

# Youth Justice Plans

2023/24

May 2025



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# 1. Executive summary

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has a critical role in overseeing the justice system for children. Local areas set out their proposals and priorities in the form of a youth justice plan, and the YJB uses the rich information these plans provide to support our role in getting better outcomes for children.

This report sets out some of the information we gathered from the plans submitted for the year 2023/24, and how we have used this information. This supports us to take an evidence-based approach to system change and underscores our commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children, their families, victims, and communities. This builds on the successes over the last 10 years where we have seen reductions in first-time entrants, significant reductions in children in custody, and reductions in reoffending rates.



We have used the plans to identify 252 individual examples of practice. We know that services working with children day to day will often develop highly creative and effective ways to engage them and to address their needs. Thirty examples of this practice are included in this report, focusing on the YJB's priority areas of focus: serious violence, prevention and diversion, custody and resettlement, and restorative approaches and victims. Examples have been identified from across all of the local areas within Wales and England.

Information on what youth justice services have told us about their key risks, and how this has changed since the last year's plans, is vital for the YJB to advocate for frontline services, and to use our strategic influence with stakeholders and across government to improve outcomes for children. The information on how services' governance is delivered and the changes in this will also give us useful information to support services in what they deliver for children.

We are very grateful to everyone working in the justice system for children for your ongoing effort and dedication, especially in challenging times.

## 2. Introduction

Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to the provision of youth justice services in the local area. Completion of a youth justice plan with detail of services provided is also part of the [terms and conditions](#) for receipt of grant funding from the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

The YJB has published [guidance](#) which outlines how partnerships should produce their plans, what they should include, and how they should be structured.

This report sets out some collated information from the plans for 2024/25.

## 3. Use of information

The information provided in youth justice plans is used by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to inform our statutory duty to drive system change. We do this in a range of ways:

- practice examples identified from plans are followed up by YJB regional oversight teams to gather and share good practice.
- oversight teams give feedback on the plans to individual services, highlighting areas of strength and areas for development.
- oversight teams utilise the information as part of individual youth justice service performance oversight, including progress on the partnership's identified priorities from last year, and how far they have identified the right priorities for the next.
- timeliness of plan submission may be used as a form of soft intelligence on the operation of governance in local partnerships.
- analysis on strategic risk and governance is used to inform the YJB's strategic influence across government and stakeholders in justice services for children.
- information on governance may be used to identify trends in youth justice provision and build and inform the evidence base for research.

## 4. Process and resources

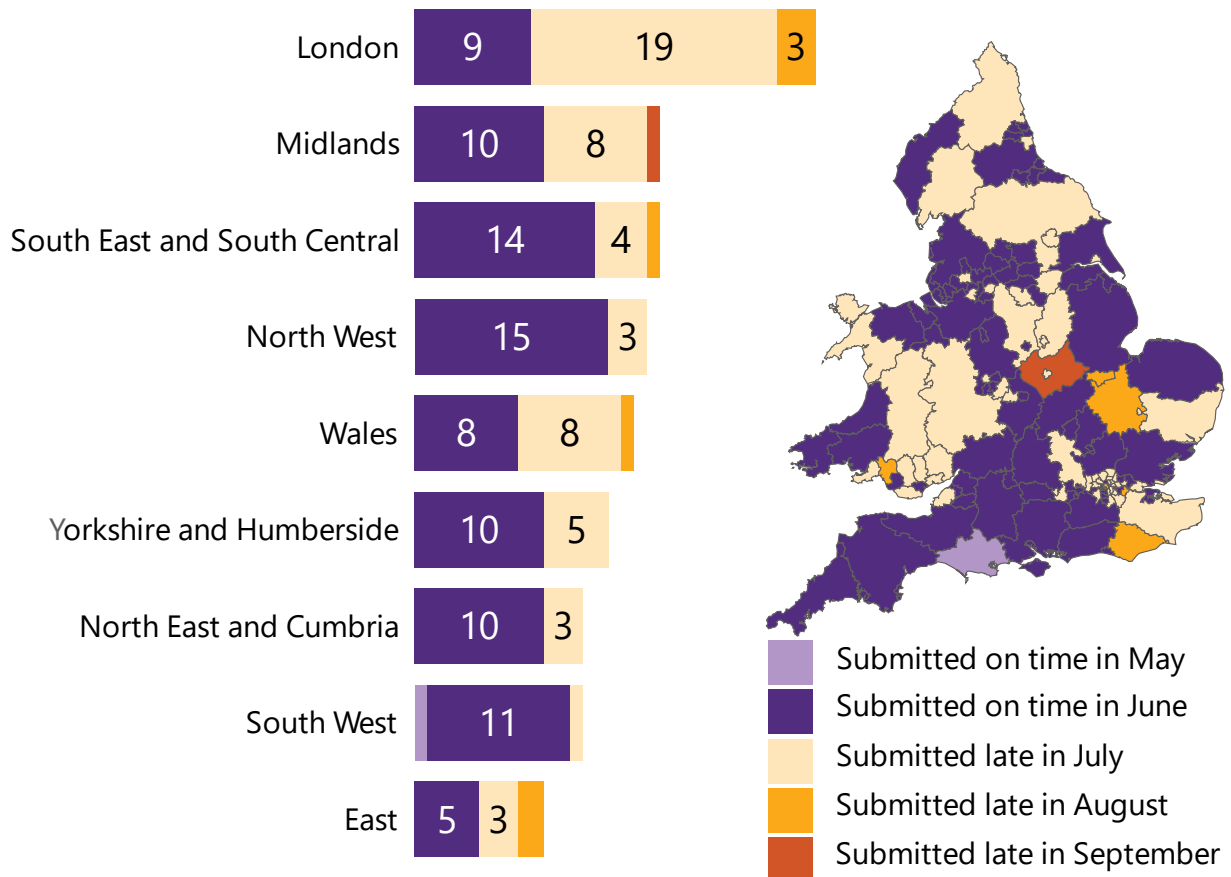
Local partnerships should send their completed plans by the deadline of 30 June every year. Plans must be signed off by the youth justice service management board and, in England only, also by the full council. Many services choose to produce a multi-year plan with annual updates; this is clearly cited within the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) guidance as an acceptable route.

Plans are then read by the Oversight Manager for each service, who gathers information for the purposes set out above onto a spreadsheet; and gives feedback to the partnership.

The spreadsheet is then used by the YJB's Statistics and Analysis team to produce graphics on collated data, disaggregated by geographical region. The YJB Standards and Improvement team create regional presentations which are shared at Heads of Service meetings, developing practice forums and similar local meetings. The spreadsheet has also been used this year by the YJB's Research team to prepare examples of practice.

## 5. Timeliness

**Chart 1: Timeliness of submission of 2023/24 youth justice plans by region.**



- In 2024/25, 68 Plans (44% of all plans) were submitted late, 45 (29%) without an agreed extension.
- 37 youth justice services had an agreed extension to July and a further 5 to August – a total of 27% of services requiring an agreed extension. Inspections and absences in the senior team were the most common reasons for agreeing an extension.
- 19 of those with an agreed extension then submitted the plan later than the agreed extension date – 16 of those with a July date and 3 of those with August. This represents 42% of those with an agreed extension.
- 26 partnerships submitted their plan late without requesting an extension. Of these, 20 were submitted within three days of 30 June, so lateness was marginal.

In the previous year, records indicate that 52 Plans (34%) were submitted late, 39 without an agreed extension. This looks like a deterioration in timeliness, but this is caveated by the fact that the process of requesting and recording extensions in the previous year was very new, and we are aware that many agreed extensions were not recorded.

Unfortunately, resource has not been available to examine whether the same partnerships have submitted late for more than one year consecutively – this information would be of use for oversight purposes, as repeat late submission without agreement may indicate a concern about governance arrangements.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) understands that planning is difficult when budgets have not been confirmed and that despite confirmation to plan on last year's grant allocation, delays in notification of grant mean that services are planning with high levels of ambiguity. However, late submission of youth justice plans, even at low levels, creates a delay in analysis of the data from the plans. This data is used to drive system change and inform the YJB's strategic influence with stakeholders and political decision makers, so timeliness is important to taking swift action to improve outcomes for children.



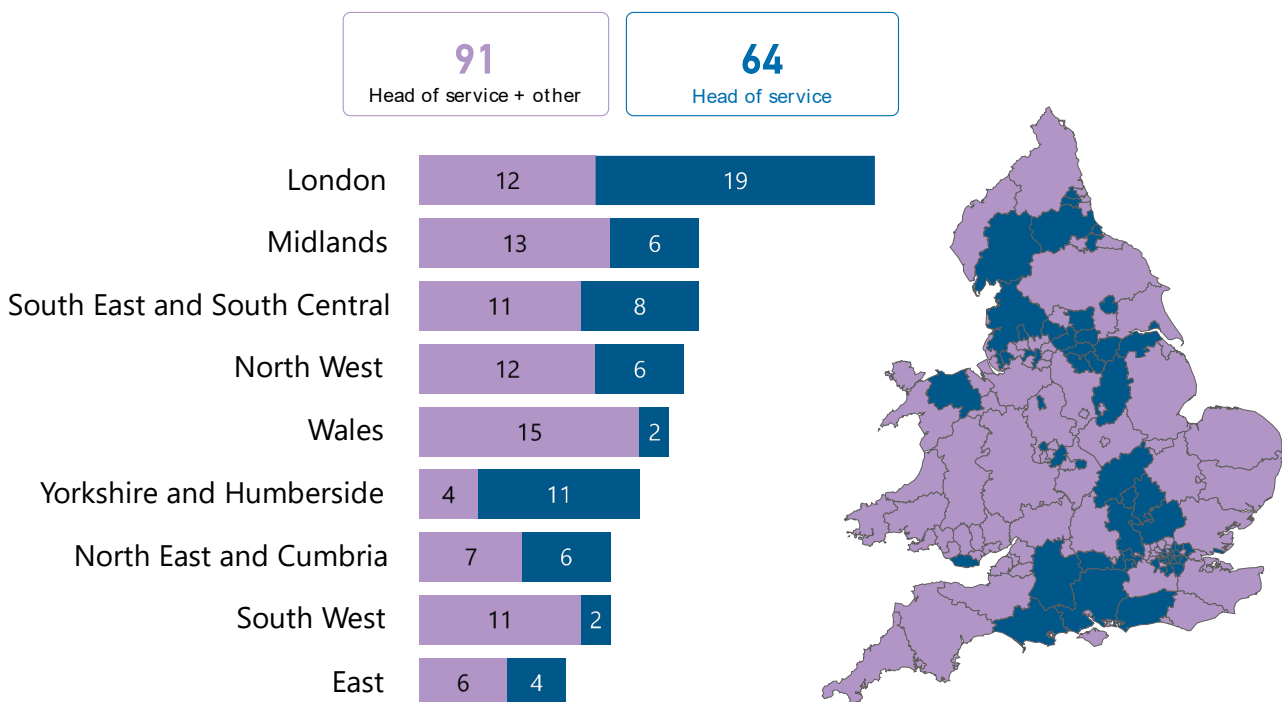
## 6. Governance

### Location of services within local authority

The information from 2024/25 shows that the majority of youth justice services (YJS) are now located within local authority children's services, with several more being in a department which covers children's services and other services (this group is usually small councils). This data indicates an increase in services being managed within children's services from the previous year. This supports our intelligence about a move to embed justice services more within wider services for children.

### Remit of Head of Service

**Chart 2: Responsibilities of Heads of Service in 2023/24 youth justice plans by region**



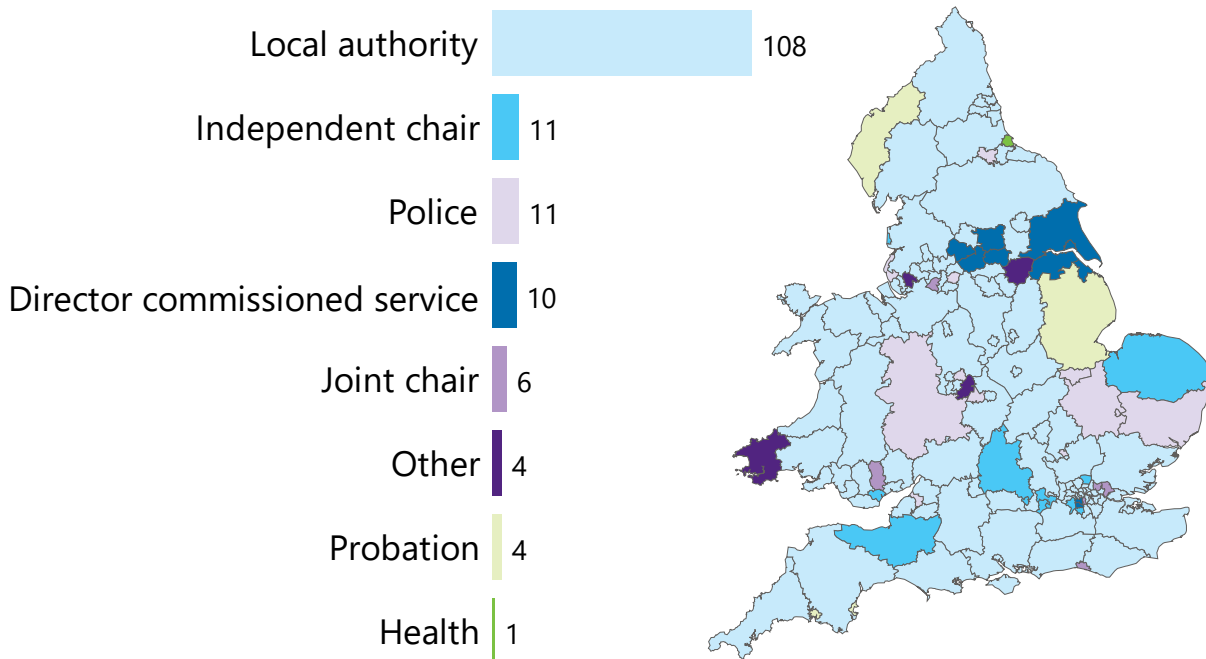
The latest information shows that nearly 60% of Heads of Service are now responsible for services in addition to justice services for children. Anecdotally this may include YJSs, commissioning, careers, virtual school or many other services.

However, there is no longer a clear role of 'Head of youth justice service' in many local authorities. Leaders may have titles such as 'Head of Integrated Youth Services' or 'Head of Children's Support Services', reflecting this change to a wider remit. The individual responsible for strategic oversight of justice for children may be titled 'Deputy Head of Youth Services' or 'Youth Justice Service Manager'; but be doing the role previously described as 'Head of youth justice service'.

The information in the graphic above is therefore caveated – whether the Oversight Manager completing the spreadsheet identified the remit of the Head of Service as wider than justice services for children or not will depend on who they regarded as fulfilling that role. It is difficult to identify any trends or draw conclusions from this information about system change, because of this divergence of titles.

## Organisation of Board Chair

**Chart 3: Board Chairs from 2023/24 youth justice plans by region**



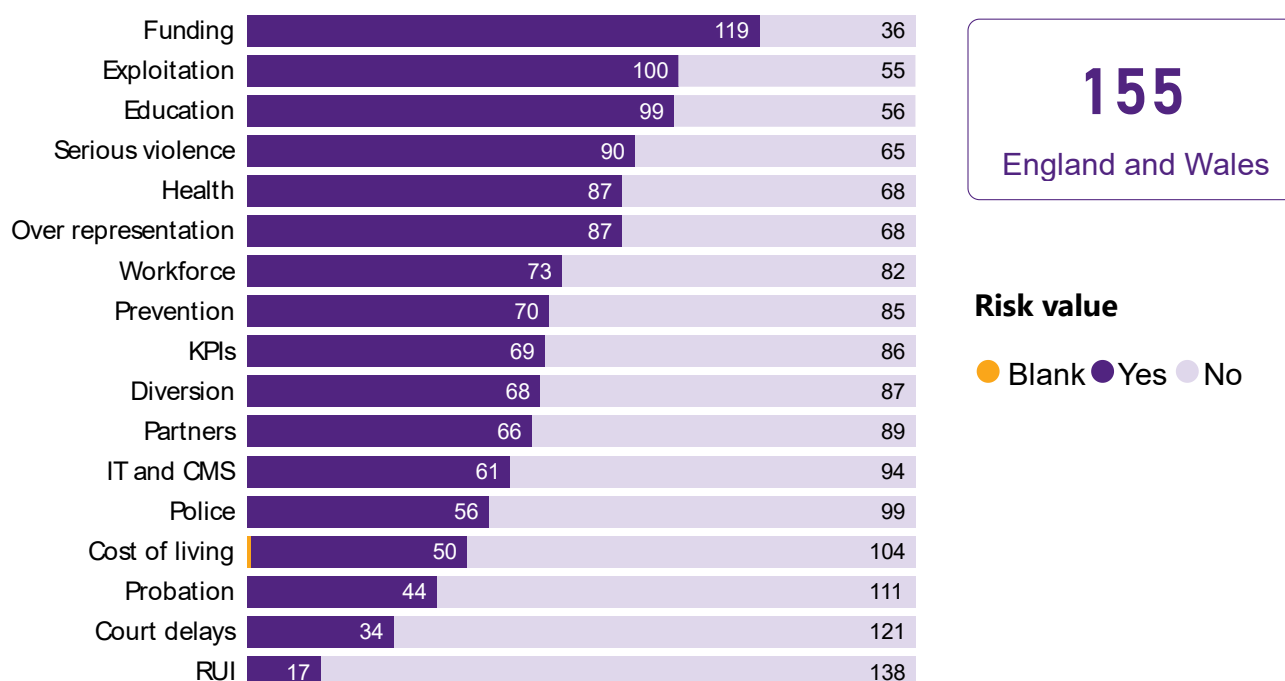
This information shows that whilst the majority of youth justice service management boards for local justice services for children are chaired from within the local authority (usually the Director of Children's Services with line management responsibility for the service), there is an increase in diversity of organisation of Chairs from previous years.

One influencing factor for this is the increase in independent Chairs of management boards, a category in itself this year. This is greater than the 11 indicated in the graphic, as the four listed as 'Other' are also independent Chairs.

Intelligence from our oversight indicates that whilst previously independent Chairs tended to be commissioned when a service was in crisis, for example after a very poor inspection outcome, many partnerships without such performance concerns are beginning to consider independent chairing. Anecdotal information shows that, as well as the longstanding independent chairs who are retired youth justice specialists, there are independent chairs from education, the judiciary and even serving managers of justice services from another area. This is an interesting move which might bear further observation.

# 7. Risks

**Chart 4: Risks identified in 2023/24 youth justice plans**



As last year, funding remained the highest concern cited by partnerships in their plans, with 119 services citing it as a core risk, an increase from 90. Cost of living however reduced slightly as a risk with 50 mentioning it in comparison to 58 the previous year. Two services left this field blank, which we interpret as a gap in reporting. A further 5 listed funding amongst 'Other' risks – this usually associated with the removal of the Turnaround specific diversion funding stream. We can conclude overall that financial risks to delivery have remained the most pressing risk, and that this has increased.

Partnerships were also a key theme, with education mentioned by 99 partnerships, Health by 87, Police 56 and Probation 44. All of these are a significant increase on the previous year. A further 66 cited Partners in general as a risk to delivery. This supports the intelligence coming through oversight, that lack of seconded staff, difficulties in engaging strategic partners at management board level and sometimes differing views on how justice services should be delivered, are key concerns for youth justice services. It is worth noting that youth justice plans are partnership documents designed to be made public, so are unlikely to be the most candid means for surfacing challenges in partnership working, especially with specific partners. Local intelligence is therefore needed to examine in detail what the actual risks are and how they can be mitigated.

Exploitation was the second most common risk, cited in 100 plans, with serious violence cited a further 90 times. This compares to 60 mentions of exploitation and 72 of serious violence the previous year. The fact that more services are identifying exploitation may indicate a greater awareness of this as a factor in children's involvement in the justice system and the link to violence.

Over representation was also cited by 87 partnerships, an increase from 60 mentions last year, reflecting the Youth Justice Board's decision to retain this as an area of focus for our work in the next year.

In the 'Other' category this year, the most commonly noted risks were those associated with custody, remand and accommodation.

## 8. Practice

This section of the report provides some information on examples of practice given by youth justice services (YJSs) in their youth justice plans. In the 2023/24 plan cycle we identified 252 examples of practice to be followed up. It is not possible to include all of these in this report, but oversight teams will follow these up individually, and where relevant find ways to share them with other services to improve outcomes for children.

It should be noted that this section gives examples of specific pieces of practice in isolation, describing particular approaches which may be used with some children known to YJSs. Children in the justice system usually have a range of complex and inter-linked needs, so there is no one intervention or set of approaches which will be suitable for all. An individual child may need a combination of many of the examples below, or something completely different, tailored to their individual needs.

These have been gathered according to four themes, which reflect particular areas of focus for the Youth Justice Board. These themes are:

- Serious violence
- Prevention and diversion
- Custody and resettlement
- Restorative approaches and victims

It should be noted that these examples refer only to practice extracted from this year's youth justice plans, which may not have been independently assessed or evaluated as being effective. They are included to illustrate the types of practice being identified.

### Findings: serious violence

#### **Sports, recreation and community activities**

Youth justice plans have captured the use of recreational activities to tackle serious violence.

The use of sporting activities was a common theme throughout the plans, with YJSs implementing various sport interventions to support children involved with or at risk of serious violence. Although based on a relatively narrow breadth of evidence, The Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit 2024 suggests that sports programmes are an intervention that can potentially have a high impact on crime and violence.

## Case study example: Essex (East)

Essex Youth Justice Service is currently working in partnership with the Active Essex Foundation to establish the Sport and Life Skills Project which intends to embed sport and physical activity into the lives of the children with whom they work. Sport activities have been paired with mentoring, life skills, volunteering and training opportunities. This is with the overall aim of reducing and deterring exploitation and involvement with serious violence.

Other recreational activities beyond sports have been used by YJSs to tackle serious violence. This provides more variety for children in contact with the justice system and caters to other interests where sport may not be an attraction. Other examples of activities include art and music, which intend to increase opportunities for children, promote relationship building and provide additional support where it is required.

## Case study example: Barking and Dagenham (London)

A collaborative project has been launched with a local music provider to allow children to express themselves through the medium of music. The joint project with Wigmore Hall has been completed by several children who have been given the opportunity to explore music of different genres, experience writing and music production and learn to express themselves through music. In one case, the project led to further opportunities for a child with a bigger production company once the intervention concluded.

### Consequential thinking

Various YJSs have encouraged consequential thinking by highlighting the real-life consequences result from serious violence.

YJSs in various regions commissioned Street Doctors to deliver programmes.

## Case study example: Flintshire (Wales)

Flintshire Youth Justice Service commissioned Street Doctors to deliver programmes in a local Flintshire school. Street Doctors offer bespoke programmes to combat serious violence through training provided by medical professionals (doctors, nurses and health professionals) and provide lifesaving knowledge in the event of a knife related injury or assault. The programme further emphasises the medical and psychological consequences that unfold in the aftermath of serious violence and help children to understand these.

## Technology-facilitated interventions

The role of technology and social media in facilitating serious violence has been flagged in recent years. This has become more urgent since the onset of COVID-19, with anecdotal evidence ([Crest Advisory Serious Violence report 2022](#)) that gangs are increasingly reliant on the use of encrypted social media platforms to groom, exploit and coerce children into criminality.

YJSs state they have used technologically facilitated interventions in innovative ways to manage serious violence, rather than enable it.

Practice identified in the plans provides a range of ways that services have used technology in this way.

### Case study example: Trafford (North West)

Trafford Youth Justice Service has engaged with a creative arts company called 'Round Midnight' and commissioned two virtual reality decision-making programmes on knife crime and gang involvement. This initiative uses virtual reality headsets to encourage children to think differently about their involvement with knives and gangs in a modern and engaging way. Trafford considers that this practice has improved their reach to children, including those in residential homes. Salford Youth Justice Service has adopted a similar approach to enhance their serious violence focussed interventions

The use of interactive applications has also been captured in some youth justice plans, on themes of exploitation and increasing child safety.

Integrated webchat options have been used to support outreach with professionals should a child require access to immediate support. Information videos have also been used to address the issue of child criminal and sexual exploitation, with the intention of promoting engaging discussions.

### Case study example: Havering (London)

In partnership with Student Voice, Havering Youth Justice Service has implemented the Student Voice Application with over 20 schools across the borough signing up, including those in areas with high levels of serious violence. This application is a child-centred tool that addresses student concerns and promotes safe student communities in a measurable way. The data gathered from the platform will inform the YJS of areas requiring intervention and improvement and allow them to safeguard their pupils.

## Therapeutic interventions and mentoring

Therapeutic approaches, specifically cognitive behavioural therapy has been identified as evidence-based practice ([Youth Endowment Fund toolkit CBT 2024](#)) which may have an impact on violent crime.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is an example of practice that has been utilised by youth justice practitioners to provide children with a space to understand and explore their thought patterns and learn to manage them.

### Case study example: Brent (London)

As part of the Your Choice programme, youth justice practitioners have been provided with training to deliver cognitive behavioural therapy techniques to children to improve positive outcomes. The use of cognitive behavioural therapy as part of a 12-week programme for children aged 11 to 17 has given children the opportunity to explore and engage with their thoughts, behaviours and emotions, as well the opportunity to confront complex challenges in their lives.

Mentoring is another example of local practice that has been utilised by some YJSs to address the issue of serious violence.

Although evidence suggests that mentoring has a moderate impact on reducing violent crime ([Youth Endowment Fund toolkit Mentoring 2024](#)), some YJSs have implemented mentoring for children.

### Case study example: Flintshire (Wales)

Being enrolled in Action for Children's Sidestep Programme, Flintshire Youth Justice Service provides children who are vulnerable to exploitation and serious organised crime with tailored, individual 1:1 support and mentoring opportunities. The programme seeks to reduce vulnerabilities and secure positive outcomes for children (e.g., education, training, employment). Alternative funding streams are being explored to continue this programme for children as current funding is due to conclude in December 2024.

## Findings: prevention and diversion

### Consideration of safety and well-being

A range of multi-agency panels have been developed and evidenced in youth justice plans to support prevention work.

Examples include (but are not limited to) Pre-Multi-Agency Child Exploitation panels, Multi-Agency Child Exploitation panels, Risk Outside the Home Panels, Prevention, Intervention,



Education and Diversion Panels, Mentally Vulnerable Offenders Panels and Risk Management Panels.

Agencies who attend these panels vary, with consideration of children's safety and well-being supported by representatives from youth providers, health, education, police, community safety, children's social care, YJSs, and Family and Adolescent Support services in the examples provided.

Specialist prevention and diversionary teams have further been developed to support children's safety and well-being and make referrals to appropriate intervention and support.

Such teams reach out to children who have been identified as needing support for reasons such as engaging in anti-social and low-level criminal behaviour, being based in areas with high levels of deprivation, or displaying vulnerability to criminal and/or sexual exploitation.

## **Case study example: Sefton (North West)**

As part of their prevention offer, Sefton Youth Justice Service have a wraparound exploitation service known as MySpace aimed at children who present concerns of significant harm through sexual and criminal exploitation. This team provides an intensive intervention service to children providing education on exploitation and grooming, diversion into positive activities and opportunities, disruption of exploitative relationships and child exploitation locations and hotspots and support of prosecutions for any perpetrators of child exploitation.

## **Partnership working**

Partnership arrangements were evident in several youth justice plans. Partnership working with the police was the most commonly referenced.

By working closely with the police, YJSs implement preventative interventions that respond to issues in the community, whilst providing children with resources to make more positive choices around their behaviour.

## Case study example: Doncaster (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Effective partnership working has supported Doncaster Youth Justice Service delivering prevention work. Its youth crime prevention service, EPIC (Encouraging Potential Inspiring Change) delivers outreach-based work in communities, in collaboration with South Yorkshire Police and the local authority. This enabled a youth hub to be set up in the city centre to respond to anti-social behaviour. Partnership working has facilitated the creation of a safe space for children to visit where they can access advice, information, and guidance from a range of partners.

Partnership working has enabled protocols and joint diversionary interventions.

Working together ensures that regional practice is consistent, seeks input from appropriate agencies, and maintains practice for children to divert them away from offending behaviours.

## Case study example: Knowsley (North West)

Knowsley Youth Justice Service operates in accordance with national guidance for diversion and has worked in partnership with the other Merseyside boroughs to implement the Joint Merseyside Protocol for the Operation and Delivery of Out of Court Disposals. The aim of this is to ensure practice throughout Merseyside is standardised, to define and promote best practice across Merseyside, to promote joint decision making between the police and youth justice service, to give staff a clear framework within which to work, and to define the responsibilities and accountability for all.

### Clear referral pathways

The development of clear referral pathways to support prevention work was evident in some youth justice plans.

The most common referral pathway was the use of a 'Front Door' for children's social care and social work.

Referrals through the Front Door for services like Family Functional Therapy and substance misuse providers allow for children to be screened against specific criteria, and if they are eligible, receive needs-led preventative interventions. There were also other clear referral pathways referenced in the youth justice plans, with some services encompassing a range of referral pathways for children to receive holistic interventions.

## Case study example: Milton Keynes (South East and South Central)

Examples of referral pathways used at Milton Keynes Youth Justice Service include Children's Social Care including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children and Families Practices (Early Help), Missing and Exploitation Panel, Contextual Safeguarding Board, Contextual Safeguarding Group chaired by Thames Valley Police, Primary and Secondary schools and further education settings, Alternative Education Panel (a multi-agency panel where children who may be moved to alternative education are discussed), PREVENT Channel Panel (a multi-agency panel where children vulnerable to radicalisation and / or extremism are discussed).

In some cases, clear referral pathways for preventative and diversionary work were provided by specific workers linked to the Turnaround Programme who support access to services as a core part of their role.

## Case study example: Blackburn with Darwen (North West)

Blackburn with Darwen Youth Justice Service has developed the role of a Turnaround Programme Coordinator to provide clear and robust referral pathways. With Turnaround Programme concluding, the structure that has been facilitated by through this role will be maintained, without the restrictions imposed by the Turnaround inclusion and exclusion criteria. This is to ensure that children are provided with an ongoing, accessible service for prevention and diversionary intervention to take place. Specifically, clear referral pathways from the police, social care and community safety teams will remain in place to facilitate routes for children who receive an out-of-court disposal.

### Pro-social identity building

Prescribing children with a 'pro-offending' identity can have an influence on self-identity ([Youth Endowment Fund 2023](#)) and promote exclusionary processes that hinder access to beneficial opportunities, thus increasing the likelihood of criminal behaviour ([Centre for Justice and Innovation: Diversion 2019](#)). Practice identified in youth justice plans on prevention therefore focuses on building a pro-social identity.

Pro-social identities are promoted through tailored interventions that provide children with the opportunity to develop life skills, engage with others, and seek guidance from positive role models.

This is with the ultimate goal of preventing offending behaviour.

## Case study example: Blackpool (North West)

Developed the Blackpool Youth Provision Partnership as part of their prevention offer. This provides youth work and safe spaces for children that facilitate exploration, encourage decision-making, boost confidence, foster interpersonal skills, and promote critical thinking. The aim is for children involved to make more informed choices, change their activities and improve positive outcomes.

Where children are given the opportunity to engage in diversionary interventions to avoid contact with the criminal justice system, practice examples ensure that these activities also endeavour to increase children's opportunities, by building their skills and pro-social behaviours that steer them away from reoffending. Some youth justice services have developed bespoke diversionary programmes, like Barnet's Residential Programme, to facilitate this process.

## Case study example: Barnet (London)

Barnet Youth Justice Service developed a residential programme for children aged 10 to 18 years who are subject to an order, out-of-court disposal or may come into contact with the criminal justice system. It was developed to provide children with positive activities away from home in activity-based environments where they have the opportunity to play, learn and grow like other children. The programme provides a unique opportunity for caseworkers and multi-agency partners to spend quality time building relationships with children and support them to develop skills, prosocial behaviours, and confidence. The programme involves learning sessions, including gang exit and weapons awareness work and counts towards the completion of their order.

### Schools-based intervention

Delivering preventative interventions at schools has been identified in youth justice plans as a way to educate children and encourage them to exhibit prosocial behaviours and make positive life decisions.

School assemblies and classrooms have been utilised as spaces to increase reach and allow children to engage with preventative resources and workshops, as interventions can be delivered in a group setting. Topics of focus included anti-social behaviour, knife crime, making positive contributions to the community, substance misuse, exploitation, county lines, serious violence, bullying, and weapons awareness. These workshops and assemblies have been delivered to children at both primary schools and secondary schools, encompassing children of a range of ages.

## Case study example: Wrexham (Wales)

Wrexham Youth Justice Service delivers school workshops and assemblies to all schools on issues such as anti-social behaviour, knife crime, and violence reduction. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 30 workshops had been delivered to over 1,600 children. School practitioners and children have provided positive feedback and constructive feedback has been used to shape delivery.

For children who have been identified as having safety or well-being concerns, the school setting has also been used to deliver more targeted one to one preventative interventions. These individualised interventions are targeted at children who are displaying behaviours at school that could result in them being excluded, with YJSs recognising that exclusion can be a key contributing factor to engagement with offending behaviours.

## Case study example: Milton Keynes (South East and South Central)

As part of their prevention offer, Milton Keynes Youth Justice Service has a project known as Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusions that works with primary and secondary schools. The project enables educational providers to refer children who may potentially be excluded to the project. Work is undertaken in order to safeguard and reduce vulnerabilities associated with becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

### Deferred Prosecution

The use of Deferred Prosecution, specifically Outcome 22, has been highlighted in many youth justice plans as diverting children from unnecessary criminalisation. Children who have committed minor offences (the most referenced in the plans being drug offences), are given the opportunity to avoid prosecution on the proviso that they agree to specific interventions aimed to address their offending behaviour.

## Case study example: Norfolk (East)

Norfolk Youth Justice Service has introduced Outcome 22 (deferred prosecution) to their diversion scheme. The use of Outcome 22 enables the service to offer children who do not admit to offences or who give no comment interviews the opportunity for diversion away from the criminal justice system. This intervention acknowledges the barriers faced by children from minoritised communities and the potential lack of trust that exists between children and services like the police.

The interventions children are expected to complete as part of an Outcome 22 vary in nature, however they share the common goal of achieving positive change for children to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. YJSs in the North West region in particular have developed their own programme in partnership with Merseyside Police to prevent children coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

## **Case study example: Liverpool (North West)**

Operation Inclusion is a deferred prosecution scheme which works with children aged between 10 and 17 who have been linked with drugs and/or violent crime. It aims to provide YJSs with an extra three to six months to work with children to put support in place and prevent their offending behaviour from continuing or escalating. The programme works with the child and their family or carer, using diversion and support strategies based on that individual's needs and can include parenting support, mentoring, health and wellbeing support, educational services, referrals to wider services such as Early Help/Family Support, Street Doctors Reducing Violence Programme, Programmes from other wider community support or services.

## **Findings: custody and resettlement**

### **Consideration of children's needs**

Ensuring that appropriate attention is allocated to children's needs when considering the use of custody and whilst in custody was evident in some youth justice plans.

Should a child receive a custodial sentence, good practice ensures that children's needs remain a focal point of interest. Consideration of children's needs should allow for unmet social, emotional, health or educational needs to be met, which can help unlock children's potentials, prioritise their best interests, and contribute to the causes of offending behaviour being addressed. Having clear processes in place to identify and inform of children's specific needs allows for them to be integrated into children's support plans. This practice has been identified as particularly beneficial for children with special educational needs or disability needs.

## **Case study example: Surrey (South East and South Central)**

Where a child is in custody there is a clear process that ensures that the secure estate is made aware of SEND needs swiftly to inform support plans for children, with roles and responsibilities clearly outlined. This is continuously monitored during custody and forms an integral part of the resettlement process.

### **Trauma-informed approaches**

Ensuring that practice is delivered in a trauma-informed way when considering the use of custody, whilst in custody, and when considering the transition to adult services was

evident in some of the youth justice plans. Remaining trauma-informed in this area is consistent with Child First principles and allows for the impacts of adverse, traumatic experiences to be considered as being of the utmost importance.

Trauma-informed practice was particularly evident around sentencing, with some YJSs referencing their attention to the YJB's case management guidance during the writing up of pre-sentence reports (PSR). Writing PSRs in a trauma-informed way allows magistrates to understand and take into account the experiences that may have contributed to a child's offending behaviour.

### **Case study example: Rotherham (Yorkshire and Humberside)**

Rotherham Youth Justice Service has built positive relationships with the magistrates' court and Crown Court and utilises stakeholder meetings to address issues or concerns about children. Trauma-informed and Child First practice is encouraged when PSRs are written for children awaiting sentencing, with multi-agency input being sought from a post court initial panel meeting developed by the service.

Attention to trauma and the subsequent use of a trauma-informed approach was extended to the transition to adult services, with multi-agency contributions being utilised to ensure children's experiences are considered during this potentially daunting and anxiety-inducing transition period.

### **Case study example: Surrey (South East and South Central)**

Surrey Youth Justice Service recognises that adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and complex special educational needs can compound challenges for children in the transition to adult services. A multi-agency transition panel is in development to ensure all professionals involved with the child can provide an input so that any complex needs are considered and managed. Continuity of case management responsibility where appropriate is to remain with the YJS to ensure a level of support that is aligned with Child First principles.

## **Supported integration into the community**

Smooth transition back into the community has been recognised to produce positive reoffending outcomes for children after a period in custody (Hazel N, Liddle M and Gordon F (2010) 'Evaluation of RESET: a major resettlement programme for young offenders' London: Rainer). Examples of practice on constructive resettlement have demonstrated the measures YJSs have taken to support children with their integration back into the community.



Identifying and supporting children to obtain suitable accommodation post-custody in a timely manner was identified as an area of practice, ensuring that children were aware of what their living arrangements would be well in advance of release.

One service in particular highlighted their relationship with their Housing Options team to develop a housing plan to support the resettlement process. Identification of other necessary support services in parallel with accommodation pathways have also been used to support the transition process and move towards a pro-social identity.

## **Case study example: Kingston upon Hull (Yorkshire and Humberside)**

Kingston upon Hull Youth Justice Service revised their resettlement policy jointly with children's social care and other partnership agencies to transition children from custody to the community in line with resettlement pathways (accommodation, education, training and employment, health, substance misuse, families and finance). YJS staff work collaboratively with social care and the Targeted Youth Support/Housing Options team which involves the development of a 'personal housing plan' to ensure appropriate resettlement.

Supporting children's professional development in custody has also been identified as constructive resettlement practice.

Specific training programmes (such as Construction Skills Certification Scheme training to receive a construction qualification) have been developed so that children feel more prepared for their release, have increased positive opportunities, and have a direction to work towards that is beneficial for their lives going forward.

## **Case study example: Barking and Dagenham (London)**

A number of boys are working alongside the reparation team to complete their Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards so that they can work in the construction industry upon release. One boy who had received a number of custodial sentences provided positive feedback on this scheme highlighting the benefits having someone believe in him has had on his progress and that he feels like he now has a sense of direction and a way to earn money.

## **Findings: restorative approaches and victims**

### **Empowerment**

Local practice examples for supporting victims of crime centred around the idea of empowerment as part of restorative approaches.



Practice examples were given which provide victims with the space to have a voice, feel listened to and heard, and have any concerns identified, managed, and support tailored to their needs.

Restorative conferences were used as a way for victims to explain the personal impact that crime has had on their lives. In addition, some YJSs ensure they represent the voice of the victim at different panels, either through direct invitation or by sharing their views on their behalf.

## **Case study example: Bromley (London)**

Bromley Youth Justice Service's Restorative Justice Service offers victims the opportunity to engage in dialogue about the impact the crime has had on their lives in a respectful and empowering way. Its restorative approaches have developed to represent the voice of the victim at its restorative Referral Order and out-of-court disposal panels.

### **Creation of resources**

On a strategic level, the voice of the victim has been used to drive change in the sector through the creation of resources that influence both the work of practitioners and the prosocial identity development of children involved with youth justice.

## **Case study example: Lancashire (North West)**

Lancashire Youth Justice Service has worked closely with child victims of crime to have their voices heard. Voice clips and feedback responses from children have been shared with strategic partners, such as the police and magistrates. Children involved in this process are provided with feedback to assure them that their views have been acknowledged and will hopefully contribute to change. One particular audio interview with a child victim was shared with practitioners and is now being developed into a restorative justice education resource.

### **Reparation**

Given the negative impacts that crime can have on victims, their families, and wider communities, YJSs outline examples of practice around reparation.

Direct victim engagement with restorative approaches tended to be relatively low based on the voluntary nature of such practices. Examples of indirect reparation activities were more commonly referenced. In some cases, children were awarded with Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) qualifications and certificates to increase their opportunities in the future.

## Case study example: Brighton and Hove (South East and South Central)

Community reparation is approached in a way that is meaningful to children, by having individualised plans and matching children to a placement based on their strengths and interests. Projects include maintenance of allotments, preparation for local community groups, charity work and food preparation for vulnerable / elderly people. AQAs have been attached to community projects to develop skills and portfolios for children.

### Healing

The measures outlined above, such as restorative meetings, engagement with appropriate panels and opportunities to engage in reparation processes have intended to support the healing process of victims. However, it was evident in some plans that services provide victims with means to support their healing process outside the context of engaging with the child who has committed the offence.

Some services offered interesting interventions to build a victim back up again where they are likely to have experienced harm as a consequence of the crime. Such examples of practice go above a standard offer of service referrals through the YJS, such as mental health support, to include positive activities aimed at improving overall emotional well-being.

## Case study example: Darlington (North East and Cumbria)

Referrals to appropriate services are made for victims of crime to support them with their healing process in the aftermath of an offence. Additional supplementary activities are further delivered by Darlington Youth Justice Service for child victims of both child and adult crime (where a referral is made), including emotional resilience interventions, positive activities designed to increase self-esteem, and one-to-one support. Continued delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award is also used to support victims and allow them to become engaged in positive activities to support their healing.

Victim healing has been further facilitated by providing victims with the opportunity to meet with relevant professionals in an informal, relaxed environment to receive support and information. Opportunities to engage with other individuals who have shared experiences have also been facilitated.

## **Case study example: Dudley (Midlands)**

Victim support workers at Dudley Youth Justice Service provide an offer of support to victims of crime, namely a Coffee Evening at a local shopping centre. An open invitation is extended to victims to come and have a coffee and talk to victim support workers, the lead for justice services and other individuals who have been affected by crime. Due to the success of the event, a further event has taken place and a weekly drop-in session for victims has been established.

### **Family focussed interventions**

Recognition that family members can also be victims or impacted by crimes committed by children was also highlighted in some of the plans. This acknowledgement was reflected in some areas of local practice, with efforts being made to provide families with appropriate interventions to allow them to move forward in a positive manner in the aftermath of a crime being committed.

## **Case study example: Bexley (London)**

Family focussed interventions at Bexley Youth Justice Service are shaped by restorative principles. Practice in this area promotes the idea of working with children and families instead of working on them. The intention is to promote relationship building where there may have been relationship breakdowns because of crime. Bexley's Restorative Justice Worker has developed an intervention programme specifically tailored to situations where offences have been committed against family members.

Coming to terms with the fact that a child has committed an offence and the impact of imminent court proceedings in the home has also been recognised and subsequently incorporated into some examples of local practice. This is with the aim of supporting family members who may be struggling.

Taking a family focussed approach to restorative justice practice allows for multi-directional consideration to all parties who may be feeling the impact of crime, even if the family members were not directly victims who experienced the offence.

This work is guided by the intention to promote positive relationships and to repair harm caused in the home because of offending behaviour.

## **Case study example: Sutton (London)**

Direct mediation between family members has been incorporated into restorative approaches at Sutton Youth Justice Service. A recent example of practice included the delivery of 6 mediation sessions between a mother and son whose relationship had been negatively impacted in light of an impending court case for a serious, complex case of sexual assault. The aim of the sessions was to manage the impact of the conflict and repair the relationship between the mother and her son.

## 9. Next Steps

Collated national information from the youth justice plans; including separate information for Wales and England, will be used by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to drive system change and inform its strategic influence with stakeholders in justice services for children, and across other government departments.

Information on what youth justice services (YJS) tell us are their key risks, and how this has changed since the last year's plans, will be a key part of this picture. The information on how services' governance is delivered and the changes in this will also inform strategic influence.

Practice examples identified from the youth justice plans, such as those highlighted in section 7, will be followed up by YJB's Oversight Teams for dissemination so that services can learn from each other's practice.

On a regional basis, this information will be presented to local youth justice service managers' meetings, and bodies such as Criminal Justice Boards, by YJB Heads of Oversight and their teams.

YJB oversight teams will monitor each service's progress against its chosen priorities identified in their youth justice plan as part of ongoing work.

The information from plans will be used to inform the prioritisation of future YJB research.

The YJB will review what analysis should be undertaken from 2025/26 youth justice plans, considering available resources and potential benefits, and will communicate this to YJSs once agreed.