

Notice of a Meeting

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Friday, 26 September 2025 at 10.00 am
Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND**

These proceedings are open to the public

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Membership

Chair: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Deputy Chair: Councillor Andy Graham

Councillors: Dr Izzy Creed Johnny Hope-Smith James Plumb
Rebekah Fletcher Emma Markham
Georgina Heritage Toyah Overton

Co-Optees: Hana G Toby Long Peace Nnaji
Fraser Long Katie N

Date of Next Meeting: 21 November 2025

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Committee Officer:
Email:



Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

September 2025

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee focuses on the following key areas a) All services and preventative activities/initiatives relating to children, young people, education (including Home to School Transport and Special Educational Needs and Disability but excluding adult education), and support of families; b) The Council's statutory functions in relation to children's social care and safeguarding. This includes public health as they relate to children and young people where they are not covered by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; c) Matters relating to care leavers and the transition between children's and adult services d) The welfare of unaccompanied young asylum seekers e) Services for Young Carers

How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets at least 4 times a year. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

See guidance note on the back page.

3. **Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)**

The Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2025 and to receive information arising from them.

4. **Petitions and Public Address**

Members of the public who wish to speak on a substantive item on the agenda at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9.00 a.m. three working days before the meeting, i.e., Tuesday 23 September, 2025.

Requests should be submitted to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9.00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

Where there are a number of requests from persons wishing to present similar views on the same issue, the Chair may require that the views be put by a single spokesperson. It is expected that only in exceptional circumstances will a person (or organisation) be allowed to address more than one meeting on a particular issue in any period of six months.

The public is reminded that the Committee is not a decision-making body and that it cannot investigate individual complaints. The Committee requests that no individual children are named when addressing the Committee.

5. **Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership - Annual Report (Pages 9 - 40)**

The Committee has requested to receive the annual report for 2024/25 of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services, Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education, and Laura Gadjus, Business Manager, have been invited to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

6. **Youth Justice Annual Plan 2025-26** (Pages 41 - 96)

The Committee has requested to receive the Youth Justice Annual Plan.

The Committee has invited Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education, Jessie Dobson, Service Manager: Adolescence and Prevention, have been invited to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

7. **Attendance** (Pages 97 - 124)

The Committee has requested a report on attendance.

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education, Kim Wilson, Assistant Director: Schools and Settings (Standards, Effectiveness and Performance), and Jaswinder Disialy, Assistant Director: Schools and Settings (Sufficiency), have been invited to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

8. **Committee Forward Work Plan** (Pages 125 - 128)

The Committee is recommended to **AGREE** its work programme for forthcoming meetings, having heard any changes from previous iterations, and taking account of the Cabinet Forward Plan and of the Budget Management Monitoring Report, as well as of the report submitted at item 6 to the Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Friday 12 September 2025,
<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1172&MId=7845>

The Cabinet Forward Plan can be found here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=448&RP=115>

The most recent BMMR, submitted to Cabinet in March 2025, can be found here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=7477&Ver=4>

9. **Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker** (Pages 129 - 134)

The Committee is recommended to **NOTE** the progress of previous recommendations and actions arising from previous meetings, having raised any questions on the contents.

10. **Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations** (Pages 135 - 142)

Attached are the Cabinet responses to the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports on:

- The Children's Homes Update
- The Education Other Than At School policy

- S.19 of the Education Act: Response To The Report Of The Local Government And Social Care Ombudsman
- Home to School Transport Policy

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the response.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 11 July 2025 commencing at 10.03 am and finishing at 12.29 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE - in the Chair
Councillor Rebekah Fletcher
Councillor Georgina Heritage
Councillor Johnny Hope-Smith
Councillor Emma Markham
Councillor James Plumb
Councillor John Shiri

Co-Optee Members: Katie N

Other Members in Attendance: Cllr Dr Izzy Creed (virtually)
Peace Nnaji (virtually)
Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People;
Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet member for Finance, Property, and Transformation

Officers: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer
Stephen Chandler, Executive Director of People
Vic Kurzeja, Director of Property and Assets
Anthony Hulsman, Head of Property Operations
Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director for County Services;
Delia Mann, Assistant Director of Early Help & Prevention;
Senay Nidai, Assistant Director for Safeguarding;
Deborah Smit, Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion;
Kim Wilson, Assistant Director for Schools and Settings - Standards, Effectiveness and Performance
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer
Ben Piper, Democratic Services Officer

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

34/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Graham, Cllr Overton (substitute: Cllr Fletcher), and from co-optees, Hana G and Toby Long.

Apologies were also received from Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion, and Jean Kelly, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care.

Cllr Dr Izzy Creed and co-optee Peace Nnaji attended virtually with the consent of the Chair.

35/25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Subject to correcting the typographical error on page 2 ('draught' to become 'draft'), substituting 'declined to do so at this stage' for 'decided against' in the tenth paragraph of agenda item No. 8, and inserting 'now' between 'Council' and 'conducted' at in the ninth paragraph of agenda item No.8, the Committee **AGREED** the minutes for the 13 June 2025 meeting as an accurate record.

Under matters arising, a question was raised as to whether the EOTAS parent-carer guidance would return to the Committee in accordance with the Committee's recommendation given that it was currently on the Cabinet agenda for approval at its meeting on 15 July 2025. Later in the course of the meeting, the Cabinet member for Children and Young People stated that it had been erroneously submitted and that an amended recommendation would be moved by Cabinet.

36/25 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

Subject to correcting the error on page 2 ('draught' to become 'draft'), substituting 'declined to do so at this stage' for 'decided against' in the tenth paragraph of agenda item No. 8, and inserting 'now' between 'Council' and 'conducted' at in the ninth paragraph of agenda item No.8, the Committee **AGREED** the minutes of the 13 June 2025 meeting as an accurate record.

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37/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

38/25 SCHOOL CATERING SERVICE - PROPOSED CHANGE OF PROVISION FOR SCHOOLS

(Agenda No. 5)

39/25 CORPORATE CLEANING SERVICE - PROPOSED OUT-SOURCE OF IN-HOUSE CLEANING SERVICE

(Agenda No. 6)

The Chair stated that items 5 and 6 would be grouped, with reports introduced and discussed separately, since both required parts to be addressed in a private session.

The Committee invited Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, and Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member Children and Young People, Stephen Chandler, Executive Director of People,, Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, Vic Kurzeja, Director of Property and Assets, and Anthony Hulsman, Head of Property Operations, were invited to present a report on proposals for the Council's school catering service and one on the corporate cleaning service.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation introduced the items and mentioned the need to discuss these items in a private session owing to commercial sensitivities. The focus was on making efficiencies for financial reasons, ensuring fairness to those involved, and maintaining service quality.

The Director of Property and Assets provided a short presentation on School Catering Services and explained the background and reasons for the proposed changes in the catering services. He highlighted that the current delivery model was not financially sustainable, even after implementing several efficiencies. The service could not break even owing to insufficient volume and the need to increase meal prices to an unreasonable level. The Council needed to consider alternative solutions.

Members asked about competitors and it was established that the main competitor was the Oxford Lunch Company, which had been bought out, although there were several other competitors.

The number of rural schools serviced was highlighted, with a focus on small village schools that could not sustain on-site catering facilities. The implications of contracting out services for these rural schools were discussed, emphasising the need to support them through delivery services.

Members were keen to confirm that the quality of food would be guaranteed by engaging leading catering services that adhere to the same standards of quality and nutrition. The Committee was given that assurance.

The Director of Property and Assets provided a short presentation on the Corporate Cleaning Service. He explained that the Council had previously outsourced 50% of its cleaning services, which had resulted in significant savings and maintained high service quality. The proposal was to extend this outsourcing to the remaining

cleaning services, including several schools, to further reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Following the overview of corporate cleaning services, it was confirmed that several schools would be affected by the proposed contract and that a number of these schools were small rural schools.

After the introductions, the Committee resolved to exclude the public for the duration of the items under discussion as the information provided in Annex 1 to each report were deemed to contain exempt information and the public interest was weighted in favour of considering the information in private as the information related to a current commercial negotiation.

In discussion about the School Catering Service, the Committee explored the following areas:

- It was confirmed that there would be no redundancies, as all staff would be transferred under Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) regulations, with their terms and conditions maintained.
- Due diligence to consider local partners. It was explained that the focus was on finding specialised catering organisations with the same values and principles. It was noted that some local providers were identified, and the preferred direction was to keep the business within Oxfordshire.
- It was confirmed that diversifying the catering contract into other areas such as adult social care was explored, but it was determined that the risks and benefits did not justify the expansion. The focus remained on improving the current school catering service.
- It was confirmed that the impact of rising free school meal eligibility without a commensurate increase in Government reimbursement posed a significant risk to the business, as the number of children eligible for free school meals was expected to continue to grow. This would strain the budget further.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People indicated that the Schools Forum appreciated the economic rationale for outsourcing catering and cleaning services. While some concerns were expressed, especially in relation to rural schools, the necessity of the proposed measures was recognised.

The Committee resolved to **NOTE** the report and members were content for officers to use their judgment and due diligence when it came to deciding which of the options proposed in the report should be recommended to Cabinet.

The Committee then focused on Corporate Cleaning Service outsourcing. The Director of Property and Assets reported that initially outsourcing 50% of services had saved costs while maintaining quality. A proposal was made to extend outsourcing to all cleaning services, including seven schools, aiming for further savings and operational efficiency. The Council sought to reduce financial exposure, keep two

area managers for contract oversight, and build on the previous successful transfer to Parkers.

Under the previous arrangement, all staff had been transferred to the new provider, with only one redundancy. The Head of Property Operations noted proactive union engagement to protect staff terms, conditions, and pensions, all honoured by the provider through a pass-through contract.

The Committee explored the following in discussion:

- It was confirmed that the contract would affect seven schools and various corporate sites, including County Hall and other council facilities within the city.
- It was confirmed that all staff members would be transferred under TUPE regulations, ensuring their terms and conditions, including pensions, were protected.

The possibility of future redundancies was acknowledged but the primary goal was to protect staff and to maintain their employment terms. Additionally, it was emphasised that vulnerable workers would be protected, and the new contracts would ensure that their needs were considered and supported.

- Whether retaining only two Area Managers and part funding the Operational Manager was sufficient. It was explained that two Area Managers would be retained to manage the contracts and ensure service quality. This decision was made after assessing the workload and engaging with the area managers, who confirmed that they could effectively manage the contracts with the adjusted responsibilities.
- Trade union engagement and communication with directly affected staff. It was explained that the unions would be engaged once approval was received, and all documentation would be shared with them.

The unions had been involved in the previous tender process, ensuring terms and conditions, including pensions, were protected. The intention was to replicate this process, ensuring the chosen provider recognised unions. Communication with staff would include informing them of the situation, their rights under TUPE, and offering support through well-being services and direct engagement opportunities.

The Committee **AGREED** to make recommendations to Cabinet relating to both reports under the following headings:

- That the Council should work to ensure that rural schools are protected and receive high quality catering services.
- That the Council should ensure that the rights of existing staff members will be protected, and that trade unions will be consulted and engaged throughout the process.

The Committee resolved to end the exclusion of the public and to return to public session.

40/25 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN (Agenda No. 7)

In order to inform its work planning, the Committee had invited officers from across Children's Services to advise and invited the Cabinet member for Children and Young People and the Cabinet member for Finance to take part in the discussion. The following officers attended

- Stephen Chandler, Executive Director for People;
- Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director for County Services;
- Delia Mann, Assistant Director of Early Help & Prevention;
- Senay Nidai, Assistant Director Safeguarding;
- Deborah Smit, Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion;
- Kim Wilson, Assistant Director for Schools and Settings - Standards, Effectiveness and Performance.

The Chair opened by stressing the need to prioritise children in the Council's plans, given the 150,000 children and young people in Oxfordshire. The Committee had requested a comprehensive data pack, setting out information relating to children's social care and to education, and the Chair recommended a structured review of the data to clearly understand what it shows about this group.

The Assistant Directors were invited to give an overview of key points relating to their respective service area.

The new Assistant Director for Schools and Settings stressed the need to improve literacy and numeracy in primary schools, particularly for vulnerable groups such as white British boys on free school meals and she announced an upcoming year-long reading initiative.

The Assistant Director of Early Help & Prevention highlighted attendance as key, especially for children under child protection plans, and called for joint work between social care and education. She reported a 17% drop in child protection plans and a 5% reduction in children in need plans, crediting multi-agency collaboration, whilst noting stable demand at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion noted that the number of Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) had risen above national averages, with over 8,000 expected in Oxfordshire, and stressed the importance of early interventions like special school outreach and SENCO support to improve outcomes.

The Assistant Director for County Services emphasised reducing out-of-county placements and increasing local foster carers, given a national decline of 4,000 Council carers. The steady number of children in care and fewer child protection plans signalled successful prevention.

The Assistant Director Safeguarding echoed the need to improve attendance for vulnerable children, starting in nurseries, and underscored the value of early help strategies to prevent statutory interventions by identifying needs sooner.

Members noted that the data relating to complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman did not set out clearly that, of the complaints investigated, all had been upheld. The Executive Director of People committed to feeding back to the committee full data of complaints and compliments the council received.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People mentioned that the Independent Chair of the SEND Improvement Assurance Board, had been taken aback by the disproportionality in the percentage of school-age children with SEND support in Oxfordshire. This highlighted a significant concern regarding the higher number of children requiring SEND support in Oxfordshire.

The Committee discussed attendance; Local Authority influence with academy schools; the School Improvement team; Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs; Education and Health Care Needs Assessments and Education and Health Care Plans; early intervention and SEND Support. The number of children in care not in education, employment or training was discussed as was the need for more foster carers. Trauma-informed education, attainment, and co-production were also discussed. Early years and Best Start centres were raised too.

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Chair, the drawing up of a provisional work programme. The Committee **AGREED** to receive the Youth Justice Annual Statement and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report at its meeting on 26 September.

During the course of the municipal year, the Committee anticipated scrutinising:

- SEND, recognising the potential impact of a new White Paper, including SEND Support and the graduated approach;
- Co-production in Children's Services: how is this embedded across service areas;
- Fostering;
- Attainment including attainment gaps;
- Educational Data (once validated)
- Attendance
- Early Years

The Committee also agreed to invite the Regional Schools Commissioner to meet the Committee regarding academies in the county and that the Independent Chair of the SEND Improvement Advisory Board should also be invited to attend a future meeting on SEND. The Committee also agreed to consider full information on comments and complaints across Children's Services and relational and restorative work across the Local Area Partnership.

The Committee **NOTED** the work programme for the next meeting, with an updated programme for the remainder of the year to be drawn up.

The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to officers for their attendance and for their preparation and engagement.

41/25 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER
(Agenda No. 8)

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendation tracker.

42/25 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS
(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet response to the report on The Virtual School.

Before the Chair closed the meeting, the Executive Director of People explained that Fridays were consistently difficult for senior officers and requested that the Committee consider moving its meetings to another weekday. The Committee **AGREED** to this in principle and **DELEGATED** to the Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Chair and the Deputy Chair, to engage with officers to identify potential alternatives.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Divisions Affected -

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26th September 2025

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) Annual Report 2024-25

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED** to note the annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership strategic safeguarding partners and to consider the key messages.

Executive Summary

2. This paper highlights findings from the Partnership's annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

Background

3. Local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are the collective responsibility of chief officers in the County Council, the Integrated Care Board and Thames Valley Police.
4. These three senior safeguarding partners agree ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services for children; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents. Under current arrangements they work with relevant partners through the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, under the leadership of an Independent Chair. The arrangement is referred to as the "Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP)".

Key Issues

5. The OSCP Annual Report 2024-5 sets out the safeguarding challenges in Oxfordshire. The report shows the need to improve practice with respect to the themes of: (1) Neglect (2) Child exploitation/Harm outside the home and (3) Safety in Education.
6. There are key messages for system leaders to bring a collective focus to:
 - Consolidate and embed the new MASA (Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements).
 - Strengthen the voice of children and families within planning, scrutiny, and delivery.
 - Improve our data infrastructure to inform targeted safeguarding interventions.
 - Focus on high-impact issues—neglect, exploitation as ongoing priorities.
 - Build a culture of learning and challenge that supports continuous improvement.
7. Over the last year there were two serious incident notifications were submitted to the National Panel, resulting in Rapid Reviews. One of these reviews did not lead to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) and this was agreed with National Panel on the basis that all key learning had been identified as part of the Rapid Review process.
8. At present, one CSPR remains active, with the Partnership currently finalising arrangements with the national panel. Eight key recommendations, along with priority areas for partnership-wide reflection and learning, are actively being advanced across the partnership.
9. The follow safeguarding common themes have been identified in reviews last year locally and nationally:
 - Children with complex mental health/emotional needs.
 - Limited access to universal mental and physical support for children not in school (electively home educated).
 - Assessing risks and providing support for the whole family.
 - Recognising and responding to the vulnerabilities of babies and adolescents.
 - Understanding the roles of fathers/male carers and extended family members.
 - Best practices identified and implemented.

Strategic Policies and Priorities

10. The report outlines the Safeguarding Children Partnership's priorities, the learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, the outcomes of quality assurance work and the summarised findings with respect to the unexpected child deaths in Oxfordshire.

Financial Implications

11. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. There is no requirement for the council to commit any further financial resources towards the Partnership beyond what is currently committed.

Comments checked by:

Lewis Gosling, Assistant Finance Business Partner (Children's Social Care),
lewis.gosling@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

12. There are no legal implications for the Local Authority

Comments checked by:

Leanne Schrouder, Locum SEN and Education Solicitor,
leanne.schrouder@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

13. There are no additional staff resources being requested by way of this report for the work outlined in the Annual Report.

Comments checked by:

Michelle Higgs, Strategic People Partner Children's and Education,
michelle.higgs@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

14. There are no additional equality & inclusion implications.

Sustainability Implications

15. The Board have moved much of its work to a virtual environment, reducing travel congestion, and no longer prints any materials for Board meetings or training sessions, instead making these available electronically. It has also reduced

printing & design costs by making more things, such as this annual report, plain text on the OSCP website.

Risk Management

16. The Partnership is made up of the partners who attend the meetings, supported by a small team in the Business Unit. If organisations do not continue to provide the level of engagement with the work of the Partnership it is likely it would fail to meet its duties laid out in statute and its accompanying guidance. As the Local Authority is one of the safeguarding partners to work together under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017), and Working Together 2023, to ensure the Partnership is established and running well, this would represent a reputational risk. It is also likely any such failings would be highlighted under the Ofsted framework and in any resulting published report.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children Services

Annex: OSCP Annual Report

Contact Officer: Laura Gajdus
Business Manager - OSCP
laura.gajdus@oxfordshire.gov.uk

August 2025



Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP)

**Yearly Report
2024/2025**

Foreword by Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs)

We are pleased to present the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) Yearly Report for the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. We want to thank our front-line practitioners and managers for their dedication to championing positive outcomes and well-being for children in Oxfordshire. Their daily commitment, dedication, and care are what keep children safe.

Over the past year, we have taken the time to review and refresh our safeguarding arrangements. This work will continue into 2025-26, with further information to be published on our website in accordance with the requirements of Working Together 2023. During this period of review, several subgroups have met in person to advance the development of the groups, and we wanted to thank those colleagues for their time in coming together. This Yearly Report for 2024/2025 sets out the work, progress, and complex issues the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is proactively addressing, in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

This year has also seen changes in the Chair's role within the partnership. In January 2025, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children Services, Education and Families (DCS), assumed the role of Chair, with Ian Sutherland transitioning from Chair to the Independent Scrutineer role. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian for his contributions in supporting the partnership to strengthen our safeguarding arrangements and look forward to leveraging his expertise in Scrutiny in the coming year.

This year marked the formal publication and the beginning of the implementation of Oxfordshire's updated Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) framework. Our priorities—neglect, exploitation/harm outside the home, and safety in education—remain unchanged to ensure embedding and long-term impact. This report outlines our progress, areas of challenge, key data trends, learning from reviews, and our forward-looking priorities. Work has continued throughout the year on our safeguarding priorities, and this report highlights the developments that have taken place and the opportunities for further work in the coming year.

The report highlights how local safeguarding arrangements have evolved in response to national reforms, with particular emphasis on the implementation of the revised Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). These changes mark a significant shift towards more transparent, child-centred, and system-wide approaches to safeguarding children and young people in Oxfordshire.

This annual report was approved by The Executive Group on 2nd July 2025. In line with statutory requirements and best practice, this annual report will be shared with:

- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Health and Wellbeing Board
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board

Jason Hogg, Dr Nick Broughton and Martin Reeves – add roles and signatures in here

Independent Scrutineer Statement

I wanted to start by saying that the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children in Oxfordshire remain robust and have been strengthened through its effective implementation of the revised Working Together guidance. There is evidence of a strong commitment to safeguarding children at senior levels across all agencies. The statutory partners and other agencies demonstrate both the ability and willingness to collaboratively address complex safeguarding issues with determination and shared purpose to improve the lives of our children and families.

I was appointed as the Independent Chair/Scrutineer in February 2024 under the previous arrangements of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB). Since January 2025, I have transitioned into the role of Independent Scrutineer for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP). The focus of the Scrutineer in 2024-25 was to assist, support, and advise the OSCB on its review of structures, considering local needs and the requirements of new Government guidance.

The Scrutineer fulfils a leadership role within the partnership and works alongside the Designated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) and Local Safeguarding Partners (LSPs). The Independent Scrutineer plays a key role in ensuring that the partnership continues to drive for continuous improvement in the delivery of services to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. Essentially, the Scrutineer operates as a 'critical friend' by offering challenge and support, based on an understanding and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data available to partners, and by accessing the lived experience of children, young people, and professionals to test and validate how well our system is working for them. The functions of the Independent Scrutineer are outlined in section 89 of "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023."

The Independent Scrutineer plan in Oxfordshire has been set out and agreed upon by the Executive Group for 2025-26 based on national guidance. The scrutiny plan will focus on developing a comprehensive appraisal of the performance of the partnership in the following areas:

- Leadership and Governance
- Learning from Reviews – local and national
- Performance Analysis and Quality Assurance
- Learning and Development of Practice
- Participation and Engagement

The priorities include:

- Neglect
- Child Exploitation/Harm outside the home
- MASA Operational Effectiveness
- Children in Detained Settings
- Voice of Children and Young People

I have supported and challenged the discussions of the Child Safeguarding Practice sub-group about cases where children have suffered serious harm due to child abuse or neglect. I participated in high-quality analytical discussions about these cases, where managers from different agencies came together to discuss openly how to overcome challenges. The partnership in Oxfordshire faces similar key practice challenges to those experienced by other local safeguarding partnerships, such as balancing the commitment to empowering parents and carers while ensuring children's safety.

It is very positive that the OSCP has set itself some highly challenging questions to answer about seeking to resolve a range of safeguarding issues that can be intractable across the country. It is encouraging that agencies in Oxfordshire can build on their strengths to focus on these questions while continuing to ensure that the current systems are working effectively. The leaders in the partnership have used the self-assessment to identify key areas for improvement, particularly the collection and analysis of the data relating to the safety and well-being of children in a more integrated, and planned action is being progressed to address this important partnership function.

There is also clear leadership and priority given to safeguarding in each of the statutory agencies (local authority, NHS, and police), as well as in schools and the voluntary and community sector groups working in Oxfordshire. The senior leaders of the statutory agencies meet every two months and often more frequently, demonstrating both an ability to work well together and to challenge one another and resolve disagreements with or without the need for the Independent Scrutineer's involvement. Whilst the senior leaders are clearly engaged there is still scope to strengthen communication, as these strategic relationships develop further.

There are and will continue to be challenges in a large county with some areas made up of people living in poverty. Furthermore, Oxfordshire is also host to regional and national services such as paediatric services at local hospitals and other specialised facilities.

In summary, the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children in Oxfordshire are strong, and this strength will enhance the ability to meet future challenges in terms of safeguarding children. The introduction of the dedicated role of independent scrutiny, replacing the independent chair function, will further strengthen the OSCP's resilience in the future.

Ian Sutherland

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Sutherland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Independent Scrutineer

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1. About Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Oxfordshire is renowned for its picturesque villages, centuries-old structures and numerous heritage sites. The county is home to approximately 150,000 children and young people under the age of 18. According to the 2021 Census, the largest ethnic group in Oxfordshire is White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British (76.8%), while 23.2% of residents come from non-white British backgrounds.

This year, safeguarding systems in Oxfordshire have continued to strengthen through the rigorous review of the arrangements throughout this year. In December 2023, the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance outlined updated legislative safeguarding requirements for individuals, organisations, and agencies. It established a framework for the three local safeguarding partners—the local authority, Integrated Care Board, and local police force—to collaborate in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs.

In preparation for the new guidance and in response to its publication, the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) in Oxfordshire dedicated this year to ensuring that the safeguarding arrangements in the county are as robust as possible. A three-year strategic plan (2024-2027) was developed to ensure readiness for the updated guidance. This plan was updated in January 2024 following the publication of the guidance and was further enhanced by a development plan overseen by the LSPs. This plan will ensure the implementation of the new Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance and enable the partnership to monitor progress.

The new arrangements are published on our website and can be found [here](#), in line with the requirements of Working Together 2023, and the current arrangements are described in this report.

2. OSCP Executive

The [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) statutory guidance sets out the multi-agency responsibilities for delivering effective help, support, and protection to children and their families. This guidance is applicable to all organisations and professionals working directly with children and families. As part of the government's Children's Social Care [:Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy](#), a series of reforms have been introduced to transform the children's social care system. Additionally, the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) represents a significant step towards achieving the government's Opportunity Mission—aimed at breaking the link between a young person's background and their future outcomes. The revised Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, published in December 2023, marks the initial phase of these reforms, with a strong emphasis on:

- Strengthening multi-agency collaboration across the entire system of help, support, and protection for children and their families.
- Promoting a child-centred approach within a whole family focus.
- Ensuring strong, effective, and consistent child protection practices.

The guidance also emphasises the role and accountability of the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) for the effectiveness and outcomes of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) in their local areas. The government has directed safeguarding partners in every local area to comply with a number of areas which are laid out in the

Implementing the Requirements of Working Together 2023 - Local Response

The implementation of the Working Together 2023 requirements in Oxfordshire was coordinated through the leadership structure of the MASA Executive Group in partnership with the Chair/Scrutineer of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB). The revised statutory guidance was introduced to the group agenda, initiating early discussions in compliance with the requirements in January 2024. A detailed action plan was developed, outlining the activities undertaken in preparation for publishing revised multi-agency arrangements in December 2024. This plan included a series of workshops, development events, and meetings. Partners worked with national facilitators to understand how best to review and strengthen multi-agency working across the entire system of help, support, and protection for children and their families at a local level, using a 'Health Check' self-assessment tool to identify necessary reforms to comply with the statutory guidance.

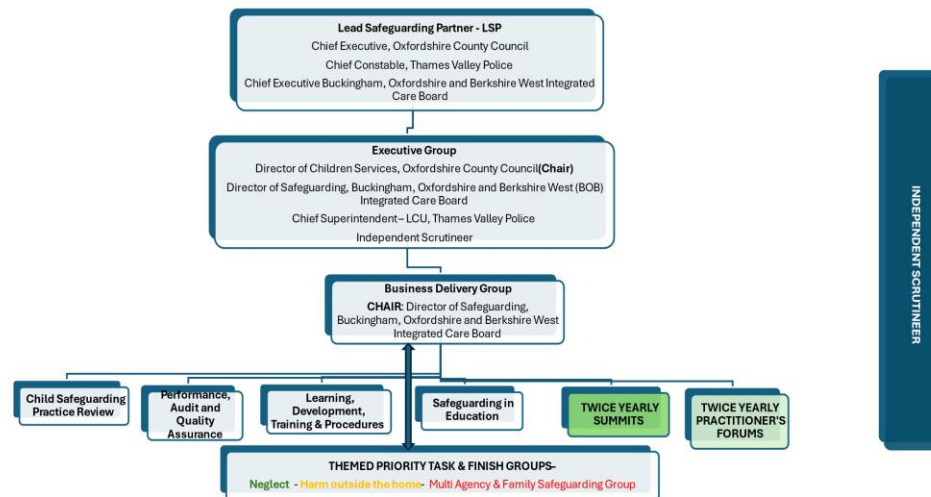
The significant changes made ahead of publishing new safeguarding arrangements governing Oxfordshire's borders includes:

- Naming Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs).
- Naming Delegate Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) with a scheme of delegation setting out the responsibilities for delivering multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes.

- Appointing an Independent Scrutineer to have full oversight of the arrangements to review and reform the MASA in response to the Working Together 2023 requirements.
- Rebranding from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP).
- Restructuring the position and direction of groups retained from the former OSCB deemed necessary to support the delivery of the MASA across the county.
- The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership published the MASA for the local area on 11th December 2024, establishing the framework endorsed and committed to by the LSPs.

The structure diagram below was agreed upon and came into effect from 1st January 2025 following the publication of the new arrangement document in December 2024.

OSCP Structure: 1st January 2025



3. OSCP Priority areas – What has been achieved this year?

The priority groups below is the work completed in the previous arrangements of the board.

Child Exploitation

The Child Exploitation (CE) Sub Group has been actively working on several key areas to enhance the safety and well-being of children in Oxfordshire. Below is a summary of the significant initiatives and observations discussed during this reporting year.

Multi-Agency Exploitation Procedures

Work is ongoing through the Business Unit to update the multi-agency exploitation procedures available to practitioners in Oxfordshire. This update will include local guidance relating to various forms of child exploitation, such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children from Abroad, including Victims of Modern Slavery
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Gang Activity, Youth Violence, and Criminal Exploitation

Harm Outside the Home

The group is reviewing Oxfordshire's response to child exploitation and harm outside the home by examining national good practices. Children Services are developing a new process for addressing harm outside the home. The existing Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Process (MARAMP) is also being reviewed for potential improvements. Partners, including Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), Health, Police, and schools, will be consulted for their involvement in these processes.

School Attendance and Criminal Exploitation

Observations from the Missing and Exploitation panel have identified a clear link between school attendance and children at risk of criminal exploitation. The Institute of Public Policy estimated that 63% of the prison population had been excluded during their time at school. The group is mapping schools where children have been excluded or are on reduced timetables with data around child exploitation to identify areas of concern and where to deploy resources.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Pilot and Modern Slavery

The NRM pilot has identified several children from Africa, coming via Libya into the UK, who report being victims of modern slavery in Libya. The exploitation includes drug trafficking, domestic servitude, and slavery. Further work will be undertaken with this group to address their needs and provide support.

These initiatives reflect the CE Sub Group's commitment to safeguarding children and addressing the complex issues surrounding child exploitation in Oxfordshire. The collaborative efforts of various partners and stakeholders are crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of these strategies.

Neglect

Neglect Subgroup Key Areas

The Neglect Subgroup has continued to be well-attended by all agencies, with regular submissions of service and agency action plans and progress reports. Recognising the importance of regular sessions for leaders in neglect to exchange information and support partnership activities, the subgroup will remain active for another year into 2025 to consolidate the aims of the strategy.

Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) Health Visitor Training and Joint Working with Children Social Care

The subgroup has been working on GCP2 health visitor training and joint working with Children's Social Care (CSC). Additionally, a reviewed tool for screening, which mirrors GCP2, will replace the THRIVE tool, as it was not being utilized by the partnership and was considered too lengthy. The new tool is expected to be endorsed in 2025.

Impact and Outcomes

The subgroup has seen several positive impacts and outcomes:

The number of Strength and Needs Assessments (S&NA) for neglect in 0-5 year olds has continued to improve, increasing from 42 per quarter in 2022/23 to 74 in 2023/24.

- A higher proportion of children starting a Child in Need plan for neglect have previously had an S&NA completed, with about half in Q3 and Q4.
- The number of children starting a Child Protection (CP) plan for neglect is decreasing, both as a raw number and as a percentage of all new CP plans.

These initiatives and outcomes reflect the Neglect Subgroup's commitment to improving practice and supporting children affected by neglect through collaborative efforts and strategic planning

Safeguarding in Education (SiE)

At the July 2024 meeting, the Safeguarding in Education group received several important updates and information on various initiatives and progress. Here is a summary of the key areas discussed:

Operation Encompass

Thames Valley Police (TVP) shared an update regarding concerns previously raised about information sharing through [Operation Encompass](#). This initiative is designed to mitigate the long-term effects of domestic abuse by enabling early intervention and support. When police attend incidents involving domestic violence or abuse where children are present—either directly or indirectly—they notify the designated safeguarding lead at the child's school before the start of the next school day. This ensures the child receives timely and appropriate support. In addition, school staff are offered training to help them recognise and support children affected by domestic abuse. Operation Encompass is active across all police forces in the UK and is available to every school. Where capacity allows, it also extends to registered nurseries, pre-schools, and childminders.

Alternative Provision (AP)

An update was provided on the numbers of children attending alternative provision and the emerging needs and opportunities for targeted support. The largest group of children accessing AP are those requiring behaviour support. The number of approved AP providers is increasing, and there is a focus on supporting further school-based AP. An AP strategy has been developed, and SiE will continue to champion and support the implementation.

Impact and Outcomes

- **Operation Encompass:** the group is assured that robust and effective plans are in place to address the identified issues with Operation Encompass and will continue to monitor progress against the implementation of these improvements.
- **Alternative Provision:** the group is assured that there is greater clarity on the numbers of children accessing AP and will continue to monitor the implementation of the AP strategy.

These updates reflect the ongoing efforts and commitment of the group to improve safeguarding practices and support the well-being of children in education.

Implementing the MASA

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) has an active implementation plan detailing the activities to be undertaken following the publication of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and during the transitional stages. This plan includes clarifying and refining the agreed structures and groups to deliver the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, as well as the strategic priorities required to deliver effective MASA.

The implementation plan provides a brief account of the progress made to date, showing attention in all areas within scope, albeit with some variation in the pace of change. Key details include:

Review of Subgroups: Chairs and groups have reviewed the direction outlined in the MASA, prompting a reconsideration of roles and expectations. They have agreed on Terms of Reference (TORs) and developed workplans to translate these TORs into a structured plan. This plan will guide their efforts and measure success, ensuring everything stays on track. Additionally, the structure and functions of the groups will inform each other's work, leading to increased collaboration and triangulation of key elements. For example, learnings from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews will impact training, procedures, and auditing work for the partnership.

Review of Strategic Priority Groups: The OSCP has mainly retained the same priorities (Neglect and Child Exploitation) from the former arrangements of OSCB, these were framed across the whole system of help, support, and multi-agency protection. The third strategic priority is the introduction of a whole systems approach to family safeguarding.

1. CHILD NEGLECT

- Enabling partners to work together to act early to protect those at risk of abuse or neglect
- Exploring the right help is given to children at the right time along specific themes (i.e. Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Children with Disabilities.)

2. CHILD EXPLOITATION & CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

- Ensuring Targeted multi agency support, intervention and effective multi-agency practice to protect those at risk of harm outside the home, and exploitation, in all its forms
- Improving our Contextual Safeguarding approach to Exploitation.

3. MULTI-AGENCY PROTECTION:

- understanding the partnership approach to risks across processes
- examining the application and impact of the threshold to support, including the reviewing of multi-agency meetings

Summit and Practitioners Events: The formation of these events is currently being put into place. The Business Delivery Group (BDG) and the Learning, Development, Training & Procedures Groups are in the early stages of considering their roles, expectations, TORs, and work activities. The arrangements for these events will be reflected in their planning.

Strategic Safeguarding Boards Protocol: One of the key activity from the 2024 review of the safeguarding board arrangements was a strengthened focus and clearer understanding of the safeguarding activities being carried out across various boards and partnerships. These bodies share responsibilities and accountabilities for safeguarding within the county. As a result, the recommendation to establish Oxfordshire's Joint Statutory, Strategic Partnership & Boards was implemented. Group members have been identified, and the first meeting—initiated by the OSCP Business Manager—was held on 10 March 2025. The intention is for the chairing of strategic partnership groups to rotate, with a highlight report from each meeting shared with the Business Unit (for onward sharing at the Business Delivery Group), following the agreed meeting frequency.

Business Unit: The necessity and dependency on strong business support to coordinate all requirements to demonstrate effective safeguarding arrangements is a priority for the business unit. Work is currently underway to align the OSCP business team to the new arrangements, aiming to have the right positions to better coordinate and assist the partnership in evidencing effective safeguarding arrangements.

4. Funding arrangements

The Working Together 2023 guidance states that the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) should agree on the level of funding required to deliver multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions such as local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training, and learning events. It is the responsibility of the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed upon by the LSPs. The funding for these arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements. The funding partners have continued their commitment to supporting the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Most of the budget is allocated to staffing the business unit, with professional services, including the undertaking of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) which require an independent commissioned author, being the next largest area of expenditure. This year has seen an underspend, primarily due to vacancies in staffing within the business unit. The underspend will be allocated to a reserve budget, which the partnership will utilise in the coming year to address identified gaps in response to learning from reviews, OSCP priorities, and the findings of any relevant inspections.

5. What do we know – Data

Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance (PAQA) Subgroup

The Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance (PAQA) subgroup is responsible for monitoring, overseeing, and scrutinising data. For the coming year, the audit plan will be responsive to data analysis, with a workplan that includes broader data analysis from across the partnership. The local authority performance team has been providing a rich source of data for this subgroup to consider and analyse. This openness reflects the local authority's commitment to identifying challenges and seeking opportunities. Plans are in place to review the data dashboard in line with the OSCP priorities and to include data from wider partners. Data has always come from health and police but has always been collated by the local authority.

Child Protection Systems

Child protection data is routinely examined by children's services, with findings shared and analysed as required across the partnership via subgroups. As of April 2024, the number of children subject to a child protection plan is 17% below that of our statistical neighbours and is decreasing—6% lower than this time last year and 30% lower than two years ago (196 fewer children). This reduction aligns with the reinvigoration of the Family Safeguarding Approach. Fewer children are starting a plan, 17% less than our statistical neighbours, and children are on a plan for slightly less time than elsewhere. At the end of

December 2024, 19% of children had been on a plan for more than a year compared with 20% elsewhere. The timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) is in line with similar authorities, and in the last two months, all ICPCs were on time. All children who were on a plan at the end of the quarter had been reviewed on time.

A July 2024 analysis of children on a child protection plan shows that children from a mixed ethnic background are over-represented compared to the current reception to Year 11 school population (10.3% compared to 7.5%). Children from an Asian background are under-represented (7.0% compared to 12.1%), while children from a black ethnic background on a child protection plan are slightly above the school population (10.2% compared to 9.2%).

Children We Care For

167 children became children we care for between April and December 2024. 28 of the 167 are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) (17%). At the end of January 2025 785 children (including 87 UASC) were cared for. Consistent with authorities across England, Oxfordshire is seeing growth in the child-in-care population. The proportion of our care leavers in education, employment, and training is in the top quartile nationally, with 95.6% of 16–17-year-olds in education, employment, or training. The rates of permanent exclusion and suspension are significantly lower than national averages and compared to statistical neighbours. The Partnership also has plans to bring children who are placed outside of Oxfordshire closer to home in the forthcoming year.

Support for Children and Families

Early Help in Oxfordshire: The refreshed Early Help & Prevention strategy is dedication to championing positive outcomes and well-being for children across the partnership to address unmet needs at the earliest stage. We aim to see the impact of this strategy with evidence of an increase in Strength & Needs forms as a result of this shared endeavour.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) contacts have steadily increased year on year. To address this, efforts are underway to encourage partner agencies to enhance their quality assurance processes for referrals before they are submitted to MASH, thereby reducing referrals where thresholds are not met and other avenues of support are available. It is also recognised that many referrers include MASH as part of their pathways and may feel unable to provide support themselves or are not commissioned to offer specific support. One of the priorities for the upcoming year will be revising the threshold of need document. This revision aims to align the partnership's efforts in supporting and identifying children and their families more effectively and based on identified needs achieving a timely response. In 2023/24 **29,770** contacts were received, (82 per day). This led to **5203 referrals** (331 per 10,000 children). 21% of our referrals were families that had been re-referred within 12 months. In the six months to March 2025 this has reduced to 15%.

In 2023/24, MASH completed 95% of red enquiries and 66% of non-red enquiries within the required timescales, against targets of 90% and 75% respectively. To improve performance, revised duty and allocation arrangements were introduced, supported by a new Operating Protocol. As a result, between July 2024 and January 2025, 97% of red enquiries and 73% of non-red enquiries were completed within timescales.

The MASH Steering Group and operational group has been working hard to collectively monitor and review multi-agency activities. We have conducted multi-agency audits to enhance the understanding of MASH thresholds and outcomes across the partnership. The key themes identified include:

- Checks and Decisions: Additional checks are necessary to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Police Checks: Revisiting police checks to improve decision-making when new intelligence arises between enquiries.
- Referral Quality: Emphasizing the importance of communicating with referrers to improve the quality and accuracy of referrals.
- Timeliness: Making timely decisions can lead to better outcomes, while delays may risk reducing engagement or exacerbating concerns.
- Partner Agencies: to ensure the quality of referrals

These efforts are aimed at ensuring a more effective and cohesive approach to safeguarding within our community.

**red enquiry - information indicates child has suffered or at risk of suffering significant harm and immediate action may be required to safeguard the child; to be completed within 24 hours of receipt of contact.*

Children's Health

We continue to see a reduction in A&E attendances for self-harm among Oxfordshire children, with a 9% reduction in the last 12 months (57 fewer children aged 10-19) attending A&E for self-harm and a 24% reduction in hospital admissions (32 fewer children aged 15-19). However, we are seeing an increase in both A&E attendances and hospital admissions for drug-related issues.

Safe at School

119,713 pupils attending 362 schools in June 2024. 84.3% attending state funded school (primary, secondary, special). 15.3% attend independent schools – more than double the national average (6.5%).

The provisional absence rates for terms 1-2 were 6.4%, in line with the national rate of 6.2% and an improvement on the same time last year (6.9%). A total of 1,915 pupils (2.3%) were severely absent, missing 50% of their school sessions, and 13,852 pupils (17.0%) were persistently absent, missing 10% of their sessions. This figure improved from 19% for the corresponding terms last year.

6. Findings from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Serious Incident Notifications and Reviews

During this reporting year, two serious incident notifications were submitted to the National Panel, resulting in Rapid Reviews. One of these reviews did not lead to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) and this was agreed with National Panel on the basis that all key learning had been identified as part of the Rapid Review process.

At present, one CSPR remains active, with the Partnership currently finalising arrangements with the national panel. Eight key recommendations, along with priority areas for partnership-wide reflection and learning, are actively being advanced across the partnership.

Learning summaries have been produced to ensure key findings and lessons arising from the rapid reviews conducted by the partnership. These summaries are available on the OSCP website to facilitate the dissemination of learning and ensure accessibility for all partners.

Common Themes with National Reviews

- Children with complex mental health/emotional needs
- Limited access to universal mental and physical support for children not in school (electively home educated)
- Assessing risks and providing support for the whole family
- Recognizing and responding to the vulnerabilities of babies and adolescents
- Understanding the roles of fathers/male carers and extended family members
- Best practices identified and implemented

Key Actions from the Partnership

Throughout the year, safeguarding partners have demonstrated a commitment to improving multi-agency arrangements and safeguarding practices. One of the most frequently reported actions is the implementation of recommendations from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews. Safeguarding partners respond to review findings by:

- **Updating Policies, Procedures, and Guidance Documents:** The procedures subgroup met six times between April 1st, 2024, and March 31st, 2025. The group reviewed and approved twenty-one updates to TRIX chapters, including updates to procedures linked to key themes from reviews and

priority areas such as online safety, information sharing, assessments, and child criminal exploitation, including Domestic Abuse. You can register for updates [\[here\]](#).

- **Collaborative Policy Development:** The group worked with the Adults Board to develop a joint Transitional Safeguarding Policy for Oxfordshire. In response to learning from reviews, members of the group developed Pre-Birth Guidance to improve practice in relation to pre-birth assessments, revised Bruising Guidance for Mobile Children, and updated the Resolving Professional Concerns and Disagreement Policy.
- **Improving Accessibility of Procedures and Guidance:** Following feedback regarding the accessibility of procedures, protocols, and local guidance, and a change to the TRIX manual template, the business unit developed a new Safeguarding Procedures, Guidance, and Resources webpage. The new page includes a link to the TRIX manual and an A-Z of all local guidance and protocols previously held in the TRIX resource library and across other webpages.

7. Multi-agency Training and Annual Conference

Organisations must ensure that all staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training. Agencies in Oxfordshire are expected to meet the standards set out in the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding Introductory Training, Minimum Content Requirements. The Lead Safeguarding Partners are responsible for providing multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training through a blended approach, including online self-directed learning, taught online sessions, and other opportunities available via the OSCP webpage.

The Business Unit supports the Learning and Development and Procedures Subgroup to develop and promote safeguarding learning opportunities, particularly in areas of joint responsibility like domestic abuse. The OSCP 'Learning, Development and Training Framework' uses an outcomes-based accountability methodology to measure:

- **How much did we do?**
- **How well did we do it?**
- **What difference did it make to outcomes for children and young people?**

Training Delivery and Impact

Courses are delivered by volunteer trainers from the OSCP 'Training Pool,' consisting of over 80 practitioners in Oxfordshire. In the past year, the following courses were offered and attended:

Course Type	Number of Courses	Offered Places	Attended
Core courses	103	2700	2481
EY core courses	51	1260	1103

Course Type	Number of Courses	Offered Places	Attended
Themed courses	123	3121	1844
Total	277	7081	5428
Conference	1	152	117
eLearning	-	-	11,586

Impact on Practice

Participants reported increased confidence in incorporating safeguarding knowledge into their practice. For instance, the Child Exploitation course showed a learning gain from 3.87 to 4.57.

This comprehensive approach ensures that safeguarding training is effective, impactful, and continuously improving to meet the needs of children and young people.

Post course Feedback:

‘TVP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INTELLIGENCE - brilliant initiative for contextual safeguarding!’

‘.... this has been very helpful, and my toolbox has expanded’

‘Safeguarding on agenda needs to be more robust - not just pupil updates but bringing information to the meeting about latest updates, quizzes, on the spot questioning etc’.

‘I want to look at rolling out area experts as we grow our student and staff body, and start training people up early to own their areas’

‘Genograms are a useful tool I hadn't come across before’

Figure 5.

The figure below provides a breakdown of agencies across the partnership attending multi-agency training

Category	Count
Police	32
District Councils	133
Childminders	227
Nurseries	1041
Early Years Other	99
Foster Carers	21
Children Social Care	381
GPs	42
Health	194
Oxfordshire County Council Other	192
Private, Community + Voluntary Sector	430
Housing	48
Adult Social Care	42
Schools	2065
Other	598

Overall multi-agency training across the year has evaluated positively as outlined in Figure four, increasing knowledge and confidence, which is consistent with previous years. In the coming year the Learning and Development group will consider how the impact on practice and outcomes of multiagency learning and development opportunities, which includes training, can be further evidenced.

OSCB Annual Conference 2024

The OSCB Annual Conference took place on Wednesday, 10th July 2024, at Unipart, focusing on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). The event was highly anticipated and fully booked within two weeks of going live on the OSCB booking system. A total of 136 delegates and 7 speakers attended in person, with an additional 2 speakers presenting online. Members of the training pool and some board members assisted with facilitating tables and helping the OSCB business unit with setup and sign-in on the day.

Delegate Attendance and Sector Representation

Sector	Delegate Numbers
Education	41
Children's Social Care	36
Health	28
Voluntary and Community Sector	12
Other	9
Thames Valley Police	7
District Councils	3
Housing	0

Keynote and Speaker Highlights

The conference featured a mix of local and national speakers, with a keynote presentation by Jane Wiffin from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. Additionally, survivors May Baxter-Thornton, and Elysia and Katie from the REIGN Collective C.I.C., shared their personal experiences of working with professionals to help improve practices when working with CSA survivors.

Delegate Feedback and Evaluation

Out of those who attended, 109 delegates completed an evaluation form. The majority rated the conference as excellent or good. Delegates were asked to rate their understanding of CSA at the start of the day and again in the post-event evaluation:

Rating	Pre-event	Post-event
Excellent	14	61
Good	63	46
Adequate	31	1
Inadequate	1	0

Feedback from Delegates

The feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive:

- “Excellent speakers, a good balance of experience, guidance and impact.”
- “First time attending OSCB conference, learnt a lot. The survivors were fantastic, so powerful.”
- “I enjoyed the day and found it very informative and useful for practice. The speakers all seemed knowledgeable and passionate about the subject. I feel much better prepared for practice.”
- “Thanks to those who shared personal stories, it is so powerful and informative in terms of signs, symptoms, disclosure, support, etc. The signs and indicators tool exercise were useful in focusing on whether behaviour and presentation might be indicative of CSA.”

The OSCB Annual Conference 2024 was a resounding success, providing valuable insights and learning opportunities for all attendees.

8. Voice of Children, Families, and Communities

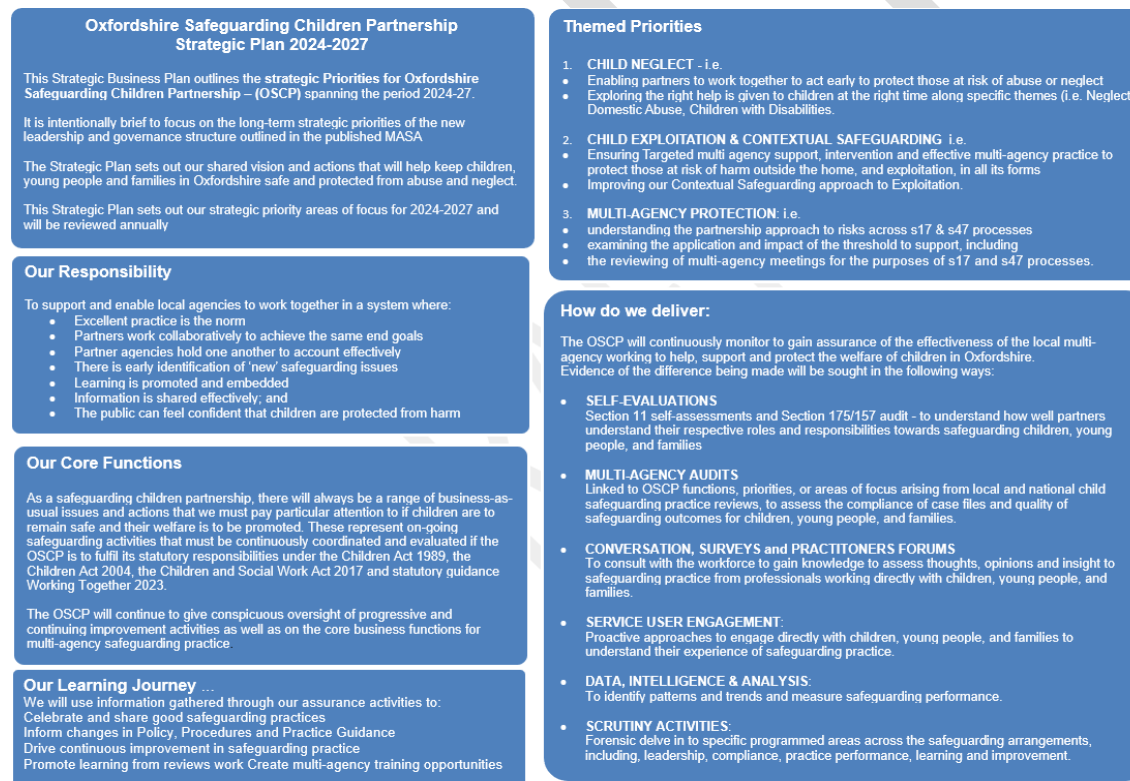
In Oxfordshire, one of the four key outcomes within the [Children and Young People's Plan](#) is to ensure that the views of a diverse range of children and young people shape the strategic plans of the council and its partnerships. During its review of arrangements this year, the partnership has committed to strengthen the voice of children and families. Our ambition is to develop a comprehensive voice and influence strategy that empowers children to participate actively, feel empowered, and engage meaningfully to achieve better outcomes and resilience.

The strategy aims to operate at individual, family, service, and strategic levels, helping to identify the best ways to support and engage children and young people at all levels. The partnership is committed to embedding the voice and influence of children and young people within the culture, discussions, decisions, and actions of the council. Hearing and responding to their voices are paramount to the work of the safeguarding partnership in Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) is dedicated to fostering a culture where the voices of young people are heard and responded to across all its work. The Partnership recognises that more work is needed to hear the voices of children and young people who have experienced the safeguarding system through Early Help, Child in Need, and Child Protection. The Executive group has agreed to fund some recourse within the business unit to advance these efforts. Additionally, there is acknowledgment of the significant work being done within the third sector and educational establishments, which is valuable insights from these efforts are being increasingly recognised and integrated.

9. Priorities for 2025-2026

In conclusion as you have read the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) has undergone a year of meaningful transition and development. The formal publication of revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) in December 2024 marks a significant step forward in our commitment to strengthening how we safeguard children, support families, and work together as a partnership. While navigating structural and capacity shifts with resilience, the partnership has demonstrated resilience, cohesion, and purpose. However, this report also identifies several challenges that will require continued attention. These include the pace of change in subgroup alignment, the impact of rising mental health needs, gaps in education engagement, and the need to embed consistent family and child participation across all aspects of partnership activity.



As we move into 2025/2026, OSCP is clear on its direction. The partnership will:

- Consolidate and embed the new MASA arrangements.
- Strengthen the voice of children and families within planning, scrutiny, and delivery.
- Improve our data infrastructure to inform targeted safeguarding interventions.
- Focus on high-impact issues—neglect, exploitation, and education—as ongoing priorities.
- Build a culture of learning and challenge that supports continuous improvement.

It was agreed that the priorities for 2025-26 should be:

- Child Neglect
- Child Exploitation/Harm outside the home
- Multi-agency protection & Family Safeguarding Approach

These priorities will allow the partnership to continue the work established in 2024-25 and proactively respond to emerging themes and opportunities for growth. The Executive will seek assurance regarding the response of the current safeguarding system to these areas and identify opportunities to develop practice and improve the outcomes for children in Oxfordshire. The outcomes related to these priorities and the impact of any development work will be outlined in the 2025-26 annual report.

Future focus

To ensure continuous improvement in safeguarding practice and to ensure momentum is maintained, the partnership have already committed to some areas of identified work for 2025-26:

- Undertaking a revision of the Partnership Health Check Self-Assessment
- Fully embedding the new arrangement set out and agreed in December 2024
- Development of a robust and responsive audit and review programme

- Further develop systems to demonstrate impact and levels of assurance
- Develop the voice and influence of children, young people, parents, carers and families, in particular those with experience of the safeguarding system.
- Embed Education as part of Executive and strengthening their voice at strategic level
- Further strengthen the voice of the third sector at all levels
- Revise the Neglect Strategy and further develop the tools that support best practice.
- Revise the Harm outside the home/Child Exploitation Strategy for the partnership
- Embedding the twice-yearly summits and front-line practitioner forums to enhance the linkage with and voice of front-line staff.
- Undertake a training needs analysis for the partnership to ensure it is aligned with the Priorities of the partnership
- Continue to develop the Strategic partnership protocol to all relevant Boards and Partnerships.
- Establish a chairs and deputy chairs meeting to ensure joint working across subgroups.

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Divisions Affected - All

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26th September 2025

Youth Justice Annual Plan 2025-26

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to** note and provide any comments and recommendations on Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2025-26 and consider partnership responses to the action plan for the year ahead.

Executive Summary

2. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the minimum statutory requirements for Youth Justice Services. The statutory aim of the Youth Justice system is to prevent children from offending. Section 39 of the Crime & Disorder Act requires the cooperation of named statutory partners and places a duty on them to cooperate to secure and deliver youth justice services appropriate to the area. These partners are:
 - The Local Authority (inclusive of Children's Social Care & Education)
 - The Police
 - The Probation Service
 - Health
3. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act sets out the youth justice partnership's statutory responsibility to produce a youth justice plan. The local Youth Justice Partnership Management Board governs and owns the process of producing this plan to collectively shape the direction of youth justice delivery so that it best meets the needs of the locality, children, families, victims and communities.
4. The youth justice plan structure is proscribed by the Youth Justice Board statutory guidance and must outline progress against the previous year's priorities, performance data, a plan for the forthcoming year and how the partnership is meeting its statutory responsibilities against the Youth Justice National Standards for Children and the national Key Performance Indicators.

The core priorities for Oxfordshire's youth justice service for 2025-26 are:

- Working in partnership to develop the prevention & diversion offer in Oxfordshire, which will support a reduction in First Time Entrants.
- Working in partnership to improve outcomes for children with SEND in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire.
- Working in partnership to improve support for arrested children.
- Working in partnership to address over-representation and disproportionality for justice-involved children in Oxfordshire.
- Working in partnership to effectively support victims of youth crime in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Annual Plan 2025-26

5. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 was agreed at Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Management Partnership Management Board and approved by its previous Chair. It covers both strategic and operational delivery arrangements and the agreed key strategic priorities for 2025-26. The plan was submitted to the Youth Justice Board for the deadline on 31st June 2025.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

6. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice plan aligns with delivery of the council's corporate strategy priorities to:
 - Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire
 - Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential
 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents

Financial Implications

7. The production of Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Annual Plan is a statutory requirement of the Youth Justice Board's grant terms and conditions. The Youth Justice Board grant provision is outlined in Section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Comments checked by:

Lewis Gosling, Assistant Finance Business Partner,
Lewis.gosling@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

8. Section 40(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 ("the Act") provides that: (1) It shall be the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year a plan (a "youth justice plan") setting out: (a) how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and (b) how the youth offending team or teams established by them (whether alone or jointly with one or more other local authorities) are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out.

In accordance with Regulation 4(1) and Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 the Plan is to be referred to Full Council for ultimate consideration and adoption.

There are no direct potential legal implications contained within this report.

Comments checked by:

Craig Cochrane, Head of Law and Legal Business Partner,
craig.cochrane@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

9. There are no direct HR implications contained within this report.

Comments checked by:

Michelle Higgs, Strategic People Partner Children's and Education,
michelle.higgs@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

10. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice partnership is committed to addressing disproportionality and overrepresentation of minoritized groups of children in the justice system in Oxfordshire. We are duty bound to consider and be responsive to the protected characteristics of all children receiving Youth Justice services in Oxfordshire.

Sustainability Implications

11. There is no current sustainability implications associated with either the contents or recommendations of this report.

Risk Management

12. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Partnership Management Board reviews its Risk Register on a quarterly basis as set out in the Annual Plan on pages 23-25.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children Services

Annex: Oxfordshire Youth Justice Service Annual Plan

Contact Officer: Jessie Dobson
Service Manager: Adolescence and Prevention
jessie.dobson3@oxfordshire.gov.uk

August 2025

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1. Introduction, vision and strategy

Chair's Foreword

I have great pleasure in presenting this foreword to the Oxfordshire Youth Justice Plan for 2025-26. The plan sets out our priorities for the coming year and beyond, and at a practical level describes how we will go about responding to the challenge of providing excellent youth justice services by harnessing the potential of the whole partnership of agencies who have responsibilities in this area.

The government and our regulators have spelt out in some detail what they expect of us from a national perspective. We are still required to demonstrate in all our action that we are aware that the children with whom we work are first and foremost children, the impacts of which are clearly laid out in the four tenets of 'Child First' in Chapter 4 of this plan. However, at the same time the government has increasingly required us to ensure we have a strong focus also on victims. We already have excellent 'Restorative Justice' services to bring victims and children who have offended together to build understanding, reconciliation, and repair. But we are now required to go beyond this and ensure that, across the partnership, first rate services and responses are available to victims of youth crime. This is a challenge on which we are enthusiastically embarked.

Another priority, as it has been in past years, is to understand why some groups of children are more prone to be represented in the youth justice system and to ensure there is no bias in our system. This is what we call the 'over-representation challenge' and our plan describes fresh initiatives to address this, to understand why some groups of children are over-represented at various stages in our services, and to reduce this where it is a result of unfair prejudices.

We will be more focused than previously on preventing offending and diverting children from crime. Our proportions of children becoming part of the formal youth justice system are higher than comparable areas and we are alert to the dangers that unnecessary exposure to the formal system can have for children in terms of their self-identity and development. So, reducing the number of children entering our system, our 'first time entrants', is a central aspect of our plan and we will not rest until we are out-performing comparative areas.

We also aim to improve outcomes for children who offend, particularly in terms of the clusters of their needs which we can broadly describe as 'health' needs. We freely acknowledge that there is more that we need to do to ensure such needs are identified and then met by our partners, with the ambition that by so doing we will reduce some of the root causes of children's offending behaviour.

We will also focus more closely this coming year on what happens to children after initial contact with the Police, again with the aim of ensuring that we learn from best practice elsewhere to ensure that such work is purposeful, free from unnecessary delays, and contribute to our aim of reducing further offending and delivering a high-quality service to victims.

In all of this we aim to support and resource our excellent staff well in undertaking this most difficult of work, and we will ensure we are open to the messages from the front line of our services, as well as listening to the voices of children, their families, victims of crime and our communities.

Therefore, our overarching partnership priorities for 2025-26 are:

- Working in partnership to develop the prevention & diversion offer in Oxfordshire, which will support a reduction in First Time Entrants
- Working in partnership to improve outcomes for children with SEND in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire
- Working in partnership to improve support for arrested children
- Working in partnership to address over-representation and disproportionality for justice-involved children in Oxfordshire
- Working in partnership to effectively support victims of youth crime in Oxfordshire

John Drew, CBE

Introduction

1. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Service has the highest aspirations for Oxfordshire's children, and we will support them to achieve their full potential whilst protecting them, their families and the public from harm. We will achieve this by working in a restorative and relational way:
 - Listening to children, parents/carers, victims of crime and our communities and ensuring their feedback informs service delivery
 - Providing solutions to youth justice issues at an individual and local level and through collaboration with partners
 - Working in partnership to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and victims of crime and to ensure that their individual needs are met
 - Identify and address disparity and disproportionality within the youth justice system in Oxfordshire and in collaboration with regional partners
2. This Youth Justice Plan 2025-26 has been developed in collaboration with those who use our service, our staff and volunteers and our Youth Justice Partnership Management Board through whole-service workshops and a digital survey. The plan reflects our 'Child First' thinking and ambitions to improve the life chances of children in all our communities through an integrated and effective partnership approach.
3. Our children and their families/carers come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds with varied lived experience that shape their identity. We understand our responsibility in responding to diversity through inclusive, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. Improving our engagement with children and families/carers

will support them to feel more empowered in their interactions with our organisations and build trust and confidence in our services. Our strengths-based and person-centred approach recognises the rights and needs of our children and families, as well as the rights and needs of victims of crime and our local communities.

4. This plan represents our commitment in Oxfordshire to continually challenge ourselves to improve the quality of services and provision for children who offend in our county and ensure that Child First principles are embedded in all that we do.

Vision & Strategy

5. Our organisational values underpin everything we say and do. They mean we are:
 - Always learning
 - Kind and caring
 - Treating each other equally and have integrity in all we do
 - Taking responsibility
 - Daring to do things differently
6. We are committed to providing the right support from the right service at the earliest opportunity to intervene and divert children away from the Criminal Justice System. We recognise the interdependencies of the youth justice agenda within wider strategies such as the Early Help & Prevention and Harm outside the Home Strategies, which are underpinned by Oxfordshire County Council's Children & Young People's Strategic plan 2024-28.
7. Oxfordshire is a Marmot County and the underpinning principle of tackling social determinants of health inequalities supports our partnership priorities to give every child in our County the best start in life and address root causes of disparity and disproportionality. Oxfordshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2024-30 sets out how the Health & Wellbeing Board will help Oxfordshire's residents stay healthy, well and cared for. The Children's Trust Board oversees key areas of multi-agency strategic planning for children, and reports into the Health & Wellbeing Board. The issue of First Time Entrants has been highlighted as a key priority for the Children's Trust Board in overarching governance over the Youth Justice Service.
8. Oxfordshire County Council has been a Family Safeguarding Approach authority since 2020. The core pillars of the approach, discussed later in the plan, are already well-embedded within Youth Justice where multi-disciplinary teams use motivational interviewing and restorative practice to support children, families and victims of crime.
9. In 2024-25 Children's Services in Oxfordshire re-aligned the former Youth Justice & Exploitation Service alongside the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) and developed a model of three distinct teams to form a new Adolescence & Prevention Service. The service includes youth justice, harm outside the home, our National Referral Mechanism devolved decision-making pilot and targeted youth work. Although each team has its own unique functions, this new model will support the alignment and strengthen delivery of prevention and diversion of children at risk of

entering the criminal justice system in our County and provide a comprehensive and evidence-based response to harm outside the home. The service offer reduces potential duplication and will provide children with consistent relationships with trusted adults, evidence-based interventions and support at times they need it most. The vision for the service moving forwards is for the teams to work to shared priorities to provide a preventative, integrated offer across a child's journey through adolescence, regardless of starting point, so they receive the right support at the right time.

Local Context

10. Most recent data from the Office for National Statistics (2023) estimated that there were 171,655 children aged 0–19 living in Oxfordshire. Of these, 90,859 were aged 10–19 and therefore above the age of criminal responsibility. This represents a 2.78% increase in the number of children over the age of criminal responsibility compared to 2022.
11. Oxfordshire generally has lower levels of deprivation and child poverty compared to other areas in the Southeast. However, there are significant variations across the county, with some areas experiencing notable deprivation. Recent challenges affecting families and children include:
 - Rising unemployment
 - Increased rental costs
 - Growing numbers of households in fuel poverty

These factors are likely to negatively impact children living in affected households. In 2023–2024, a total of 19,591 children in Oxfordshire were living in low-income households. Of these, 9,624 children (49%) were aged 10–19 (source: JSNA, 2023).

12. Between 2018 and 2023, the most common age group for committing offences in Oxfordshire was 18 to 21 years old. However, in 2024, there has been a noticeable shift. The peak age group for several serious offence types—including criminal damage, sexual offences, and violence (both with and without injury)—has dropped to children aged just 13 to 15. For anti-social behaviour, the most affected age group is even younger, at 11 to 14 years old. At the same time, the age profile of victims has also changed. In 2024, there was a sharp rise in the number of 10 to 18-year-olds who were victims of violent crimes. This was followed by an increase in sexual victimisation among children aged 10 to 15. Together, these trends suggest that child-on-child offending is becoming more common and is emerging at younger ages in Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire Strategic Needs Assessment, 2025). This has implications for the youth justice partnership in the paramount importance of prevention and early intervention.
13. The most prevalent offence types by children in Oxfordshire continues to be violence against the person and drug offences, continuing the trend from previous years. The two most urbanised districts in the county, Oxford and Cherwell, had the highest count of crimes per capita in 2024, with acquisitive crime and violence with and without injury being the most prevalent crime types.

14. In the year ending 2024, a total of 207 children in Oxfordshire received a caution or sentence. The majority - 82% - were White, followed by 9% of mixed heritage, 4% Black, and 3% Asian. While White children made up the largest proportion of those involved in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire, it is children of mixed heritage who were the most over-represented when compared to their share of the general 10–17-year-old population. They accounted for 9% of the offending group but only 7% of the wider age group in Oxfordshire. Despite this over-representation, the Youth Justice Board's Disparity Toolkit does not flag it as statistically significant. This pattern reflects a broader trend seen across the Thames Valley, where both Black and Mixed heritage children are over-represented in the youth offending population. However, in both cases, the differences remain below the 5% threshold used by the YJB to indicate significant disparity between the offending and general populations of 10–17-year-olds.

15. Children of mixed heritage were 1.4 times more likely to be cautioned or sentenced than white children in Oxfordshire. White children were most likely to have committed a serious offence, whilst the most frequent proven offence committed by Black children were violence against the person offences (YJB Disparity Toolkit, 2023-24). 82% of children within the youth justice cohort in 2023-24 were children of White ethnicities.

16. Rising support needs in schools:

- The number of children receiving school support for special educational needs (SEN)—particularly for social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH)—has been steadily increasing.
- This rise is seen both nationally and in Oxfordshire, with Oxfordshire's growth outpacing the national trend.

School attendance:

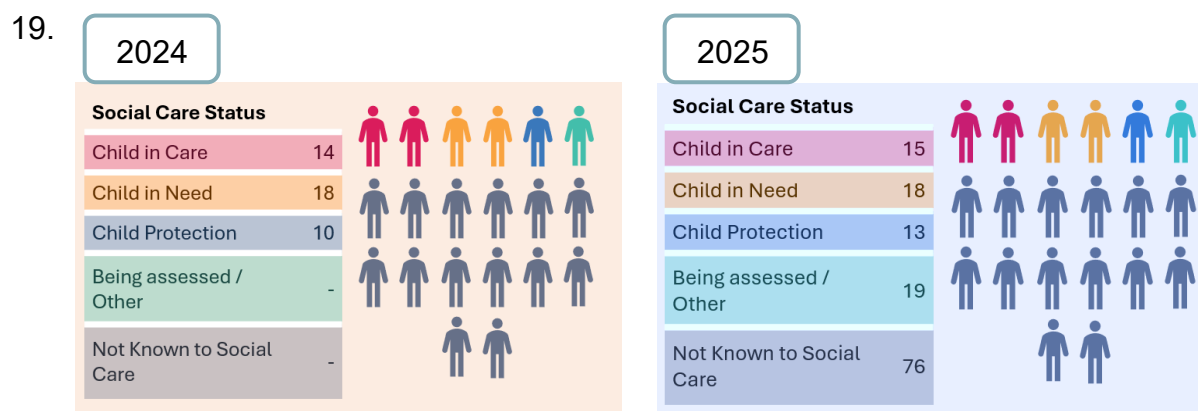
- In 2022–2023, over 22,000 pupils (20%) in Oxfordshire were classified as persistent absentees.
- This is an increase from 13.5% in 2020–2021.
- Mental health remains a key factor contributing to low attendance across schools.

Post-16 education and employment:

- In 2024, Oxfordshire achieved a lower percentage of 16- and 17-year-olds not in education, employment, or training (NEET) compared to both regional and national averages.
- Boys were more likely to be NEET than girls (source: JSNA, 2023).

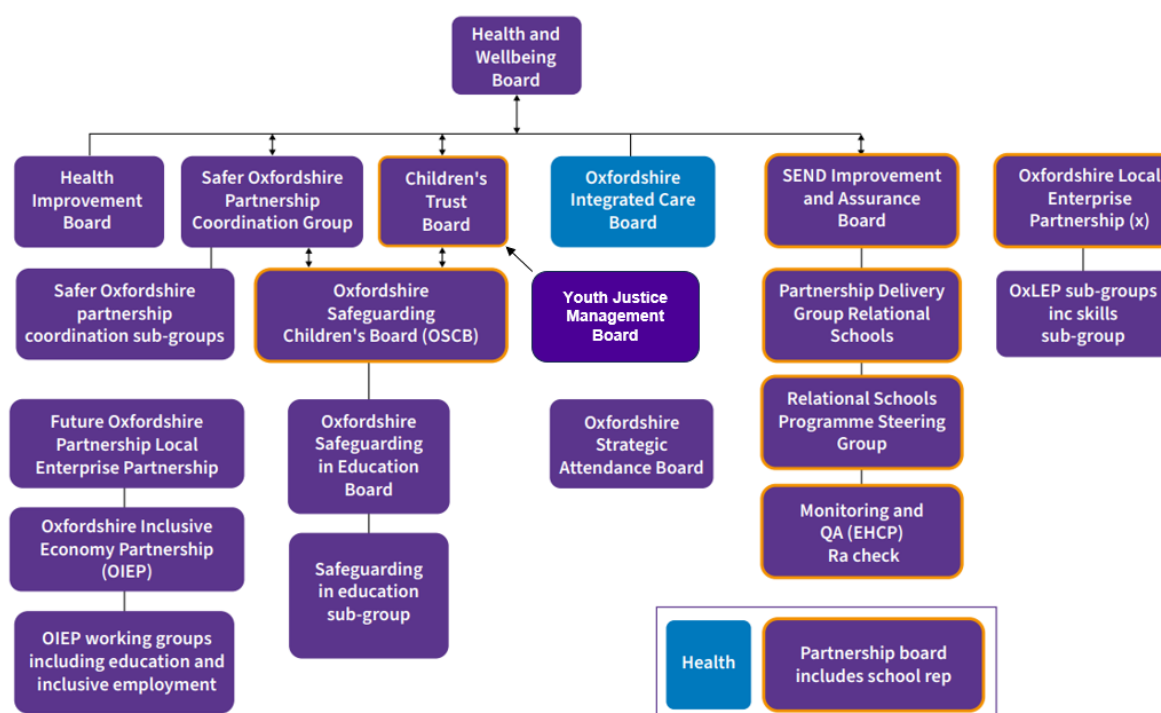
17. As of May 2025, Oxfordshire has 796 children in Local Authority care, 74 of which are unaccompanied children. This figure is 4% higher than last year but is still average compared with our statistical neighbours. Oxfordshire has 546 children on Child Protection plans which is a 4% increase on this time last year. Again, this is average when compared to our statistical neighbours.

18. As of 31st March 2025, 65 of the 141 children open to Youth Justice were also receiving support from Children's Social Care, representing 46% of the cohort. However, the largest proportion of these children were either under assessment or recorded with a status of 'other' —a category not included in last year's data. The 'other' category includes children who technically have an open referral but don't fit into a standard category. Excluding this group, 32% of the Youth Justice cohort were on statutory plans, compared to 27% the previous year, indicating an increase of 5%.

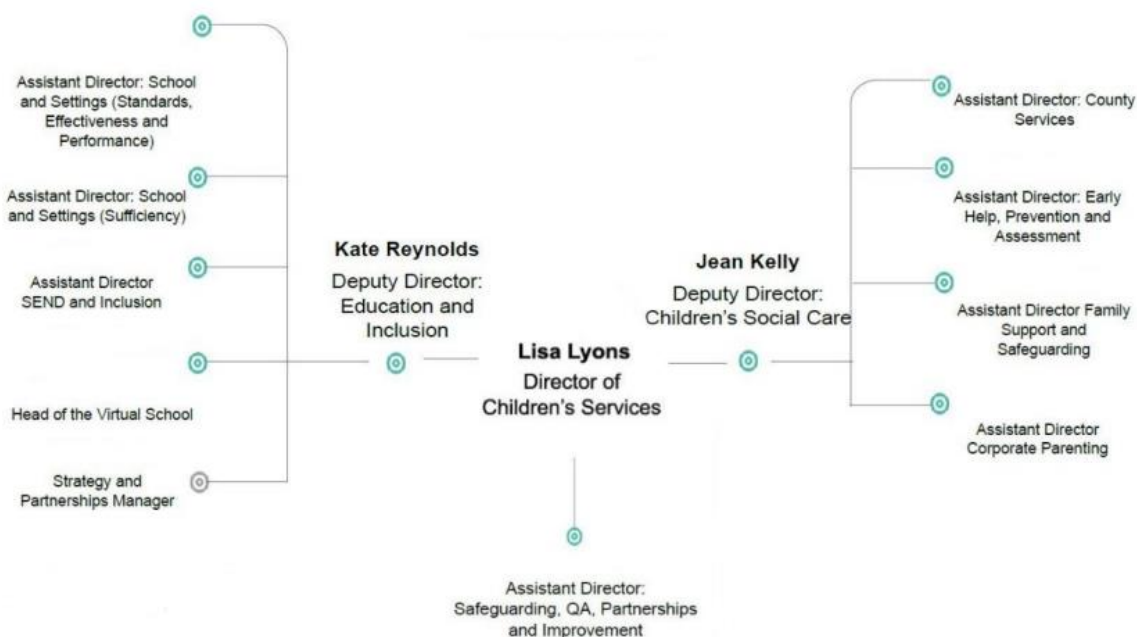


2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Key Strategic Partnerships & Boards



Children's Service's leadership structure



Service location

20. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) is located within Oxfordshire's Children Education and Families Directorate (CEF) under the Assistant Director for Early Help, Prevention and Assessment. The YJS has been moved into a new Adolescence & Prevention Service alongside Children's Services' harm outside the home and targeted youth work teams.

Strategic Partnerships

21. Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Board is a multi-agency partnership and is currently chaired by an Independent Chair. Its membership comprises key stakeholders from: the Local Authority, Thames Valley Police (TVP), Oxford Health NHS Trust, The Probation Service (PS), Fire & Rescue, the voluntary & community sector (VCS) and Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

22. The service and Board priorities are aligned with key strategic partnership priorities for preventing offending and re-offending by children and tackling serious violence and exploitation in the county, including the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Violence & Vulnerability strategy, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's response to exploitation, and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Plan for 2021-25.

23. The service is strategically represented on the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Coordination Group (SOPCG), which oversees the County's Violence and Vulnerability strategy and delivery plan. Through this, the Youth Justice Service

plays a statutory role in implementing violence reduction approaches under the Serious Violence Duty.

Head of Service remit and responsibilities

24. The designated senior manager for Youth Justice is the Service Manager for the Adolescence and Prevention Service, who has a portfolio including Youth Justice, Targeted Youth Support and harm outside the home. The Service Manager reports to the Assistant Director for Prevention, Early Help & Assessment in Children's Services. The Service Manager is the strategic lead for Youth Justice, Exploitation and Missing Children within Oxfordshire's Children's Services. The Service Manager represents Children's Services at the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership Strategic Board and Safer Oxfordshire's Partnership Co-ordination group.

Operational partnerships

25. Between 2022 – 2024 the County's Violence Reduction Coordinator was co-located within Youth Justice. The focus of the role was to align key strategic and operational plans across the local partnership around the youth crime and violence reduction agenda, and support partnership readiness in implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. Oxfordshire now has a well-developed response under the Duty and the functions of this temporary role have been mainstreamed into the work of our Community Safety partners for sustainability. The Adolescence and Prevention Service will be a key partner in delivery of preventative approaches around children in the County's Violence & Vulnerability strategy and delivery plan.
26. Thames Valley Police, Health, Children's Social Care, Education and Family Help are represented at the Youth Justice Safety Panel and Joint Decision-Making Panel, supporting effective information-sharing, oversight, partnership-working and accountability in keeping children and our communities safe. As a result of the SEND Quality Mark process, we now have a representative from SEND at YJ Safety Panel which has improved discussions and planning around children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP). An example of this has been ensuring there is effective and timely information sharing when a child moves in and out of County and their EHCP is transferred between authorities, which can cause delays in the child's access to appropriate provision.
27. The Youth Justice and Exploitation Service has been a long-standing member of the Sexual Violence & Exploitation Network (SVEN) led by local victim support charity SAFE! Representation in this network will continue via the new harm outside the home team within our Adolescence & Prevention Service. The YJS has many useful links to voluntary and community sector organisations (whose social impact commitments are aligned with our Child First principles) through our Turnaround Programme, Reparation and Unpaid Work placements to support children's access to interactions, activities and roles for positive identity development.

28. Berkshire Health NHS Trust provide delivery of Liaison and Diversion services in Oxfordshire in providing assessment and some interventions to children at the point of contact in Police custody for diverting children into health or other services, as appropriate. The service benefits from longstanding collaboration and child-centred partnership working with Oxfordshire's Forensic CAMHS teams.
29. Oxfordshire YJS made a successful bid in 2023 for Oxfordshire to become part of the National Referral Mechanism devolved decision-making pilot. Our local panel is chaired by the NRM Coordinator whose role sits within the new harm outside the home team (and previously within the combined Youth Justice & Exploitation Service) and involves training and participation of statutory partners in Police, Health and Social Care.
30. The Education, Employment and Training (EET) Service provide post-16 tracking of participation in EET and support one to one casework opportunities for post-16 young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of NEET up until the September after their 18th birthday. The YJS works closely alongside the EET service in support of our children's needs, and we regularly share our caseload data to ensure outcomes for justice-involved children are effectively tracked and monitored.
31. The service is integrated into wider children's services with strong joint-working arrangements across Children's Social Care and Education for children with voluntary and statutory plans and intervention. This includes joint supervision, multi-agency auditing and inspection readiness activity and development of integrated performance reporting.

3. Update on the previous year

a. Progress on priorities

32. The service has a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan which is reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis which includes outcome-focused actions, leads and timescales. The service is also working to a YJB Improvement Plan for assurance and oversight of our work to improve our First Time Entrant performance.

Key outcomes:

17% reduction in
FTE rate from
June 2024

SEND Quality
Mark achieved
Dec 2024

Turnaround target
of 104 children
reached

NRM decision-making period reduced to 50 days through local pilot (stat guidance states 90 days)

84 NRM referrals received in 2024-25, 31 Positive Conclusive Grounds decisions made at local panel to date

30 deferred cautions approved since TVP pilot went live in March 2025

Delivered training on Youth Justice to over 200 students and apprentices and newly qualified Social Workers

Rolled out Act Now project in Jan 2025 to support children arrested for knife crime

Hosted an Educational Psychology placement to support the service's review of SEND practice

Oxfordshire YJS worked with Coram BAAF & Sylvia Ikomi to develop resources to raise awareness of adultification – these will be shared in spaces such as Police stations

The YJS Restorative Justice lead has supported the roll-out of Oxfordshire's Relational Schools programme which has now reached 43 schools

Effective practice submissions from our Turnaround project recognised by the Ministry of Justice

Service Priorities 2024-25	Agreed Actions	Progress in June 2025	RAG	Barriers & mitigation
Disproportionality	Refresh of Partnership Disproportionality Action Plan.	Consultation with Liminality Group on refresh of Disproportionality Action Plan in July 2025.	Partially achieved	Delay in securing partnership facilitation for refresh of Action Plan. Action Plan scheduled for review in July 2025.
	Stand-up task and finish group responsible for driving activity to ensure Board oversight and partnership accountability.	Board/Service away day held in June 2024 with focus on disproportionality and adultification.	Partially achieved	Delay in securing partnership facilitation for task-and-finish group. Board Chair to drive partnership accountability and ownership of this strategic priority.
		Liminality Group commissioned to delivery disparities training to service in June 2025.	Completed	Disproportionality training has taken place with the service June 2025.
First Time Entrants	In July 2024, Oxfordshire launched an Improvement Plan after being placed in quadrant 3 of the YJB Oversight	YJS' and TVP collaborated on development of Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) guidance for consistency	Completed	Improvements made in relation to FTE locally, but ongoing improvement work is taking place with YJB to monitor impact and reduce rate in line with statistical family.

	Framework, primarily due to persistently high First Time Entrant rates.	across Thames Valley.		
		Thames Valley Police have agreed a 12-month pilot for deferred cautions which went live in March 2025. Oxfordshire's JDMP has recommended deferred cautions for 30 to date.	Ongoing	This pilot is a positive step towards evidence-based diversion for children in Oxfordshire and impact and outcomes will be closely monitored and reported to Board.
		Oxfordshire YJS participation in Thames Valley Scrutiny Panel of out-of-court decision making for feedback and learning.	Completed	Oxfordshire YJS continues to participate in the Thames Valley Scrutiny Panel and share learning back into the service to inform practice.
		Oxfordshire was successful in reach of MOJ	Completed	Funding secured through OPCC for 2 years until 2027

		Turnaround target of 104 children and has successfully bid to the OPCC for 2-year funding to continue the model.		
		The service has been brought in alignment with Targeted Youth Work and Exploitation to develop an adolescent service offer from prevention through to specialist support.	Completed	Alignment of the YJS into a new Adolescence & Prevention Service is focusing plans for an integrated prevention response.
		Since June 2024 Oxfordshire's FTE rate has reduced by 17% from 215 to 178, though it remains higher than our statistic family	Partially achieved	To gain a better understanding of our high FTE rates we have scrutinised our data and done deep-dive into individual children who received Youth Cautions or Youth Conditional Cautions in the last quarter, to scrutinise decision-making. This information has been shared with the YJB, who have also observed one of our Joint Decision-Making Panels, with positive feedback on our child-centred approach and robust multi-agency discussions.

		and regional rate.		
Participation	Align Youth Justice participation with wider Children's Services approaches	Youth Justice has worked closely with the Principal Social Worker in Children's Services to develop a YJ Participation Strategy to ensure alignment with other youth voice and engagement forums.	Ongoing	Work to continue as part of participation approaches within new Adolescence & Prevention Service.
		The Participation Strategy and a term of reference for a Youth Shadow Board were ratified at the YJ Board in Jan 2025.	Completed	Next steps will be to progress key aims of our Participation Strategy for 2025-26.
Exploitation	Continue impact and outcome reporting on local National Referral Mechanism devolved	Oxfordshire's NRM devolved decision-making pilot continues to be successful in achieving positive	Completed	Our local devolved decision-making pilot will continue to report outcomes and impact into the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Exploitation sub-group. The NRM Coordinator role will sit within the new harm outside the home team.

	decision-making pilot.	outcomes for children and we have presented data on our local pilot to the Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and the LCJB Children's sub-group.		
	Embed harm outside the home strategy within Children's Services.	Children's Services are developing an adolescent offer with a clear framework for contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm.	Completed	New offer for children experiencing harm outside the home to be launched July 2025 in line with refreshed strategy – progress and impact will be monitored for across Children's Social Care and as part of the wider prevention agenda.
Education & SEND	Complete the SEND Quality Mark self-assessment.	The service completed the SEND Quality Mark self-assessment in December 2024 and achieved Quality Mark status.	Completed	The SEND Quality Mark has been achieved, and improvement plans are incorporated into our Service Improvement Plan for 2025-26.

Policing	Work with TVP to raise awareness and ensure consistent use of overnight remand thresholds and support appropriate bail condition planning.	YJ Team Manager now attends Children in Custody meetings to review and scrutinise data on overnight remands. Work is underway to bring this data to Board quarterly.	Ongoing	There is renewed commitment from TVP to provide quarterly data on Oxfordshire children held overnight in Police custody to the Board for oversight and scrutiny.
		The YJ Team Manager has engaged with the Oxfordshire Custody Inspector to review and discuss application of remand thresholds.	Completed	Discussions have taken place to provide clarity of understanding around application of remand thresholds under PACE in Police custody and under LASPO (2012) in Court. Closer joint-working between the partnership is due to be taken forward within the Remand Working Group for 2025-26 to support TVP risk assessments around bail.
	Deliver OPCC (Office of Police and Crime Commissioner) 'Act Now' as early intervention response for to	We have been running 'Act Now' since Jan 2025 and in June 2025 will have two full-time practitioners in	Ongoing	The Act Now project began in January 2025 and will be fully staffed by June 2025. Demand quickly exceeded capacity and, as a result, the Youth Justice Service implemented and notified the OPCC of interim measures to prevent any negative impact on statutory service delivery. Notably, the demand projected using 2023–24 data increased by two-thirds within the first quarter of 2025.

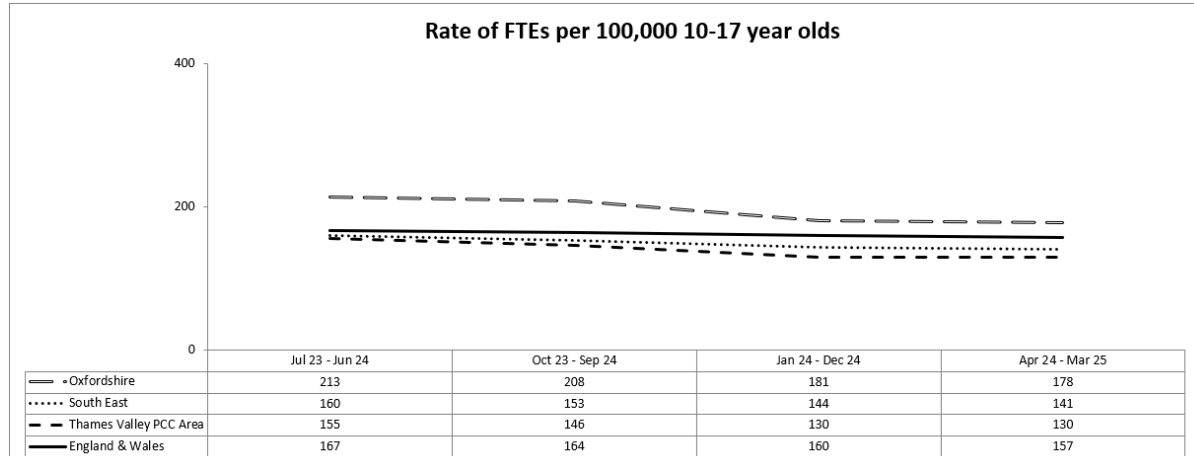
	children in Police custody for knife possession.	post. We are currently supporting 36 children under this project.		Act Now is a fixed-term project and ongoing delivery will depend on future funding arrangements. Consideration will be given to any contingency and sustainability planning moving forward.
	Embed pathway for effective use of 'Outcome 22' in Oxfordshire's Pre-Court decision-making.	Outcome 22 was approved for use in Thames Valley in June 2024.	Completed	Outcome 22 was included as an available outcome for children within the Thames Valley Police Out of Court Decision Making Guidance, published in 2024.
	Ensure effective interface between YJ and the new TVP Harm Reduction Unit in child-centred decision-making and practice.	Youth Justice ATM has delivered training to HRU Sergeants and Schools PCs on out-of-court diversion and child-centred practice	Ongoing	The YJS has established positive working relationships with new colleagues within the Oxfordshire Harm Reduction Unit (HRU). HRU Sergeants have attended our JDMP to learn and observe, and we have delivered training to the Harm Reduction Unit (inclusive of Schools PCs) on children and out-of-court decision-making.
Workforce Development	Targeted recruitment campaign to improve diversity of volunteers.	We currently have 39 volunteers and have recruited 18 volunteers over the last year. This includes some existing volunteers who have taken on	Ongoing	Recruitment of volunteers is an ongoing task, and we remain committed to reflecting our diverse local population within the workforce that see and interact with our children. We have had success in recruitment in 2024 despite significant national challenges in volunteering.

		additional roles to include Referral Order Panels and Appropriate Adults.		
	Undertake a skills audit of youth justice staff to inform a new Workforce Development Plan.	Due to the service alignment under a new Adolescent Service umbrella of teams, the Workforce Development Plan is pending, to be informed by review of the needs of this new adolescent workforce.	Ongoing	Workforce Development plan to be aligned under new Adolescence & Prevention service.
Evidence-based and effective practice	Using learning from Turnaround evaluation and FTE audit - build on our learning around effective prevention and diversionary practice informing targeted	YJB Improvement Plan to reduce FTEs and develop our prevention offer has been monitored since Sept 2024 with monthly progress reporting to YJB.	Partially achieved	Learning from FTE data and Turnaround is informing our developing prevention offer. Our YJB Improvement Plan remains under regular scrutiny for impact.

	approach of interventions to reduce FTE's.			
	Implement Relational Case Management.	We have not renewed our local Relational Case Management pilot. Our practice continues to be informed by formulation with Forensic CAMHS.	Completed	Reduction in FCAMHS capacity in 2024 has led to review of need for pilot and adaptation of offer within resource constraints. We continue to work very closely with an excellent offer of support from our FCAMHS colleagues, and clinical case formulation is already embedded within our practice. We have reviewed the impact reporting from the Enhanced Case Management and alongside FCAMHS incorporated the Trauma Recovery Model into our existing formulation framework.

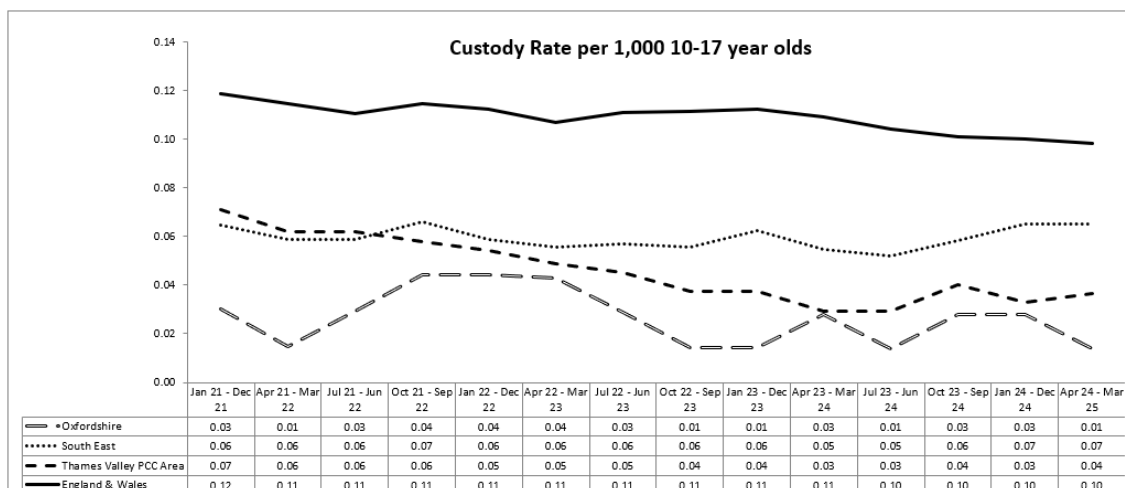
b. Performance over previous year

First Time Entrants



33. Since June 2024, Oxfordshire's First Time Entrant (FTE) rate has declined each quarter, resulting in a 17% overall reduction—from 215 to 178. This equates to a decrease from 154 to 128 individual children. For this duration Oxfordshire Youth Justice Service has been implementing an Improvement Plan in response to the YJB moving the service from Performance Quadrant 2 to Performance Quadrant 3 under its Oversight Framework. The Improvement Plan has seen progress made across staffing capacity, managerial capacity, success in reaching Turnaround targets, the availability of deferred cautions in Thames Valley and the alignment of the service under a new Adolescence & Prevention service area, which will increase and enhance the prevention offer to children in Oxfordshire. The Board Chair and service managers are meeting with the Centre for Justice Innovation (CJI) in June 2025 to explore enhanced support from the CJI to Oxfordshire YJS and Thames Valley Police around effective diversion. The service has a target to bring our FTE rate in line with the regional rate by December 2025.

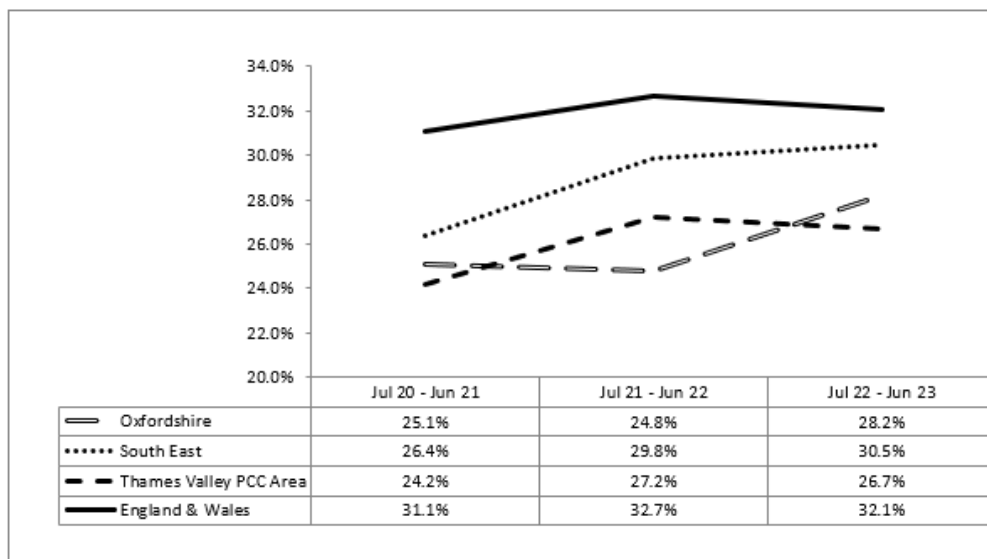
Use of Custody



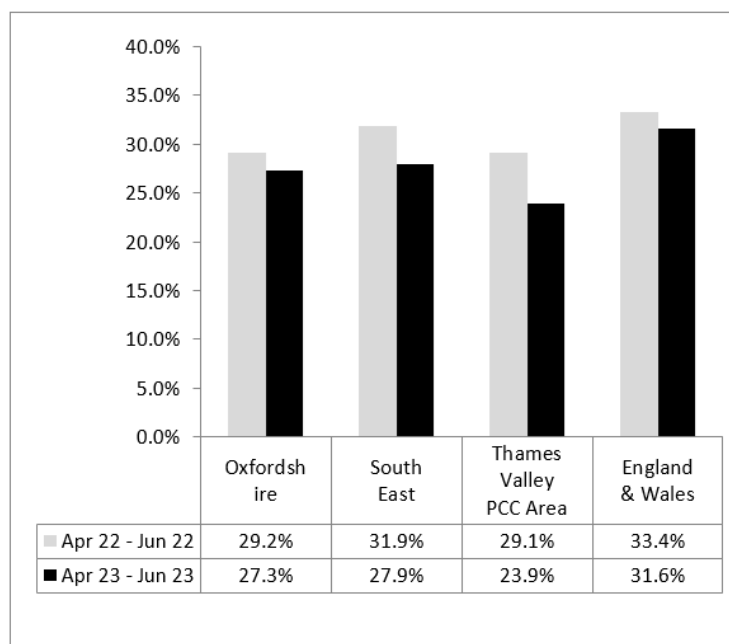
34. Oxfordshire's custody rate has remained consistently lower than the national and regional rates and lower or equal to the Thames Valley average since 2021. Between 2024 – 2025 Oxfordshire has had one child remanded into the secure estate for serious violence offences. This child initially went to Oakhill Secure Training Centre but is now in Vinney Green Secure Children's Home following representations from the YJS and reports shared with the Court about his significant vulnerabilities.

Re-offending rate

Annual Weighted Average



Quarterly cohort – year on year comparison



35. The re-offending rate (annual weighted average) for Oxfordshire increased by 4% from 24.8% in 2021-2022 to 28.2% in 2022-2023. This was lower than the South-East and national rates, but slightly higher than the Thames Valley rate of 26% at the time. To identify if a child has reoffended, they need to be tracked for a 12-month period following their original outcome. In addition, there is a further 6 month waiting period to allow the offence to be proven in court. The date refers to the quarter in which the child received their original outcome, at which point they became eligible for tracking, so the most recent data will refer to a period from 18 months to 2 years ago.

c. Risks and issues

Risk	Mitigation	Action	Desired Outcome
FTE rate continually higher than regional and national rates	Implementation of YJB Improvement Plan which is monitored monthly.	Reporting and monitoring on progress done via quarterly reporting to Board for strategic partnership oversight and action. Quarterly Monitoring meetings with YJB Regional Oversight Manager for support and challenge.	Oxfordshire's FTE rate to be in line with the current regional rate (142) by December 2025.
Partnership funding reduction	Horizon-scanning to identify funding opportunities for the service and pro-active approach to bid-writing.	Applications submitted for Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) funding and other funding opportunities identified during 2025-26. Issues in change to OPCC funding eligibility criteria are raised at Board level for senior leadership oversight and follow-up.	Funding opportunities are identified and where appropriate applied for to contribute to resource in 2025/6.
Building a stronger partnership for youth justice services	Asking all partner agencies to review their engagement with the youth justice service,	Introducing a new format for partners to explain the challenges they face and how they	Quarterly reporting in place, strong support for the Youth Justice Management Board and the multi-disciplinary planning and decision-

	whether it be in terms of financial support, policies or assistance in kind.	can, and do, support the overall youth justice partnership.	making forums where all partners come together for children and victims.
Workforce capacity & resources	Prioritise recruitment activity and ensure learning from retention issues is understood and mitigated.	Use learning from staff survey to inform service planning and improvements. Review and improve the staff work bases as part of OCC building strategy.	Service establishment is in place and the annual staff survey shows the progress we are making to support our staff.
Serious Incidents	Use of YJB Serious Incident Notification processes.	Critical Learning Reviews inform partnership response and improvements.	Partnership trust and confidence in Youth Justice response to serious incidents. Learning is used to mitigate future incidents occurring.
Practice & system improvement	Inspection Readiness meetings in place and partnership Board planning underway. Share learning and information with CSC staff and wider partners around HMIP inspection framework.	Service policies and partnership/service-level agreements reviewed for update/refresh. Audit activity against new framework – for Domain 2 and Victim Standard – learning fed into remedial improvement work. Inspection Readiness briefings taking place across Children, Education & Families Directorate to include YJ Inspection.	Assurance that the service knows what ‘good’ looks like in securing the best outcomes for children and victims. Service and partnership Board readiness for HMIP new inspection framework and programme from 2025.

Business continuity	Plans in place for business continuity in line with organisational policies and procedure; regularly reviewed.	Implementation of business continuity in the event of disruption taking account of environment i.e. Pandemic or other threats.	Service business continuity plan in place to mitigate risks to service delivery within Adolescent Service and for risks unique to youth justice.
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4. Plan for the forthcoming year

The Child First principle is made up of the following four tenets (Youth Justice Board, 2022):

As children	Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
Building pro-social identity	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
Collaborating with children	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
Diverting from stigma	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

a. *Child First*

As Children

36. We are working with our District Judge and Youth Bench to prepare child-friendly letter templates that can be used to explain difficult or complex decisions to children, which staff can then use to help children and parents/carers make sense of what has happened. We have seen this work effectively and support child-centred communication where a child has been remanded, so that the child has a clear record of what has happened, why decisions were made and what will happen next.
37. We are working closely with a Speech and Language therapist in the Children's Integrated Therapies service to adapt our speech, language and communication screening tool and process, so it is more robust and supports practitioners with what to do next where issues are identified. Current tools are very school-focused, whereas youth justice practitioners are mostly seeing children in the community and at home, or with peers, who may not attend school, so we are keen to adapt our assessment to reflect observations of children in these different contexts.

38. In 2024 we implemented regular Intervention Workshops for the youth justice team to have a space to reflect on practice, share their experiences of different resources and approaches and look at effective practice research to ensure all work is child-centred and developmentally informed. These have since been opened up to staff across the wider Adolescence & Prevention Service and our next workshop will focus on interventions around knife and weapon carrying. This is a space for learning and reflection as well as upskilling practitioners across our new service area.

Building Pro-Social Identity

39. The service works closely with charity and community sector groups to give our children fresh 'AIR' - activities, interactions and roles for positive identity development. Oxfordshire YJS used Turnaround funding to commission Inspire Sounds' 'Inspiring Change Through Music' project, which supports children who have experienced adversity through bespoke mentoring and music sessions in a professional recording studio, to promote children's well-being, inclusion and access to music. Our children have taken part in lyric-writing, poetry, beat-making and production workshops and access 1:1 mentoring aimed at building their confidence and resilience.
40. We are working closely with our Youth Justice Police Officers to develop a child-centred intervention pack for the Police to use when delivering sessions with children. Primarily these will be used for informal and formal pre-Court disposals and be based on best practice in diversion, but we are keen to focus on positive relationship-building between our children and Police through our YJ Police Officers and widen this out to our statutory cohort. The YJ Police Officers are keen to cascade this child-centred approach to child-facing teams across TVP.
41. The service is reviewing our volunteer offer and in 2025-26 will be developing an ETE Mentor role. We are working with two current volunteers who have links locally with construction companies to develop a proposal for a skills-based vocational pathway for children. Building on the social value commitments of companies we are seeking to develop 'Exploration Days' a local construction company with parallel support from an ETE Mentor; upon completion the company would 'interview' the child with a view to moving them into pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes.

Collaborating with Children

42. Our service Participation Lead has worked closely with the Principal Social Worker in Children's Services to develop our Participation Strategy to ensure our approach is aligned with wider participatory approaches and youth engagement work across Social Care and Education. We have produced a Terms of Reference for a new Youth Shadow Board which was ratified at our Management Board in January 2025. Establishment of the Shadow Board will be a priority for 2025-26.
43. Many of our placements used for Reparation and Unpaid Work are focused on social inclusion for children and supporting investment into their local communities.

Children undertake reparative activities at their local community centres, and some have chosen to continue volunteering beyond the end of their formal Reparation. Oxford Wood Recycling and Bicester Green are placements that support children to engage with environmental issues and sustainability practices, equipping them with skills for the future.

44. The Adolescence & Prevention Service is developing a harm outside the home framework which will work with community stakeholders to ensure children's voices shape service delivery, including through detached youth work, recognising this as a key tool in capturing children's lived experiences. The harm outside the home response will also use insights from youth engagement and partnership-working to co-design positive activities for children who live in areas identified as contexts of concern.
45. Listening to the voices of the children we support—and the victims affected by their actions—is a top priority. We aim to ensure their perspectives shape future service development and help us better understand patterns of offending, risk, and trauma. This insight allows us to identify and secure the right support for each child.
46. Across Oxfordshire County Council, there are various ways children can share their views, with multiple participation and engagement opportunities in place. Our Targeted Youth Support Service recently received positive feedback for its SEND Youth Forum. We're now working with voluntary and community sector partners to explore how this model can be expanded countywide.

Diversion from Stigma

47. Oxfordshire has worked very closely with Thames Valley Police and the YJB in the development of the Youth Diversion Programme (YDP); this is a 12-month pilot in the use of deferred cautions in Thames Valley. Our Joint Decision-Making Panel advocates strongly for proportionate diversionary outcomes for our children and since the Youth Diversion Programme went live in March, this outcome has been agreed for 26 children.
48. Thames Valley Police are developing a Child-Centred Policing Strategy and are committed to treating children as children. Thames Valley Police have been working with partners in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Courts (HMCTS) and Youth Justice to develop a streamlined process for 'on the day diversion' from Court for children to be considered for out-of-court disposals. A Section 10 admission form is now being used in Court, and this has improved timeliness of referral back from Court and of decision-making.
49. Thames Valley Police are undertaking work around admissions from children considering the evidence around child and adolescent development, neurodiversity in the youth justice cohort and disproportionality in eligibility for diversion for black and mixed heritage children. This includes consultation with clinical psychologists on appropriate documentation used with and about children to improve its accessibility.

50. We will continue to deliver diversionary support as part of the Turnaround Project. We made a successful bid to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner to continue this work for 2 years beyond the current end of Ministry of Justice funding. We are working closely with the Targeted Youth Support Service to align preventative and diversionary approaches and are carefully reviewing triage and eligibility criterion so that children receive sustainable support at the right level by the right service based on their presenting needs.

b. Resources and Services

51. The service has 1fte nurse from the Phoenix Team in Oxford Health Children's Integrated Therapies. The Phoenix Nurse offers a public health nurse health assessment to children on statutory Court Orders; this is currently 33% of our total caseload. If consent is given the nurse can work with children on any issues that are identified, alongside completing onward referrals as necessary. The offer for children on pre-Court disposals, currently 87% of our caseload, is liaison between the Phoenix Nurse and case-manager for advice on signposting and referrals and to connect professionals to named School/College Nurses.

52. As the YJS work with young people who can present with more complex needs, Forensic CAMHS offers consultation, liaison and triage for Oxfordshire YJS via a link worker. This facilitates direct access to assessments and intervention as well as improving access to a range of CAMHS provisions, including advising on NHS or welfare secure accommodation provision where appropriate.

53. There is an identified CAMHS/YJS Mental Health Liaison clinician who is based within the forensic CAMHS team. This post holder has close working arrangements with the 3 locality CAMHS teams and other Specialist CAMHS Teams.

This results in:

- YJS having access to regular triage and consultation.
- Liaison and Diversion offering a triage service to children & young people before the criminal courts.
- Advice and signposting to enable YJS staff to help young people to access appropriate services.
- Joint and CAMHS assessments where appropriate.
- Clinical Supervision of children who display harmful sexual behaviour.
- Access to specialist knowledge and training.
- Access to a range of specialist provisions including tier 4 services, as required.

54. The CAHBS service (child and adolescent harmful behaviour service) is also part of the wider forensic CAMHS service and will offer input to cases where sexually harmful behaviour is of concern. An additional resource is the nationally commissioned Liaison and Diversion project within the Forensic CAHMS Team. This aims to assess young people at point of contact with the Youth Justice System/Police and can provide input at the arrest/ court/ bail support stages.

55. Oxfordshire YJS does not have any enhanced working arrangements with Speech and Language therapies. Professionals can refer into the Speech and Language team but there is currently a 2-year waiting list. The Management Board is aware of this gap in provision for justice-involved children in Oxfordshire. The Head of Children & Young People's Community Services has completed a Quality Impact Assessment to inform a commissioning review, outlining the risks and consequences of lack of investment and significant shortfall in capacity in these services. This also informs Oxfordshire County Council's SEND Improvement Plan. This is an area of ongoing work between partners and, in lieu of provision, the service is working with a Speech & Language therapist from Oxford Health to improve our screening tool and identify suitable training to upskill practitioners.
56. Thames Valley Police provide the YJS with two Youth Justice Police Officers, 1 permanent full-time and one full-time 6-month secondment. The Police Officers are involved in delivery of pre-Court disposals and intervention sessions to learn about the law, the 'criminal justice ladder' and disclosure and barring. We are keen to develop the intervention pack delivered by YJS Police Officers for the coming year to upskill them in child-centred and trauma-informed practice.
57. The YJS bids for OPCC funding to commission young person's drug & alcohol service Cranstoun (Here4Youth) to deliver the Drug Diversion Scheme in Oxfordshire. Children who receive a Community Resolution for drug possession offences can be referred to Cranstoun for a treatment-based response to identified substance misuse concerns, with the aim of reducing criminalisation of children for lower-level drug offences.
58. The Probation Service provided Oxfordshire YJS with a regular secondee until October 2023. Due to recruitment challenges, a replacement did not start until January 2025 but was withdrawn in April 2025 because of a range of complex challenges within Probation. Contingency plans, which include improved collaboration with our Probation colleagues, are now in place to ensure that all eligible children continue to receive transition support in line with national guidance until we can fill this role within the team. The Probation Secondees commitment to the YJS remains a high priority for our Probation Board representative.
59. Our core YJB grant is spent in its entirety on staffing costs, and we use partner contributions and available internal resources to deliver our statutory and voluntary services. The service receives funding from the Home Office to deliver our local devolved decision-making NRM pilot, the Ministry of Justice to deliver Turnaround and the OPCC to deliver the Drug Diversion Programme and Act Now knife crime project. Finance is reported on quarterly at the Board for oversight and scrutiny.

c. Board Development

60. We will continue to enhance our quarterly Management Board governance meetings by the addition of deep-dive workshops to examine key issues we are facing. We will continue to enhance our quarterly Management Board governance meetings by the addition of deep-dive workshops to examine key issues we are facing. We will improve the level of key performance data coming from our partners about children both at risk of entering and within the youth justice system, to

improve our performance reporting, collective oversight and scrutiny of data. This will include Stop & Search data and data on children in custody overnight from Thames Valley Police.

61. Board membership is regularly reviewed to ensure that we have the right representation from partners with the necessary seniority and rank for effective challenge, decision-making and shared accountability. Board members have been tasked to provide data relevant to their organisations connected to children both at risk of entering and within the youth justice system to improve our performance reporting, collective oversight and scrutiny of data.
62. Board attendance and contribution is an area of focus for the Board Chair to ensure the Board can effectively identify and tackle barriers across the system which may be adversely and disproportionately impacting justice-involved children.
63. In 2024 the service developed refreshed Induction Packs for Board Members, and these were shared as part of an Inspection Readiness workshop with the Board in November 2024.

d. Workforce Development

64. In 2024-25 the service has undertaken a range of training including AIM3 refreshers for case-managers, Bail and Remand and PSR training with the Youth Justice Legal Centre, Protective Behaviours and Disproportionality. New staff members have undertaken the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate and one of our Senior Practitioners returned to the service having completed a Social Work qualification.
65. All staff and volunteers have access to OSCP's training and development offer and that of Oxfordshire County Council's Children's Services. These provide a wide and varied learning and development offer that includes safeguarding, exploitation, motivational interviewing, restorative approaches, trauma-informed practice, working with children with mental health difficulties and thematic practice areas such as domestic abuse and neglect. The Children, Education & Families Directorate regularly undertakes staff engagement sessions and briefings on key organisational and practice developments, and a monthly staff newsletter keeps staff informed of Directorate-wide updates and opportunities. This is a forum to keep staff appraised of everything related to children, but equally a space for positive staff recognition and feedback.
66. Our Senior Practitioners support inductions of new starters and learning opportunities for the wider team through buddying arrangements and delivery of workshops and training. One of our Senior Practitioners works closely with Oxford Brookes University to deliver talks on Youth Justice to Social Work and Criminology students and assists Children's Services' Social Work Development Centre by arranging shadowing and observation opportunities for students and apprentices.
67. Members of the team have benefitted from internal promotion opportunities in filling Assistant Team Managers and Senior Practitioner roles, providing continuity and consistency for the service as well as clear pathways for professional development.

We have also benefitted from a secondment from the Targeted Youth Support Service to fill a Youth & Family Practitioner role within our Turnaround project. Upskilling practitioners from across the Adolescence & Prevention in youth justice prevention approaches will develop resilience in the workforce and facilitate the sharing of skills and expertise.

68. Quarterly meetings are held for all our volunteers, featuring themed presentations from guest speakers from the YJS service and wider partnership. These sessions support volunteer learning and development, and feedback shows they value the opportunity to stay informed about service updates and best practices.
69. The service is working to align our internal audit processes with wider children's services' 'Driving Quality, Improvement, Practice and Performance' (DQIPP) cycle; this will ensure consistency in audit and quality assurance activity and senior leadership oversight of youth justice performance.

e. Evidence-based Practice and Innovation

70. Oxfordshire's Children's Services are built on three interconnected strands of evidence-based practice. Together, they emphasise the importance of building strong relationships, actively listening, empowering individuals, understanding both need and capacity for change, and focusing on strengths through a collaborative "doing with" approach.

- **Restorative Practice** is at the heart of what we do, it is how we interact with children, families, each other, and partner agencies. It incorporates respect, honesty, kindness, and empathy. Restorative practice promotes the importance of building relationships and resilience and sees all behaviour as an unmet need. Restorative practice can be used to ensure people are heard and to repair relationships.
- **Trauma-informed practice** is our strengths-based approach which understands and responds to the impact of trauma on people's lives and the trauma we can cause when we intervene. The approach emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and aims to empower individuals to re-establish control of their lives.
- **Motivational Interviewing** is our person-centred communication approach to behaviour change, designed to focus on understanding and working with resistance. Motivational interviewing can be a powerful tool to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to change.

71. The service actively learns from effective practice across the sector, fostering a culture where staff feel confident sharing new and innovative ideas with the management team—ideas that often lead to tangible outcomes. In 2024–25, a team member proposed delivering a First Aid course for children, with a focus on active bystander skills and responding to knife-related injuries. A local provider offered to deliver two courses per year at no cost, and the first session took place in March 2025, receiving positive feedback from the children involved. We are now

exploring opportunities to expand this offer across the Adolescence and Prevention Service.

72. Another member of staff has developed a proposal for a Driving Intervention, following consultation with the YJB, Youth Endowment Fund and our Board Chair. The scope of this will be to utilise intervention sessions for eligible children to give them driving lessons, developing a key life skill that can improve social mobility, help with employment and build self-confidence and self-efficacy.
73. Our Board Chair and service managers are meeting with the Criminal Justice Institute in June 2025 to explore their offer of consultation and support for effective diversion, to drive our improvement work around Oxfordshire's high First Time Entrant rates.

f. Priorities for 2025 – 2026

Standards for Children

74. **Out of Court:** Oxfordshire YJS has undertaken a significant amount of work in partnership with the YJB, our 9 neighbouring Thames Valley YJS' and Thames Valley Police to improve the diversionary offer available for children as part of pre-Court decision-making in Thames Valley. In June 2024, partnership guidance was released that introduced the use of Outcome 22 in Thames Valley. In March 2025 a 12-month pilot on the use of deferred cautions, known locally as the Youth Diversion Programme or 'YDP', was launched. We will be monitoring the impact and outcomes for children of the YDP pilot closely to inform ongoing service delivery.
75. We will also be working closely alongside Thames Valley Police to review timeliness from point of arrest to outcome for children, particularly for those children approaching 18 who may lose their opportunity to appear in a Youth Court if statutory time limits are not met. We are mindful of recommendation by HMIP in our 2020 inspection around outcome timeliness, and support for arrested children is a key priority for the youth justice partnership.
76. **At Court:** The service undertook the last YJB Self-Assessment against this standard in October 2023 and implemented a subsequent action plan. A progress report was shared with the Management Board in April 2025. We have seen significant improvements in 'on the day diversion' for children with a process agreed and implemented between the YJS, TVP, CPS and Court staff which has reduced delays for children and families.
77. **In the Community:** The service is undertaking a review of Referral Order practice with a view to ensuring approaches are in line with the Child First evidence base, and volunteers have the training and support to work with our increasingly complex cohort of children. Our Senior Practitioners have undertaken training for staff on the new YJB Prevention & Diversion Tool and have provided feedback into regional and national forums on how this new tool is functioning in practice, as well as recommendations for a review of Assetplus, to ensure assessment practice is in

line with the evidence-base. One of our Senior Practitioners has implemented quarterly Intervention Workshops for the team which have covered topics including Identity Development (the AIRS model), knife and weapon carrying and Court. These workshops will continue to draw on underpinning theory and research in youth justice to support high quality intervention delivery.

78. In Secure Settings: Oxfordshire has low rates of children entering custody on either remand or sentence. The service plans to work with colleagues in Quality Assurance and Inspection Readiness, as well as Education, to undertake audits of children who entered custody for serious violence offences where Elective Home Education was a key feature in their histories. Findings of these audits will be shared with the service and Management Board, as well as at the Children's Services' DQIPP meeting. The partnership is sighted on the concerns around the introduction of PAVAspray for use in Youth Offending Institutes and we will continue to keep this under close review.

79. Transitions & Resettlement: In 2024, Oxfordshire YJS developed a new Resettlement Policy and staff guidance, drawing on best practice from other areas. The service is also collaborating with the Probation Service on a Thames Valley-wide audit of transitions practice. Findings and recommendations from this audit will be shared with the Management Board and the wider service by our Probation Board representative. In the absence of a Probation Officer secondee, a Senior Practitioner leading on transitions is working closely with a linked Senior Probation Officer to hold monthly transitions meetings for eligible children, ensuring coordinated and effective support is in place. Transitions data is also incorporated into our Quarterly Board Performance reporting which assists the close monitoring of this area of practice.

Service Improvement Plan

Priority area	Actions	Outcome for children/victims	Lead	Timescales
Prevention & Diversion				
Reduction in First Time Entrant rate	Delivery of targeted Year 6-7 transition programmes for at-risk children as recommended in FTE Audit Report	Reduction in identified vulnerable children becoming FTEs	TYSS Team Manager	Review for impact in October 2025
	Continued implementation of YJB Improvement Plan	Oxfordshire moves out of Performance Quadrant 3 due to positive reduction in FTEs	YJS Service Manager, Jessie Dobson	Reviewed in monthly assurance meetings with YJB
	Monitor impact of Youth Diversion Programme pilot (deferred cautions)	More children receive informal diversion in line with evidence-base for reducing First Time Entrants	YJS Team Manager, Alison Brookman	Monitored via quarterly Board performance reporting
	Quarterly observation of Joint Decision-Making Panel for quality assurance	Assurance of consistent, high quality multi-agency decision-making in line with Child First principles	Jessie Dobson Alison Brookman Andrea Whittall (YJB)	Quarterly
Aligned prevention offers across the Adolescence & Prevention Service	Using data and insights about adolescents to inform triage decisions and	Consistent decision-making for children at the right level Ensures sustainability of the effective Turnaround approach by improving	Jessie Dobson Alison Brookman	Review for impact in December 2025

	apply thresholds appropriately	reach to children on the cusp of criminality Reduction in duplication across offers to adolescents		
	Develop a consistent set of resources for practitioners and families working with adolescents	Delivery of consistent, high-quality evidence-based practice in working with adolescents	Youth Justice Senior Practitioners & Senior Youth Workers	September 2025
	Ensured shared KPIs and aims for adolescents at risk are aligned across relevant Boards	More effective service delivery for children, families and victims through a shared vision and well-understood approach across teams	Jessie Dobson	July 2025
Restorative Practice & Victims				
Ensure practice meets HMIP Victims Standard	Case-work audits	Assurance of high-quality casework and positive outcomes for victims well evidenced	Pete Wallis	August 2025
	Capturing the voice of victims to inform pre-Court decision-making at JDMP	Victim's views and impact of offence/s inform proportionate decision-making to build trust and confidence in criminal justice system Children open to Youth Justice have a better understand of the impact of their behaviour on others	Pete Wallis	August 2025
	Implementation of 2025-26 RJ	The YJS provides high-quality service for all victims in line with Victim's Code and best practice evidence	Pete Wallis	December 2025

	Improvement Plan	Increase wider team knowledge base and confidence in Restorative Justice and victim work – evidenced through staff surveys and audits		
Improve visibility of Restorative Justice and victim work to the Board	Development of RJ performance dashboard for oversight, scrutiny and support of victim work	Shared understanding and partnership appreciation of needs of victims and required provision to provide high quality services in Oxfordshire This will inform accountability for responsibilities to victims across the youth justice partnership	Jessie Dobson	October 2025
Disproportionality				
High quality partnership Disproportionality Action Plan driven through shared accountability	Review of Disproportionality Action Plan with clear recommendations and actions for the partnership to take forward in 2025-26.	Accountability across the Board and appropriate escalation mechanisms in place to respond to identified areas of concern	YJ Board	October 2025
Education & SEND				
Increasing attendance and attainment for children open to youth justice	Termly meeting with relevant Education and SEND colleagues to review children of concern	Reduction in drift and delay Children have access to appropriate, high-quality provision in line with their needs	Kate Reynolds (Deputy Director for Education) Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion) Jessie Dobson	For quarterly review in Board Performance

Increased oversight and scrutiny of suspension and exclusion data for children open to YJ	Raise at Strategic Attendance Board	Use of data to support school leaders' understanding of the needs of children open to YJ Partnership practice is inclusive and consistent Suspensions and exclusions for justice-involved children are scrutinised	Kate Reynolds (Deputy Director for Education) Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion) Jessie Dobson	For quarterly review in Board Performance
Ensure YJ Board is sighted on relevant aspects of SEND Improvement Plan and shared aims for children in youth justice	Education /SEND Board reps to present on SEND Improvement Plan as relevant to youth justice children	Aligned governance and shared aims for justice-involved children with SEND Consistent understanding of all partners at the YJ Board with learning cascaded across partner organisations	Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion)	Reporting into YJ Board as relevant to justice-involved children
	Across 2025 - 2026 all Board members to report on their relevant organisation's response to children with SEND in youth justice	Organisations can share good practice in relation to working with children with SEND	Board Chair to ensure	Reporting into YJ Board as relevant to justice-involved children
Arrested Children				
Work to reduce delay from arrest to outcome for	TVP have created toolkit to	Improved monitoring and scrutiny of timescales that would adversely	TVP Board Rep	Being monitored for impact over next 6 – 12 months

children in Oxfordshire	monitor timeliness	impact children and outcomes for victims		
	Implement robotics to flag children whose cases have less than 6 weeks remaining on their statutory time limit	Enables appropriate escalation where issues identified	TVP Board Rep	TVP Board Rep to report to Board as appropriate on progress
	Review all current children's files where they are approaching 18 years old and focus resources to progress these whilst still a youth	The child is first seen in a Youth Court which may mitigate adultification and ensure response is proportionate to their developmental age		
Develop partnership offer of support for children post-arrest and subject to Bail/RUI	FCAMHS to undertake review of current offer of support for children after arrest	FCAMHS to present findings of review to YJS with recommendations with a view to create a partnership working group and action plan to take to Management Board	FCAMHS (Dr Mat Lister, Board Rep) Service Manager, Jessie Dobson	To be presented to Management Board in October 2025

5. National priority areas

a. Children from Over-represented Groups

80. The service and performance colleagues have worked to develop our quarterly performance reporting to improve oversight and scrutiny of disproportionality and over-representation within our data. This has helped us identify an increase in the number of girls within our pre-Court cohort, and a regional audit across the 9 Thames Valley YJS' has been proposed to scrutinise our data and identify themes, trends and any appropriate mitigating action. Work undertaken will be reflected within our refreshed Disproportionality Action Plan.
81. We are very mindful of the high proportion of children within the youth justice service who have both identified and identified SEND needs. We understand that unmet need and inadequate support or provision can compound the difficulties these already vulnerable children are experiencing within our system. Improving outcomes for these children is a key priority for the partnership for 2025-26.
82. Although children of mixed heritage are not statistically over-represented in the overall cohort, our data shows they are 1.4 times more likely to receive a court sentence than to be diverted at the pre-court stage. This mirrors national research highlighting disparities in diversion outcomes for Black and mixed heritage children. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) uses the term 'mixed' to describe a broad range of dual ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures. It is therefore essential that we seek to understand the unique identities and lived experiences of these children. This evidence strengthens our commitment to ensuring proportionality and maintaining rigorous multi-agency scrutiny in both pre-court and court decision-making.

b. Policing

83. Thames Valley Police has undergone a major Force-wide review during 2024–25, leading to changes in how youth justice is structured. Youth justice responsibilities now sit within newly established Harm Reduction Units across the region. Since the launch of Oxfordshire's Harm Reduction Unit, the Youth Justice Service (YJS) has worked closely with its leadership to maintain effective practice, share key learning on child-centred approaches, and coordinate efforts across youth justice, exploitation, and risk management. As Oxfordshire develops its new Harm Outside the Home framework and introduces Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements, the YJS Service Manager is collaborating with the TVP Harm Reduction Unit Inspector to co-chair these meetings. This partnership ensures that practice and processes concerning children are well-aligned and clearly understood.
84. In June 2025, the Youth Justice Service (YJS) participated in a Court User Group meeting attended by representatives from the District Judge, Youth Bench Chair, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and Thames Valley Police (TVP). During the meeting, TVP presented ongoing work related to children, particularly around improving outcome timeliness. These developments have directly informed the

YJS Service Improvement Plan for 2025–26, ensuring alignment with TVP’s priorities and reinforcing our shared commitment to timely and effective outcomes for children and victims.

c. Prevention

85. The Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) plays a vital role in supporting children and young people identified as vulnerable to offending or exploitation. TYSS typically works with individuals facing multiple risk factors, such as school exclusion, family breakdown, poverty, or exposure to criminal influences.
86. The approach is often multi-agency, involving collaboration with schools, social care, police, and community organisations to provide tailored interventions that address the root causes of vulnerability for children. These may include group work or 1-2-1 intensive support on themes such as protective behaviours, healthy relationships, self-regulation, identity, and misogyny. TYSS youth workers support children to identify their own goals and aspirations, and access diversionary activities aimed at building resilience, making positive choices and identity. These interventions are designed to support social and emotional development, reduce risk-taking behaviours, and help young people access community-based support for sustainable change.
87. Following the First Time Entrants audit completed by the YJS in 2024 and adoption of FTEs as a partnership priority within Children’s Services, TYSS has developed targeted transition programmes for children moving from primary to secondary education provision, where vulnerabilities around risk of exclusion or managed moves are identified.
88. Oxfordshire’s Turnaround project has continued to work with children who received Community Resolutions, were on Bail / Released under investigation or were referred by partners due to concerns about police contact such as anti-social behaviour or a ‘No Further Action’ outcome. The work of our Youth & Family Practitioners focuses on the areas recommended in the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit, particularly social and emotional interventions, music and sporting activities, mentoring and restorative justice. At the close of Year 3 (31.03.25) Turnaround in Oxfordshire had successfully completed work with 95 children and was still supporting a further 9 children which meant we met our Ministry of Justice target to support a total of 104 children. Of our 95 completions, the outcomes were:

Children who have reoffended (convicted at court or received police youth caution or other outcome)	7 (7%)
Children with no further contact with the police / Youth Justice	67 (71%)
Children who have had further contact with police or Youth Justice (including those on the YJ caseload due to receiving a statutory outcome for a pre-Turnaround offence, and children still under investigation for a new offence).	21 (22%)
TOTAL	95

89. The Ministry of Justice acknowledged case studies of good practice that we submitted for inclusion in their evaluation evidence, and one of our Youth & Family practitioners was recognised at the Oxfordshire County Council Staff Awards for her work supporting girls in the Turnaround cohort.
90. Work with Turnaround children has been an important part of the development of Oxfordshire's diversionary offer. When children engage and complete work to address their offending on a voluntary basis with Turnaround, they are more likely to receive lower outcomes at our Joint Decision-Making Panel or Court. A recent example is a young person who was convicted of Robbery and sentenced at Youth Court in April 2025. Recognising his previous progress under Turnaround whilst on bail, the Court decided to issue a Conditional Discharge rather than a Referral Order. This had the benefit of allowing him to progress with an RAF apprenticeship which would not have been possible were he received a Referral Order.
91. The Ministry of Justice has confirmed funding for Turnaround for the year 2025-2026, and that we were successful in a bid to the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) who have granted 'top-up' funding for the years 2025-2027 to address the shortfall in Ministry of Justice funding. This allows us to continue with our current offer of Turnaround Support whilst we integrate into a new Adolescent Service alongside Targeted Youth Work and harm outside the home. We have used the learning from an audit of our First Time Entrant cohort in 2024 to better target children based on indicators of vulnerability, which will support a phased approach to prevention and diversion across the new Adolescent Service.
92. For sustainability we will be upskilling practitioners across the Adolescent workforce in preventative approaches for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system and will be using evidence and insights to ensure that vulnerable children have the right support at key stages in their lives be that transition points in schooling or into adulthood, exclusions from school or any other significant life events.

a. Diversion

93. The Thames Valley Police Harm Reduction Unit (HRU), Liaison and Diversion Service (L&D), and Youth Justice Service (YJS) are core members of the Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP). Contributions also come from the Education, Training and Employment service (EET 16+), Locality Community Support Service (LCSS), and Children's Social Care where appropriate.
94. These panels are recognised as good practice for enabling healthy discussion, challenge, and decision-making among a dedicated and diverse group of partners. They aim to achieve proportionate outcomes for the child, victim(s), and community. The Panel considers the child holistically, reviewing previous interventions, the child's individual circumstances and needs, offence details, professional involvement, and the impact on the victim(s) and their safety needs.

95. This approach allows panel members to gain a deeper understanding of the child and their victim(s) in a timely manner, enabling informed and varied views on the most proportionate and fair outcomes. Oxfordshire YJS has contributed to a Thames Valley set of shared guidance regarding JDMP processes and procedures to ensure consistency in decision-making across the TVP Force area.

96. Since 2021, we have seen an increase in outcomes through our JDMP in Oxfordshire, with a slight reduction in 2023-24. We are observing more children with high levels of need and complexity, particularly concerning mental health, neurodiversity, social care histories, and education experiences. Panel Chairs report seeing more children on Child Protection plans, Children We Care For, and those with positive conclusive grounds National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decisions.

97. Key points:

- Increase in the number of girls in 2024: We are planning an audit to explore themes and trends to understand the reasons behind this increase and identify potential interventions.
- Community Resolutions: These remain the most common outcome, with support offered to children in most cases through Turnaround or voluntary sessions, aligning with our plan to reduce First-Time Entrants (FTEs).

98. Development of Out of Court data for 2025 – 26:

We aim to expand our data and reporting on out-of-court disposals and the Joint Decision-Making Panel for 2025-26. We are exploring how to include data breakdowns of:

- Proportion of children for whom the outcome was their first offence
- Number of children who re-offended within the year

99. Youth Diversion Programme (YDP):

In March 2025, the Thames Valley Chief Constables Management Team (CCMT) approved the use of deferred Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions as an available disposal option for children. These deferred cautions, referred to as the Youth Diversion Programme (YDP), will be piloted for 12 months across Thames Valley and evaluated after March 2026.

The YDP allows for diversion and intervention to be completed by the child without a formal outcome being recorded in local police systems or the Police National Computer (PNC). The programme reflects child-first principles, current research, and best practices for reducing re-offending and addressing youth crime.

100. Eligibility for the YDP:

- Possible First-time entrant to the youth justice system
- The offence must be eligible
- The child must agree and be willing to participate in the scheme

The YDP serves as an alternative to a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution, with eligibility criteria consistent with these disposals. All eligible children will be discussed at the JDMP and will have a YJB Prevention & Diversion Assessment to inform the intervention plan. In Oxfordshire, the YDP will run for 16 weeks, aligning with the timescale for Youth Conditional Cautions (YCCs). At the end of the YDP, the child will meet with the Youth Justice Police Officer for a closure appointment, where the officer can confirm that the offence has been filed as 'no further action' or NFA.

101. Between April 2025 and June 2025 our JDMP has approved 30 YDPs. It is anticipated that this programme will positively reduce our number of First-Time Entrants (FTEs) and provide early and targeted diversionary support to children.

d. Education

102. As of March 2025, Oxfordshire has 367 educational settings:

- 45 independent schools and sixth form colleges
- 28 Special schools (13 Special Independent Schools, 3 maintained schools, 10 academies, 1 Pupil Referral Unit and 1 Hospital school)
- 39 secondary schools (1 maintained school and 38 academies)
- 2 All through schools (academy)
- 243 primary schools (113 maintained schools and 130 academies)
- 7 state-maintained nursery schools
- 3 Further Education colleges

103. Data on the **162** children open to Youth Justice in June 2025:

Academic year 24/25 Terms 1-5	No.	%
Average % Attendance (n=79)		49%
Persistent absence >=10%	69	75%
Severe absence >=50%	36	45%
1 or more suspensions	42	53%
Average no. suspensions per pupil	4.4	
Permanent exclusions	3	4%

Of the 162 children in the cohort, 79 are currently on a school roll, with an average attendance rate of 49%. Nearly half (45%) meet the criteria for severe absence, defined as attendance below 50%. Additionally, 42 children (53%) have experienced one or more suspensions, and 3 have been permanently excluded.

104. Within the cohort:

- 10% are Children We Care For (Looked After)
- 10% are not in education, training, or employment (NEET)
- 4% are electively home educated
- 2% are identified as Children Missing Education

A total of 34 children have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and 44 receive SEN Support. The most common primary need is Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

105. Speech and language needs remain under-identified, consistent with findings from our July 2024 First Time Entrant audit and national evidence. These needs often emerge only at the point of assessment, highlighting the importance of early screening and access to appropriate support. Strengthening partnership arrangements to fully understand the education and health needs of justice-involved children in Oxfordshire—and taking action to improve their outcomes—is a central priority in our 2025–26 plan in alignment with OCC’s SEND Improvement Plan.

	No.	%
Children we care for	17	10%
NEET	16	10%
Elective Home Education- end of term 5	6	4%
Elective Home Education - any point in terms 1-5	10	6%
Child Missing Education - end of term 5	3	2%
Child Missing Education - any point in terms 1-5	11	7%

	EHCP	SEN
EHCP status	No.	No.
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	7	7
Hearing Impairment		1
Moderate Learning Difficulty	3	3
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	22	24
Specific Learning Difficulty		5
Speech, Language and Communication Needs		2
Not Recorded	2	2
Total with EHCP/SEN	34	44
Total youth justice cohort	162	92

e. Restorative Approaches and Victims

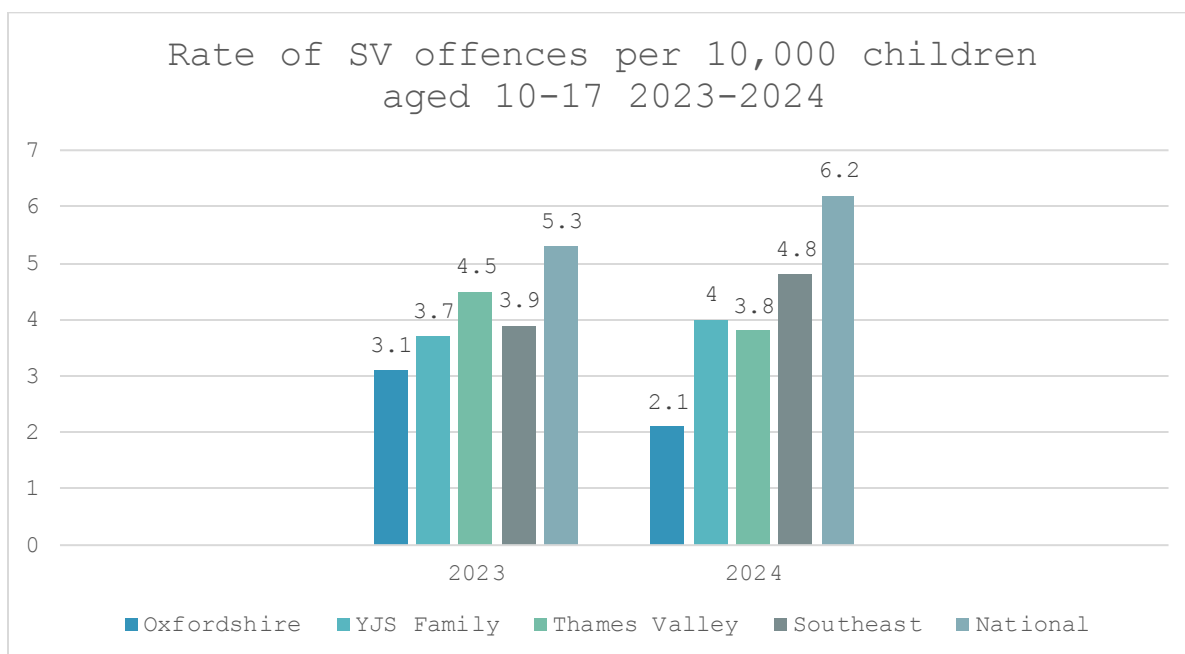
106. Youth Justice Services have a duty under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime to contact individuals affected by youth crime to provide information and updates about their case and opportunities for restorative justice. Oxfordshire YJS seeks to contact and consult with all those affected by the offences committed by children referred to the service. We take their opinion into consideration, hear about the impact of crime and enable them to have a voice if they wish. Consideration is made of the safety to individuals and communities, and any diversity needs are identified and addressed to ensure that the service is appropriate and inclusive.

107. Services for people affected by youth crime are tailored to their needs and wishes, and may include keeping them up to date with their case and answering any questions, offering involvement in restorative justice (which provides an opportunity to communicate safely with the child who caused harm), giving them a voice in the type of reparative activity the child undertakes and providing information about other support services. As a significant proportion of those affected by crime are themselves young people, Oxfordshire YJS also offers a brief intervention to help them cope and recover, including protective behaviours and safety planning. Youth Justice staff keep up to date information about other services offering support to victims of crime, ensuring that victims are made aware of support available outside of the service.
108. The service works in close partnership with local charity SAFE! who run the Thames Valley wide Support After Crime and Abuse service. The charity SAFE! began within Oxfordshire YJS when a gap was identified in provision of support for children who have experienced victimization. SAFE! has since grown to cover the whole of Thames Valley offering a range of victim services and support for children and families. Interventions for children, and their parents/carers range from one-to-one emotional support and counselling, targeted and thematic group work, digital support, and advocacy through the criminal justice system. Oxfordshire children and families have access to Children's Independent Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence Advocates via SAFE! as well as the Building Respectful Families programme which provides specialist support for families experiencing child and adolescent on parent violence and abuse. The CEO of SAFE! is a long-standing member of the Youth Justice Management Board bringing expertise to the Board around victims.
109. Youth crime can have a lasting and in some cases life-changing impact on those affected, including the child responsible. Restorative justice is a sensitive area of work, which has the potential to bring enormous benefits to all those involved. Oxfordshire YJS is a Registered Service Provider with the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) and works to RJC principles and best practice to ensure a safe and appropriate restorative justice service. Where those involved wish to meet face to face, there is a rigorous process of preparation and assessment to ensure that the encounter will do no further harm.
110. The YJS receives consent and contact details for individuals affected by youth crime from the Police. Sensitive and personal information is recorded securely on ChildView and kept separately from the child's records. The Victims Code states that practitioners must not excessively record victim information if it has no purpose toward protecting the victims, future victims or the young person, and the YJS works within the council's data protection procedures.
111. Restorative justice is about repairing harm caused by crime and is one element of restorative practice which also seeks to build and maintain relationships. Restorative practice has been adopted as the practice approach for Oxfordshire's Children's Services, and the YJS seeks to embed this way of working within the staff team and across its partnerships to ensure a consistent approach for children, families and communities.

*f. Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding*¹*

112. In the year ending December 2024 there were 15 serious violence offences committed by children from Oxfordshire. This is a decrease of -7 compared with 2023 which saw the number double from 11 in 2022 to 22 in 2023. In the year ending December 2024 the rate of serious violence per 10,000 children aged 10-17 was 2.1 for Oxfordshire, which is a decrease of -1 compared with 2023. The proportion of serious violence offences has also decreased from 2023 by 1% to 4% of all offences committed by children in 2024.

113. Oxfordshire's rate of serious violence offences committed by children is lower than our YJS family, Southeast region, Thames Valley PCC area and national rates.



114. All youth serious violence offences committed in Oxfordshire between April 2023 – March 2025 have been by boys. The offence types have been variable between this same period, with a mix of drug, robbery and violence against the person offences. After a significant spike in knife possession offences in July – September 2023 with 19 offences, this significantly reduced in the same period in 2024 with 6 offences. This has reduced further with 2 possession of knife offences recorded in October – December 2024. Possession only (knife and weapon) offences remain the most common with threats with a knife/weapon less prevalent.

115. Between April 2023 – March 2024 6 serious violence offences were committed by children aged between 10-14. As of May 2025, 1 serious violence offence committed in Oxfordshire was by a child aged between 10-14 years old. The most

¹ Contextual safeguarding, which has been developed by Dr. Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire, recognises that as young people grow and develop, they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family. For example, in school or college, in the local community in their peer groups or online. Children and young people may encounter risk in any of these environments. Sometimes the different contexts are inter-related and can mean that children and young people may encounter multiple risks. Contextual safeguarding looks at how we can best understand these risks, engage with children and young people and help to keep them safe (NSPCC).

common age group who committed serious violence offences in 2024 – 2025 has been 15 years old which is of concern, and our longitudinal data shows an increase in serious violence offences committed by children aged 16 or below since 2021.

116. Oxfordshire's Serious Violence Coordinator role has been relocated from the YJS into the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) as of October 2024. This role continues to support the development of Oxfordshire's annual Strategic Needs Assessment to inform place-based responses to serious violence in the county. An extensive youth provision mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify gaps in support and interventions for children most at risk of serious violence. This work has supported funding bids for youth engagement provision based on the Youth Endowment Fund toolkit.
117. Using the data gathered through youth provision mapping and the YJS' First Time Entrant audit, TYSS are now implementing transition support programmes for children moving from primary to secondary education, as this presents a particular point of vulnerability for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system. TYSS have also introduced a peer-on-peer violence programme for delivery in schools and communities.
118. Through joint-work in partnership with statutory and voluntary partners, the YJS and TYSS have led on the place-based approaches to address contextual risk; this has included detached youth work in local 'hot-spots' or in response to incidents and establishing targeted youth activities in communities that meet the needs of children and young people.
119. Now TYSS, the YJS and harm outside the home teams are aligned under one Adolescent Service, work is ongoing to develop Oxfordshire's prevention and harm outside the home framework for adolescents. This will continue to include our successful National Referral Mechanism (NRM) devolved decision-making pilot which has yielded positive outcomes for Oxfordshire's children.
120. Between 2023-24 the exploitation types identified at point of referral were broken down as follows:
 - 57% child drug exploitation
 - 24% 'other type' of exploitation (including trafficking, forced labour, kidnap for ransom)
 - 14% child sexual exploitation
 - 5% child criminal exploitation
121. Between 2023 – June 2025 out of a total 130 referrals, 74 children have received Positive Conclusive Grounds decisions at our local panel. 24 children have received Negative Reasonable Grounds decisions, which means their case does not proceed. The remaining children are still awaiting decisions. When referrals were made to the Single Competent Authority (SCA) children could be awaiting anywhere between 6 months to 24 months for a decision, whereas the Oxfordshire panel has reduced decision-making timescales down to 50 days (the national statutory guidance is 90 days). This has had a positive impact for our children in Oxfordshire who are receiving decisions more quickly made by

professionals who know them well, and this has then gone on to inform Police and Court processes and decision-making.

g. Detention in Police Custody

122. The YJS delivers an Appropriate Adult service for children who are arrested and taken to Police custody. The YJS has a team of 36 volunteers, of which 25 are trained Appropriate Adults. All have received in-house training to ensure compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and NAAN guidelines. The volunteers receive safeguarding training, regular supervision, access to support group meetings to raise any concerns / issues regarding their role, hear relevant service updates and receive specific training to enhance their skills and knowledge in the role. Refresher Appropriate Adult training is available, and Appropriate Adult full-day training is offered to Children's Services staff and Adult Social Care staff. The service also delivers an Appropriate Adult Awareness course twice yearly, open to all Oxfordshire County Council staff including partner agencies working with children and vulnerable adults to help them to understand this vital role. Experienced volunteers provide shadowing for new volunteers wishing to experience custody before working independently.
123. In the year 2024-25 our Appropriate Adult volunteers supported children in custody on 67 instances, which is a 49% decrease from last year when Appropriate Adults attended on 132 occasions.
124. The YJS monitors the number of strip-searches that a volunteer Appropriate Adult attends, including the ethnicity of the children who are strip-searched. In 2024-25 there was 1 strip-search where the YJS provided an Appropriate Adult. The child was White British, and this was a negative search in which nothing was found.
125. The YJS Team Manager also attends a police-led Children in Custody Data Review meeting each quarter where data on children who are held overnight in custody suites across Thames Valley is scrutinised and discussed with partners including YJS', Emergency Duty Teams, Health colleagues and Social Care. We are working with TVP to ensure data on Oxfordshire children is presented to the Management Board each quarter.

h. Remands

126. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) has collaborated with partners across Children's Services to establish a new pathway for remanded children. This pathway ensures that children who are not already known to Social Care are swiftly allocated to a Social Work team. It also includes an urgent notification process to alert senior leaders across Children's Services of a newly remanded child. The process was formally approved by the Children's Senior Management Team in April 2025. Since then, the Team Manager has delivered briefing sessions to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), with additional briefings planned for key teams across Children's Services. These sessions aim to embed the new pathway and ensure it is consistently understood and applied.

127. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) recently delivered a presentation to the Board on the newly published Remand Concordat for children, outlining its implications and the associated responsibilities for partner agencies. Following this, the Board endorsed the value of conducting a self-assessment against the Concordat's recommendations. To support this work, a dedicated Remand Working Group has been established and will lead the implementation of recommendations and learning throughout 2025–26.

i. Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement

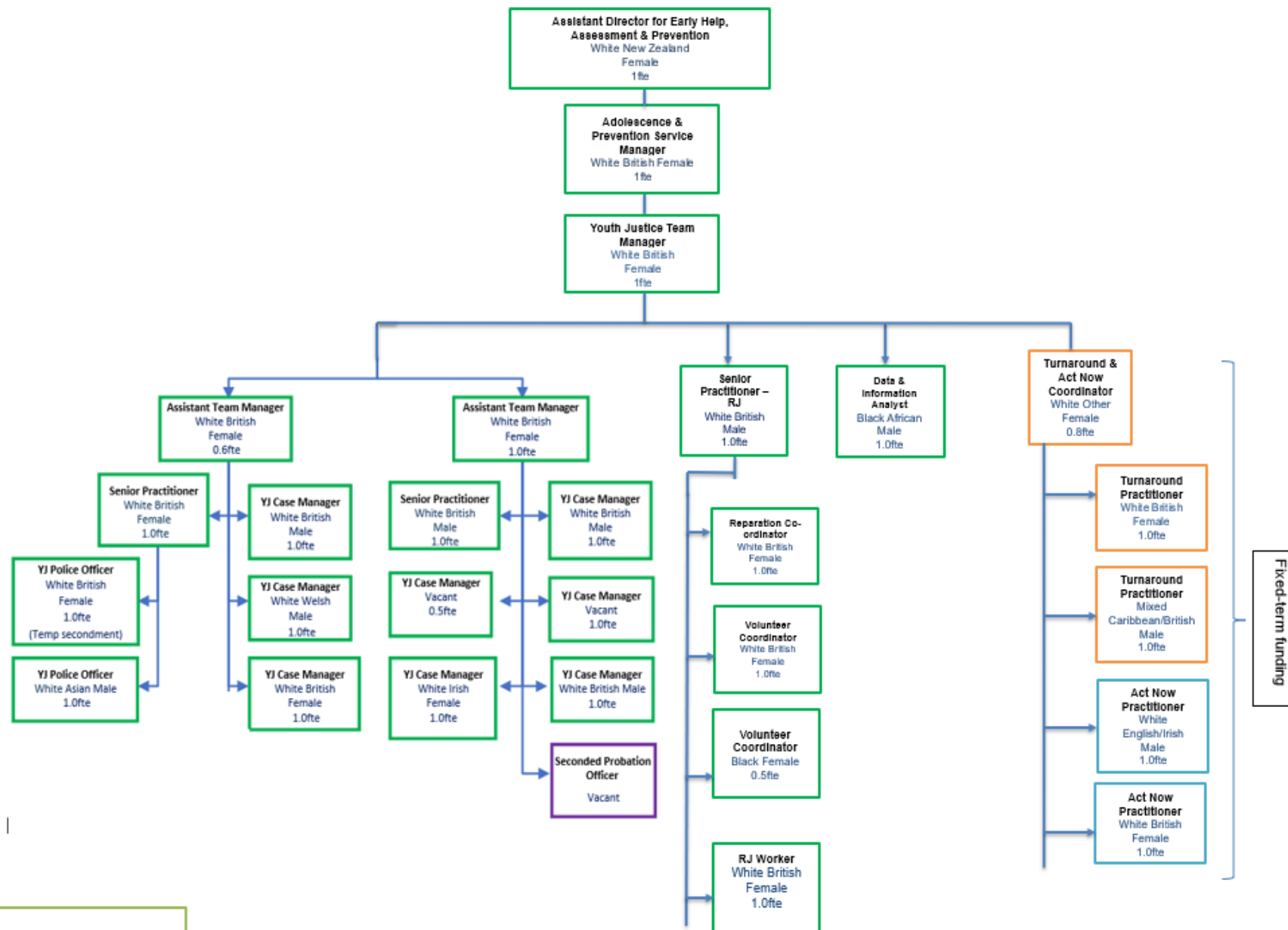
128. Partnership working across Children's Services, Health, Housing, Police and third sector will support robust resettlement planning for our children from the point of entry into custody. In 2024 Oxfordshire YJS produced a new local Resettlement Policy with practice guidance for the service. As part of a series of training workshops with partners, the YJS is presenting on areas on partnership practice which will include custody and resettlement, to raise awareness of our collective responsibilities and duties to children.

j. Working with Families

129. When supporting children, we take a whole-family approach, recognising that meaningful, lasting change happens through connection and collaboration. We are currently reviewing how we support parents and carers to help them better understand and respond to the challenges of adolescence. Families can also access a range of group programmes through our Family Help offer.

130. We are using data to guide early support for siblings of children working with the Youth Justice Service, helping inform the work of our Targeted Youth Work and Harm Outside the Home teams. Our Family Bridges team offers intensive, preventative support to help families stay together, working closely with practitioners to understand the impact that harmful behaviours, exploitation, and external risks can have on children and their families.

131. As a Family Safeguarding authority, we are committed to relational practice—working alongside children and families with empathy and respect for where they are in their journey of change. Our restorative approach recognises the impact of harmful behaviour not only on those directly involved, but also on the wider family and community.



Health
1fte Health Nurse
0.2fte Forensic CAMHS input

The service has 36 volunteers of which 25 are female and 11 are male. The diversity of the volunteers is an ongoing focus to ensure reflection of the diversity of the communities we serve. The breakdown of ethnicity of our volunteers is: 31 White British, 1 Black Caribbean and White, 1 Mixed Other and 3 White Other

Sign off, submission and approval:

Signed by Chair of Board: John Drew (CBE)	 <i>John Drew, CBE</i>
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Divisions Affected - All

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26th September 2025

Attendance Update

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

Note the content of the report.

Comment on the content of the report.

Note the recommendation for a further workshop with elected members on specific areas within attendance.

Executive Summary

2. The report outlines the roles and responsibilities of key personnel within Oxfordshire County Council's County Attendance Team. It covers four core functions: Attendance Officers (CAT), Licensing, Children Missing Education (CME), and Elective Home Education (EHE).
3. Report shares key data on attendance and outlines our next steps on how we are developing the work on attendance including the work on Attendance Strategic Board

Corporate Policies and Priorities

4. The report is in line with OCC's values and will be linked to the overall Education Framework which is in development.

Financial Implications

5. None.

Comments checked by:

Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

6. None.

Comments checked by:

Craig Cochrane, Head of Law and Legal Business Partner,
craig.cochrane@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

7. None.

Comments checked by:

Michelle Higgs, Strategic People Partner Children's and Education,
michelle.higgs@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

8. None.

Sustainability Implications

9. None.

Risk Management

10. None.

Consultations

11. The report has been shared with CEF ELT and SLT and signed off by OCC legal, finance and HR departments

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children Services

Annex: Attendance Report
Scrutiny Report

Contact Officer: Jaswinder Didially, Assistant Director – Schools and
Settings (Sufficiency),
jaswinder.didially@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

September 2025

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Introduction

This report outlines the roles and responsibilities of key personnel within Oxfordshire County Council's County Attendance Team. The team covers four core functions:

- Attendance
- Licensing
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Children Missing Education (CME)

These teams work collaboratively to safeguard children, support schools and families, and ensure statutory compliance.

Attendance: County Attendance Officers (CAT) Roles and Responsibilities

County Attendance Officers support schools, pupils, and families to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, in line with DfE guidance.

- Provide guidance on voluntary/formal support for pupils and families.
- Clarify school responsibilities prior to LA involvement.
- Ensure shared responsibility for attendance between schools and the LA.
- Act as named contacts for schools; facilitate Targeting Support Meetings.
- Coordinate engagement sessions and share best practices.
- Lead on consistent messaging and protocols across Oxfordshire.
- Support implementation and review of DfE's Targeting Support Meetings.

Licensing : Child performance Licensing Roles and Responsibilities

Licensing Officer manage the issuing of licenses for child performances, chaperones, and child employment, ensuring legal compliance and safeguarding.

- Issue licences for child performances, chaperones, and child employment.
- Conduct/support inspections.
- Interview chaperone applicants.
- Validate DBS checks and raise concerns as needed.
- Provide guidance to employers and entertainment organisations.

Elective Home Education (EHE) Roles and Responsibilities

EHE Officers support families who choose to educate their children at home, ensuring safeguarding and educational standards are met.

- Provide advice and support to EHE families.
- Monitor educational provision and wellbeing of EHE children.
- Liaise with other services where safeguarding or SEND needs are identified.
- Maintain accurate records and ensure compliance with statutory guidance.

Children Missing Education (CME) Roles and Responsibilities

CME Officers are responsible for identifying and supporting children who are not receiving suitable education and are not on a school roll.

- Investigate cases of children missing education that are not on a School Roll.
- Liaise with schools, families, and external agencies to locate and re-engage children.
- Ensure safeguarding protocols are followed.
- Maintain accurate records and contribute to CME tracking and reporting.

National Context: DfE Attendance Framework

The Department for Education's updated attendance framework (2024) outlines strengthened statutory duties for local authorities, schools, and multi-agency partners. Key expectations include:

Local Authority Duties:

- Lead strategic attendance improvement across the area.
- Facilitate Targeting Support Meetings for persistently/severely absent pupils.
- Provide early help and formal interventions.
- Monitor school-level attendance data and challenge poor performance.
- Use legal powers where support is refused or ineffective.

School Duties:

- Maintain accurate registers and codes.
- Engage families early when concerns arise.
- Collaborate with the LA on referrals and support.
- Communicate expectations clearly to parents.

Virtual School Duties (from Sept 2026):

- Champion education for children with a social worker and those in kinship care.
- Promote practice that supports engagement and narrows attainment gaps

Oxfordshire County Council Implementation

Regular School Engagement:

Attendance Officers are conducting two weekly/termly meetings with all secondary schools across Oxfordshire. These meetings focus on early intervention to improve pupil attendance and ensure access to education.

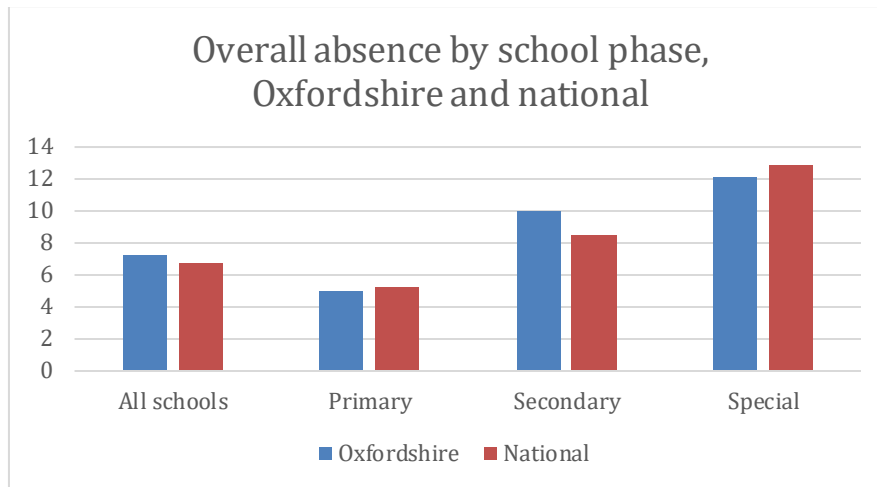
District Meetings:

All schools in Oxfordshire are invited to participate in District Meetings. These sessions are designed to share good practice, provide training, and communicate important updates. They foster collaboration and consistency across the county.

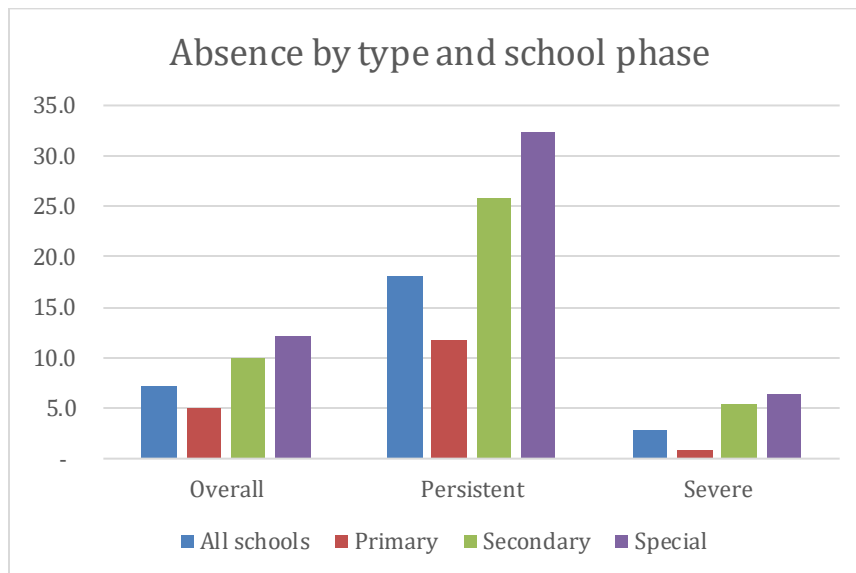
Internal Audit:

An internal audit of the Attendance Team and Children Missing Education (CME) processes is nearing completion. This audit is helping to identify gaps in service delivery and will inform future improvements to strengthen support for schools and families.

Performance Overview



Overall Absence: 7.1% (vs. 6.6% nationally); Secondary: 9.7% (vs. 8.2% nationally).



- Persistent Absence: 17.9% (slightly better than national 19%).
- Severe Absence: Secondary schools at 5.2%; slight increase in special schools.
- SEN Support Absence: Rising trend; further analysis needed.
- EHCP Absence: Improved in Term 4.
- Children We Care For: Higher absence rates, especially within Oxfordshire placements

Three-Stage Attendance Monitoring (TAM) Process

Stage 1: Initial Audit conducted with schools identified as having whole School attendance rates below 94% to assess attendance concerns and identify children at risk due to poor school attendance.

Stage 2: Targeted Follow-Up Meetings were held with each school. Each child was discussed to ensure a clear educational plan was in place.

Stage 3: Third TAM Meeting all participating schools were invited to a central meeting to share feedback from the Stage 1 and 2 processes, present data from the TAM process and showcase good practice

Example of good practice

The need for targeted transition was raised during TAM 2 with a primary school. The school identified a cohort of children with attendance concerns who often go unnoticed during standard transition processes.

CAT Officers facilitated a bespoke meeting between the primary and secondary school. Members of the Exclusion and Re-Integration Team were invited to contribute insights and raise awareness.

The meeting enabled the schools to share in-depth information about individual pupils including family circumstances, known barriers, and attendance history.

As a result the secondary school gained a broader understanding of the pupils transitioning in September. They contacted families over the summer to offer early support and implement attendance strategies from the start of Year 7.

Elective Home Education (EHE) Parent Engagement Meetings

Three in-person meetings were held with parents who are currently home educating or considering home education. The meetings were attended by Admissions Team to answer questions about returning to mainstream education.

As well as improving communication and strengthening relationships between OCC and parents who home educate, EHE Officers shared examples of acceptable evidence of education provision.

Work on the Attendance Strategic Board

The Attendance Team is actively engaged in the development and delivery of the Attendance Strategic Board. This board is guided by a clear vision: that all children and young people Priorities attendance at school and are kept safe. We recognise the importance of collaboration across services to ensure that help is available at an early stage, reducing the number of pupils missing out on their education entitlement due to poor attendance. Current efforts include reviewing how the board is structured, identifying the right stakeholders to be involved, and refining the terms of reference to ensure the board operates effectively and with clear purpose.

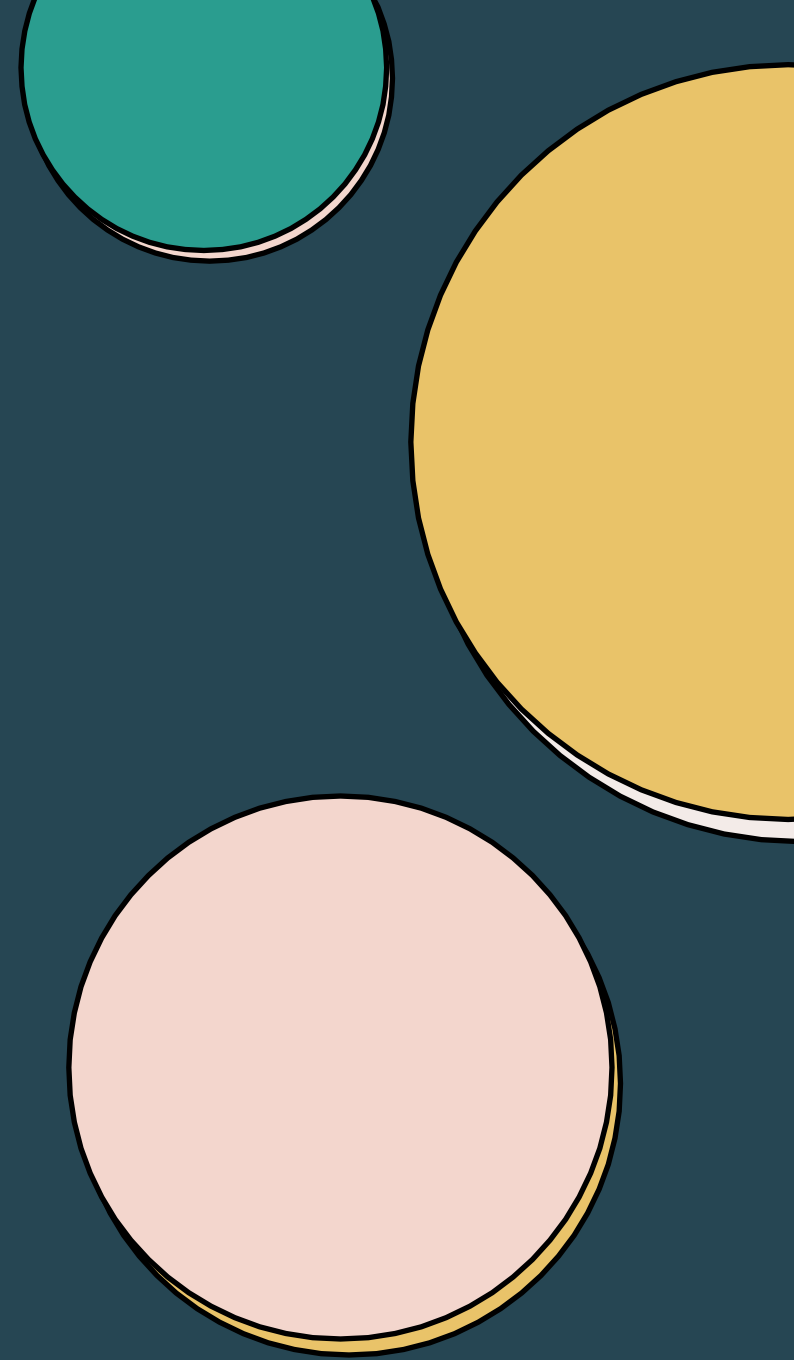
Next Steps

- Data Integration: Power BI dashboards for real-time access.
- Audit Planning: Themed audits proposed for EHE and CIN/CP cohorts.
- Graduated Pathway: Development underway to guide professionals on attendance interventions
- Virtual School Support: Key barriers to attendance for children we care for.



Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Attendance Report

Introduction





Overview of County Attendance Team Functions

- **Attendance Improvement**

- Focuses on enhancing school attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism among children.

- **Licensing and Compliance**

- Ensures legal compliance and child safety in youth employment and performance licensing.

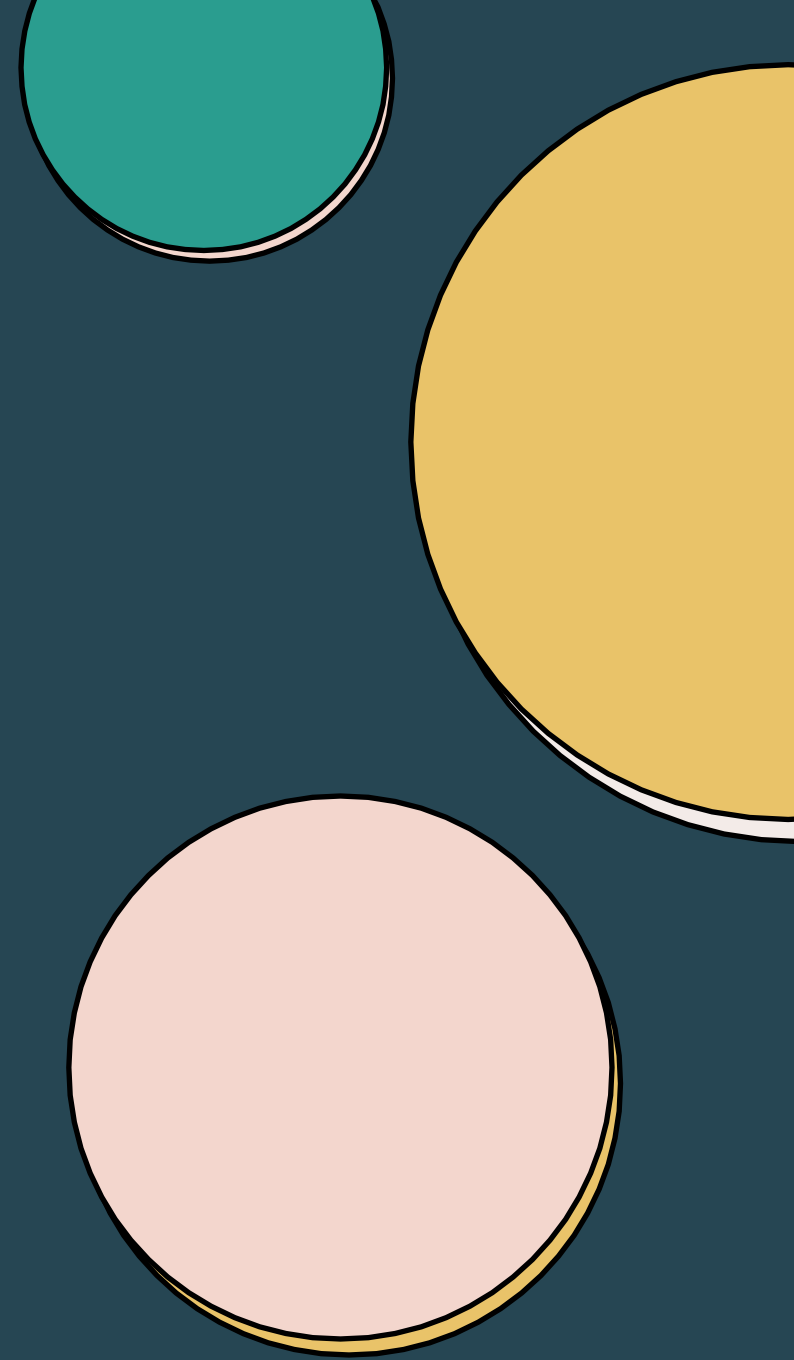
- **Elective Home Education Support**

- Supports families choosing home education, ensuring educational standards and safeguarding are met.

- **Children Missing Education**

- Identifies and supports children not enrolled in school to help re-engage them in education.

Roles and Responsibilities





Attendance Team Roles

- **Support and Guidance**
 - County Attendance Officers provide guidance to schools and families to improve attendance and reduce absences.
- **Accountability and Collaboration**
 - They clarify school responsibilities and ensure shared accountability between schools and local authorities.
- **Coordination and Communication**
 - CATs facilitate meetings, coordinate engagement sessions, and disseminate best practices for attendance improvement.
- **Consistent Messaging and Protocols**
 - They lead consistent attendance messaging and support the implementation of Department for Education protocols.

Licensing Responsibilities

Page 110



License Issuance and Compliance

Officers issue licenses for child performance and employment while ensuring legal compliance and safeguarding.



Inspections and Interviews

Conducting inspections and interviewing chaperone applicants to validate DBS checks and suitability.



Guidance and Safeguarding

Providing guidance to employers and organizations to maintain safe and lawful child employment practices.



Elective Home Education(EHE)

- **Support and Guidance**
- EHE Officers provide advice and support to families choosing home education, ensuring quality learning environments.
- **Monitoring Education and Wellbeing**
- Officers monitor educational progress and wellbeing to maintain standards and safeguard children in home education.
- **Collaboration and Safeguarding**
- EHE Officers liaise with services to address safeguarding and special educational needs effectively.
- **Record Keeping and Compliance**
- Accurate records are maintained by EHE Officers to ensure compliance with statutory education guidelines.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Identifying Missing Children

CME Officers investigate and identify children who are not enrolled or receiving suitable education.

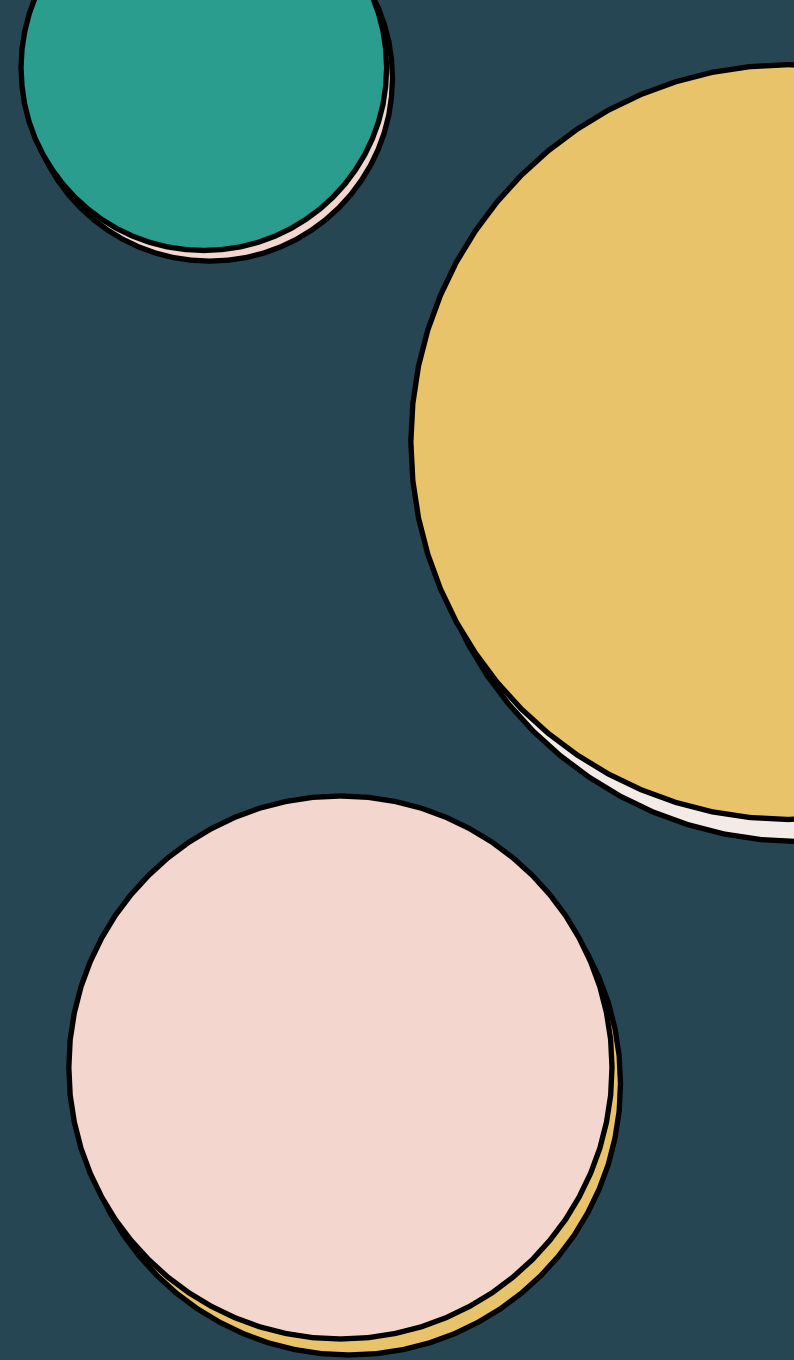
Collaboration and Liaison

Officers work closely with schools, families, and agencies to locate and re-engage children into education.

Safeguarding and Record Keeping

Ensuring safeguarding protocols and accurate CME records are maintained for effective tracking and reporting.

Policy and Implementation





DfE Attendance Framework

Local Authority Responsibilities

- Local authorities lead attendance improvement, coordinate support meetings, provide interventions, and enforce legal measures.

School Duties

- Schools maintain registers, engage families early, collaborate with local authorities, and clearly communicate attendance expectations.

Role of Virtual Schools

- From 2026, Virtual Schools support children with social workers and kinship care, promoting engagement and closing attainment gaps.



Oxfordshire County Council Implementation

Early Intervention Meetings

- Attendance Officers hold regular meetings with secondary schools to support early intervention and improve pupil attendance.

District Collaboration

- District Meetings foster sharing of best practices, training, and consistent communication across the county.

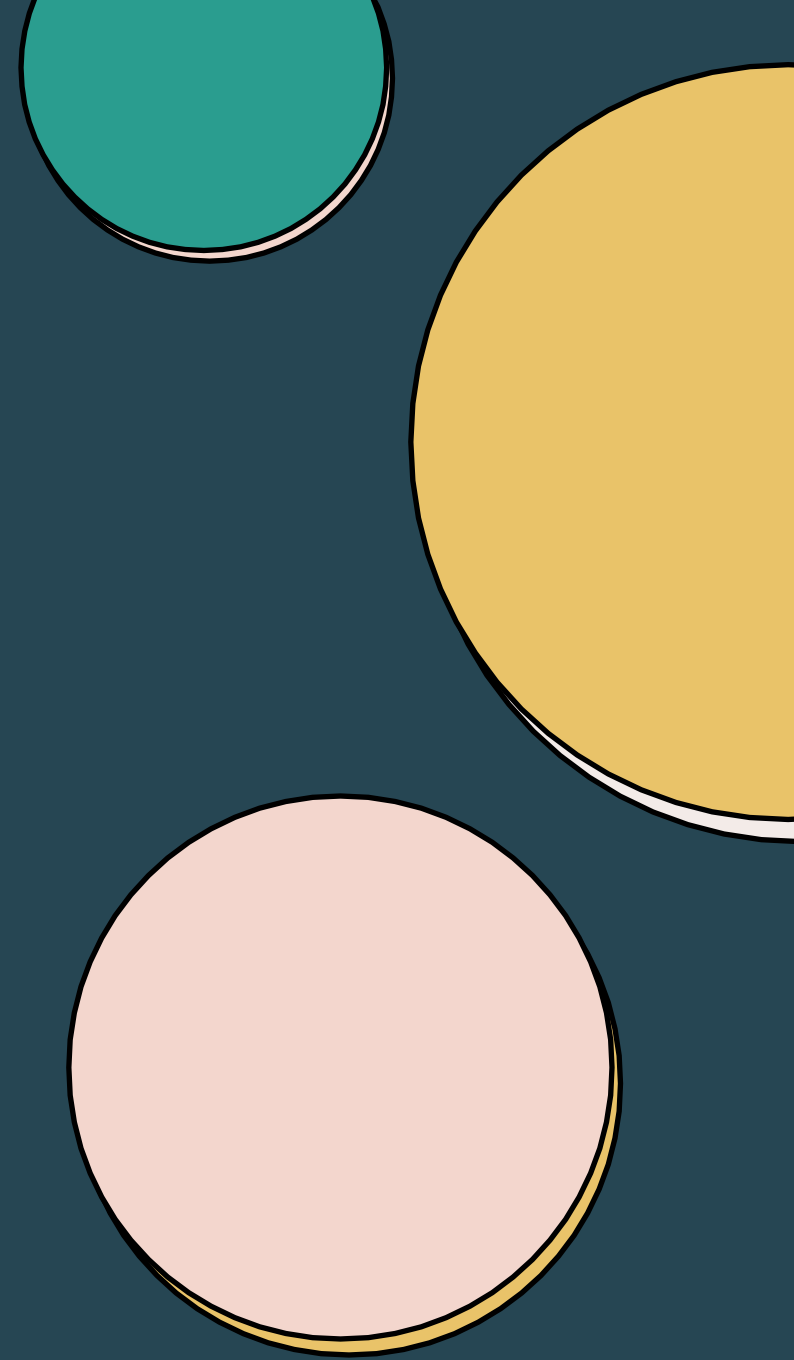
Internal Audit Process

- An internal audit reviews Attendance Team and CME processes to identify gaps and improve service delivery.

Commitment to Safeguarding

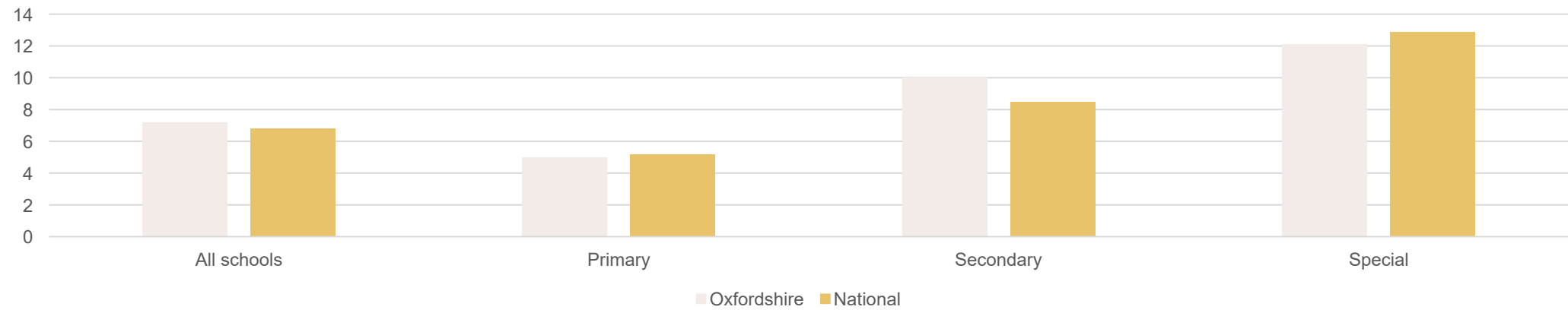
- The council's actions demonstrate a strong commitment to improving attendance and safeguarding children.

Performance and Monitoring



Performance Overview

Overall absence by school phase,
Oxfordshire and national



Page 117

	ALL SCHOOLS	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	SPECIAL
Oxfor ds hire	7.2	5	10	12.1
National	6.8	5.2	8.5	12.9



Three-Stage Attendance Monitoring (TAM) Process

Stage 1: Initial Audit

Schools with attendance below 94% are audited to assess risks and attendance concerns systematically.

Stage 2: Follow-up Meetings

Targeted follow-up meetings discuss individual students and ensure educational plans are in place.

Stage 3: Central Collaboration

All schools share feedback, data, and best practices in a central meeting to improve attendance strategies.



Good Practice Example

Identification of Attendance Concerns

- Primary school identified students with attendance issues to proactively address challenges early.

Collaborative School Meeting

- CAT Officers arranged a meeting between primary, secondary schools, and support teams for thorough information exchange.

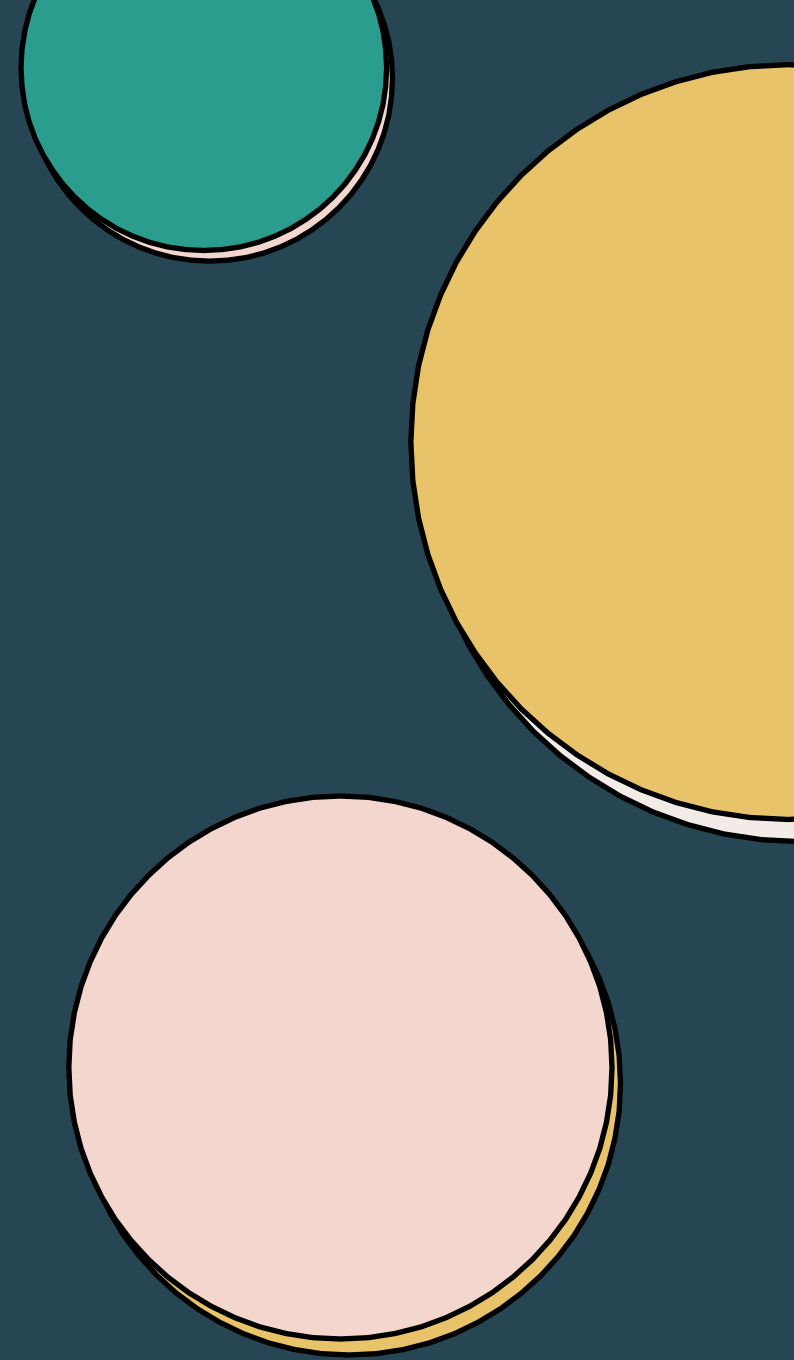
Early Family Engagement

- Secondary school contacted families during summer to offer support and plan attendance strategies ahead of Year 7.

Improved Attendance Outcomes

- Proactive strategies led to better transition experiences and increased attendance rates among students.

Engagement and Strategic Planning





EHE Parent Engagement

Parent Meetings and Support

Three in-person meetings engaged parents currently or considering home education, enhancing collaboration and support.

Admissions Team Participation

Admissions team addressed questions about returning to mainstream education, clarifying options for families.

Clarifying Compliance and Expectations

EHE Officers shared acceptable evidence examples to help parents meet educational provision requirements.

Strengthening Relationships

Sessions improved communication, reinforcing the council's commitment to inclusive education and better outcomes.



Attendance Strategic Board

Vision and Purpose

- The board aims to ensure children prioritise attendance and are kept safe through coordinated support.

Collaboration Across Services

- The board fosters collaboration between services to provide early help and improve attendance outcomes.

Strategic Development

- Efforts include reviewing structure, identifying stakeholders, and refining terms to ensure effective operation.

Goal of Reducing Absence

- The initiative seeks to reduce pupil absences and foster accountability and support culture

Next Steps

Data Integration with Dashboards

- Integrate data using Power BI dashboards to enable real-time access and monitoring for better decision-making.

Themed Audits Planning

- Plan themed audits for EHE and CIN/CP cohorts to identify attendance challenges and improve outcomes.

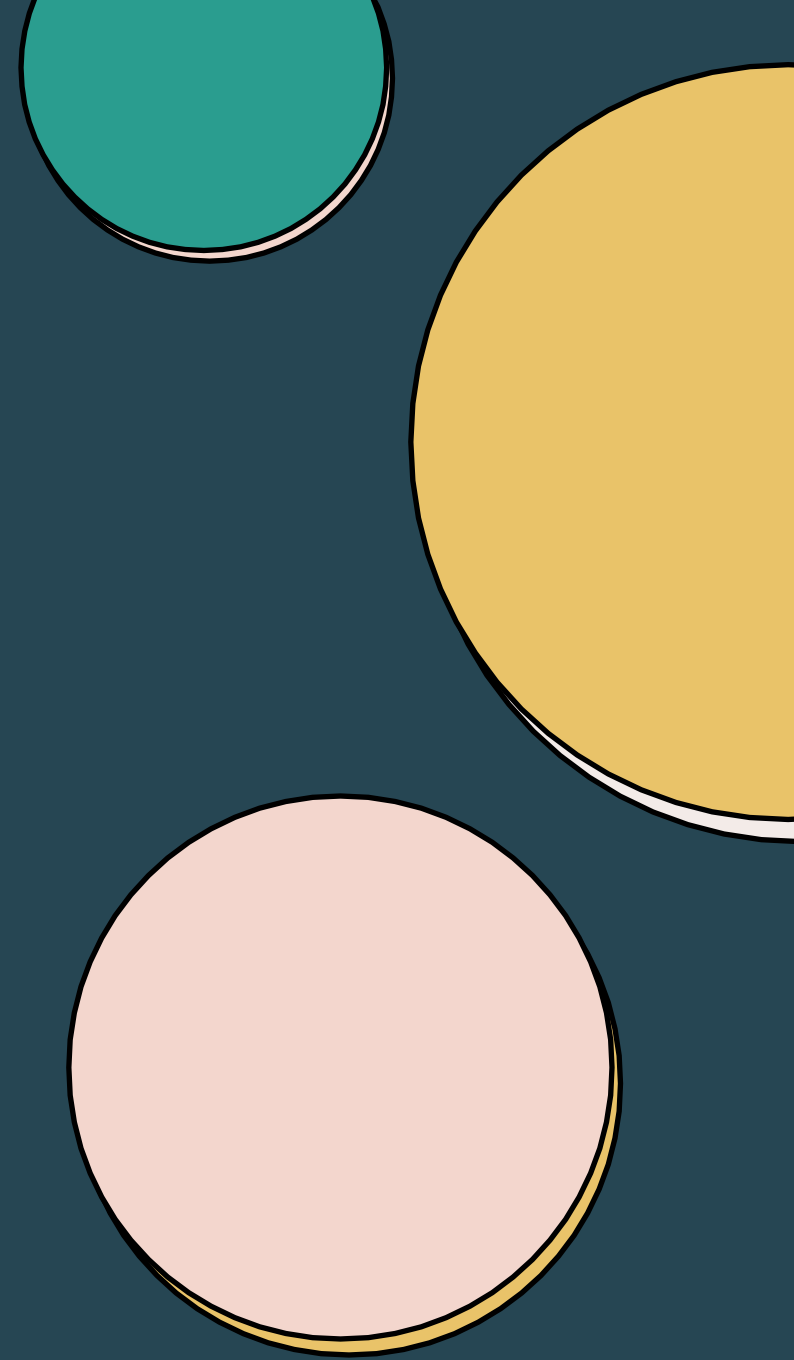
Graduated Pathway Development

- Develop a Graduated Pathway to guide professionals on effective attendance interventions for children.

Supporting Virtual Schools

- Support Virtual Schools in addressing attendance barriers for children in care to ensure equitable education access.

Questions ?



Work Programme 2025/26

Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse, OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Report Leads
26 September 2025				
Attendance	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	To understand the Local Authority's responsibilities relating to attendance and to review data	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Kim Wilson
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system	To consider the annual report; to ensure accountability and improvement.	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons
Oxfordshire Youth Justice Annual Plan	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	To consider the annual report before it is presented to Full Council; to ensure accountability and improvement.	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Jessie Dobson



		26 November 2025		
Attainment including attainment gaps	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	To receive data and to identify performance	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington
Fostering	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	<i>Scope to be confirmed</i>	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Delia Mann, Charlotte Davey
		27 February 2026		
Early Years	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	<i>Scope to be confirmed</i>	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, tbc



Educational Data (validated)	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	<i>Scope to be confirmed</i>	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington, Kim Wilson
s.19 Monitoring Report	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure accountability and improvement	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington
		27 March 2026		
Harm Outside the Home	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	<i>Scope to be confirmed</i>	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Delia Mann
EOTAS Policy Review	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To review progress of policy implementation	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington

SUB GROUP / WORKING GROUP

SUB GROUPS / WORKING GROUPS				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members

BRIEFINGS FOR MEMBER INFORMATION

BRIEFINGS				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members
Personal Budgets	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	To be briefed on funding pressures.	To identify any areas that need to be referred to the Committee	Members of the Committee
Inclusive Schools Finance	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	To understand and analyse pressures within schools.	To identify any areas that need to be referred to the Committee	Members of the Committee

Recommendation Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The recommendation update tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress accepted recommendations. The tracker is updated with recommendations accepted by Cabinet. Once a recommendation has been updated, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker. If the recommendation will be update in the form of a separate item, it will be shaded yellow.

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Recommendations:

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
28-Mar-25	Update of Children's Homes	That the Council should encourage Ofsted to ensure the registration period for children's homes is as short as possible and thereby expedite the process of placing children in registered settings.	Lisa Lyons; Jean Kelly; Charlotte Davey	Accepted See agenda item 10
13-Jun-25	EOTAS Policy	That the Council, if the draft EOTAS Policy is approved by Cabinet, should commit to co-producing the parent carer guidance relating to the policy in a timely fashion with it being reviewed by the Committee before it is submitted to Cabinet.	Lisa Lyons	Accepted See agenda item 10

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
13-Jun-25	s.19 of Education Act	1. That, notwithstanding the complexity of the processes being set out, the Council should ensure that the process chart at Annexe B is re-designed to make it clearer and easier to follow.	Lisa Lyons	Partially Accepted See agenda item 10
		2. That the Council should highlight how there will be sufficient resource – both financial and practical – to ensure the s.19 approach and Pathway of Action can function adequately.		Partially Accepted See agenda item 10
13-Jun-25	Home to School Transport	1. That the Council should work at pace to organise personal transport budgets with appropriate flexibility to take account of individual circumstances.	Lisa Lyons; Paul Fermer; Vic Kurzeja	Accepted See agenda item 10
		2. That the Council should ensure regular review of the policy is to mean 'annual', subject to legislative changes.		Accepted See agenda item 10
11-Jul-25	School Catering Services and Corporate Cleaning Services	1. That the Council should outline the specific measures it has taken to ensure that rural schools are protected and that all schools will receive high quality catering services.	Lorna Baxter; Vic Kurzeja	Presented to Cabinet on 16-Sept-25
		2. That the Council should set out the specific steps it will take to ensure		Presented to Cabinet on 16-Sept-25

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
		that the rights and interests of existing staff members will be protected, and that trade unions will be consulted and engaged throughout the process		

Action Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete
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Actions:

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
There are no outstanding action items				



Recommendation Update Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The recommendation update tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress accepted recommendations. The tracker is updated with recommendations accepted by Cabinet. Once a recommendation has been updated, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker. If the recommendation will be update in the form of a separate item, it will be shaded yellow.

KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated
-----	----------------	----------------	---------

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
17-Jun-25	Local Area Partnership SEND Update	The Council will publish the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as well as the RAG Rated Priority Action Plan Tracker and ensure they are accessible to the public.	Lisa Lyons; Kate Reynolds; Matthew Tait	Progress update to be provided
		The Council will set out how the views of the SEND Youth Forum, and its members, will be taken into account and how they will be presented, including any consultation prior to the publication of any reports about the Forum.		Progress update to be provided

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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: **Update on Children's Homes**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People**

Date response requested:² **17 June 2025**

Response to report:

The report was well received by all counsellors who are keen to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to understand more about the care provided to Children we Care For.

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Council should encourage Ofsted to ensure the registration period for children's homes is as short as possible and	Accepted	To confirm that the council robustly "encourages" OFSTED to ensure that the waiting time for registration is as short as possible.

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

thereby expedite the process of placing children in registered settings.		This includes, contacting OFSTED by telephone, speaking to inspectors when they are visiting other children's homes and escalating delay to more senior HMI's should the delay fall out of time scale.
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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: **Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Policy**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People**

Date response requested:² **15 July 2025**

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Council, if the draft EOTAS Policy is approved by Cabinet, should commit to co-producing the parent carer guidance relating to the policy in a timely fashion with it being reviewed by the Committee before it is submitted to Cabinet.	Accepted	The revised parent carer guidance will be brought to Scrutiny in the Autumn. The guidance is being co-produced with the EOTAS working group and OCC's co-production team.

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Education Act 1996 (Section 19) – Response to the report of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People

Date response requested:² 15 July 2025

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That, notwithstanding the complexity of the processes being set out, the Council should ensure that the process chart at Annexe B is re-designed to make it clearer and easier to follow.	Partially accepted	The Annex B is an internal workflow chart for officers. It is a complicated picture since there are several different routes/reasons for the Council's section 19 duties to be engaged. We will continue to amend the workflow chart in line with any

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		changes in guidance from central Government which is expected in the Autumn.
2. That the Council should highlight how there will be sufficient resource – both financial and practical – to ensure the s.19 approach and Pathway of Action can function adequately.	Partially accepted	We are expecting a significant change in approach from central Government in the Autumn and will then reflect that in our approach to S19.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Home to School Transport Policy

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People

Date response requested:² 15 July 2025

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council should work at pace to organise personal transport budgets with appropriate flexibility to take account of individual circumstances.	Accepted	After engagement with other Local Authorities the Council has developed a Personal Travel Budget which it aims to make available to families during the 2025/26 academic year. The Council will begin by working with a small cohort of families to test and refine the PTB option and the process that will underpin it before a wider role out across the service. Engagement with the

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		initial cohort begins in August with the aim for some families to begin using a PTB for their Home to School travel needs in early October 2025.
2. That the Council should ensure regular review of the policy is to mean 'annual', subject to legislative changes.	Accepted	The Council will conduct an annual review of it's policies to identify potential alterations to support effective service delivery, improve understanding and support delivery of the Council's wider aims and objectives. Reviews triggered by legislative changes will be conducted as and when necessary.'