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## **1. Introduction, vision and strategy**

### Chair's Foreward

I have great pleasure in presenting this foreward 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:

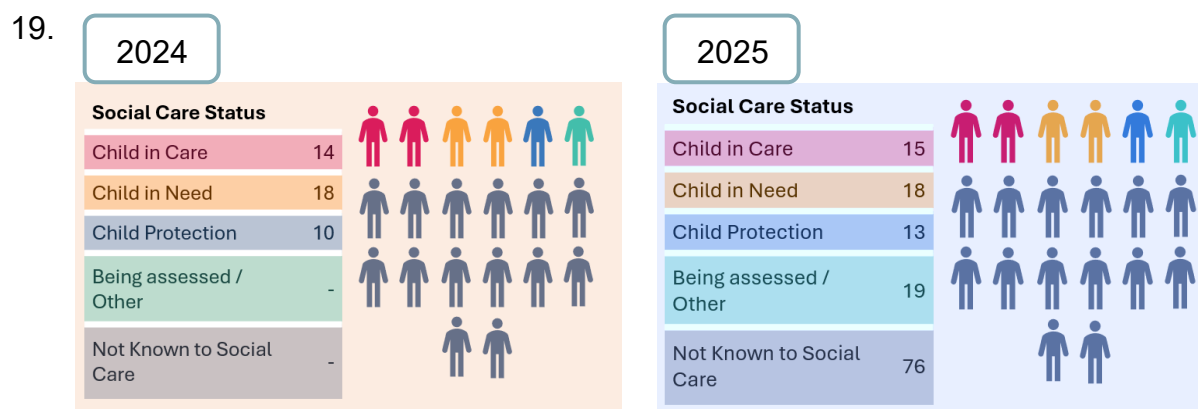
- In 2022–2023, over 22,000 pupils (20%) in Oxfordshire were classified as persistent absentees.
- This is an increase from 13.5% in 2020–2021.
- Mental health remains a key factor contributing to low attendance across schools.

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).

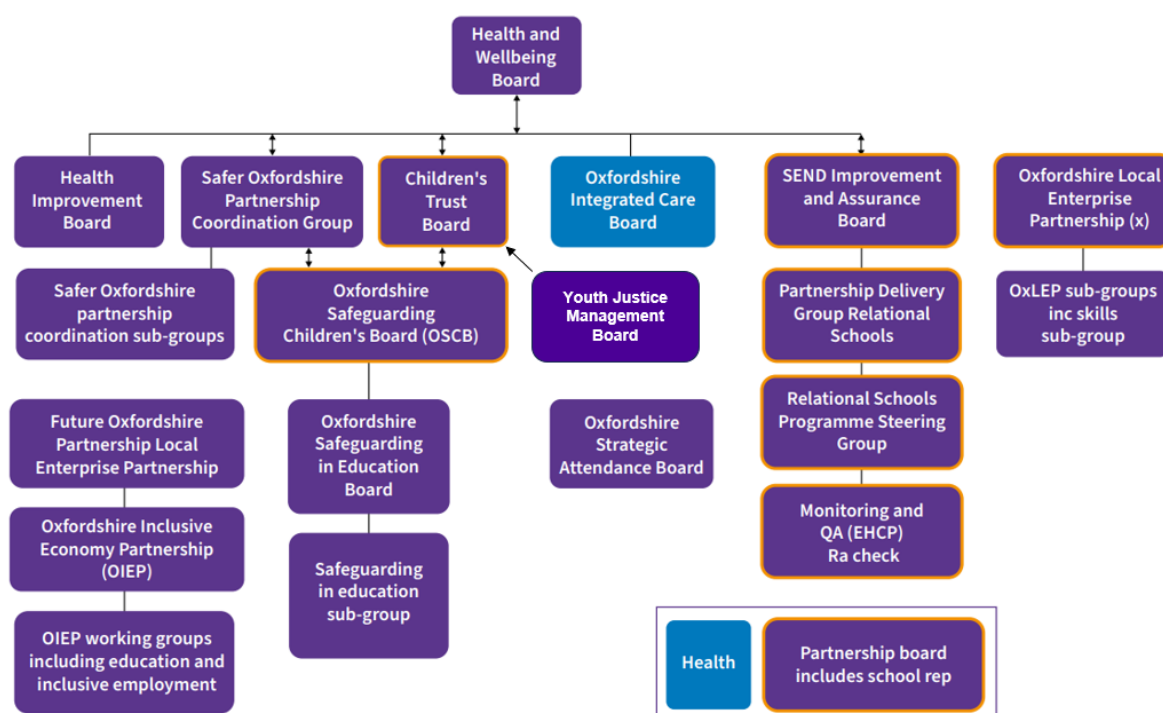
17. As of May 2025, Oxfordshire has 796 children in Local Authority care, 74 of which are unaccompanied children. This figure is 4% higher than last year but is still average compared with our statistical neighbours. Oxfordshire has 546 children on Child Protection plans which is a 4% increase on this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

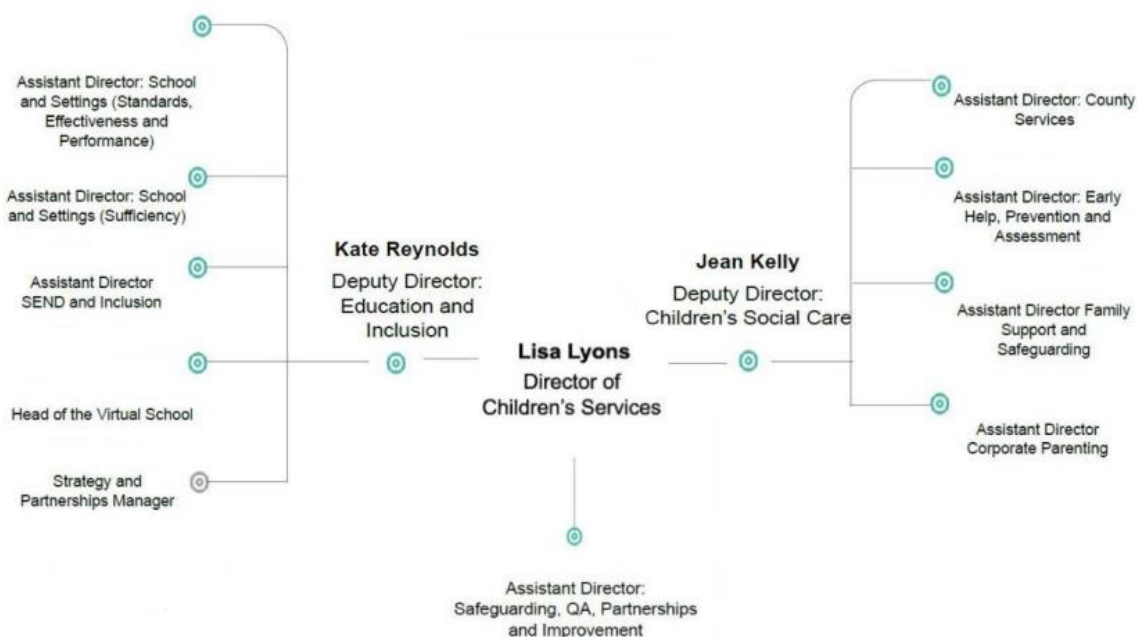


## 2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

### 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
<b>Disproportionality</b>	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.
<b>First Time Entrants</b>	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.		
<b>Participation</b>	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.
<b>Exploitation</b>	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.
<b>Education &amp; SEND</b>	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.



<b>Policing</b>	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.

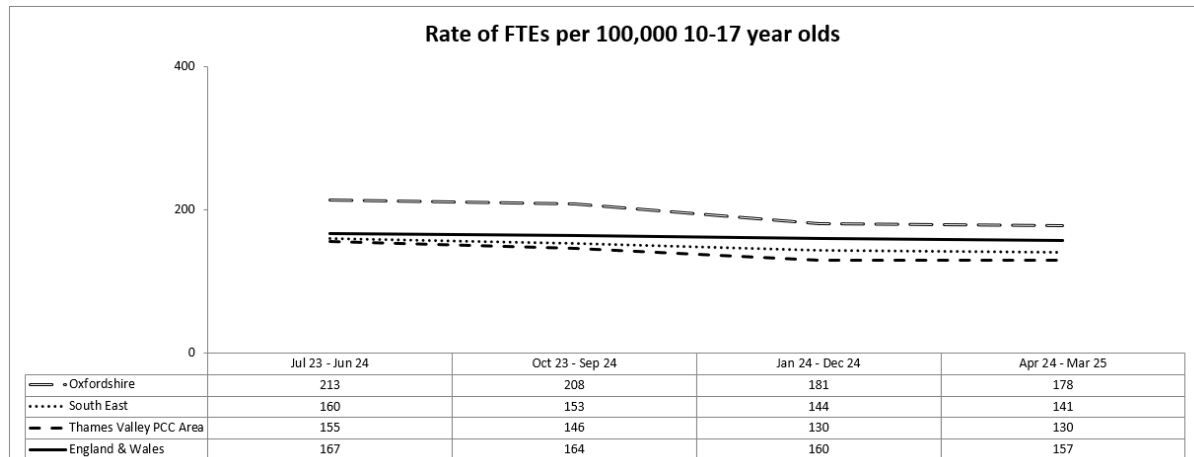
	children in Police custody for knife possession.	post. We are currently supporting 36 children under this project.		Act Now is a fixed-term project and ongoing delivery will depend on future funding arrangements. Consideration will be given to any contingency and sustainability planning moving forward.
	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.
<b>Workforce Development</b>	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.
<b>Evidence-based and effective practice</b>	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.

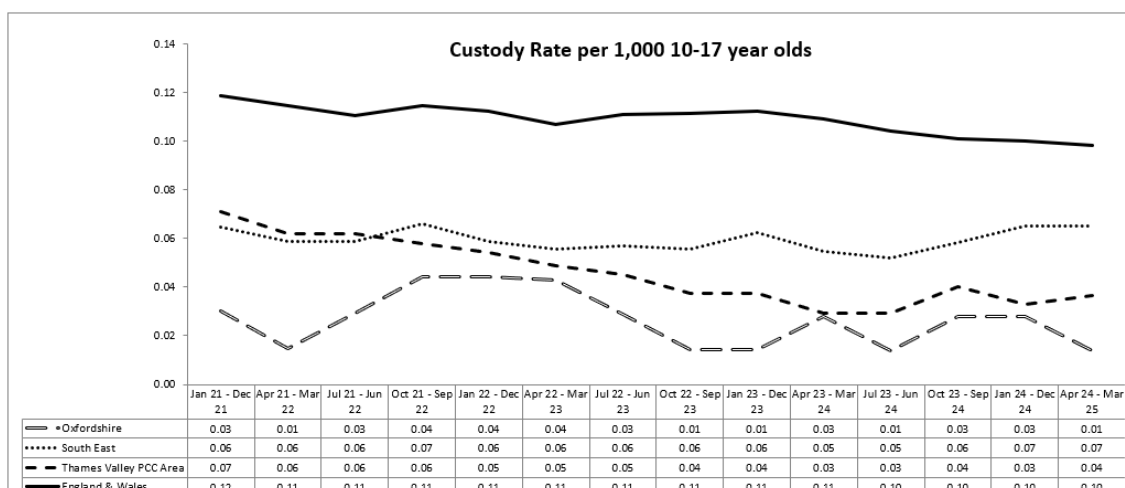
*b. Performance over previous year*

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.

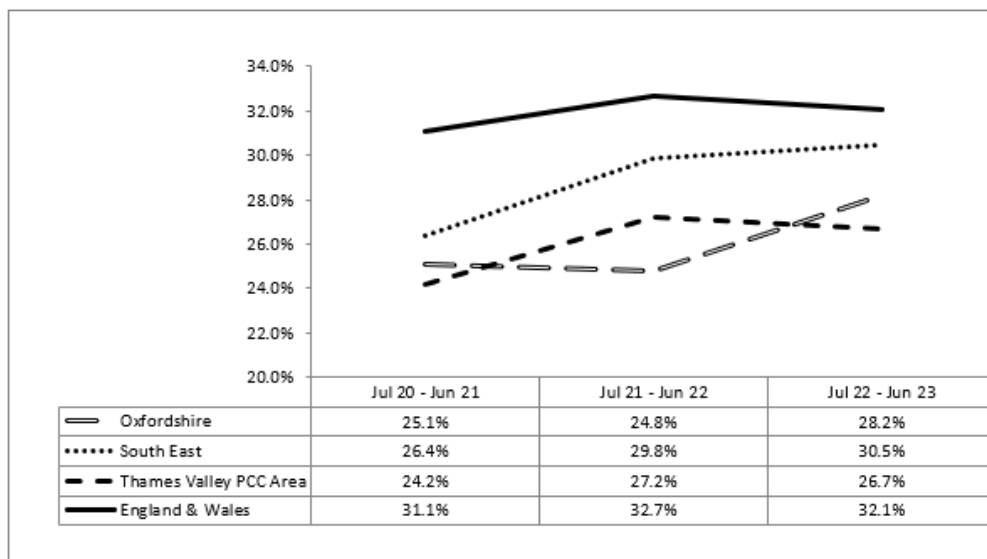
Use of Custody



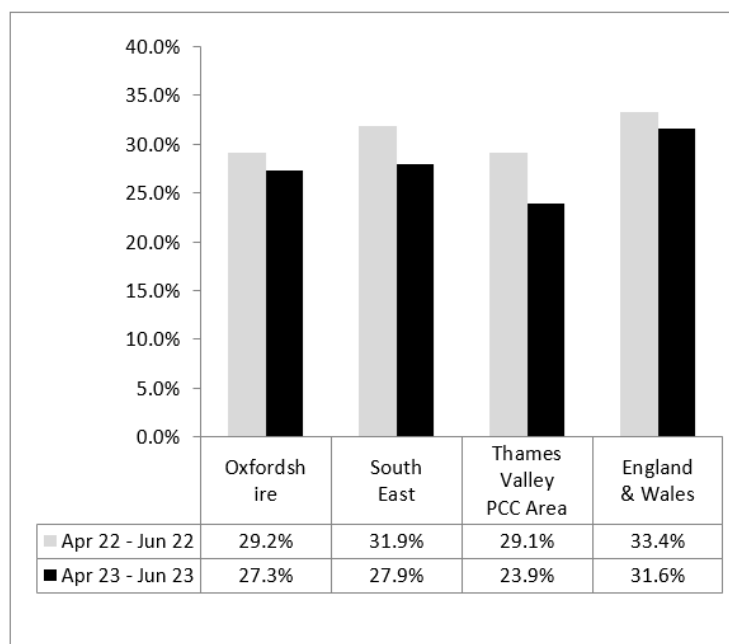
34. Oxfordshire's custody rate has remained consistently lower than the national and regional rates and lower or equal to the Thames Valley average since 2021. Between 2024 – 2025 Oxfordshire has had one child remanded into the secure estate for serious violence offences. This child initially went to 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*

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
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):

<b>As children</b>	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.
<b>Building pro-social identity</b>	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.
<b>Collaborating with children</b>	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
<b>Diverting from stigma</b>	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
<b>Prevention &amp; Diversion</b>				
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
<b>Restorative Practice &amp; Victims</b>				
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
<b>Disproportionality</b>				
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
<b>Education &amp; SEND</b>				
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	<p>Use of data to support school leaders' understanding of the needs of children open to YJ</p> <p>Partnership practice is inclusive and consistent</p> <p>Suspensions and exclusions for justice-involved children are scrutinised</p>	<p>Kate Reynolds (Deputy Director for Education)</p> <p>Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND &amp; Inclusion)</p> <p>Jessie Dobson</p>	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	<p>Aligned governance and shared aims for justice-involved children with SEND</p> <p>Consistent understanding of all partners at the YJ Board with learning cascaded across partner organisations</p> <p>Organisations can share good practice in relation to working with children with SEND</p>	<p>Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND &amp; Inclusion)</p> <p>Board Chair to ensure</p>	<p>Reporting into YJ Board as relevant to justice-involved children</p> <p>Reporting into YJ Board as relevant to justice-involved children</p>
<b>Arrested Children</b>				
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%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>



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
<b>Total with EHCP/SEN</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Total youth justice cohort</b>	162	92

#### e. Restorative Approaches and Victims

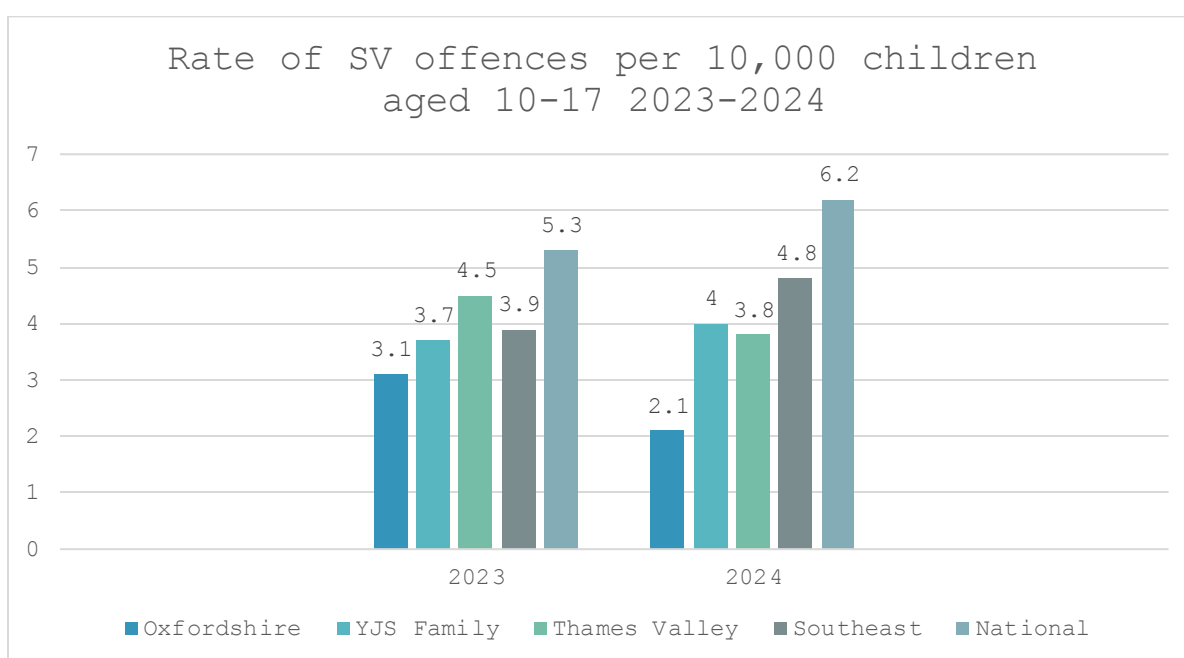
106. Youth Justice Services have a duty under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime to contact individuals affected by youth crime to provide information and updates about their case and opportunities for restorative justice. Oxfordshire YJS seeks to contact and consult with all those affected by 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\*<sup>1</sup>*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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*

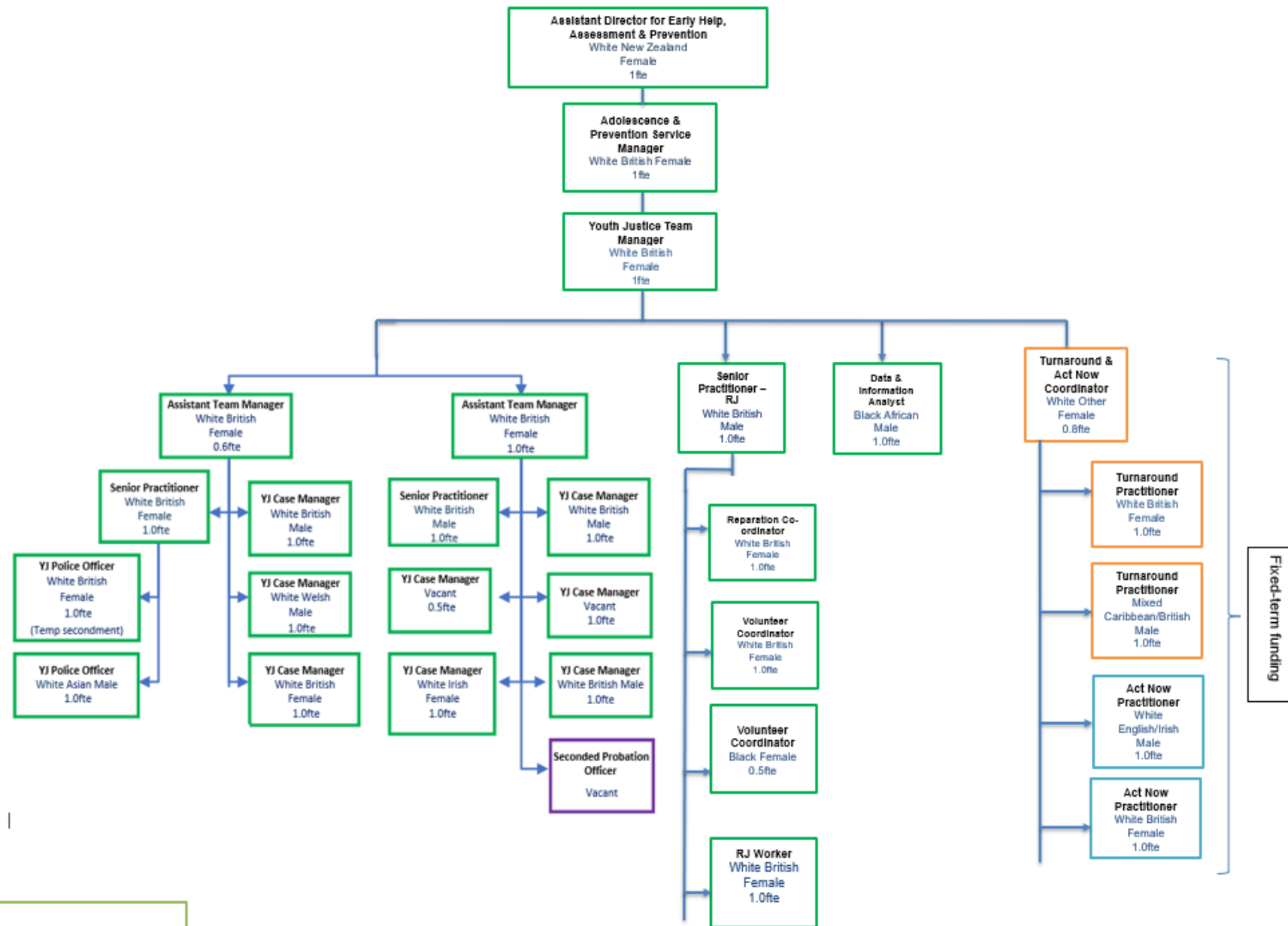
128. Partnership working across Children's Services, Health, Housing, Police and third sector will support robust resettlement planning for our children from the point of entry into custody. In 2024 Oxfordshire YJS produced a new local Resettlement Policy with practice guidance for the service. As part 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:**

<b>Signed by Chair of Board:</b>  <b>John Drew (CBE)</b>	  <i>John Drew, CBE</i>
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