

Business plan

2025 - 2026



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Foreword



This business plan sets out a bold and credible roadmap for how the Youth Justice Board will continue to contribute to a safer, fairer society by preventing offending and delivering better outcomes for children, victims, and communities, in a way that upholds the values of public service.

We begin this new business year on the foundation of a completed Public Bodies Review. The review is an essential milestone to make sure we are match fit and heading into the next five years with a clear sense of purpose and ambition. I look forward to working with ministers to determine our role in shaping the future of youth justice in England and Wales when the Government's response to the final report and recommendations is published. I am confident the review will

confirm the value of our role and our response to the review will ensure that we remain effective, efficient, and aligned with the Government's ambitions for reform.

We recognise the importance of this moment: a new government with new energy, new ministers with renewed focus, and clear missions that resonate with our own long-standing priorities - creating Safer Streets and unlocking Opportunity for Children. This plan sets out exactly how we will support those aims, from helping to develop Prevention Partnerships and Young Futures Hubs, to sharing the best practice that reduces violence against women and girls and protects children from exploitation and violence.

What gives us confidence that this plan will deliver is the clarity and depth of our commitments. We are:

- **Driving standards and improvement** across all local youth justice services, backed by robust oversight and performance reviews.
- **Advancing equity** through a focused commitment to address persistent racial disparity and support children with special educational needs.
- **Grounding everything we do in evidence**, ensuring that our advice to government, use of grant funding, and support for the sector are all informed by what works.

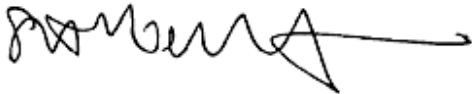
We are not starting from scratch. Through the delivery of our statutory function to monitor, advise, fund, research and share best practice, we are building on a strong platform. The detailed commitments from pages 8 to 11 link directly to both our strategic objectives and the Government's wider missions, making it easy to track our contribution and impact.

We also know how to measure progress. This plan includes clear benefits and internal performance indicators to keep us accountable and on course, with transparency through regular reporting and external audits.

Alongside all of this, our corporate functions - spanning finance, digital innovation, anti-racism, and people development - ensure that we operate as a high-performing public body, capable of adapting and leading the youth justice system in a changing environment.

Above all, this plan reflects our unwavering belief in children's potential. By seeing them as children first, treating them fairly, and helping them to thrive, we help create the conditions for safer communities and fewer victims.

We know what needs to be done. This plan shows how we're doing it. I look forward to working with all of you, who read this plan, to continue to make a difference over the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steph Roberts-Bibby', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Steph Roberts-Bibby

Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board

Who we are

As well as establishing the Youth Justice Board, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defined the principal aim of the youth justice system as preventing offending by children. Working towards achieving this is at the heart of what we do and our mission and vision.

Our mission

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

Our vision

“A youth justice system that sees children as children first, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. This will prevent offending and create safer communities with fewer victims.”

Our mission

Our mission defines our unique role and purpose within the youth justice system. Our approach reflects three aspects of the role defined for us when we were established:

- Supporting improvement throughout the youth justice system and in the provision of local youth justice services.
- Informing the public, practitioners, and policymakers, including ministers, about the operation of the youth justice system.
- Influencing practitioners and policymakers to adopt the Child First¹ evidence. This means treating children as children and upholding their rights, building pro-social identity, collaborating with children and diverting them from stigma, in order to deliver positive outcomes for children, victims and our communities.

Our vision

Our vision sets out a broad ambition for the youth justice system by describing how it can have wider impact on the communities in which children live, beyond the principal aim of preventing offending.

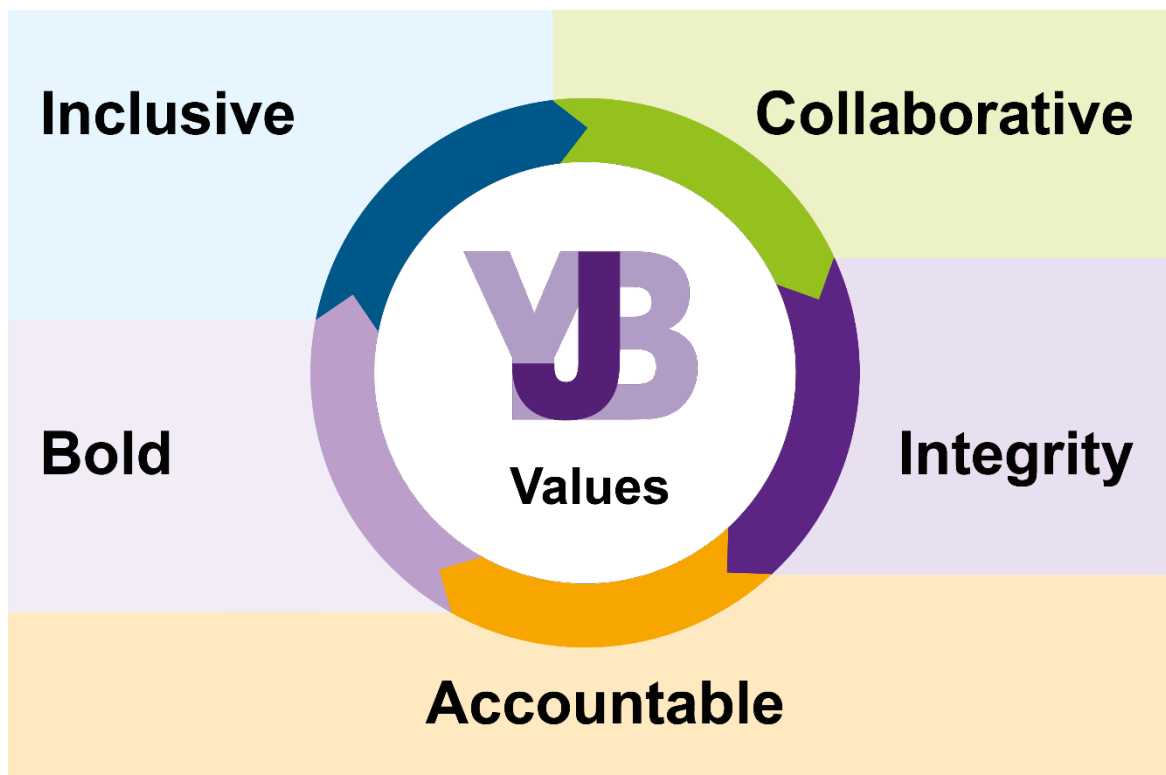
Decades of national and international research is summarised in our Child First framework¹, and we seek to translate it into policy and practice across the youth justice system. It reflects evidence that the most effective way to reduce offending is by empowering children to be the best versions of themselves and contribute positively to the world around them.

¹ [A Guide to Child First - Youth Justice Board for England and Wales \(October 2022\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub](#)

Our values

Our culture is based around five values which define our beliefs and what it means to work for the organisation.

Our collective commitment to these values is driving us towards our ambition of becoming an exemplary and high performing public sector organisation and we are embedding these core values into every aspect of our organisation. Everyone at the Youth Justice Board is encouraged to breathe life into these values in our daily work.



Inclusive – challenging discrimination and promoting inclusivity and equity in all that we do, as well as eliminating bias within the Youth Justice Board and the youth justice system.

Collaborative – collaborating with our youth justice partners and encouraging partnership working to meet the needs of children, victims and their communities.

Integrity – showing integrity by fulfilling our duties responsibly and always behaving in a professional manner.

Accountable – being accountable in our actions and our performance in supporting the sector to improve.

Bold – ensuring we remain evidence-based and boldly championing the voice of the child.

What we do

The Youth Justice Board's seven statutory functions are also defined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and we are accountable to ministers for delivering them.



The approach to meeting these statutory functions has evolved over the past 25 years in response to the political and cultural landscape in which the youth justice system operates, and developments in the evidence about what is most effective in meeting the needs of children to prevent offending, reducing victims and creating safer communities.

We are also influenced by recommendations from internal and external reviews and any steer that we receive from the ministers responsible for youth justice.

The Act set out the requirement that each local authority should establish a youth offending team (now commonly referred to as youth justice services) and a local youth justice management board responsible for co-ordinating services in its area. The Youth Justice Board is responsible for monitoring those services and setting strategic direction for the youth justice system.

Our commitments in 2025-2026

Our Board's current three-year strategy² sets objectives which guide us in meeting our statutory functions.

The table which follows at pages 8-11 describes the activity we will deliver in 2025 - 2026 towards meeting those objectives and the workstreams which will support the current Government Missions which are relevant to the youth justice system.

Our strategic objectives 2024 - 2027 (see columns 1 – 3 below)	
Objective 1: Supporting the improvement of local youth justice services	
Objective 2: Focussing on addressing disparities	
Objective 3: Advancing adoption of evidence-based policy	
Government Missions (see columns A – J below)	
Safer Streets	Cracking down on anti-social behaviour (A)
	A plan to get knives off our streets (B)
	A network of Young Futures hubs (C)
	Development of local Prevention Partnerships (D)
	Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (E)
	Protection for victims (F)
Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity	Providing security for families (G)
	Supporting the best start to life (H)
	Raising school standards (I)
	Improving access to arts, music and sport (J)

² [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Strategic Plan 2024-27 - GOV.UK](#)

COMMITTED ACTIVITY & OUTCOME	YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2024 - 2027			GOVERNMENT MISSIONS									
				“SAFER STREETS”						“BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY”			
	1	2	3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
STATUTORY FUNCTION 1: <i>Monitoring and overseeing the operation of the youth justice system.</i>													
Monitor youth justice services in line with expectations in the Oversight Framework³ <i>Review performance of youth justice services and partnerships against evidence-based expectations and standards and provide support to drive up standards in delivery and replicate best practice.</i>													
Develop our information and insights platforms and products <i>Provision of analysis to support oversight, planning, decision-making and advice.</i>													
Monitor, analyse and share findings from serious incidents involving children <i>Annual publication with analysis of serious incident notifications submitted to the Youth Justice Board.</i>													
STATUTORY FUNCTION 2: <i>Providing independent evidence-based advice to ministers and officials in Whitehall and the Welsh Government.</i>													
Develop clear evidence-based positions on youth justice matters <i>Provide high quality, independent evidence-based advice on themes including online harms, victims and girls.</i>													

³ [Youth justice oversight framework - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/youth-justice-oversight-framework)

Informing policy and legislative change <i>Collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders with interest in the youth justice system through our established forums to drive an evidence-led approach.</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
STATUTORY FUNCTION 3: Administering and distributing grant funding.													
Allocate core grant funding to local authorities <i>Prompt allocation of youth justice core grant funding to 157 local authorities in England and Wales.</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓					
Renew grant terms and conditions <i>Develop and implement new terms and conditions which reflect the aims and objectives of the youth justice system.</i>	✓	✓											
Youth justice core grant funding <i>Support Ministry of Justice ministers and officials to develop proposals for a new fairer, evidence-based formula for allocating funding.</i>	✓	✓	✓										
Administer targeted funding to support innovation through pathfinder projects <i>Support delivery of thematic projects on disproportionality, accommodation for children and enhancing use of temporary release from custody.</i>	✓	✓	✓										
STATUTORY FUNCTION 4: Providing assistance in the use of information technology and equipment for the youth justice system.													
Deliver, maintain and enhance data and information systems provided to youth justice services	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Continue contracts to deliver, maintain and enhance the Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF) system.													
STATUTORY FUNCTION 5: Collating and publishing information about the performance of the youth justice system.													
Analyse and utilise data from Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) <i>Publish KPI Quality and Methodology Information Paper and apply KPIs to the Oversight Framework.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
Youth Justice Annual Statistics 2024 - 2025 <i>Annual statistical release with data on the youth justice system in England and Wales.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data workbooks, toolkits and dashboards <i>Produce quarterly Youth Justice Data Summary workbook and share with youth justice services.</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data exploration, automation and linkage <i>Explore options for linking Assetplus data to Ministry of Justice and wider datasets.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publish a periodic review of how racial disparity affects children in their early years and within the youth justice system <i>Publish report on disproportionality at different stages of the youth justice system.</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓					
STATUTORY FUNCTION 6: Commissioning research to support practice development.													
Commissioned and in-house research <i>Scope, undertake and publish in-house and externally commissioned research, including projects which will evaluate the prevention / diversion tool; application of the Child First approach to practice; and child exploitation.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Coordinate our Academic Liaison Network <i>Maintain mutually beneficial relationships and collaboration between the Youth Justice Board and academia.</i>													
STATUTORY FUNCTION 7: Identifying and sharing evidence-informed practice across the sector.													
Maintain Case Management Guidance <i>Support adoption of Case Management Guidance and undertake thematic updates.</i>													
Youth Justice Leaders Summit 2026 <i>Organise the annual summit.</i>													
Youth justice sector Workforce <i>Facilitate the workforce development council.</i>													
Elevate <i>Review the programme delivery model to ensure it meets the needs of participants.</i>													
Disseminate promising practice <i>Maintain our communications strategy and share evidence-informed practice with the youth justice sector.</i>													
Wales: Collaborate with the Welsh Government and with devolved and non-devolved services in Wales to meet our strategic objectives and statutory functions													
<i>Monitor performance of youth justice services; identify and promote evidence and research; and work in partnership to deliver the vision in the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales, the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and other areas of strategic focus.</i>													

Our corporate functions

Our corporate functions enable the Youth Justice Board to operate as an efficient, inclusive and effective high-performing organisation. They manage essential business-critical functions which are necessary for the functioning of the organisation and ensure that our policies and procedures are up-to-date and being applied in as efficient way as possible.

Public Bodies Review

In 2025 - 2026 we are ready to respond to the findings and recommendations of the public bodies review of the Youth Justice Board to ensure that that our functions remain useful and necessary to deliver the Government's priorities for the youth justice system, and that we are operating effectively and delivering value for money.

Corporate activity	What we will do
Our commitment to actively oppose racism and discrimination, and promote racial equity	<p>Anti-Racist Statement: Update our published statement to reflect progress we have made in 2024 - 2025 and set out our commitments for the year ahead.</p> <p>Anti-Racist Strategy: Review our strategy to monitor activity that is underway or completed and identify opportunities for new activities.</p> <p>Criminal Justice Board for Wales Anti Racist Action Plan: Support implementation of the Anti-Racist Action Plan to eliminate racism and advance race equity across all public services in Wales and Welsh society.</p>
Financial management	Manage and monitor all financial activity for the Youth Justice Board through liaison with Ministry of Justice finance teams and Grants Centre of Excellence to provide strategic financial advice and robust reporting to the Accounting Officer; foster a culture of value-for-money and productivity; ensure budget efficiency; promote financial compliance; and support informed decision-making by our Board and Senior Leadership Team.

People Strategy	<p>Deliver our People Strategy for 2025 – 2027 to support our aim to be an exemplary public sector organisation and employer, which will be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attracting, recruiting and retaining the diverse talent we need within the constraints of our budget. ➤ Promoting a sense of belonging as an inclusive, compassionate, and pro-actively anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisation. An organisation with effective and supportive leadership, which values the strengths of its people, and its people are encouraged to value each other. ➤ Embedding a culture of high achievement, accountability and responsibility, rooted in our values with inspiring and empowering leadership. ➤ Developing and supporting our people to help build and maintain individual and organisational, resilience.
Digital and Data Strategy	<p>Apply our Digital and Date Strategy to set out how we will use the high-quality data and tools to derive insights and aid decisions to support our legal duty of overseeing and improving the youth justice system and improve the experience of children who come into contact with it.</p> <p>We will produce regular internal insights products which draw on the information and intelligence accessed through the Insights Platforms, designed to inform our Board and Senior Leadership Team to support oversight, planning, decision-making and advice.</p> <p>To deliver this we will work in partnership across government and consider how new technologies and developments such as artificial intelligence can help us achieve efficiencies and support our work.</p>
Welsh Language Act	<p>Work with the Welsh Language Commissioner to ensure that we are compliant with the provisions of the Welsh Language Act 1993.</p>

Benefits and measuring impact

Our work is led by the benefits we provide to the youth justice system. We are determined to ensure that everything we do contributes to the achievement of four overarching benefits which are closely aligned to our statutory functions and strategic objectives.

1. Improved youth justice service performance to prevent offending.
2. Reduced racial disparity.
3. Treating children as children and upholding their rights, building pro-social identity, collaborating with and diverting them from stigma, in order to deliver positive outcomes for children, victims and our communities.
4. Improved Youth Justice Board performance.

These benefits are ambitious and (apart from benefit 4) are dependent on the performance of the wider youth justice system, not just the Youth Justice Board. As a result of their scope and scale, benefits 1-3 are tracked over an extended period rather than just within a single business year.

To evaluate progress in delivering these benefits, we use a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators including metrics and insight from our oversight about the performance of the system and local youth justice services, ratings from inspections of youth justice services conducted by HM Inspectorate (Probation), youth justice sector key performance indicators, outcomes from targeted funding projects and research projects, and ratings from Government Internal Audit Agency thematic audits.

For benefit 4 (Improved Youth Justice Board performance) we have developed a draft set of internal key performance indicators to evaluate our own performance and enable us to evidence our successes and highlight areas where we need to improve. We will further develop these indicators and how they will be monitored following the conclusion of the public bodies review of the Youth Justice Board and confirmation of our functions.

KPI	Baseline measure	Target measure	Source of measure	Frequency of evaluation
Average working days lost to sickness are below the Civil Service average	7.8 per year (year ending March 2024)	Less than 7.8 for year ending 2026	Civil Service and Youth Justice Board data	Bi-annually
People engagement score is equal to or more than Civil Service benchmark	63% (2024)	64% (Civil service benchmark)	Civil Service People Survey	Annually

KPI	Baseline measure	Target measure	Source of measure	Frequency of evaluation
Employee attrition rate is equal to or lower than the UK average	27.8% (2023/24)	Equal to or lower than 16% (2024)	Youth Justice Board data/Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	Annually
Inclusion and fair treatment score to equal or exceed the benchmark for Civil Service	77% (2024)	Equal to or more than 80% for 2025 which is the Civil Service benchmark	Civil Service People Survey	Annually
Reduction in the number of people who say yes to having been discriminated against at work	9% (2024)	Less than 9% for 2025	Civil Service People Survey	Annually
Reduction in the number of people who report being bullied and harassed at work	16% (2024)	Less than 16% for 2025	Civil Service People Survey	Annually
Gender and ethnicity pay gaps to be below 5%	Average Youth Justice Board earnings: Gender: -2% ⁴ Ethnicity: 5% ⁵	Gender and ethnicity pay gaps to be below 5%.	Pay gap report	Annually
Increase the level of our diversity declaration reporting	Youth Justice Board non-declaration: Ethnicity: 11% Disability: 11%	Less than 11% for ethnicity and disability not declared in 2025	Youth Justice Board internal data	Annually

⁴ Women on average earning 2% more than men.

⁵ Across whole of Youth Justice Board, white colleagues earning on average 5% more than minority ethnic colleagues.

Monitoring and managing risk

We use our Risk Management Framework to identify, monitor and mitigate risks which may have an impact on our efforts to realise our intended benefits, achieve our statutory functions and strategic objectives. Senior and Board-level structures and our Finance, Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee provide further oversight to ensure that our response is being managed appropriately.

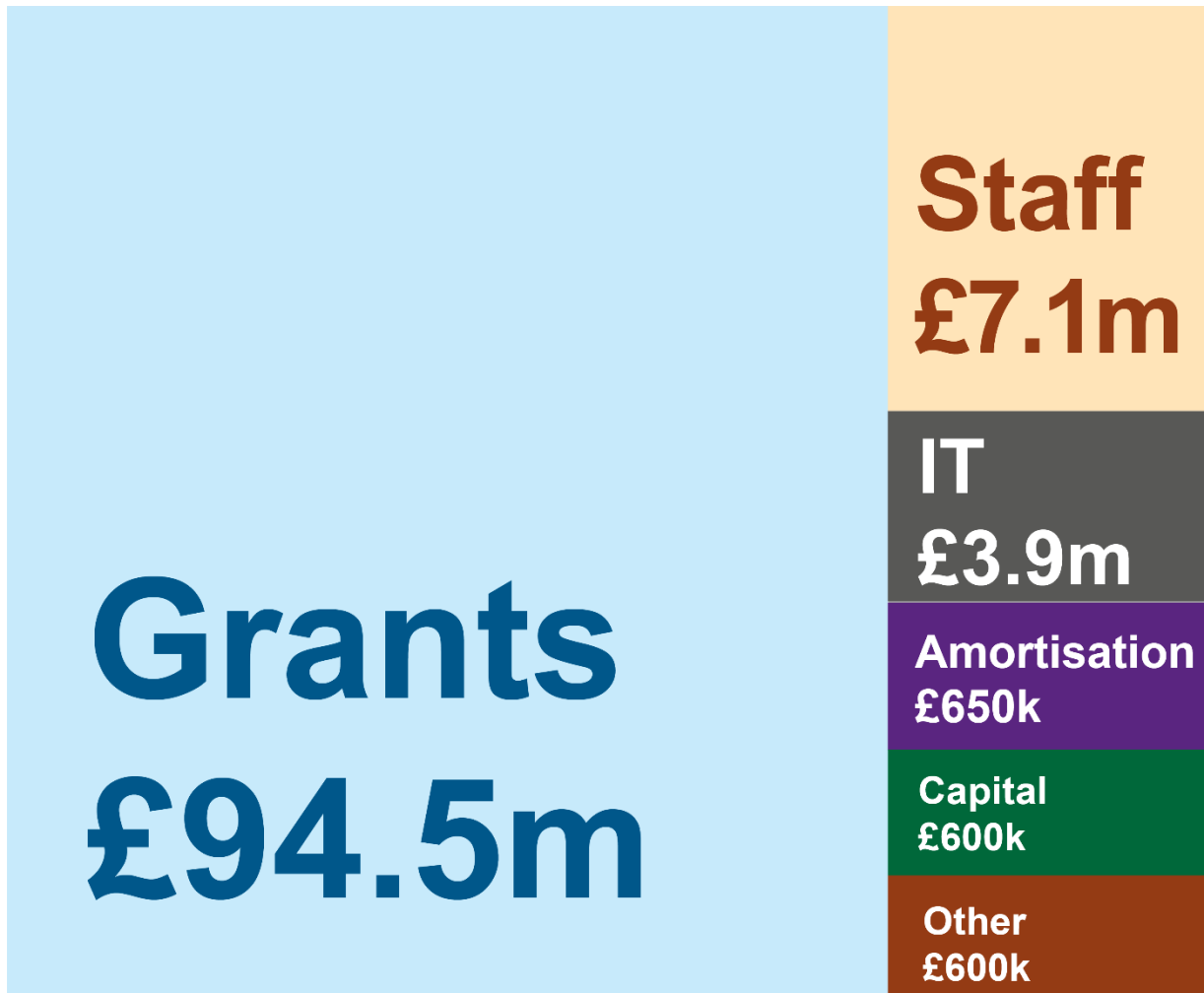
We have identified the following strategic risks for 2025 - 2026, and we have a detailed control and mitigation plan in place for each one.

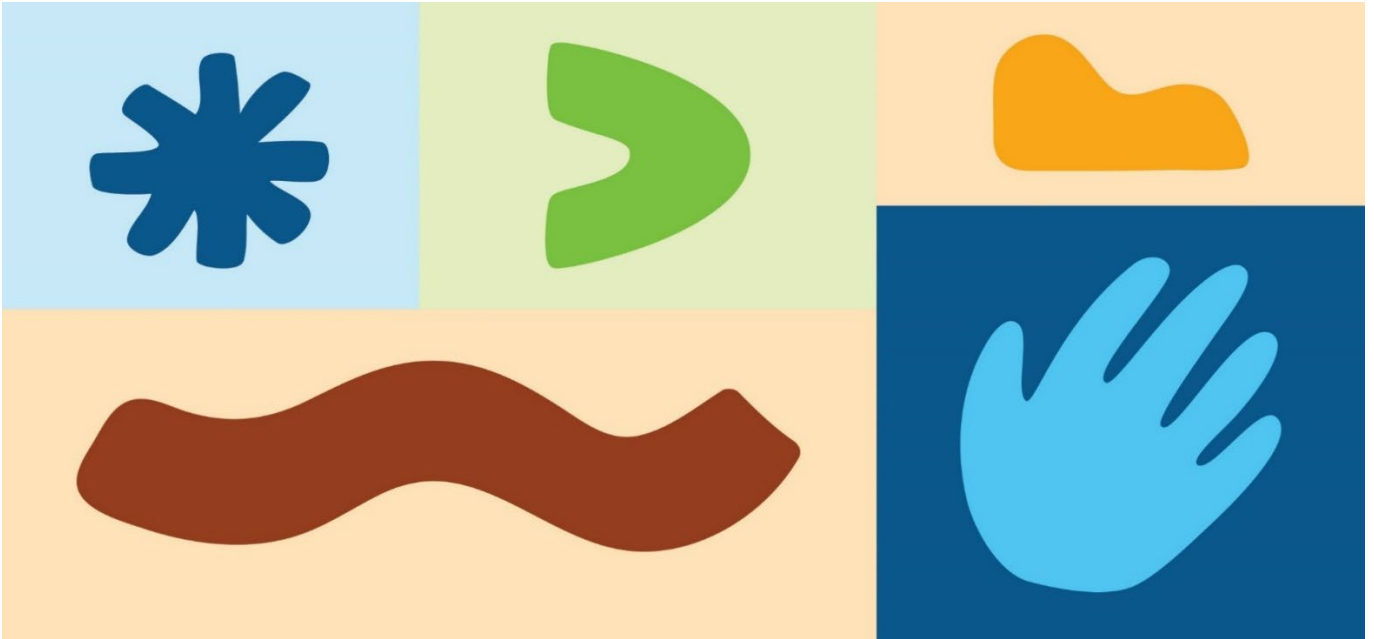
Risk
Strategic risk 1: Insufficient evidence base to provide sound and effective advice.
Strategic risk 2: Failure to deliver our statutory monitoring function.
Strategic risk 3: Failure to deliver our statutory function to support the information technology provision for youth justice services.
Strategic risk 4: Failure to realise benefits and evidence the full impact of our work.
Strategic risk 5: Failure to adhere to our organisational-wide governance processes leading to a lack of corporate discipline and ability to maximise our resources.
Strategic risk 6: Ineffective relationship with the sponsoring department, Welsh Government and wider partnerships affecting collaboration and delivery of objectives.
Strategic risk 7: Failure to manage the budget effectively to ensure that our resources, including capital, targeted investment, and core grant, are utilised to maximise impact on driving system improvement and delivering statutory functions.
Strategic risk 8: Failure to have sufficient and/or appropriately skilled staff to effectively deliver our strategic and business plans.
Strategic risk 9: Ineffective/insufficient leadership at senior and Board level.

Our finances

Each year, we publish our Annual Report and Accounts in which we reflect on our achievements during the year and the value we provide with the public funds that we receive.

Our budget allocation for 2025 - 2026 is expected to be as follows:





Youth Justice Board / Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuenctid

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Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU

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