

Business plan

2026 - 2027



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Foreword



This year's business plan comes at a pivotal moment for youth justice in England and Wales.

In February 2026, the Government set out a bold direction for reform in its Command Paper *A Modern Youth Justice System*, which signalled the most significant reshaping of the system in a generation. The reforms set out in the paper recognise both the remarkable progress made since the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Act which established the Youth Justice Board, and the very different context in which we are operating. While the youth justice system remains one of the great public service success stories of the last 25 years - marked by steep reductions in the number of children

entering the criminal justice system, in custody and offending - today's landscape is more complex, more interconnected and more demanding than ever.

Children who enter the system now often bring multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities. Themes such as knife crime, online harms, violence against women and girls, harmful sexual behaviour and exploitation through County Lines need a broad response involving the resources of a range of different partners to provide support and bring about the changes that are needed help children thrive. These challenges, and the government's renewed expectations of the youth justice system, provide the backdrop to this business plan.

The government's ambition for reform is to ensure that youth justice system remains as effective and efficient as it needs to be to meet the challenges for the next 25 years including the recognition that caseloads are increasingly complex involving interconnected services, and that local services need stronger, more integrated national support to deliver for children, victims and communities.

As part of this, the responsibilities of the Youth Justice Board will change. Our core purpose to develop and interpret the evidence of 'what works', support improvements in frontline services and further embed the child first evidence framework will remain but will be sharpened. Our expertise will focus on **continuous improvement** across the youth justice system and use deep, real-time insight in support of that. When these reforms are implemented, the Youth Justice Board will have a renewed mandate to drive best practice, foster innovation, and provide practical, thematic support to frontline services.

Other activity currently delivered by the YJB including functions relating to advising ministers, monitoring the performance of youth justice services, setting standards and the administration of the youth justice core grant will change as part of Government's reforms. This includes strengthening accountability within the Ministry of Justice while also recognising the Government's wider ambition to devolve power and enable stronger regional and local leadership.

We are working closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that the transition to the new arrangements is a smooth and carefully planned transition. Our shared priority is to provide clarity of role, purpose and function for both the Ministry and the YJB. This includes ensuring that the system maintains momentum through the transition period, that

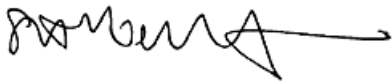
local youth justice partnerships experience stability, and that the expertise of our team at the YJB continues to directly support positive outcomes for children, victims and communities. As these reforms unfold, we remain fully committed to our current statutory duties, our partners and the people we serve.

This business plan sets out the actions we will deliver in 2026–2027 to support the system during this period of change. We will continue to drive improvements in local youth justice services, maintain our focus on tackling persistent disparities, further strengthen our understanding of what works, and the application of the Child First evidence framework across practice. This year we will also continue to prioritise our participation in major inquiries including those into the events which led up to the 2024 Southport attack and the response to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by grooming gangs, to ensure we learn from the voices and experiences of children, families and victims in how services evolve.

As always, people are at the heart of our mission: the exceptional professionals across the youth justice sector; the children whose potential we are determined to unlock; and the victims and communities whose safety and confidence are paramount. Public service, fairness, compassion and evidence-led decision making will continue to be values that underpin our work through this transition and beyond.

I acknowledge that there will be uncertainties for the team at the YJB as well as colleagues across the sector, but I believe that this is a moment of both challenge and opportunity. The reforms are significant, my hope is that they provide a chance to build a system that is more responsive, more resilient and more capable of supporting the most vulnerable children in our society.

I look forward to working with colleagues across the system as we shape the next chapter of youth justice together.



Steph Roberts-Bibby
Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board

Our commitments in 2026-2027

Our Board's current three-year strategy¹ sets objectives which guide us in meeting our statutory functions. The tables describe the activity we will deliver in 2026 - 2027 towards meeting those objectives.

COMMITTED ACTIVITY & OUTCOME		YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 - 2027		
		Objective 1: <i>Supporting the improvement of local youth justice services</i>	Objective 2: <i>Focussing on addressing disparities</i>	Objective 3: <i>Advancing adoption of evidence-based policy</i>
STATUTORY FUNCTION 1: <i>Monitoring and overseeing the operation of the youth justice system.</i>				
Performance / Oversight	Continue to monitor and review the performance of youth justice services and partnerships against evidence-based expectations and standards set out in our Oversight Framework .	✓		
	Support to youth justice services and partnerships to understand and replicate best practice from across the sector and maintain standards in delivery.	✓		
Supporting practice delivery and improvement	Maintain our Case Management Guidance to ensure that it reflects the latest evidence and policy, remaining relevant to YJS practice and supporting oversight of the sector.	✓		✓
	Continue to arrange quarterly Developing Practice Fora to discuss current challenges and successes with youth justice services, explore the needs of the sector and collect examples of practice.	✓		
	Review the language used in AssetPlus to ensure that it reflects the latest Child First evidence.	✓	✓	

¹ [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Strategic Plan 2024-27 - GOV.UK](#)

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	Maintain content on the Resource Hub to ensure that enables the sector to access the latest research and evidence and supports practice.			
	Evaluate the Youth Justice Leaders' Summit held in March 2026 and plan for an event in 2027 that will reflect the future role of the YJB.			
Serious incidents	Continue to collate and share information with Ministers about serious incidents involving children reported to the YJB and publish an annual report highlighting key themes and recommendations.			
Workforce development	Scope and explore how the Elevate Programme can best support how colleagues from Black, Asian and minority groups can move into senior and strategic roles.			
STATUTORY FUNCTION 2: Providing independent evidence-based advice to ministers and officials in Whitehall and the Welsh Government.				
Informing policy and legislative change	Continue to promote an evidence-based approach in policy making and legislative change through the provision of independent evidence-based advice to Ministers, parliamentarians and stakeholders across government and the third sector.			
Statutory guidance	Support the Home Office with implementation of new knife possession guidance developed in early 2026.			
Southport Inquiry	Lead the response to Recommendation 66 from Phase 1 of the Inquiry (creating guidance for professionals to give to parents,			

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	carers and family members of children who may obtain weapons); and provide evidence to Part 2.			
Position statement	Develop a new position statement on the latest evidence and data on the factors influencing the online behaviour of children and the implications for youth justice services.	✓		✓
Wales	Support new Senedd members after the May 2026 election with briefing on key youth justice evidence and data.	✓		✓
STATUTORY FUNCTION 3: <i>Administering and distributing grant funding.</i>				
Core grant funding	Ensure prompt allocation of youth justice core grant funding to 157 local authorities in England and Wales.	✓		
	Collaborate with MoJ to ensure Ministerial expectation to transfer the statutory role to distribute youth justice grant funding to the core department is completed by the end of the 2026/27.	✓		
	Support the Ministry of Justice and the Welsh Government in developing proposals for the devolution of youth justice funding to the Welsh Government.	✓		
Pathfinder Funding	Continue to administer targeted funding to support innovation through pathfinder projects. In 2026/27 this will include: - Leeds ROTL pilot to test the benefits of having a support worker in place to improve outcomes from a new policy of temporary release from custody. - Addressing Ethnic Disparity (AED) pathfinder aims to reduce over-representation of black and mixed heritage children in the youth justice system, with a specific focus on early intervention and prevention.	✓		

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	- London Accommodation pathfinder (LAP) provides supported accommodation for 16/17-year-old boys as an alternative to custody or for resettlement.			
STATUTORY FUNCTION 4: <i>Providing assistance in the use of information technology and equipment for the YJS.</i>				
Information systems	Continue to deliver, maintain and enhance existing information systems provided to youth justice services.			
	Ensure future resilience through working with the supplier awarded the contract to build a replacement solution for YJAF; and undertake strategic design work with MoJ Digital to consider deployment of future IT enhancements.			
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Establish a working group to consider the use of AI in the youth justice system and develop guidance about practice.			
STATUTORY FUNCTION 5: <i>Collating and publishing information about the performance of the youth justice system.</i>				
Key performance indicators (KPIs)	Continue to use KPI data to monitor performance of youth justice service and identify barriers to reducing reoffending by children.			
Annual statistics	Publish the annual youth justice statistical release for 2025/26 with data on the youth justice system in England and Wales Statistics; and collaborate with MoJ to complete the Ministerial expectation to transfer the statutory role for publishing data about the whole youth justice system to the core department.			
Data Workbooks, toolkits and dashboards	Maintain our existing suite of workbooks, toolkits and dashboards.			
	Enhance use of KPI data in our performance oversight role.			

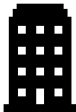
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	Undertake an exploration and validation exercise as a precursor to publication of official statistical release on prevention and diversion data .			
STATUTORY FUNCTION 6: <i>Commissioning research to support practice development.</i>				
Commissioned and in-house research	Scope, undertake and publish in-house and externally commissioned research, which in 2026/27 will include: - In-house rapid evaluation of the Neurodevelopmental Pathway developed by Cwm Taf youth justice service. - Contracted research on Child Criminal Exploitation. - In-house rapid evaluation of the Rotherham “Be Share Aware” programme. - Contracted research focussed on children who commit sexual offences online. - Contracted research to provide understanding about the training and other needs of the youth justice workforce and inform future investment priorities.			
Research networks	Maintain mutually beneficial relationships and collaboration between the Youth Justice Board and academia.			
STATUTORY FUNCTION 7: <i>Identifying and sharing evidence-informed practice across the sector.</i>				
Engagement with the youth justice sector build	Continue support for existing practitioner-led forums focussed on working with girls and with Black and mixed ethnicity boys to gather evidence and share effective practice with the youth justice sector.			

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evidence and share practice	Maintain support for national implementation of Youth Detention Orders (YDOs) through development of operational guidance, information for children and parents and engagement with stakeholders to ensure consistent approach to practice.	✓		✓
Disseminate promising practice	Maintain the Resource Hub as a resource for sharing information and insight about practice with the youth justice sector.	✓	✓	✓
Stakeholder engagement	Review existing forums and their links to thematic workstreams to ensure that they have are ready to support YJB when it takes on its new role focussed on continuous improvement.	✓	✓	✓
Participation	Enhance the voice of the child in modelling our future Continuous Improvement role to ensure that children and young people can be engaged to inform, shape, and challenge the YJB's work.	✓	✓	✓
Wales: Collaborate with the Welsh Government and with devolved and non-devolved services in Wales to meet our strategic objectives and statutory functions.				
Collaborate with the Welsh Government and with devolved and non-devolved services and stakeholders operating in Wales to ensure that our strategic objectives and statutory functions are met and deliver the vision in the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales and the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan.		✓	✓	✓
Work alongside the police and youth justice services to deliver the aims of the Out of Court Resolutions (OOCRs) project and ensure consistency across Wales.				✓

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Continue to play an active role in facilitating the Hwb Doeth partnership to connect academics and youth justice practitioners to embed research into practice and support effective implementation of policy.			

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.

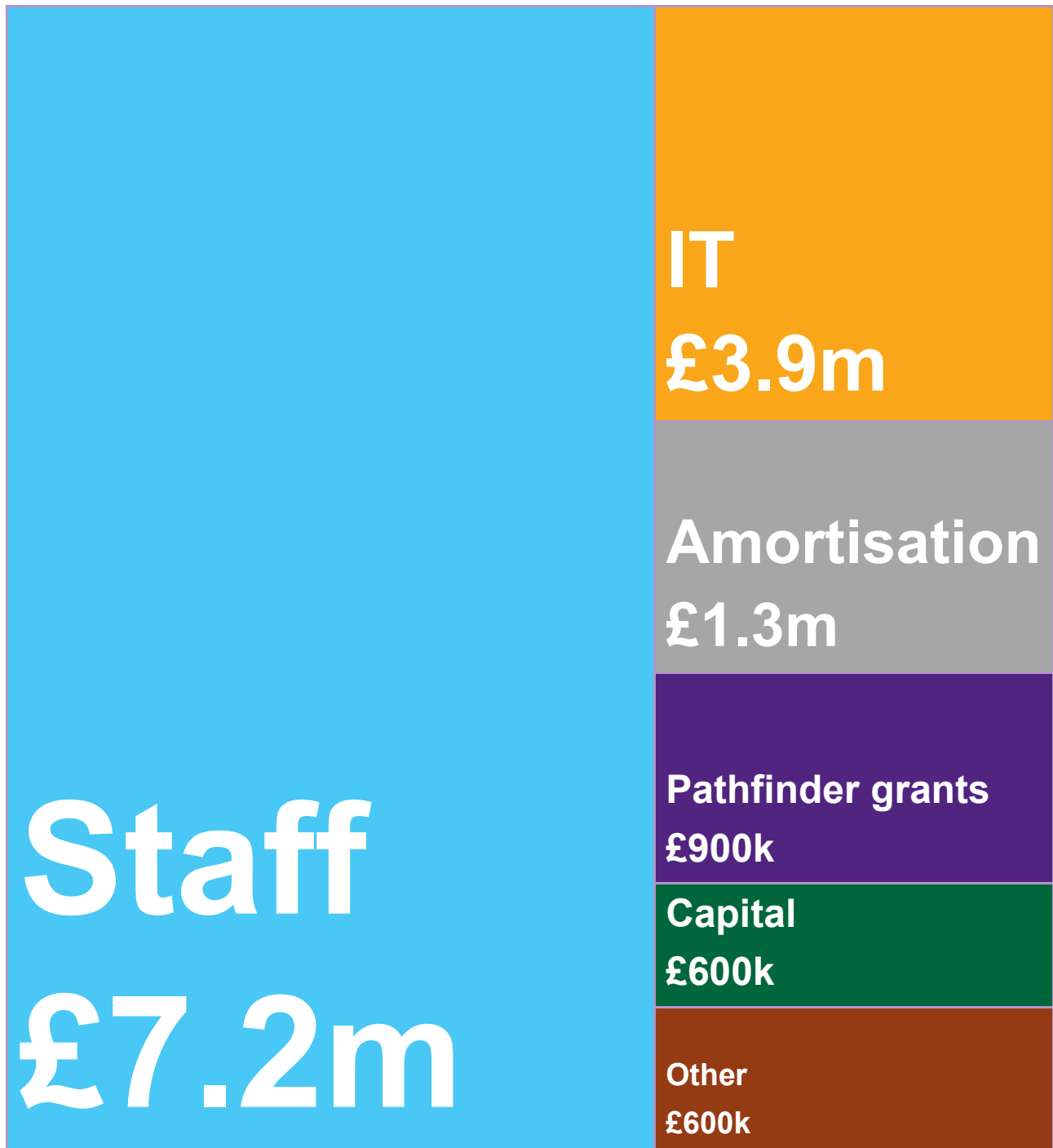
Corporate activity	What we will do
EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS 	<i>Effective corporate governance, executive support and strategic communications to enable the YJB to operate efficiently, transparently and accountably, through:</i> - Business support for the senior management team, the Board and regular meetings and sub-committees. - Providing ad hoc advice and regular updates to ministers and officials in the Ministry of Justice. - Responding to enquiries, official correspondence and legal enquiries.
ESTATES & ASSET MANAGEMENT 	<i>Ensuring that the YJB is a healthy and safe place to work by creating safe and well-managed workplaces for our team to work in.</i>
FINANCE & AUDIT MANAGEMENT 	<i>Robust financial management, governance and assurance to support effective decision-making, accountability and sustainable delivery, through:</i> - Financial governance, control and assurance to set, delegate and manage our budget. - Medium-term financial planning and MoJ spending review commissions. - Workforce planning and pay governance. - Transparency, reporting & external accountability, including publishing our Annual Report and Account.

Corporate activity	What we will do
GOVERNANCE & OVERSIGHT OF ACTIVITY 	<i>Effective governance, oversight and assurance to ensure the successful delivery of YJB priorities and programmes.</i> - Managing our Portfolio of activity. - Effective management of programmes. - Oversight and control of risk.
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY 	<i>Secure, reliable and innovative digital services that enable effective working, safeguard information and support organisational improvement.</i> - Maintaining and developing the architecture of our Insights Project to enhance the way in which we gather and share information and intelligence about the youth justice sector. - Establishing a working group on AI. - Renewing our Data Protection Registration and Cyber Security Contract Renewal.
PEOPLE 	<i>Strategic people leadership that supports workforce capability, wellbeing, inclusion and organisational resilience.</i> - People Strategy & Operations – payroll budget, workforce planning, recruitment, business continuity, change programmes, managing the relationship with the central shared services team - Employee Engagement, Inclusion & Wellbeing – the Staff Engagement and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion groups, analysing the response to the annual people survey, workplace and financial wellbeing activities and maintaining the relationship with the trade unions. - Talent, Performance & Employment Framework - Learning and development activity, enabling coaching and mentoring, performance management, pay and reward, HR policies and guidance and oversight of job descriptions.

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 2026 - 2027 will be as follows:



Youth Justice Board / Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU

Welsh Government Buildings
Llys-y-ddraig Penllergaer
Business Park
Penllergaer
Swansea
SA4 9NX

YJB.Enquiries@yjb.gov.uk