



The role of the Youth Justice Service Police Officer

December 2023



Contents

Forewords	3
Introduction	5
Do YJSs need to have a police officer?	5
Where to locate the YJS police officer	6
The tasks the YJS police officer should undertake	6
The role of the YJS police officer in prevention	7
The role of the YJS police officer in diversion	7
The role of the YJS police officer with Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions	10
The role of the YJS police officer with children on court orders	10
The role of the YJS police officer in sharing information with the YJS	11
The role of the YJS police officer with victims of crime	13
When the YJS police officer should make use of their warranted powers	13
How the YJS police officer should be managed	14
The role of the YJS police officer regarding children in police custody	14
How the police and YJS should work in partnership	15
The role of the YJS police officer with regards to inspections	15



Forewords

As the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) Lead for the Children and Young Persons Portfolio, I welcome this revised Youth Justice Service (YJS)¹ Police Officer role guidance provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB).



The youth justice landscape has evolved significantly since the first multi-agency youth offending teams were established. Child-centred policing continues to develop and, along with the Child First approach championed within youth justice, is informing how we treat, listen and respond to children at every stage of the criminal justice process.

The emphasis on working in partnership has become ever more important. I recently had the privilege to visit an outstanding YJS within my own force area. The abiding impression I took away was of a committed, multi-skilled team working together to provide excellent support to our children. It was clear the police role is integral to the team and many functions are interdependent.

This refreshed guidance is intended to assist police forces and YJSs by setting out core functions and providing clarity, whilst allowing the flexibility to suit local needs in the broad range of tasks it covers. I hope it proves useful in assisting this vital work.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Roper".

Chief Constable Catherine Roper

NPCC Children and Young Persons Lead

¹ The statutory definition of a local youth justice service is contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In statute these are known as youth offending teams and generally within policing, abbreviated to YOT. As services have evolved, they have become known by different names and for the purposes of this guidance we use the term youth justice service (YJS).

It is encouraging to look back at the previous version of this guidance, which was published in 2014, to see how the youth justice system has evolved. The evidence we now hold and are driven by has transformed practice and will continue to do so. Whether you call it Child First or child-centred, the evidence and direction is the same.



We know that we will achieve more by ensuring children are treated as children, meaningfully engaged and supported, diverted from the justice system wherever possible and not unnecessarily criminalised. We are united in our ambition to make a child-centred system a reality.

Those of us working in youth justice have the challenge and responsibility of supporting some of the most vulnerable children in our communities. Getting it right for these children can mean the difference between a life of crime and going into adulthood happy, healthy, safe and surrounded by opportunity.

The role of the youth justice police officer remains absolutely critical to the success of a youth justice partnership. Wider than this, the importance of the partnership between the police and youth justice at all levels cannot be overstated. Strong police involvement at both a strategic and operational level is a commonality consistently shared by the strongest performing YJSs.

We are further united in tackling the challenges ahead and know we must work effectively together, whether that is to reduce disproportionality or to tackle the criminal exploitation of children.

This handbook provides you with updated guidance which is underpinned by legislation. It aims to support police officers and wider youth justice colleagues to have a shared understanding of role of youth justice police officers and are able to harness it in full.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Fraser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Keith Fraser

Chair of the Youth Justice Board

Introduction

This guidance is written to support the shared understanding of the role of the police officer within the youth justice service (YJS)². This document supersedes 2014's "The role of the YOT Police Officer" from The Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC). This revised guidance will consider:

- Child First research and changes in legislation
- developments in prevention and diversion approaches
- the resulting change in composition of children's caseloads in the justice system.

It is recognised that policing and the context in which policing is delivered within the justice system for children, has changed considerably since the previous guidance was written. The Child Centred Policing principles of trustworthiness, fairness, respect and voice, which are supported by procedural justice theory have added to the evidence around how children should be viewed within the justice system [Child Centred Policing Best Practice Framework](#). The number of children entering the system have reduced considerably since the previous guidance was written, however those that remain often have multiple and complex needs and there remains an over-representation of children from ethnic minorities who may have a lack of trust in the police and the criminal justice system. Nationally, as overall numbers of children in the justice system have declined, violence has also increased as a percentage.

The statutory definition of a local youth justice service is contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In statute these are known as youth offending teams, however, as services have evolved, they have also become known as youth justice services (YJS) reflecting the shift towards a Child First justice system.

Do YJSs need to have a police officer?

All YJSs must have a police officer and the role should be protected as a dedicated resource for the YJS as detailed in the [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#). The act places a duty on every chief officer of police to co-operate with the local authority(ies) within their area in the discharge of its duty to establish a YJS. Section 39(5) of the Act also specifies that a YJS shall include at least one police officer.

The YJS police officer possesses unique skills and warranted powers that must be utilised to best effect within the YJS to prevent offending, reoffending and supporting children within or on the edge of the justice system. As such, it is vital that the secondee to the YJS police officer role is a serving police officer who can undertake tasks set out in this document. The YJS police officer is an important role and dedicated officers should be

² The statutory definition of a local youth justice service is contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In statute these are known as youth offending teams and generally within policing, abbreviated to YOT. As services have evolved, they have become known by different names and for the purposes of this guidance we use the term youth justice service (YJS).

assigned to the YJS. However, it is acknowledged that in addition to the YJS police officer, police staff can provide a valuable support to the delivery of the YJS locally.

The National Police Lead for Children and Young People and the YJB recognise that, in terms of operational delivery, it is for the Chief Constable and local youth justice partnership through its YJS management board to determine the size, scope and deployment of staff to the YJS. They are best placed to deliver the best possible services to their communities and have the greatest knowledge of local needs. This guidance does not seek to remove such autonomy, as it is vital that local agencies are able to manage their own services in the way they consider most appropriate. However, the YJS police officer is a vital role and the identification and deployment of suitably skilled personnel should be considered a priority.

Where to locate the YJS police officer

It is expected that YJS officers should be physically based within the YJS to which they are assigned and be provided with access to the police computer systems on the YJS premises with appropriate security measures in place. However, it is important they maintain effective operational relationships within their force. This co-location will better facilitate integration, learning and support the effective sharing of information and practice between the YJS police officer and YJS staff. Co-location will also allow the YJS police officer to engage with the children who may attend the YJS building. However, it is acknowledged that the pandemic may have impacted the way in which the YJS works and that despite these changes it will be important to maintain relationships with YJS staff where / if office-based working had reduced. Some children have negative experiences of the police and the YJS police officer can play an important role in building trust and rapport with children who may be reticent to contact the police.

The tasks the YJS police officer should undertake

The role of the YJS police officer is multi-faceted, it is therefore essential that the YJS make the best use of the officer's skills within the multi-agency team. YJS police officers are not case managers as there will be other staff within the YJS who fulfil this role.

The YJS should utilise the YJS police officer role to support case managers and the children they work with. Examples of the tasks the YJS police officer could contribute to broadly fall into the following areas;

- intelligence and information sharing (e.g. around serious youth violence, exploitation, children already engaged with the YJS who may have come to police attention etc.)
- out-of-court work (including prevention and diversion)
- statutory court orders
- victim information
- partnership working.

In some areas the police force will cover several local authority areas and YJSs, in these cases it is important that the links detailed in the guidance are applied to all YJSs in the area. It is vital that the police can take a strategic view to the management of links with the different YJSs.

The role of the YJS police officer in prevention

The YJS police officer can have a significant role in both preventative and diversionary activities co-ordinated by the YJS. Prevention is support and intervention with children (and their parents/carers) who may be displaying behaviours which may indicate underlying needs or vulnerability. In practice this involves a tiered approach of early and targeted prevention. The aim being to address unmet needs, safeguard, promote positive outcomes and stop children entering the formal youth justice system.

The role of the YJS police officer in preventing children entering the formal justice system will often vary based on individual areas, resource allocation and strategic priorities. It is important that unmet needs are firstly identified through effective assessment, and secondly that these needs are sufficiently met. Through this work YJSs will continue to contribute to protecting the public by reducing offending and creating fewer victims. It is important that prevention work is focused on identifying and addressing unmet needs for children, taking a welfare-based approach which has been evidenced to be effective in reducing offending³. Examples of tasks the YJS police officer may undertake could include helping to create a more positive relationship with the police, supporting wider engagement between the police and communities, giving information/advice to children/families etc. The YJS police officer also has a role in sharing information on whether children and their family have been known to the police in any capacity.

In the longer term, effective prevention will work to reduce the number of children who enter the justice system by providing effective interventions to reduce offending. It is this investment that will lead to fewer adult offenders. Further information about the delivery of prevention work is included in the [case management guidance](#).

The role of the YJS police officer in diversion

Diversion is where children with a linked offence receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record and therefore avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system and associated stigmatisation. This may involve the YJS delivering support/intervention that may or may not be voluntary and/or signposting children (and parent/carers) into relevant services. All support should be proportionate, aimed at addressing unmet needs and supporting prosocial life choices.

Diversion is an area of evolving practice across the country. Local areas have developed their own diversion schemes, approaches between the police, YJSs and other partners aimed at supporting children who have committed offences to avoid a criminal record and escalation into the formal justice system. This involves multi-agency decision-making

³ Studies show that Child First preventative programmes can reduce offending by children (Case et al, 2012; Case and Haines, 2015³) and maximise children's strengths, capacities and potentialities (assets) (Butts et al, 2010; Catalano et al, 2002³).

processes to support the consideration of referrals and determine the outcome for the child, this may or may not include intervention to support desistance⁴, depending on the assessed level of need and due consideration to proportionality. The current [standards for children in the youth justice system](#) make it clear that local areas are required to have both a diversion offer and an effective system for joint decision making. The YJS police officer has a role in contributing relevant information to support assessment against this standard if required. There are a range of diversion resources on the [Youth Justice Resource Hub](#) which include joint protocols setting out locally agreed practice arrangements.

When dealing with offences committed by children the police have a range of outcomes available that avoid criminalising them, as per sections 135-138 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012. These include but are not limited to (there may be variation in terminology used by the YJS and police to describe these outcomes):

Community Resolution (out-of-court disposal)

Community resolution is a diversionary police outcome that can only be used when children have accepted responsibility for an offence. It is an outcome commonly delivered, but not limited to, using restorative approaches.

No Further Action

No Further Action is an outcome used when the police decide not to pursue an offence for various reasons. This may be because there is not enough evidence, or it is not in the public interest. Voluntary support may be offered to children to address identified needs.

No Further Action – Outcome 22

No Further Action – Outcome 22 is a diversionary police outcome that can be used when diversionary, educational or intervention activity has taken place, and it is not in the public interest to take any further action. An admission of guilt or acceptance of responsibility is not required for this outcome to be used.

No Further Action – Outcome 21

No Further Action – Outcome 21 is a diversionary police outcome used when further investigation, that could provide sufficient evidence for charge, is not in the public interest. This includes dealing with sexting offences without criminalising children.

The Youth Gravity Matrix (2013) has been revised in 2023 and is now the [Child Gravity Matrix](#). This provides guidance on decision making for children who commit offences.

The [out-of-court disposals section of the case management guidance](#) also provides a detailed explanation of joint decision-making processes which are a key element in effective out of court decision making.

The YJS police officer has an important role in supporting this diversion by completing research for all children who are made the subject of a referral to the YJS. The research is conducted by interrogating police systems to identify any history of involvement in the justice system or relevant intelligence that can both support assessment and decision making. This should also include information about the family and consider factors such as

⁴ Desistance essentially means 'ceasing and refraining from offending or other antisocial behaviour among those for whom offending had become a pattern of behaviour' (McNeil et al, 2012 and Weaver et al. 2008)

parental offending and domestic abuse. There are a range of different factors and traumatic events in a child's history that can contribute to offending behaviour and identifying these can help with both decision making and identification of the right support. It is important that a holistic approach to understanding offending behaviour is taken as children can have widely different levels of maturity, understanding and decision-making skills. These factors can be detrimentally impacted by adverse experiences in their lives.

The YJS police officer for where the child resides is responsible for this research but may require liaison with other police forces where children have lived in different areas. In the case of children looked-after, the YJS police officer must ensure that contact with the local authority where the child resides (and home area if different) is completed to obtain as full a history as possible. This task may be completed by other staff within the YJS. This is to ensure that intelligence that is not known by the police area where the child currently resides is included and informs decision making. This should be completed in line with the requirements for the sharing of information.

Further information can be found in the [national protocol for the transfer of case responsibility](#).

Once the YJS police officer has completed the checks the information should be used to support the disposal decision making process. In all cases, in line with local DSAs (Data Sharing Agreement), where intelligence is passed on it should be accurately recorded and stored enabling others to access this information if required. This will also be required for auditing purposes.

As detailed in the [case management guidance](#), all local areas are expected to have provision for diversion as well as formal out-of-court disposals (Youth Caution and Youth Conditional Caution). The development of these will require strategic engagement and partnership between the YJS and the police to develop local systems that adhere to the Child First principles⁵ and safeguarding principles. Research indicates that this approach will be effective in reducing the number of offences committed by children and as a result there will be fewer victims. It is therefore suggested that the police engage with the YJS at a strategic level to ensure that consistent processes are in place to support diversion systems. This should include agreeing local processes and guidance for diversion. Progress can be monitored and reviewed at the YJS management board where the police are statutory members.

The police should also contribute to reviewing/quality assuring the decision making by the professionals involved. Local areas should establish an out of court scrutiny panel where senior members of the contributing organisations can review a selection of decisions to ensure that they are consistent and both legally and ethically sound. These should include

⁵ Case and Browning (2021) synthesis of the evidence highlights the most influential research papers & policy developments, underpinning Child First.⁵ The paper refers to pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention as being one of the four tenants of Child First and vital tools to prevent offending and improve outcomes for children. The four tenants are:

- 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.

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.

a proportionate number of cases involving children. This should be a learning process where constructive feedback is used to improve decision making.

The role of the YJS police officer with Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions

The YJS police officer will often have a significant role with formal out-of-court disposals, Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions. While the use of formal out-of-court disposals is decreasing in favour of diversionary interventions there remain occasions when these are the appropriate disposal for a child. As detailed in the case management guidance, it is considered good practice that while the police can issue Youth Cautions unilaterally, that these decisions are made jointly through out of court decision making processes (e.g. Triage, Bureau, Joint Diversionary Panel etc.) and the YJS police officer should support shared decision making. The [Youth Justice Resource Hub](#) includes resources on joint decision making.

The YJS police officer may deliver Youth Cautions or Youth Conditional Cautions to children or this may be through a different locally agreed mechanism within the police. In some areas Sergeants or Inspectors issue these, in other areas it is one of the roles for the YJS police officer. Whether the officer should be in full uniform when issuing the caution is for police supervisors to determine in line with local force policy. There will be times when the use of full uniform is not appropriate and could be a barrier to engagement. Children should not be expected to miss education to have Youth Cautions or Youth Conditional Cautions issued. Barriers to participation such as transport should also be considered when considering how these are issued to children. Further information is available in the out of court section of the case management guidance and for current information on fingerprints, photographs and DNA samples please refer to [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code D](#).

The role of the YJS police officer with children on court orders

There are several different court orders that can be issued to children. Some such as the Referral Order and Youth Rehabilitation Order are community orders whereas others are custodial, further details of the types of orders can be found in the case management guidance.

The YJS police officer plays an important role with children subject to a court order. While the practice details vary, the common principle of working as an effective part of the multi-disciplinary team in the YJS to address the needs of these children should be paramount. An example of this could be YJS police officer being able to support a child who has been through the court system for the first time by offering information and guidance to the child. It is common for children to have questions and the YJS police officer role can be helpful in answering or helping the child to find their own answers. In addition, this contact will help to build relationships between the child and the police.

The YJS police officer could also play a role at the point bail or remand is being considered for a child in establishing whether a proposed bail address is suitable.

The YJS police officer will also need to contribute to the management of complex children where there is an increased likelihood of reoffending. This will often take the form of attending meetings such as risk management meetings or liaison with Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or Integrated Offender Management (IOM). The YJS police officer will also provide additional value in these cases by communicating information between the YJS and local police to support public protection but also keep these children safe. In some cases the YJS police officer may work directly with these children alongside YJS staff which could include home visits or seeing them in other community venues.

The YJS police officer should support the YJS in approving the suitability of phone contacts for the child in custody where consent has been obtained for checks to take place. It is important for children in custody to be able to maintain supportive relationships, contact is vital to this. The YJS police officer should ensure a suggested contact is not a victim or potential victim and that they have not been involved in offending behaviour with the child in custody. Where the suggested contact lives in an area outside of the home area the YJS police officer should facilitate contact with the relevant police area to ensure that the contact is safe for the child.

Resettlement refers to children leaving custodial sentences and returning home or to another residential setting. These children are often some of the most complex to work with and the YJS police officer plays a vital role in the wider team of support in order to prevent reoffending. The YJS police officer should act as a supporting mechanism for the YJS who will carry out the supervision of the child. The YJS police officer should work with the YJS to ensure there is a planned transition for constructive resettlement and contribute to licence conditions, ensuring these are realistic and enforceable and ensuring no child is given conditions they cannot reasonably adhere to. The YJS police officer should inform the relevant police area of the address the child will be living at upon release and of licence conditions in a timely manner and prior to the child's release from custody as part of their planned resettlement. Depending on the resettlement plan and the team that will support the child in the community it might be helpful for the YJS police officer to be present on the first meeting post release. This initial meeting should be focused around providing the support and coping mechanisms for the child to reintegrate back into the community. The YJS police officer is responsible for passing on any relevant information obtained during that initial meeting.

The YJS police officer should support the YJS in approving the suitability of phone contacts for the child in custody where consent has been given for these checks to take place by the subject of the checks. The YJS police officer should ensure a suggested contact is not a victim or potential victim and that they have not been involved in offending behaviour with the child in custody. Where the suggested contact lives in an area outside of the home area the YJS police officer should liaise with the relevant police area to ensure that the contact is safe for the child.

The role of the YJS police officer in sharing information with the YJS

The sharing of intelligence and information is a key component of the YJS police officer role and supports the other activities of the YJS. There is provision made under Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for the sharing of information for the purpose of preventing offending and community safety. This legislation provides the framework for the

sharing of information between the police and YJS as part of, or acting on behalf, of local councils. At all times it must be remembered that safeguarding overarches all information sharing within the YJS.

The YJS police officer will perform the key role as a link between the YJS and wider police intelligence. As such, YJS police officers should be vetted to a suitable level to ensure that they can access police and partner agencies computer systems, to allow for information and intelligence to be passed without delay.

Sometimes this will involve the YJS police officer researching information while other situations will require the YJS police officer acting as an interface between the YJS and other police officers. This link between the YJS and police is a vital area of work and should be supported and facilitated by the YJS police officer. This could include children of concern, hotspot areas, gang activity, serious violence or exploitation. The YJS police officer should act as the two-way conduit of intelligence sharing between the YJS and the local police, where this function is not being undertaken through other means. It is particularly important that the YJS police officer promotes a culture of intelligence sharing and is also focused on safeguarding issues, particularly in relation children connected to gangs or exploitation, along with any disparity issues. The YJS police officer may also engage with processes for sharing information on children where there are safeguarding concerns, such as children who go missing and/or who may be being exploited. The YJS police officer may also support risk assessments for home visits to be carried out by YJS staff or contribute to case formulations to support multi agency working with a child.

The YJS police officer should engage with processes for sharing information on children who have committed serious/violent offences and children who are subject to MAPPA. This is very important to the management of risk by the YJS (as an agency with a duty to co-operate) and the agencies responsible for children subject to MAPPA (police, probation and secure accommodation). It is also crucial in ensuring the YJS is aware of any intelligence that is relevant to the management of a particular case, in terms of safeguarding both the child and staff, as well as risk management processes.

In all cases, in line with local Data Sharing Agreements, where intelligence is passed on it should be accurately recorded and stored enabling others to access this information if required. This will also be required for auditing purposes. As a minimum, the following should be captured on the record produced:

- date of request
- who requested it
- what they requested
- what police systems were searched
- what information was supplied.

If, as a result of this intelligence gathering, if there is cause to believe that there are safeguarding concerns relating to the child or members of the child's household, local safeguarding processes should be followed and relevant referrals made. On occasions information will need to be gathered and shared promptly, examples include pre-sentence report requests or urgent safeguarding incidents and the YJS police officer should endeavour to accommodate these.

If the YJS require further information not related to the risk identified, the YJS police officer must receive this request from the YJS in writing. The YJS must provide a reason for any additional requests to ensure it is proportionate and necessary for the management of the case of that child. In exceptional cases, where the information is sought urgently, it can be provided, and the written request completed as soon as practicable. In cases where the information is about live investigations, children in custody, or serious offences the officer in the case must be contacted prior to any information being disclosed. In some cases, there will be a need to ensure that the sharing of information does not jeopardise an investigation or increase the risk to the child in custody.

The better the information provided to the YJS the more effectively they will be able to support and manage the children that they work with.

The role of the YJS police officer with victims of crime

There needs to be a joint approach to ensuring that all victims are included, and their needs met. Not all victims will want to be involved but attempts should be made to engage and explain the youth justice process and to gather their views which should be taken into account in decision making.

The YJS will need to be provided with victim's details by the police to enable them to meet their responsibilities under the Victims Code.

Victims should be contacted before outcomes decisions are made either or court or the local joint decision panel. They should also be contacted to inform them of the outcome. Local arrangements will vary as to how this is delivered between the YJS police officer and the YJS who may have dedicated victim workers.

Restorative justice is one approach that can be used to bring children who have offended and victims together. However, it is not suitable in every situation and the YJS police officer should consult with the case manager for the child for them to come to a joint decision as to the suitability. Restorative justice can take a variety of different forms from letters of apology, shuttle mediation through to a face-to-face restorative conference. Restorative justice should not take place if it is detrimental to either the child or victim. This could include re-traumatising a child or victim through having to talk through the offence again. Restorative justice should also not be used if it is formulaic and a process the child has to be encouraged through. Restorative justice works best when both parties genuinely wish to take part.

When the YJS police officer should make use of their warranted powers

It is accepted that the YJS environment needs to be one where the child feels safe to attend and where they will do so even when they are wanted for other matters. The YJS police officer should work with YJS management staff to arrange arrests of wanted children, ensuring that, the integrity of the YJS is maintained, and the welfare needs of children are met. This would include encouraging a child to surrender at a police station at a time where YJS staff will be readily on hand to support them. However, this does not and should not preclude the YJS police officer from making arrests, where necessary.

How the YJS police officer should be managed

The YJS police officer will continue to be employed by their home constabulary and have a police line manager. The YJS police officer should also have a dedicated YJS manager assigned to provide direction and oversight to their role. There should be regular communication between the police and YJS manager to ensure joint oversight of their work. There is a presumption that the YJS police officer will not be abstracted from their usual duties except in the most serious circumstances and for compulsory operational training.

It is important that this more strategic approach to the partnership between YJS and police is taken otherwise there is a risk the YJS police officer role will become solely administrative and diminish resilience / capacity in the system. It is therefore crucial that, wherever possible, processes are established to ensure regularly used information (e.g. arrests, custody) is obtained daily and that wider intelligence is shared to support the YJS to manage children in the community. Some police areas have established ICT solutions such as automatic daily emails to the YJS police officer with details of all the children in police custody. This approach can also be used for other information sharing with the YJS such as children who have been voluntarily interviewed or providing updated outcomes for offences. The information exchange between police forces and the YJS should be determined and monitored by the local partnership.

The role of the YJS police officer regarding children in police custody

It is important that at a strategic level police and the YJS work together to ensure information about children in police custody is available to the YJS. This might involve the YJS police officer directly or be a more automated ICT based process. Regardless, it is vital that this information is provided daily to the YJS, including children who have been in custody overnight, weekends and bank holidays. Should a child be in the care of a local authority it is important that robust processes are in place to ensure that the social worker (regardless of the home area) is notified.

The YJS and police should also have links with the local provider of liaison and diversion services for children. liaison and diversion services are commissioned across all of England and provide an early opportunity to screen children in police custody. This screening can support decision making by both the police and the YJS by providing information about the needs of the child.

All children in custody should have the same access to liaison and diversion screening regardless of their home area. Should a child from another area be in police custody, they should be offered liaison and diversion screening if this is during operational hours.

[The Child Centred Policing Best Practice Framework](#) highlights the need to gather data to monitor and have oversight of the use of police custody for children in recognition of the potential for detention to be a traumatic event for children.

How the police and YJS should work in partnership

At a strategic level it is important to build a strong trusting partnership between the police and the YJS as this will facilitate the aims of both organisations. This approach will support the YJS police officer in their role but also relationships between the police and YJS.

It is therefore essential that an effective partnership between the police and the YJS is established at both a strategic and operational level. This should be done through consistent senior representation at YJS management boards by the police. The relationship between the police and the YJS is one where both services are aiming for a shared objective of preventing offending and reoffending by children but have different skills and powers to achieve this. When this partnership works well the services both understand each other but also use their different skills and knowledge to complement each other in the best interests of the local community.

All statutory funding partners must be represented on the local YJS management board, i.e. the local authority (this should include children's social care and education), police, probation and health and should be of an appropriate level of seniority to make strategic decisions, and to prevent delays in committing both staffing and financial resources. The police representative should be the rank of Chief Inspector or above and ideally should be a member of the local senior leadership team and therefore provide the board with data on local police matters- such as exploitation, children released under investigation and with No Further Action, Stop and Search and disparity across these areas. It is essential for the officer to have sufficient seniority to challenge practice and have the authority to make decisions when required. Board members should be active in their attendance and participation. They should recognise the contribution their own agency makes to the YJS and advocate the work of the YJS in their own broader roles. The chair of the management board is appointed by the local authority chief executive following consultation with partners. Any of the partners may chair; including the police and, in some cases, an independent chair is appointed.

The role of the management board is explored in greater depth in the [youth justice service governance and leadership guidance](#).

The YJS police officer has a significant role in building the partnership between the police and other partners such as the YJS or children's services. Effective multi-agency working is crucial in both reducing offending behaviour but also in keeping children safe.

The role of the YJS police officer with regards to inspections

The governance of the YJS forms part of the HMI Probation inspections and full joint inspections often have HMI Constabulary involvement. It is therefore essential that all parties are represented at strategic meetings. It is recommended that police areas nominate a representative from their senior leadership team who is responsible for attending these meetings, have regular discussions with their YJS Head of Service with a focus on driving performance improvements locally within their police area.

In addition, there should be overview and scrutiny of police processes from a strategic level within the police, particularly as there may be several YJSs in the force area, in order

to promote equitable practice. This will bring together leads from across the force area to examine matters of good practice, performance, governance and strategy. There also needs to be consideration of the child-centred policing framework when making decisions with regard to children.