1. Continue to embed Child First across the full span of our work from oversight to effective practice to advice to ministers. We will continue to support our staff in their individual and combined learning
2. Continue to apply theory to practice and look at what the evidence suggests appropriate system reform might look like. We will work in collaboration with sector leaders to test and challenge our thinking and to inform our advice to decision makers

Our vision: A Child First youth justice system (Continued)

3. Ensure clear and consistent messaging to the sector. We recognise that what we say should reflect the latest evidence and where it doesn't, we aim to resolve this. We will begin to review publications, guidance and documents to ensure alignment and manage our current messaging
4. Continue to engage and influence key stakeholders and decision makers in how best to prevent children offending and entering the youth justice system. Work done outside of the formal youth justice system to safeguard and ensure inclusion of children in decision making is vital and should be recognised as such
5. Work with both English and Welsh government to support the development of policy and practice that treats children as children
6. Ensure the voices of children and young adults with lived experience are heard and influence policy and practice development
7. Develop an understanding of what work is undertaken around prevention and diversion through the Prevention and Diversion project jointly commissioned by National Probation Service (NPS), YJB and Associate of YOT managers (AYM); alongside developing an evidence-base that incorporates learning from a wide range of research in this area

2021-2022 Activity

Be an exemplary public sector organisation and employer

Through clear leadership, we will use our resources efficiently and innovatively to operate as an exemplary public sector organisation and employer. We will ensure that as an organisation we live our values, to be:

- child-centred
- outcome focussed
- inclusive
- collaborative
- trustworthy

We will display these values in all that we do. We will act with integrity, challenge inequality and bias in the system, encourage system led change, enable innovation and champion the needs of children.

To invest in our staff to encourage excellent behaviours and outstanding leadership, we will:

1. Define the skills and behaviours needed to deliver our strategic and business plans and focus on developing our people to meet and exceed these standards. We will produce an overall budgeted YJB development plan
2. Celebrate the diversity of our workforce, promote constructive open dialogue and an understanding of all areas of equality and diversity throughout the organisation
3. Offer a suite of development initiatives, prioritising leadership and management development at all levels
4. Develop and deliver an open and transparent pay and reward policy which meets Treasury Guidance for public sector bodies and promotes fair reward for all staff
5. Continue to embed a coaching culture

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

To develop a resilient organisation, we will:

1. Develop a new way of operating which builds on the lessons learned from our Covid-19 response and helps us achieve our business and strategic plans in the most effective and engaging way
2. Revise our people strategy for the next 3 -5 years to align with our strategic plan and reflect political, economic, environmental, social, technological, organisational and legal changes and create a culture of innovation

To use our resources effectively, remove bureaucracy and enable innovation, we will:

1. Consolidate sector practice outputs through the publication of our annual reports and accounts
2. Continue to provide, enhance and embed technological solutions that support the YJB and the youth justice system in delivering operations in a Child First way and provide value for money
3. Develop and deliver communications and stakeholder plans which support the delivery of all planned activity
4. Continue to streamline our business processes and remove unnecessary bureaucracy
5. Continue to embed our risk management and assurance, audits and benefits management approaches
6. We will be transparent about our financial controls, and take a value for money approach, and continue to publish details in our annual reports and accounts

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

7. Develop accurate and meaningful management information. This will enable us to efficiently and effectively meet statutory requirements. It will also support how we deploy staff so that we can flexibly respond to demands
8. Continue to make sure that we operate within our legal framework as a public sector employer and where possible we seek out and mirror best practice
9. Develop and implement systems and processes which encourage:
 - collaborative working
 - knowledge management
 - support for the needs of the business
 - engagement of staff including supporting the Chair and Board to effectively deliver their duties and make our processes
10. Refresh and implement our Welsh Language Scheme

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

Effectively deliver our unique statutory oversight function

Our unique statutory oversight function enables our effective monitoring of the operation of the youth justice system.

To strengthen and enhance our oversight of the youth justice system, we will:

1. Continue to develop the evidence base and further understand the youth justice landscape
2. Wherever practical respond to the needs of our youth justice partners and the public
3. Provide evidence-based advice to ministers and policy colleagues in England and Wales
4. Continue to work with partners and other government departments in England and Wales to support recovery from COVID-19
5. Continue to develop strategic relationships with other government departments in England and Wales, voluntary sector organisations and partners in key policy areas for children such as education, health and family and relationships

To effectively distribute grants to improve outcomes for children and their communities, we will:

1. Administer core grant to local authorities supporting the delivery of youth justice services to ensure children's needs are met and ensuring best use of public money
2. Continue to support the development of promising and innovative practice through distributing targeted funding

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

Drive system improvement

The leadership and guidance we provide to our partners drives system improvement for children and achieves better outcomes.

To drive system improvements that see children as children, we will:

1. Continue to develop and share the evidence base to support the youth justice system, ensure this evidence is accessible to all and publish accessible annual statistics
2. Enhance the technological solutions to improve analytical capabilities of the YJB and its youth justice partners
3. Support the youth justice sector to carry out effective research and evaluations
4. Commission or conduct research to further our understanding of the youth justice landscape
5. Publish and share revised case management guidance
6. Ensure that services are addressing any gaps identified in their national standards self-assessments in their youth justice plans
7. Share findings from national standards audits and use this information to advise the Secretary of State for Justice
8. Further develop and deliver our improvement offer across services (community and secure) where the outcomes achieved for children are of concern

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

To promote a holistic approach to address challenges facing children in contact with the youth justice system, we will:

1. Develop the Youth Justice System Oversight Group (YJSOG) to work collaboratively with other government departments and partners across England and Wales towards departmental alignment and shared outcomes
2. Jointly convene with the Welsh government and the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel to provide a holistic overview of youth justice. We will work collaboratively with partners to maximise opportunities for system improvement
3. Work in partnership with the Welsh government, Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and other partners to implement the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales
4. Publish statistics and the results of commissioned research that meet the needs of the public and are in accordance with official guidance
5. Implement and embed participation strategy and work with children to identify solutions to the things they identify as issues
6. Review and develop our official positions on a range of important policy areas
7. Work with policy colleagues and other government departments to inform the Spending Review and champion the needs of children

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

To promote sector-led practice development and strengthen ways to disseminate what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond, we will:

1. As part of our Innovation and Practice strategy we will review our pathfinder model
2. Continue to deliver our existing pathfinder projects to facilitate sector-led sharing of innovative practice supporting our strategic objectives which include diversion, over represented children, preventing harm from exploitation and custody, resettlement and transitions
3. Work with the sector-led Workforce Development Council to implement the Workforce Development Strategy, 2021-23
4. Continue to make learning and evidence easily accessible through the Youth Justice Resource Hub
5. Promote collaboration on practice and innovation through facilitating Developing Practice fora in England and Hwb Doeth in Wales
6. Implement and embed our Innovation and Practice Strategy
7. Work with the Association of YOT Managers (AYM) and the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership (YJSIP) to transition the Sector Improvement Programme to the sector
8. Organise and host virtual youth justice events (YJB Live) and organise a spring 2022 Youth Justice Convention
9. Continue to support the Department for Education Partners in Practice pilot and use the learning and evidence to inform on-going AssetPlus development
10. Continue to work with case management system providers, youth offending teams (YOTs), youth custody service (YCS) and secure staff to improve and evolve AssetPlus
11. Develop and launch a Child First effective practice module to support workforce development
12. Continue to deliver and evaluate the Enhanced Case Management model

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

To maximise opportunities for improvements for children, we will continue to work on our on-going identified strategic objectives: preventing harm caused by exploitation, reducing over-representation and custody, resettlement and transitions. There are a number of areas which may have a particularly adverse impact on children and their life chances. This is where we continue to focus our activity.

Responding to the harm caused by the exploitation of children remains an important focus for us. Harm is caused, not only for the children who are exploited, but for the community and victims. Children who are vulnerable can become drawn into criminal activity. We will continue to understand the underlying reasons behind this and how we can support our partners to address children's needs.

To prevent harm caused by exploitation, we will:

1. Review our guidance on how to manage extremism
2. Respond to increasing concerns around extremism and radicalisation including increases in online exploitation following COVID-19 measures
3. Support other government departments and wider partners to consider how to prevent harm caused by exploitation using the most up to date evidence
4. Engage and influence our partners, stakeholders and other government departments responses to children's needs in response to exploitation, provide evidence-based advice and identify where we can strengthen our collaboration with these partners

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

We know there are groups that are over represented in the youth justice system and this remains a concern for the YJB. That is why we need to continue to work with partners to understand and respond to the challenging issues faced by children who are over represented in the system.

To influence the youth justice system to treat children fairly and reduce over-representation, we will:

1. Continue to build strategic relationships and influence the youth justice sector, and wider partners including other government departments in England and Wales, to collect and analyse data to understand the causes of over representation and to improve the life chances for children in over-represented groups
2. Work with and advise partners on issues of over-representation for children
3. Publish the 'exploring racial disparity' resource (annual)
4. Continue to develop and share disproportionality toolkits for over-represented children
5. Work with the Workforce Development Council to deliver in England the Youth Justice Apprenticeship and the Positive Action Programme. This will offer additional support to individuals from ethnic minority groups, those that have experience of the system and care leavers
6. Work with the Workforce Development Council and the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership (YJSIP) to develop a middle-manager positive action programme for under-represented groups. This will enhance their opportunities to progress to senior leadership
7. Use our convening powers, working with the Magistrates Association, to support the sector to develop and implement a disproportionality protocol

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

The secure estate remains a priority. It continues to accommodate those children with the most complex and challenging needs and whose behaviour has the potential to have the greatest effect on their communities. Custody has a huge impact on children's lives and leads to poorer outcomes for those children. To see a reduction in the numbers of children in custody we need to understand the factors that lead to children being placed in the secure estate, including those on remand and how community alternatives may be better utilised. For those children where custody remains the most appropriate option, we will work with others to improve their experience and resettle them into the community. This must be done in a way that gives them every chance of a positive future and support not to reoffend which also safeguards communities.

To reduce the numbers of children in custody we will:

1. Conduct quality improvement work and analysis of pre-sentence reports data and judicial discretion
2. Contribute and respond to the MoJ's remand review

To improve the experience for children in custody we will:

1. Support the government to move away from young offender institutions (YOIs) and build an evidence base about what works
2. Work with partners to support the opening of the first secure school
3. Support and challenge the YCS to ensure the safety and well-being of children in secure establishments including the reviews of pain inducing techniques and separation
4. Work with the YCS to evaluate and support improvements in the secure estate and continue to improve provision for children in secure establishments
5. Implement and embed a model of oversight for the secure estate
6. Work with partners to understand the vulnerabilities of children in the secure estate and ensure this that is at the forefront of plans for COVID-19 recovery and beyond

2021-2022 Activity

(Continued)

To improve resettlement and transition outcomes for children we will:

1. Support the YCS casework review
2. Continue to work with Youth Custody Service, other government departments, external stakeholders and partners – for example, local authorities, YOTs and Directors of Children's Services - in the community to improve resettlement outcomes for children leaving the secure estate