

Youth Justice Annual Plan

Service	Oxfordshire Youth Justice and Exploitation Service (YJES)
Head of Service	Jennifer Sergeant
Chair of YJ Board	John Drew

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1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Chair's Forward

I have great pleasure in presenting to you the updated 2024-2025 Youth Justice Plan for Oxfordshire which has been produced by the County's Youth Justice and Exploitation Service and has the approval of the multi-agency partnership that oversees the work of the service.

The plan constitutes a refinement on the previous years' plan. Our overarching priorities remain:

- reducing our First Time Entrants rate;
- tackling exploitation of children in Oxfordshire;
- tackling serious youth violence in Oxfordshire; and
- improving outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) in the criminal justice system in Oxfordshire.

Reflecting on these continuing challenges we have refined our plans in each of these areas, as well as in other parts of our work, in the light of our experience over the past year. At our recent away day with the staff team the Management Board reflected on these priorities and left the event with renewed enthusiasm to tackle these issues.

For now, I will just reflect on reducing our First Time Entrants rate, the proportion of children formally entering the youth justice system in Oxfordshire having committed an offence. Years of experience has taught us that this is a key performance indicator, one of only three principal issues. Diverting children away from crime and the criminal justice system was one of the founding ambitions of the youth justice system forty years ago and in recent times Oxfordshire's performance has been less impressive than that of comparable areas. Drawing on best practice from elsewhere we are determined to turn this position around, and our staff will be analysing in detail the question of whether we are missing opportunities to put children on a different pathway and with a different mindset and personal identity than their initial offending might be predicting.

Resourcing throughout public services is tight and something that the Board keeps under close review. We want to ensure that our staff have the best possible support to do this most challenging role. As well as proper training and supervision, this also means making sure that workloads are sustainable. I commend the plan to you and committed the Management Board to keep its progress under close review over the coming year.

John Drew CBE

Independent Chair, Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Board

Introduction

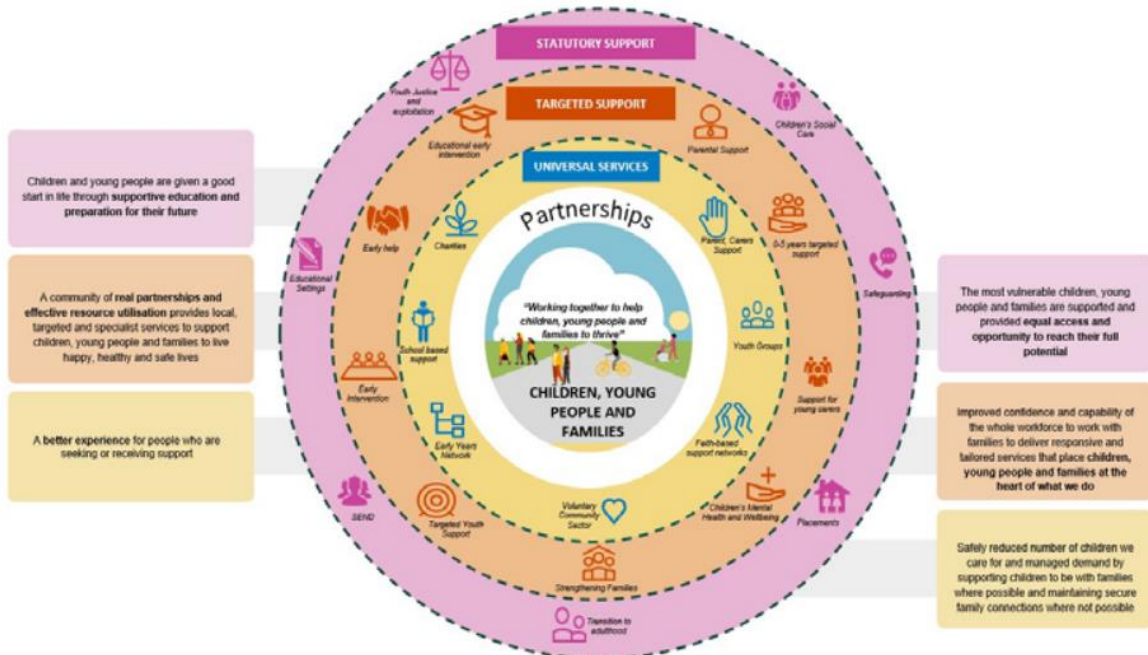
1. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice & Exploitation Service has the highest aspirations for Oxfordshire's children, and we will support them to achieve their full potential whilst protecting them, their families and the public from harm. We will achieve this by working in a restorative and relational way:
 - Listening to children, parents/carers, victims of crime and our communities and learning from their feedback
 - Providing solutions to youth justice issues at an individual and local level
 - Working in partnership to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and victims of crime and to ensure that their holistic needs are met
 - Identify and address disparity and disproportionality within the youth justice system locally
2. This Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 has been developed in consultation with members of staff and members of Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Management Board. The plan reflects our 'Child First' thinking with ambitions to improve the life chances of children in all our communities through an integrated and effective partnership approach.
3. 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, balancing these with the rights and needs of victims of crime.
4. This plan represents our commitment in Oxfordshire to evaluate our values and beliefs about the quality of provision for children who offend in Oxfordshire and ensures that Child First principles are embedded in all that we do.

Vision & Strategy

5. Our organisational values underpin everything we do and say. 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

'The Oxfordshire Way' for children's services sets out our strategic direction. Our vision is at the centre of everything that we do we do, in providing children and families with the right support at the right time.

The Oxfordshire Way



6. We are committed to provide the right support by the right person at the earliest opportunity to intervene early and divert children away from the Criminal Justice System. We recognise the interdependencies of the youth justice agenda with safeguarding and early help strategies within our local Safeguarding Children's agenda and commit to ensuring alignment around prevention and diversion for children at risk of entering the criminal justice help that meets their needs at the earliest opportunity.

7. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board vision and statement of intent is:

We will work together to help children, young people, and families to thrive. We will ensure children, young people and families are safe and feel safe, by working in partnership. We will:

- Ask, not assume what is happening in their life and what would help
- Act by seeking to understand their lived experiences and work with them
- Discuss with them their choices and how they can safely feel in control
- Respect and value them, and the people who care about them
- Work as a team – with them, their family and with each other as professionals – so that everyone's ideas and knowledge are used
- Be honest with them and communicate clearly in a way that they can understand
- Focus on who and what helps them feel safer, and where they feel safer
- Work with them at their pace wherever possible – but if things aren't improving fast enough, or if we need to immediately protect them, to act quickly and decisively.

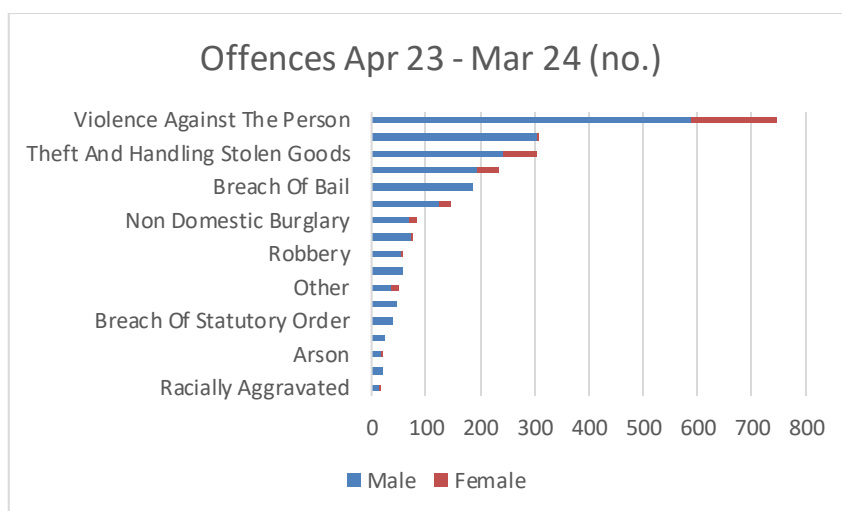
Local Context

8. The Office for National Statistics mid-year youth population estimate for children aged 0-19 in 2022 was 168,300. The number of Oxfordshire children aged between 10 – 19, and, therefore, over the age of criminal responsibility, was 88,400 (Oxfordshire JSNA, 2023).
9. During 2023/24, 214 children received a caution or a sentence; 173 of these children were white, 19 of mixed heritage, 8 were Black, 7 Asian and 7 identified as having another ethnicity type. 163 of these children were male and 52 females. The increase in the population, especially numbers of young people, is connected to levels of house-building and rapid growth. Oxford City has seen an increase in youth population aged between 5-14 years old between the 2011 – 2021 census.
10. Similar to national trends, Oxfordshire has an increasing percentage of children with social, emotional, and mental health needs. The number of mental health referrals for young people has increased, especially for those aged between 10-19 years old.
11. Oxfordshire's central England location is the most rural county in the Southeast region. The majority (60%) of Oxfordshire's population are resident in Oxford City and main towns. The remaining 40% live in smaller towns and villages. Despite Oxfordshire's relative affluence there are wide inequalities in health and well-being. The cost of living in many cases are above the England average. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019) Oxfordshire was ranked the 10th least deprived of 151 upper-tier local authorities in England. Oxfordshire has areas of deprivation, in parts of Oxford City and Banbury, the two largest urban centres in the county.
12. In 2021 there were 168, 000 (23%) people in Oxfordshire from an ethnic minority background, which has increased by 16% (107,000) since 2011. The Ethnic Disparity Toolkit from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for the year ending March 2023, show's Oxfordshire over-representation of black and mixed heritage children in the offending population during 2023/4. The tool identifies where a particular ethnic group is over-represented in the youth offending cohort and the level of over-representation is statistically significant. The data excludes children where the ethnic group is not known. Due to small numbers the Youth Justice Board decided to aggregate data for children from the Asian, Black, Mixed and other ethnic groups into the ethnic minority group.

Ethnic group	2022/23 Offending Population	Share of total ⁽¹⁾	2021 Census 10-17 population by ethnic group	Share of total % ⁽²⁾	% Point Difference	Over represented, offending pop >10 and statistically Significant
Asian	7	4%	4,930	7%	-3%	No
Black	12	7%	1,912	3%	4%	Yes
Mixed	21	12%	4,426	7%	5%	Yes
Other	2	1%	1,055	2%	0%	No
Ethnic minority groups ⁽³⁾	42	23%	12,323	18%	5%	No
White	139	77%	55,391	82%	-5%	No

13. The over-representation of black young people in Oxfordshire's offending population remains unchanged since 2022, however over-representation of children of dual heritage children is a new pattern emerging for our focus to address and meet needs.

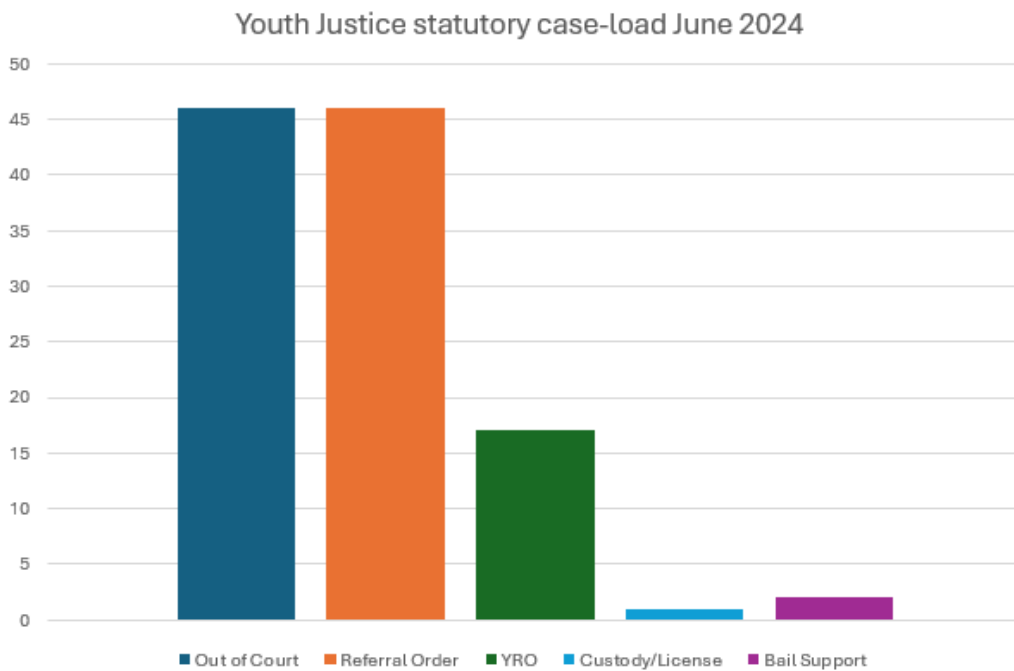
14. During 2023/4 the most common offence type was 'Violence Against the Person' followed by 'Drugs' and then 'Theft and Handling Stolen Goods', identical to last year's figures. Girls made up 21% of 'Violence Against the Person' offences, representing a decrease of 2% from the preceding year. 33% of all offences were committed by 16-year-olds, 31% by 17-year-olds. 15% were by 14-year-olds.



15. At the end of June 2024, Oxfordshire Youth Justice was working 112 with children in the statutory caseload.

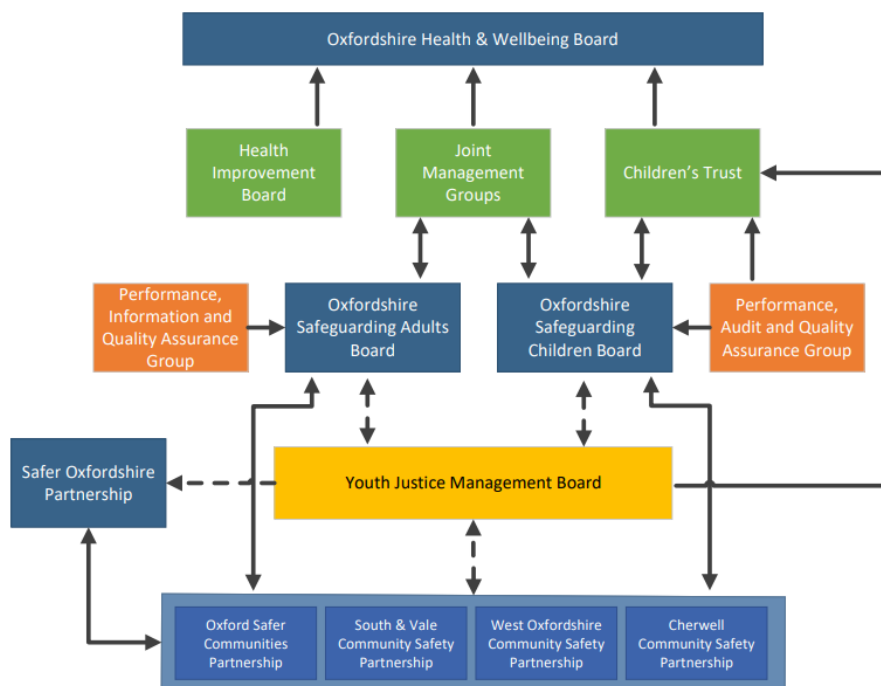
Intervention	Number of children
Out of Court (Community Resolutions, Youth Cautions, Youth Conditional Cautions)	46
Statutory Court Orders (Inclusive of Referral Orders, Youth Rehabilitation Orders, Custodial)	64

Sentences including post-custody licenses)	
Statutory Bail Support (Court ordered Bail intervention, where the child is not already on a youth justice disposal)	2



16. Boys made up 88% of the caseload, and girls 12%. Of these young people open to the service in May 2024, 27% were also open to Children’s Social Care. Of these children, 10 were subject to Child Protection Plans (CP), 14 had Child We Care for Status (CWCF) and 18 being subject of Children in Need (CIN) plannin

2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements



Service location

17. The service is located within Oxfordshire's Children Education and Families Directorate (CEF). The service is an integrated team undertaking exploitation social work as well as statutory youth justice.

Strategic Partnerships

18. Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Board is a multi-agency partnership and is currently chaired by an independent chair. Its membership comprises key stakeholders from: Children's Social Care, Thames Valley Police (TVP), Oxford Health NHS Trust, Education, the National Probation Service (NPS), Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Co-ordination Group (Community Safety), the voluntary & community sector (VCS) and Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS). The service reports into the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Coordination Group (SOPCG).

19. The service and Board priorities are aligned with key strategic partnership priorities for reducing of crime and tackling exploitation in the county including the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Violence & Vulnerability strategy, OSCB's partnership response to tackling exploitation of children, and the Police and Crime Commissioners Plan 2021-25.

20. The service has operational and strategic representation on the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Coordination Group (SOPCG), which has oversight of the County's Violence and Vulnerability strategy and delivery plan, which Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Service is a statutory stakeholder in delivery of the County's Serious Violence duty.

Head of Service remit and responsibilities

21. The Head of Service portfolio includes the Youth Justice & Exploitation Service, Unaccompanied Children & Young People's Team, and the Leaving Care services. The Head of Service is the operational and strategic lead for Youth Justice, Exploitation, Missing Children, and Prevent in Oxfordshire's Children's Services. The Head of Service represents Children's Services at the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) strategic Board, and Safer Oxfordshire's Partnership Co-ordination group. The Head of Service key strategic roles in the cross-cutting youth justice agenda, includes vice-chair of the OSCB's Child Exploitation Sub-Group.

Operational partnerships

22. The County's Violence Reduction Coordinator, funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), Community Safety and YJES was co-located in the service until May 2024. The focus of the role being to align key strategic and operational plans across the local partnership around the youth crime and violence reduction agenda and supporting partnership readiness in implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. This role was temporarily funded between 2022 – 2024 by Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and Community Safety; Oxfordshire now has a well-developed response under the Duty and the functions of this temporary role have now been mainstreamed into the work of our Community Safety partners for sustainability.

23. Thames Valley Police, Health, Children's Social Care, Education and Early Help are represented at the YJ Risk Management and Joint Decision-Making Panels supporting effective information-sharing, oversight, partnership-working and risk management of children and children in public protection, promoting wellbeing and reducing harm.

24. The Youth Justice and Exploitation Service sits on the Sexual Violence & Exploitation Network which is chaired by the voluntary sector organisation SAFE! The service has useful links to voluntary and community sector organisations in our Turnaround Programme, Reparation and Unpaid Work placements.

25. The service has representation at Oxfordshire's MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) for domestic abuse. A range of 'champion' roles exist in the service across a range of themes including Domestic Abuse, Neglect, Housing & Immigration, Trauma-informed Practice and Harmful Sexual Behaviour.

26. 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.

3. Update on previous year

Progress against our priorities

Priority Area	Progress/comments on 2023-24
Disproportionality	We reviewed of our Disproportionality Action Plan and functionality of the Task and Finish Group, which highlighted the need for improved partnership activity and input in addressing over-representation. In addition, challenges in Board representation have been escalated to the Board Chair for resolution.
	Staff report increased confidence in recognising and challenging disproportionality for children within the youth justice system and continue to use the Escalation Log to flag concerns to the Head of Service for intervention where appropriate.
	The service continues to receive positive feedback from Courts and defence solicitors about our Disproportionality statement in our Pre-Sentence Reports. It ensures that in decision making Courts account for the impact of structural discrimination and racism experienced by minoritised children.
Participation and Child Voice	The service collaborated with students from a local college who produced designs for a new service logo; as part of their college course work experience. The winning logo is due to be shared with the YJ Management Board in September 2024.
	Plans to progress improvements for participation and engagement of young people will be aligned with wider departmental approaches to participation and engagement. We

	<p>continue to receive feedback from children and their carers/parents about what has worked well in providing them support in interventions. The most common factor reported being the positive relationship with staff they are working with.</p>
	<p>The service commissioned 'Safety Box' as intervention for exploited children, providing a 'credible messenger' advocate for the child to improve engagement and outcomes and support desistance.</p>
Tackling Exploitation	<p>Oxfordshire's NRM devolved decision making pilot is in its second delivery year. Home Office feedback is the local pilot success in driving up numbers of NRM referrals across Oxfordshire. Between Jan – Dec 2023 56 children were referred to the pilot, and 24 have been referred to date since January 2024. Impacts of the pilot include changes in Police approach to decision-making (waiting for NRM decisions) and reducing delays in Court decision-making. Trends and patterns from the local pilot are reported into the OSCB Child Exploitation sub-group quarterly to inform the OSCB response to tackling exploitation.</p>
	<p>The service membership at the OSCB's neglect forum is in recognition of the impact of neglect as a factor contributing to children's vulnerability to exploitation and offending; learning is disseminated across the service to heighten staff awareness and build confidence in responding to signs of neglect.</p>
	<p>The contextual safeguarding framework for Oxfordshire is in development to reflect the development of approaches from within YJES. The service has led on developing and delivery of the OSCB Exploitation training this year, including specifically to schools, which has been well received.</p>

	<p>We have taken part four place-based partnership projects (Senior Management Groups – ‘SMGs’) to tackle violence and exploitation in localities, which yielded positive outcomes for children and local communities. The YJES Service Manager received Thames Valley Police commendation for contributions to partnership work disrupting exploitation in localities during 2023-24.</p>
	<p>The ‘One Step Ahead’ parenting group (based on learning from Parents Against Criminal Exploitation – PACE) continues to receive positive feedback from parents attending thematic sessions that support parents knowing their rights, and those for their children from information sharing and advice from Police, Health, Substance Misuse, DWP, Housing colleagues.</p>
Reducing First Time Entrants & Diversion	<p>Implementation of the Ministry of Justice Turnaround programme is now well embedded in Oxfordshire and delivering positive outcomes for children. We are confident that our plans to reach our target of 104 children by March 31st 2025 can be achieved.</p>
	<p>The Service’s Out of Court Joint Decision-Making Panel remains a strength for the service. Workshop delivery for all service staff highlighting practice implications of the implementation of the Child Gravity Matrix task ensured assessments are appropriately demonstrating mitigating factors for children in supporting robust and rigorous decision-making.</p>
Education and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)	<p>Our ambition to achieve the SEND Quality Mark remains a priority for 2024-25. A focus on SEND at the June 2024 Board/Service Away Day secured partnership commitment to improving outcomes for children with unmet speech and language needs and SEND in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire.</p>
	<p>Data on children with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) and children</p>

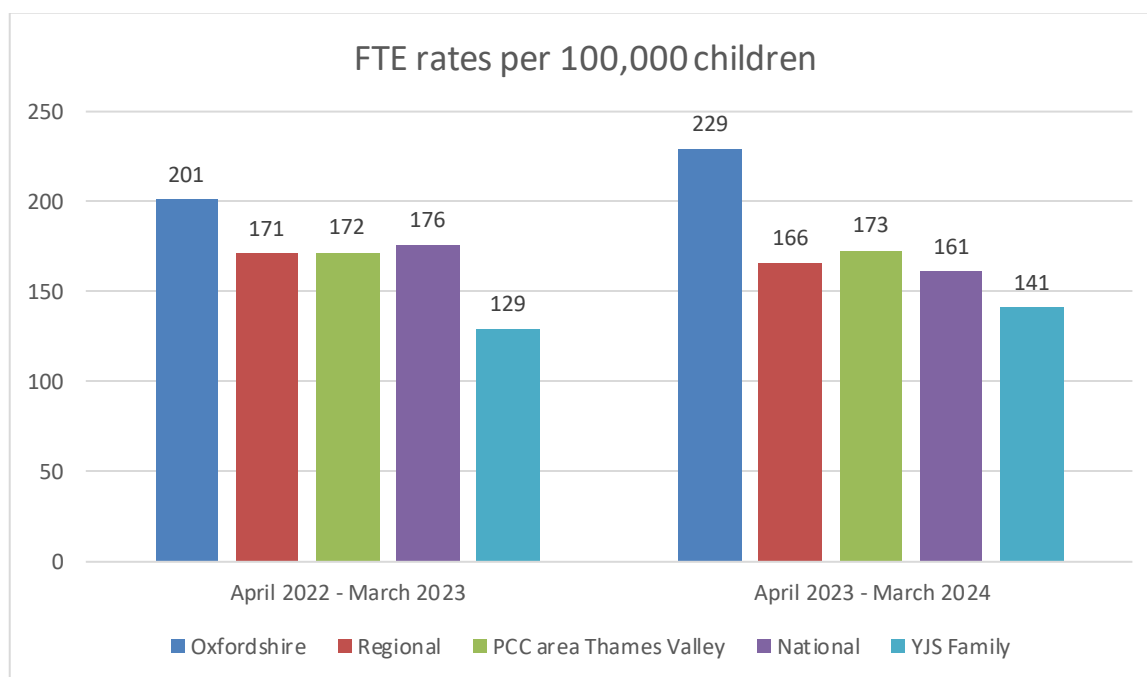
	who are NEET is collected and scrutinised by the Head of Service in monthly performance meetings and shared quarterly with the Board.
KPI (Key Performance Indicators) Readiness	We have recently successfully recruited to Information and Performance Analyst role to ensure service resilience in data collation and analysis for Board reporting and informing service improvements.
	In line with Youth Justice Board requirements for reporting on new KPI's the service has produced new KPI case-management recording guide that assists staff recording for effectiveness and efficiencies in data capture for collation and analysis.
	Updates on KPI developments are provided to the Board quarterly for key stakeholder organisations' understanding of partnership contribution to and compliance with YJB requirements.
Transition & Resettlement	Production of the service Resettlement Policy and practice guidance is for completion by the end of June 2024. This draws on the evidence-base and best practice from Constructive Resettlement and will be shared at the Board in Autumn 2024 for sign off.
	In collaboration with the National Probation Service, we have agreed funding for a Transitions Worker role for recruitment by the service. NPS 'launch' of the Transitions role is scheduled at a Probation Development Day in July 2024, in raising awareness of the role and the advantages of strong partnership-working around transitions.
Audits	Completion of YJB Self-Assessment for 'At Court' reported to the Board in October 2023; the resulting action plan is being implemented for Board monitoring in support and challenge.
Workforce Development	Staff have taken up a range of qualifications in meeting their learning and development needs. The range of qualifications include Social Work degree, ILM (Institute of Leadership and

	Management) 5, Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate and ILM 7.
	The Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate is afforded as learning and development opportunity for all new starters. A programme of learning and development includes Assetplus refresher training scheduled to take place during July - August 2024. 'Behind the Blade' knife crime intervention training provided to staff is supporting staff in interventions aimed at young people's desistance in knife carrying.
	In 2023 - 2024 2 Social Work students joined the service for placements and shared positive feedback on their learning experience, and in turn made significant contributions to the service.
	A whole service workshop delivered by the Youth Endowment Fund on their toolkit supported practitioners in thinking about 'best bets' in the evidence-base for reducing youth violence.
Evidence-Based and Effective Practice	The Relational Case Management Pilot is due to for refresh of implementation in 2024-25 with FCAMHS colleagues.
	Research on desistance shared with the staff team has supported service thinking about the AIRS model (Activities, Interactions and Roles) for children in their intervention plans.
Serious Youth Violence	The Violence Reduction Coordinator role co-location in the service helped the partnership readiness for Oxfordshire's implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. This role led on developing Oxfordshire's strategy aligning our priorities with those of partnership agendas with shared aims and objectives for reducing youth crime.

Performance over previous year

First-Time Entrants (FTEs)

27. Oxfordshire's FTE (First Time Entrants) rate has increased Between April 2022 – March 23, the FTE rate was 140 children (FTE rate of 207 per 100,000), and during April 2023 – March 2024, 159 children became First Time Entrants (FTE rate of 229 per 100,000). Oxfordshire's rate is higher than its 'family' average FTE rates of 141, the regional rate 173 and the national rate 161.
28. A specific improvement plan is now in place focused on lowering the numbers of Oxfordshire's First Time Entrants to the youth justice system. This is a significant and high priority for us in carrying out the activity set out in our improvement plan. Our target is to bring our FTE rate in line with the Thames Valley rate of 173 by March 2025.
29. A deep-dive audit is in progress for completion by end of June 2024. Its analysis and findings will inform planning in targeting interventions for increasing our prevention and diversion offer and reach of children at the cusp of crime.

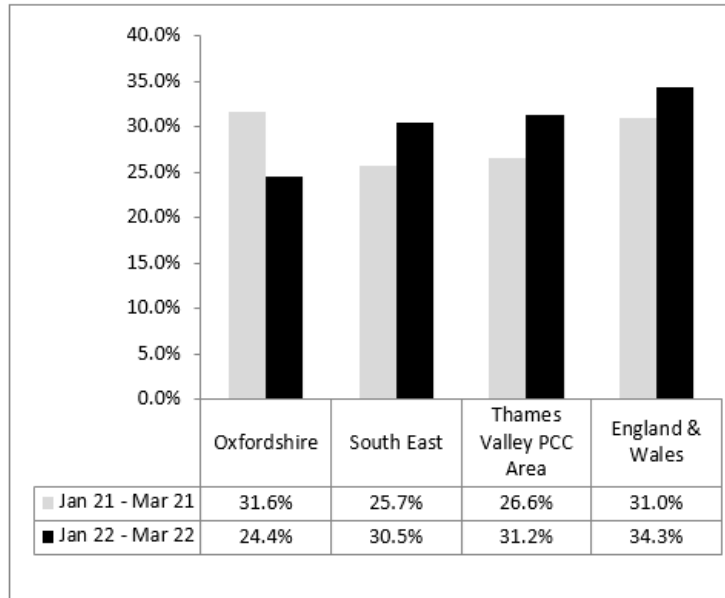


Reoffending

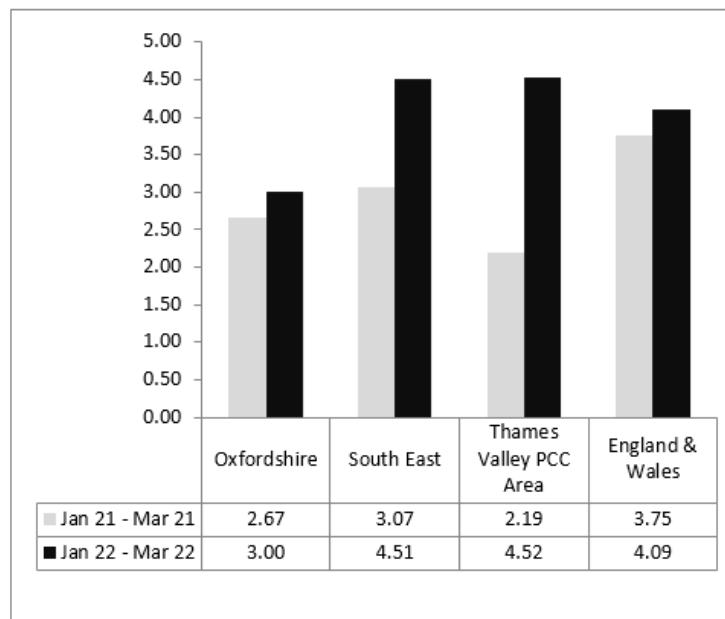
30. The binary reoffending rate (reoffenders/number in cohort) for the 3-month cohort has fallen to 24.4% compared to 31.6% in the previous year. This is below the regional (30.5%) and national (34.3%) rates. Frequency of reoffending (reoffences/reoffenders) has however slightly risen by 0.33 over the same period but remains lower when compared to regional and national performance. The success of our lower re-offending rates is testament to the tenacious and persistent

work of the staff in the service in engaging and supporting our children, using creative interventions and trusting relationships to support future desistance.

Quarterly cohort - year on year comparison - Reoffenders/Number in cohort



Quarterly cohort - year on year comparison - Reoffences/Reoffenders



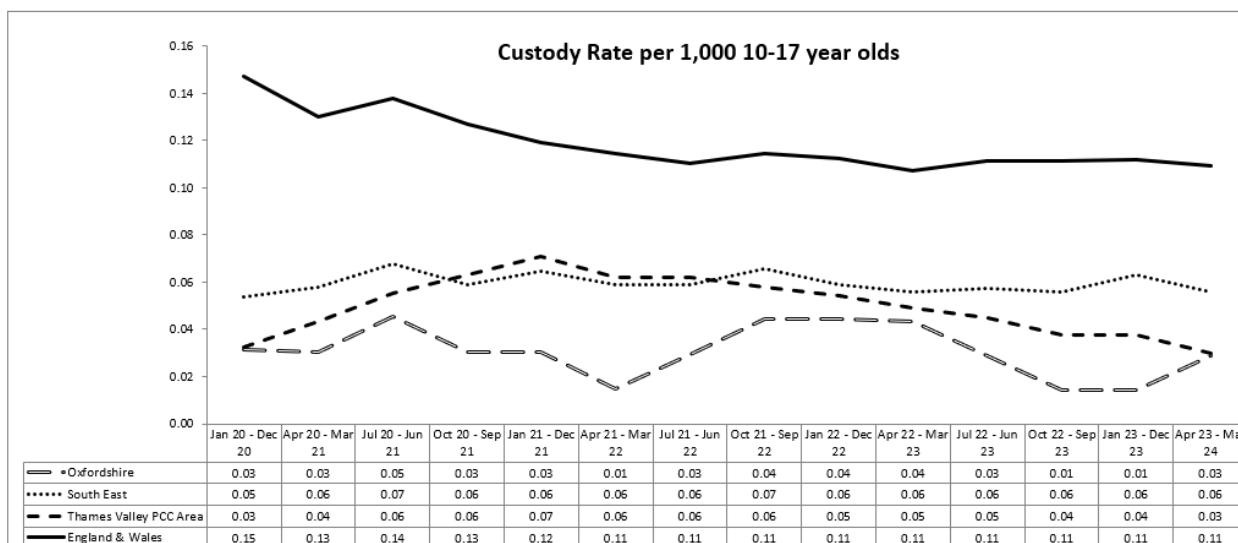
Timeliness offence to outcome date

31. The average number of days children are subject to Bail or Released Under Investigation (RUI) waiting times between an offence and outcome remains of concern across England and Wales, as in Oxfordshire. It remains a priority for the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board for scrutiny and oversight. The Turnaround Programme currently offers ongoing support to children who receive a

No Further Action (NFA) outcome and who are on bail or released under investigation.

Use of Custody

32. The rate of children sentenced to a custodial sentence remains very low and better than that of comparative groups. 2 children in Oxfordshire received custodial sentence between April 2023 – March 2024 for offences linked to serious violence (Attempt Murder, Drug Supply and Possession of Offensive Weapon).



The 10 new YJB Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

33. Oxfordshire has prepared its readiness for submission of data returns to the YJB in compliance with grant conditions. In January 2024, the YJB released Version 1 of a KPI Tableau Dashboard which reflects headline measures of the new KPIs. Version 2 released in April 2024 informed error correction. Headline measures:

1. Proportion of children in suitable accommodation at the end of their order.
2. Proportion of children in suitable ETE at the end of their order.
3. Number of children with a formal plan in place as a proportion of children with identified SEND/ALN.
4. Number of children with a screened OR identified need for a MH or EW intervention at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.
5. Number of children with a screened OR identified need for intervention/treatment to address substance misuse at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.
6. Number of children who completed intervention programmes in the quarter as a proportion of the number of children with an OOC ending in the period.

7. Proportion of children connected to/supported by wider care and support services at end of order.
8. Number of senior partners attending Youth Justice Management Board meetings out of five.
9. Number of proven serious violence offences as a proportion of 10-17 population (2021).
10. Number of victims engaged with on Restorative Justice opportunities as a proportion of total number of victims who consent to be contacted.

34. YJB Communications report of issues with the KPI Tableau Dashboard means that KPI data does not yet accurately represent data submitted. Oxfordshire will continue to monitor updates on YJB progress on dashboard solutions and will continue to report figures to quarterly management Board meetings.

35. Analysis of KPI information will further inform the narrative for our deeper understanding of needs of our cohort of children, in better targeting our interventions for meeting their support needs. Stakeholder partner organisations provision of information will be invaluable in contribute to our collective and shared understanding about our children so that we respond effectively and efficiently in our service delivery and provision.

Risks and issues

36. In review of the Youth Justice Management Board Risk Register the following service risk issues and action in mitigation have been identified for 2024-25, for monitoring at the quarterly Board meetings.

Risk	Mitigation	Action	Outcome Sought
FTE rate higher than regional and national rates	Immediate implementation of reducing FTE Action Plan to narrow the gap between national and regional rates by March 2025.	Reporting and monitoring for the progress in activity aimed at reducing Oxfordshire's FTE rates. Youth Justice Board oversight of progress in implementation of FTE Action Plan.	Lowered rates between Oxfordshire's FTE rate (229) and the regional rate (173) by March 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	New funding opportunities are identified and where appropriate applied for to contribute to resource in 2024/25.

		identified during 2024/25.	
Workforce capacity	Prioritise recruitment activity and ensure learning from retention issues is understood and mitigated.	Use learning from staff survey to inform service planning and improvements.	Service establishment is in place.
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.
Inspection Readiness	Inspection Readiness meetings scheduled to commence service and partnership Board planning. Share learning with staff and partners around new HMIP inspection framework when it is made available.	Service policies and partnership/service-level agreements reviewed for update/refresh. Audit activity against YJB Standards for Children.	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.	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.

4. Plan for forthcoming year

Child First

37. We will continue to champion children's needs, abilities, strengths, and potential. All children subject to community orders are offered a full health assessment with

a specialist nurse. Regular case-formulation provided to the service by Forensic CAMHS ensures all our work is developmentally informed and that interventions are designed and sequenced to each child's individual needs.

- 38. Our 'whole family' approach means that children's needs are seen within the context of their wider family dynamics as well as their socio-environmental contexts using our contextual safeguarding approach. Strong relationships with colleagues across wider children's services, includes joint-supervision arrangements makes sure that our children are always at the centre of planning to achieve positive outcomes.
- 39. Intervention plans focus on developing and understanding the child's identity, creating space to reflect on their lived experience and find opportunities to build on their strengths and potential. Our practitioners encourage children to learn about their strengths, skills and abilities exploring ways for them to achieve and build confidence and self-esteem.
- 40. Our use of language is important to ensure children are seen and treated as children within the criminal justice system. We challenge language that is labelling or stigmatising to children whether as victims or perpetrators of crime; it has a significant impact on children's self-identity and future outcomes.

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.

Resources and Services

- 41. The service benefits from two seconded Police Officers from Thames Valley Police. The National Probation Service are funding a newly developed Transitions role for effective transition of our older adolescents to adult services. It is an example that demonstrates the partnerships' innovation in finding solutions to address the

service gap of the National Probation Service (NPS) seconded probation officer role.

42. Enhanced access arrangements from Forensic CAMHS and Liaison and Diversion ensures children’s swift and timely access to mental health services. Partnership arrangements with Health facilitate comprehensive support to our practitioners with clinical supervision, case formulations, oversight of specialist clinical assessments and direct work with children identified where children’s emotional and/or mental health needs are identified as being unmet.
43. Oxford Health NHS provision of nurses in the Phoenix Team provision offers all our children health screening and assessment in care planning. This facilitates swift and timely referral in access to other key health professionals and health services.
44. Cranstoun ‘Here4Youth’ deliver the Drug Diversion Scheme for children charged with drug possession offences.

Youth Justice Budget 2024 – 2025

Agency	Total	Comments
Youth Justice Board	£711,391	Salaries
Police and Crime Commissioner	£113,712	Salaries and overheads
Local Authority	£1,078,239	Salaries, activity costs, accommodation, overheads and equipment
Probation	£26,783	Probation secondee (up to October 2023)
Police	£74,000	2.0 Seconded Police Officers
Health	In kind	Access to Phoenix Nurses and FCAMHS

Board Development

45. Key stakeholder organisation representation in attendance, engagement, and participation at the Youth Justice Management Board supports delivery and quality of service delivery and its provision. All new members of the Board are provided a Board induction handbook, due for refresh in Autumn 2024 to better reflect the YJB’s governance and leadership guidance.
46. Support for the development of the Board’s knowledge and experience of the service takes place through an annual Board/Service away day. Staff are encouraged to attend Board meetings in sharing best practice case studies, themes, and service developments. We continue to deliver workshops to key

stakeholder organisations promoting the Youth Justice agenda that ensures awareness and understanding our work in our shared objectives in reducing and tackling youth crime in Oxfordshire.

47. In 2024-25 the Board chair's commitment is the offer of an annual meeting with every Board member in support of key stakeholder organisation's contribution for accountability and responsibility of quality and service delivery of youth justice provision in Oxfordshire.

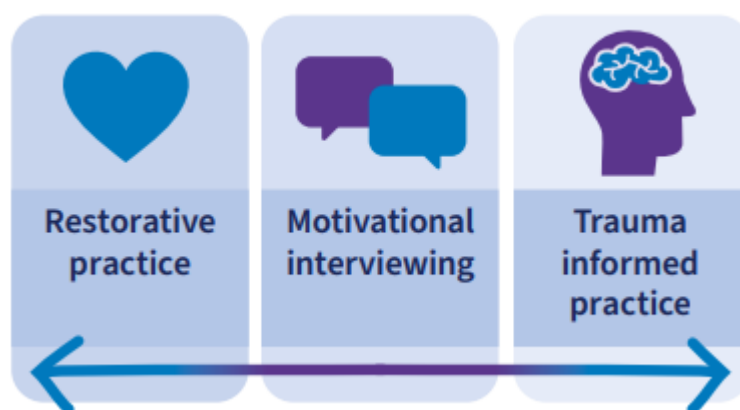
Workforce Development

48. During 2024/25 we will develop refresh of learning and development opportunities required for each level of youth justice practice. This will be informed by the YJB 2023-25 Workforce Development Strategy and the Youth Justice Skills Matrix, aligning it with the YJB's strategic approach to 'promote sector-led practice development, strengthening our local approach in the dissemination of learning about what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond.'
49. Staff inductions include a combination of academic learning, shadowing and observation, training, and reflective supervision. Members of staff are funded to undertake the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate; all case-holding staff have either completed or are in the process of completing this.
50. The service has access to OSCB'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.
51. Monthly service-wide meetings provide staff opportunities for presentations, workshops and briefings for practice development and learning. Over the past year themes and topics have included: domestic abuse, the climate emergency, the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on children, and their families, special educational needs, the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Education Safeguarding Team.
52. A series of workshops to support staff has covered best practice in case recording, the YJB Child First principles and Standards for Children, out-of-court practice, and the new Child Gravity Matrix. Outcomes from our findings in completion of the YJB "Court" Self-Assessment has resulted in an action plan that includes scheduled learning activity during July 2024 focused on increasing excellence in Court practice.
53. Quarterly meetings take place for all our volunteers' attendance. Thematic presentations from guest speakers from across the partnership support the learning and development of our volunteers and feedback is they welcome these opportunities for keeping abreast of service and practice developments.

54. The service relates to wider national learning and development opportunities, connecting with other YJS' via practice forums. National and local training opportunities are shared regularly, and staff encouraged to take up in attendance.

Evidence-based practice, innovation, and evaluation

55. Oxfordshire's children's services have three components to our evidence-based practice, complementing each other, emphasises the importance of building relationships, listening, empowering people, understanding need and capacity to change, building on strengths and "doing with."



- **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.

56. We are committed to using strengths-based models of practice and raising the awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the devastating impact on children's ability to reach their potential. Our use of trauma-informed practice and restorative approaches to build stronger, positive relationships encourage

desistance. In recognition that forming trusting relationships is at the heart of our approaches, relationship-building is often the first objectives to be included in our intervention plans.

57. We promote children's individual strengths and capacities as a means of developing their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance from offending behaviours. Non-compliance is considered within the context of the child's experiences of trauma and additional needs. Practitioners use joint reflective supervision to think with partners and the child/family about the ways in which interventions and approaches can be adapted to engage the child more effectively.
58. Our use of restorative approaches support children to take responsibility and make amends for their actions. We recognise that many of the children we work with have also been harmed by others and that acknowledging their own experiences of being a victim provides opportunity for them to move forward. Motivational Interviewing (MI) an evidence-based approach to changing behaviours, focuses on exploring and resolving ambivalence and centres on motivational processes within the individual that facilitate change.
59. Clinical oversight and support from Forensic CAMHS remain a strength of our service; its benefits are its provision of case-formulation, and assistance with completion of specialist assessments. Taking a psychological and developmentally informed approach is part of the fabric of our work in Oxfordshire.
60. We have continued strong and positive relationship with Courts. The service has delivered presentations at Youth Panel meetings on a range of topics and themes. During the year these have included: referral Orders in practice, neurodiversity in children, restorative justice and the National Referral Mechanism local pilot positively welcomed by our HMCTS colleagues.
61. Oxfordshire Youth Justice attended Oxford Magistrates Court formed the greeting of a delegation of Ukrainian representatives learning about youth justice in England. The delegation included the Ukrainian Deputy Prosecutor General, the Head of Department for the Protection of Children's Interests and the Head of Unit for International Cooperation.
62. Feedback from Court colleagues said *"The Ukrainian delegation's visit to Oxford Magistrates Court such a success. Your explanations of youth justice work clearly had a strong impact and impression on our guests from Ukraine today. I was so glad you were able to join us to explain the vital work that you do for the children in Oxfordshire and for our guests to gain that insight and to be as impressed as we are at Oxford Magistrates Court."* (Senior Legal Manager).
63. We look forward to learning from the national Ministry of Justice evaluation on the Turnaround Programme to inform planning in next steps for our prevention and diversion practice. Early indications of our Turnaround programme suggest positive outcomes in meeting children's and families' needs at an earlier opportunity and diverting them from entry into the criminal justice system.

64. The service is working alongside a local business to identify opportunities for children to access apprenticeship opportunities, and to explore how the service can better utilise the social value responsibilities of local business and organisations.

Priorities for the coming year

i. Standards for Children

Standard 1: Out of Court

65. The national issue on the delay for children remaining Released Under Investigation (RUI) remains a priority for Board scrutiny and oversight in 2024-25. We understand the challenges for Police of investigatory timescales, however, the impact on children of delays is well documented as being detrimental. We will continue our scrutiny and oversight of this issue so that we can take collective action where delays are significantly impacting on children through partnership working with Thames Valley Police.

66. We are aware of the impact of the absence of Outcome 22 as an available disposal in 2023-24 for Oxfordshire's children. Our hypothesis is that it has been a contributory factor impacting on our high First Time Entrant rates. We are pleased that partnership working with Police has recently shifted in progressing its implementation locally for decision-makers to divert children away from the criminal justice system. The Director of Children's Services has raised the issue with the County Strategic Safeguarding Partnership and with the Assistant Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, where there is commitment to joint work around this issue. We will be monitoring its impact in tracking children's outcomes this year as a key priority.

67. Our Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) is an area of strength for the service. We plan to improve our reporting on JDMP to better evidence outcomes achieved for children in relation to proportionality and diversion.

68. Our Turnaround programme exit plan and learning from the programme will also inform our developing partnership robustness in its early help offer in rigour of our approach, aim and ambition to divert children away from crime at the earliest opportunity.

Standard 2: At Court

69. Partnership completion of the YJB's "Court" Self-Assessment was rated overall as being 'Good.' An action plan detailing improvements is being progressed. New systems guidance for staff were developed and have been implemented, and further work is taking place in July 2024 to embed learning via staff workshops.

Standard 3: In the Community (Court Orders)

70. We are committed to reviewing our Referral Order practice to ensure our approach remains child-focused and accessible for children. In ensuring the same for delivery of Youth Rehabilitation Orders, we will continue to ensure that at all available opportunities children are empowered and supported to take ownership in active participation.
71. Breach rates in Oxfordshire remain low. In making compliance decisions, the service takes great care so that every available step is taken to consider the child's needs and address barriers to engagement. Where children assessed as being posing a high risk of harm to others, we ensure that enforcement action is expedited without delay. This approach means that only children where there are the highest risks are returned to Court and our focus is on the engagement skills of staff mitigating this wherever possible.

Standard 4: Secure Settings

72. The number of children in custody from Oxfordshire is low. However, we remain vigilant in ensuring the safety of our children within the secure estate.
73. Presentation to the Board on learning from HMIP and OFSTED Remand Thematic (November 2023) in May 2024 resulted in actions for increased rigour in senior leadership and Board chair oversight of safeguarding arrangements for Oxfordshire's children serving sentence or remanded in the youth custodial estate. This is in recognition and acknowledgement of the vulnerability of our children in the youth custodial estate.
74. We are committed to improve data reporting to the Youth Justice Management Board to include the demography of remanded children, offence type, establishment and some key background information about professional involvement and steps taken to avoid the child entering custody.
75. Following the practice recommendations from the Remand Thematic, we are looking to improve the training available for Social Workers on their statutory responsibilities to children who become Cared For by virtue of their remand status, and to Children We Care For who are sentenced.

Standard 5: Transition and Resettlement

76. We are in the process of finalising refresh of our local Resettlement Policy and practice guidance for staff. We are working with key partners in Children's Services and Education to ensure there is an expedited referral pathway and response for children who enter custody for prompt and rigour in coordination and in planning for children's resettlement in line with Constructive Resettlement principles.

ii. *Service Development 2024-25*

Service Priorities 2024-25	Action required	Timescales/lead
Disproportionality	Refresh of the Disproportionality Action Plan and partnership commitment and accountability is a planned outcome of the Board/Service away day in June 2024. Revision of membership of the Task and Finish Group responsible for driving activity is planned to ensure Board membership involvement and participation alongside staff.	Head of Service/Board Chair Autumn 2024
First Time Entrants	Delivery of Improvement Plan to reduce FTE rate to Thames Valley rate by March 2025	Head of Service/Board March 2025
Participation and Child Voice	Align Participation and Engagement activity with wider Children's Services approach	Head of Service/Children's Services December 2024
Tackling Exploitation	Report on impact of local Devolved NRM decision making pilot to OSCB	Head of Service December 2024
	Embed National Working Group (NWG) tools within Harm outside the Home processes	Head of Service and Exploitation Team Manager Autumn 2024
Education and SEND	SEND Quality Markassessment launch	Head of Service and Board September 2024
	Partnership work with Education in developing offer of alternative education through ASDAN/AQA education programmes	Education Board member /Head of Service /Youth Justice Team Manager / Education December 2024

	Develop and embed referral pathway for children remanded or sentenced in planning for resettlement	Head Of Service/Children's Services/ Education
Policing	Work with TVP to improve awareness and consistent application of thresholds around overnight remand in Police custody and to support TVP in identification of appropriate support for bail conditions.	Youth Justice Team Manager
	Deliver OPCC (Office of Police and Crime Commissioner) 'Act Now' as early intervention response for to children in Police custody for knife possession.	Head of Service /Police /Targeted Youth Support manager/AD Early Help and Prevention /Youth Justice Team Manager Timescales are to be confirmed awaiting delivery detail from OPCC.
	Embed Outcome 22 provision for children in Oxfordshire using (June 2024) guidance for Thames Valley Police	Head of Service/Board/Thames Valley Police In progress
	Ensure effective interface with the new TVP Harm Reduction Units (HRU) in child-centred decision making	Head of Service/YJ Team Manager and Thames Valley Police October 2024
Workforce Development	Undertake a skills audit of youth justice staff using YJ Skills Matrix to inform new Workforce Development Plan.	Head of Service/Youth Justice Team Manager Summer 2024
	Ongoing recruitment campaign for diverse range of volunteers	Head of Service/Senior Practitioner
Evidence-Based and Effective Practice	Learning from Turnaround best practice, and FTE Audits build on our learning around effective	Head of Service / Youth Justice Team Manager

	prevention and diversionary practice informing targeted approach of interventions to reduce FTE's.	In progress
	Implement Relational Case Management.	Youth Justice Team Manager/Health January 2025

5. National priority areas

Over-represented children

77. Ethnicity data for children detained in Police custody, including those who are subject to strip-searches, is now subject to service and Board reporting for scrutiny and monitoring for over-representation of black and mixed heritage children.
78. Police supply data on Stop and Search rates in Oxfordshire to the Board, to include the number of 'positive' searches compared to 'negative' searches in its scrutiny and oversight.
79. Staff continue to use the Escalation Log to raise concerns about disproportionality and discrimination to the Head of Service for action and response for escalation to Board chair where appropriate.
80. The partnership Disproportionality Task and Finish Group and Action Plan is due refresh in Autumn 2024. We aim to widen our action plan to better reflect our response to minoritised children impacted and affected by structural discrimination.

Policing

81. Regional partnership working has taken place with our Thames Valley Police colleagues in response to their force-wide review, to ensure the seconded Police Officer role's continuation to meet statutory requirements in delivery of its accountability and responsibility for Oxfordshire's youth justice services.
82. We will continue to support Thames Valley Police transition from Youth Justice Units to Harm Reduction Units, in help to newly appointed Policing staff provision of information and training on Child First principles for their consistency of approach and in mitigating any adverse impact on decision-making and outcomes for children.

Prevention & Diversion

Community Resolutions

83. In 2023-24 the number of Community Resolutions (CRs) issued by Thames Valley Police on the street, including those referred to the Drug Diversion Scheme, was 654. This is a small reduction from 691 in 2022-23.

84. The number of cases that came through to the TVP Youth Justice Decision-Making Unit for pre-Court consideration and who went on to receive a Community Resolution was 88, an increase from last's year which was 66. The total number of Community Resolutions given to children both through 'street' deliveries and through a triage process was 751. Data provided by Thames Valley Police shows the following:

Total crimes disposed of by way of a Community Resolution for children in Oxfordshire	
2021-22	466
2022-23	753
2023-24	751

85. The rise in the use of Community Resolutions has been a direct consequence of the introduction of the Drug Diversion Scheme and changes in Police decision-making toward use of informal disposals to avoid criminalisation of children.

86. The consequences are that the service has identified the need to scope prevention and diversion support to the children given Community Resolutions following discussion at JDMP and to review whether support can be offered for all Community Resolutions with aims to:

- To reduce the number of first-time entrants in Oxfordshire, diverting children from the criminal justice system
- To provide timely support to children involved in low level offending behaviour
- To identify children and families in need of further support e.g. from other services

87. This approach is already informing our local delivery of the Ministry of Justice Turnaround programme in our identification of children for diversionary support away from the youth justice system in Oxfordshire.

Turnaround

88. Children are offered Turnaround if they have contact with the police but are not on the statutory youth justice caseload. Our focus has been offering Turnaround to children who have received a Community Resolutions or Youth Cautions. We also respond to referrals from our partners (Police, MASH team, Family Help Front Door, Targeted Youth Support Service and CAMHS Liaison and Diversion and

schools) to accommodate children who are Released Under Investigation, on Bail, repeatedly coming to services' attention for Anti-Social Behaviour, or have received a police No Further Action outcome.

89. Our Turnaround programme will support children eligible for Outcome 22, and we are pleased that this option is now agreed for consideration in decision-making locally. Board reporting on implementation of Outcome 22 in Oxfordshire will ensure support and challenge for its impact for improved performance of our FTE rates.
90. Our Youth and Family Practitioners engage children in one-to-one support focusing on social and emotional support including work on peer influence; emotional regulation; managing conflicts; appropriate use of social media; knife crime; resilience to exploitation; emotional well-being; building self-esteem; managing self-harm; and engaging in education and training opportunities. Our practitioners have strong links with partners and community resources and can support children to access mental health assessments via Liaison and Diversion (CAMHS); participate in positive activities in the areas of sport, music and leisure; or access longer-term mentoring programmes.
91. We have particularly strong links with Project PT (fitness and boxing) and Inspire Sounds (music and mentoring) and have also benefited from work with the Gold Seal Service (online entrepreneurship and music mentoring). Our practitioners are also using bespoke resources for our children which are local to their community and specific to their interests. Examples of this is a child interested in motor sport spending a day as a VIP guest at the Williams Factory to learn about careers in motorsports, and another young person in a rural area being supported to start learning to drive to improve self-esteem and employability. This work fits the ethos of Turnaround which focuses on strengths and positive opportunities to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of the children in the cohort.
92. The Turnaround cohort are achieving a range of positive outcomes following work with our team including desistance from offending, improved family relationships, being at home more and spending less time with other children on the cusp of offending, increased conflict and emotional management skills, access to more appropriate education provision, increased attendance at school, referral for first initial screening for neurodiversity and progress with obtaining Education and Help Care Assessments and Plans, developing new hobbies and positive activities, improved self-esteem and mental health. Some recent feedback from children and their families demonstrates how valued the work is.
93. 'T' was referred to programme following receipt of a Youth Caution for Assault and Criminal Damage and Community Resolutions for Arson and Attempted Arson. Police concerns included repeated anti-social behaviour in the community and association with older children and adults of concern.

T's feedback: *"It is a brilliant idea and really helps you to stop getting into trouble and to understand what is going on... I understand now that police are not the enemy and have a job to do... It's made me understand some of the negative*

influences that made me act different... and that there are consequences to your actions...J listened to everything I had to say and helped me understand things.”

T's parent: *“The Turnaround Practitioner has been amazing. A great balance of support, listening and setting boundaries. ‘T’ is home on time, is smiling, is calmer, and integrates more at home and at school.”*

94. Monitoring and tracking of children for re-offending and qualitative feedback will inform our planning for sustainability of our preventative and diversionary work, to positively impact Oxfordshire's current FTE rates.

Drug Diversion Scheme

95. Between April 2023 – March 2024 Thames Valley Police made 145 referrals into the Diversion Scheme. Contact was made with 100% of these children, 35 declined the intervention and 110 children entered the Drug Diversion Scheme. At the time of writing 98 children have completed the Drug Diversion intervention and the rest remain open and support is ongoing. As of March 2024, only 2 children out of the 98 who completed the DDS were re-referred by Thames Valley Police for further drug possession offences.

Education

96. Improving outcomes for children with SEND remains a partnership strategic priority in the forthcoming year. Our plans to commence the SEND Quality Mark will contribute to improving outcomes for our children with SEND needs, including those affected by unmet speech and language needs. The assessment will help us to identify what is required for partnership improvements, and it will also contribute to Oxfordshire's wider SEND improvement activity. Planning for 2024-25 is for close collaboration with Education colleagues to establish AQA/ASDAN awards as alternative education opportunities for our children.

Restorative Approaches and Victims

97. The YJES continues delivery of restorative justice interventions with children who offend, and the people harmed by their crimes. During 2023-2024 192 victims were identified for support, of whom 102 engaged in restorative work. 92 completed an indirect restorative process and 14 engaged in a direct restorative meeting with the child who harmed them. Over the same period 235 restorative justice/victim awareness sessions were conducted with young people under youth justice supervision.
98. During the year, the restorative justice team shared 13 letters of explanation/apology written by young people to victims of their offences. Below is one example, well received by its recipient:

“We hope you are well. We have one thing that we'd like to say to you, and that is that we are really sorry for what happened. If we could go

back in time, we would undo what we did to you. You didn't deserve any of this and we didn't mean to harm you. We really want you to feel safe and not to worry about going out. We miss being your friend and we really hope you enjoy your summer. We wish you all the best."

99. 22 victims provided feedback following their involvement in restorative approaches during 2023-24, of which 100% said that they were given enough information to understand the role of the service and kept up to date with what was happening with the child who harmed them. The average score out of 10 for satisfaction with the service was 8.5.

100. The service lead is involved in research being undertaken by the Restorative Justice Council and the Youth Endowment Fund in measuring the impact of restorative justice, including how it relates to the YJB Child First principles. In consultation for the YJB's new KPI's, Oxfordshire highlighted the absence of a KPI related to victim contact and restorative justice work. This was acknowledged and recognised through its inclusion in the YJB new KPI's. The service lead continues work with the YJB in its further refinement of the victims KPI.

101. We are proud of our delivery of restorative practice and approaches in youth justice. This was shared with the YJB during its visit to the service in April 2024 for learning about our best practice. Feedback from the YJB Chief Operating Officer was: *"It was a pleasure to meet the team at Oxfordshire YJS (Youth Justice Service) and learn about the incredible practice at the service to improve outcomes for children and support those affected by crime. Oxfordshire takes its responsibility to all children affected by crime seriously – by listening to them, supporting them, mitigating the impacts on them and their communities and working together to promote positive outcomes, prevent further crimes and victimisation."*

102. The YJB intends sharing of Oxfordshire's Restorative approach as best practice nationally on their Youth Justice Board's Resource Hub. The service continues to hold Registered Service Provider status with the Restorative Justice Council. The service lead for Restorative Justice is a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Restorative Justice and illustrates our ongoing dedication and commitment to improve restorative justice in the criminal justice system.

103. Oxfordshire's Children's Services adoption of restorative practice as one of its core practice approaches is being spear-headed by its Principal Social Worker and departmental senior leads in embedding the approach through delivery of a programme of training, dissemination of resources, toolkits, and a community of practice for children's services staff and volunteers. We look forward to learning from evaluation evidence of impact in embedding the approach in Children's services.

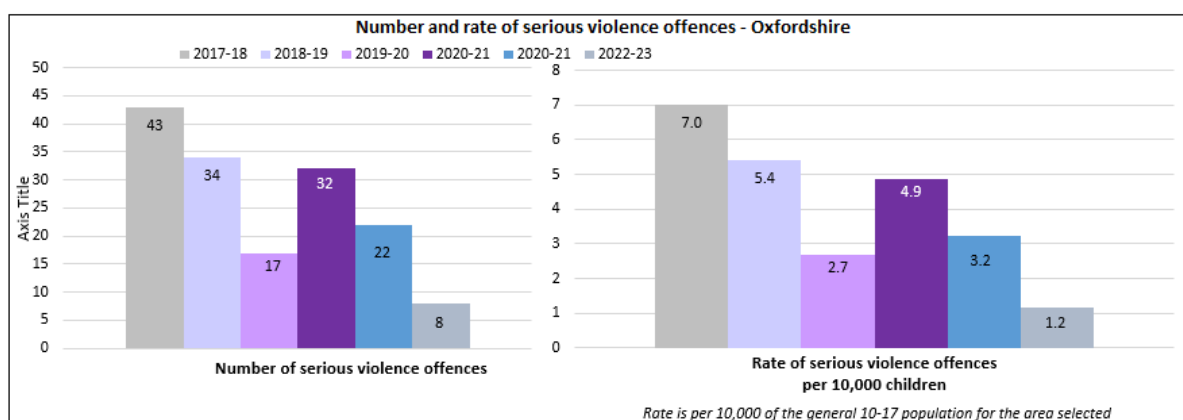
Reparation

104. In the past year, the service delivered 203 reparation sessions with children. Children's feedback about Reparation activity told us that they feel safe, and value being treated with respect and fairly in activity placements. Their views, coupled

with feedback from victims and placements, helps the service develop creative Reparation opportunities in support of skills-building and community integration for our children.

Feedback example: *“I just wanted to say thank you so much for all the support I was given by everyone and thank you so much for making sure I got the support because you’re the first people who really understand me and got along really well with thank you so much again for all the support I was given it was noticed. It’s very well appreciated by me.”*

Serious Violence, Exploitation & Contextual Safeguarding



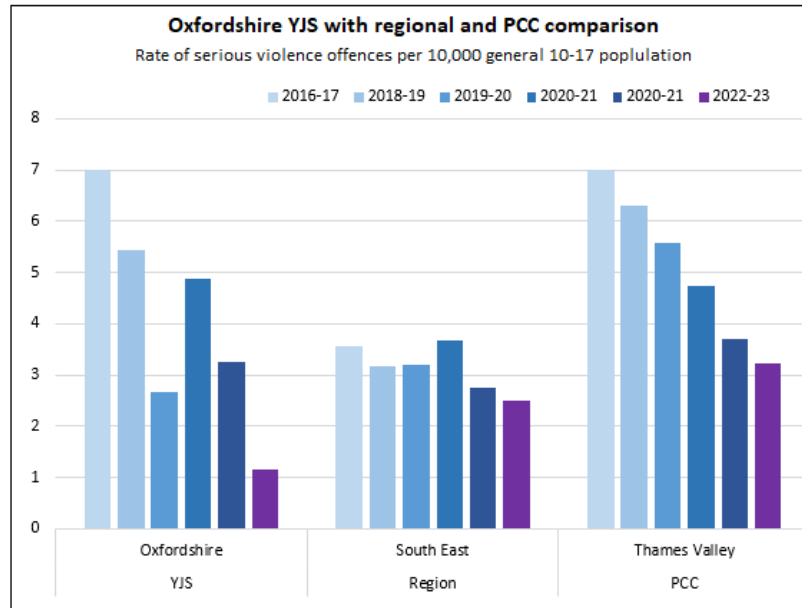
Oxfordshire	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of SYV offences	43	34	17	32	22	8
Rate per 10,000 of the general 10-17 population	7.0	5.4	2.7	4.9	3.2	1.2
% SYV comprise of total offences	8%	7%	4%	7%	7%	2%

Change from previous year (2021-22) to latest year (2022-23)
-14
-2.1
-5 pp

pp = percentage points

105. The number of serious violence offences committed by children per 10,000 has decreased and is now at a rate of 1.2, with 8 serious violence offences being committed by children in 2022-23. This is a reduction of 5% from 2021-22 and remains lower than the regional rate (2.5) and Thames Valley rate (3.2).

106. In 2022-23 Violence and Drugs made up the greatest proportion of serious violence offences by children, with Robbery offences reducing by 50% from 2021-22. 72% of serious youth violence offences were by white children, 28% by ethnic minority groups, with over-representation of ethnic minorities by 9%. Most serious violence offences are by male children.



107. The service sits alongside a statutory social work exploitation team, who lead on contextual safeguarding within Children’s Services in Oxfordshire. Its benefits are swift multi-agency responses to serious youth violence and exploitation risks focusing on contextual, place-based interventions.

108. Strategic Management Groups (SMGs) form our local partnership framework and place-based approach to tackling serious violence and exploitation. The framework has achieved positive results in tackling and reducing emerging crime and exploitation risks in communities in Oxfordshire. As a multi-agency response, it provides focused coordination of partnership and community resources, flexible to meet local circumstances in addressing the risks of concern. The approach applies the well-established problem-solving triangle in recognising interconnections between victims, perpetrators, and locality, using neighbourhood-level interventions to reduce risk and in providing sustainable, legacy actions for the community.

109. Using the ‘4 P’s’ approach (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue) partners undertake mapping exercises of the children and adults involved to ensure effective safeguarding measures are in place. We work closely with schools to support them to safeguard children on and off-site and coordinate the delivery of suitable training and interventions for schools in key violence and exploitation hot spots. We work very closely with Police and Community Safety to look at environments and places and have utilised CCTV, additional Police patrols, engagement of community and faith leaders and the use of civil orders to help communities feel safer.

Examples of success in the past year include:

- Disruption of exploitation and debt bondage of a group of 15 – 16-year-olds.

- Mediation and problem-solving between rival groups of young people from different areas; mitigating and reducing risk of serious violence incident at a community event through pro-active engagement and diversion of these young people.
- Significant reduction in anti-social behaviour and missing episodes in relation to a group of 15 children in a locality.

110. In response to the prevalence of knife carrying by children, the service renewed its 'Behind the Blade' intervention license and commissioned refreshed training for case-managers. We will continue developing our evidence-base for reducing youth violence to ensure our practice remains proportionate and informed.

111. Since Oxfordshire's establishment of its National Referral Mechanism (NRM) devolved decision-making pilot, NRM referrals rates have increased locally. For those children awaiting charging from Police for Possession and Supply offences, we are seeing an increase in the Police waiting for an NRM outcome before making charging decisions. This is being also mirrored in the Youth Court where the Youth Bench are consistently requesting updates on NRM outcomes. With the increased awareness and successful of this local process we hope to see less children progressing to Court or being charged where their offending has been within a context of exploitation. We will continue to monitor and track evidence of the pilot's impact in bi-annual reports for the Board and in annual reporting to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board.

Detention in Police Custody

112. During the last year collaboration with Police has led to improvements in information-sharing about children, resulting in increased Police efficiency and effectiveness in meeting children's needs in custody by being more informed in decision-making and planning for children's safe release and issue of proportionate bail conditions.

113. The YJES delivers an Appropriate Adult service for children who are detained in custody for the purposes of interview who are then released, and for those who are held overnight. The YJES has a team of 28 volunteers, of which 19 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. We now also deliver 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.

114. In the year 2023 – 2024 our Appropriate Adult volunteers supported children in custody on 132 instances, which is a 28% increase from last year when Appropriate Adults attended on 103 occasions. The average time a volunteer spends in custody is 3 hours 6 minutes, but depending on the circumstances, volunteers can spend large amounts of time in custody. The maximum amount of time spent by volunteers in custody has been six hours, for example when there is more than one detained person to see, or the wider processes have been slow. When they leave custody, the volunteer is offered a de-brief with a member of staff which is vital particularly if the offence was serious or concerns were raised during their time in custody.
115. The YJES monitors the number of strip-searches that a volunteer Appropriate Adult attends, including the ethnicity of the children who are strip-searched. In 2023 – 2024 there were 5 strip-searches where the YJES provided an Appropriate Adult. 3 of the young people were White British, of the remaining 2, 1 identified as Asian and the other White & Black African. Nothing was found on the young people in 3 of the 5 strip searches.
116. There has been a national change to how police forces define a strip search under PACE (Code C, Annex A) so we now send out Appropriate Adults to custody if a young person is required to removed tracker-bottoms with cords. This year we provided Appropriate Adults to attend for this change in clothing for 3 children.
117. The YJES also provides volunteers who act as Appropriate Adults for children and vulnerable adults out-of-hours up to 11pm. These out-of-hours requests are managed by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) with use of our YJES volunteers. In the year 2023 – 2024 we provided volunteers for 155 call outs for vulnerable adults, supporting our colleagues in Adult Social Care.

Remands and Use of Custody

118. Our data for the last year shows that we have had low numbers of children remanded into youth detention accommodation, and this has been for the most serious offences. 5 children were remanded between April 2023 – March 2024, 2 to youth detention accommodation and 3 into local authority accommodation. All 5 children were male, 4 were White British and 1 was White and Black African. For the children who were remanded in local authority accommodation there were high levels of concern around persistent offending and parental neglect. Oxfordshire's performance in use of custody for children is better than that of our comparative groups.
119. A May 2024 report to the Youth Justice Management Board outlined the findings and recommendations of HMIP and OFSED Joint Thematic Use of Remand and implications for Oxfordshire. As a result, quarterly briefings on Oxfordshire children subject of remand are provided to Children's services leadership team and the elected council member portfolio-holder for oversight in safeguarding these children.

120. Where Oxfordshire children appear in Court ‘out of area,’ or ‘out of area’ children appear in Oxfordshire’s Courts, collaboration with the child’s local Youth Justice Service ensures clear and informed planning for safe and proportionate Court decision-making. We have received positive feedback from other Local Authorities in recognition of our help where the best desired outcomes for children are achieved, particularly where remand to custody has been a risk and appropriately avoided.

Constructive Resettlement

121. Our local Resettlement Policy and practice guidance in line with the YJB case-management guidance is due completion in July 2024, for ratification at the Board meeting in the Autumn. It will ensure continuation of our best practice in assisting children’s resettlement from custody. Joint working with Children’s Services, Education and accommodation providers will ensure suitable provision is identified at the earliest opportunity supporting robust resettlement plans for our children. Due to the gap in resource of a seconded Probation Officer, innovative partnership problem-solving has yielded agreement for recruitment to a newly developed ‘Transitions Worker’ role by the Youth Justice Service, funded by Probation.

Working with families

122. Oxfordshire YJES is committed to whole family working and ensuring that assessments and plans are responsive to the needs of the family, to best support desistance and reduce vulnerabilities to exploitation. We have continued to run the ‘One Step Ahead’ parenting groups for parents of children open to our service and have received positive feedback from parents and partners.

123. The service inclusion of siblings in assessments ensures consideration of the holistic impact to all family members where criminogenic risks and needs are identified. This approach strengthens our prevention and diversion offer for children and aims in reducing First Time Entrants locally through the identification and our response in supporting the needs of siblings at the earliest opportunity. We committed to ensuring system wide access in existing parenting provision supports parents of children we are working with.

Climate Change

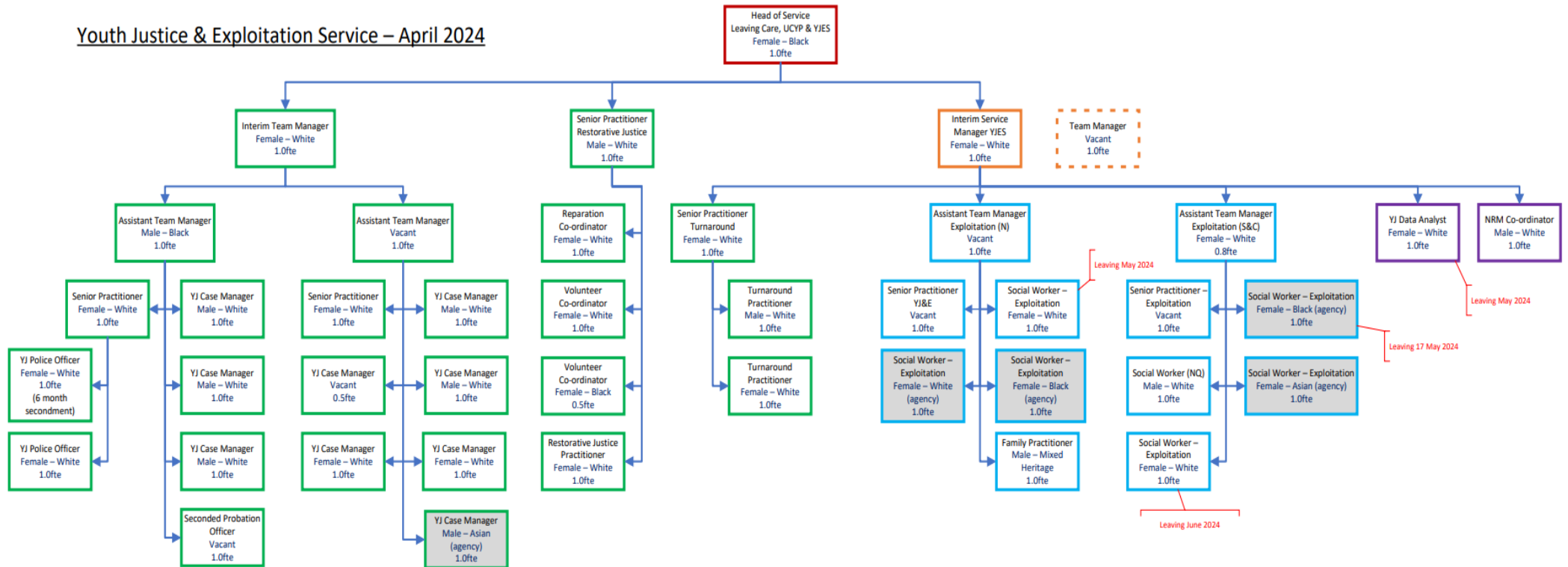
124. The 2023/4 Director of Public Health Annual Report on climate change and health identified the most deprived neighbourhoods in the county most likely to be affected by extreme heat, air pollution and flooding. Climate action is a regular topic at service meetings, with recent input from the council’s Climate Action Team on retrofitting grants and in reducing Oxfordshire’s carbon footprint. ‘Small wins’ in climate action are planned for delivery for the service in Autumn 2024.

Sign off, submission and approval.

<p>Signed by Chair of Board:</p> <p>John Drew</p>	<p><i>John Drew</i></p>
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Appendix 1: YJES Staffing Structure

Youth Justice & Exploitation Service – April 2024



The service has 34 volunteers of which 24 are female and 10 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:

- 29 White British
- 1 Black Caribbean and White
- 1 Black British
- 1 Black African
- 2 White Other