

To: Councillor Asare (Chair)  
Councillors Naz, Ballsdon, Clarke,  
Cresswell, Dennis, Eden, Foster,  
Gittings, Griffith, Magon, McEwan,  
Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Smith, Tarar  
and Walkem

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30 June 2026

Your contact is: Jemma Durkan - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE 8 JULY 2026**

A meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee will be held on **Wednesday, 8 July 2026 at 6.30 pm** in the **Council Chambers, Civic Offices, Reading**. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.	
<b>2. DELEGATED DECISIONS</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>
<b>3. MINUTES</b>	<b>7 - 12</b>
<b>4. PUBLIC PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS</b>	
Public petitions and public questions may be submitted on any matter within the Committee's responsibilities. Submissions should be emailed to <a href="mailto:committee.services@reading.gov.uk">committee.services@reading.gov.uk</a> and must be received no later than 12 noon, four clear working days before the meeting.	
<b>5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS</b>	

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Councillor questions may be submitted on any matter within the Committee's responsibilities. Submissions should be emailed to [committee.services@reading.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@reading.gov.uk) and must be received no later than 12 noon, four clear working days before the meeting.

- 6. ANNUAL SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT 2024/2025** 13 - 62

A report to consider the School Standard and Attainment and priorities and planned activity to improve attainment.
- 7. BEST START IN LIFE STRATEGY 2026-2028** 63 - 98

A report to introducing the Best Start in Life Strategy 2026-2028.
- 8. ANNUAL REPORT FOR NEW DIRECTIONS COLLEGE** 99 - 106

A report providing an update on activiy and performance of the New Directions College.
- 9. READING YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN 2026/27** 107 - 180

A report to consider the progress of the 2025/26 Youth Justice Service annual plan, timeframes for completion and strategic priorities for 2026-27.
- 10. PROCUREMENT OF CHILD AND SCHOOL TRANSPORT AND POST-16 TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY STATEMENT 2027/2028** 181 - 208

A report to consider procurement of child and school transport and to consider a proposed consultation on the Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement 2027/2028.

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Committee	Directorate	Date of meeting	Minute number	Item title	Decision	Officer delegated to	Lead Councillor portfolio	Expected timescale for decision
ACE Committee	DCASC	02/07/25	8	Supported Living Framework Tender	<p>That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be given delegated authority, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Procure and enter into a contract with successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided. The contract would be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years);</li> <li>· Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.</li> </ul>	Exec Director of Community and Adult Social Care Services;#Director of Finance/s151 officer;#AD of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer/Returning Officer	Adult Social Care	Tender documents published on 26/09/2025 so the period is now open to receive applications. On track to formally award and initiate mobilisation in early January, with the contract commencing from 1st April.
ACE Committee	DCASC	02/07/25	9	Homecare Framework Tender	<p>That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to be granted delegated authority to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support / care services to be provided. The contract would be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years).</li> <li>· Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time, and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.</li> </ul>	Exec Director of Community and Adult Social Care Services;#Director of Finance/s151 officer;#AD of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer/Returning Officer	Adult Social Care	Tender documents published on 26/09/2025 so the period is now open to receive applications. On track to formally award and initiate mobilisation in early January, with the contract commencing from 1st April.

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## ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026

**Present:** Councillor Asare (Chair);

Councillors McEwan (Vice-Chair), Eden, Gittings, Griffith, Keane, Lanzoni, Magon, O'Connell and DP Singh

**Apologies:** Councillors Ballsdon, Cresswell, Mpofu-Coles and Woodward

### 25. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decisions were noted.

### 26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 27. CQC ASSURANCE

The Committee considered a report presenting the findings of the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) assessment of the Council's Adult Social Care service conducted between July 2024 and April 2025, together with progress made since the inspection and priorities for further improvement. An update on the development of the Adult Social Care Strategy was also provided.

The report explained that the evaluation, based on its Single Assessment Framework, had reviewed performance across four themes: Working with People, Providing Support, Ensuring Safety, and Leadership. Evidence was gathered through policy reviews, performance data, stakeholder engagement, and an on-site assessment. An overall score of 53% was received and a rating of 'Requires Improvement'. The final assessment report detailed many well-developed strengths as well as areas for improvement both of which have been detailed in this report.

It was noted that the Assessment process was a challenging experience resulting in a number of process and quality assurance concerns being raised with the CQC. This resulted in a formal complaint being submitted in January 2026. Whilst an adult social care improvement plan was in place prior to the assessment with a number of improvements achieved, a refreshed improvement plan aligned with CQC feedback and staff input was now underway, forming the basis of the new Adult Social Care Strategy due to be completed in summer 2026.

The report explained that while the CQC assessment identified areas requiring improvement, the Council had a strong foundation of compassionate care, innovative services, and committed leadership. Continued focus on the identified areas of improvement such as timeliness, safeguarding and accessibility would be critical to achieving a higher rating and delivering effective, equitable, person-centred care for all residents.

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026**

The report also provided detailed information on the assessment activity and information on the formal complain to the CQC outlining the Council's concerns about the assessment of its adult social care services.

The Committee raised questions on partnerships with health, recruitment and retention, vacancy levels, staff morale, and neighbourhood hubs. Officers responded with detail on strengthened partnerships, reduced vacancies, improved staff wellbeing, and ongoing community work.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the content of the report pertaining to the published assessment by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) of the Council's adult social care delivery of duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 be noted.**
- (2) That the improvements made since the CQC assessment and the ongoing improvement plan be noted.**
- (3) That progress made against the Council's Adult Social Care Improvement Plan be brought back to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee for review.**

**28. MATERNITY SERVICES UPDATE**

The Committee received a report and presentation from Sarah Bailey, Interim Director of Midwifery Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust (RBFT) on a summary of the national MBRRACE report findings, local data on inequalities in maternity care and progress on reducing inequalities across maternity care.

The Committee were provided with the following information:

- The findings of the 2025 MBRRACE report, highlighted significantly higher maternal mortality rates for Black women, Asian women, and women living in the most deprived areas, with leading causes of death identified as cardiac disease, mental health conditions and thrombosis.
- RBFT supported approximately 5,800 women annually, with around 4,800 births per year, serving a diverse population including areas within the 20% most deprived nationally.
- Perinatal mortality was discussed, noting a rolling RBFT rate of 4.91 per 1,000 births (Q1–Q3 2025/26), slightly above the 2023 national comparator of 4.84. A multidisciplinary deep dive review was underway, focusing on medical review, thematic analysis, ethnicity and deprivation.
- Disparities had been identified in 2023–24, including a perinatal mortality rate for Black women of 6.19 per 1,000 births, three times higher than for White women.

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026

- Neonatal outcomes were reported to be below the national target for term admissions, with no increased neonatal morbidity identified for ethnic minority women in 2024/25.
- Maternal outcomes were reported as stable, with further work planned to analyse outcomes by ethnicity through the National Maternal Care Bundle.

The Committee were also informed about actions taken to reduce inequalities, including:

- Continuity of care teams.
- Cultural competence training.
- An Inclusion Midwife appointment.
- Expansion of enhanced interpretation services via WordSki.
- Targeted community engagement through the Maternity and Neonatal Voice Partnership, resulting in improved early booking rates.
- Supporting targeted initiatives to improve early booking, mental health support and safe sleep.

The Committee welcomed the report and recognised the scale of work underway. Discussion focused on the Trust's response to the interim findings of the Baroness Amos review, workforce capacity and representation, the role of maternity and family hubs, community engagement, and the need for improved data to evidence impact on health outcomes.

Officers emphasised the importance of partnership working, learning from national reviews, strengthening complaints and Call for Concern processes, maintaining safe staffing levels, and improving access through maternity hubs.

Healthwatch representative Alice Kunjappy-Clifton attended the meeting and asked a question regarding what local action was being discussed or taken by maternity services regarding patients reporting they had experienced discrimination. In response it was noted that all staff were undertaking mandatory cultural competency training and any reported discrimination was thoroughly investigated.

The Chair thanked Cllr Mpofu-Coles for raising this issue during her time as Chair of ACE Committee. The Chair also thanked Sarah Bailey for the information and looked forward to an update to be provided to the Committee in 12 months.

**Resolved – That an update report be provided to the Committee in 12 months.**

### 29. SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from Dr Emma Wainwright, Co-Clinical Lead and Consultant in Sexual Health and HIV at the Florey Clinic, Royal Berkshire Hospital.

The presentation outlined the services provided by the Florey Clinic as a multi-faceted integrated sexual health service. The clinic offered Genitourinary Medicine (GUM),

## **ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026**

contraception, HIV care, psychosexual counselling, home testing and health advisory, outreach and safeguarding services.

The presentation included the following points:

- The clinic was the most research active Sexual Health site in the Thames Valley including the MSD study of Islatravir and Doravirine, Positive Voices questionnaire study, Emergency department BBV testing study , Halo Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). Also an undergraduate and postgraduate training site.
- Changing complexity and changes: new BASH PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) guidelines in 2025, injectable PrEP, injectable antiretroviral therapy for HIB, DoxyPEP available soon in clinic.
- PrEP on Wheels, PrEP for all: project funded by Gilead to promote PrEP creating awareness and knowledge.
- Changing STI prevalence and complexity: Data from national and local sources showed varying rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis. Reading data was comparatively high compared to other local areas however it was noted that this was stable.
- HIV Patient Caseload: The number of patients living with HIV was increasing, was a highly complex area of work and used a large amount of clinician time as proportion of patients were classed as complex.
- STI Chlamydia testing: The number of people screened who were aged under 25 had increased which was a positive result.
- Service users who were seen within two working days: The percentage of people was high and had improved.
- Service users offered and tested for HIV: The percentage of people who had accepted a HIV test at the service had increased. It was noted that this was part of the government's plan for ending new HIV transmissions by 2030.
- Vulnerable Outreach Services: Outreach nurses attended home, school or any convenient place to provide care. Example of users included vulnerable people under 18 who could struggle to attend clinic, people in contact with social care, substance misuse and commercial sex workers.

The Committee made comments, asked questions and received responses on supporting the outreach work with under 18s, medical meaning of complex care, pharmacy support and GP referrals.

The Committee thanked Dr Wainwright for the information and requested that a future update report be provided in a 12 months time.

**Resolved – That an update report be provided in 12 months.**

### **30. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD INAUGURAL REPORT**

The Committee received the Children's Services Improvement Board Inaugural Report. Andy Couldrick, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board provided the Committee with an overview of the report.

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026**

The report explained that on 28 January 2025 Council had agreed not to extend its contract with Brighter Futures for Children Ltd and to bring its Children's Services back in-house. The transition back into the Council took place on 1st October 2025. This required the establishment of an independently chaired Children's Services Improvement Board. It was noted that a report recommending the Terms of Reference and appointment process for an Independent Chair was presented to Council in June 2025. Andy Couldrick was appointed as the independent chair and the Board was convened in November 2025. As a requirement of the transition this was the first report to ACE Committee.

It was noted that following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI), of the multi-agency response to children in Reading who are victims of domestic abuse, a non-statutory improvement notice was issued by the Department for Education to the Council followed by the appointment of a DfE Improvement Advisor. The Advisor also sits on the Children's Services Improvement Board.

The Committee noted that the Board met for the first time in November 2025 and has continued to meet every six weeks. The Committee noted the Terms of Reference, Forward Plan and key issues that would be monitored by the Improvement Board.

The Committee discussed the report and comments and responses were provided on fostering respite care, corporate parenting role of councillors and supporting young people.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

**Resolved –**

**(1) That the report be noted.**

**(2) That an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Board be provided to the Committee on a six-monthly basis.**

**31. BERKSHIRE WEST SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25**

The Committee were provided with information on the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/2025. The BWSCP Annual report provided a summary of activity for the work and progress undertaken by the multi-agency partnership to promote the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in Reading, West Berkshire, and Wokingham.

The Committee noted that the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (WTSC23) provided the statutory guidance for all safeguarding children partnerships in England. From March 2019, the safeguarding partners across the west of Berkshire (Reading, West

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026**

Berkshire and Wokingham) had joined to become the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP). BWSCP was the key statutory partnership whose role was to co-ordinate the partners safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents.

It was noted that five new Priority areas had been established: Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Intra Familial Harm, Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Extra Familial Harm, Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding & Support for Children Not in School, Safeguarding & Support for Pre-School Children, Reducing Neglect.

It was also noted that an options appraisal in relation to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in response to the findings of the Joint Target Area Inspection had been undertaken. Following consideration by lead safeguarding partners a decision had been made to move to single local authority safeguarding arrangements. Therefore, a Reading Safeguarding Children's Partnership would be established to replace the Berkshire West Children's Safeguarding Partnership. It was noted that timelines and details were to be approved at an extraordinary meeting with lead safeguarding partners. It was noted that this work would also feed into the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.30 pm)

**Adult Social Care,  
Children's Services and  
Education Committee**



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

**08 July 2026**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2024/2025</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Lara Patel, Executive Director of Children’s Services
<b>Report author</b>	Brian Grady, Director of Education
<b>Lead councillor</b>	Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
<b>Council priority</b>	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the position regarding school standards and attainment as set out in the attached report</li> <li>2. Endorse the priorities identified in this report to further improve attainment, with a focus on reducing inequalities.</li> </ol>

**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. Education is a strategic priority for Reading Borough Council. The Annual School Standards report sets out how Reading Borough Council supports statutory duties regarding education and school standards in support of Reading Borough Council strategic priorities and policies. It uses verified examination data and so relates to the previous (2024/25) academic year, not the current academic year.
- 1.2. This report builds on the School Standards report presented to the July 2025 ACE Committee report and the identified strategic priorities set out in that report.
- 1.3. The Annual School Standards report 2024/2025 report confirms that schools are implementing research informed approaches to improve standards, with schools being judged positively by Ofsted and in findings from school effectiveness assurance activities. This report informs the Education Partnership Board strategic priorities for action.

**2. Policy context**

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council has high ambition to provide opportunity for all of our children and young people to thrive in education and succeed. The strategic approach to supporting improved educational outcomes and school effectiveness has been strengthened through the establishment of the Reading Education Partnership Board, which oversees and drives improvement action on standards and achievement.

- 2.2. School governing boards and their executive leaders are ultimately accountable for the standards and achievement in their schools. The roles and responsibilities of Reading Borough Council are:
- a) To act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, have a social worker, are a survivor of trauma and or have physical or mental health needs
  - b) Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress
  - c) To be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
  - d) To identify schools causing concern and to rapidly intervene where a school is at risk of decline or failing standards, working closely with the DfE Regional Director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve.
  - e) Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.
  - f) Exercise relevant powers to intervene in locally maintained schools causing concern and to work with the Department for Education Regional Director where there are concerns about school effectiveness in academy schools and settings

### **3. Overview of school standards and attainment**

- 3.1. The enclosed school standards report sets out a detailed overview of standards and attainment.
- 3.2. The School Effectiveness team leads on the work with schools to deliver improved outcomes and standards. The team undertook and recorded eighty official visits to Locally Maintained schools in term one including effectiveness, safeguarding, English monitoring and curriculum reviews. The team also completed HTPM for schools and provided training for headteachers, subject leads, individual school staff teams, behaviour leads, safeguarding leads, School Business Managers and Governors.
- 3.3. Outcomes across Reading show positive momentum at key transition points, most notably in Early Years, where Good Level of Development continues to rise, reflecting the impact of early intervention, workforce development and partnership working. We have also seen a strong improvement at narrowing the gap in Key Stage 2 and 4 for disadvantaged pupils, a key council plan priority.
- 3.4. However, these headlines mask substantial variation between schools and pupil groups, with persistent gaps remaining for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, and those experiencing poor attendance.
- 3.5. The data shows that Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is a driver of variation in outcomes at every phase. Children without SEND in most schools perform at or above national benchmarks, indicating that core curriculum and teaching quality is benefiting many children in many schools. However, pupils with SEND—particularly those on SEN Support and with EHCPs—continue to experience significantly weaker outcomes and higher absence and suspensions than their peers. Many of these children fail to secure foundational learning knowledge by the end of KS1. Strategic focus on providing children with the best start in life and reforming SEND and school organisation are essential if we are to drive change in these outcomes.

- 3.6. Attainment also varies across global majority heritage groups, with headline outcomes ranging widely and differences significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. Some groups continue to underperform relative to national expectations even without SEND, including Black Caribbean children, some mixed heritage pupil groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, indicating that factors beyond SEND contribute to these gaps. Overall, the data suggests that while improving SEND provision remains important, there is also a need to address persistent ethnic disparities that are evident within the non-SEND population.
- 3.7. Attendance remains a key limiting factor on attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Elevated levels of persistent absence are disproportionately concentrated in highly inclusive schools that serve our communities most impacted by disadvantage and intersectional vulnerability. Poor attendance is strongly correlated with weaker KS2 and KS4 outcomes and higher post sixteen disengagement. The data reinforces that attendance challenges are often structural and contextual, linked to poverty, health, housing instability, and unmet need, rather than school practice alone. Improving attendance for vulnerable groups therefore requires integrated, multi-agency responses, rather than punitive or school only solutions.
- 3.8. Most young people in Reading continue into post-sixteen education, and the authority performs well against national benchmarks for participation and the September Guarantee. However, retention and progression to Level 3 qualifications remain significant challenges for vulnerable learners. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are far more likely to leave school-based sixth forms at 16 and enter FE or become NEET. This reflects earlier attainment gaps, limited access to academic pathways, and insufficient preparation for adulthood. The findings reinforce that post-16 outcomes are shaped well before Year 11, requiring stronger KS3 foundations and clearer vocational and technical pathways that include all children, aligned to the national White Paper reform ambitions

### **3.9. Strategic priorities for 2026/27**

- 3.10. The Annual Standards report has identified focused and targeted school improvement activity priorities and priorities regarding improving school attendance. We will secure these actions through the oversight and governance of the Education Partnership Board, our strategic governance arrangements which involves and represents all 61 schools and all early years settings in Reading.
- 3.11. The Annual Standards report identifies the following strategic priorities across partnerships and agencies:
- 3.12. It is important that we deliver the national SEND reforms and local area SEND Strategy at pace, focusing on early identification, adaptive teaching, attendance, and Preparation for Adulthood across all phases, to ensure that children with SEND have access to the highest quality of education.
- 3.13. We must continue to prioritise the Best Start in Life strategy, recognising early years as the most effective lever for long-term improvement and equity.
- 3.14. The Education Partnership Board will explore opportunities to strengthen Multi Academy Trust and Local Authority collaboration to strengthen and rationalise provision and school improvement across our 61 schools and co-design inclusive pathways across Key Stage 4 and post-sixteen pathways.
- 3.15. To support improvements for global majority heritage groups who experience poorer outcomes, including Black Caribbean children, some mixed heritage pupil groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, building on engagement with parents and community leaders over the past year, Education Partnership Board will be agreeing targeted action to address identified disparities.
- 3.16. Proactive work on school place planning and financial modelling and management to promote sustainability underpins our approach, an update on the Reading Borough

Council School Place Planning Strategy will be presented to ACE Committee in October 2026.

#### **4. Contribution to strategic aims**

- 4.1. Council and partnership wide work on improving school standards and outcomes for children supports the Council's strategic priority to 'Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children', improving outcomes for children and families through a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention. In addition, helping children fulfil their potential through education supports the Council's ambitions to secure Reading's economic and cultural success, and to promote more equal communities in the borough.
- 4.2. The work undertaken with Reading schools helps secure access to consistently high-quality education for all Reading children, to help them succeed and thrive as full participants in Reading's inclusive economy.

#### **5. Environmental and climate implications**

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. Ensuring high quality education available local to all residents would be expected to reduce carbon emissions from unnecessary travel. There are no direct environmental and climate implications as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.

#### **6. Community engagement**

- 6.1. As set out in the report, engagement with schools is critical to deliver improved outcomes for Reading children through a self-improving school to school support system. School leaders will be attending alongside Council officers to present this report and to engage further with committee on relevant aspects of the report, including the context of current standards and attainment, and priority improvement actions.

#### **7. Equality impact assessment**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The actions set out in this report are intended to have a differential positive impact on people with protected characteristics, who experience a risk of disproportionately poor educational outcomes: specifically, as identified in the outcomes data on this report: disability, race and sex (gender).

#### **8. Other relevant considerations**

- 8.1. No other relevant considerations have been identified related to this report.

#### **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1. The Education Act 1996 establishes the fundamental legal framework for local authority education duties. Section 13 places a general duty on local authorities to "contribute

towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education, and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area". In this way, it is assumed that any child learning within the borough is a Reading pupil regardless of the form of governance of the school. Reading Borough Council (RBC) is therefore responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools and local education provisions.

- 9.2. Reading Borough Council has statutory duties (Children Act 2004, Childcare Act 2006) to:
- a) to promote cooperation between itself and other relevant organisations in order to improve the well-being of children in its area". This includes both "protection from harm and neglect as well as positive duties such as promoting physical and mental health". In this was the Council can act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences discrimination, or have a social worker.
  - b) be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
  - c) exercise its education functions to promote high standards
  - d) exercise its powers to intervene in schools causing concern (in line with the DfE Schools Causing Concern 2022 statutory guidance).

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1. With the removal from Local Authorities by HM Government of the School Improvement and Monitoring Brokerage Grant, the work of the Local Authority with Reading schools to support and challenge improved standards and attainment is funded solely through community and maintained school funding of the Dedicated Schools Grant. There are no direct financial implications regarding this report, which reports on the current funded activity.
- 10.2. Jo Collis-Heavens (Strategic Finance Business Partner (Children's Services) has cleared these Financial Implications.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1. Action to deliver school improvement activities will be undertaken through the Education Partnership Board across the 2026/2027 academic year. Updates will be provided in the next Annual School Standards report.

## **12. Background papers**

- 12.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

- 1. Annual School Standards Report 2024/2025**

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# School Standards and Achievement Annual Report 2024-2025

For decision     For discussion     For information

## SUMMARY

This is the annual report on school standards and achievement for the academic year 2024-2025.

The purpose of this report is to set out the current standards and outcomes for Reading schools.

## OWNER

**Brian Grady**, Director of Education

**Alice Boon**, Strategic Lead School Effectiveness

## VERSION

**V2.0**

## DATE

10-06-2026

Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,  
Reading RG1 2LU



## Contents

**Introduction** .....4

**Executive Summary- School Standards and System Priorities 2024–2025**.....4

    Standards and Outcomes .....4

    Equity, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and Inclusion .....4

    Attendance and Vulnerability.....5

    Post-16 Participation and Progression .....5

    Strategic Priorities for the Next Phase .....5

**The local system**.....6

**School Standards 2025-26** .....7

    Operational Context.....7

**Primary School Standards** .....7

    Primary School Context.....7

**Early Years Foundation Stage: Good Level of Development** .....9

    Benchmark .....9

    Performance .....9

    Vulnerable Pupil Groups.....11

    Ethnic Group Performance .....13

    School Performance .....14

    Attendance .....15

**Phonics**.....16

    Benchmark.....16

        Year 1 .....16

        Year 2 retake .....16

    Vulnerable groups .....18

    Ethnic Group Performance .....20

**Key Stage Two**.....21

    Benchmark.....21

    Performance .....21

    Reading .....22

    Writing .....23

    Maths .....25



<b>Ethnic Group Performance .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Attendance .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>KS4.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Context .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Performance .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Vulnerable Groups .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Ethnic Group Performance .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>KS5.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b><i>Post sixteen pathways and destinations.....</i></b>	<b><i>38</i></b>
<b><i>School effectiveness activity 2024-2025.....</i></b>	<b><i>42</i></b>



## Introduction

- This report provides a comprehensive overview of the educational performance and standards achieved in Reading schools during the academic year 2024-2025. The report outlines the trends observed, and the impact of school leaders on raising standards. The report highlights key trends, achievements, and areas for improvement across all educational stages, from early years to post-sixteen.
- The report supports leaders across the system to evaluate and revise Reading's education strategic priorities, so that consistent evidence-based improvement approaches can be agreed, commissioned, and implemented.

## Executive Summary- School Standards and System Priorities 2024–2025

This report confirms that Reading's education system continues to demonstrate many areas of strength, particularly in Early Years improvement, phonics recovery by the end of Key Stage 1, strong KS4 outcomes at local authority level, and high participation in post-sixteen education. However, it also highlights inequalities for vulnerable children.

### Standards and Outcomes

Outcomes across Reading show positive momentum at key transition points, most notably in Early Years, where Good Level of Development (GLD) continues to rise, reflecting the impact of early intervention, workforce development and partnership working. KS4 outcomes remain a key strength of the authority, with attainment above national averages across Attainment 8, EBacc APS, and English and Maths. However, this headline success masks substantial variation between schools and pupil groups, with persistent gaps for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and those experiencing poor attendance. At KS5, A-level performance is highly variable, with strong outcomes concentrated in a small number of academically advantaged settings and weaker outcomes in sixth forms serving more complex cohorts, reinforcing the importance of earlier intervention.

### Equity, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and Inclusion

The data shows that Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is a driver of variation in outcomes at every phase. Children without SEND in most schools perform at or above national benchmarks, indicating that core curriculum and teaching quality is benefiting many children in many schools. However, pupils with SEND—particularly those on SEN Support and with EHCPs—continue to experience significantly weaker outcomes and higher absence and suspensions than their peers. Many of these children fail to secure foundational learning knowledge by the end of KS1. Strategic focus on providing children with the best start in life and reforming SEND and school organisation are essential if we are to drive change in these outcomes.

Attainment varies across ethnic groups, with headline outcomes ranging widely and differences significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. When focusing on the Not SEND cohort, attainment increases across all groups, in some cases substantially, indicating that SEND distribution

has a strong impact on overall outcomes and can distort direct comparisons. The highest performing groups remain consistent, with Chinese and Indian pupils achieving well above the national benchmark, alongside other Asian and White groups. Larger cohorts, particularly White British pupils, also perform securely above national when SEND is excluded, providing a more stable indicator of system performance.

Some groups continue to underperform relative to national expectations even without SEND, including Black Caribbean children, some mixed heritage pupil groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, indicating that factors beyond SEND contribute to these gaps. Overall, the data suggests that while improving SEND provision remains important, there is also a need to address persistent ethnic disparities that are evident within the non-SEND population.

### Attendance and Vulnerability

Attendance remains a key limiting factor on attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Elevated levels of persistent absence are disproportionately concentrated in highly inclusive schools that serve our communities most impacted by disadvantage and intersectional vulnerability. Poor attendance is strongly correlated with weaker KS2 and KS4 outcomes and higher post-sixteen disengagement. The data reinforces that attendance challenges are often structural and contextual, linked to poverty, health, housing instability, and unmet need, rather than school practice alone. Improving attendance for vulnerable groups therefore requires integrated, multi-agency responses, rather than punitive or school-only solutions.

### Post-16 Participation and Progression

Most young people in Reading continue into post-sixteen education, and the authority performs well against national benchmarks for participation and the September Guarantee. However, retention and progression to Level 3 qualifications remain significant challenges for vulnerable learners. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are far more likely to leave school-based sixth forms at 16 and enter FE or become NEET. This reflects earlier attainment gaps, limited access to academic pathways, and insufficient preparation for adulthood. The findings reinforce that post-16 outcomes are shaped well before Year 11, requiring stronger KS3 foundations and clearer vocational and technical pathways that include all children, aligned to the national White Paper reform ambitions.

### Strategic Priorities for the Next Phase

The evidence in this report points clearly to the need for a continued movement from individual school-level improvement activities to coordinated system leadership, with the following priorities:

- Deliver the SEND reforms and local area SEND Strategy at pace, focusing on early identification, adaptive teaching, attendance, and Preparation for Adulthood across all phases.
- Continue to prioritise the Best Start in Life strategy, recognising Early Years as the most effective lever for long-term improvement and equity.
- Use White Paper opportunities to strengthen MAT-LA collaboration, rationalise provision, and co-design inclusive pathways across KS4 and post-sixteen.
- Proactive school place planning and financial modelling and management to promote sustainability.



- Protect leadership capacity and wellbeing, recognising that people, not structures, drive improvement and ensure that support to schools and settings support workload reduction, quality improvement and reduces system risks and inequalities.


Taken together, this report shows a system with strong foundations but limited headroom, where future success will depend on early intervention, inclusive practice, strategic collaboration, and courageous system leadership.

## The local system

*Table showing the numbers of schools by type in each education phase and sector in Reading 2024-2025*

School Type	Nursery	Primary	Alternative Provision Academy	Secondary	Special	Total
Academy Converter				2	1	3
Multi-Academy Trust		13	1	8	2	24
Community School	5	22			1	28
Voluntary Aided School		5		1		6
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>61</b>

- Reading schools and settings include those that are LA-maintained, converter academies, Multi-Academy Trust sponsored, selective Grammar and Independent schools.
- School effectiveness activities are focused on locally maintained schools where Reading Borough Council has statutory duties, powers, and direct influence. All schools and settings can purchase school improvement support through the School Effectiveness SLA.
- Intelligence about all schools is collected as part of LA duties under the School Effectiveness Framework. School visits, data analysis, and monthly multi-agency school effectiveness meetings identify risks to schools and pupils and identify mitigation and escalation actions. This has enabled officers to make well-evidenced enquiries and take timely action to support children, families, and schools.
- In 2024-25, all academy partners were offered CEO meetings and a local headteacher “keeping in touch” meeting to identify local issues and barriers to improvement and identify opportunities for local school improvement partnerships.
- All school types are represented by Headteacher Association and Cluster leads on the Education Partnership Board and all schools are invited to cluster meetings, Headteacher Briefings, and engagement groups. All Schools contribute to the review of strategic policy including the Reading wide Education Strategy.
- Annual Quality Assurance Visits are in place for all schools with LA-funded Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPS) and all schools access the Local RISE service.

- 
- All schools are required to submit safeguarding self-audits (S 175 Safeguarding Audit) as part of Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. Audits are analysed and reported. All locally maintained schools receive an annual safeguarding audit led by the School Effectiveness Team.
  - The school effectiveness team conducts KS1 Phonics Screening Check monitoring, KS2 writing moderation and KS2 SATS monitoring visits as part of LA statutory duties. In 2026 The School Effectiveness team are leading DfE funded engagement events to support Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Assessment.

## School Standards 2025-26

### Operational Context

The new Ofsted framework places greater emphasis on curriculum coherence, foundational learning, inclusion, attendance, and sustained progress for vulnerable groups, raising the bar for what is considered good or better provision.

To support schools meet these raised standards the DfE has introduced a range of national support programmes—such as National RISE led training, South East area Curriculum Hubs, targeted training, and recovery-focused intervention, however, access to these is often limited to schools meeting specific eligibility thresholds, meaning that many schools that would benefit from support outside formal intervention are not always able to receive it.

Despite challenges, the LA's strong commitment to inclusive practice remains a notable strength. Schools continue to champion approaches that align closely with the principles set out in the SEND reforms and the wider Education White Paper, focusing on early identification, high-quality teaching, and a graduated approach to meeting needs. Our well developed and high quality Additional Resourced provisions (ARPS) continue to provide excellent support for SEND children within their local mainstream school and our specialist schools continue to work with the LA to create additional provision and support Mainstream inclusion. This provides a secure foundation for improvement through the SEND Recovery Plan and Gold Programme and reflects a shared ethos that prioritises equity, access, and ambition for all pupils, even in the face of significant operational pressures.

## Primary School Standards

### Primary School Context

Outcomes by school for the academic year 2024-2025 sit within a context of significant variation in cohort complexity across Reading's primary schools. Schools in the borough do not serve uniform or comparable populations; instead, there is a marked spread in levels of disadvantage, SEND, EHCPs, mobility and persistent absence.

The NFER report *High-SEND schools: Patterns and pressures in mainstream provision* (2026) demonstrates that SEND concentration is a structural feature of the system, creating unequal pressures across schools. The Sutton Trust's report *Double Disadvantage?* (2025) adds that cohort composition—particularly the intersection of SEND and socioeconomic disadvantage—has a decisive impact on outcomes, reinforcing inequities in attainment and access to support. Ofsted's latest

reporting and reforms, as reflected in the *Annual Report 2024/25 (Education, Children's Services and Skills)* and associated inspection changes, increasingly recognise these realities, highlighting the importance of context, inclusion, and vulnerability in understanding school performance.

This national picture is reflected locally, with variability in outcomes across Reading borough's primary schools aligning closely to differences in cohort composition, particularly levels of SEND and disadvantage. Some schools have small proportions of pupils with SEND or disadvantage and therefore operate with comparatively fewer barriers to learning, while others educate cohorts with elevated levels of need against national comparators. Ofsted plans to launch benchmarking against "similar schools" in its Inspection Data Summary Reports (IDSR) from Autumn 2026 to enable more precise self-evaluation.

Current cohort distribution in Reading has an effect on headline outcomes, particularly for combined RWM, where SEND and disadvantage typically exert the greatest downward pressure. As a result, variations in attainment across Reading cannot be interpreted without reference to the differing levels of contextual challenge that schools face.

When SEND is removed from the analysis, many schools demonstrate strong and secure outcomes, often exceeding national non-SEND attainment benchmarks in Early Years, Phonics, the Multiplication check and at the end of KS2 in Reading, Writing and Maths. This pattern strongly suggests that, in many settings, the core curriculum and teaching for many pupils is effective, with pupils without additional needs achieving highly.

However, the uplift between all-pupil outcomes and non-SEND outcomes in schools which carry disproportionate levels of SEND and complex need, reveals the extent to which overall results mask the quality of provision. In these schools the attainment gap is driven primarily by the concentration of high-need pupils rather than weaker classroom practice or curriculum design.

The data also shows that a small group of schools have cohorts that are not representative of the local areas they serve. In some cases, schools with very high attainment figures also have very low levels of SEND, EHCPs and pupil disadvantage, creating a profile that differs significantly from the mixed-needs composition of their surrounding neighbourhoods.

Conversely, there are schools whose cohorts reflect higher-than-average levels of disadvantage, SEND, persistent absence, or mid-phase admissions, meaning they are educating pupils with needs that exceed those seen in their immediate catchment area. These factors shape the trajectory of attainment and progress and underline the importance of interpreting school performance within its specific demographic context.

The distribution of complexity aligns closely with DfE and Ofsted guidance, which emphasises that outcomes must never be considered in isolation. Inspectors are required to evaluate the extent to which leaders are meeting the needs of the pupils they serve, rather than comparing schools without reference to SEND, disadvantage or absence profiles.

Reading's 2024-2025 data demonstrates clearly that headline attainment does not tell the full story about school effectiveness with some schools facing significant challenges to securing strong attainment.



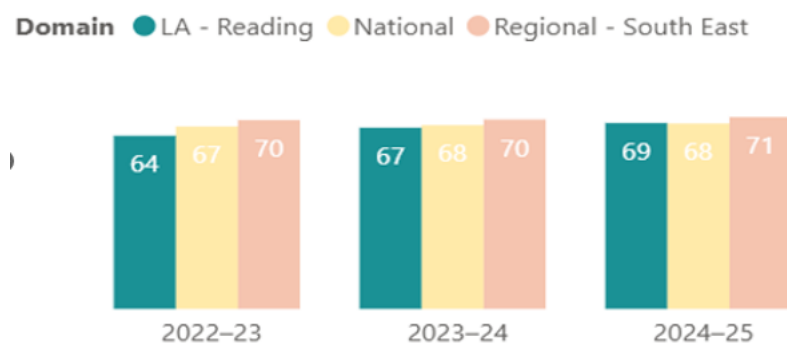
Taken together, the data highlights the need for a differentiated school-improvement approach. Schools with low-complexity cohorts and strong outcomes should be challenged to show depth, stretch, and ambition in their curriculum. Schools with high contextual need should receive proportionate support focused on SEND inclusion, foundational learning in early language and literacy, and focus on attendance. This includes the allocation of Experts at Hand resources outlined in the SEND reform plan.

A small number of schools with both low all-pupil and low non-SEND outcomes represent a priority for targeted, intensive support, as their data indicates that underlying weaknesses in curriculum, teaching or leadership are compounding the challenges created by cohort complexity.

## Early Years Foundation Stage: Good Level of Development

### Benchmark

*Graph showing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*



### Performance

In 2024/25, 68.5% of pupils in Reading schools achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) in the Early Years Foundation Stage, representing 1,241 pupils from a cohort of 1,813.

This marks a continued upward trajectory for the local authority, with the GLD rate increasing by 1.7 percentage points from 66.8% in 2023/24. This improvement is equivalent to approximately thirty additional pupils achieving a good level of development compared with last year. The average total points score across all GLD goals also remains strong at 21.8 out of twenty-four, indicating broad and secure development across the early learning goals.

This sustained positive trend demonstrates the ongoing impact of early years practice across the system including strengths in PVI and Nursery School Provision, targeted early intervention, and strengthened collaboration across Reading schools.

Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, Reading improved its national ranking, rising eight percentile places, from the 60th to the 52nd percentile. Local performance now sits comfortably within the national



mid-range. When compared with the national picture, Reading’s 2024/25 GLD rate of 68.5% sits 0.2 percentage points above the national average of 68.3%. Although this is a modest margin—equivalent to around three more pupils achieving GLD than would be expected if Reading were performing at exactly the national level.

It is important to note that the relative rate of improvement has slowed: the local authority’s improvement rate has reduced from +2.5% in 2023/24 to +1.1% in 2024/25, primarily because national outcomes also rose during this period, albeit more modestly. Nationally, results have risen from 67.2% to 68.3% during the same period—a smaller rate of improvement than that seen locally.

*Table showing DfE Targets for proportions of children achieving GLD by 2028: Source Best Start in Life Strategy RBC.*

MEASURE	CURRENT (2024/25)	TARGET (2028)
<b>GLD Overall</b>	68.4%	75.9%
<b>GLD FSM Eligible</b>	49.8%	64.9%
<b>GLD Non-FSM</b>	72.5%	Maintain ≥75%
<b>SEND GLD</b>	26%	Significant improvement
<b>FSM Gap</b>	22.7%	<15%

The LA will need to make 2.5% progress in GLD each year, for the next three years, to achieve the GLD target set by the DfE for Reading.

The Best start in Life strategy aims to support this ambitious goal. The strategy focuses on ensuring that every child benefits from strong early development, consistent support, and a smooth transition into school. A core priority is creating a Smooth Journey to School, enabling children to enter Reception with good attendance, readiness to learn, growing independence, and secure emotional regulation. Many schools note that too few children are “ready” for school on admission to reception. Best Start Family Hubs will provide an integrated, place-based offer that connects universal and targeted support such as mental health services, SEND guidance, and home learning outreach, ensuring families can access help early and locally.

These strands are strengthened by stronger partnerships across health, education, and the voluntary sector, delivering coordinated information and support so that families with diverse needs experience consistent pathways from birth through the early years. It is hoped this will relieve pressure on schools to intervene at point of entry as fewer children start school without being ready.

The strategy also aims to support further consistency in early years provision, with an emphasis on high-quality childcare, a skilled and confident workforce, and strong curriculum leadership.

In schools the strategy will coordinate work with partners, including the Local Early Years Hub, to provide school improvement capacity across nursery and reception to further establish high quality




curriculum and pedagogy. Securing foundational learning for all children remains a barrier to children achieving GLD and being successful as they move through school.

### Vulnerable Pupil Groups

Table showing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2024-2025 by pupil group compared to National and Regional Averages for that group. Table shows the relative % improvement for the group compared to National and Regional improvement rate and the LA National Centile Ranking (1 being high) Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

		Good Level of Development - EYFSP				
Domain	Pupil Group	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	National Gap (DfE)	Cohort
National:		68%	1%			584360
South East		71%	1%			96540
LA: Reading	All Pupils	69%	2%	52	0%	1813
National:		52%	0%			89270
South East		50%	0%			11640
LA: Reading	Disadvantaged	50%	-4%	58	-21%	236
National:		71%	1%			472000
South East		74%	1%			84900
LA: Reading	Non-Disadvantaged	71%	2%	52	0%	1577
National:		77%	1%			488450
South East		78%	1%			81380
LA: Reading	SEN No Recorded Provision	78%	1%	48	9%	1457
National:		26%	1%			58910
South East		28%	2%			8590
LA: Reading	SEN Support	28%	0%	43	-40%	240
National:		4%	0%			20360
South East		5%	0%			3310
LA: Reading	SEN EHCP	7%	7%	20	-61%	28
National:		21%	1%			79280
South East		22%	2%			11900
LA: Reading	SEN Support & EHCP	26%	3%	16	-43%	268
National:		67%	1%			217360
South East		69%	2%			29900
LA: Reading	World Majority Ethnicity	69%	2%	33	0%	1116
National:		69%	1%			367000
South East		72%	1%			66640
LA: Reading	Other than World Majority Ethnicity	68%	1%	59	0%	697
National:		65%	1%			125830
South East		67%	3%			16510
LA: Reading	EAL	70%	3%	17	1%	655
National:		70%	0%			436870
South East		72%	0%			75950
LA: Reading	Non-EAL	70%	0%	54	2%	1044



Performance across key pupil groups in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) highlights both areas of strength and persistent gaps that require continued strategic focus.

Underperforming children often have intersectional vulnerabilities and foundational knowledge gaps.

The school Effectiveness service has focused visits this year on supporting leaders to identify equalities issues within their schools, identify barriers and make effective interventions at the earliest stage. Officers have identified a need for leaders to refine curriculum sequences and classroom activities to ensure more time is focused on ensuring all children secure the foundational knowledge they need to be successful in Reception.

Among disadvantaged pupils, 50.0% achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD), with 118 out of 236 pupils meeting expectations. This is 1.5 percentage points below the national disadvantaged average and outcomes remain significantly lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils locally and nationally. The gap between disadvantaged pupils in Reading and the national non-disadvantaged cohort stands at 21.3 percentage points, mirroring the local attainment gap with Reading's non-disadvantaged pupils.

This cohort sits in the 58th percentile nationally, indicating performance below the midpoint and reinforcing the importance of sustained targeted support to narrow the gap. Attendance significantly impacts outcomes for this group. Children in this group without SEND achieve 2% lower than their peers nationally. This highlights the need to focus on ensuring every child achieves the foundational knowledge necessary to progress through the curriculum.

Pupils who do not have SEND as a whole group continue to demonstrate comparatively strong outcomes. In 2024/25, 77.5% of these pupils achieved GLD (1,129 out of 1,457), performing slightly above national outcomes for this group with a national percentile ranking of 48<sup>th</sup>.

For pupils receiving SEN Support, 27.9% of the cohort achieved GLD (67 out of 240 pupils). Positioned in the 43rd percentile, Reading performs above national levels by 1.5 percentage points when compared to the national SEN Support cohort indicating relatively strong performance and suggesting our Consistent approaches to inclusion are having impact.

This groups performance is 40.4 percentage points below the national all-pupils average and 40.6 points below local outcomes for all pupils. This means that children with SEND are going to need ongoing, high-quality support and intervention to achieve improved outcomes.

This cohort continues to require strengthened early identification, adaptive practice, and robust intervention in the first one thousand days of life to address substantial barriers to early learning and gaps on entry to school. Many schools tell us they are often the first statutory service to identify needs like Speech and Language and other developmental delays that could have been identified much earlier. The Best start in Life Strategy is in place to address this issue over time.

Pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) represent the group facing the greatest challenges in achieving early learning outcomes at the same pace as their peers. In 2024/25, 7.1% of pupils with an EHC Plan achieved GLD (2 out of twenty-eight pupils). Reading performs 3.2 percentage points above national outcomes for pupils with EHC Plans though small cohorts' skew comparisons and should be considered with caution. This outcome is 61.4 percentage points below the LA's overall GLD rate and 61.2 points below the national all-pupil average emphasising the



importance of continued investment in high-quality early intervention, specialist support, and effective multi-agency coordination.

### Ethnic Group Performance

*Table showing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups.*

Ethnicity	All Pupils Cohort	All Pupils %GLD	Disadvant aged Cohort	Disadvant aged %GLD	Not SEN Cohort	Not SEN %GLD	variance to National Average 68%
Chinese	63	82.5%			60	85.0%	14.5%
Indian	556	73.6%	3	66.7%	489	79.6%	5.6%
Any Other White Background	549	72.5%	11	81.8%	493	77.1%	4.5%
Any Other Asian Background	314	71.0%	7	71.4%	275	77.8%	3.0%
White and Asian	140	70.0%	3	66.7%	124	75.0%	2.0%
White - British	1652	69.9%	83	41.0%	1426	77.1%	1.9%
White - Irish	13	69.2%	1		9	66.7%	1.2%
Gypsy / Roma	3	66.7%			2	100.0%	-1.3%
Any Other Mixed Background	229	62.0%	10	30.0%	193	68.9%	-6.0%
Refused	118	61.9%	6	66.7%	106	65.1%	-6.1%
Pakistani	368	61.4%	12	58.3%	321	67.9%	-6.6%
White and Black African	71	60.6%	5	60.0%	63	65.1%	-7.4%
Black - African	349	60.2%	9	44.4%	285	70.5%	-7.8%
White and Black Caribbean	222	58.6%	29	48.3%	176	68.2%	-9.4%
Black Caribbean	43	58.1%	7	71.4%	37	64.9%	-9.9%
Bangladeshi	47	57.4%	1	100.0%	36	69.4%	-10.6%
Any Other Black Background	54	57.4%	3	33.3%	42	66.7%	-10.6%
Any Other Ethnic Group	143	57.3%	11	63.6%	118	66.9%	-10.7%
Information Not Yet Obtained	519	54.9%	6	66.7%	517	54.7%	-13.1%
Irish Traveller	7	28.6%	2	50.0%	6	33.3%	-39.4%

Attainment varies across ethnic groups, with headline outcomes ranging widely; however, these differences are significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. When focusing on the Not SEN cohort, attainment increases across all groups, in some cases substantially, indicating that SEND distribution has a strong impact on overall outcomes and can distort direct comparisons. The highest performing groups remain consistent, with Chinese and Indian pupils achieving well above the national benchmark, alongside other Asian and White groups. Larger cohorts, particularly White British pupils, also perform securely above national when SEND is excluded, providing a more stable indicator of system performance.

Despite this uplift, some groups continue to underperform relative to national expectations even without SEND, including Black Caribbean, some mixed heritage groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, indicating that factors beyond SEND contribute to these gaps. Overall, the data suggests that while improving SEND provision remains important, there is also a need to address persistent ethnic disparities that are evident within the non-SEND population.



## School Performance

School Outcomes are impacted by population complexity, cohort size, and mobility. School Outcomes should not be directly compared.

22/38 (58%) of school's results are above national average and 27/38 (71%) when statistically significant SEND cohorts are accounted for.

In the sixteen schools below, national average SEND significantly skewed outcomes in four schools. School Effectiveness officers have identified areas for development in curriculum sequencing and teaching across this year group. Targeted school improvement support will be offered as part of the Best Start in Life Strategy.

This School improvement support will be important to maintain momentum and further accelerate progress for learners so that fewer schools perform below average year on year.

## Attendance

*Table showing the impact of Attendance on children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2024-2025 Source Power BI/ DfE IDAMS. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

		EYFSP GLD %		
Cohort		All pupils	Disadvantaged	SEND
	National Average	68%	52%	26%
	Local average	69%	50%	28%
	<b>Attendance category</b>			
986	95%+ (good attendance)	75%	62%	37%
366	Persistently Absent	45%	35%	19%
11	Severley Absent	0%	0%	0%

The relationship between attendance and Early Years outcomes is strongly evident in the 2024/25 EYFSP data.

Children with good attendance (95%+) achieve markedly higher outcomes, with 75% of all pupils attaining a Good Level of Development (GLD), rising to 62% for disadvantaged pupils and 37% for those on SEN Support—well above national GLD attainment averages for these groups.

In contrast, pupils who are persistently absent show significantly lower outcomes, with only 45% of all pupils achieving GLD, falling further to 35% for disadvantaged pupils and 19% for SEN Support pupils.

The most concerning outcomes are among the severely absent group, where none of the 11 pupils achieved GLD. Notably, 7 out of 11 (64%) severely absent pupils have SEND, including one with an EHCP, and SEND pupils are disproportionately represented in persistent absence figures: 38% of pupils on SEN Support and 57% of pupils with an EHCP are persistently absent, compared with only 17% of non-SEND pupils.

This pattern highlights the substantial impact of attendance on early learning and underscores the need for strengthened inclusive practice and attendance support for families, particularly for



disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, to mitigate widening gaps in early outcomes. Children that do not gain foundational knowledge due to missing school will struggle to access the curriculum in the following year. This can see them lose confidence and further compound patterns of poor attendance and behaviour.

It can also lead to children being identified as SEND when in reality they have gaps in their foundational learning. This can lead to children going on to need EHCPs when early intervention at this stage could have prevented the need for assessment.

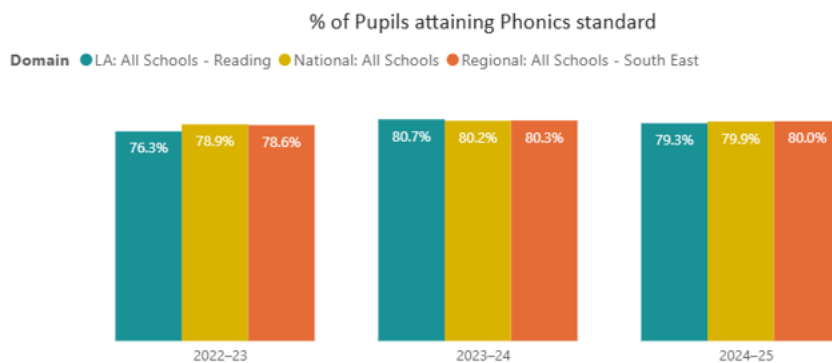
Interventions in schools work best when they occur daily for short periods of time. Children who miss school also miss the impactful implementation of interventions. Schools have worked tirelessly in recent years to address attendance issues, and this is shown in data improvements, however, more needs to be done to secure parental and care giver understanding of the vital role of regular attendance in Early Years and to ensure schools have the staffing capacity and knowledge to implement effective early intervention.

## Phonics

### Benchmark

*Graph showing the proportion of children meeting the standard in phonics screening at the end of Year one in Reading 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

### Year 1



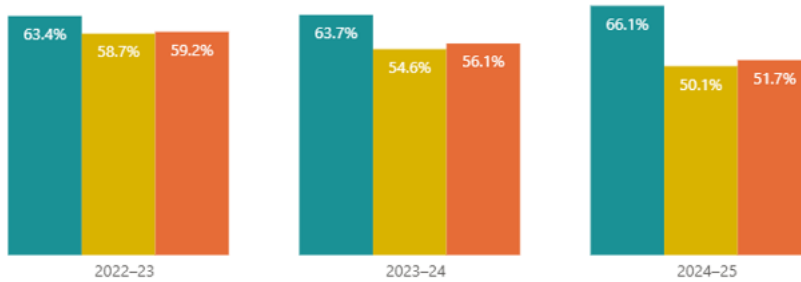
*Graph showing the proportion of children meeting the standard in phonics screening at the end of Year two in Reading 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

### Year 2 retake



% of Pupils attaining Phonics standard

Domain ● LA: All Schools - Reading ● National: All Schools ● Regional: All Schools - South East



### Performance

In 2024/25, 79.2% of Year 1 pupils in the local authority achieved the expected standard in phonics, equivalent to 1,370 pupils meeting the benchmark score of 32. The average point score for the cohort was 33.2, indicating generally secure performance among the majority of pupils who achieved the expected standard. However, overall attainment represents a decline compared with the previous academic year.

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has fallen by 1.5 percentage points from 80.7% in 2023/24 to 79.2% in 2024/25. This decrease equates to approximately twenty-five fewer pupils meeting the expected standard compared with the previous year.

Across the last three academic years, the LA’s average Year 1 phonics performance stands at 78.7%, showing relatively stable—but slightly fluctuating—attainment patterns over time.

At 79.2%, the LA’s 2024/25 phonics outcomes sit 0.7 percentage points below the national average of 79.9%. This difference is the equivalent of around eleven additional pupils who would have needed to meet the standard for the LA to be in line with national outcomes.

While the LA’s attainment declined by 1.5 percentage points between 2023/24 and 2024/25, the national average fell by only 0.3 percentage points, suggesting a sharper decrease locally than that seen nationally. This change largely reflects cohort levels of SEND.

Performance trends over the last three academic years show improvement followed by slight decline. National performance followed a similar pattern but with smaller shifts.

In 2024/25, the LA ranked in the 58th percentile nationally for Year 1 phonics expected standard attainment. This positions the LA within the same decile as LAs achieving between 79.0% and 79.9%. The percentile ranking represents a decline of thirteen places from 2023/24, when the LA was positioned at the 45th percentile. Looking over the longer term, the LA has dropped from the 36th percentile in 2022/23 to the 58th percentile in 2024/25, showing reduced relative performance despite relatively stable absolute attainment.

The strong performance of Year 2 pupils in phonics reflects the effectiveness of school’s approach to supporting SEND pupils and those who start school not yet school-ready to catch up. Outcomes have risen to 66.2% in 2024/25, an increase of 2.5 percentage points from the previous year and the



equivalent of twelve more pupils meeting the expected standard. This improvement stands in sharp contrast to the national picture, where outcomes fell by 4.5 percentage points, positioning the LA 16.1 percentage points above the national average—equivalent to seventy-eight more pupils achieving the standard than would be expected nationally.

Consistently high performance over the last three years, with the LA outperforming the national average each year and improving its relative standing to +7.0% in 2024/25, demonstrates the impact of strong early identification, targeted intervention, and high-quality inclusive teaching.

The LA’s rise to the fourth percentile nationally further highlights the success of long-term strategic focus on early support for reading, ensuring that vulnerable learners rapidly catch up and achieve strong outcomes by the end of Year 2.

### Vulnerable groups

*Table showing the proportion of children achieving the standard in Phonics at the end of Year one, in Reading 2024-2025, by pupil group compared to National and Regional Averages for that group. Table shows the relative % improvement trend for the group compared to National and Regional improvement rate and the LA National Centile Ranking (1 being high) Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

		Expected Standard (Year 1) - Phonics				
Domain	Pupil Group	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	National Gap (DfE)	Cohort
National:	All Pupils	80%	0%			601000
South East		80%	0%			98700
LA: Reading		79%	-2%	58	-1%	1729
National	Disadvantaged	67%	-2%			134700
South East		63%	-1%			17910
LA: Reading		68%	-6%	46	-16%	335
National	Non-Disadvantaged	84%	0%			443840
South East		84%	0%			80790
LA: Reading		82%	0%	66	-2%	1394
National	SEN No Recorded Provision	88%	0%			487530
South East		88%	1%			80710
LA: Reading		88%	0%	53	9%	1372
National	SEN Support	52%	1%			77120
South East		50%	0%			11930
LA: Reading		53%	-2%	49	-27%	251
National	SEN EHCP	20%	0%			28040
South East		21%	0%			4370
LA: Reading		13%	-10%	83	-67%	75
National	World Majority Ethnicity	80%	0%			225990
South East		81%	0%			31250
LA: Reading		80%	-3%	52	0%	1103
National	other than World Majority Ethnicity	80%	-1%			375010
South East		80%	0%			67450
LA: Reading		78%	1%	65	-2%	626
National	EAL	80%	0%			133460
South East		80%	-1%			17400
LA: Reading		79%	-5%	57	-1%	645

In 2024/25, phonics outcomes for disadvantaged pupils declined in both Year 1 and Year 2. In Year 1, 67.5% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard, which is 226 pupils out of 335. This is a drop from 73.7% last year. The gap between disadvantaged pupils in the LA and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally has widened, increasing from -9.8% to -16.1%. Despite this, disadvantaged pupils in the LA are still performing slightly better than disadvantaged pupils nationally. Overall, the LA sits in the 46th percentile for Year 1, meaning performance is around the middle nationally.

It is also of note that 81% of Disadvantaged children without SEND achieved the phonics standard. This is in line with non-disadvantaged children. There is still a 7% gap for this group with the non-SEND group overall, but these outcomes demonstrate the success of schools in targeting this group. Discussions with Heads through standards visits has identified that Poor attendance in Reception and Year one often accounts for underachievement in this group. Visits to Locally Maintained schools show consistent fidelity to high quality schemes and in year progress from starting points for the majority.

In Year 1, 53.4% of pupils on SEN Support achieved the expected standard in phonics, which is 134 pupils out of 251. This is a small decrease from last year and is 26.5% lower than the national figure for all pupils. However, pupils on SEN Support in the LA are performing slightly better than SEN Support pupils nationally. Overall, the LA sits in the 49th percentile for this group, meaning performance is around average compared with other local authorities. These results show that while some pupils on SEN Support are making progress, this remains a priority group requiring continued targeted intervention in Year 1.

In Year 2, 48.8% of pupils on SEN Support achieved the expected standard in phonics, which is sixty-one pupils out of 125. The group is placed in the 27th percentile nationally, showing that outcomes remain strong compared with other local authorities. However, this represents a decrease from the previous year and suggests that, overall, pupils on SEN Support are not fully catching up by the end of Year 2. Although their outcomes are only 1.3% below the national figure for all pupils, the drop from Year 1 and the fall in performance compared with last year indicate that many pupils continue to struggle with securing the phonics skills needed.

Only 13.3% of pupils with an EHCP achieved the expected standard in phonics (10 out of seventy-five pupils). This is a decrease from last year and places the group 66.6% below the national figure for all pupils. Outcomes also fell by 9.5 percentage points from 22.8% in 2023/24, showing that many pupils with the highest level of need continue to struggle with early phonics skills. The group sits in the 83rd percentile nationally, meaning outcomes are low compared with other local authorities, however, mainstream inclusion within SLD ARPS may be skewing data as standards visits have not identified concerns about the quality of provision in phonics for this group of children.

The lower EHCP phonics outcomes for this cohort reflect inclusive assessment practice. Of the seventy-two pupils with EHCPs recorded in test outcomes, nine achieved the expected standard, with a further five receiving scores between 15–30, indicating emerging decoding skills. However, a sizeable proportion of pupils (20) scored zero. These pupils were able to access the check and attempt it but demonstrated no secure grapheme–phoneme correspondence or blending ability at the time of assessment. In line with STA guidance, they were not disapplied as they could engage with the task. Arguably the outcome does not provide valuable diagnostic information about their current stage of development. Pupil by pupil results show variability between settings and in some

settings cohorts with similar needs may have been disapplied, resulting in a higher reported school average.

With this in mind it is possible local data reflects a high level of inclusion in assessment of pupils with complex cognition and learning and/or speech and language needs, rather than weaker provision. The school Effectiveness team are investigating to ensure local consistency in line with national guidance.

In Year 2, 15.4% of pupils with an EHCP achieved the expected standard, a slight improvement in the national gap but still indicating that most pupils with EHCPs do not catch up by the end of Key Stage 1, again this may reflect a relatively high proportion of children with significant learning difficulties and complex SEND attending mainstream schools compared with the national picture though issues require further analysis.

Across other pupil groups, outcomes in Year 1 show a mixed picture. Non-disadvantaged pupils performed below expectations, with 82% achieving the expected standard, slightly below the national figure and placing the LA in the 66th percentile.

Pupils with no recorded SEN achieved good outcomes, matching the national figure at 88% and sitting around the midpoint nationally. In terms of ethnicity, pupils from World Majority Heritage achieved 80%, matching national outcomes.

### Ethnic Group Performance

*Table showing the proportion of children achieving the phonics standard in Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups.*

Ethnicity	All Pupils Cohort	All Pupils %WA	Disadvantaged Cohort	Disadvantaged %WA	No SEN Cohort	No SEN %WA	variance to National Average 80 %
Chinese	82	86.6%			79	86.1%	6.6%
Indian	625	86.6%	14	85.7%	566	90.5%	6.6%
Bangladeshi	44	86.4%	8	87.5%	38	92.1%	6.4%
Any Other Ethnic Group	137	81.8%	8	87.5%	123	83.7%	1.8%
Any Other Mixed Background	240	81.3%	49	73.5%	196	87.2%	1.3%
White and Black African	85	81.2%	24	87.5%	72	87.5%	1.2%
Any Other White Background	605	81.2%	63	69.8%	522	87.0%	1.2%
Black - African	395	78.7%	51	66.7%	306	86.9%	-1.3%
White and Asian	171	78.4%	27	66.7%	148	83.8%	-1.6%
Any Other Asian Background	397	78.1%	37	81.1%	346	85.8%	-1.9%
Any Other Black Background	59	78.0%	9	77.8%	47	87.2%	-2.0%
White - British	1751	77.7%	372	62.9%	1436	85.1%	-2.3%
Black Caribbean	53	77.4%	12	58.3%	38	86.8%	-2.6%
White - Irish	13	76.9%	5	40.0%	11	81.8%	-3.1%
Pakistani	416	76.7%	66	83.3%	348	83.3%	-3.3%
White and Black Caribbean	242	73.6%	112	77.7%	192	78.6%	-6.4%
Refused	101	71.3%	14	64.3%	83	79.5%	-8.7%
Information Not Yet Obtained	110	52.7%	8	87.5%	97	54.6%	-27.3%
Irish Traveller	8	37.5%	3		6	50.0%	-42.5%
Gypsy/ Roma	3	33.3%	1		2	50.0%	-46.7%



Phonics outcomes by ethnic group show variation in attainment; however, this is significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. Consistent with wider patterns, performance improves across most groups when focusing on the non-SEN cohort, indicating that SEND has a substantial impact on headline outcomes and can distort comparisons between ethnicities. Higher attaining groups remain broadly similar even when SEND is excluded, while several groups move closer to the national benchmark of 80%, suggesting that some gaps are partly explained by differences in SEND prevalence and outcomes rather than ethnicity alone.

Despite this, some variation persists between ethnic groups within the non-SEN cohort, indicating underlying differences that are not solely attributable to SEND.

Out of thirty-two mainstream primary schools with data available, eighteen schools (56%) are performing at or above the national average, while fourteen schools (44%) fall below it. The variation between schools is wide, ranging from 54% to over 95%. When pupils with SEND are removed, almost every school shows a substantial increase in attainment, and the majority of schools' No-SEN outcomes rise well above 85%, with many exceeding 90%.

This pattern shows that much of the variation between schools is driven by differences in the proportion and needs of SEND pupils, rather than the overall quality of phonics provision. The stronger and more consistent outcomes in the No-SEN column indicate that most schools have secure phonics teaching for pupils without additional needs, while the presence of higher-need cohorts has a notable impact on whole-school averages.

## Key Stage Two

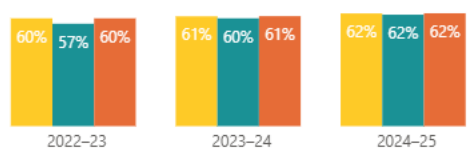
### Benchmark

*Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in Reading, writing and Maths at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

### RWM

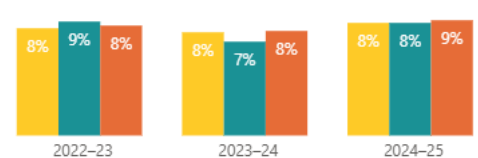
#### Expected standard

RWM  
Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



#### Greater Depth

RWM  
Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



### Performance

At the end of Key Stage 2, 61.6% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, representing 1,164 pupils from a cohort of 1,891. This marks a



two-percentage-point improvement on the previous year and is equivalent to thirty-seven more pupils meeting the benchmark compared with 2023/24.

For combined KS2 Reading Writing and Mathematics results, disadvantaged pupils have made strong and ahead of target progress. Performance for disadvantaged pupils remains well below that of their peers and there are significant variations between groups; therefore removing the achievement gap remains a key priority.

Over the past three years, performance has remained broadly stable, with a three-year average of 59.3%, indicating steady upward movement overall. Although outcomes have improved, the LA remains 0.7 percentage points below the national average of 62.3%, which equates to around fourteen fewer pupils achieving the expected standard than would be expected if national performance were matched.

The authority has moved up in the national rankings, rising from the 65th to the 61st percentile, showing modest but positive improvement in position relative to other local authorities.

Performance at the higher standard also shows encouraging progress. In 2024/25, 8.4% of pupils achieved the greater-depth benchmark in RWM, equivalent to 158 pupils, representing a 1.4-percentage-point increase and approximately twenty-six additional pupils reaching this level compared with the previous year. This places the LA in line with the national average, which also stands at 8.4%, and reflects the strongest relative performance seen in recent years.

Over a three-year period, the LA’s average for higher-standard attainment stands at 7.9%. The relative change compared with national trends has improved significantly, moving from –1.2% in 2023/24 to +0.7% in 2024/25. The LA also rose from the 64th to the 59th percentile, indicating improved standing nationally for higher-attaining pupils.

Although the overall results show improvement at both the expected and higher standards, the distribution of outcomes demonstrates ongoing variation across groups, with 318 pupils (16.8%) scoring below the expected standard threshold (scaled score <100). The authority sits within a decile of local areas achieving between 60.1% and 61.7% at the expected standard, placing it in the middle of the national range.

Scores are impacted by outcomes in writing and though improvement is being secured further work is needed to secure consistently strong outcomes across all groups by securing foundational knowledge for all children at the end of KS1.

### Reading

*Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in reading at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

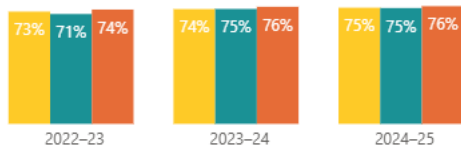
Expected standard

Greater Depth



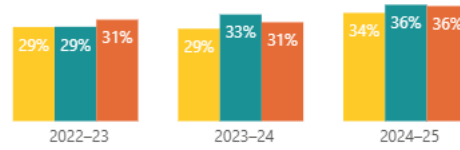
## Reading

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



## Reading

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



At the end of Key Stage 2, 75.1% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Reading, representing 1,420 pupils from a cohort of 1,892. This marks a 0.6-percentage-point improvement compared with 2023/24 and reflects around ten additional pupils meeting the standard this year. Over the last three years, the LA’s performance has shown steady upward movement, with a three-year average of 73.6%. Despite this improvement, outcomes remain slightly below the national average, with the LA performing 0.2 percentage points lower than the national figure of 75.3%, equivalent to approximately five fewer pupils meeting the expected standard compared with national performance. The LA has been above the national average once in the last three years, and while both local and national results improved this year, the national rate of improvement was marginally faster. As a result, the LA’s relative position declined from +1.7% to –0.3% and its national percentile rank shifted from 58th to 64th, placing it within the band of authorities where between 74.4% and 75.5% of pupils meet the expected standard.

Higher-standard outcomes in Reading present a positive picture. In 2024/25, 36.0% of pupils achieved the greater-depth standard, totalling 682 pupils. This is a three-percentage-point increase on the previous year and represents fifty-eight additional pupils reaching a high level of reading proficiency. Over a three-year period, the LA averages 32.7% at this higher standard. Importantly, the LA now performs above the national average, which stands at 33.5%, meaning around forty-eight more pupils reached the higher standard locally than would have been expected if outcomes matched national performance.

The LA has exceeded national outcomes in all three of the last three years for this measure indicating strong curriculum impact. However, the national rate of improvement this year was faster than the LA’s, leading to a decrease in relative standing—from +4.3% to –1.9%—and a drop in percentile ranking from 30th to 38th nationally. Nevertheless, the LA remains within a decile of strong-performing authorities, where between 35.5% and 37.5% of pupils reach the higher standard.

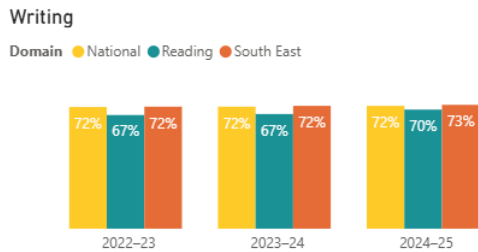
Taken together, the results highlight a steady and positive improvement trajectory in KS2 Reading. Attainment at the expected standard continues to rise gradually, narrowing the gap with national performance, while outcomes at the higher standard remain a notable strength for the LA. Although the LA’s national percentile rankings have shifted slightly downward due to stronger national gains this year, the overall profile reflects secure performance, with increasing proportions of pupils achieving both expected and higher standards. These improvements indicate strong curriculum delivery in reading and a growing proportion of pupils demonstrating advanced comprehension and analytical skills by the end of Key Stage 2.

## Writing

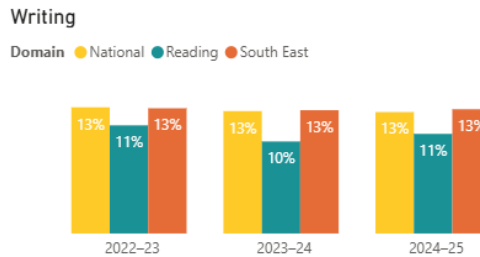


Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in writing at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

### Expected Standard



### Greater Depth



At the end of Key Stage 2, 70.0% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Writing, representing 1,323 pupils from a cohort of 1,891. This reflects a 2.6-percentage-point increase from the previous year and the equivalent of forty-eight additional pupils meeting the expected standard.

Performance has risen consistently over the past three years, bringing the three-year average to 68.0%. However, despite this improvement, outcomes remain 2.2 percentage points below the national average of 72.2%, meaning around forty-two fewer pupils reached the expected standard compared with national performance.

Although the LA has not exceeded national outcomes for the expected standard in Writing in the past three years, its relative position has improved as the increase locally has been greater than the national rate of improvement. The LA’s percentile rank has risen significantly, moving from the 90th to the 75th percentile, placing it within a group of authorities achieving between 69.3% and 70.7% at this measure. This indicates a positive shift in Writing achievement, even while the overall gap with national performance remains.

High-standard performance in Writing shows a similar pattern of steady improvement. In 2024/25, 10.5% of pupils achieved greater depth, a total of 199 pupils, which represents a 0.8-percentage-point increase and around sixteen additional pupils reaching this standard compared with the previous year. This improvement places the LA close to its three-year average of 10.5%. Nevertheless, outcomes remain below the national average, which stands at 12.8%, equivalent to forty-three fewer pupils achieving greater depth locally than would be expected if the LA matched national performance.

Although the LA has not exceeded national outcomes for greater depth in Writing in the past three years, the relative change compared with national performance has improved, and the LA has risen five percentile places to the 72nd percentile, reflecting gradual strengthening despite the ongoing gap.

Significant work with the school Effectiveness team has identified gaps in foundational knowledge in writing. The team have worked with LA maintained schools to support them to review research on foundational learning and to implement findings from the DfE’s writing research and writing framework. This has helped schools refine and simplify curriculum content in reception and KS1 to



secure foundational writing skills. This work is impacting on outcomes at the end of each year group and will over the next three years continue to raise standards.

In Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS), 73.0% of pupils achieved the expected standard, which is 1.5 percentage points higher than last year and represents 1,382 pupils. This marks an improvement equivalent to twenty-nine additional pupils meeting the standard compared with 2023/24. The LA’s three-year average now stands at 71.9%.

GPS performance sits slightly above the national average, outperforming the national figure of 72.7% by 0.3 percentage points, equivalent to roughly seven additional pupils achieving the expected standard. The LA has exceeded national outcomes in one of the last three years in this measure and has made positive relative gains, moving from +0.3% to +1.1% against national performance. This improvement is reflected in a rise of thirteen percentile places, moving the LA from the 69th to the 56th percentile nationally.

At the higher standard in GPS, 33.6% of pupils achieved a scaled score of 110 or above, representing 635 pupils. This is a 2.3-percentage-point decrease from the previous year and equates to forty-four fewer pupils achieving this standard.

However, despite the decline, the LA continues to perform well above the national average, which stands at 29.6%, meaning around seventy-five more pupils met the higher standard locally than would be expected if performance matched national levels. The LA has been above national outcomes for the higher standard in GPS for all of the last three years.

While its relative advantage narrowed slightly this year, from +1.9% to +0.1%, the percentage of pupils achieving the higher standard remains comparatively strong. The LA’s percentile position declined modestly from 36th to 38th, but it remains within a high-performing band of authorities achieving between 32.9% and 35.1% at this level.

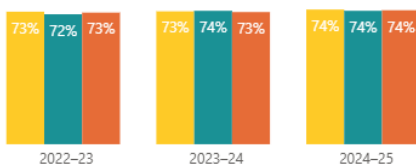
## Maths

*Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in Maths at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

### Expected standard

#### Maths

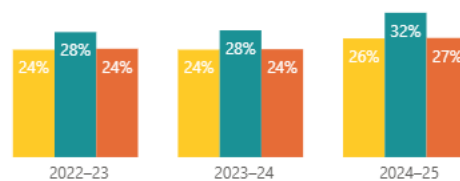
Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



### Greater Depth

#### Maths

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



At the end of Key Stage 2, 73.5% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Maths, representing 1,391 pupils from a cohort of 1,892. This figure is unchanged from the previous year, indicating that performance has been maintained but not improved.

The outcome remains 0.7 percentage points below the national average of 74.2%, equivalent to around thirteen fewer pupils meeting the benchmark compared with national performance.

Despite performance holding steady, the national rate rose by 1.0 percentage point over the same period, resulting in a relative decline. Over the past three years, the LA's average performance stands at 72.9%, reflecting stability but limited upward trajectory.

The LA's percentile ranking for expected standard Maths fell from the 54th to the 64th percentile, placing it within a group of local areas achieving between 72.9% and 74.0% at this measure. This shift reflects stronger improvements nationally and suggests that further focus is needed to raise outcomes, particularly among pupils at risk of not reaching the expected standard; 26.5% of pupils (501 pupils) scored below one hundred, highlighting a significant cohort requiring targeted support across KS2.

The picture is more positive at the higher standard. In 2024/25, 32.1% of pupils achieved the greater-depth threshold in Maths, equivalent to 608 pupils. This represents a 3.9-percentage-point increase on the previous year—one of the strongest year-on-year improvements across subjects—and equates to seventy-four additional pupils reaching the higher standard.

This places the LA well above the national average of 26.4%, meaning around 109 more pupils reached this higher level locally than would be expected if performance matched the national rate. The LA has exceeded national outcomes for the higher standard in all of the past three years, and this year's relative position improved from +0.4% to +1.4%. The LA also rose from the 34th to the 26th percentile, placing it within a high-performing group of authorities achieving between 31.2% and 33.5% of pupils at the higher standard. This indicates strong provision for higher-attaining pupils in Maths.

Closing the gap at the expected standard—particularly for the 501 pupils not yet meeting the benchmark—will be key to improving overall Maths performance and strengthening the LA's national standing.

### Vulnerable Groups

*Table showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (RWM) in Reading 2024-2025, by pupil group compared to National and Regional Averages for that group. Table shows the relative % improvement trend for the group compared to National and Regional improvement rate and the LA National Centile Ranking (1 being high) Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

		RWM Expected Standard - Key Stage 2					Reading Expected Standard - Key Stage 2		Writing Expected Standard - Key Stage 2		Maths Expected Standard - Key Stage 2		GPS Expected Standard - Key Stage 2	
Domain	Pupil Group	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	National Gap (DfE)	Cohort	Value	Value Trend	Value	Value Trend	Value	Value Trend	Value	Value Trend
National	All Pupils	62%	2%			650550	75%	1%	72%	1%	74%	1%	73%	0%
South East		62%	2%			104190	76%	0%	73%	1%	74%	1%	72%	1%
LA: Reading		62%	2%	61	-1%	1891	75%	1%	70%	3%	74%	0%	73%	2%
National	Disadvantaged	48%	2%			204220	63%	1%	59%	1%	61%	2%	60%	1%
South East		43%	2%			26820	61%	1%	56%	1%	56%	2%	54%	1%
LA: Reading		45%	3%	61	-25%	566	61%	-1%	57%	6%	56%	0%	58%	4%
National	Non-Disadvantaged	69%	2%			439800	81%	1%	78%	1%	81%	1%	79%	1%
South East		69%	2%			77370	82%	1%	79%	1%	80%	1%	78%	1%
LA: Reading		69%	3%	59	0%	1325	81%	2%	76%	2%	81%	1%	80%	2%
National	SEN No Recorded Provision	74%	2%			502060	85%	1%	84%	1%	84%	1%	84%	1%
South East		74%	2%			80540	86%	1%	85%	1%	84%	1%	83%	1%
LA: Reading		76%	5%	46	13%	1386	87%	2%	84%	5%	86%	2%	86%	3%
National	SEN Support	29%	3%			109210	50%	2%	39%	3%	47%	3%	42%	3%
South East		28%	3%			17250	50%	2%	38%	3%	46%	3%	39%	3%
LA: Reading		27%	-4%	66	-36%	399	49%	-2%	35%	-2%	45%	-5%	43%	-1%
National	SEN EHCP	9%	1%			37160	20%	0%	13%	1%	18%	1%	17%	0%
South East		9%	1%			6150	21%	0%	14%	1%	18%	1%	17%	1%
LA: Reading		6%	-1%	85	-56%	99	14%	-3%	13%	4%	13%	1%	16%	3%
National	World Majority Ethnicity	65%	2%			239370	76%	2%	74%	1%	77%	1%	77%	0%
South East		67%	2%			32340	78%	1%	76%	1%	79%	0%	78%	0%
LA: Reading		67%	4%	46	5%	1183	79%	2%	75%	4%	79%	1%	80%	3%
National	Other than World Majority Ethnicity	61%	1%			400350	75%	0%	71%	0%	73%	1%	71%	1%
South East		60%	2%			70780	76%	0%	72%	0%	72%	1%	69%	0%
LA: Reading		53%	-2%	97	-10%	701	69%	-4%	62%	-1%	65%	-3%	62%	-3%
National	EAL	64%	2%			149110	74%	2%	73%	1%	78%	1%	76%	0%
South East		67%	2%			18450	77%	1%	76%	1%	80%	0%	78%	0%
LA: Reading		67%	2%	40	5%	761	78%	2%	76%	3%	81%	0%	81%	2%

Attainment across vulnerable groups at KS2 continues to show wide variation, with disadvantaged pupils, pupils on SEN Support, and those with an EHCP achieving markedly lower outcomes than their peers.

For disadvantaged pupils, 44.7% reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM), an improvement on last year but still 24.5 percentage points below the national non-disadvantaged benchmark. Although gaps narrowed slightly in Writing and GPS, outcomes in Reading and Maths remain significantly behind national comparators.

In Reading, 60.5% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard, and in Maths 56.3% were successful, both representing large gaps to national non-disadvantaged pupils. Writing showed the strongest improvement, rising by 6.4 percentage points, yet the group remains more than twenty percentage points below the national non-disadvantaged figure.

Across subjects, disadvantaged pupils sit between the 61st and 77th percentiles, showing that, although progress is being made, performance for this group remains well below that of their peers and limits overall LA attainment.

Outcomes for pupils from non-World Majority Ethnic backgrounds (WBRI) also require focus. Pupils in this group tend to perform below those from World Majority Ethnic backgrounds, particularly in reading and GPS. Across the authority, performance patterns suggest that pupils from this group

remain disproportionately represented among those not achieving expected standards, reinforcing the need for culturally responsive teaching approaches and targeted support for early communication and language acquisition.

Pupils on SEN Support show particularly low attainment across all KS2 measures. Only 26.6% met the expected standard in RWM, a fall from the previous year and 35.7 percentage points below the national all-pupils' figure.

Outcomes were similarly low across individual subjects, with 48.9% achieving the expected standard in Reading, 34.8% in Writing, 45.1% in Maths, and 42.9% in GPS. These results place the group between the 50th and 73rd percentiles, highlighting that while their performance mirrors national trends for high-needs pupils, the scale of underachievement remains a significant challenge for the LA. The consistently lower outcomes across subjects indicate that core literacy and numeracy interventions need further strengthening for this group, particularly in Writing and GPS, where gaps to national performance are widest.

Pupils with EHCPs face the greatest barriers to attainment, with only 6.1% meeting the expected standard in RWM. Outcomes at individual subject level remain low, with 14.0% achieving the expected standard in Reading, 13.1% in Writing, 13.0% in Maths, and 16.0% in GPS. While small improvements are visible in Writing, Maths and GPS, the group continues to sit between the 57th and 87th percentiles, indicating that outcomes remain well below those seen nationally for pupils in this category. These findings underline the importance of specialist provision, high-quality adaptive teaching, and access to appropriate therapies and interventions to support more meaningful progress.

In contrast, outcomes for pupils with no recorded SEN remain strong and consistently above national averages. 75.6% achieved the expected standard in RWM, with even stronger results across individual subjects—86.9% met the standard in Reading, 84.2% in Writing, 86.1% in Maths and 85.9% in GPS. This group outperforms national all-pupil averages by more than eleven percentage points in every subject, demonstrating secure provision for learners that do not need additional support. These strong outcomes help stabilise overall LA performance but also highlight the widening gap between pupils with and without SEND.

Across all groups, the data highlights a clear pattern: while the LA maintains strong outcomes for pupils without additional needs, vulnerable groups—particularly disadvantaged pupils, pupils from WBRI backgrounds, and those on SEN Support or with EHCPs—continue to experience widespread and persistent gaps across Reading, Writing, GPS, Maths and combined RWM. Strengthening early identification, targeted intervention, culturally responsive practice, and high-quality adaptive teaching will remain central to improving outcomes and reducing inequalities at Key Stage 2.

Consistency in curriculum implementation is a vital part of securing disadvantaged and SEND outcomes improvement. School improvement resources are needed to secure consistent approaches. These are well understood by school leaders but difficult to implement due to school improvement capacity and resourcing issues.



## Ethnic Group Performance

Table showing the proportion of children achieving expected standard in RWM at KS2 Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups.

Sub- Category	All Pupils Cohort	All Pupils %RWM	Disadvantaged Cohort	Disadvantaged %RWM	No SEN Cohort	No SEN %RWM	variance to National Average 62 %
Indian	616	78.1%	33	51.5%	553	83.9%	16.1%
Chinese	110	71.8%	1	100.0%	98	74.5%	9.8%
White and Asian	138	71.0%	32	50.0%	113	78.8%	9.0%
Any Other Asian Background	374	66.0%	43	58.1%	316	74.4%	4.0%
Bangladeshi	64	64.1%	21	71.4%	49	77.6%	2.1%
Any Other White Background	536	64.0%	76	52.6%	440	72.5%	2.0%
Any Other Ethnic Group	121	63.6%	28	46.4%	103	71.8%	1.6%
Pakistani	408	62.0%	113	52.2%	337	70.0%	0.0%
Black - African	425	58.8%	107	55.1%	347	67.4%	-3.2%
Refused	115	58.3%	32	50.0%	95	69.5%	-3.7%
Any Other Mixed Background	281	56.9%	84	45.2%	209	68.4%	-5.1%
White and Black African	74	55.4%	34	55.9%	53	69.8%	-6.6%
White - British	2095	53.9%	643	32.7%	1388	69.6%	-8.1%
Any Other Black Background	59	49.2%	26	30.8%	43	62.8%	-12.8%
Information Not Yet Obtained	106	40.6%	21	33.3%	74	50.0%	-21.4%
White and Black Caribbean	226	39.8%	135	34.1%	146	52.7%	-22.2%
Black Caribbean	67	38.8%	44	36.4%	47	48.9%	-23.2%
Gypsy/ Roma	5	20.0%	2		4	25.0%	-42.0%
White - Irish	9	11.1%	4	25.0%	4	25.0%	-50.9%
Irish Traveller	7		7		1		-62.0%

KS2 outcomes in reading, writing and maths (RWM) show considerable variation between ethnic groups; however, these differences are strongly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. Across nearly all groups, attainment increases markedly when focusing on the Non-SEN cohort, in some cases by over 10 percentage points (e.g. White British 53.9% to 69.6%, Black African 58.8% to 67.4%). This indicates that SEND has a substantial impact on headline attainment and can distort direct comparisons between ethnicities. When SEND is excluded, several groups perform well above the national average of 62%, including Indian (83.9%), White and Asian (78.8%), and Chinese (74.5%), while others move closer to national expectations, suggesting that part of the variation is attributable to differences in SEND prevalence and outcomes.

Despite this, some gaps persist within the Non-SEN cohort, particularly for Black Caribbean (48.9%), White and Black Caribbean (52.7%), and pupils with unknown ethnicity (50.0%), indicating underlying differences beyond SEND.

Across the authority, thirty-nine schools have published KS2 RWM outcomes for 2025. When compared with the national average for all pupils, eighteen schools (46%) are performing at or above national standards, while twenty-one schools (54%) fall below the national benchmark. However, the pattern changes considerably when SEND is removed and outcomes are compared against the

national non-SEND expected standard of 74%. On this measure, twenty-nine schools (74%) have no-SEND attainment at or above national levels, while ten schools (26%) remain below the 74% benchmark for pupils without SEND.

This shift shows that many schools with lower all-pupil averages demonstrate much stronger performance once inclusion is accounted for, reflecting the impact of high-need cohorts on headline measures.

There is a smaller group of seven schools where both all-pupil RWM outcomes and no-SEND outcomes remain below national standards. These schools do not show the uplift typically seen when inclusion is accounted for, suggesting that lower performance cannot be explained solely by cohort complexity.

School effectiveness visits have identified underlying weaknesses across the system in core provision that would benefit from more targeted school improvement support, including strengthened curriculum sequencing, improved early intervention strategies, and sharper approaches to SEND inclusion and adaptive teaching. These schools represent a priority group for focused monitoring, leadership support, and system-level collaboration to secure improvement.

When school non-SEND outcomes are compared with the national non-SEND benchmarks (85% Reading, 84% Writing, 84% Maths), performance improves sharply: twenty-nine schools (75%) move to at or above national non-SEND standards. This reveals that in most schools, core teaching and curriculum provision are strong for the majority of pupils, and that lower whole-school averages are often driven by the distribution and complexity of SEND need.

One Year Improvement trends add further insight. Based on RWM trend data, twenty-seven schools (69%) show an improving trajectory for all pupils, while twelve schools show a declining pattern. When SEND is removed, the picture strengthens: thirty-one schools show improving RWM trends for non-SEND pupils (80%), with only eight schools showing no improvement. This wider uplift suggests that curriculum implementation and teaching quality are strengthening across many settings, but that these gains are not yet reaching all vulnerable learners.

## Attendance

Attendance across Reading's primary schools varies widely. Roughly a third of schools perform above national attendance levels, a third sit around the national average, and a third fall below.

Schools serving higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and pupils with high mobility tend to have the greatest attendance challenges, including higher persistent absence.

While some schools are improving—especially in FSM and SEND attendance—others show attendance that is static or declining. Year 6 attendance also varies significantly, with some schools with over 94% of pupils attending regularly, while others drop as low as 66%.

There are positive signs that many schools are improving attendance for disadvantaged and SEND pupils. However, many schools continue to struggle, particularly with persistent absence. In settings already facing high levels of complexity, attendance difficulties often reflect structural and contextual pressures—such as health needs, poverty, transport issues, and housing instability—rather than school-level factors alone.

School Effectiveness focused visits have identified that schools are applying research informed approaches to improving attendance, are working collaboratively with the Attendance team and families and are working together to tackle this area in cluster groups.

Attendance influences KS2 outcomes. Schools with lower attendance, especially where persistent absence is high, tend to have lower KS2 RWM results. The seven lowest performing schools also appear in the attendance analysis, each showing weaker attendance patterns that align with their lower attainment. Likewise, schools with particularly strong attendance often have the highest KS2 outcomes, highlighting the close link between regular attendance and achievement.

Attendance remains a key factor behind the variation in KS2 outcomes across Reading. Improving attendance, particularly for vulnerable groups, will be central to raising standards in the schools with the lowest outcomes. At the same time, schools with high contextual need require additional support rather than increased pressure, as their attendance patterns reflect wider social and economic challenges. The role of Family Hubs will be a crucial lever improving attendance in these communities.

## KS4

The Department for Education designs key Stage 4 (KS4) headline measures to give an overview of how well pupils achieve across a broad and balanced curriculum with a strong academic core. These measures include, the percentage achieving grade 5 or above in both English and maths (a strong GCSE), and the proportion of children gaining a grade 4 in English and Maths at GCSE. This is the gateway qualification for most Level three courses and many jobs.

Attainment eight measures how well pupils perform across up to eight qualifications, including English and maths (double weighted), EBacc subjects, and open or vocational qualifications. It provides a broad picture of achievement across the curriculum and reflects how effectively a school enables pupils of all abilities to succeed across a mix of academic and applied subjects.

EBacc APS looks only at attainment across the five EBacc pillars: English, maths, sciences, a language, and history or geography. It records the average point score across all five pillars, giving a clearer indication of how securely pupils achieve in traditional academic subjects.

Progress eight is not published for 2024/25 or 2025/26 due to the absence of KS2 baseline data following COVID-nineteen disruption, and there is no replacement measure during this period.

Improvement has been made in line with target to reduce KS4 attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils. As with KS2 achievement, performance for disadvantaged pupils remains well below that of their peers and there are significant variations between groups; therefore removing the achievement gap remains a key priority.

When interpreting KS4 outcomes, it is important to note that recent results are affected by changes to grading approaches following the pandemic. As a result, year-on-year comparisons should be treated with caution, with greater emphasis placed on curriculum breadth, attainment patterns, and changes in outcomes for different pupil groups rather than headline trends alone.

## Context



Secondary schools in Reading operate within a highly varied and complex local context, with significant differences in pupil intake, levels of disadvantage, SEND, EAL, stability and deprivation across the borough. There is no single or typical profile for a Reading secondary school. Instead, schools serve markedly different communities, which has a substantial influence on attendance, behaviour, engagement, and headline attainment outcomes at Key Stage 4 and in sixth forms.

The data shows wide variation in FSM eligibility, SEN Support and EHCP prevalence, with some schools serving cohorts with well above-average levels of additional need, including children in need (CIN) and pupils experiencing deprivation both at pupil-base and local area level. These schools often face greater challenges linked to attendance, stability, mental health, and post-pandemic recovery, all of which impact learning and progress. In contrast, a smaller number of schools operate in comparatively lower-complexity contexts, with significantly lower FSM and SEND rates and more stable pupil populations. These differences create an uneven distribution of challenge across the secondary system.

In several cases, school intakes are not fully representative of the communities in which schools are located. Some schools admit far fewer disadvantaged or SEND pupils than would be expected based on local demographics, while others educate cohorts with complexity levels that exceed those of their immediate catchment areas. These patterns reflect a combination of parental choice, school specialisms, faith or selective characteristics, historic admissions arrangements, and post-sixteen recruitment factors. As a result, some schools carry a disproportionately high share of vulnerable pupils, while others benefit from intakes with fewer barriers to learning.

In Reading, schools serving fewer complex cohorts tend to achieve stronger headline outcomes, while those serving the most vulnerable pupils face sustained pressures that are not always visible in raw attainment measures alone.

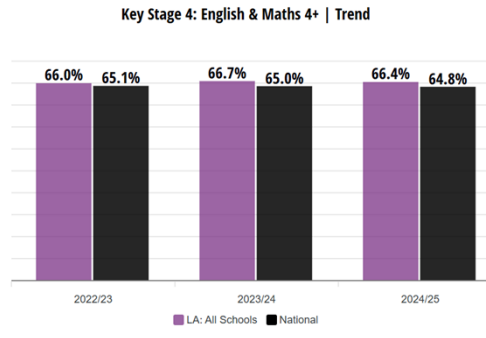
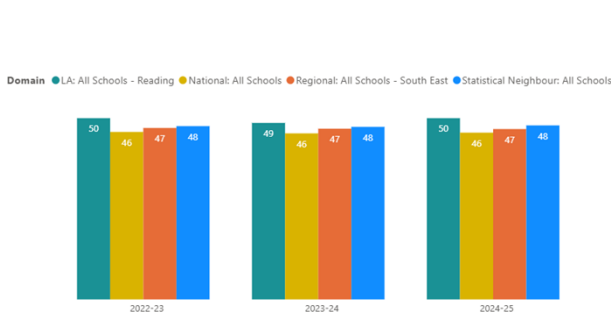
The removal of Progress 8 for 2024/25 and 2025/26 further increases the importance of contextual interpretation. In line with DfE and Ofsted guidance, secondary school performance in Reading must be evaluated by considering how effectively schools meet the needs of the pupils they serve, rather than through direct comparison of headline measures in isolation. Factors such as SEND prevalence, deprivation, attendance, stability, and pupil mobility are essential to understanding variation in KS4 outcomes and to informing proportionate, differentiated support across the borough.

## Benchmark

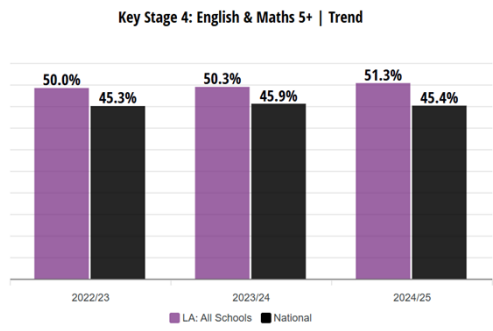
*Graphs showing headline attainment measures at the end of KS4 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

Attainment 8

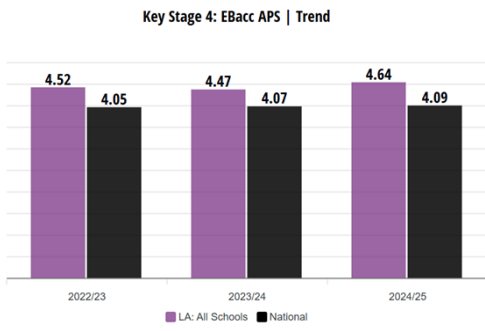
GCSE English and Maths 4+



## English and Maths GCSE 5



## EBacc APS



## Performance

Outcomes at Key Stage 4 in 2024/25 show a positive picture for the local authority, with performance above national averages across the main headline measures. The average Attainment 8 score is 50.2, based on a cohort of 1,652 pupils. This represents an improvement of 1.4 points from the previous year and places the LA 4.2 points above the national average.

Attainment eight has now been above national levels for three consecutive years, and the LA's relative position improved in 2024/25, moving to the 28th percentile nationally.

Performance in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) also continues to strengthen. The LA achieved an EBacc Average Point Score (APS) of 4.64, an increase on the previous year and 0.55 points above the national average. Just over 53% of pupils were entered for the EBacc, with nearly three in ten pupils achieving a grade 5 or above across the full EBacc suite. The LA's relative standing improved significantly, rising to the 18th percentile nationally, reflecting stronger academic attainment across EBacc subjects.

Outcomes in English and Maths remain a particular strength. In 2024/25, 51.3% of pupils achieved grade 5 or above in both English and Maths, an increase on last year and 5.9 percentage points higher than the national average. This equates to almost one hundred more pupils achieving the expected standard compared with national performance. The LA is ranked in the top quarter nationally on this measure. Achievement of grade 4 or above in both subjects stands at 66.4%, remaining above national levels, although this measure showed a slight decline from the previous year in line with national trends.

As Progress 8 is not available for this academic year, these headline measures provide the main indicators of KS4 performance.

## Vulnerable Groups

Key Stage 4 outcomes for vulnerable groups in Reading continue to show significant and persistent attainment gaps, despite some improvement in average scores.

Overall performance at KS4 masks substantial differences between pupil groups, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

While incremental improvements are evident in some measures, these have not yet resulted in consistent improvements in key qualifications for the most vulnerable learners.

Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve markedly lower outcomes across all KS4 measures when compared with non-disadvantaged peers. Although Attainment 8 and EBacc scores for disadvantaged pupils have improved slightly year-on-year, this progress has not translated into stronger outcomes in English and Maths, where fewer than a quarter of disadvantaged pupils achieve grade 5 or above, and fewer than two-fifths achieve grade 4 or above.

This indicates that gains in overall point scores are often being achieved through performance outside the core subjects most critical for post-sixteen progression.

Within this group, the data shows that disadvantaged pupils without SEND perform noticeably better than disadvantaged pupils with additional needs, achieving higher Attainment 8 and English and Maths outcomes than the disadvantaged cohort as a whole. However, despite this relative strength, their attainment remains significantly below non-disadvantaged pupils, particularly at the higher English and Maths threshold.

This demonstrates that economic disadvantage alone continues to be a strong barrier to achievement, even where pupils do not have identified additional needs. The pattern suggests the cumulative impact of weaker early literacy and numeracy foundations, attendance challenges, and reduced access to academic support across KS2 and KS3, rather than SEND as the sole driver of underachievement.

Outcomes for pupils with SEN Support are broadly in line with national SEN Support averages but show declining trends locally, particularly in Attainment 8 and English and Maths results. Proportions achieving both grade 5+ and grade 4+ in English and Maths have fallen compared with the previous year, indicating that pupils with moderate additional needs are not yet being consistently supported to sustain or accelerate progress through KS4.

Pupils with EHCPs have the lowest outcomes across all KS4 measures, with low Attainment 8 scores and only a small minority achieving passes in either English or Maths. Outcomes for this group have declined further this year, reflecting the complexity of need within the cohort. These results highlight the limitations of headline GCSE measures in capturing meaningful progress for pupils with EHCPs and underline the importance of personalised pathways and broader success measures for this group.

In contrast, non-disadvantaged pupils and pupils with no recorded SEND perform strongly across all KS4 measures, with Attainment 8 scores, EBacc APS, and English and Maths outcomes well above national averages. This confirms that Reading's secondary schools are enabling important levels of academic success for pupils without significant barriers to learning. However, the scale of the gap between these pupils and their disadvantaged or SEND peers remains the most significant issue in the data.



Overall, the evidence shows that KS4 outcomes improvement has not been experienced evenly across pupil groups. While average attainment continues to rise, especially for pupils without disadvantage or SEND, vulnerable learners—particularly disadvantaged pupils, including those without SEND—remain far less likely to secure the core qualifications needed for strong post-sixteen progression. T

his reinforces the need for earlier and more sustained intervention to ensure children secure foundational knowledge in KS3 if this has not been achieved in previous phases, this will require stronger transition and curriculum alignment between KS2 and KS3, and targeted academic and pastoral support throughout KS3 if long-standing attainment gaps at KS4 are to be reduced meaningfully.

### Ethnic Group Performance

*Table showing the proportion of children achieving expected standard in RWM at KS2 Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups*

Ethnicity	Average Overall Progress8 Score	Average Overall Attainment8 Score	% GCSE Basics Achieved 5+	% GCSE Basics Achieved 4+	Overall Att8 Trend Indicator	Overall Basic5+ Trend Indicator	Overall Basic4+ Trend Indicator
Indian	1.07	73	86.5%	92.8%	↓	↓	↓
Chinese	1.17	72	82.4%	90.1%	↑	↑	↑
White and Asian	0.39	61	73.9%	82.9%	↑	↑	↑
Any Other Asian Background	0.55	56	64.3%	80.8%	↑	↑	↑
White - Irish	-0.18	53	53.8%	69.2%	↑	↑	↑
Any Other Ethnic Group	0.53	50	46.5%	64.6%	↑	↓	↑
Any Other White Background	0.37	49	44.3%	66.6%	↑	↑	↑
Bangladeshi	0.10	48	52.5%	67.5%	↓	↓	↓
Pakistani	0.03	45	43.9%	62.3%	↓	↓	↑
Any Other Mixed Background	-0.25	44	41.7%	59.3%	↑	↑	↑
Black - African	0.12	44	38.4%	56.9%	↑	↓	↓
White - British	-0.43	44	42.6%	58.8%	↓	↑	↑
Refused	-0.51	43	40.0%	63.6%	↑	↑	↓
White and Black African	-0.23	41	35.2%	46.5%	↑	↑	↑
Any Other Black Background	-0.02	40	36.8%	56.6%	↓	↓	↓
Irish Traveller	-1.13	39		100.0%	↓	↔	↓
Information Not Yet Obtained	-0.54	38	35.6%	49.2%	↓	↓	↑
White and Black Caribbean	-0.75	33	29.1%	41.7%	↓	↓	↓
Black Caribbean	-1.07	33	15.1%	41.5%	↑	↑	↑
Gypsy/ Roma		25			↑	↔	↔

KS4 outcomes show marked differences in attainment and progress between ethnic groups. The highest performing groups are consistently those of Asian heritage, with Chinese and Indian pupils achieving the strongest outcomes across both attainment and progress measures. Chinese pupils record the highest Progress 8 score (1.17) alongside high attainment (Attainment 8 score of 72), with improving trends across all indicators. Similarly, Indian pupils achieve the highest attainment (73) and very strong basics measures (86.5% achieving grade 5+, 92.8% grade 4+), although recent trends indicate some decline. Other Asian groups and White and Asian pupils also perform securely above average, with positive progress scores and improving trends, indicating strong and improving outcomes for these cohorts.

In contrast, outcomes are weaker for a number of White British, Black and dual heritage groups. White British pupils, the largest cohort, record negative progress (-0.43) despite modest improvements in basics measures, suggesting underperformance relative to prior attainment. More pronounced gaps are evident for Black Caribbean (-1.07) and White and Black Caribbean (-0.75) pupils, who have both low attainment (Attainment 8 scores of 33) and low proportions achieving grade 5+ in English and maths (15.1% and 29.1% respectively), despite some recent improvement in trend indicators.

Other groups, including pupils with unknown ethnicity and some dual and Black backgrounds, also perform below average across key measures. While some of these groups show signs of improvement, the overall picture indicates persistent disparities in outcomes

Relative differences in cohort size may impact average outcomes.

Key Stage 4 outcomes across secondary schools in the local authority show substantial variation in performance, reflecting significant differences in pupil intake and context.

When measured against national benchmarks using Attainment 8 and GCSE English and Maths outcomes, around half of schools perform at or above national averages for all pupils, while the remaining schools fall below national benchmarks.

A small number of schools achieve very strong outcomes, significantly exceeding national averages across Attainment 8 and GCSE English and Maths. These schools tend to be selective or serve relatively privileged cohorts in contrast, a group of schools sit well below national averages, often across multiple measures. These schools frequently serve cohorts with high levels of disadvantage, SEND, EHCPs, pupil mobility and attendance challenge, which has a pronounced impact on headline attainment figures. Some of these schools have had historic performance issues and are improving year-on-year.

When outcomes are considered by pupil group, the school-level picture becomes clearer. In a majority of schools, attainment for non-SEND and non-disadvantaged pupils is secure and often above national benchmarks, even where whole-school performance is below average. This strongly suggests that in many settings, core teaching and curriculum provision are effective, but overall outcomes are being depressed by the concentration of vulnerable pupils within the cohort.

Only a small number of schools show weak outcomes for all pupils and non-SEND pupils, indicating that for these schools, underperformance cannot be explained by cohort complexity alone and may point to deeper challenges in curriculum implementation, teaching quality, or leadership capacity.

Analysis of GCSE English and Maths threshold measures reinforces this pattern. While approximately two-thirds of schools achieve grade 4+ outcomes close to or above national levels, far fewer reach national benchmarks for grade 5+, particularly in schools with higher levels of disadvantage and SEND. Disadvantaged pupils without SEND also underperform in many schools, confirming that economic disadvantage alone remains a significant barrier to securing higher-grade outcomes, even where SEND is not present. This limits progression opportunities for these pupils and contributes to wider attainment gaps.

## Attendance

Attendance across Reading's secondary schools shows considerable variation, with schools distributed across above-average, average, and below-average attendance bandings when compared with national figures. Only a small number of schools sit consistently above national attendance benchmarks, while several fall below, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. This uneven pattern mirrors the broader variation seen in attainment and cohort complexity across the secondary system.

There is limited evidence of sustained improvement in attendance overall. While a few schools show improving trends relative to national figures, particularly for SEND attendance, the majority either show declining trends or remain static. Attendance for FSM pupils is weaker in most schools, with very few achieving above-average bandings, suggesting that economic disadvantage continues to be a major driver of absence. Schools should consider how well disadvantaged children feel they belong and are successful in their school community and how KS3 pastoral provision is securing attendance from the start of Yr 7.

Persistent absence remains a significant challenge in several schools, with a number performing above national levels for persistent absence, indicating worse outcomes for regular attendance and engagement.

The Year 11 attendance data shown in each school IDSR (percentage of pupils attending more than 90% of sessions) highlights further disparity. While some schools achieve strong levels of regular attendance in this important assessment year (around the mid-to-high 80% range), others fall considerably lower. Schools with lower proportions of pupils attending regularly are disproportionately those with higher levels of disadvantage, SEND and pupil instability, reinforcing the link between attendance and wider contextual factors.

When considered alongside achievement data, the relationship between attendance and outcomes is clear. Schools with stronger attendance profiles tend to be those achieving higher GCSE outcomes, particularly in English and Maths. Conversely, schools with weaker attendance and higher persistent absence consistently show lower KS4 attainment, especially for vulnerable pupils. Earlier analysis demonstrated a moderate positive correlation between attendance and KS4 RWM outcomes, confirming that attendance is a meaningful predictor of school performance.

Research is clear that children with foundational learning gaps have weaker attendance, poorer mental health and are more likely to be subject to suspension, suggesting they are less happy at school than their peers. Ensuring gaps are identified and addressed as early as possible remains a priority if more children are to thrive in secondary school.

Overall, the attendance data reinforces the need for contextual interpretation of school outcomes. While improving attendance remains a key priority for raising attainment, particularly in English and Maths, the evidence suggests that schools serving the most complex cohorts require additional, sustained support rather than simple comparison with national benchmarks.

Strengthening attendance strategies, alongside targeted academic and pastoral support for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, will be essential if attainment gaps across Reading secondary schools are to narrow meaningfully.

**A Level**

A-level outcomes across Reading in 2025 show a highly variable pattern, with performance linked to student intake, prior attainment, and the scale of sixth-form provision. Overall performance for Reading broadly aligns with national averages, but this masks significant internal variation between providers.

At the top end, a small number of sixth forms achieve remarkably high attainment and retention, with average grades above national benchmarks, exceptionally strong completion rates, and a high proportion of students achieving AAB or higher including two facilitating subjects. These outcomes reflect academically selective or lower-complexity cohorts.

In contrast, several providers show average to below-average progress scores, lower average grades and much smaller proportions of students achieving higher-grade outcomes.

Despite this, retention across most settings remains relatively high, indicating that students are largely sustained through their programmes even where attainment is weaker.

Taken together, the data indicates that strong A-level performance in Reading is concentrated in a small number of provisionally advantaged settings, while other sixth forms face ongoing challenges in improving attainment and progress for more diverse and vulnerable cohorts.

This reinforces wider findings that post-16 outcomes are strongly shaped by prior attainment and access to academic pathways at KS4, rather than sixth-form quality alone, and highlights the importance of early intervention, inclusive curriculum planning and targeted transition support if A-level success is to be widened across the system


## Post sixteen pathways and destinations.

Analysis of post-16 pathways in Reading shows a consistent pattern across secondary schools: students with identified vulnerabilities, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have SEND, are significantly more likely to leave school-based sixth forms at the end of Year 11 and continue their education in Further Education (FE).

In every school reviewed, the proportion of FSM and SEND pupils was higher among those who left than among those who stayed into Year 12, with all Year 11 leavers having at least one special characteristic.

School-based sixth forms continue to provide strong academic A-level pathways, particularly for students progressing to higher education. However, these offers remain less accessible to lower-attaining and more vulnerable pupils, especially where GCSE English and maths outcomes do not meet entry criteria.

As a result, FE colleges—particularly Reading College—carry a disproportionately high share of disadvantaged and SEND learners, many requiring English and maths retakes or more applied pathways. Capacity pressures in FE and feedback from employers underline the need for better alignment between curriculum, skills development, and future employment.



Local heads highlight structural barriers to widening school-based post-sixteen provision, including staffing capacity, funding constraints, limited facilities for vocational courses, and variable student take-up. While schools offer some Level 2 retake opportunities, these are often tied to academic pathways, limiting options for students who would benefit from more applied or technical routes. Careers guidance is a critical issue, with sixth form leaders highlighting the need for earlier, more targeted support for FSM and SEND pupils, including clearer understanding of apprenticeships and alternative pathways.

These findings highlight the importance of early preparation for adulthood (PfA) for pupils with SEND, beginning in early KS2 and strengthened through KS3 and KS4, rather than being deferred until post-sixteen transition. Embedding PfA principles early—such as independence, communication, self-advocacy and understanding of future pathways—supports engagement, attendance, and resilience, particularly during KS3 where disengagement often emerges for vulnerable learners. Strong early PfA enables more realistic and aspirational pathway planning, smoother transitions post-sixteen and reduces the likelihood that SEND pupils leave school-based provision without adequate preparation.

Overall, the post-sixteen analysis reinforces that outcomes at age 16 and beyond are shaped well before Year 11. Improving post-sixteen participation and progression for vulnerable learners depends on earlier intervention, secure academic foundations, sustained careers education, and a coherent approach to preparation for adulthood.

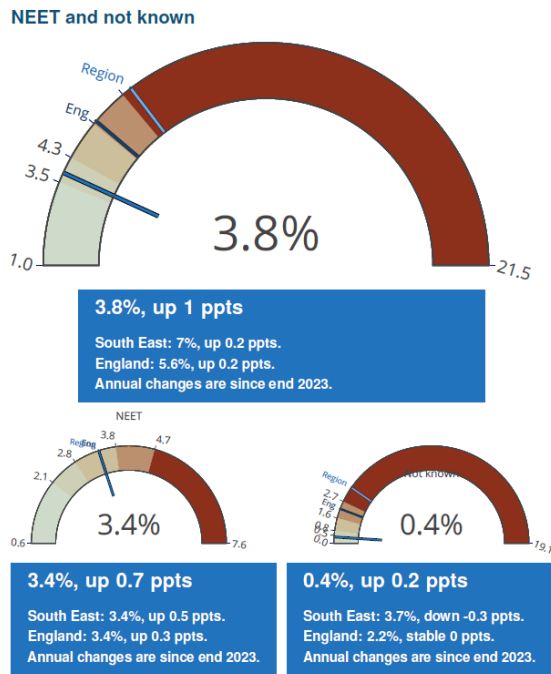
Schools and providers have made significant forward strides in developing partnership working, increasing Post 16 provision, and reducing competition between providers. Further strengthening of collaboration between secondary schools, FE providers, employers, and the local authority—aligned with the Reading Education Strategy—will be essential to widening pathways and improving long-term outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.



Graphic showing NEET figures in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025.

Source DfE 1

. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.



The comparator scorecard shows that Reading’s overall participation in education and training post-sixteen remains broadly in line with national and regional benchmarks, although there has been a slight recent decline.

As of the most recent reporting point, 91.5% of young people in Reading are participating in education or training, which is comparable with the Southeast and England averages. This indicates that most young people continue into post-sixteen destinations, but the small downward trend suggests growing pressure on transition and retention, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The proportion of young people who are NEET or whose destination is not known stands at 3.8% in Reading, which is below the national rate (5.6%) but higher than some local comparators.

While this places Reading in a strong position overall, the data shows that NEET levels have increased since the previous year, mirroring national trends. This suggests that post-pandemic recovery remains uneven, and that additional targeted support is needed to prevent further increases in disengagement.

Analysis shows that vulnerability is a significant predictor of NEET status. Young people identified within vulnerable groups—including those with SEND, EHCPs, mental health needs, care experience, or alternative provision histories—are far more likely to be NEET or not known than their peers.

In Reading, over a quarter of young people from vulnerable groups fall into the NEET/not known category, which is higher than both the South-East and national averages. The data reinforces that post-sixteen disengagement is not evenly experienced, and that SEND and additional vulnerabilities significantly increase the risk of not sustaining education or training beyond age16.

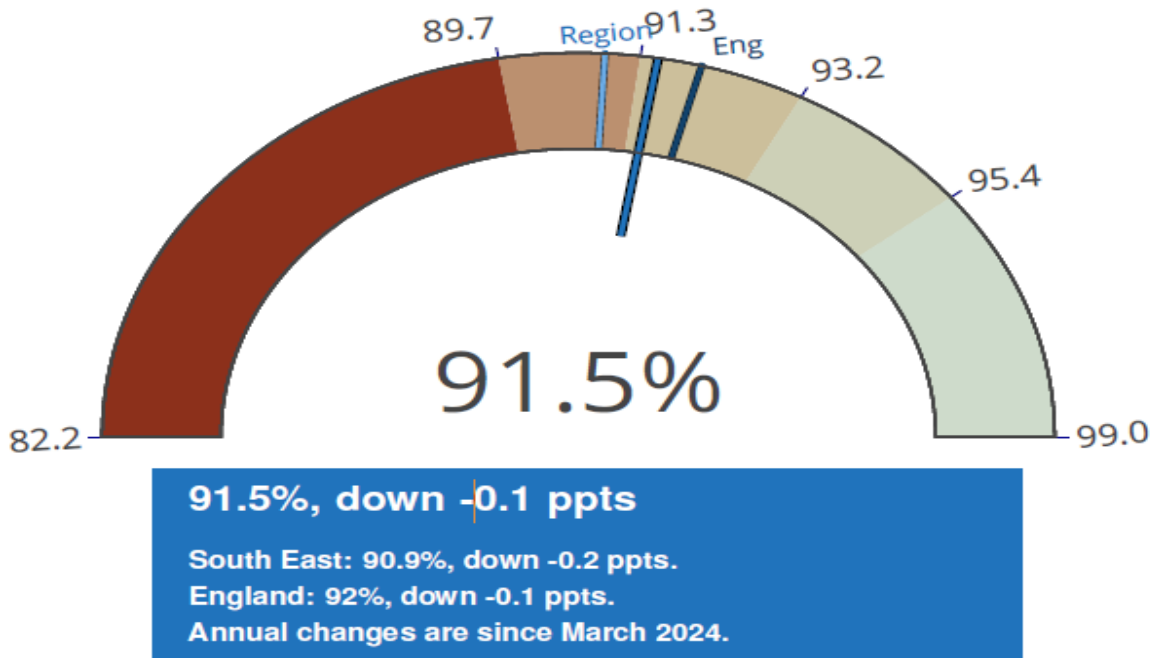


Young people with SEND, especially those with EHCPs or SEN Support, show elevated NEET rates compared with pupils without SEND. SEND learners are more likely to leave school-based provision at the end of Year 11 and require alternative pathways because they do not meet entry criteria for post sixteen courses.

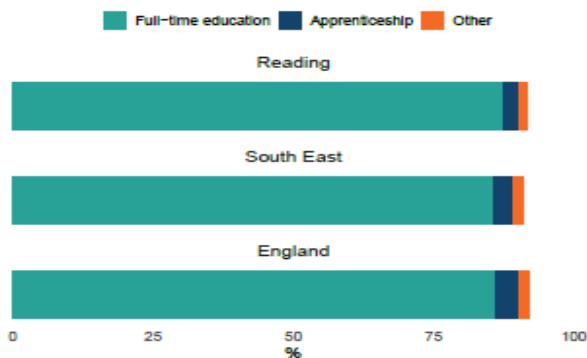
*Graphic showing participation figures in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025. Source DfE. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.*

## Participation

### Participating in education and training



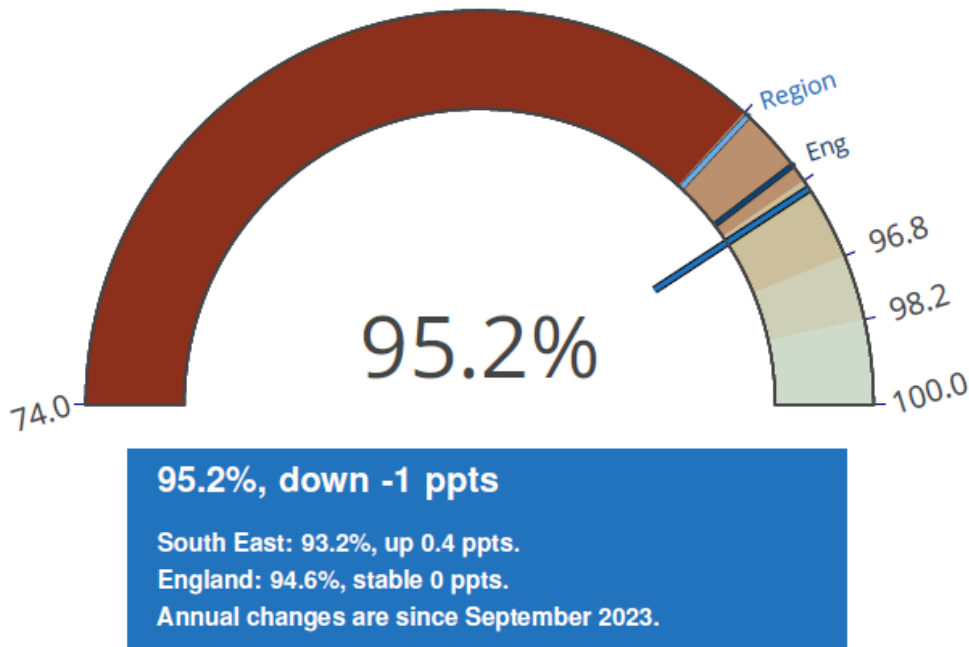
### Type of education and training





Graphic showing the proportion of young people offered an education place in September of year 12 in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025. Source DfE. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

### September Guarantee: % offered an education place



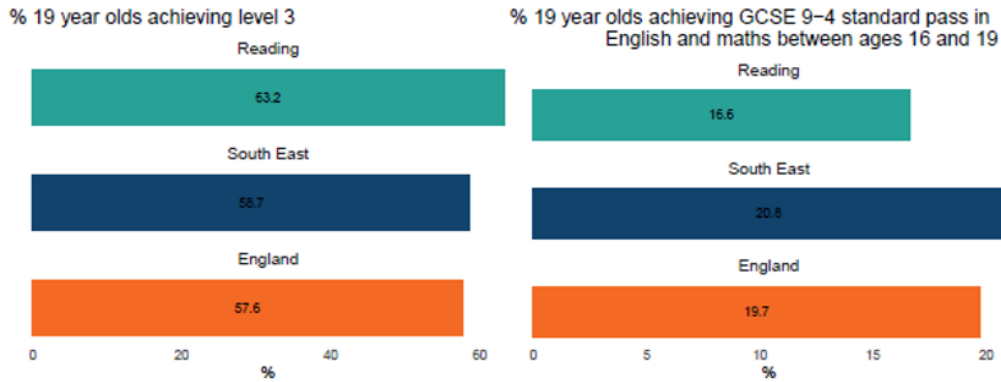
Reading performs strongly on the September Guarantee, with over 95% of young people offered a suitable post-16 education place. This is above the Southeast average and comparable to national performance, indicating that systems for securing an initial offer are effective. However, the gap between being offered a place and sustaining participation over time is evident when viewed alongside NEET figures, suggesting that retention rather than access is the key challenge.

This pattern reflects findings from post-sixteen analysis showing that many vulnerable young people do enter post-sixteen provision, particularly FE, but struggle to maintain engagement once there. The data therefore points to the importance of early identification, transition planning and ongoing pastoral and academic support, rather than focusing solely on initial destinations.



Graphic showing level 3 and level 2 attainment by the age of nineteen in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025. Source DfE. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

### Post 16 attainment



The contextual charts show that though Reading does well for young people who are on level 3 pathways, achievement for those that still need to secure English and Maths at level 2 is lower than both the Southeast and England averages.

Overall, the charts suggest that Reading’s post-sixteen system performs well at a headline level, but that outcomes are far less positive for vulnerable young people, particularly those with SEND and additional needs. While most young people access post-sixteen provision and are offered places, sustained participation and outcomes remains a challenge for a significant minority.

The data reinforces earlier conclusions from Key Stage 4 (KS4) and post-sixteen analysis: improving post-sixteen outcomes depends on earlier intervention, including secure literacy and numeracy foundations, strong attendance, inclusive curriculum planning, and early preparation for adulthood, particularly for SEND learners.

There is also a need to ensure that Reading schools and Further Education Providers continue to work together to provide sufficiency across Without addressing these factors from Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 3 (KS3) onwards, post-sixteen participation rates risk masking deeper inequalities in progression, retention, and long-term outcomes.

## School effectiveness activity 2024-2025

- School Governing Boards, Trustees, and their Executive Leaders are accountable for the standards and achievement in their schools as outlined by the Department for Education.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority are to:
  - ✓ Act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who: are looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, have a social worker, are a survivor of trauma and or have physical or mental health needs.



- ✓ Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress.
- ✓ Be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
- ✓ Identify schools causing concern and to rapidly intervene where a school is at risk of decline or failing standards, working closely with the DfE regional director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve.
- ✓ Encourage maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.
- ✓ Exercise relevant powers to intervene in locally maintained schools causing concern and to work with the regional director where there are concerns about school effectiveness in academy schools and settings.
- The Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness sets out how Reading Borough Council discharges its duties, primarily through the School Effectiveness service. Work to influence the local system is based on research informed consistent approaches to inclusion that support schools to effectively implement research-based approaches in their schools.
- The framework recognises that school leaders have the expertise and experience to support school improvement, and that collaborative school-led partnerships are a key feature of local education provision with improvement being driven by local schools. Where the Local Authority needs to intervene in schools to bring about rapid improvement, it commissions and brokers school-to-school and Trust support wherever this is possible.
- Targeted support and school effectiveness projects are provided to support improvement in outcomes identified by data and through School Effectiveness activities across the academic year.
- Collaboration is ongoing between Reading Borough Council officers, schools, Trusts and Mobius Maths Hub to support school improvement.
- The School Effectiveness team collaborate with RISE and the EPS to ensure consistent approaches are implemented in schools and that advisory work is consistent, quality assured and focused on the key priorities for school improvement.
- School to school, and agency support has been brokered for schools causing concern to secure improvements identified by School leaders and School Effectiveness leads. This has been successful in achieving progress and in securing positive judgements in Ofsted inspections.
- The team also completed headteacher performance management for thirty schools and provided training for headteachers, subject leads, individual school staff teams, behaviour



leads, safeguarding leads, school business managers, and governors. Safeguarding audits take place in all Locally maintained schools annually.

## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

**08 July 2026**

<b>Title</b>	Best Start in Life Strategy 2026-2028
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Lara Patel, Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Report author</b>	Becky Bateman, Head of Early Years and Childcare
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children
<b>Council priority</b>	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Committee endorse the Best Start in Life Strategy 2026-2028</li> <li>2. That Committee note that governance and oversight of the Strategy, including monitoring of delivery plans against agreed objectives and reviewing of outcomes, will be through the Health and Wellbeing Board</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In March 2026 the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed that the Best Start in Life strategy is one of the 3 priorities for the Board over the next 3 years.
- 1.2. Reading's Best Start in Life Strategy focuses on early help, joined-up services and removing barriers to support, especially for families who need it most. Strong integrated pathways—midwifery, early years, health visiting, Family Hubs and voluntary and community partners—provide wraparound support from pregnancy to school entry. Through improved early intervention, targeted support, strengthened early years provision and high-quality Family Hubs, Reading is committed to:
  - supporting children's development from birth
  - improving Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes for all children
  - ensuring more children thrive by the time they enter Reception
  - enabling every child to have the strongest possible start in life
- 1.3. In Reading, we want every baby and child to grow up feeling safe, loved and able to flourish. The Strategy sets out how we will work as one team in Reading to support our children and young people to live lives free from fear and harm, to help them feel safe, be healthy, achieve their potential and experience a sense of belonging.
- 1.4. By working together with families and communities, we will help families from pregnancy through to starting school for children to:

- feel secure and supported
- be healthy, happy and confident
- develop strong communication and learning skills
- experience a sense of belonging.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1 In July 2025, HM Government published *Giving every child the best start in life*: The government's strategy for improving child development and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5-year-olds in England have a good level of development by 2028. The government's strategy required all local authorities to develop and publish local Best Start in Life plans by the end of March 26. Publication of the Reading strategy followed endorsement from the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 2.2 The Best Start in Life strategy forms part of the national early years transformation agenda, with a focus on improving outcomes for children aged 0-5. The strategy aligns with national and local priorities; Families First reforms, SEND reforms and early years transformation through integrated system delivery via Best Start Family hubs.
- 2.3 The approach reflects the strong evidence base that early childhood - particularly the earliest years - has a significant influence on long-term health, wellbeing, and life chances. As such, the programme prioritises prevention, early help, and improving outcomes for families at the earliest stage.

## **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. The Best Start in Life strategy aims to increase the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) from 68% to 75% by 2028, while reducing inequalities for groups, including children with SEND, those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- 3.2. The programme strengthens early identification and intervention and delivers integrated, accessible services through a Family Hub "single front door" approach. This reflects a shared system priority to improve outcomes in the early years through prevention, early intervention, and integrated working.
- 3.3. The strategy directly supports the priorities set out in Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan, particularly:
- Ensuring children and young people in Reading can reach their full potential
  - Tackling inequality and deprivation across the borough
  - Delivering early intervention to reduce escalation into higher-cost services
- 3.4. Reading has a diverse and growing population, with areas of significant deprivation alongside relative affluence. This contributes to:
- Variation in school readiness and early years outcomes
  - Health inequalities, including maternal health and child development
  - Increased demand for early help, SEND support, and safeguarding services
- 3.5. The Best Start in Life Strategy responds to these challenges through a targeted, place-based approach, focusing resources on communities with the greatest need.
- 3.6. The Strategy is aligned with key partnership arrangements across Reading, including:
- The Thames Valley NHS Integrated Care System (ICS) and local health priorities

- The Reading Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy, which prioritises improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities
  - Local safeguarding partnerships, ensuring protection and early identification of need
- 3.7. Partnership working in Reading is critical, particularly through:
- Integration of health visiting, Best Start family hubs, and early help services
  - Collaboration with early years providers, schools, and the voluntary sector
  - A shared focus on prevention and early intervention

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The Best Start in Life Strategy supports the Council's strategic priority to 'Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children', improving outcomes for children and families through a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention. The development of integrated Best Start Family Hub services will improve access to support by providing a more coordinated and streamlined offer for families.
- 4.2. This approach is expected to contribute to improved school readiness, better health and wellbeing outcomes, and increased family resilience. It will also support earlier identification of need, reducing escalation to higher-level statutory services and improving overall service effectiveness.
- 4.3. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:
- Putting residents first
  - Building on strong foundations
  - Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
  - Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
  - Being proudly ambitious for Reading

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the Best Start in Life Strategy

#### **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. Community engagement involved extensive consultation with young people, parents and carers and partners in order to shape the priorities of the Best Start in Life Strategy. Staff and councillors were also consulted before publication of the strategy.

#### **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. The policy is not expected to lead to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, or victimisation under the Equality Act 2010.
- 7.2. The strategy is explicitly designed to be inclusive, accessible, and family-centred, supporting all families in Reading. It focuses on improving access to services and the policy will affect access to services and participation, but in a positive way, with the intention of reducing inequalities.
- 7.3. Key impacts include:
- Improved access to integrated services (e.g. Family Hubs, health visiting, early years support), designed to be inclusive, local, place-based and accessible.
  - Targeted outreach and early intervention for families facing the greatest challenges, including those affected by poverty, poor housing, or other adversities.

- Enhanced support for children with SEND and neurodivergence, including earlier identification and intervention.
  - Focus on closing development gaps which are already evident in early childhood and linked to deprivation.
- 7.4. Protected characteristics most positively affected include:
- Disability (SEND and neurodiversity support)
  - Race and ethnicity (through inclusive, accessible services and outreach)
  - Sex and pregnancy/maternity (perinatal support)
  - Socio-economic disadvantage (local characteristic)
- 7.5. Locally defined characteristics also supported:
- Experience of care (targeting vulnerable families and children in care)
  - Armed forces community (via universal access routes, though not explicitly targeted)
- 7.6. Potential risks (to be mitigated):
- Unequal uptake of services among some groups (e.g. marginalised communities)
  - Access barriers (e.g. language, digital exclusion, cultural barriers)
  - Outcomes for all children and families, with additional targeted support for those experiencing disadvantage, which is consistent with lawful positive action.
- 7.7. The strategy is expected to have a positive impact on community cohesion and understanding.
- 7.8. The strategy promotes inclusive, respectful, and trauma-informed services that recognise diverse family needs. It has been co-produced with families, communities and partners, helping ensure different voices are represented.
- 7.9. By improving early support and reducing disadvantage, it contributes to long-term social inclusion and reduced inequality, which are key drivers of cohesion.
- 7.10. If not implemented equitably, perceived inequalities in service access could lead to dissatisfaction or reduced trust

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. Key risks include workforce capacity, effective cross-agency integration, data system maturity, and engagement with priority groups. Mitigation will focus on governance, partnership working, and performance monitoring.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. To be confirmed in consultation with Legal Services prior to submission.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. The Best Start in Life grant will include both revenue and capital allocations provided under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 10.2. Reading Borough Council's provisional allocation for financial years 2026-29 of the programme is £2,612,000
- 10.3. Table 1: Distribution of funding allocation across the relevant programme strands for financial years 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29.

<b>Table 1: Grant Strands</b>	<b>2026/2027</b>	<b>2027/2028</b>	<b>2028/2029</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Delivery	345,200	282,000	289,000	916,200
Parenting	104,500	10,5700	110,400	320,600
Home Learning Environment (HLE)	139,200	141,000	147,100	427,300
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	175,400	280,600	280,600	736,600
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>764,300</b>	<b>809,300</b>	<b>827,100</b>	<b>2,400,700</b>
Delivery – Capital	69,100	70,400	71,800	211,300
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>69,100</b>	<b>70,400</b>	<b>71,800</b>	<b>211,300</b>
<b>Total Allocation</b>	<b>833,400</b>	<b>879,700</b>	<b>898,900</b>	<b>2,612,000</b>

10.4. A detailed budget plan has been developed and formally agreed within the Directorate of Children’s Services. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Executive Director of Children’s Services and the Deputy Director of the Best Start Family Hubs LA Delivery Division, confirming roles, responsibilities, and financial oversight arrangements.

10.5. The first two quarterly instalments of the grant were received on 29 May 2026, in line with the agreed funding schedule.

10.6. Funding beyond the 2026–29 period will be subject to future government spending review processes. Key financial risk relates to the sustainability and transition of funded activities beyond the grant term. Without continuation funding, this may result in:

- Service reduction or discontinuation
- Workforce implications, including potential redundancies at contract end

10.7. Mitigation planning will be required to manage exit strategies and explore future funding opportunities.

10.8. This section has been reviewed by Steven Davies, Strategic Finance Business Partner.

## **11. Timetable for Implementation**

11.1. Delivery will take place from **2026 to 2029**, with phased implementation, ongoing monitoring, and evaluation through programme governance arrangements.

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

**1. The Best Start in Life Strategy**

**2. Equality Impact and Needs Assessment**

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# Best Start in Life Strategy for Reading 2026 - 2028

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## Owner

Andrea King, Berkshire Neurodiverse System Transformation Lead  
Strategic Transformation Lead for Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing  
& Families First Strategic Lead

## Version

V1.0

## Date

February 2026

## Review Date

February 2028

## **Foreword, Councillor Wendy Griffith and Councillor Rachel Eden**

(Lead Councillor for Children and Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health, Reading Borough Council)

This strategy reflects Reading's ambition as a town to give all our children the best start in life.

Voluntary groups and public services have worked together in partnership to develop this strategy, which most importantly has involved careful listening and co-design with our local families and communities.

Our strategy recognises that the first 1001 days of a child's life are crucial to ensure that our children grow, develop, learn and thrive in childhood and adulthood. It is the responsibility of us to work together to help Reading's babies and children to have the very best start in life.

In Reading's Best Start in Life Strategy we set out how our town will come together to help Reading's babies and children have the best start in life. This will involve partnerships between midwifery, health visiting, early years, libraries and culture, family support and mental health as well as services that support neurodivergence, special educational needs and disabilities, and care. This offers a wide range of help including support with housing, debt advice, cooking skills, guidance around substance and alcohol dependency, support for mums and dads-to-be and other key carers for our children, and much more.

This strategy is ambitious, but our children deserve nothing less.

The principles of respectful, inclusive, family-centred, trauma-informed, accessible and welcoming environments, shape our approach to early support. We are determined to ensure that enabling a good life and improving outcomes for Reading's residents starts from the earliest moments of life.

Improving what we offer to families in our local communities is something we can be proud of in response to what our children and families most need.

We also want to provide a foundation for integrated neighbourhood support throughout our communities' lifetimes. We believe that the integrated family help set out in this strategy will enable every child in Reading to have equal access to good quality support and help, in the right place, and at the right time.

### **Reading's children and young people, describe our shared vision in these words:**

'Children and Families' voices will be heard, that our children will be supported to prepare for the future, reach their full potential and become the best person they can be'.

## Reading's children and young people, describe our shared vision in these words:

'Children and Families' voices will be heard, that our children will be supported to prepare for the future, reach their full potential and become the best person they can be'.

### Our Vision

In Reading, we want every baby and child to grow up feeling safe, loved and able to flourish.

Together, we will work as one team in Reading to support our children and young people to live lives free from fear and harm, to help them feel safe, be healthy, achieve their potential and experience a sense of belonging.

Trusting relationships matter. We commit to understanding the specific experiences and identities of our children and their families, shaping our help and support to reflect that.

By working together with families and communities, we will help children from pregnancy through to starting school to:

- feel secure and supported
- be healthy, happy and confident
- develop strong communication and learning skills
- experience a sense of belonging.

Strong, trusting relationships are at the heart of a good start in life. We know that every family is different, and we shape our support around children's individual needs, strengths and identities.

### Our Values

The Best start strategy articulates how we, as a network of partners and organisations across Reading, work in more integrated and collaborative way with families that is respectful, inclusive and empowering, particularly at a time of rising child poverty.

We will work alongside families in ways that are:

**Respectful and inclusive** – grounded in anti-discriminatory practice and cultural humility, recognising and valuing the diverse experiences, identities and strengths of Reading's communities, and ensuring that services are responsive rather than prescriptive.

**Family-centred** – strengths-based approach and recognising the wider pressures families face, we aim to reduce barriers to support, build resilience, and deliver help that is accessible, equitable and focused on improving outcomes for those most affected by hardship.

**Trauma-informed** – understanding the impact that adversity, inequality and poverty can have on children and families, and prioritising safety, trust and compassion in all interactions.

**Accessible and welcoming** – reducing barriers and making support easy to find.

**Early and preventative** – offering help before problems escalate.

## Why the first 1,001 days matter, and what this means for Reading

The first 1,001 days of life, from conception to age two, are a critical period for brain development, physical health, emotional regulation, and attachment. Research shows that experiences during this window have lifelong impacts on learning, wellbeing, and future outcomes. Early intervention has the greatest effect because the brain's capacity for change is highest in the earliest years. Investing in babies, young children and families creates lasting benefits across education, health and society.

[The Best Start for Life, A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days, The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report.](#)

Reading's [Director of Public Health Annual Report](#) (2025) sets out the case for change and the importance of investing in a child's early years. We recognise that while the brain remains adaptable throughout life, the ability to influence development decreases with age—making early family help the most effective and efficient way to improve outcomes and reduce future demand on statutory services.

## What shapes children's early development

From pregnancy through early childhood, key factors influence outcomes:

### Brain and Cognitive Development

- Good nutrition, sleep, and physical health support optimal brain growth
- Chronic illness, malnutrition, or frequent infections affect attention, memory, and learning
- Early health problems can have long-term consequences for school performance.

### Physical Development

- Health in infancy underpins growth, motor skills, and coordination
- Illness or poor nutrition can delay important milestones such as walking and fine motor control.

### Emotional and Social Development

- Warm, responsive relationships build emotional security and resilience
- Healthy children have more energy to explore, play, and learn social skills

- Stress, poor health, or trauma can lead to anxiety, irritability, or withdrawal.

### Immune System and Resilience

- Healthy children miss fewer days in early education, giving them more consistent learning experiences
- Feeling physically well supports confidence, coping skills and successful transitions
- Collectively, this evidence shows that early intervention - before difficulties escalate - is one of the most effective and cost-efficient ways to improve population outcomes. Investment in early years is estimated to return 9–10 times the financial value through improved life chances and reduced need for intensive services later in life.

### The Picture in Reading: Key Challenges

While many children in Reading do well, outcomes are not equal. There are a range of early health and social factors that disproportionately affect families in the borough:

#### Poverty and Inequality

- 24% of children under 16 live in low-income households, including around 2,000 under-fives, with concentrations in the most deprived wards
- Poverty is linked to poorer physical health, delayed language development and emotional difficulties.

#### Oral Health

32.9% of five-year-olds have tooth decay—well above the national average.

#### Healthy Weight

- Around 1 in 5 children are overweight or obese at the start of school; 1.9% are underweight—higher than the national average
- Physical activity in early childhood supports motor, cognitive and emotional development, yet not all children have equal access to safe play and green space.

#### Immunisation

Uptake for under-fives is below the national 95% target and below the minimum 90% standard for several vaccines.

#### Teenage pregnancy and maternal health

- Reading's under-18 conception rate (18.9 per 1,000) is significantly higher than England's rate (13.1).

- 5.9% of pregnant women smoke, a key risk factor for stillbirth, complications and low birth weight.

### Early Trauma and Family Stress

Exposure to domestic abuse, parental mental ill-health and substance misuse in early childhood is linked to lifelong risks across health, education and relationships.

### Neurodivergence and SEND

Early identification reduces later mental health difficulties, exclusion and social marginalisation, yet families report inconsistent access to early support.

### School Readiness

Reading aims for 75.9% GLD by 2028, but current outcomes show inequalities:

- GLD overall: 68.5%
- GLD FSM: 49.8%
- GLD SEND: 26%

Children facing adversity and children from minority backgrounds are less likely to begin school with the skills they need.

### Why this matters for Reading

- The foundations of brain development, attachment, and healthy behaviours, are laid in the early years of a child's life (before school)
- Early inequalities such as poverty, poor housing, low birth weight and delayed communication all impact mental health, educational attainment and long-term employment
- Inclusive early identification of neurodivergence improves opportunities for adjustment of home and community environments, increases inclusion and belonging, reduces crisis, and increases positive long-term outcomes
- Integrated services help families access support earlier, reducing escalation to statutory intervention
- Parents' mental health strongly influences infant development, bonding, and emotional wellbeing.

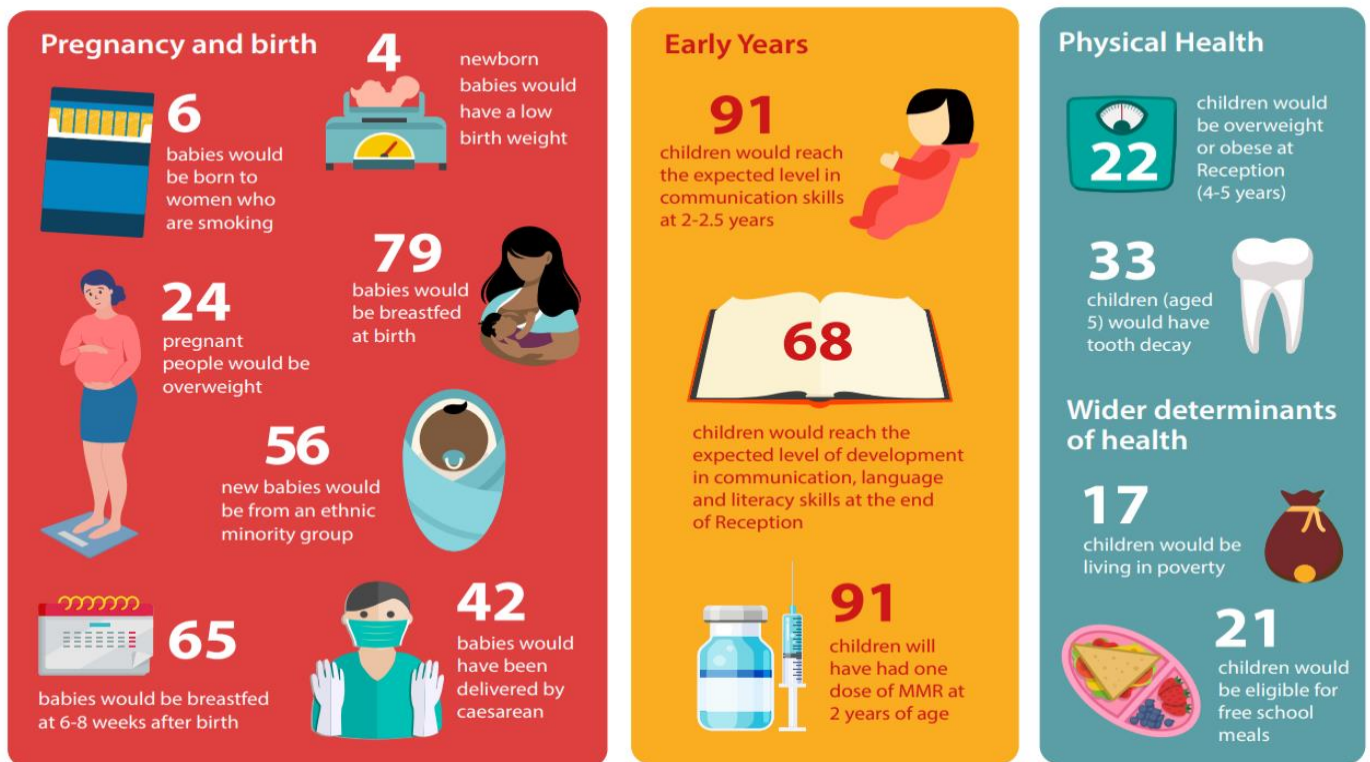
### Our Commitment

Reading's Best Start in Life Strategy focuses on early help, joined-up services and removing barriers to support, especially for families who need it most. Strong integrated pathways—midwifery, early years, health visiting, Family Hubs and voluntary or community partners—provide wraparound support from pregnancy to school entry.

Through improved early intervention, targeted support, strengthened early years provision and high-quality Family Hubs, Reading is committed to:

- reducing inequalities
- supporting children’s development from birth
- improving GLD outcomes for all children
- ensuring more children thrive by the time they enter Reception
- enabling every child to have the strongest possible start in life

If Reading were a town of 100 children:



## Listening to the voice of our children and families

Reading’s partners have committed to listening carefully to the voice of local children and families in the design and development of the Best Start in Life (BSIL) Family Hubs and our overall BSIL Strategy for Reading.

Family Hubs act as a universal prevention offer, with additional targeted support that specifically aims to mitigate and reduce exposure to known early life risk factors including poverty, parental mental ill health, domestic abuse and language delay. Family Hubs bring services such as infant feeding advice, parenting classes and perinatal mental health support together in one place to make it easier to get help and advice early, to support children aged 0-18 and up to 25 with SEND, and their families.

## Key themes from young people's responses.

Young people said:

**Access and atmosphere:** Friendly people and having a welcoming vibe are important.

**Physical environment:** Colourful spaces, variety of activities (games, physical activities, books, art), music, a relaxing sensory space, a quiet area. Soft furnishings are important.

**Young people identified that they needed additional help and support with:** Mental health, social media safety, job opportunities and career advice support.

**Digital engagement:** Interest in young person led podcasts interviewing voluntary sector youth support leaders and wider stakeholders with a voice that young people are interested in engaging with apps, and social media with useful content/videos.

**Participation:** Lots of young people expressed interest in shaping or running parts of Reading's Family Hubs.

## In response to Young People's requests, Reading's Family Hubs have been designed to:

Reading's Family Hubs have embraced the theme of 'welcome and belonging'.

Reading's Family Hubs have been designed with artwork chosen by, or created by, our local young people.

Reading's Family Hubs have specific new emotional health and training/work support services embedded in them and Reading has co-designed an innovative emotional health triage support to coordinate our local emotional health service offers and help all of our children who need emotional health support to have greater access to the right help at the right time.

A dedicated digital platform has been designed for Reading's Family Hubs to provide help, support and advice online, for young people and families who prefer to access information or help online.

## Quotes from our children:

*"Gaming can result in new friendships."*

*"Access to new opportunities and things to do rather a boring white room with just chairs."*

*"I would love to be part of running and shaping parts of the Family Hubs."*

*"It could have a space where you can talk to people about things and just have a safe space for people to be able to just relax after a stressing day."*

## Parents and carers asked for:

**More support:** With worklessness, benefits and asked if Citizen's Advice Bureau support could be linked to Family Hubs

**Specific help was needed with:** Perinatal mental health support, breastfeeding support, access to health visitors, mental health and emotional wellbeing support.

**Being able to find out about:** Local childcare options, musical and physical play groups, sports for all ages, toddler groups and weekend activities

**Specialist support:** Support for families with multiple births, for families with English as a second language classes, continuing wraparound care beyond the age of 5, housing advice and local community support.

## Levels of Need in Reading – and How We Are Responding

Ensuring every child has the Best Start in Life requires a clear understanding of the pressures faced by families in Reading. While many children thrive, outcomes are not shared equally. Socio-economic disadvantages, health inequalities, and barriers to accessing early support continue to shape a child's early development, school readiness and long-term outcomes. Families, parents, caregivers and young people have told us what they need, and this has directly shaped our design of Reading's Best Start in Life Strategy and Family Hubs.

### 1. Key Areas of Need in Reading

#### 1.1 Poverty and Early Development

Around 24% of Reading's children under the age of 16 live in poverty. This includes approximately 2,000 children under the age of five who live in low-income households. Poverty increases the risk of:

- delayed speech and language development
- poorer physical and mental health
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- reduced school readiness

Parents told us they need clearer information, accessible local help with benefits, childcare, housing and employment support.

#### 1.2 Maternal and Infant Health

Reading has the **highest rate of low birth weight in the South East (4.1%)**, which is most commonly linked to smoking in pregnancy, maternal stress, poor nutrition, and substance or alcohol dependency.

Teenage pregnancy also remains above the national average, and families highlighted difficulties accessing perinatal emotional health support.

### 1.3 Oral Health and Healthy Weight

Children in Reading experience significantly poorer oral health:

- 32.9% of five-year-olds have tooth decay - a level far above the national average.

Weight inequalities begin early, in Reading:

- 1 in 5 Reception age children are overweight or obese
- 1.9% are underweight, which is higher than the national average.

### 1.4 Housing and Environmental Health

- 10.1% of households are overcrowded, contributing to stress, disrupted sleep, and developmental challenges.
- Emergency admissions for respiratory infections have nearly doubled in five years, with worsening housing conditions a contributing factor.

### 1.5 Low immunisation uptake

Vaccination coverage for under-fives is below the 90–95% required for population protection. Parents told us they need better reminders, easier booking, and trusted information.

### 1.6 SEND, neurodivergence and early identification

SEND needs are increasing, with 61% of under-fives with SEND having communication and interaction as their primary need.

In qualitative reviews and co-production conversations, Reading's families said support in the first 1,001 days can be hard to access and that some services can feel unwelcoming or inaccessible.

### 1.7 Attendance and school readiness

Although school readiness has improved (**GLD 68.4%**, above national), outcomes are not equitable:

- FSM children: **49.8% GLD**
- Non-FSM children: **72.5% GLD**
- SEND children: **26% GLD.**

Persistent absence in Reception particularly affects disadvantaged children and those with SEND.

## 1.8 Safeguarding pressures

Children later needing child protection services often experience domestic abuse, parental mental health difficulties and substance/alcohol misuse. Parents consistently ask for earlier, easier-to-reach support.

## 1.9 Cultural and linguistic diversity

Over 30% of Reading's residents are from global majority backgrounds, and many children grow up multilingual. Families said they need ESOL support, culturally humble services and home-language-inclusive early learning.

## Our shared priorities (2026–2028): What we will do and why

Based on our analysis of need and what families, parents, young people and professionals told us, Reading will focus on five strategic priorities, delivered through six integrated areas of work (A–F). These reflect the areas where early intervention has the greatest impact, and where inequalities in Reading are most evident.

### 1. Strengthening Perinatal and Early Health Support

Families asked for more **perinatal mental health support**, help with **breastfeeding**, and clearer early guidance. Many told us they struggled to navigate the system during pregnancy and the first 1,001 days.

In response, we are:

- Expanding smoking cessation, infant feeding and perinatal mental health support through Family Hubs.
- Co-locating midwifery with early years teams to ensure seamless identification of vulnerabilities and early help from pregnancy onwards.
- Delivering weekly outreach support for domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental health in communities with the highest levels of need.
- Embedding a stronger focus on healthy pregnancy, attachment, maternal wellbeing and early development.

This work addresses key local needs including high rates of low birth weight, low immunisation uptake, and inequalities linked to maternal health.

### 2. Earlier identification of neurodivergence and SEND

Parents told us that identifying developmental needs early, and receiving support that is respectful and accessible, is crucial and makes a significant difference to children's outcomes, but they also described significant delays in identification of neurodivergence and SEND in Berkshire.

We are responding by:

- Reading is leading Berkshire's whole system transformation and the introduction of the innovative neurodiversity early-identification needs and strengths tool and co-designing multi-disciplinary training 2,000+ professionals across health visiting, early years and family support.
- Doubling Portage (specialist home visiting educational service for children under 5 with developmental delays or disabilities) capacity (100% expansion), reducing waiting times by 58% and removing the waiting list.
- Creating SEND advice drop-ins and webinars from 2026 to improve parent access to guidance.
- Strengthening specialist partnerships with the Berkshire Sensory Consortium and CYPIT (Children and Young People's Integrated Therapies Team i.e. Speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational health) to support children with hearing, visual and multisensory needs.

This will reduce inequalities in access to assessment, improve school readiness for SEND children, and ensure families receive adjustments that reflect their child's strengths.

### **3. Stronger home learning and early language support**

Parents told us they need more support with early language, routines, and knowing how to help their children learn at home.

We are responding by:

- Launching culturally humble Home Learning Environment outreach for 2- to 4-year-olds who need additional support.
- Introducing the ELKLAN Home-Based Learning Initiative (March 2026) to strengthen early language and literacy skills
- Supporting families to use every day play, stories and conversations to build strong communication foundations.
- Valuing home languages, reducing barriers for multilingual families and supporting inclusive early learning.
- Aligning home-learning support with schools and early years settings to strengthen consistency for Reception entry.

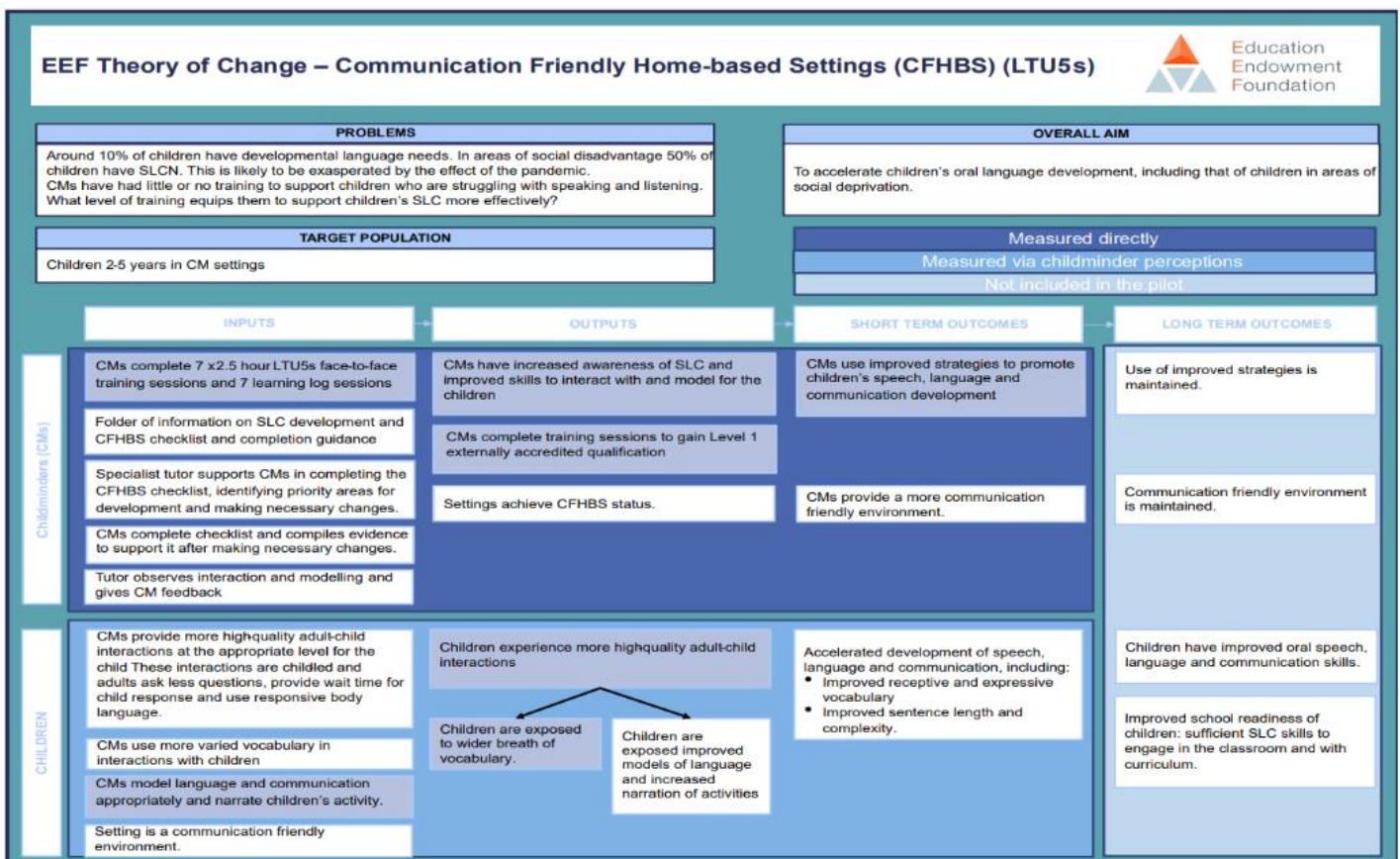
This directly addresses Reading's challenges in language development, literacy, GLD outcomes and preparation for school.

### **ELKLAN Model**

This sets out some additional information on the evidence-based ELKLAN model that will be adopted in the Home Learning Environment outreach for two-, three- and four-year-olds in families who need additional help and support.

Children benefit from increased exposure to high-quality language input and emotionally supportive interactions. The CFHMB pilot study provided evidence-informed mechanisms of change that led to:

- Home carers reported that over a 1/3 noticed improved receptive and expressive language, including vocabulary in their children.
- Over ½ of home carers reported improved sentence structure complexity and length in their children.
- Reported better listening, attention and turn-taking
- Enhanced social communication skills, such as initiating interaction and sharing play
- Improved emotional understanding and self-regulation, supporting positive behaviour



#### **4. Strong early years provision and workforce development**

To improve GLD outcomes and reduce inequalities, Reading is strengthening quality across early years settings through:

- Advisory visits, Stronger Practice Hub support and DfE programmes focused on communication and language, self-regulation, emotional wellbeing, physical development and early maths.
- Standardised transition guidance across early years, Family Hubs and schools.
- Workforce development focused on early identification, inclusion and support for diverse needs.
- Targeted projects such as Little Foundations, Mental Health First Aiders, and Enrichment for Twos.
- Improved access to qualifications, leadership development and peer-to-peer networks.

This builds on strong evidence from the PADO programme, which delivered measurable improvements in communication, PSED and physical development, and reduced referrals to specialist services.

#### **5. Family Hubs as Inclusive, Local, Place-Based Support**

Families and young people told us they want welcoming spaces, clear information, mental health support, safe places to talk, digital access, and help with ESOL and finances.

We have responded by:

- Establishing four Best Start Family Hubs in communities with the highest levels of need offering a joined-up package of support.
- Creating a digital Family Hub platform for childcare, activities, infant feeding, health visiting and specialist services.
- Designing hub environments with young people to promote belonging, inclusion and emotional safety.
- Extending outreach to families who have previously felt unwelcome in services.

This strengthens early help, reduces crisis escalation, and improves access for families who experience language, cultural or systemic barriers.

Reading benefits from rich cultural, leisure and skills providers who have been consistently passionate about supporting children, young people and families. Thousands of Reading's families engage with the libraries, museums, theatres and leisure providers in Reading, which contribute to our children's early development, parent and caregiver confidence and positive activities for children and young people. Together we have worked hard to link Best Start in Life Family Hubs to our library offers, physically co-locating our services and linking our digital support, whilst also helping to create language-rich home environments, strengthening early literacy, creating multi-lingual outreach and reducing social isolation.

## Family Hub locations

Our Best Start in Life Family Hubs are located in our areas of greatest need and provide outreach across Reading:

- **Southcote**
- **Ranikhet**
- **South Reading**
- **East and North Reading**

Reading Family Hub digital platform:

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/beststartinlifefamilyhubs>

The range of help and support available from the Best Start in Life Family Hubs, includes:

### 1. Child & Family Health

Amongst other things, our Best Start in Life Family Hubs offer on-site midwives, health visiting, baby groups, developmental reviews, infant-feeding support, health clinics and public-health campaigns.

There is a range of physical advice and online resources that are specifically tailored to the needs of Reading's children and families, to support early development and promote safety and welfare of our children.

### 2. Early Learning & School Readiness

A range of very specific Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) aligned play and learning groups are available in Reading and are linked to our wider Best Start in Life Family Hub offer, including free Ofsted-registered crèche, library access in some hubs, school-readiness activities and preparation for nursery and reception.

### 3. Family Support & Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Best Start in Life tailored support now includes emotional wellbeing support, SEND and speech-and-language drop-ins, neurodivergence outreach and advisory support, parenting programmes (sleep, behaviour, routines, feeding, safety, emotional wellbeing), help with two-year-old funding and benefits, housing, work, financial guidance and referrals to additional specialist services that some of our services need.

### 4. Family Help & Safeguarding

Family help for families has been brought together in Reading to work as one team, co-located in Best Start in Life Family Hubs, providing a range of support from universal advisory support, outreach and home visits, and practical support with housing and school issues; to specific tailored help for families working with social care (providing a golden thread for our families receiving multi-agency child protection support). Partnerships with

health, midwifery, and neurodivergent advice or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support enable early risk identification and consistent support for families facing multiple needs and challenges.

## 5. Parenting Offer

A trauma-informed, early-intervention pathway supports families from pregnancy to age 5. This includes antenatal support, perinatal mental health programmes, Mums in mind, young parent programmes, dad-specific sessions, trauma-informed courses (Mellow Bumps & Babies) and evidence-based toddler programmes such as Incredible Years.

## Links to Neighbourhood Health

Reading's Health and WellBeing Board recognised in their workshop co-designing the Best Start in Life Strategy on 10<sup>th</sup> February 26, the potential of Reading's Best Start Strategy, the careful listening to Reading's communities in the co-design of Reading's offer, and the multi-disciplinary support embedded in Family Hubs, has strong potential to act as a foundation for the new Neighbourhood Health design. The explicit focus on children and young people, and their families, in the draft proposals for local Neighbourhoods is very welcome.

## 6. Stronger Partnerships and Public Health Nursing

To deliver integrated support, partners across health, education and the voluntary sector are strengthening the 0–19 (up to 25 SEND) Public Health Nursing Service.

This includes:

- A workforce strategy to improve recruitment, retention and training pipelines
- Clearer specialist roles within the service to help support children and families that need safeguarding, or have complex or multiple needs. areas)
- Strengthened links between health visiting and immunisations, nutrition, oral health, smoking cessation and safety
- Improved quality of mandated reviews to enhance early identification
- Better digital systems for data sharing, reporting and risk identification
- Alignment with the national Healthy Child Programme, safer staffing tools and a strengthened quality framework.

This ensures families receive the right support at the right time, and that partners work together around shared goals.

## What difference do we hope to make to the outcomes of Reading's children?

Reading has a relentless focus on improving outcomes for our children and a specific sensitivity to children and families facing multiple challenges or disadvantages. We want to see:

**“A future where every child grows up safe, nurtured and supported to reach their full potential, regardless of background or circumstance.”**

By 2028, the Best Start in Life Strategy will deliver measurable improvements in children’s health, development and school readiness. We aim to see more babies born healthy, with increased uptake of smoking cessation support and early perinatal mental health help, and improved birthweight outcomes (please see our specific outcomes below).

- Immunisation rates for under-fives will rise towards the 95% national target, childhood obesity at Reception will stabilise, and levels of tooth decay among five-year-olds will reduce.
- More children will be identified earlier for neurodivergent and SEND needs, with faster access to help, advice and support, including Portage and Family Hub support.
- By strengthening home learning, early language and early years provision, we expect a sustained increase in the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development, with a narrowing of the gaps for disadvantaged children, children with SEND and those from backgrounds facing marginalisation or multiple disadvantages.
- Persistent absence in Reception will fall, and more children will start school with the independence, communication and self-regulation skills they need to thrive.
- We want:
  - to hear back from families reporting feeling seen, heard and supported
  - to hear that our children and families experience feeling included and have a sense of belonging
  - our children and families to be able to access help early and subsequently see a reduced number of children and families reaching crisis without previous support.

Ultimately, these improvements will contribute to a future where every child in Reading grows up safe, nurtured and able to reach their full potential.

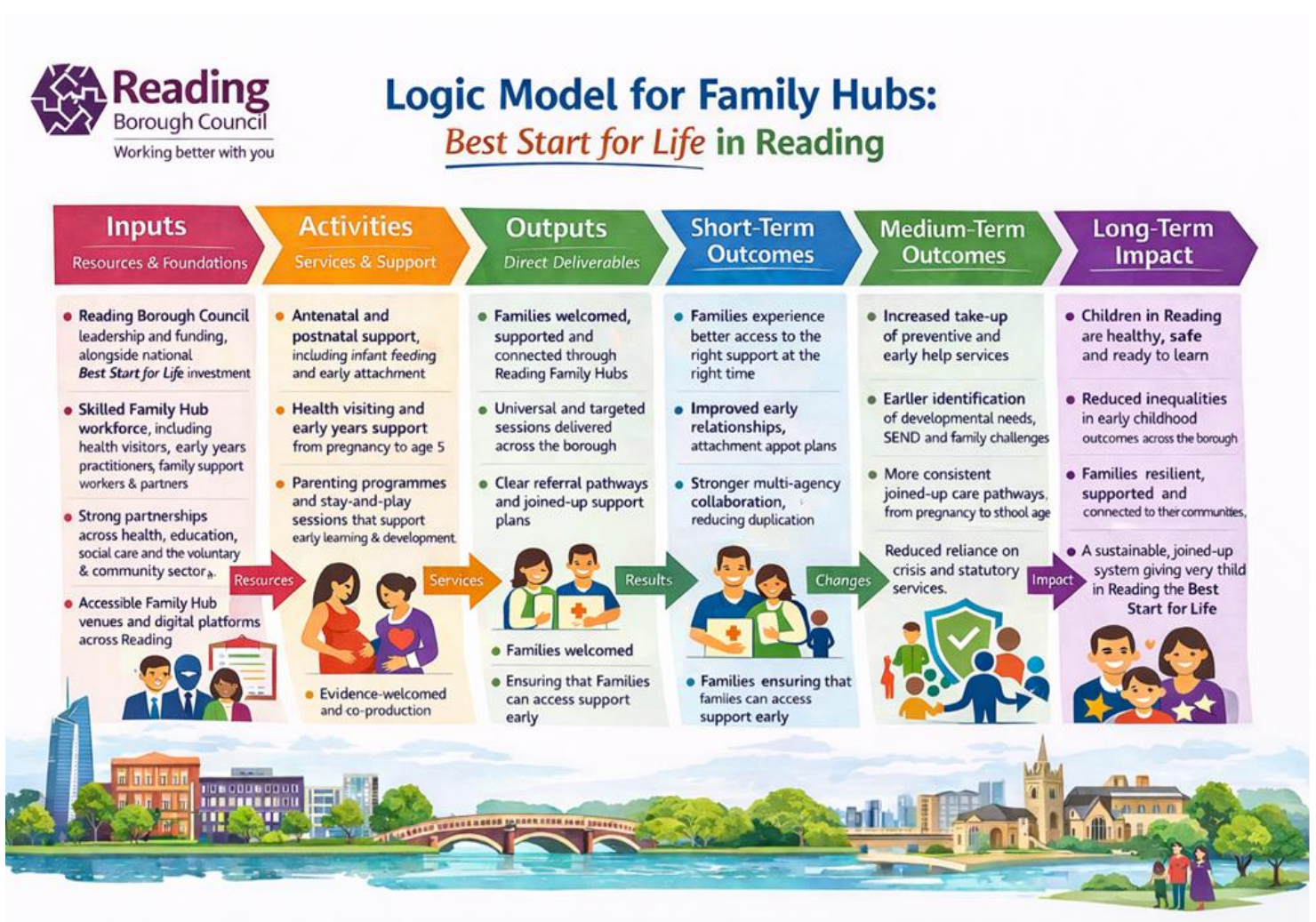
## **Governance**

Given the system-wide response needed by partners and communities to improve outcomes for children, the Best Start in Life Strategy has been overseen by the One Reading Partnership on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board and has been proactively discussed at co-design stage by Reading’s Health and Well-Being Board members.

‘Best Start in Life’ has been identified as one of three priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board for 2026-2028. In practice, this means that the Board will regularly review the progress of the delivery plan and ensure shared accountability across partners. The

Health and Wellbeing Board will also ensure links are made with other key programmes of work such as Neighbourhood Health and we are delighted that children and young people's integrated support through Family Hubs has been identified as a key foundation for Neighbourhood Health development.

Visually, this can be described in the following ways:



RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT & LONG TERM OUTCOMES	IMPACT PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES
<p>Partnership services responding to levels of need and parental requests for help to be coordinated in Family Hub Offer (e.g., midwifery, health visiting, early years advisory support, family workers, mental health, domestic abuse, substance/ alcohol recover, housing worklessness, smoking cessation, perinatal mental health, speech and language, Portage, etc.</p> <p>4 Family Hubs to be established in the communities of greatest need.</p> <p>Analysis of evidence-based practice to inform parenting and home learning education support</p> <p>Early years and childcare sufficiency review</p> <p>Early Years SEND outreach to settings and via Family Hubs</p>	<p>One coordinated partnership offer via Family Hubs running weekly in the four communities of greatest need, with outreach.</p> <p>Culturally humble Home Learning Environment home outreach service</p> <p>Increase in childcare sufficiency.</p> <p>Digital resources on childcare, weaning, breastfeeding, child development, parenting, perinatal mental health, speech, and language, etc to be brought together on Family Hub digital platform.</p> <p>Speech and language telephone advisory support to be offered</p>	<p>Support for all parents/ caregivers with nutrition, breastfeeding, mental health and wellbeing, child development, parenting, health literacy, school readiness, good level of development</p> <p>Targeted support for home learning environments specifically supports Good Level of Development, language rich environments.</p> <p>Early identification of neurodivergence and support plans to adjust home, setting and community environments.</p> <p>Earlier targeted emotional and mental health, positive relationships parenting and substance/ alcohol recovery support in local communities</p>	<p>Children and families experience being welcomed and listened to – a sense of belonging.</p> <p>More children achieve a Good Level of Development and are school ready.</p> <p>Neurodiverse and SEND children can understand and describe their diversity, strengths and needs and experience adjustments to their environment to increase inclusion and belonging.</p> <p>Improved emotional well-being and resilience.</p> <p>Reduced substance/ alcohol dependency</p> <p>Increased positive relationships and reduction in harm.</p> <p>Decreased numbers of children escalating to child protection without previous experience of help.</p>	<p><b>B02a/b/c/d – School readiness</b></p> <p><b>B03 – Pupil absence (Reading 7% vs England 7.1%)</b></p> <p><b>B11 – Domestic abuse related incidents and crimes (Reading 25.1 per 1,000 va England 27.1 per 1,000)</b></p> <p><b>C08a/b/c – Child development (2 to 2.5 years old)</b></p> <p><b>C11a/b – Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children.</b></p> <p><b>C19a/b/c – Successful completion of drug/alcohol treatment (all red for Reading)</b></p> <p><b>C28 – Self reported wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>E02 – Percentage of 5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious tooth decay</b></p> <p><b>C09a – reduction in Reception obesity (gap in outcomes for Reading’s children)</b></p> <p><b>C09b – reduction in Year 6 obesity (gap in outcomes for Reading’s children)</b></p>

			Reduced potentially avoidable accidents and injuries in under 5s.	CO2a – Under 18s conception rate  Rate of immunisations for Reading’s children
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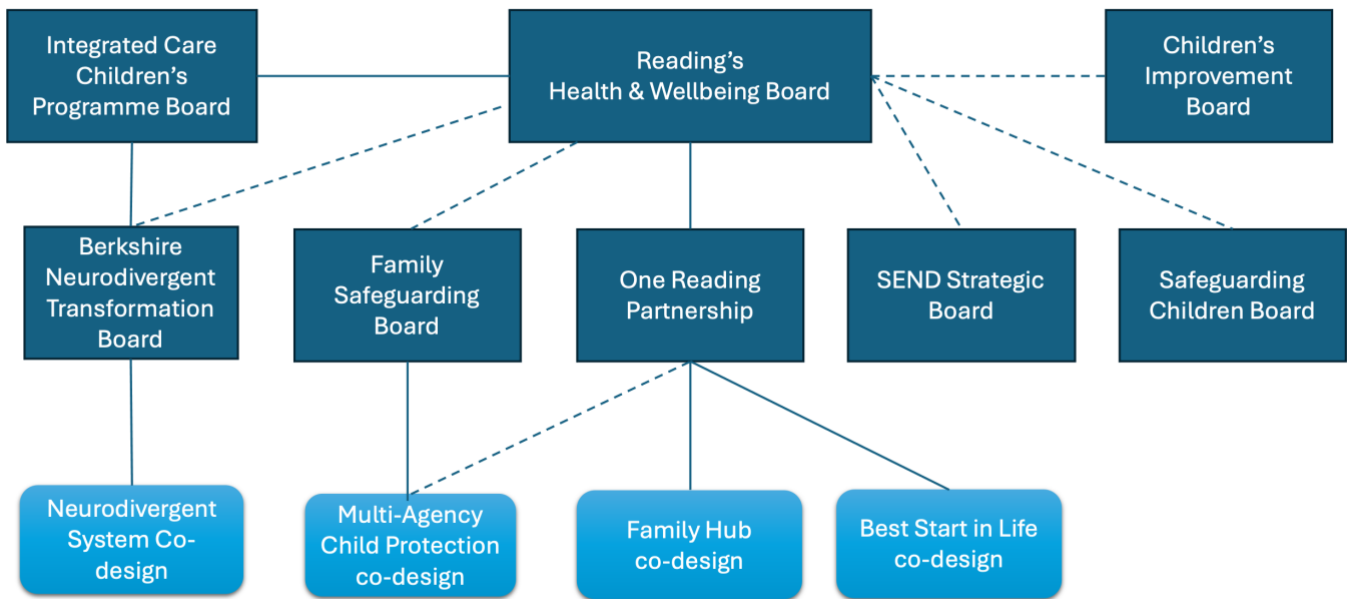


Figure x Diagram showing governance for the Best Start in Life Strategy and Reading's integrated Best Start in Life, Families First and SEND Reform child-centred focus

Reading Borough Council's policy committee and ACE committee will provide local authority statutory oversight and governance of the Best Start in Life Strategy.

## Conclusion

Reading's statutory and voluntary partners will work as one team to maximise the very best outcomes for children and young people and provide the very Best Start in Life in Reading. This is a commitment into the medium to long term from Reading's leaders, recognising that strategic change of this nature takes time to embed and will require the shared investment of all our local services in Reading:

### **'It takes a village to raise a child'**

NB. "It takes a village to raise a child" is an African proverb meaning that a child's upbringing is a communal effort, requiring support from extended family, neighbours, professionals, and friends, rather than just parents or caregivers. It emphasizes shared responsibility, where the "village" ensures a safe, nurturing environment to help children thrive.

We leave you with the words of Reading's children, who describe this vision in their own words:

**“Your voices will be heard, and you will be supported to prepare for the future, reach your full potential and become the best person you can be”**

## Appendix

### Appendix A - Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading (at end of reception year)

This visualisation demonstrates the number of Reading children's achieving a Good Level of Development in the period 2022/23 to 2024/25:

	Year	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
All achieving a good level of development	Achieving a Good Level of Development	63.8%	66.9%	68.4%
	National Average	67%	68%	68%
Boys Achieving a good level of development	Boys	56.3%	59.6%	60.4%
	Boys National Average	61%	61%	62%
Girls Achieving a good level of development	Girls	71%	74.3%	76.4%
	Girls National Average	74%	75%	75%
FSM eligible children achieving GLD	FSM eligible	50.6%	55.3%	49.8%
National FSM eligible children achieving GLD	National FSM eligible	49%	51.6%	52%

Non-FSM eligible children achieving GLD	Non-FSM	68.4%	71.2%	72.5%
National Non-FSM eligible children achieving GLD	National Non-FSM	69%	71.5%	72%
FSM Gap	FSM Gap	17.8%	15.8%	22.7%
	National FSM gap	20%	19.9%	20%
SEN achieving a good level of development	SEN	24%	23%	26%
	SEN National Average	20%	20%	21%
SEN GAP	SEN Gap Reading	40%	44%	43%
	SEN Gap National Average	47%	48%	47%

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## Equality Impact Assessment Template

### A. Information about the policy

<b>Policy title</b>	The Best start in Life Strategy
<b>Lead officer (name and role)</b>	Becky Bateman Head of Early years and Childcare
<b>Date of assessment (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	16.6.2026
<b>Summary of the policy</b>	<p>Reading's Best Start in Life Strategy focuses on early help, joined-up services and removing barriers to support, especially for families who need it most. Strong integrated pathways—midwifery, early years, health visiting, Family Hubs and voluntary and community partners—provide wraparound support from pregnancy to school entry. Through improved early intervention, targeted support, strengthened early years provision and high-quality Family Hubs, Reading is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supporting children's development from birth</li> <li>• improving Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes for all children</li> <li>• ensuring more children thrive by the time they enter Reception</li> <li>• enabling every child to have the strongest possible start in life</li> </ul>

### B. Initial assessment

	<b>Assessment</b>
<p><b>PSED Aim 1 (unlawful behaviour):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could your policy lead to <a href="#">direct or indirect discrimination</a>, <a href="#">harassment</a>, <a href="#">victimisation</a>, or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010?</li> </ul>	<p>The policy is not expected to lead to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, or victimisation under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The strategy is explicitly designed to be inclusive, accessible, and family-centred, supporting all families in Reading. It focuses on improving access to services and the policy will affect access to services and participation, but in a positive way, with the intention of reducing inequalities.</p> <p>Key impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access to integrated services (e.g. Family Hubs, health visiting, early years support), designed to be inclusive, local, place-based and accessible.</li> <li>• Targeted outreach and early intervention for families facing the</li> </ul>

	<p>greatest challenges, including those affected by poverty, poor housing, or other adversities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced support for children with SEND and neurodivergence, including earlier identification and intervention.</li> <li>• Focus on closing development gaps which are already evident in early childhood and linked to deprivation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PSED Aim 2 (equal opportunities):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could your policy affect how service users or employees access services or participate in activities relevant to your policy area?</li> <li>• Could it impact people with particular protected characteristics who have a disproportionately low level of access to services, participation in public life, or other activities?</li> <li>• Could it create or worsen disadvantages and inequalities in your community?</li> <li>• Could it remove or minimise disadvantages and inequalities in your community?</li> </ul>	<p>Protected characteristics most positively affected include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability (SEND and neurodiversity support)</li> <li>• Race and ethnicity (through inclusive, accessible services and outreach)</li> <li>• Sex and pregnancy/maternity (perinatal support)</li> <li>• Socio-economic disadvantage (local characteristic)</li> </ul> <p>Locally defined characteristics also supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of care (targeting vulnerable families and children in care)</li> <li>• Armed forces community (via universal access routes, though not explicitly targeted)</li> </ul> <p>Potential risks (to be mitigated):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal uptake of services among some groups (e.g. marginalised communities)</li> <li>• Access barriers (e.g. language, digital exclusion, cultural barriers)</li> <li>• Outcomes for all children and families, with additional targeted support for those experiencing disadvantage, which is consistent with lawful positive action.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PSED Aim 3 (good relations):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could your policy affect how people perceive or interact with others?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy is expected to have a positive impact on community cohesion and understanding.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could it help tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people with different protected characteristics?</li> <li>• Could it lead to prejudice, community tensions, conflicts, isolation, or segregation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy promotes inclusive, respectful, and trauma-informed services that recognise diverse family needs. It has been co-produced with families, communities and partners, helping ensure different voices are represented.</li> <li>• By improving early support and reducing disadvantage, it contributes to long-term social inclusion and reduced inequality, which are key drivers of cohesion.</li> <li>• If not implemented equitably, perceived inequalities in service access could lead to dissatisfaction or reduced trust</li> </ul>
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## C. Full assessment

### i. Impact on protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Expected impact	Evidence
Age	<b>Positive</b> – Focus on the first 1,001 days improves early childhood outcomes and life chances.	Strategy prioritises early intervention in infancy and early childhood, where inequalities first emerge and have lifelong impact.
Disability	<b>Strong positive</b> – Improved early identification and support for children with SEND and neurodivergence.	Specific priority on earlier identification of SEND and access to integrated support services.
Gender reassignment	<b>Neutral to positive</b> – No specific targeted actions, but inclusive, non-discriminatory service design benefits all groups.	Services described as inclusive, respectful, and accessible to all families.
Pregnancy and maternity	<b>Strong positive</b> – Core focus on perinatal health, parenting support, and early support for families.	Priority on strengthening perinatal and early health support for mothers, babies, and families.
Race	<b>Positive</b> – Outreach and accessible services expected to improve access for ethnically diverse communities.	Emphasis on inclusive, accessible, community-based services and targeted outreach to families facing adversity.
Religion or belief	<b>Neutral to positive</b> – No direct targeting, but inclusive and community-based	Co-production with communities and inclusive

	approach supports diverse needs.	principles support culturally appropriate services.
Sex	<b>Positive</b> – Support offered to both mothers and fathers, promoting equitable parenting support.	Services include support for “mums and dads-to-be” and family-centred approaches.
Sexual orientation	<b>Neutral to positive</b> – Inclusive family approach supports diverse family structures.	Strategy designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all families.
Marriage and civil partnership	<b>Neutral</b> – No specific differential impacts identified.	Universal access to services regardless of marital status.
Membership of the armed forces community*	<b>Neutral to positive</b> – Access to universal and targeted services available to all families, including mobile or transient populations.	No specific targeting, but inclusive Family Hub model improves accessibility
Socio-economic disadvantage*	<b>Strong positive</b> – Significant focus on reducing inequality linked to poverty and deprivation.	Outreach to families facing adversity, including support with housing, debt, and wider determinants of health.
Experience of care*	<b>Positive</b> – Additional support for vulnerable children and families, including those known to services.	Strategy includes support for children in care and vulnerable families as part of integrated services

\*Additional characteristics identified by the Council to be considered in Equality Impact Assessments.

## ii. Mitigating Actions

Negative impact	Mitigating action
N/A	

## iii. Monitoring and Review

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Monitoring will be proportionate, data-driven, and aligned to existing performance frameworks, ensuring that equality impacts are actively tracked and addressed throughout the life of the strategy.

#### **D. Approval**

<b>Approving officer (name and role)</b>	<b>Date (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
Brian Grady, Director of Education	17/06/2026

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## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

**08 July 2026**

<b>Title</b>	Annual Report for New Directions College
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
<b>Report author</b>	Lisa Welch, Adult Learning and Skills Manager and Principal New Directions College
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
<b>Council priority</b>	Promote more equal communities in Reading
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the committee notes the report for information

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In January 2022, ACE Committee requested an annual report that highlights the key activities and outcomes delivered by New Directions College.
- 1.2. This report provides the latest update and covers activity during the period August 2025 to April 2026 and the performance information for the 2024-25 academic year. The report highlights the core service offer, performance, emerging developments and learner feedback.
- 1.3. This report demonstrates how New Directions College continues to improve outcomes for residents, widen participation and support economic inclusion during a period of funding reform and financial constraint.
- 1.4. The report sets out the policy context, service offer, performance outcomes, in-year developments and learner feedback.

### 2. Policy Context

- 2.1 New Directions College is Reading Borough Council's Adult and Community Education (ACE) service. It is funded through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF), with a small amount of additional income from course fees, apprenticeships and external funding bids. Since ASF replaced the Adult Education Budget in August 2024, all grant funded adult skills provision now operates under Department for Education / Department for Work and Pensions funding rules, following the closure of the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in March 2025. The College is inspected under Ofsted's updated Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and is currently graded Good (December 2024). The work of the College aligns with the Government's growth and labour market priorities, including the Skills for Growth agenda and emerging national workforce planning reforms, which emphasise place-based delivery, progression into work and support for adults furthest from the labour market.

- 2.2 Local Authority ACE sits within the wider Further Education (FE) sector and focuses on learning at Level 3 and below. Level 3 qualifications are broadly equivalent to A levels and represent the highest level typically delivered within adult and community education. They are designed to equip adult learners with the specialist skills and knowledge needed to progress into skilled employment, higher-level apprenticeships or further study, and are a key pathway for adults returning to learning later in life. Learners must be aged 19+ and meet ASF eligibility and residency rules, which were updated for 2025–26.
- 2.3 Reading Borough Council uses a place-based approach to plan its adult learning offer, drawing on local economic, social and labour market intelligence. This ensures programmes align with local priorities, employer needs and learner aspirations. The approach is strengthened through participation in Berkshire Connect to Work, a multi council programme supporting residents facing barriers to employment with tailored skills, health and job readiness support with co-location of employment support staff at the College’s main location.
- 2.4 ASF funding is targeted towards adults who are disadvantaged or underrepresented in education. The College works closely with partners, including employers, Jobcentre Plus and local agencies, to widen participation and support progression into further learning or work. These partnerships help ensure that learners develop strong personal, social and employability skills.
- 2.5 The College continues to deliver apprenticeship provision, with strong employer engagement where programmes remain in scope, while taking a planned and cautious approach in response to national funding changes.
- 2.6 Nationally, adult skills remain a major priority within the Government’s growth and labour market mission. This supports place-based delivery models like Reading’s, ensuring adult learning aligns with economic need and contributes to local and national growth. The establishment of Skills England has strengthened coordination across the post-16 system, with a growing emphasis on data led workforce planning.

### **3. New Directions College 2025-26**

#### **Background**

- 3.1. Reading Borough Council has delivered adult education since 1958. Today, New Directions College continues to provide an inclusive and supportive space where adults can build confidence, develop essential skills and progress into further learning, employment and improved wellbeing.
- 3.2 The College offers a wide range of informal and formal learning from entry level to Level 3 qualifications, alongside employability support, confidence building programmes and community-based learning. Provision focuses on skills for life, work and community participation, including:
- English, maths and digital skills, fully funded for eligible adults under statutory entitlements;
  - English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), including asylum seekers and refugees;
  - Vocational qualifications (Levels 1–3) in Early Years, Education/Teaching Assistant, Hospitality, Barista Skills;
  - Apprenticeships, currently available at Levels 2, 3 and 5 (however, recent national defunding of several Leadership apprenticeship standards means the College will reduce and refocus its apprenticeship offer moving forward);
  - Family learning, delivered in partnership with schools;
  - Supported learning for adults with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or mental health needs, building independence, social skills and employability ;

- Employability and work readiness, including CV support, interview preparation, confidence building workshops and sector-based programmes with local employers such as Thames Water, IKEA and Crowne Plaza;
  - Creative and wellbeing programmes, including arts and ceramics, supporting mental health and social connection.
- 3.3 The College operates from its main site at 330 Northumberland Avenue, with additional delivery at Southcote and Whitley Community Hubs, Children’s Centres as part of the Family Hub offer, Libraries and community venues. Further expansion is planned once the new Central Library at the Civic Centre is completed.
- 3.4 A substantial proportion of learners are long term unemployed, from vulnerable households, adults with mental health needs, learning difficulties or disabilities, and newly arrived communities including refugees and asylum seekers. The College provides comprehensive Additional Learner Support, including:
- Childcare, travel and course related financial support;
  - Access to digital devices and equipment;
  - In class learning support;
  - Dyslexia assessment and specialist support;
  - Support for visually impaired and deaf learners;
  - Exam access arrangements and concessions.

This ensures all learners, regardless of background or need, can access, participate in and succeed in learning.

### **Performance and Learner Outcomes (2024-25)**

- 3.5 The College’s key performance objectives are to maintain achievement above national averages, improve year-on-year outcomes following the post-pandemic dip, and close gaps for priority learner groups including those with SEND, ESOL learners and adults furthest from the labour market. Outcomes have improved year-on-year, with achievement now above national averages and strong performance for priority groups. In 2024–25, overall adult skills achievement rose to 89.4%, exceeding the most recent national average (NAR 87%) and demonstrating strong recovery and improvement. Achievement refers to the proportion of learners who successfully complete and achieve the qualification or learning aim for which they were enrolled, in line with national funding and Ofsted definitions.
- 3.6 In 2024–25, the College enrolled 877 learners on government funded adult skills provision, with particularly strong performance in English (99%), ESOL (95%) and Skills and Employment provision (94%). Achievement in English improved markedly from 91% in 2023–24 to 98–99% in 2024–25, reflecting strengthened curriculum delivery and assessment practice. Maths achievement, while improved overall, remains an area for development, particularly at Level 1.
- 3.7 The learner profile continues to be predominantly female, with 75% female and 25% male learners in 2024–25. For the first time, male learners outperformed female learners, achieving 94.0% compared with 87.8%, reflecting the impact of targeted interventions to support male learners’ engagement and attainment. Leaders recognise that further work is needed to rebalance this gap while sustaining improved outcomes for male learners.
- 3.8 Learners declaring a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) represented 23% of the learner cohort in 2024–25. Outcomes for this group improved significantly, with learners with LDD achieving 92%, compared with 88.6% for learners without LDD. This represents a notable improvement (+3.8%) and evidences the impact of strengthened learning support, improved curriculum design and more systematic monitoring of progress.

- 3.9 The College serves a more ethnically diverse learner population than the Reading borough population as recorded in the 2021 Census, reflecting its accessibility to learners from neighbouring areas as well as Reading residents. Overall achievement across ethnic groups was strong at 90.9%, with particularly high outcomes for Asian Chinese (96.3%) and Arab (96%) learners. Some variation remains between groups, and targeted actions are in place to close remaining gaps.
- 3.10 The most popular areas of provision continue to be Skills for Life (English, maths and ESOL), followed by preparation for life and work, vocational education (particularly Early Years and Education), digital skills and hospitality programmes. Hospitality and barista provision for adults with SEND remains a particular strength, with 99 learners and a 97% achievement rate, alongside strong progression into volunteering and employment.
- 3.11 Overall, learners are well prepared for their next steps. Of those who responded to destination surveys, 66% progressed to further learning, 11% entered paid employment, and most remaining learners were supported into positive pathways aligned with their circumstances. While destination data capture remains an area for improvement, outcomes demonstrate that the College continues to achieve strong impact for learners furthest from the labour market.

### **In Year Performance and Key Developments (August 2025-April 2026)**

- 3.12 This section covers in year performance from August 2025 to April 2026. This period has been characterised by significant financial constraints across the adult learning sector, including funding reform, the ending of time-limited national programmes and rising delivery costs. These factors have shaped delivery choices and require a focus on stability, quality and financial sustainability.
- 3.13 The College has continued to respond to sustained demand for ESOL provision, reflecting the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and new migrant communities in Reading. Demand remains particularly strong from Hong Kong British National (Overseas) households, alongside ongoing support for Ukrainian and Afghan communities. ESOL remains one of the largest areas of provision, with strong retention and achievement, despite learners often facing complex personal and housing related challenges.
- 3.14 Recognising that local demand for ESOL exceeds the capacity of any single provider, the College secured funding from the Southeast Strategic Partnership for Migration to establish and chair the Reading and the newly formed Berkshire ESOL Provider Network. This partnership approach enables local providers - including all 6 Berkshire Local Authorities, Reading Community Learning Centre, The English Language Centre, Activate Learning and Reading Refuge Support Group - to coordinate delivery, share good practice and resources, and strengthen collective capacity. Working in this way is increasingly important in mitigating reduced funding and ensuring provision remains accessible across the borough.
- 3.15 The College has also continued to develop its hospitality and barista programmes for adults with SEND, which have become an established area of strength. Learner numbers increased to 99, with 97% achievement. Achievement refers to the proportion of learners who successfully complete and achieve the qualification or learning aim for which they were enrolled, in line with national funding and Ofsted definitions. The College's learner café continues to provide supported work experience opportunities, helping learners develop confidence and practical skills. Progression into paid employment for this group remains challenging, particularly following the closure of some accessible town centre venues, and further partnership working with employers alongside referrals into the Connect to Work Programme will be explored. This will include closer working with Supported Employment services, local employers and the Berkshire Connect to Work programme to improve progression routes for SEND learners.

- 3.16 Partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and local employers have continued to grow, supporting unemployed adults through employability programmes, sector-based training and job search support. The College continues to deliver a weekly Jobcentre Plus Job Club, ensuring residents can access advice, guidance and progression support. Early destination data shows positive progression into further learning and employment, although improving destination tracking remains a priority.
- 3.17 In response to changes in national apprenticeship funding and increased financial risk, the College has taken a planned and cautious approach to apprenticeship delivery. Apprenticeship numbers have been deliberately reduced while programmes are reviewed and strengthened. This approach has enabled improved outcomes and reduced risk and ensures that any future apprenticeship activity is sustainable and aligned with employer demand.
- 3.18 The College remains actively involved in local and regional partnership structures, including the Social Inclusion Board, Mental Health and Wellbeing Board, Sanctuary Forum, the Berkshire Adult Learning Officers Group, the Thames Valley Further Education & Skills Partnership and the Learning, Skills and Employment Workstream of the Berkshire Prosperity Board. These partnerships support alignment with wider Council priorities and will play an increasingly important role in sustaining provision as funding pressures continue.
- 3.19 The College has also continued its Recognition Awards programme, celebrating the contribution of learners, staff and volunteers, with the annual ceremony held at Reading Town Hall. This remains an important element of maintaining morale and recognising achievement during a period of change.
- 3.20 Overall, the work of the College has continued to be focused on stability, financial responsibility and partnership led delivery. Looking ahead, the College recognises that working more closely with partners will be essential to maintaining access, impact and value for money as public funding remains constrained and further change will be needed to support a financially sustainable service.
- 3.21 The College is operating within an increasingly constrained financial environment, with ongoing changes to grant conditions, funding methodologies and cost pressures across the sector. As part of the Council's wider Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) process, a review of the financial sustainability of the Adult and Community Education service will be required. This will consider the impact of national funding reforms, demand pressures, and the long-term viability of the current delivery model. A further report will be brought forward in due course setting out options to ensure the continued delivery of a high-quality, financially sustainable service aligned to Council priorities.

### **Learner Feedback**

- 3.22 Learner feedback for 2024–25 remains consistently strong and demonstrates high levels of satisfaction, safety and confidence across the College's adult learning provision.

### **Learner Satisfaction Survey**

- 3.23 Based on over 300 learner responses, results show that learners feel safe, supported and positive about their experience at New Directions College:

- 100% of learners say they feel safe at College;
- 99% say they enjoy learning (all or most of the time);
- 99% say they are happy learning at New Directions College;
- 99% report that the College encourages respect for others;
- 98% feel listened to by tutors and staff;
- 98% would recommend the College to friends and family;

- 95% say they are making progress towards their goals;
- 92% say the College encourages them to respect staff and other learners;
- 89% say the College supports their mental health and wellbeing;
- 88% say the College supports their physical health and wellbeing.

These outcomes reflect the College’s strong inclusive culture and its focus on learner wellbeing alongside academic and vocational progress.

### **End of Course Learner Survey**

3.24 Responses from 131 learners completing courses further reinforce these findings:

- 100% say they feel safe at College;
- 99% would recommend their tutor;
- 99% say they are more confident because of their learning;
- 98% say the course met their expectations;
- 97% say their skills have improved;
- 97% say their knowledge has improved;
- 97% say their tutors give helpful feedback on progress;
- 92% say they received the information, advice and guidance needed to decide next steps;
- 92% say they had the information they needed at the start of the course.

The most common reasons learners give for studying at the College continue to be improving employment prospects, building confidence, and progressing to further learning, with learners frequently highlighting the welcoming environment and quality of teaching.

### **Learner Comments**

3.25 Qualitative feedback continues to emphasise tutor expertise, supportive learning environments and improved confidence. Examples include:

*“The tutor created a friendly atmosphere where everybody felt welcome. I gained confidence and practical skills that I can use straight away.”* — Employability learner

*“I didn’t understand many things at the start, but my tutor explained everything patiently. I now want to progress to the next course.”*— Digital Skills learner

*“The course exceeded my expectations. The support and encouragement made a real difference to my confidence.”*— Supporting Teaching and Learning learner

### **Summary**

3.26 Overall, learner feedback for 2024–25 confirms that New Directions College continues to deliver high-quality, inclusive adult education, with learners reporting strong progress, increased confidence and positive experiences, even during a period of funding and system change.

## **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1 New Directions College supports the Council Plan by improving access to learning, skills and wellbeing support for Reading residents, particularly those who face barriers to participation. Adult and community education plays a key role in helping residents gain confidence, develop skills for work and everyday life, and improve their health and wellbeing. By delivering learning in community settings and working closely with partners,

the College helps residents engage locally, supports employers to access skills, and contributes to stronger, more inclusive communities across the borough. In a challenging financial environment, the College's focus on partnership working, targeted provision and value for money ensures that services continue to be effective, targeted and deliver value for money.

4.2 The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading;
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success;
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint;
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children;
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future.

Adult and community education contributes to each of these priorities by widening access to learning, supporting progression into employment, promoting wellbeing and sustainability, and strengthening community engagement.

4.3 In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first;
- Building on strong foundations;
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities;
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents;
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading.

4.4 Delivery of this work is guided by the Council's principles. The College puts residents first by shaping provision around local need, recognises and values Reading's diverse communities, and works collaboratively with partners to extend reach and impact. Learning programmes empower residents to build skills, confidence and independence, supporting long term resilience and self-reliance. The service remains ambitious for Reading, while grounded in practical delivery.

## **5 Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2 This is an annual update report on New Directions College for ACE Committee and does not introduce new environmental or climate impacts. However, the College has continued to strengthen its approach to sustainability, with a growing focus on practical delivery and learner engagement. Increased use of the College's green space has supported outdoor learning, wellbeing activities and environmental awareness, particularly within ESOL and supported learning programmes. The appointment of a Sustainability Manager has helped embed Education for Sustainable Development across curriculum planning and enrichment activity. In a challenging funding environment, the College will continue to work with partners to build on this work and maximise impact through shared resources and collaboration.

## **6 Community Engagement**

6.1 The College has longstanding and trusted community relationships, working closely with local partners to ensure provision reflects the needs of Reading's diverse neighbourhoods. Engagement with parents and families continues to be a core strength,

with programmes designed to build confidence, support children's learning and respond to new and emerging local priorities. In a tightening funding environment, these partnerships are increasingly central to the College's strategy. By working collaboratively with community and voluntary sector organisations, the College can extend its reach, share resources, and ensure that adult learning continues to meet the needs of residents across the borough.

## **7 Equality Implications**

- 7.1 No adverse equality implications arise from this report. The College has key actions within the Council's Tackling Inequality Strategy and is delivering provision as part of the Council's Placed Based work. This includes targeted employment focused provision in Whitley and Church Wards.

## **8 Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1 This is an annual update report on New Directions College for ACE Committee. There are no other relevant considerations here.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this Annual Update report.

## **10 Financial Implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **11 Background Papers**

- 11.1 There are none.

## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading

Borough Council

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Working better with you

**09 June 2025**

<b>Title</b>	Reading Youth Justice Service annual plan 2026/27
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To summarise the Youth Justice plan
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
<b>Report author</b>	Ollie Foxell, Service Manager, Youth Justice and Extra Familial Harm
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children
<b>Corporate priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote more equal communities in Reading</li> <li>Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the Committee notes the progress of the 2025/26 Youth Justice Service annual plan and timeframes for completion and approves the strategic priorities for 2026-27

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Local Authority to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan. The production of a plan is also a condition of the Youth Justice Board Grant. Once agreed the Plan will be published on the Reading Borough Council website.
- 1.2. The production and sign-off of the plan is overseen by the multi-agency Youth Justice Partnership through the Youth Justice Management Board which is independently chaired. The structure of the Plan complies with the expectations set out by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

### 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Annual Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requiring the local authority to publish a plan on an annual basis. The plan contributes to the strategic theme of promoting more equal communities in Reading and safeguarding and supporting the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children, as set out in the Corporate Plan.

### 3. The Proposal

- 3.1. This year's Youth Justice Plan has been completed in draft ahead of the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June for submission to the Youth Justice Board, before which it will be agreed and signed off at the Youth Justice Management Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.
- 3.2. Performance across the Youth Justice Service continues to improve, with clear evidence of positive outcomes for children, families, and victims. Notable progress has been made in reducing first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System and lowering reoffending rates. These improvements reflect sustained focus on developing evidence-based practice, partnership delivery, and diversionary interventions. Below is a summary of areas of improved performance, followed by areas of challenge:

### Reduction in First Time Entrants (FTEs)

- 25 children entered the youth justice system for the first time in 2025–26, a **10% reduction** from 28 in the previous year.
- This follows a **27% reduction** the year prior, demonstrating sustained improvement.
- The FTE rate is now **below the national average**, though still above comparator groups.

#### Drivers of improvement:

- Joint Decision-Making Panel for Out of Court Disposals
- Turnaround programme
- Diversionary initiatives and **Youth Diversionary Disposals**, including deferred outcomes

### Reduction in Reoffending

- **21.9% reoffending rate** (12 months to June 2024), a **6.2% decrease** from the previous year
- 14 out of 64 children reoffended
- The rate is now **below all comparator groups**
- The frequency of reoffending per child who reoffended increased slightly:
- From 2.63 to 3.79 offences per child
- However, this remains **below comparator averages**

#### Drivers of improvement:

- Post-inspection improvement activity (2024)
- Embedding of:
  - Child First principles
  - Trauma-informed practice
  - Identity development approaches

3.2 However, challenges remain—most notably in relation to custody rates, serious youth violence, and ongoing disproportionality. These areas will require continued strategic focus in 2026–27.

### Custody and Remand

- 2 custodial sentences recorded (following zero the previous year)
- 1 remand to Youth Detention Accommodation
- The custody rate is now **above comparator groups**

3.3 Although small cohort sizes can disproportionately affect rates, this indicates need to strengthen alternatives to custody as well as further address serious youth violence.

### Serious Youth Violence (SYV)

- 17 offences leading to a substantive outcome (year ending Dec 2025)
- Rate of **10.1 per 10,000**, above:
  - YJS Family
  - Southeast
  - National averages and comparator groups

3.4 As well as the continued delivery of initiatives such as the Act Now project, the YJS is receiving additional funding in 2025-26 to deliver the focused diversion programme. Work will also be delivered in collaboration with Thames Valley Police to strengthen the delivery of Focused Deterrence, learning from models of good practice in other areas of the country.

3.5 **Disproportionality**

3.6 Children from Global Majority backgrounds remain **over-represented**, particularly those of mixed ethnicity. This remains a key priority for the YJS and partnership and further work is required to achieve demonstrable and sustained impact

### 3.7 **Practice and Workforce Strengths**

3.8 Audit and assurance activity confirms that the quality of practice has continued to improve following inspection and that outcomes for children and victims are improving accordingly. Key strengths include:

- Strong **relationship-based and trauma-informed practice**
- More robust **assessing, planning and intervention** in respect of safety for others and safety and well-being for children.
- Focus on **identity development**
- Effective **partnership delivery model** driving consistency across services

3.9 In December 2025 the Youth Justice Management Board and Youth Justice Board acknowledged the significant progress made by the service and partnership, following the HMIP inspection in 2024. The board and YJB approved the decision to close the HMIP Action plan and consolidate outstanding actions into a single, operational which sits under the Youth Justice plan. This new plan incorporates remaining items from the improvement plan alongside other new priorities, forming an ongoing framework for continuous improvement. This reports to YJMB and continues to have oversight of the YJB via their Performance Oversight framework.

3.10 The following set of strategic priorities have been identified for 2026-27, with an increased focus on strategic and thematic trends for the final priority:

- Reducing First Time Entrants
- Improving long term outcomes of children who have offended
- Positively addressing and reducing disproportionality of Black and global majority children
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence, including a sharper focus on extremist behaviour and violence against women and girls
- Improving education outcomes for children within the YJS by reducing reliance on part-time timetables and alternative provision, strengthening SEND outcomes, and decreasing the number of post-16 young people who are NEET.
- Improving outcomes for actual and potential victims of youth crime, aligned to our strategic analysis of victim need, specifically a sharper focus on the correlation between victimisation and offending.

The following theme will cut across these priorities:

- Aligning parenting and whole family work with the Family Safeguarding and Contextual Safeguarding practice models for Children's Services.

## 4. **Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1. The improvement work contributes to the theme of "Promote more equal communities in Reading" and "Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children" as set out in the Council Plan. It does this by delivering essential improvements to the quality of Youth Justice work in Reading.

## 5. **Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications linked to the Youth Justice inspection or improvement plan.

## 6. **Community Engagement**

- 6.1. Feedback from young people, parents, victims and partner agencies will be used to inform the Plan and priorities for the year ahead. The recent establishment of a 'Young People's Board' in April 2025 within the service is the first major step to our commitment for the voice of young people and victims to shape and determine the future of this service.

## **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. Addressing disproportionality within the criminal justice system is one of the priorities for the Youth Justice Service and partnership as outlined in the Youth Justice Plan 2026-27. One of the recommendations in the HMIP inspection report was to ensure the effective implementation of the disproportionality action plan across the partnership. This will continue to be a priority for the year ahead with renewed focus on impact and outcomes for children.

## **8. Other Implications**

- 8.1. Following the inspection outcome in 2024, the Youth Justice Service moved to quadrant 3 of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) 4 quadrant oversight framework. The criteria for this are that there is an identified improvement need or concern and that the service is considered a 'priority service'. The classification enables the Youth Justice Board to undertake focused engagement at a service level (or across regional statutory and/or delivery partners) and, where appropriate, provide support on their improvement journey. De-escalation from quadrants 3 and/or 4 can only be achieved through meeting the agreed exit criteria. These criteria will be defined through engagement with the Youth Justice Board and the Youth Justice Service.
- 8.2. The improvement work and impact on outcomes has been recognised by the YJB within their oversight and improvement framework, who are now considering whether Reading YJS should be moved from quadrant 3 to quadrant 2 of the oversight framework.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The publication of the Plan will fulfil Reading Borough Council's legal responsibilities in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 9.2. The provision of a multi-agency Youth Justice Service by Reading Borough Council in partnership with the National Probation Service, Clinical Commissioning Group and Thames Valley Police ensures we are compliant with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. The Youth Justice Board contribution (the national contribution) to the YJS pooled budget, is based on a national funding formula. It is yet to be confirmed for 2026-27. Last year's contribution was £324,156.
- 10.2. One of the recommendations from 2024 HMIP inspection was for The Reading Youth Justice Service Management Board to ensure the Youth Justice Service is both sufficiently resourced and structured to facilitate the delivery of high-quality interventions to both children and victims of crime. The service establishment is sufficient to undertake statutory roles and therefore the resources identified are adequate to respond to the learning from the inspection with any vacant posts having approval to recruit.

## **11. Timetable for Implementation** Page 110

- 11.1. 12<sup>th</sup> June; draft plan is available for Councillors.

- 11.2. 16<sup>th</sup> June; draft plan is shared with partners prior to Youth Justice Management Board meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> June.
- 11.3. 23<sup>rd</sup> June; Youth Justice Management Board sign off plan having already had oversight.
- 11.4. 30<sup>th</sup> June; Youth Justice Board submission date.
- 11.5. 14<sup>th</sup> October; Youth Justice Plan to be presented to Council.

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# Reading Youth Justice Plan 2026-27



**Youth  
Justice  
Service**  
Reading



Protecting Our Communities



YJS Young Artist - Koestler Arts Award 2025, Gold award  
in recognition of "its exceptionally high standard".

## Contents

1. Introduction, vision and strategy
2. Local Context
3. Governance leadership and partnership arrangements
4. Update on the previous year:
  - 4.1 – Progress on priorities in previous plan
  - 4.2 – Performance over previous year
  - 4.3 – Risks and issues
5. Plan for the forthcoming year:
  - 5.1 – Child First
  - 5.2 – Resources and Services
  - 5.3 – Board Development
  - 5.4 – Workforce Development
  - 5.5 – Knife Crime Guidance
  - 5.6 – Evidence Based Practice and Innovation
  - 5.7 – Evaluation
  - 5.8 – Standards for Children
  - 5.9 – Service Development and priorities for the forthcoming year
6. Board membership, sign off, submission and approval

Appendix 1 – Organisational Structure

Appendix 2 – Staffing Structure

## 1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Welcome to our 2026-27 Reading Youth Justice Strategic Plan. I am confident that this plan will support the strategic partnership to deliver the highest quality Youth Justice Services in Reading, setting clear strategic priorities for 2026 and beyond. This year's plan builds on the strong partner relationships that have been developed in recent years and aims to support the continuous improvement journey of the service. As we move from a phase of rapid improvement, following the HMIP inspection of 2024, to sustained continuous improvement, the plan also sets out the vision for the service and evidence based practice model of Child First and identity development focused practice.

The plan is aligned with the Reading Borough Council Children's Services OFSTED Improvement Plan, the priorities of our Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnerships, as well as Thames Valley Police's Strategic plan 2025-26 and Race Action Plan 2023-26.

At the time of writing, the Government has published its White Paper on Youth Justice Reform, **Cutting Youth Crime, Changing Young Lives 2026**. The planned reforms are summarised as follows, alongside each area of the Child First Framework with which they align :

- Earlier intervention to stop children entering crime - *Build Pro-social Identity, Divert from Stigma*
- More funding for prevention and community support - *Collaboration and Build Pro-social identity*
- Move toward a more preventative, evidence-led youth justice system – *Child First*
- Aim to reduce reoffending and improve long-term outcomes - *Build Pro-social Identity, Divert from Stigma*
- Youth custody to become a last resort - *Build Pro-social Identity, Divert from Stigma*
- 25% reduction target for children held on remand - *Divert from Stigma, Build Pro-social identity*
- Specialist Youth Intervention Courts to be introduced - *As children, Build Pro-social identity*
- Stronger parental accountability measures proposed- *As children*
- Consultation on tougher Parenting Orders and possible sanctions - *As children, Divert from Stigma*
- Potential review of the age of criminal responsibility - *As Children*
- Childhood criminal records may no longer follow people for life - *As children*
- Greater focus on tackling child criminal exploitation - *As children*

This strategic plan sets the direction for the work of the Youth Justice Service (YJS) in Reading. It sets out details of performance over the past year and our priorities for the next year.

The YJ Management Board, the staffing team children and victims have been involved in the development of this plan and continue to work together to deliver sustained continuous improvement of the service. The Continuous Improvement Plan will become the operational plan for this strategy and is aligned with the longer-term vision of driving Child First and Identity Development focused practice.

### **Our vision statement sets out our ambition for children and victims of crime in Reading.**

*We are confident that by embedding child-first and identity-focused approaches across the partnership, we will achieve improved outcomes for children and victims in 2026-27. We place their*

*needs at the heart of everything we do, always seeing children as children, working collaboratively with them, supporting the development of positive, pro-social identities, and actively diverting them from stigma and harm.*

This is a shared partnership vision for the Youth Justice Service in Reading, one which permeates across this strategic plan into everything we do.

The Youth Justice Service has a key role to play by:

- Diverting children away from the youth justice system, where appropriate.
- Helping prevent offending and reoffending.
- Reducing the use of custody.
- Contributing to multi-agency public protection and safeguarding, improving outcomes for actual and potential victims of crime

The Youth Justice Service does this by working together with its key partners – the police, children’s services, health services, education, probation, community safety and both voluntary and private sector providers – adopting evidence based approaches such as Child First Practice, Trauma Informed Practice and whole family approaches to youth justice, to deliver high quality and effective services to children, their families and the victims of offending.

The overall effectiveness of the Youth Justice Service continues to be monitored by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Overall, our performance data indicates that we are continuing to see improved outcomes for children families and victims, with significantly improved outcome data in respect of numbers of children entering the youth justice system for the first time, and those reoffending.

In 2025-26, 25 children became first time entrants, a 10% reduction on the number in the previous year which was 28. This follows a 27% reduction over the previous year. The rate is now below the national rate but still above that for other comparator groups. This steady improvement demonstrates that we are starting to see impact following the implementation of the Out of Court disposal Joint Decision making panel, the Turnaround project and other diversionary initiatives, and more recently Youth Diversionary Disposals, which have introduced deferred outcomes for children who engage with them.

We have also continued to see a significant reduction in the number and rate of children reoffending in the most recently available 12-month period for tracking. 21.9% of children reoffended in the 12-month period to June 2024, a 6.2% reduction from the rate in the 12 months to June 23. This equates to 14 children reoffending from an overall cohort of 64 and means the rate is now below all comparator groups. The number of reoffences per child who has reoffended has increased slightly in the same period from 2.63 to 3.79 but the rate remains below all comparator groups. This data demonstrates that we are now seeing the positive impact of the improvement work the service and partnership have delivered following the inspection outcome in 2024 as well as continued work to embed child first, identity development and trauma informed.

Custody data is not so positive. There were 2 custodial sentences in 2025-26 following a 12 month period previously where there were no custodial sentences, pushing the rate above comparator groups. There was also one child Remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation in the period. Whilst we know that small numbers can disproportionately impact this data, this suggests that we need to do more to ensure custody is used as a measure of last resort for our most vulnerable children and that there is more to do to address serious youth violence in particular.

We have been on an ambitious journey of improvement, which has focused directly on evidence-based approaches to practice. Audit and assurance work tells us that practice has improved and in turn outcomes

for children and victims are also improving. Our practice model continues to drive partnership activity and operational practice.

Children from Global Majority groups continue to be over-represented in the Youth Justice System in Reading, compared to the general 10–17-year-old population, with those who identify as of mixed ethnicity being most significantly over-represented. This reinforces the importance of the work that has been driven by the partnership on disproportionality in 2025-26 but we need to do more in order to see positive impact.

Serious youth violence remains a significant challenge. In the 12 months ending December 2025, there were 17 Serious Youth Violence offences resulting in a substantive outcome. The rate per 10,000 is now 10.1, which is higher than the YJS Family, Southeast and National averages and all comparator groups. The service and its partners continue to deliver a range of initiatives to address serious youth violence, such as the Act Now project. However, this data suggests that further action is required to achieve a meaningful and sustained impact.

We know that within our Youth Justice Service, we have a significant number of children with complex and multiple needs, having experienced abuse, trauma and neglect as well as Special Education Needs and Disabilities and Speech and Language needs. This year's plan includes a detailed breakdown of the prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences for children supported by the Youth justice Service. Oversight of practice demonstrates that the staff are skilled in delivering relationship based and trauma informed approaches, based on supporting identity development. We will also continue to prioritise our focus on ETE, emotional and mental health and participation with children to support identity development.

2026-27 will see us focus on developing our early intervention and prevention offer to further reduce numbers of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System; improving our strategic and operational response to reducing numbers of potential and actual victims; improving the effectiveness of work to support parents and developing the response to serious youth violence.

### **2026-27 Youth Justice strategic priorities**

Our Improvement work across 2025-26, Local and National performance data, YJB Serious Youth Violence toolkit, and YJB ethnic disparity toolkit, combined with local and national drivers for systems change in youth justice have informed the following changes in our strategic priorities:

- Reducing First Time Entrants
- Improving long term outcomes of children who have offended
- Positively addressing and reducing disproportionality of Black and global majority children
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence, including a sharper focus on extremist behaviour and violence against women and girls
- Improving education outcomes for children within the YJS by reducing reliance on part-time timetables and alternative provision, strengthening SEND outcomes, and decreasing the number of post-16 young people who are NEET.
- Improving outcomes for actual and potential victims of youth crime, aligned to our strategic analysis of victim need, specifically a sharper focus on the correlation between victimisation and offending.

The following theme will cut across these priorities:

- Aligning parenting and whole family work with the Family Safeguarding and Contextual Safeguarding practice models for Children's Services.

On behalf of the YJS Management Board, I am proud to present our Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026-27.



**Michael O'Connor**  
**Independent Chair, Reading Youth Justice Service Management Board**

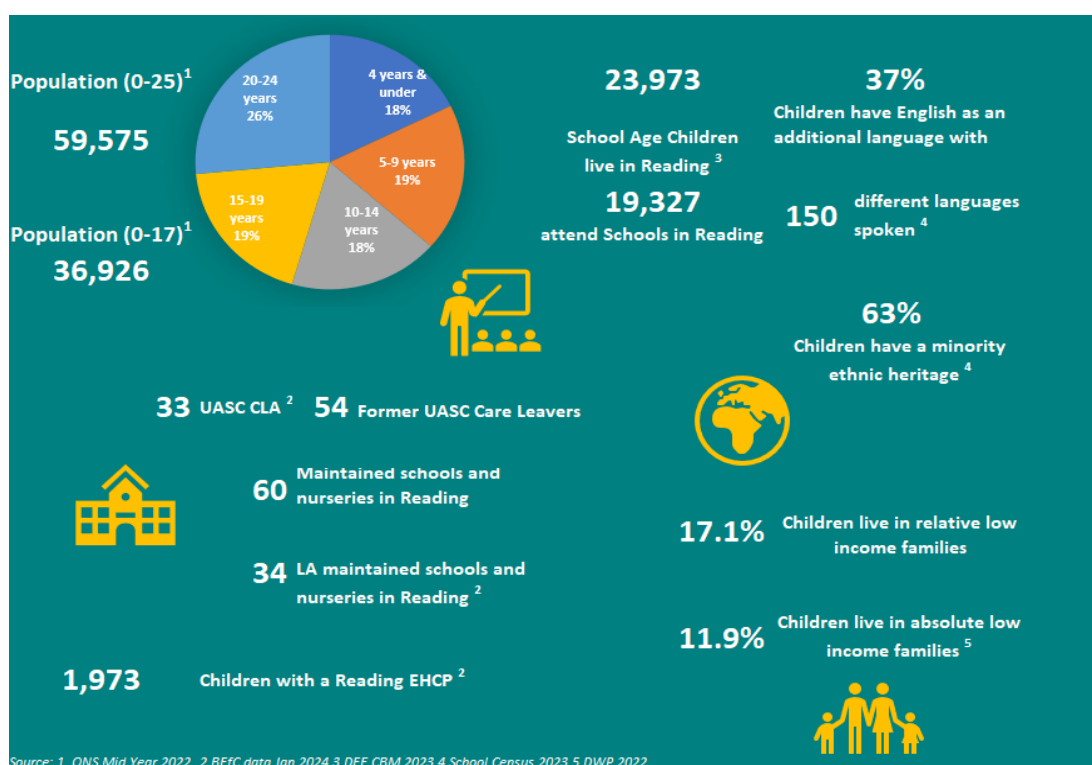
## 2. Local Context

Reading is a thriving and diverse town. It is home to 174,200 people (2021 Census) which is an increase of almost 12% since the census of 2011. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and the South East (7.5%). The overall population in Reading is young, diverse and dynamic with 59,575 children aged between 0 and 18 years of age and 39,936 aged between 10 and 17 years of age (ONS 2022 mid-year). It is a diverse community with 63% of children from Global Majority groups. 37% of children speak English as an additional language. There are more than 150 languages spoken (School Census 2023).

The percentage of children under 16 living in low-income families in Reading is 17.1% with 11.9% living in absolute low income (DWP 2022), compared with 18.5% nationally in 2020. There are limited non-academic and vocational pathways at post 16 and whilst the employment rate in Reading is good, disadvantaged groups including children who have offended have more difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. There are 60 maintained schools and nurseries and 34 Local Authority maintained school and nurseries in Reading. There are 1,973 children with an Education Health and Care Plan in Reading. There are 33 current and 54 former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) resident in Reading (BFfC Jan 2024).

Reading is one of the 3 top crime generating CSP areas in the Thames Valley Community Safety Partnership and has the second highest levels of serious violence in the Thames Valley. Recorded crime is at a similar level to other similar Community Safety Partnership areas across the country.

The following infographic illustrates some of this data:



### 3. Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

The Youth Justice Service sits within the Department of Children's Services at Reading Borough Council. Responsibility for the delivery of children's services was brought back under the direct control of Reading Borough Council in October 2025, following the Council's decision not to continue the contract with Brighter Futures for Children.

The Department of Children's Social Care in Reading Borough Council recently underwent a leadership restructure. This was driven by the need to address findings from Ofsted and JTAI inspections, which identified inconsistent practice and weaknesses in service delivery, and to align with national reforms. The restructure aims to strengthen leadership capacity, improve accountability and consistency, and deliver more effective, coordinated services for children and families. Key principles include building resilience, supporting workforce wellbeing, creating career progression opportunities, and improving practice quality through clearer responsibilities and reduced duplication.

The final structure confirms a move to two Director roles supported by five Heads of Service and ten Service Managers (plus additional fixed-term improvement roles), increasing overall leadership capacity. It separates operational services from transformation and quality assurance functions to enable stronger oversight and sustained improvement. Overall, the changes are intended to deliver more joined-up leadership, improve practice standards, and create a more stable and effective service for children and families.

Under the new structure the Service Manager for Youth Justice has joint responsibility for Extra Familial Harm, and reports to the Head of Service for Family Help and Specialist Service.

The Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) has had an Independent Chair since August 2023 ensuring appropriate challenge and support of the strategic partnership to improve outcomes for children and victims in Reading. The YJMB has representation from all statutory partners as well as a range of non-statutory partners, including representatives from the third sector. The current membership of the YJMB is outlined in section 6 and the overall structure of the Youth Justice Service is detailed in Appendix 1.

Operationally, the service benefits from the following partnership arrangements:

- 1 FTE Seconded Police Officer
- 1 FTE Transitions Officer, funded in partnership by the Probation Service and Brighter Futures for Children.
- 0.33 FTE Child and Adolescent mental Health (CAMHS) clinician
- 0.2 FTE Speech and Language Therapist
- 0.27 FTE NHS Nurse
- 0.4 Elevate worker
- 0.4 Tutor

### 4. Update on the previous year:

#### 4.1 Progress on priorities in the previous plan

In last year's plan we included the entirety of the Improvement Plan formulated in response to HMIP inspection. Additional actions identified within last year's Youth justice Plan were incorporated in to that delivery plan.

In December 2025 a paper was presented to the YJMB outlining progress against the HMIP Improvement priorities. Following endorsement from the board and the YJB, it was agreed to close that plan and for remaining priority areas of work to transition in to one single plan for continuous improvement, as 'business as usual'.

Below is a summary of progress against key areas of focus in the improvement plan, followed by a summary of progress against additional actions added from last year's YJ plan.

## Summary of Completed Work

### Governance and Leadership

- Board induction has been reviewed and relaunched ensuring a more robust induction process
- Performance reporting has been enhanced to include additional local performance measures as well as more granular detail that sits within the overall national indicators, KPIs and local performance. This continues to be kept under review and evolves with each Youth Justice Management Board meeting.
- The audit framework has been reviewed and is now aligned with HMIP standards with tools and templates having been updated. This ensures both Domain 2 audits and audits of our practice with victims. Audit outcomes are now brought to board as outlined in the Forward Plan ensuring a clear line of sight from board level to practice.
- Board members have been involved in audit and assurance activity, notably our Chair has led a thematic audit of victim need, ensuring a strategic response to victim demographic/need and seeking to prevent future potential victims, again reinforcing the line of sight from board level to practice.
- A new management oversight template has been launched and embedded with managers to ensure consistent and robust management oversight of work with children and that supervision case discussions remain focused on delivering improved outcomes for children and victims.
- The Quality Assurance framework has been reviewed and relaunched for both AssetPlus and Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool quality assurance, ensuring robust oversight of the quality of assessments and plans.
- The Disproportionality Action plan has been reviewed and re-launched at the Youth Justice Management Board as a revised Anti-Racism Action Plan, refocusing the partnership on what impact they can have on addressing disproportionality within the Youth Justice System.
- Victim representation has been secured on the board; and an audit of victim work has been completed covering both operational practice with individual victims as well as a strategic analysis of victim needs and themes.
- Child First training (including the focus of Child First on managing the Safety of Children and Others) has been delivered to staff and partners and will continue to be delivered across partner organisations. A workshop is planned for Probation colleagues in 2026.
- Educational triage and oversight has been embedded via the Protect 25 initiative, ensuring that children open to the Youth Justice Service benefit from a 'PEP style' approach to ensuring they receive suitable education.
- A risk register has been created and shared with the board, ensuring that the board has a clear understanding of the risks affecting the service and measures put in place to mitigate them.

### **Staffing and Workforce Development**

- There has been successful recruitment of three qualified Probation Officer's in front line roles and one member of staff is undertaking the Youth Justice degree. These have been significant steps in supporting the development of practice, particularly in relation to safety for others and communities.
- The Restorative Justice Officer role has been successfully recruited and will lead our response to strengthening our victim offer in line with the Victim Code, Youth Justice Standards and the Victim and Prisoners Act 2024.
- Career progression pathways have been developed supporting progression to a Senior Practitioner level for case workers, again supporting the service in ensuring the ongoing development of practice.
- AssetPlus and risk management training has been delivered to staff; as well as SAVRY and MAPPA training.
- Anti-racism training has been delivered to all staff.
- Local practice standards have been launched and oversight of local performance measures is monitored through QA tracking.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion has been embedded in reviewed QA tools.
- The Equity Diversity and Inclusion policy has been created and launched.
- The Transitions Policy has been reviewed and updated with learning from the HMIP thematic review of Transitional Safeguarding.

### **Partnerships and Services**

- The Act Now programme has been delivered in partnership with Reading Football Club Community Trust. Funding has been extended to 2028, albeit at a reduced rate, meaning that delivery has been modified and brought in house.
- A substance misuse screening has been created to support assessment of need. Staff training has been delivered and a substance misuse drop in has been created with the Reconnect team to support decision making over referrals.
- All Police-led interventions are delivered in the YJS environment unless there are exceptional circumstances. The YJS seconded PC is working with a group of children to redesign the weapons intervention that the YJS deliver, following feedback received via the Young People's board.
- An additional support programme was delivered at Cranberry College by colleagues at NewAngle which has delivered positive outcomes.
- A review of Health and Justice has concluded and there has been a tightening of referral processes to ensure support is delivered to all children.
- The YJS has commissioned 23 days of Educational Psychologist support to the YJS per year to support case workers in ensuring children's needs are understood and met.

### **Process, Systems and Quality of Practice**

- QA templates have been reviewed and relaunched for both Court and Out of Court cases, strengthening oversight of practice.
- A monthly multi-agency Safety Panel was launched in October 2025, which is chaired by the Service Manager and provides oversight of all children assessed as high or very high Safety for Others and/or Safety and Well-being. Dip audit findings have indicated that this has strengthened practice in relation to assessments, planning and delivery.
- A local performance dashboard has been developed to support the delivery of local practice standards.

- A new template has been adopted for JDMP recording to ensure that outcomes and decision rationales are clear.
- A detailed analysis, including a qualitative audit of first time entrants was delivered to board in March 2025. This has informed the delivery of prevention and diversion services moving forward. Moving forward, each performance report contains more granular analysis of first time entrants to support board challenge and oversight.
- Audits of practice with victims, aligned to V.1.1 and V.1.2 are also now part of our forward plan for assurance and continuous improvement

### **Impact**

- Audit outcomes demonstrate clear improvements in the quality of practice, as a result of the rapid improvement work delivered following inspection. Specifically, there have been marked improvement to the consistency of assessing and planning for safety for others and safety and well being. However, audits indicate that further work is needed to continue the trajectory of improvement in these areas and in particular to ensure that safety plans are consistently delivered and emerging risks are responded to. The introduction of Safety Panels in October is supporting practice in this area. In June 2026, we have challenged Board members to help us review safety planning via a thematic audit and this will be presented to the YJS Management Board in September with themes for partnership response.
- Outcome indicators show significantly improved outcomes for children across all three national indicators – first time entrants, reoffending and custody - for the most recent 12-month period compared to the equivalent period the previous year
- This improvement work and impact on outcomes has been recognised by the YJB within their oversight and improvement framework, who are now considering whether Reading YJS should be moved from quadrant 3 to quadrant 2 of the oversight framework.

## **Outstanding Actions and Areas for Development**

### **Governance and Leadership**

- Further refinement of performance reporting is needed to include deeper analysis of National Indicators, KPIs and local performance. Additional, more granular first time entrants analysis will be introduced from June boards moving forward.

### **Staffing and Workforce Development**

- Recruitment to remaining vacant posts (1 x Restorative Justice Worker post). Recruitment to 1 RJ worker post has been successful but the second post still needs to be filled this is planned for 2026-27.
- Embedding of volunteer supervision and development arrangements. This was delayed by the recruitment to the RJ worker. This process has now started in early 2026-27 and will continue throughout the year.

### **Partnerships and Services**

- Development of SEND strategy to reflect the needs of the YJS cohort. The head of SEND now attends the YJMB and this work will be developed throughout 2026-27.

- Continued work to support transition of the Serious Violence Duty to the local authority. This is ongoing. In 2026-27 the YJS is receiving funding to deliver Focuses Diversion will which will support the transition of the duty to the local authority.

#### **Process, Systems and Quality of Practice**

- Launch of the multi-agency case formulation panels with CAMHS. Progress with launching this piece of work was delayed by changes of staff in health and justice provision but is expected to be launched by September 2026.
- Securing of additional performance analyst resource.
- Completion of local review of Out of Court decision-making timescales by Thames Valley police. This piece of work is ongoing and being led by Thames Valley Police Youth Justice unit who are exploring a number of strategies to improve timescales from arrest to outcome.
- Further analysis of victim consent and community resolution completion rates. Work to improve victim consent levels is underway at a regional level and is expected shortly. Locally, where consent has not been provided by Police, the YJS seeks this directly from victims.

Additional actions added from last year's YJ plan:

Additional actions	Action status and impact
<b>Governance and Leadership</b>	
<p>Objective: Enhance operational involvement and leadership to address disproportionality:</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>Page 125</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of work to support girls leading to improvements in practice</li> </ul>	<p>The following data was produced in September 2025 to address this action:</p> <p><b>Overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numbers of girls entering Reading YJS are <b>stable to declining overall</b>, in line with much of Thames Valley.</li> <li>Girls remain a <b>small but increasingly visible cohort</b>, requiring continued gender-informed focus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Age profile</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading shows a <b>notable shift toward older girls (16–17+)</b>, while younger entrants are decreasing.</li> <li>This may indicate <b>later identification of need or escalation at a later stage</b>, highlighting missed early intervention opportunities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Diversion is the most common outcome</b>, reflecting a positive focus on early intervention.</li> <li>However, Reading has a <b>higher proportion of formal out-of-court disposals and court outcomes</b> than some neighbouring areas, suggesting scope to review consistency and access to gender-responsive diversion.</li> </ul> <p><b>First Time Entrants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proportion of girls who are FTEs has <b>reduced over time</b>, now broadly aligned with national levels (16%).</li> <li>A short-term increase in 2023–24 reduced the following year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Offending and re-offending</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Violence against the person</b> is the most common offence type for girls. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the context in which this occurs is more commonly expressive violence within peer groups, at a lower level of seriousness than that of boys.</li> <li>The joint decision making panel exists as a suitable forum in which to ensure scrutiny of outcomes and that individual needs are met for girls.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Short-term re-offending is rare, though some <b>emerging longer-term re-offending</b> is evident, remaining below national averages.</i></li> </ul>
<p>Objective: Ensure there is a strategic and operational lead for victims</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Undertake detailed needs analysis of victims to support the board in understanding the profile of victims in Reading.</i></li> </ul>	<p>The following is a summary of a strategic analysis undertaken by the Independent Chair of the YJ Management board, submitted to Youth Justice Management Board in June 2026.</p> <p><i>The report highlights the strong and consistent overlap between <b>victimisation and offending among children</b>, demonstrating that most young people who commit violent offences have experienced significant harm themselves. Violence is therefore best understood not as isolated criminal behaviour, but as part of a broader pattern of <b>trauma, vulnerability, and unmet need</b>.</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Core Insight</b></p> <p><b><i>Children involved in violence are more likely to be victims than purely perpetrators.</i></b>  <i>This challenges traditional justice approaches and reinforces the need for <b>child-centred, trauma-informed responses</b>.</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Key Messages</b></p> <p><b>1. Violence is Rooted in Trauma and Adversity</b>  <i>Children involved in violent behaviour commonly experience:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Abuse, neglect, or family instability</i></li> <li>• <i>Loss, separation, or absence of positive role models</i></li> <li>• <i>Ongoing exposure to fear and insecurity</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Violent behaviour is often a <b>response to lived experience</b>, not simply deliberate wrongdoing</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>2. Victimisation Drives Offending Pathways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Victims of violence are at significantly increased risk of becoming offenders</i></li> <li>• <i>Cycles of harm are reinforced through:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Retaliation</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Peer group dynamics</li><li>○ Lack of protective intervention</li></ul> <p><i>Early victim support is <b>critical to preventing future offending</b></i></p>
	<p><b>3. Fear and Self-Protection are Key Motivators</b></p> <p><i>Many children:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carry weapons</li><li>• Engage in violence</li></ul> <p><i>Primarily due to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fear of harm</li><li>• Lack of trust in authorities</li><li>• Need for self-protection within peer environments</li></ul> <p><i>Violence is frequently <b>defensive and situational</b></i></p>
	<p><b>4. Youth Violence is Highly Gendered</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Predominantly involves boys and young men</li><li>• Influenced by:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Masculinity norms</li><li>○ Status, identity, and peer pressure</li></ul></li></ul> <p><i>Effective responses must include <b>gender-informed approaches</b></i></p>
	<p><b>5. Systems Often Respond Too Late</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intervention tends to occur after behaviour escalates</li><li>• Earlier signs of vulnerability and victimisation are missed</li></ul> <p><i>Greater emphasis is needed on <b>early identification and prevention</b></i></p>
	<p><b>Strategic Implication</b></p> <p><i>A system focused primarily on enforcement risks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reinforcing trauma</li></ul>

<p>Page 128</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Missing root causes</i></li> <li>• <i>Failing to reduce reoffending</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Instead, <b>violence reduction depends on recognising and responding to victimisation early and holistically</b></i></p> <hr/> <p><b>What the Evidence Points Toward</b>  <i>Effective responses should prioritise:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Trauma-informed, child-first practice</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Early intervention for victims of violence</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Strong, trusted relationships with professionals</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Community-based and preventative support</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Positive identity and development opportunities</i></b></li> </ul> <p><i>In addition to the work already being delivered by the Youth Justice Service to deliver against these areas of priority, the following pieces of work are planned:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Extension of Ministry of Justice funded Turnaround support for children ‘on the cusp of’ entry to the Youth Justice system</i></li> <li>• <i>Delivery of Police and Crime Commissioner funded Serious Violence initiatives, outlined in greater detail later in this plan.</i></li> <li>• <i>Further enhancement of the offer to support victims, ensuring that support recognises the strong prevalence of victimisation in our cohort of children open to the YJS.</i></li> </ul>
<p>Objective: Further workforce development for Board and Operational staff to ensure Child First and Evidence based practice is embedded across all interventions with children</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Operationalise Young People’s board</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Young People’s Board – Purpose and Progress</b></p> <p>The Young People’s Board was launched in Spring 2025 and is a key mechanism for promoting voice, influence and positive identity. The group currently consists of three children and is supported by YJS staff and the Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB), with plans to expand membership.</p> <p>To date, the Board has met at least five times and has already influenced service development and strategic decision-making within YJS and the wider partnership.</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 129</p>	<p>A notable example of participation in action includes a care-experienced child addressing the YJMB and national senior leaders (CEO of the YJB), providing powerful testimony about his journey and the role YJS support played in achieving stability, employment and progress towards successful completion of his order.</p> <p><b>What Children Have Told Us</b></p> <p>Children reported feeling <b>valued, respected and safe</b> in their relationships with YJS staff, with space to discuss their lives beyond their offending. Trusting relationships were viewed as stronger with staff than with parents in some cases.</p> <p>Key areas of challenge and feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional, consequence-focused <b>weapons awareness work</b> was perceived as ineffective, leading YJS to redesign this offer through co-production with children and police colleagues.</li> <li>• A strong emphasis on the need for <b>legitimate employment opportunities</b>, influencing YJS participation in <b>The Skill Mill Social Outcomes Partnership</b>, which aims to provide structured employment, qualifications and sustained work for young people aged 16–18.</li> <li>• The importance of <b>constructive activities</b>, resulting in the creation of a bike repair workshop and the funding of gym memberships to support positive activities, interactions and roles.</li> <li>• Practical and relational challenges, including difficulty travelling to the YJS office, feelings of reparation being punitive when not co-designed, emotional impact of repeatedly revisiting offences, perceived inconsistency in enforcement practices, and limited ETE pathways.</li> <li>• A desire for <b>recognition and celebration of achievement</b>, including interest in an awards event involving families.</li> </ul> <p>Further work planned on developing collaboration with children will focus on building in the offer of collaboration and participation as business as usual with all children’s plans. This will ensure that all children are offered the opportunity to participate in shaping the service and that this forms a part of their intervention in it’s own right.</p>
<p>Objective: Enhance and diversify the early prevention offer.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Deliver school navigators project</i></li> </ul>	<p>Following changes to commissioning arrangements associated with BFFC services returning in-house, it was necessary to adopt a full procurement process for this proposal. Unfortunately, procurement timelines could not be aligned with the Police and Crime Commissioner’s required start date of September 2026. As a result, the project will not proceed in its original form. However, the partnership remains committed to supporting vulnerable children and young people, and from May will prioritise children missing education – including those who have received fixed-term exclusions – for referral into focused deterrence support.</p>

- *Deliver positive outcomes as a result of the Kickz tier 1 and 2 projects*

Reading YJS continued it's partnership with Reading Football Club Community Trust in 2025-26 to deliver Premier League Inspires, which is a Tier 1 intervention in schools, and Kickz Targeted which is Tier 2 one to one targeted intervention. The following high level outcomes were delivered for both projects

**Premier League Inspires**

*Unique participants - 17*  
*Spaces allocated - 142*  
*Average contact hours per person - 18.33*  
*Sessions delivered - 20*  
*Session hours delivered - 45*  
*Participants from under represented groups - 4 (23.52%)*  
*Females - 9 (52.94%)*  
*Male - 8*  
*White - 13*  
*Black - 2*  
*Mixed heritage - 1*  
*Other - 1*

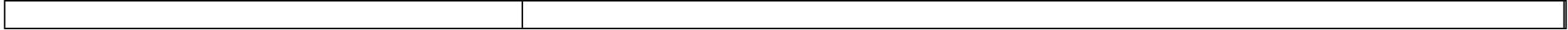
**Kickz Targeted**

*Unique participants - 7*  
*Spaces allocated - 50*  
*Average contact hours per person - 14:17*  
*Sessions delivered - 57*  
*Session hours delivered - 114*  
*Participants from under global majority groups – 57%*  
*Females - 1 (14.29%)*

<b>Workforce Development</b>	
<p>Objective: Agreement to recruit to vacant posts and to support growth investment from across the partnership to deliver high quality YJS services.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Transitions Officer supports the evaluation and improvement of the transitions process demonstrating positive impact for young adults.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Following the successful recruitment of an experienced Probation Officer, in to the role of Transitions Officer, this role has become an established part of the team. The Transitions Protocol has been reviewed and re-launched with probation colleagues and is kept under review within regular Young Adult Cohort network meetings held with Probation colleagues. This has supported a number of examples of improved transitions.</p>
<p>Objective: Further develop the response to serious violence with an improved focus on violence against women and girls and radicalisation and extremism.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Deliver training for staff that leads to improvements in practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>Consider specialist intervention support regarding masculinity and the impact of the online world.</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop response to children at risk of radicalisation in the YJ cohort</i></li> </ul>	<p>The YJS has collaborated with a local University Academic who specialises in Critical thinking and Online Harms. This work has involved the delivery of 2 workshops to staff to support the development of skills, including specific resources to support work with children at risk of displaying harmful behaviour as a result of radicalisation and online harms.</p> <p>This collaboration has led to a bid being submitted to the Home Office to seek Prevent funding for a joint Wokingham and Reading pilot to reduce the risk of online radicalisation among children and young people through early intervention and prevention. The project aims to build digital resilience, critical thinking, and identity confidence so that young people are better able to recognise and resist extremist and harmful online content. It combines a universal offer at a key developmental stage with targeted support for those most vulnerable, including workshops, specialist input, and one-to-one mentoring. Overall, the bid aims to strengthen local safeguarding responses and prevent young people from being drawn into extremist ideologies before risks escalate.</p>
<b>Partnership and Services</b>	
<p>Objective: Enhance the operational and strategic response to serious violence.</p>	

<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Work with partners to support the transition of the serious violence duty from the VPP to the local authority</i></li> <li>• <i>Successfully deliver the Act Now intervention project demonstrating positive impact.</i></li> <li>• <i>Successfully deliver the additional support programme in Cranbery college with NewAngle</i></li> </ul>	<p>The YJS has successfully delivered the Act Now project, funded by the PCC as a ‘reachable moment’ style intervention for children arrested for knife enabled and other violent offences. The project was delivered in partnership with Reading Football Club, Community Trust. Data on Outcomes in provides in the section above.</p> <p>The YJS has been successful in securing funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for 1 year’s worth of funding for Focused Diversion. The project is designed to target children at risk of committing serious violence offences, at an early intervention stage for whom there is a gap in existing statutory support.</p> <p>The YJS has worked at pace to design a model, learning from established Focused Deterrence Models, which involves operationalising an existing member of staff to coordinate intervention support using high impact trusted providers for delivery in 2026-27.</p> <p>The YJS worked with trusted intervention provider NewAngle who delivered a five-week summer intervention, aimed at reducing reoffending and promoting positive decision-making among young people known to the YJS. The project supported the YJS work to address ethnic disproportionality. The programme engaged five boys from Black and Dual Heritage backgrounds through weekly structured sessions combining physical activities (such as boxing and gym-based fitness) with mentoring and reflective discussions, focusing on building self-esteem, accountability, and healthier lifestyle choices. Attendance and engagement were consistently strong despite the voluntary nature, with participants demonstrating enthusiasm, commitment, and positive participation throughout. Young people engaged meaningfully with discussions about personal growth, including reflecting on past experiences and developing more positive future aspirations.</p>
<p><b>Processes Systems and Quality of Practice</b></p>	
<p>Objective: Reduce numbers of children becoming first time entrants:</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Embed the use of Youth Diversionary Programme (YDPs) demonstrating positive impact on the number of children becoming FTEs.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Following the launch of the Youth Diversionary Programme (Outcome 22) by Thames Valley Police, 11 children received this form out of court resolution, which ensures they were diverted from entering the Youth Justice System in 2025-26. Of those 11, only 1 child has so far gone on to commit a further offence, receiving a non-statutory out of court resolution.</p>

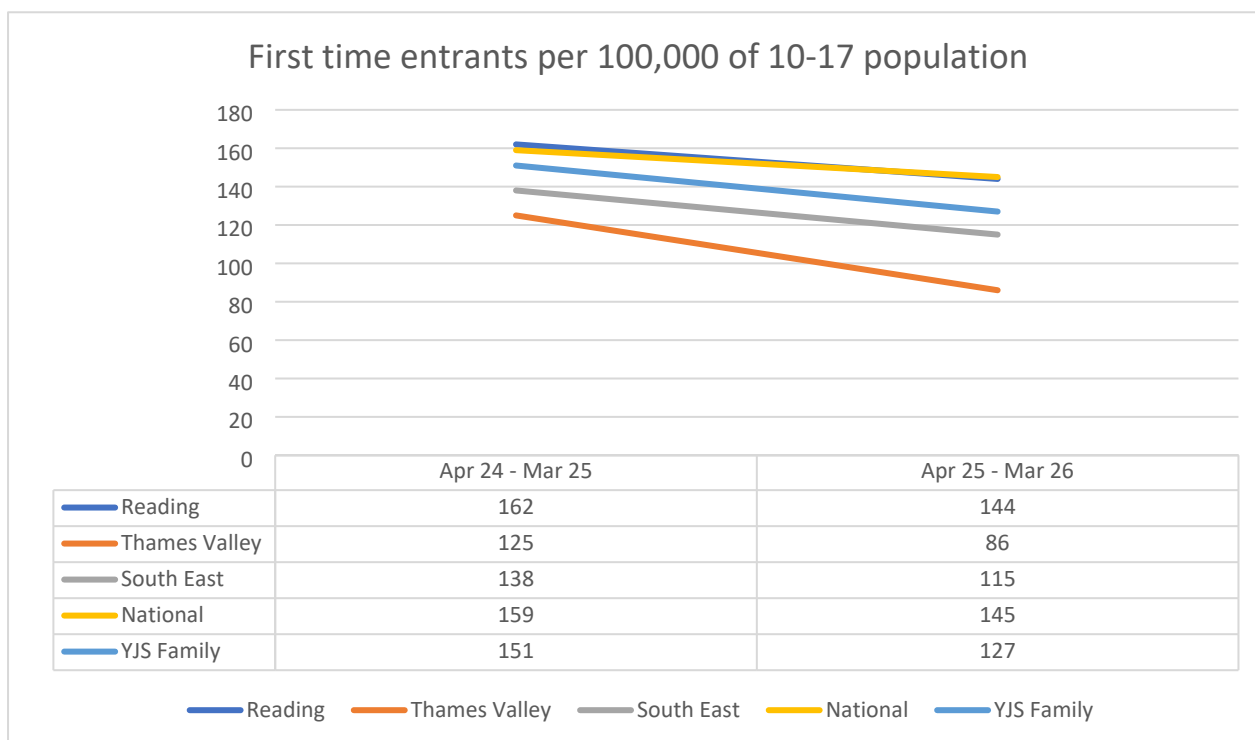
Page 132



### 3.2 Performance over the previous year

The following data is provided for the most recently available period for each indicator. It shows performance for the most recent period, compared against the previous equivalent period.

#### First Time Entrants

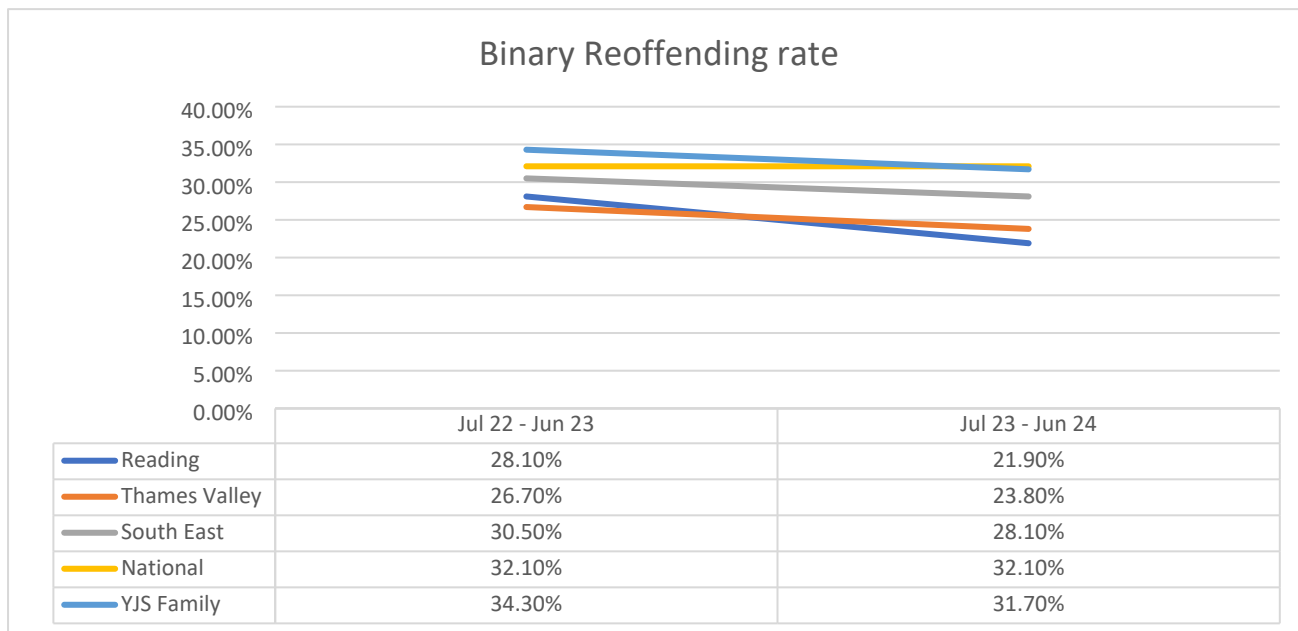


Performance data for the most recently available 12-month period demonstrates a 10.7% reduction in the rate of children entering the Youth Justice System for the first time in Reading, when compared with the equivalent period in the previous year. This follows a 27% reduction over the previous year. With a rate of 144 children per 100,000 of the 10-17 population, the rate is below the national rate but above other comparator groups. In actual numbers, this amounts to 25 children entering the Youth Justice System in 2025-26, compared to 28 in the previous 12 months.

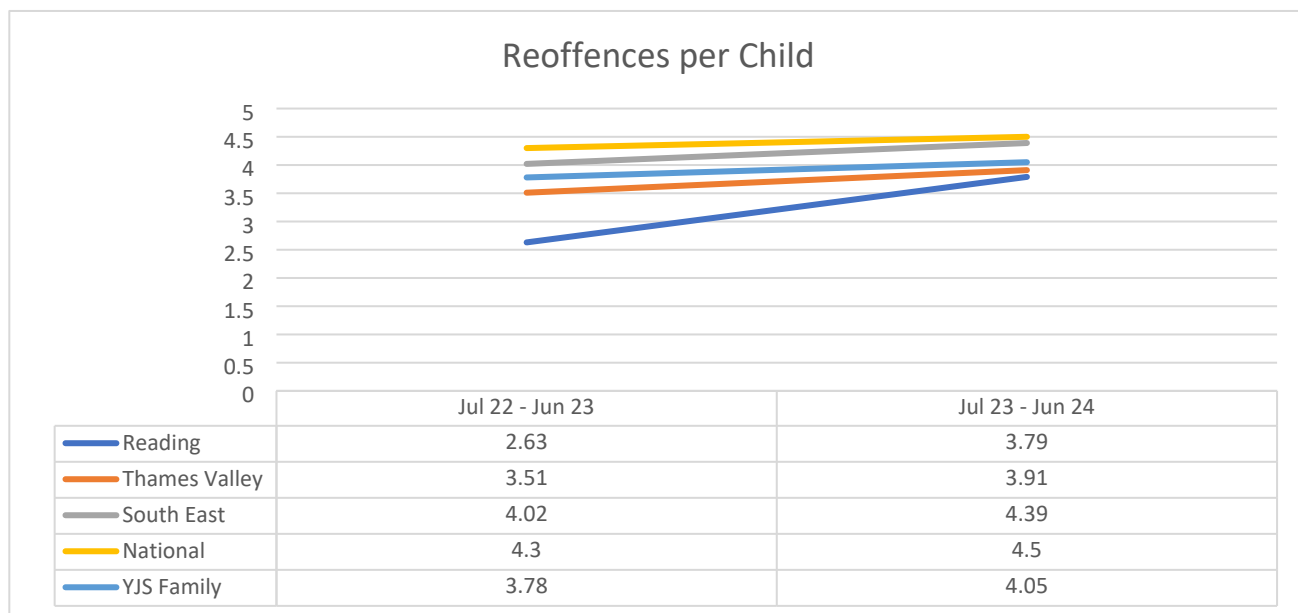
The consistent reduction in first time entrants follows the implementation of the Out of Court disposal Joint Decision-making panel in May 2025 and the hard work by YJS staff and partners within this forum, to divert children from formal entry to the Youth Justice System. In April 2026, Thames Valley Police launched the Youth Diversionary Programme (Outcome 22), following challenge from the Youth Justice Management Board and from the YJS's across Thames Valley. This introducing a deferred outcome scheme, meaning children who successfully complete intervention benefit from a 'no further action' outcome. 11 children received this form of out of court resolution, which ensures they were diverted from entering the Youth Justice System in 2025-26. Of those 11, only 1 child has so far gone on to commit a further offence, receiving a non-statutory out of court resolution.

In addition to this, we believe that we have started to see the impact of the 3 years of the Turnaround programme which has focused on diverting children from formal entry to the Youth justice system. We know that more work is needed in this area in order to see outcomes continue to improve.

### Reoffending



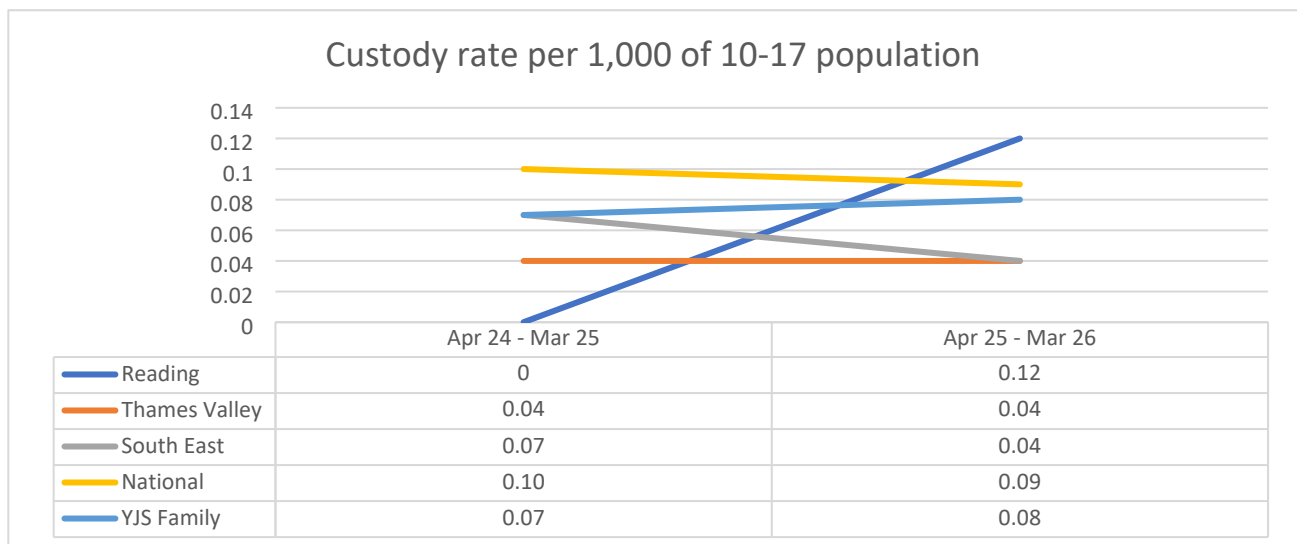
Performance data demonstrates that the rate of children reoffending has further reduced, from 28.1% in the 12 months to June 23 to 21.9% in the 12 months to June 24. This amounts to a 6.2% reduction and follows a 7.5% reduction over the previous year. This means that the rate of reoffending remains below all comparator groups.



The number of reoffences per child who reoffended has increased from 2.63 in the 12 months to June 2023 to 3.79 to June 2024. The rate remains below all comparator groups.

We know, from both quantitative and qualitative local data the data that there are a significant number of children who experience a range of complex needs many of whom go on to reoffend, sometimes multiple times. A significant proportion of the children supported by the YJS are also involved with Children’s Social Care and other services, indicating that a coordinated offer of support is necessary. Further more detailed analysis of this correlation with adverse childhood experiences is contained later within this section of the plan. The YJS is committed to delivering work that is consistent with principles of Child First; seeing children as children, building pro-social identity, collaborating with children and diverting from stigma. The steady reduction in children reoffending, suggests that we are starting to see positive outcomes as a result of the strong work that has been developed over recent years and our positive response to inspection learning. Nonetheless, we know that more work is required in order to further embed trauma informed and child first ways of working with children, to support positive identity shift.

**Custody**



The rate of children receiving a custodial sentence per 1,000 of the local 10–17-year-old population increased from 0 in the 12 months to March 2025 to 0.12 in the same period the following year. This reflects two custodial sentences. This places the rate above all comparator groups, and although the small sample size limits the statistical significance of the data, the YJS recognises the need to ensure we continue to work hard to ensure custody is used only as a last resort.

A custody panel process has now been fully embedded to ensure oversight of pre-sentence report proposal and appropriate levels of support for PSR authors.

Congruence data is routinely monitored to assess the alignment between pre-sentence report (PSR) proposals and final sentencing outcomes. In 2025–26, of the 10 PSRs completed, 8 resulted in sentences fully aligned with the proposal, 1 resulted in a significantly different outcome, and 1 in a moderately different outcome. This quantitative analysis is complemented by qualitative feedback from sentencers, which highlights the high quality and value of PSRs produced by the service. Collectively, these measures demonstrate the effectiveness and credibility of the service’s PSR work.

**Remand data**

The following data relates to children remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation. The data shows a that following a period where there were no new remands to Youth Detention Accommodation, there was one child who received such an outcome in 2025-26.

	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>No. of Bed Nights</b>
2022/23	1	9
2023/24	4	394
2024/25	0	0
2025/26	1	69

As part of the recently published Government White paper, the government announced planned Youth Justice reforms, including the following improvements to custodial outcomes:

- **Youth custody to become a last resort**
- **25% reduction target for children held on remand**

Although numbers of children sentenced and remanded in to custody remain low in Reading as well as for geographical neighbours, the YJS is exploring ways to work regionally to further reduce the use of custody.

## Key Performance Indicators

From April 2023 all Youth Justice Services have been required to gather data on an additional 10 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Data presented to YJS's from the YJB does not allow comparison to other YJS's for benchmarking purposes. As such, some of the KPI's are of limited use in understanding local performance.

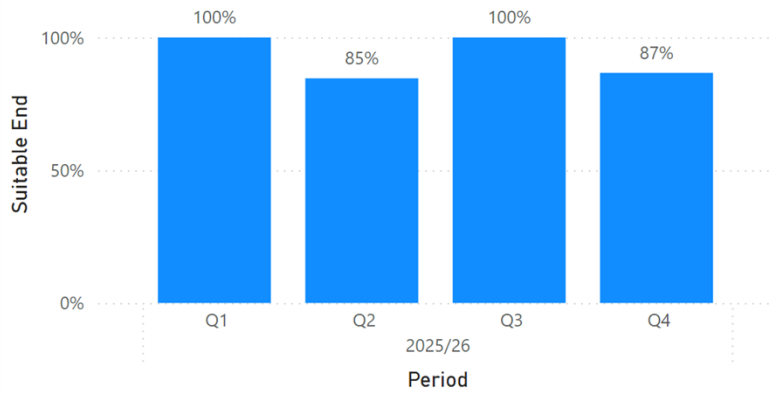
KPI	Definition
KPI 1 - Accommodation	The proportion of children with suitable accommodation arrangements
KPI 2 - Education, training and employment (ETE)	The proportion of children attending a suitable ETE arrangement
KPI 3 - Special educational needs or disability (SEND)	The proportion of children who have an identified SEND need, are in suitable ETE and have a formal learning plan in place for the current academic year
KPI 4 - Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing	The proportion of children with a screened, or, identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing; and offered interventions; and attending interventions
KPI 5 - Substance misuse	The proportion of children with a need for specialist treatment intervention to address substance misuse; and offered intervention and attending intervention
KPI 6 – Out-of-court disposals	The proportion of out-of-court disposal interventions that are completed
KPI 7 – Wider Services	The proportion of children who are currently on either an Early Help (EH) plan; on a child protection (CP) plan or classified as Child in need (CiN) or have looked-after status.
KPI 8 – Management Board attendance	Monitoring senior partner representation at management boards, and monitoring if partners contribute data from their individual services that identify areas of racial and ethnic disproportionality.
KPI 9 - Serious violence	The rates of children convicted for a serious violent offence on the YJS caseload.
KPI 10 - Victims	The proportion of victims who are offered and engage with Support from the YJS



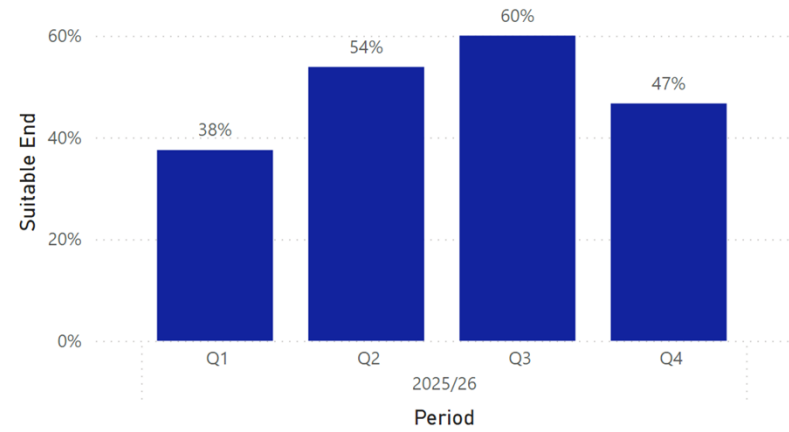
# KPIs

## 1. Accomodation Suitability End

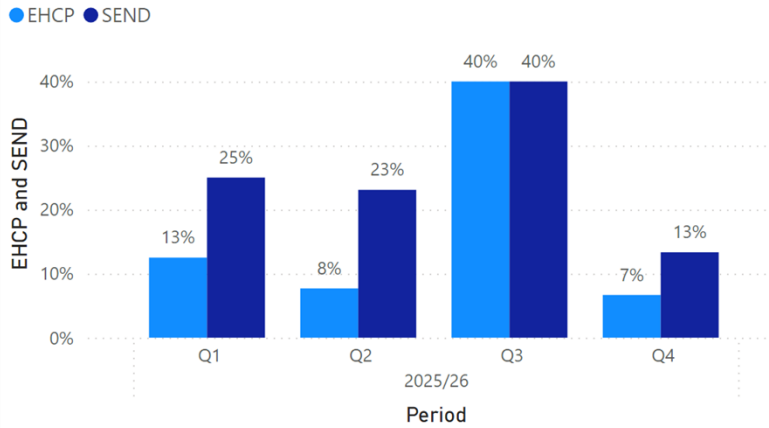
(including non-substantive out of court disposals with YJS intervention)



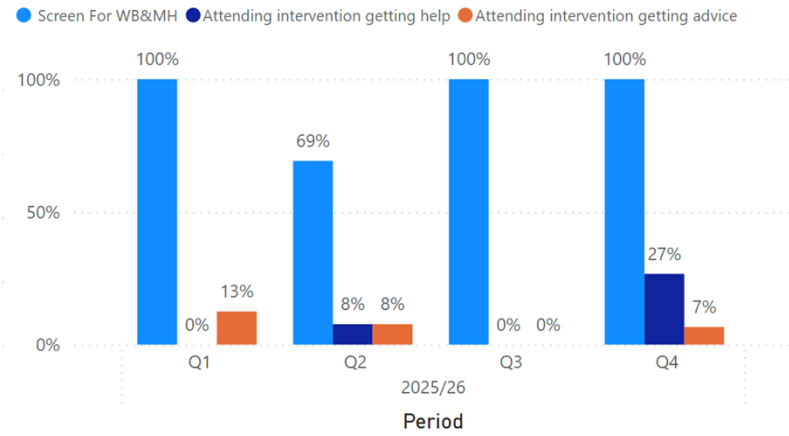
## 2. Suitable ETE End



## 3. Percentage of children with SEND/EHCP at end of order



## 4. Percentage of orders ending screened/identified for MH



## 1. Accommodation

Accommodation suitability has remained consistently high across all four quarters, exceeding 85% in each period. Across the year, there were 41 interventions ending (Q1: 8, Q2: 13, Q3: 5, Q4: 15), with the vast majority ending in suitable accommodation.

Performance was strongest in Q1 (8/8) and Q3 (5/5), where 100% of interventions concluded with suitable accommodation. This indicates effective practice and strong oversight in securing and sustaining appropriate living arrangements during these periods.

In Q2 and Q4, a small number of interventions ended with unsuitable accommodation (2 in each quarter), equating to 11/13 (85%) suitable outcomes in Q2 and 13/15 (87%) in Q4. While still representing strong overall performance, these cases highlight some consistent challenges, primarily relating to:

- Practitioners sometimes not being able to access or have visibility of the home environment, affecting the ability to confirm suitability
- Safeguarding concerns within the household, where accommodation is available but does not meet suitability thresholds due to risk factors

Overall, the data demonstrates sustained strong performance, with a small number of exceptions linked to complex safeguarding circumstances. These findings reinforce the importance of continued multi-agency collaboration and professional curiosity to ensure accommodation assessments fully reflect the child's safety and wellbeing.

## 2. ETE

Education, Training and Employment (ETE) suitability has fluctuated across the four quarters, both in terms of volume and the profile of need.

In **Q1, 5 of 8 children (63%)** were assessed as being in unsuitable ETE. Within this group, 2 were not in education, employment or training (NEET), while **3** were not attending the hours provided by their education setting.

In **Q2, 6 of 13 children (46%)** were recorded as being in unsuitable ETE. Of these, **2** were NEET and **4** were not attending their allocated hours, indicating that non-attendance remained the primary driver of unsuitability during this period.

In **Q3**, there was a notable reduction, with **2 of 5 children (40%)** assessed as unsuitable. Within this, **1** was NEET and **1** had no ETE information recorded, which is categorised as unsuitable. While overall numbers are low, this highlights a data quality issue within this quarter.

In **Q4**, there was a significant increase, with **8 of 15 children (53%)** assessed as being in unsuitable ETE. All **8 cases** were recorded as NEET.

The Youth Justice Service has now embedded the **Protect 25 initiative** in partnership with Education colleagues. This introduces a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)-style meeting for all children open to the service**, providing a more coordinated and individualised approach to educational provision. Early indications suggest this is contributing to **improvements in the proportion of children assessed as in suitable ETE**. However, the variation across quarters demonstrates that **further work is required to secure consistent and sustained improvement**, particularly in reducing NEET levels and strengthening engagement with education providers.

The YJS is working with The Skill Mill Social Outcome project this year to further efforts to support children in to sustained training and employment.

### **3. SEND**

SEND data has fluctuated across the 4 periods. In addition to those with a formal Education Health and Care Plan or SEN support, the YJS are aware from local data of the prevalence of undiagnosed SEND and speech and language need. The YJS has commissioned 23 days of Educational Psychologist support to the YJS per year to support case workers in ensuring children's needs are understood and met. An evaluation of outcomes is due to take place to understand the impact of this.

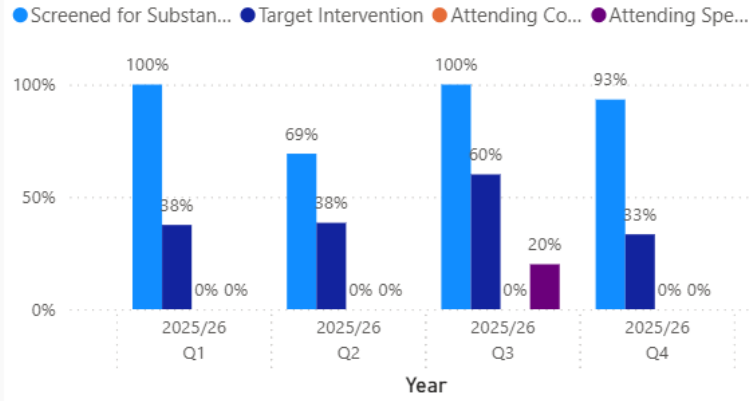
### **4. Mental health and wellbeing**

Data demonstrates that screening for mental health concerns is consistent. Some children open on repeat interventions have previously been screened, which impacts on data. Data indicates relatively low numbers accessing interventions from CAMHS and other health specialists. However, this does not align with our anecdotal understanding of the level of support provided to staff and children through the health and justice offer. Further in-depth analysis is underway to better understand this discrepancy.

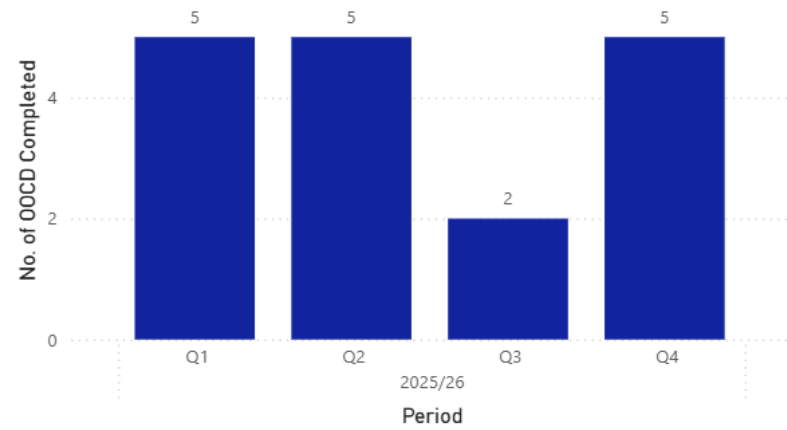


# KPIs

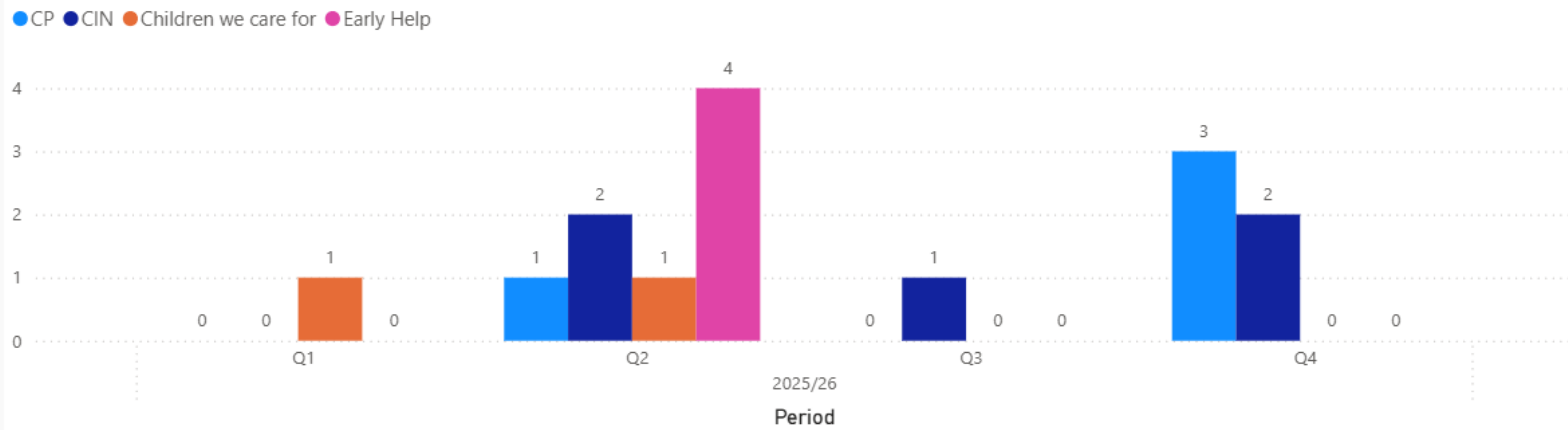
**5. Percentage of orders ending screen/identified for substance misuse**



**6. No. OOCDC Completed**



**7. No. of children open to Wider Services at the end of order**



## 5. Substance misuse

Substance misuse data indicates a broadly consistent rate of children being screened. Similar to mental health screening, some children engaged in repeat interventions had been screened previously; this reflects a reporting issue rather than a gap in practice. The data also shows that most interventions are delivered directly by YJS workers at Tier 2, with more intensive, specialist substance misuse support (Tier 3) provided where required, although less frequently.

Following the HMIP inspection in September 2024, the YJS has strengthened its approach to both screening and intervention. This has included introducing a revised partnership process with the Reconnect team, who provide Tier 3 interventions, while YJS workers continue to deliver Tier 2 support. In addition, a drop-in session is available to YJS staff to support the assessment of need.

## 6. Out of Court Disposals

This KPI shows Out of Court disposal completion is relatively consistent throughout the year.

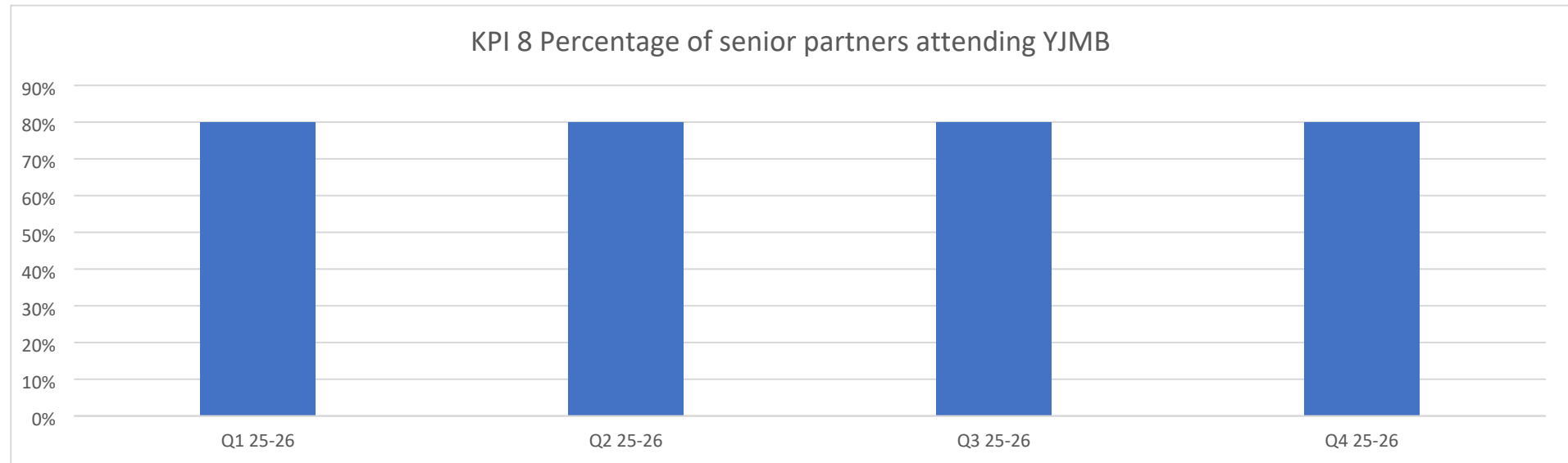
## 7. Wider Services

Q1 - 1 child was being supported by early help services post the end of the intervention.

Q2 - 1 child was a child we care for, 1 child was supported as part of a child protection plan, 2 child children were supported via child in need plans and 1 was supported by early help post intervention.

Q3 - 1 child was supported via a child in need plan. 1 was supported by early help post intervention.

Q4 - 3 children were being supported as part of a child protection plans, 2 children were being supported via child in need plans.



### 8. Management Board

The partnership continues to maintain strong representation from statutory partners at the YJMB. The reported 20% non-attendance is largely attributable to recent staffing changes within probation services, an issue which has now been resolved. Attendance is therefore expected to improve. The YJMB remains committed to strengthening consistent attendance and partner representation.

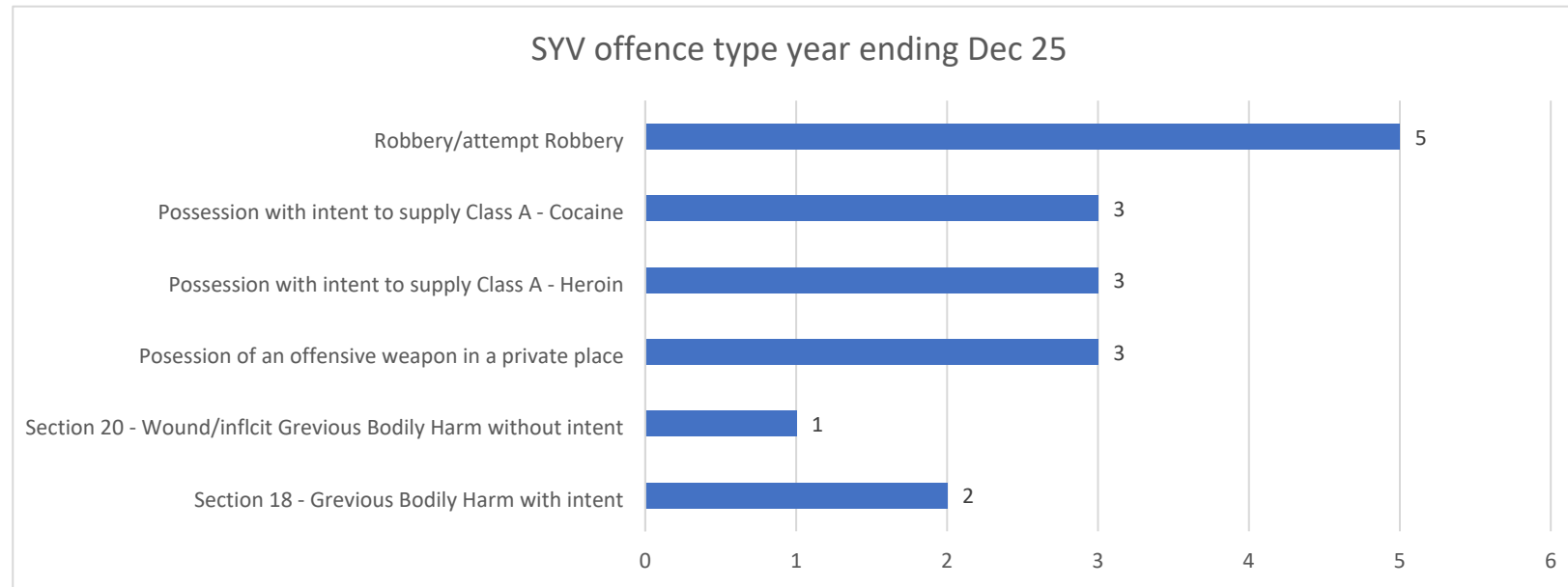
### 9 Serious Youth Violence

In addition to the KPI data on SYV, the YJB also publishes a periodic serious youth violence tool which uses a different definition, that includes high gravity drug possession offences. This data can be viewed alongside the SYV KPI data for context, but it is important to note the difference in definition.

The rate of serious violence offences per 10,000 of 10-17 population by YJS, YJS family, YJS region, PCC area and national average year ending December 2022 - 2025

	Year ending Dec							
	2022		2023		2024		2025	
<b>YJS family</b>	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences
<b>Reading</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10.1</b>
<b>Family average</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5.3</b>
Sutton	10	4.4	4	1.7	9	3.8	9	3.8
Bristol	24	6.0	33	8.1	31	7.5	6	1.5
Barnet	54	13.2	19	4.5	44	10.4	27	6.4
Merton	13	6.3	10	4.8	15	7.2	14	6.7
Cardiff	13	3.8	12	3.4	17	4.8	15	4.2
Southampton	26	11.9	30	13.4	14	6.2	15	6.7
Coventry	10	2.8	17	4.7	29	8.0	34	9.4
Hillingdon	17	5.3	24	7.4	7	2.1	33	10.1
Hertfordshire	40	3.2	52	4.1	80	6.3	45	3.5
Brighton and Hove	9	4.0	6	2.6	16	7.0	7	3.1

YJS region	Year ending Dec							
	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences
<b>Reading</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10.1</b>
<b>South East</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>4.5</b>
East Midlands	193	4.2	195	4.1	203	4.2	202	4.1
Eastern	316	5.2	371	5.9	397	6.1	287	4.4
London	868	10.4	822	10.0	930	10.9	873	10.1
North East	88	3.6	106	4.2	105	4.6	106	4.2
North West	302	4.2	328	4.4	502	6.8	494	6.5
South West	143	2.8	169	3.3	172	3.3	121	2.2
Wales	64	2.2	94	3.2	113	3.9	84	2.8
West Midlands	386	6.5	322	5.3	374	6.3	458	7.2
Yorkshire	263	5.0	248	4.7	315	5.7	260	4.7
England and Wales	2,906	5.2	2,967	5.2	3,536	6.2	3,282	5.6



### 9. Serious Youth Violence

SYV dashboard data, which allows comparison with other YJSs, indicates that the rate in Reading has remained consistently high and that this is now higher than all statistical neighbours, apart from Hillingdon who share the same rate.

There were 17 offences committed by 13 children in the 12 months to December 2025. 6 were high gravity score drugs offences, and 3 were serious violent offences. There were 3 attempted robbery offences relating to 1 incident resulting in 3 offences for 3 different children, and 2 further separate offences of robbery. The possession of an offensive weapon offences relate to 3 completely separate incidents involving 3 different children.

#### Cohort Profile

- The cohort is relatively small (13 children) with all being male and predominantly aged **16–17**.

#### Entrenched vs Emerging Risk

- A notable feature is that **6 of 13 children were not previously known to YJS**, indicating a significant proportion of children becoming first time entrants for serious offending.

- 3 previously unknown children were involved together in a group attempted robbery
- However, among those known, there is evidence of **established serious youth violence (SYV) patterns and concerns**, suggesting a mixed cohort of both emerging and entrenched risk.

#### **Exploitation and Vulnerability**

- **9 out of 13 children are identified as at risk of or having experienced exploitation**, representing a very high level of vulnerability.
- This strongly suggests that offending behaviour is **closely linked to external influence, coercion, or contextual safeguarding concerns**.

#### **Education and Protective Factors**

- Only **2 children were engaged in mainstream education, training, or employment** at the time of the offence.
- This indicates a **significant absence of protective structures**, with most children likely experiencing exclusion, disengagement, or instability in education.

#### **Disproportionality**

- While the majority are White (7), the proportion of **mixed Heritage children (3 of 13)** reinforces themes around disproportionality of this cohort of children when compared to the general 10-17 population.

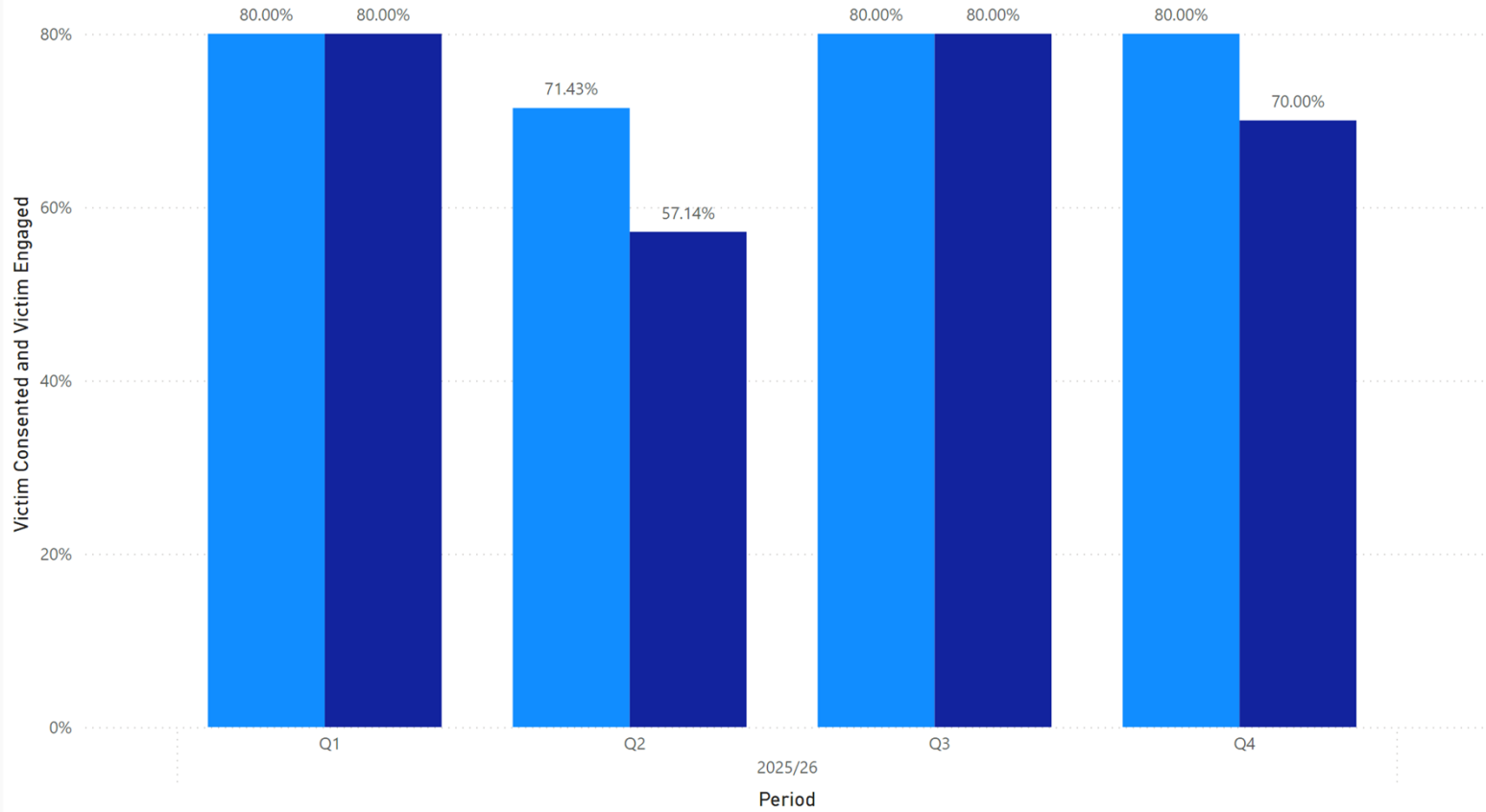
Addressing the ongoing risks presented as a result of serious youth violence will continue to be a priority for the YJS and the partnership in 2026-27. The YJS will work in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime commissioner in 2026-27 to deliver Op Deter Youth (Act Now) – a teachable to moment style intervention starting at the point a child is arrested for a violent offence, as well as focused diversion and focused deterrence – both of which are designed to provide specific intervention for children either known to be carrying weapons or at risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence.



# KPIs

10. Percentage of Victims consented to be contacted/engaged with RJ

● Victim Consented ● Victim Engaged



**10. Victims**

- **Q1:** 8 interventions involving 5 identified victims.  
4 victims (80%) consented to be contacted, all of whom went on to receive direct victim support or were engaged in restorative justice. 1 victim did not provide consent.
- **Q2:** 13 interventions involving 7 identified victims.  
5 victims (71%) consented to contact, with 4 progressing to engage in RJ opportunities. 2 victims did not provide consent.
- **Q3:** 5 interventions involving 5 identified victims.  
4 victims (80%) consented to contact, with all subsequently engaging in RJ opportunities. 1 victim did not provide consent.
- **Q4:** 15 interventions involving 10 identified victims.  
8 victims (80%) consented to contact, with 7 engaging in RJ opportunities. 2 victims did not provide consent.

**Additional Context**









- Instances of non-consent predominantly reflect victims choosing not to receive support, rather than issues with contact or consent processes.
- Where police consent is not provided, the service proactively contacts victims directly to seek consent.
- The Youth Justice Police Officer supports the service in obtaining victim contact details where required.

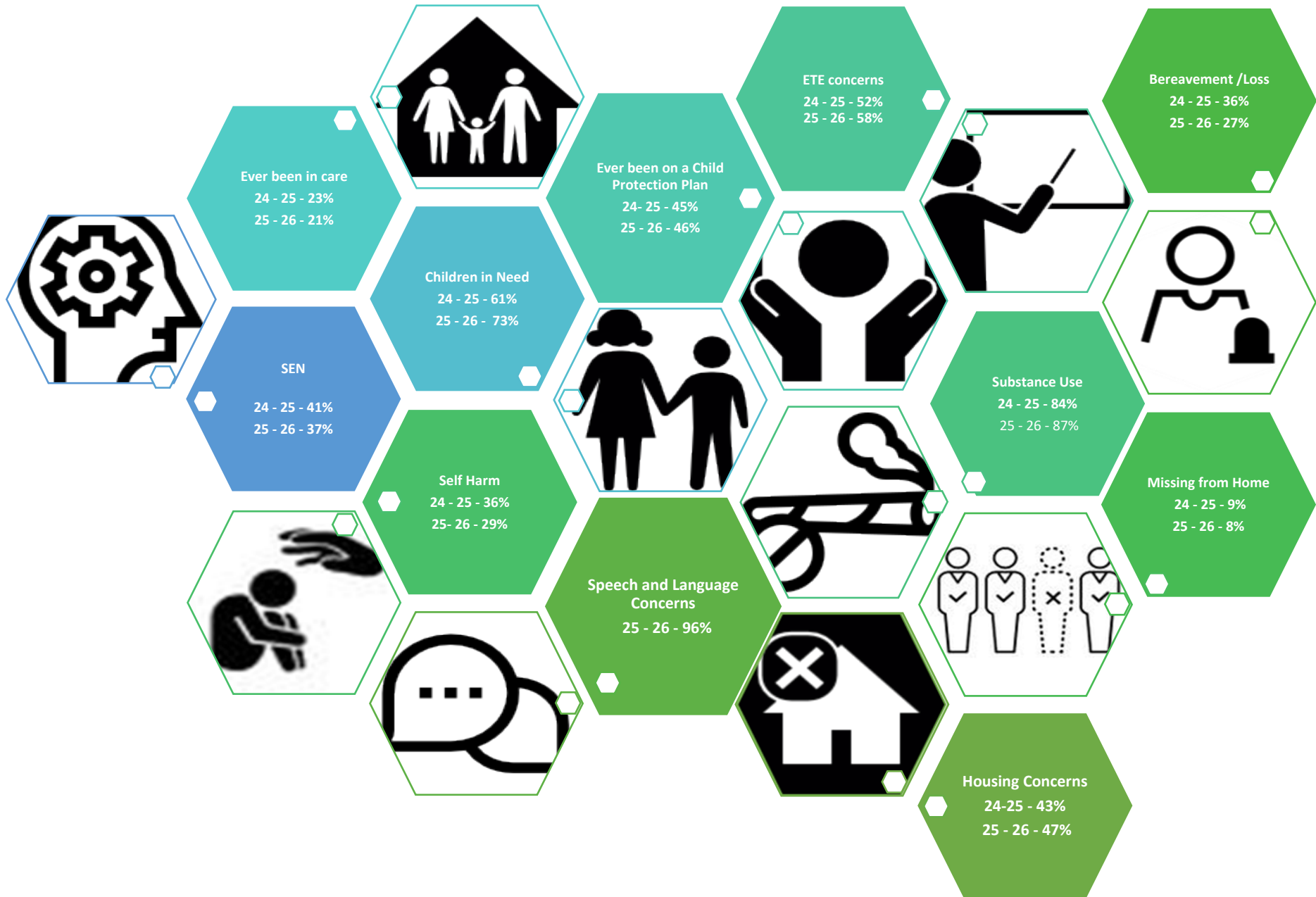
**Local Data**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)**

The following data is extracted from the YJS case management system and relates specifically to children who have a completed AssetPlus assessment. It does not include the out-of-court cohort, who are subject to a different assessment process. Nevertheless, the data provides a useful indication of the complexity and challenges faced by children in Reading who come into contact with the youth justice system.

	Experienced 0 ACEs	Experienced 1 ACE	Experienced 2-3 ACEs	Experienced 4+ ACEs
<i>Children with completed AssetPlus</i>	2%	8%	59%	31%

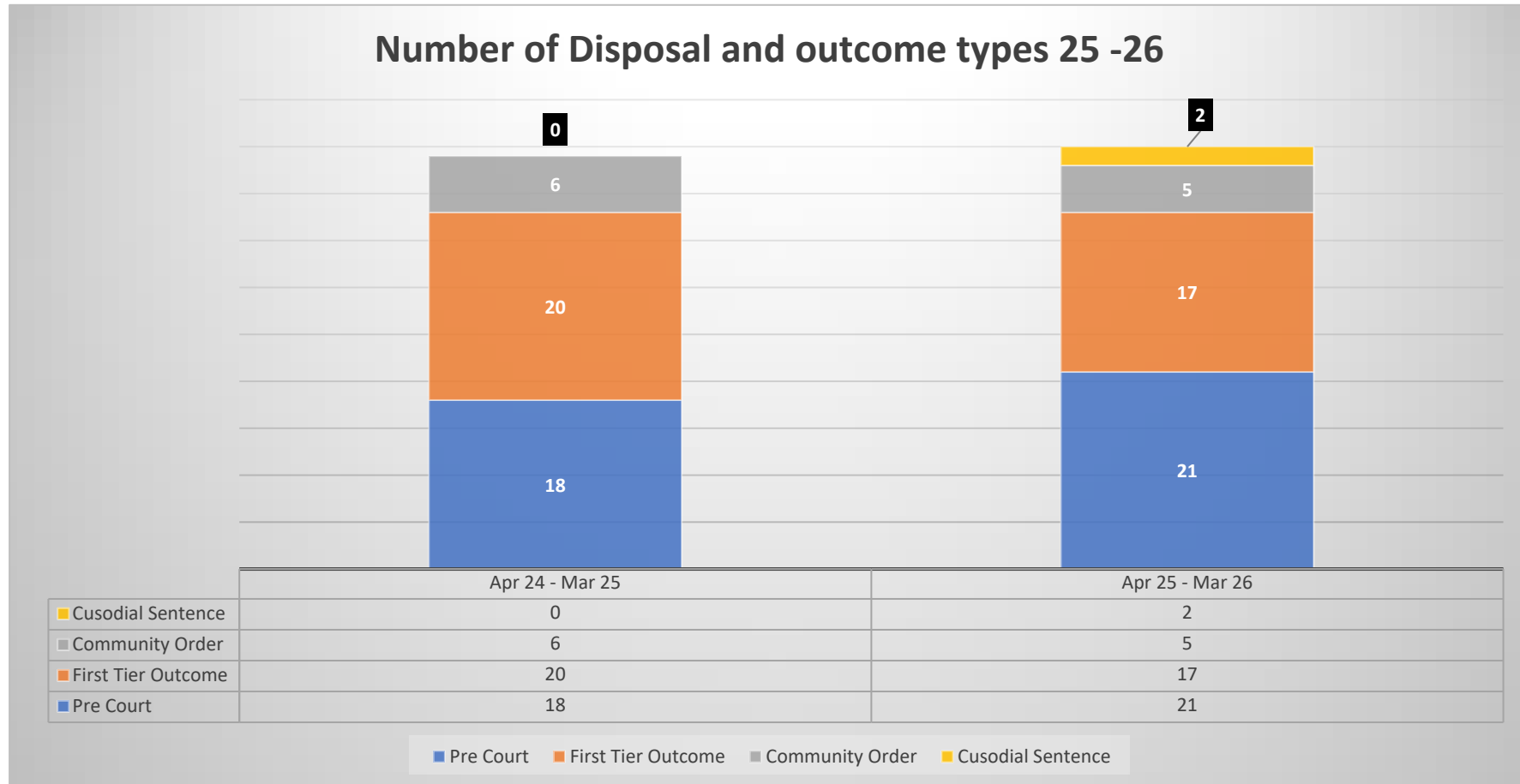
	 Physical	 Sexual	 Emotional	 Mental Illness	 Family member involved in crime	 Parental Separation	 Substance Abuse	 Domestic Abuse
2024/25	5%	0%	0%	50%	18%	68%	22% (parents)	29%
2025/26	6%	0%	0%	68%	25%	76%	29% (parents)	36%



The data demonstrates that the vast majority of children, 90%, have experienced 2 or more adverse childhood experiences and that there has been an increase in factors affecting this, from the previous year. The data demonstrates that children in the Youth Justice System in Reading have multiple and highly complex needs, characterised by multiple overlapping adverse childhood experiences. While some reductions are evident in areas such as self-harm and bereavement, there is a clear upward trend in social care involvement, substance use, and education-related vulnerability.

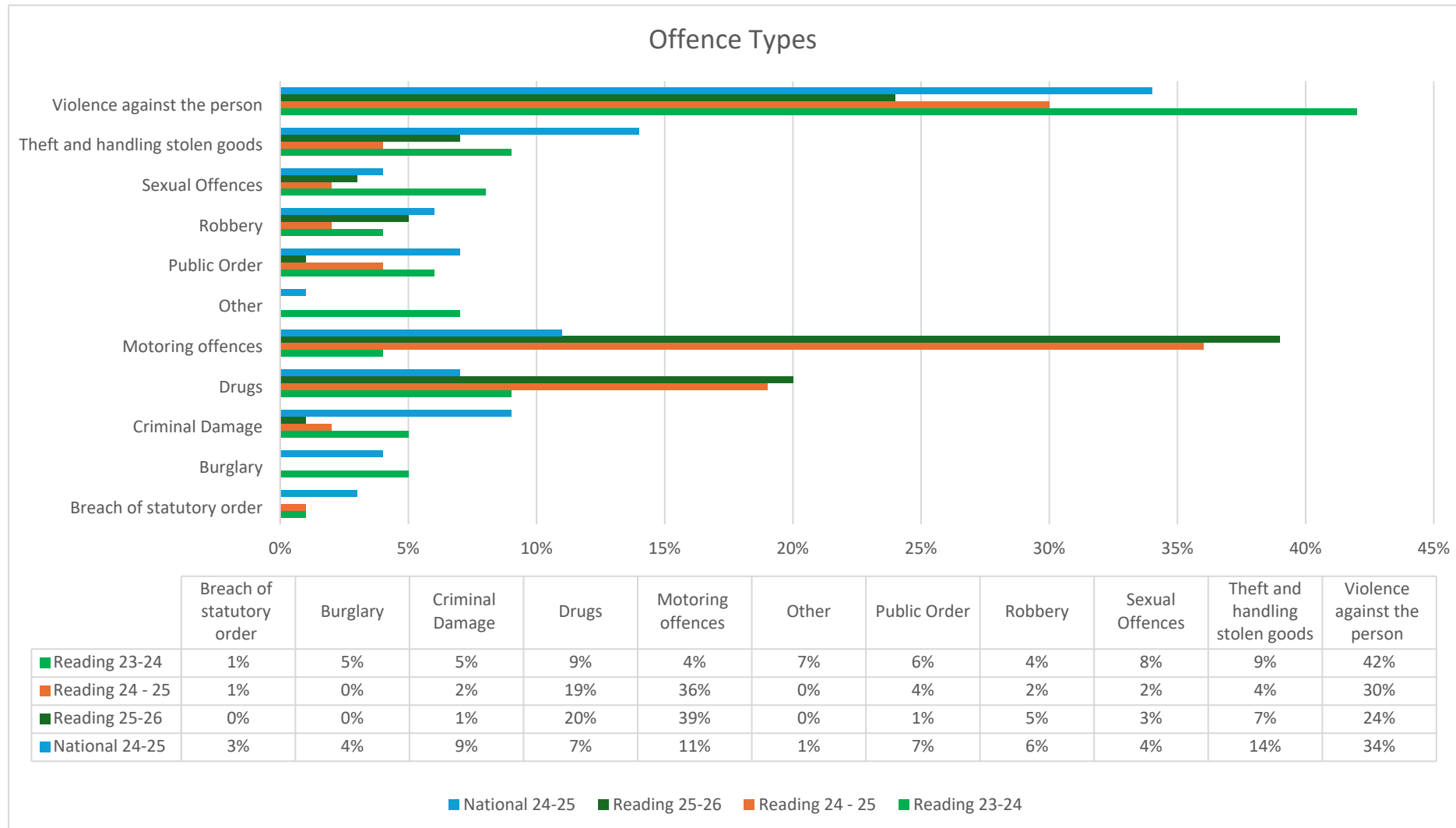
The extremely high presence of speech and language needs, alongside high safeguarding and risk indicators, highlights the need for integrated, trauma-informed, and developmentally responsive interventions across the partnership system. This underlines the need to follow the child first evidence base, alongside a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach to supporting children in the Youth Justice System in Reading.

**Throughput**



Page 154

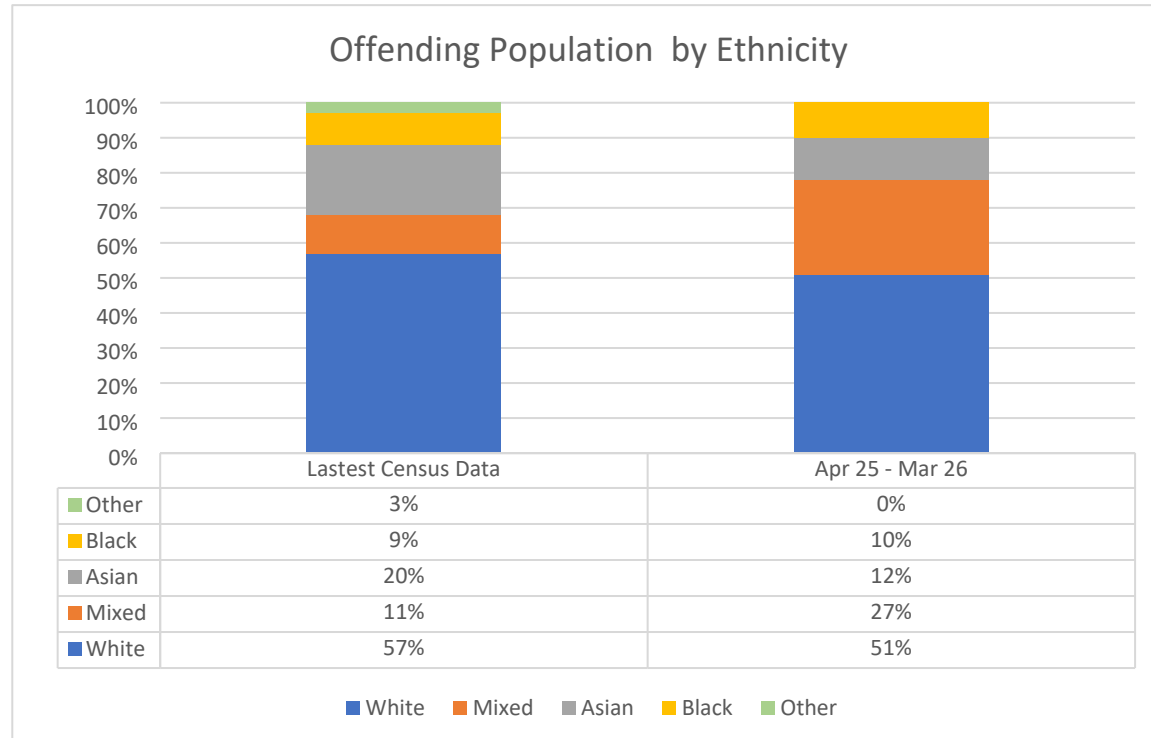
The total number of formal outcomes (excluding Community Resolutions) increased slightly from 44 in 2024-25 to 45 in 2025-26. It is notable that there were no custodial sentences in 2024-25 but 2 in 2025-26.



Data from 2025-26, indicates that whilst the breakdown of offence patterns are similar to both the national and previous years local data, there has been an increase in motoring offences and reduction in violence against a person, which remains the highest offence category. Notably, driving offences are significantly over-represented compared to National data.

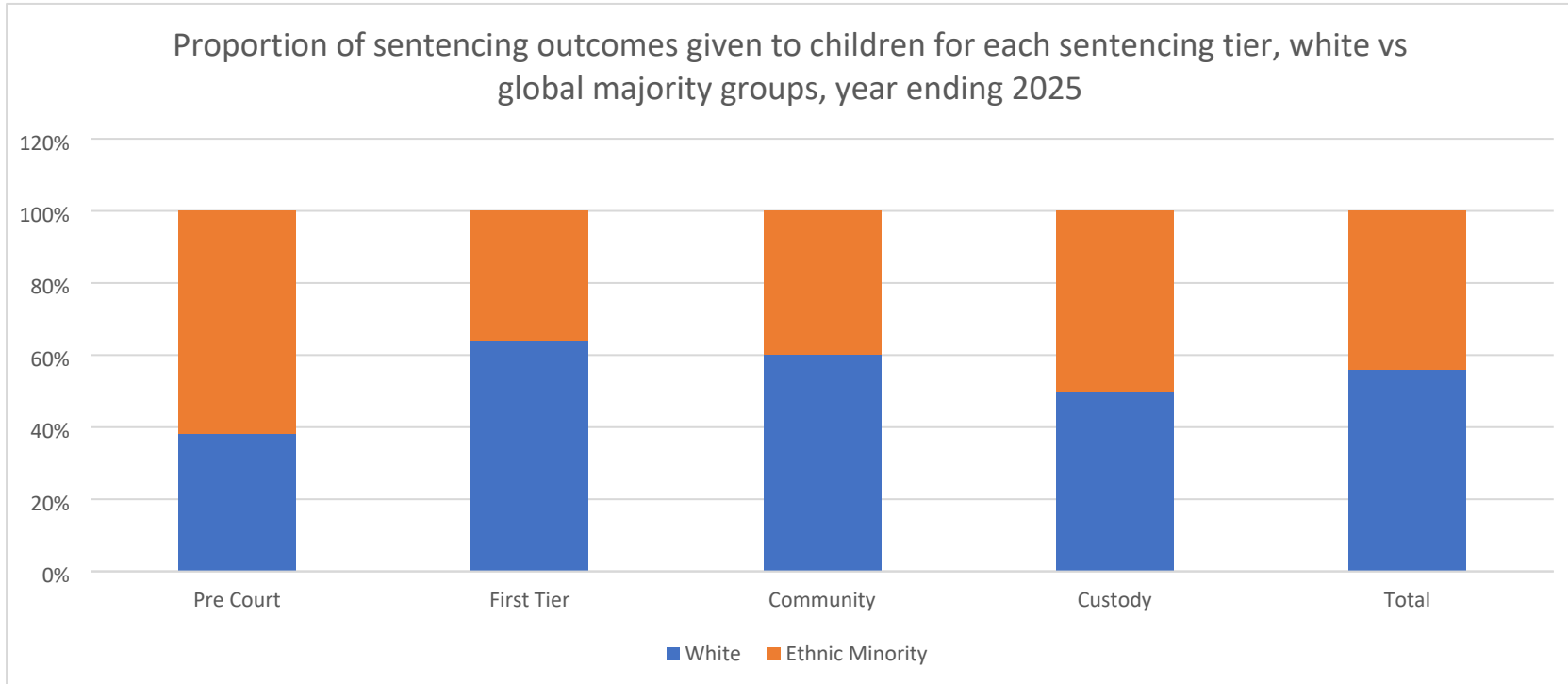
Contextual analysis of first time entrants presented to the YJMB in March 2025, indicated that all but 1 child who became a first time entrant in the 12 months to December 2024, had committed either violence against the person, driving or drugs offences. Overall, this analysis of the offence types supports anecdotal observations around complexity and risk within the cohort of children.

**Ethnicity data**



Children from Global Majority groups overall are over-represented in the offending population when compared to the general 10-17 population, although not hugely. However, it is notable that children of Mixed ethnicity are significantly over-represented in the offending population. This is supported by quarterly caseload data, as well as thematic analysis of first-time entrants. The YJS is committed to addressing this through a review of the disproportionality action plan in order to ensure there is a focus on delivering impact through specific targeted intervention and support.

**Proportion of offences committed by ethnicity within each gravity score, year ending March 2025**

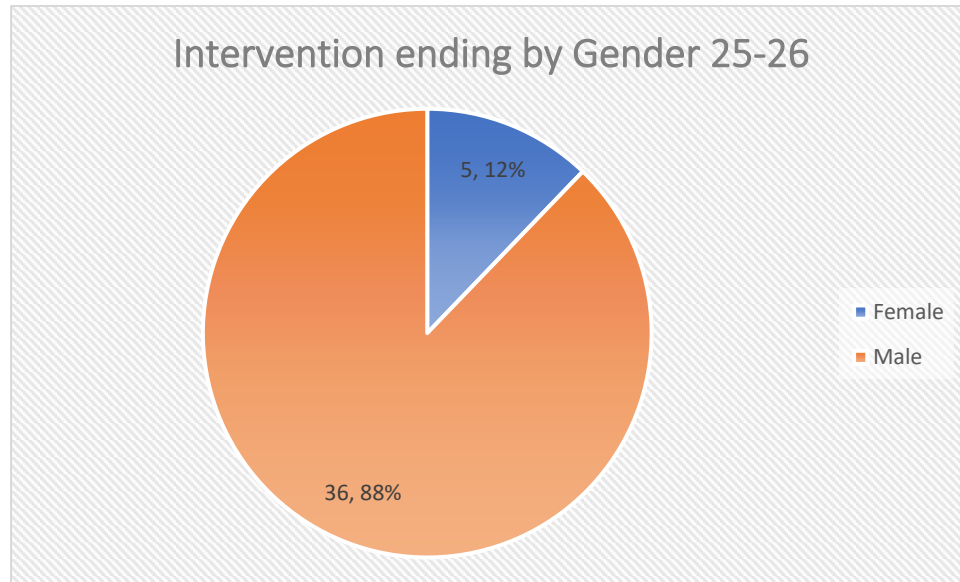


Page 157

	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Proportion of overall offences
Gravity Score 1 - 4	15%	12%	12%	0%	61%	71%
Gravity Score 5-8	15%	21%	11%	0%	53%	29%

These data, for the most recently available period, demonstrate that offences committed by black children are more likely to be of a higher gravity score, whilst white children are more likely to receive lower-level first-tier outcomes than children from Global Majority groups. This demonstrates that more work is needed to address ethnic disproportionality, and that specifically there is work required on scrutiny of out of court decision making.

### Gender



The proportion of children with an intervention ending who were girls in the most recent period is 12% compared to approximately 14% nationally, indicating a small under-representation of girls in Reading. The YJS has collaborated with regional colleagues to undertake an analysis of outcomes for girls, a summary of which is included earlier in this plan.

### Prevention

In February 2025, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) confirmed a 12-month extension to the Turnaround Programme, alongside a reduction in funding for Reading YJS from £75,970 to £51,251. Although the continuation of funding was welcomed, the short-term nature of the extension and reduction in funding, created immediate pressures on delivery capacity.

The reduced allocation supported one full-time Turnaround worker with minimal additional resources. As a result, the service introduced a revised delivery model centred on targeted intervention. This model prioritised children most at risk of entering the Youth Justice System, informed by thematic analysis of first-time entrants.

This analysis highlights a cohort characterised by multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities, including disproportionality affecting global majority children (particularly those of mixed ethnicity), high levels of school exclusion, significant prevalence of SEND and EHCPs, and a strong association with NEET status or attendance alternative provision. Many children are also known to Children's Social Care or Family Help, and there is evidence of earlier contact with police that did not progress to formal outcomes, indicating missed opportunities for early intervention.

Updated MoJ guidance removes numerical targets while retaining eligibility criteria focused on children 'on the cusp' of entering the system. In response, the YJS operating model places greater emphasis on professional judgement and prioritisation, with a specific focus on children who are not already receiving support from statutory or third-sector services, ensuring that limited resources are directed where they can have the greatest preventative impact.

13 children started and completed intervention via the Turnaround programme in 2025-26. A total of 52 children have been supported via the Turnaround programme since 2022, only 6 of these have gone on to become first time entrants.

In January 2026, the MoJ subsequently confirmed a further three-year continuation of the programme, providing essential stability and enabling the service to proceed with recruitment to previously vacant posts.

### 4.3 Risks and Issues

The Youth Justice Service has identified a number of strategic and operational risks that may impact its ability to deliver effective services to children, victims and the wider community.

Key themes include:

- **Workforce capacity and resourcing pressures**, particularly the absence of a seconded Probation Officer, challenges and delays recruiting to specialist posts such as Restorative Justice leads, and the uncertainty over the future of externally funded prevention roles. These risks have the potential to affect public protection, transition planning and the delivery of victim services.
- **Financial uncertainty**, including wider council funding pressures and that of partner organisations, which may reduce the service's ability to sustain early intervention and statutory provision.

- **Partnership and system dependencies**, including reliance on education, health, and SEND systems to provide coordinated support. Risks remain around strategic alignment, governance, and ensuring access to appropriate education, training, and employment opportunities.

Mitigating actions are in place across all areas, including strengthened partnership working, targeted recruitment, enhanced oversight from senior leaders and the Management Board, and development of alternative service models. As a result, a number of risks have reduced in severity, although several remain at medium to high residual levels and continue to be actively managed.

## 5. Plan for the Forthcoming Year

### 5.1 Child First

*“As soon as I realised that, I dropped that guard between us... they just keep encouraging me... they always have my back no matter what.”*

*“Whenever I’m down... they always find a way to help me.”*

*“I’m actually happy that I got arrested... if that never happened, I would have maybe been somewhere else.”*

*Quotes shared young person Q at the Youth Justice Management Board in December 2025, describing his journey with the YJS*

Reading Youth Justice Service and the wider partnership are committed to delivering work with children that is effective and routed in the principles of Child First. In last year’s plan we set out our long-term vision for the service in which the 4 tenets of Child First are fully embedded in all that we do. The following are planned as further pieces of work towards this goal:

- ***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.***

The YJS has delivered a number of introductory workshops both internally and to partners, on understanding Child First. These have been delivered to Magistrates, Alternative Education Providers as well as the Reconnect Team, who work closely alongside the YJS to support children and families where there are extra familial harm concerns. Further workshops are planned across teams within Children's Services as well as key partners organisations such as the Probation Service.

- ***Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their prosocial 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.***

In November 2025 the YJS undertook a thematic audit focused on Child First practice across the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The aim was to evaluate progress in implementing Child First practice across the service to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The audits evidenced significant progress in the practice of the YJS, with more consistent understanding of identity focused interventions for children and robust safety planning to keep children and others (victims and potential victims) safe.

Progress was evident in safety planning compared to inspection findings, but more work was needed in order to fully embed Child First principles and identity-focused practice across all children accessing the YJS. Exit planning and parental involvement were identified as areas where more work was needed.

Audit findings reinforced the need to progress the implementation of Multi-agency Case Formulation, to provide an individualised 5Ps formulation at intervention planning stage for each child. This was a key action following HMIP inspection in 2024 which had been delayed by changes of staff in health and justice provision. The YJS have now created and agreed a process and are now in the testing phase with a view to launching in July 2026.

The YJS will continue to work in partnership with members of the third sector including; No.5 Counselling, Reading Football Club Community Trust and New Angle, all of whom are part of the YJMB and are involved in delivering interventions to support diverting children from the Youth Justice System.

- ***Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.***

The Youth Justice Management Board will continue to engage children as part of the board and to ensure that the views of children and parents shape key decision making.

The young people's board continued throughout 2025-26 ensuring that key decision making was shaped by the voices of children. Key developmental pieces of work shaped by feedback from children have included; changes to weapons intervention, renewed focus on supporting children to find legitimate employment opportunities, and constructive activities including a bike repair workshop being held at the YJS office. Despite these successes, it has been a

challenge to maintain group numbers and sustain momentum. In early 2026-27 the YJS will change the approach, attempting to involve all children who are open to the YJS in some capacity.

The YJS will also continue its work with Young Voices, an organisation that seeks to ensure the views of children are involved in shaping key decision making.

- ***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.***

The YJS started working with The Skill Mill in 2025, and the project will become fully operational in the first period of 2026-27. The Skill Mill is an award-winning social enterprise that provides six months of paid employment to young people aged 16–18 who have previously offended. It is specifically targeted at those facing significant barriers to employment, combining hands-on outdoor work with formal qualifications and consistent mentoring. Young people work in small teams delivering environmental and construction projects—such as flood risk management and green space maintenance—creating tangible community benefits while building work routines, skills, and confidence. The programme is designed to offer a genuine second chance, helping participants move away from offending behaviour through structure, teamwork, and high expectations.

The model also delivers strong social and economic impact, with a significantly lower reoffending rate (8.5%) compared to the national average (63.8%), alongside reduced demand on public services. The programme is expanding nationally, with Reading YJS one of 22 Skill Mill sites in the UK. Funding is largely supported by the Youth Endowment Fund and wider partnerships, covering 72% of costs, while the remaining 28% is outcome-based and paid by commissioners only when positive results are achieved.

## 5.2 Resources and Services

The Youth Justice Grant will be used exclusively to deliver against activities linked to the 14 Key Performance Indicators. The following activities will be funded by the grant:

- Delivery of effective assessment, intervention planning and supervision for children who have offended or who are at risk of offending in Reading
- Delivery of services to the victims of youth offending
- Development of key areas of practice such as SEND, Education Training and Employment and Restorative Justice
- Analysis of performance information to inform practice development across all areas
- Delivery and development of Community Reparation
- Development and training of staff in effective practice
- Provision of a suitable database, to support effective case management, timely submission of statutory data and the use of connectivity to ensure mandatory documentation is shared securely with the Youth Custody Service.

- Ensuring that the YJS is compliant with its responsibilities in relation to the Government’s Knife Crime guidance.

Local authority funding will also be used to contribute towards the delivery of these outcomes and fund additional related activities

Funding from the Ministry of Justice will be used for the purpose of delivering the following activities as part of the Turnaround project:

- Funding one post to deliver diversionary activities for children identified as ‘on the cusp’ of the Youth Justice System

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner will provide funding specifically to deliver the following two posts/projects:

- Op Deter Youth (Act now) – one post
- Focused Diversion – one post

### 5.3 Board Development

We have worked hard since 2023-24 to enhance and develop our strategic response to youth justice in Reading. We recruited an Independent Chair in September 2023 who comes with significant expertise leading outstanding, child first Youth Justice Services and this expertise will continue to support the service and partnership to embed our Child First vision and deliver the necessary improvement work in 2026-27.

We have proactively sought to increase focus on victims at the board. A qualitative audit of work to support victims was undertaken in 2025-26, and this was followed by a strategic analysis of victim’s needs, which is due to be presented to the board in June 2026.

The board continues to increase focus on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by ensuring that there is representation on the board from a senior leader in the SEND department of Children’s Services.

Delivering the anti-racist action plan will remain a key priority, with a particular focus on achieving measurable impact in reducing the disproportionate representation of children from global majority backgrounds within the youth justice system. The board and partnership will explore opportunities for specialist external support and guidance from trusted providers to deliver impact in this area.

To further support transparency and participation, opportunities for staff shadowing will be driven, alongside continued involvement of children and young people within Board meetings. The Board will also explore the inclusion of victim perspectives within its arrangements, ensuring a more balanced and restorative approach to understanding harm and improving outcomes across the system.

## 5.4 Workforce Development

We recognise that in order to embed child first across everything we do, we need to take a whole service and whole system approach. This year we will continue to invest in further time and capacity from our Independent Chair to get closer to practice and support the service to fully embed child first as our practice model. This will mean that we are not only challenging the partnership strategically but also driving the evidence-based approach in the service at the same time.

The YJS has produced a comprehensive Workforce Development plan to ensure that the Youth Justice Service maintains a skilled, confident and resilient workforce capable of responding to increasing complexity within the youth justice system. The plan will be launched with the team in 2026-27. It aligns with the Youth Justice Board's skills and knowledge framework and emphasises the importance of continuous professional development across all roles, including practitioners, volunteers and board members. The plan highlights a structured and inclusive training offer for 2026-27 and beyond, combining internal and external opportunities, with a focus on strengthening professional capability, supporting leadership development, and embedding consistent standards of practice across the service.

Key priorities within the plan include safeguarding and child protection, Child First practice, trauma-informed approaches, and effective engagement with children, families and victims. There is also a strong emphasis on improving assessment quality, critical thinking, and the use of evidence-based frameworks, alongside a commitment to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion through anti-racist practice and culturally competent approaches. The programme further supports staff to manage risk effectively, work within multi-agency contexts, and deliver restorative and victim-focused interventions. Overall, the plan aims to enhance the quality of service delivery and improve outcomes for children and communities by ensuring the workforce is well-equipped, reflective, and responsive to emerging needs.

## 5.5 Knife Possession Guidance

In February 2026 the Government Published its guidance on knife possession offences. This was followed by National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) guidance. The YJS has worked in partnership with the 8 other YJSs in Thames Valley, the YJB and Police colleagues to respond locally at pace to this guidance.

The government guidance states that:

### **Swift**

*The importance of responding to a knife possession offence within the 'reachable, teachable moment' cannot be overstated. Police officers should alert the Youth Justice Service of knife possession offences within one working day or as soon as practicable. The Youth Justice Service should undertake a thorough assessment of the child as a priority. This should always be done while promoting a child-centred approach and considering safeguarding concerns in parallel. Youth Justice Services should begin working with a child no longer than four weeks after referral.*

### **Robust**

*Knife possession should be responded to with a mandatory intervention plan. This ensures public protection. Knife possession offences should only be met with a charge, a Youth Conditional Caution or a Deferred Prosecution. It is expected that the majority of Out of Court Resolutions where a knife is involved results in a Youth Conditional Caution. The decision on which outcome is most appropriate must be based on consideration of the full context of the offence, including the child's age and level of maturity and are as follows:*

- *A charge may be appropriate where the gravity of the offence or the details of the case means a charge should be pursued in line with existing guidelines.*
- *A Youth Conditional Caution may be appropriate and proportionate as a statutory Out of Court Resolution where the child would benefit from structured support aimed at addressing the underlying causes of their offending behaviour.*
- *A Deferred Prosecution may be appropriate in select cases where it is not proportionate to criminalise a child for knife possession and the child would benefit from structured support aimed at addressing the underlying causes of their offending behaviour and avoid prosecution upon completion.*

*The Government expects all police forces to ensure Deferred Prosecution is available for child knife possession offences to ensure there is a non-criminal outcome available for select cases where criminalisation may not be appropriate. This should still involve a referral to a Youth Justice Service and still requires the Youth Justice Service to carry out the interventions with the child but avoids undue criminalisation of children in circumstances where it is not appropriate to do so.*

### **Evidence-based**

*Interventions must be well-evidenced to reduce reoffending. Interventions should be designed on the basis of a holistic and thorough assessment of the child and address the root causes of their offending behaviour. All interventions should be equally robust and of high quality, irrespective of the outcome provided. Interventions which have weak or no evidence to support them – such as knife crime education or awareness courses – should not be used.*

### **Thorough**

*Compliance with interventions should be monitored. Where the child breaches conditions set within their intervention plan, action should be taken – both the police and Youth Justice Service should be aware of any non-compliance, and appropriate steps taken to ensure public protection and victim satisfaction and prevent reoffending. This includes charging the child for the original offence.*

The YJS ensures compliance with the guidance by delivering the Op Deter Youth programme locally (Act Now) which is a reachable moment style intervention responding to children in police custody within 90 minutes of notification from the Police. This intervention is voluntary and consent based. Where Thames Valley Police are considering an Out of Court resolution for the child, the YJS will conduct an assessment of suitability for an OOCR using the YJB approved Prevention and Diversion Assessment tool, and return the assessment to the Joint Decision making panel, to reach a partnership decision on whether a formal OOCR or charge is to be the outcome, supported by the updated NPCC guidance. This ensures that the only options available involve mandatory intervention with the YJS. Thames Valley police are currently evaluating the effectiveness of Youth Diversionary programmes, a form of deferred outcome and the YJS has

delivered a number of these throughout 2025-26. The YJS ensures that interventions are delivered in line with the Child First evidence base, promoting positive identity shift to support desistance. The YJS ensures compliance is monitored and non-compliance results in return of the case to the Police for a decision on suitable next steps. The OOCR scrutiny panel is delivered across Thames Valley and provides important scrutiny of decision making in the Out of court space, including knife crime offences.

## 5.6 Evidence-based practice and innovation

By aspiring towards adopting Child First as a framework and guiding principal underpinning everything that we do, we aim to ensure that practice is rooted in the contemporary evidence-based understanding of what works in supporting desistance in youth justice. This follows the research of Professor Neal Hazel and others.

The reduction in funding for the Turnaround project required a change in the model of delivery for 2025-26. This has been led by local analysis of the first-time entrant cohort, which led to the development of a screening tool to support the triage of need.

The YJS will continue to seek closer working relationships with Public Health colleagues to support approaches to tackling serious violence and will ensure that Public Health colleagues are part of the strategic direction of the YJS via the YJMB.

The YJS secured funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver the school navigators programme in 2025-26. Procurement challenges have meant that it has not been possible to operationalise the project in line with expected timescales. The YJS is currently working with the OPCC to explore options for potential repurpose of the funding to similar suitable projects with similar objectives.

As part of its wider anti-racism work, the Youth Justice Service has been invited to collaborate with researchers at the University of Reading on qualitative research exploring the experiences of fathers from global majority backgrounds. The study will include fathers whose children are currently open to children's social care or early help services—including the Youth Justice Service—or whose cases have closed within the past 12 months.

The project involves holding a series of focus groups which will feed into a policy briefing document aimed at stakeholders in central government, particularly from the Department for Education, who are responsible for **implementing the government's manifesto commitment to expanding local authority access to whole family work**. The briefing document will offer a series of evidence-based recommendations to strengthen and promote more positive and equitable partnerships with global majority families. The briefing will be launched at a roundtable event featuring contributions from focus group participants, researchers, and practitioners.

The broader aim of the project is to reduce the numbers of global majority children, particularly Black children, in care and in the youth justice system. This project recognises that without the contributions and engagement of the whole family, it is challenging for local authorities to meet this goal.

It is envisaged that the learning from the project will support us in Reading, in embedding family safeguarding as well as broader aims around developing cultural humility and anti-racist practice.

The YJS will use funding provided by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver two separate initiatives designed to address serious youth violence.

Op Deter Youth (Act Now) will continue for 2026-27 and funding has been confirmed until March 2028. This ensures that children are engaged at the point of detention in custody for violent offences, seeking to harness the teachable moment to engage them.

Alongside this, the YJS will also deliver Focused Diversion, which seeks to engage those children under 16 identified as a potential risk of involvement in serious violence, at an earlier stage. The model uses a dedicated multi-agency panel to triage children and intervention delivery involves trusted high impact providers.

In addition to both of these, the YJS will continue to work alongside partners in Thames Valley Police who are funded to deliver Focused Deterrence, which is focused on children identified as at risk of involvement in knife crime. The YJS will seek to support more effective delivery of focused deterrence, learning from best practice in areas where the project is well established.

The YJS have collaborated with a local university academic who specialises in online harms and critical thinking. She delivered two workshops for staff supporting their understanding of current risks affecting young people in the online space and equipping them with some resources to address these. Following this piece of work, we have submitted a joint bid to the Home Office Preventing Radicalisation fund to support schools and other organisations in addressing potential radicalisation of children at a prevention stage.

## 5.7 Evaluation

Reading YJS is currently involved in a national research project with Loughborough and Salford Universities seeking to understand the impact of the Child First Framework on outcomes for children and victims. This research is specifically focused on understanding impact chains from practice change to child level behaviour change.

In Reading YJS, Managers, practitioners and children have been part of semi-structured qualitative interviews and focus groups. The early data from this work is suggesting a direct correlation between practice change and outcomes for children and victims.

The below impact chains, linking qualitative feedback from practitioners and managers, to that gained from children being supported by the service, demonstrate how practice change/workforce development in Reading has seen a shift in practitioner delivery and subsequently improved outcomes for children and victims.

Impact Chain	Child First-attributed Practice Change – Practitioner Interviews	Child Outcome – Child Interview	Analytic Link
<p><b>Relationships are no longer incidental but are the intervention</b></p>	<p>'I think the relationships that the caseworkers have with the children here are one of the main things that are supporting and helping these children move on and with their families as well. Although we're doing very similar [to Probation with adults], we're aiming for very similar outcomes, it's completely different with the approaches that we're using'</p> <p>'thinking back to like a few years ago when I started at Youth Justice, and I suppose obviously relationships were always important, but it feels like we don't have to justify that now, whereas I think before it felt like when I was a caseworker, that within a plan of work, you kind of had to like really explain that to evidence why you were building a relationship'.</p>	<p>'They all work hard and push for everything for you. So I do like it here. I like the staff here. They're nice people. They do help a lot.'</p> <p>'They do help a lot. [what they helped with] Mental health. So I was going through a really rough time and meeting people here has sort of built me back up'.</p> <p>'it's nice to come here. You get to express your feelings. I think it's better to know you have a place and people that support you and want to help you'.</p>	<p>Practitioner interview identifies caseworker relationships as central to helping children move on; child interview describes staff as nice, supportive, confidence-building and emotionally safe.</p>
<p><b>Planning is organised around pro-social identity development</b></p>	<p>'I think we're getting much better in that [focus on identity development] in our planning and pre-sentence reports and interventions/intervention plans that we do with children. I mean, developing a pro-social identity is a journey'... 'stage two being development of a pro-social identity once they've actually got some aspirations and positive activities and they've had that good relational work with us and the decent interactions'</p> <p>'I think that's because he [a child attending YJS management Board] actually talked about this [identity development], he didn't use the word</p>	<p>'Just becoming more of myself again, really boosting. So they made me more of a character again. So I was losing myself really bad and it would be checkups on texts and in real life, they would make sure that I'm still here. I'm still good. So yeah, I really do like the support here'</p> <p>'It's better now [how I see myself]. I'm more happy. I'm more energetic. I used to be really down, but now coming here, it's helped a lot. Ever</p>	<p>Practitioners describe planning for pro-social identity and children seeing themselves differently; Child describes becoming himself again, being happier and more energetic, having no police problems and moving on from the offence.</p>

	<p>identity, but basically the way he saw himself then and now being completely different'.</p> <p>'one of the hard things about Child First is grasping it isn't just about an intervention plan having positive activities on it. It's about the activities, interactions and roles [for identity development]'</p>	<p>since I've been here, I've had no problems with people, police. I've been quite quiet, to be fair. [why do you think that's changed?] I think it's hearing other people's opinions and really taking it on board... They said they'll help me. They have helped me. And ever since then, I've been nothing but gold'.</p> <p>'Support has made me feel better with myself. Yeah. Obviously, it's nice to hear other people's thoughts about young people. And it's nice that people think highly about me'... 'I'm just, I used to be such a quiet person. Not mind my own business, but I was really in a dark place and here's helped. People here have helped'</p> <p>'It's not fully hit me to say that, like I've got a free life, but I'm slowly moving on from what happened and here it is helping me move on, basically telling me, it's going to be better. I feel better. They worked and they managed to get me here. So I believe what they say now and I do believe that I'll be able to move on from it [the offence]'</p>	
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<p><b>Workers and children plan intervention choices together</b></p>	<p>' we will now naturally think, rather than we're just going to do it, let's get some children involved in it. So, for example, our redesign of our weapons interventions, from weapons awareness to a safety programme, which we did with children rather than us just doing it'</p> <p>'thinking back to like a few years ago when I started at Youth Justice, and I suppose obviously relationships were always important, but it feels like we don't have to justify that now, whereas I think before it felt like when I was a caseworker, that within a plan of work, you kind of had to like really explain that to evidence why you were building a relationship'.</p>	<p>'Everyone was always double checking before they would do something here. So with the boxing, they've asked me about every session if I wanted to do it. So they always double check. So, yeah, I feel pretty involved'</p> <p>'it's nice to come here. You get to express your feelings. I think it's better to know you have a place and people that support you and want to help you'.</p>	<p>The practitioner account presents collaboration as a starting point; The Child experiences this as being asked, checked with and supported by people who want to help.</p>
<p><b>Children are helped to move beyond offence-based identity</b></p>	<p>'The main principle of treating children like children... understanding the complex nature and needs of the children that we're working with, obviously, when you're from my previous role working with adults, there's a lot focus on who that person is and the background they've come from and how they've ended up where they are... [instead of a] focus on what they're doing now and addressing their behaviour. But obviously, with the children we focus on the fact that they are children and helping them to be children and get away from whatever led to where they are'</p> <p>'I think that's because he [a child attending YJS management Board] actually talked about this [identity development], he didn't use the word</p>	<p>'It's better now [how I see myself]. I'm more happy. I'm more energetic. I used to be really down, but now coming here, it's helped a lot. Ever since I've been here, I've had no problems with people, police. I've been quite quiet, to be fair. [why do you think that's changed?] I think it's hearing other people's opinions and really taking it on board... They said they'll help me. They have helped me. And ever since then, I've been nothing but gold'.</p> <p>'It's not fully hit me to say that, like I've got a free life, but I'm slowly</p>	<p>Practitioner describes a different child-centred sector identity and direct identity shift; Child describes moving on from the offence and behaving differently.</p>

	<p>identity, but basically the way he saw himself then and now being completely different'.</p> <p>'it's mirroring some of that identity [pro-social identity] and seeing the good and giving, taking the risk to give the chance for us and obviously for him, like with employment, but also with his family. So that was, I think that's a really good example of that identity. There was a massive identity shift from when he first came here to versus when he left'.</p>	<p>moving on from what happened and here it is helping me move on, basically telling me, it's going to be better. I feel better. They worked and they managed to get me here. So I believe what they say now and I do believe that I'll be able to move on from it [the offence]'</p>	
<p><b>Good is mirrored back to the child to create opportunity</b></p>	<p>' I think we're getting much better in that [focus on identity development] in our planning and pre-sentence reports and interventions/intervention plans that we do with children. I mean, developing a pro-social identity is a journey'... 'stage two being development of a pro-social identity once they've actually got some aspirations and positive activities and they've had that good relational work with us and the decent interactions'</p> <p>'it's mirroring some of that identity [pro-social identity] and seeing the good and giving, taking the risk to give the chance for us and obviously for him, like with employment, but also with his family. So that was, I think that's a really good example of that identity. There was a massive identity shift from when he first came here to versus when he left'.</p>	<p>'Support has made me feel better with myself. Yeah. Obviously, it's nice to hear other people's thoughts about young people. And it's nice that people think highly about me'... 'I'm just, I used to be such a quiet person. Not mind my own business, but I was really in a dark place and here's helped. People here have helped'</p>	<p>Practitioners describe seeing the good and giving chances through employment and family work; Child describes feeling better because people think highly of him.</p>
<p><b>Parents are supported to</b></p>	<p>'we are working in a child first way. But I also think there's a real benefit in being able to role model that to parents. It's that idea of having those relations, still having a relationship, being boundaried and</p>	<p>'they're supportive of my family. They're in separate meetings with mum and my dad. So it's really nice</p>	<p>Practitioner describes role-modelling relational and boundaried Child First practice to parents; Child describes</p>

<p><b>understand a Child First approach</b></p>	<p>being firm when needed. So it kind of goes a bit hand in hand'</p>	<p>that they're with the parents as well to the child that's here'</p>	<p>separate meetings with mum and dad and feeling that family as well as child are supported.</p>
<p><b>Youth justice moves away from adult/probation logic</b></p>	<p>'The main principle of treating children like children... understanding the complex nature and needs of the children that we're working with, obviously, when you're from my previous role working with adults, there's a lot focus on who that person is and the background they've come from and how they've ended up where they are... [instead of a] focus on what they're doing now and addressing their behaviour. But obviously, with the children we focus on the fact that they are children and helping them to be children and get away from whatever led to where they are'</p> <p>'historically, it's felt a little bit like youth justice was probation life, and a lot of the approaches were just toned down or probation approaches that were just applied to children, whereas I think probably for the first time, it's more of a different approach that has to be applied to children, as opposed to whatever probation is. It just feels a bit more owned, I think, by the sector'</p>	<p>'It's better now [how I see myself]. I'm more happy. I'm more energetic. I used to be really down, but now coming here, it's helped a lot. Ever since I've been here, I've had no problems with people, police. I've been quite quiet, to be fair. [why do you think that's changed?] I think it's hearing other people's opinions and really taking it on board... They said they'll help me. They have helped me. And ever since then, I've been nothing but gold'.</p> <p>'it's nice to come here. You get to express your feelings. I think it's better to know you have a place and people that support you and want to help you'.</p>	<p>Practitioner describes seeing children as children and understanding need rather than simply managing behaviour; Child describes being happier, quieter, supported and able to express feelings.</p>
<p><b>Children are involved in redesigning interventions- Collaboration</b></p>	<p>' we will now naturally think, rather than we're just going to do it, let's get some children involved in it. So, for example, our redesign of our weapons interventions, from weapons awareness to a safety programme, which we did with children rather than us just doing it'</p>	<p>'Everyone was always double checking before they would do something here. So with the boxing, they've asked me probably about every session if I wanted to do it. So</p>	<p>Practitioner describes redesigning weapons work with children; Child describes workers checking before activities and feeling involved.</p>

		<b>they always double check. So, yeah, I feel pretty involved'</b>	
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## 5.8 Standards for children

The Service has been required to not deliver any further National Standards work since the self-assessment audit against the National Standard relating to children appearing at court, completed in November 2023. There was a specific focus on children appearing for Serious Youth Violence offences. Children and parents provided feedback on their court experiences. The audit highlighted the need for further work to assist children and families to understand the court processes that they were experiencing and to ensure that there is clear and sensitive communication to children and carers.

Following the audit activity an action plan was drawn up and delivered which included:

- Team training and guidance
- Amending the Panel Report template to assist panel members in being aware of issues relating to ethnic disproportionality
- Ensuring there are different mechanisms to gain court feedback from sentencers and court users

Although no dedicated National Standards audits have been required since 2023, the Board and Service have worked hard to enhance our audit and assurance framework and this is aligned to the YJS Standards and tenets of Child First Practice. This ensures oversight of practice aligned to the YJB Standards Framework

## 5.9 Service development and priorities for the coming year

In December 2025 the Youth Justice Management Board and Youth Justice Board acknowledged the significant progress made by the service and partnership, following the HMIP inspection in 2024. The board and YJB approved the decision to close the HMIP Action plan and consolidate outstanding actions into a single, operational plan for continuous improvement. This new plan incorporates remaining items from the improvement plan alongside other new priorities, forming an ongoing framework for continuous improvement. This reports to YJMB and continues to have oversight of the YJB via their Performance Oversight framework.

The board and partnership have agreed on the following set of strategic priorities for 2026-27, with an increased focus on strategic and thematic trends for the final priority:

- Reducing First Time Entrants

- Improving long term outcomes of children who have offended
- Positively addressing and reducing disproportionality of Black and global majority children
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence, including a sharper focus on extremist behaviour and violence against women and girls
- Improving education outcomes for children within the YJS by reducing reliance on part-time timetables and alternative provision, strengthening SEND outcomes, and decreasing the number of post-16 young people who are NEET.
- Improving outcomes for actual and potential victims of youth crime, aligned to our strategic analysis of victim need, specifically a sharper focus on the correlation between victimisation and offending.

The following theme will cut across these priorities:

- Aligning parenting and whole family work with the Family Safeguarding and Contextual Safeguarding practice models for Children's Services.

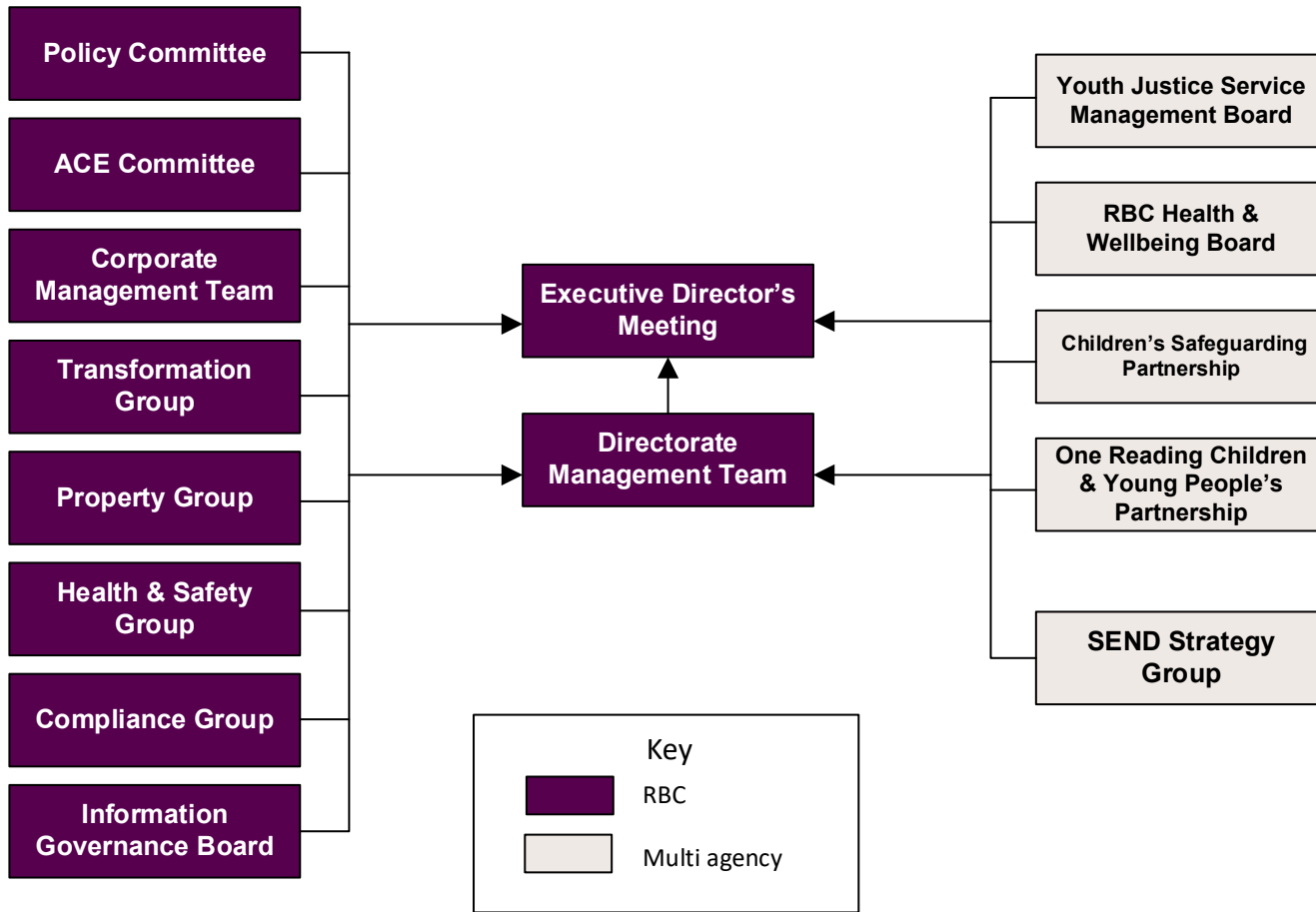
## Board membership, Sign off Submission and Approval

Name	Role	Organisation	Signature
Michael O'Connor	Independent Board Chair	Independent Chair	
Claire Willmot	Head Teacher	Cranbury College	
Ollie Foxell	Service Manager, Youth Justice Service and Extra Familial Harm	Reading Borough Council, Department of Children's Services	
Jonny Bradish	Head of Service, Family Help and Partnerships	Reading Borough Council, Department of Children's Services	
Dr Alec deSausmarez	Service Lead for RISE, Senior Educational Psychologist	Reading Borough Council, Department of Children's Services, Education.	
Sunny Sohki	Detective Chief Inspector, Harm Reduction Unit, Berkshire West	Thames Valley Police	
Matthew Prouse	Service Manager	NHS	
Jo Middlemass	Community Partnerships Service Manager	Reading Borough Council	
Martin White	Head of Public Health	Reading Borough Council	
Alison Wilding	Director	No.5	
Thomas Jarvis	Director	N3wAngle CIC	
Carol Kelly	Youth Court Magistrate	His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)	
Hannah Powell	Deputy Head of Probation Delivery Unit, Berks West	His Majesties Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)	
Paul Brown	Head of Strategy and Impact/Safeguarding Lead	Reading Football Club	
Hannah Hughes	Service Manager	SAFE Young Victims Service	
Councillor Griffith	Lead Member for Children's Services	Reading Borough Council	

Sonja Janeva	Children and Young People Mental Health Commissioning Lead Berkshire West	Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board	
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**Appendix One – organisational structure charts**

## Children's Services Governance Structure



Page 178

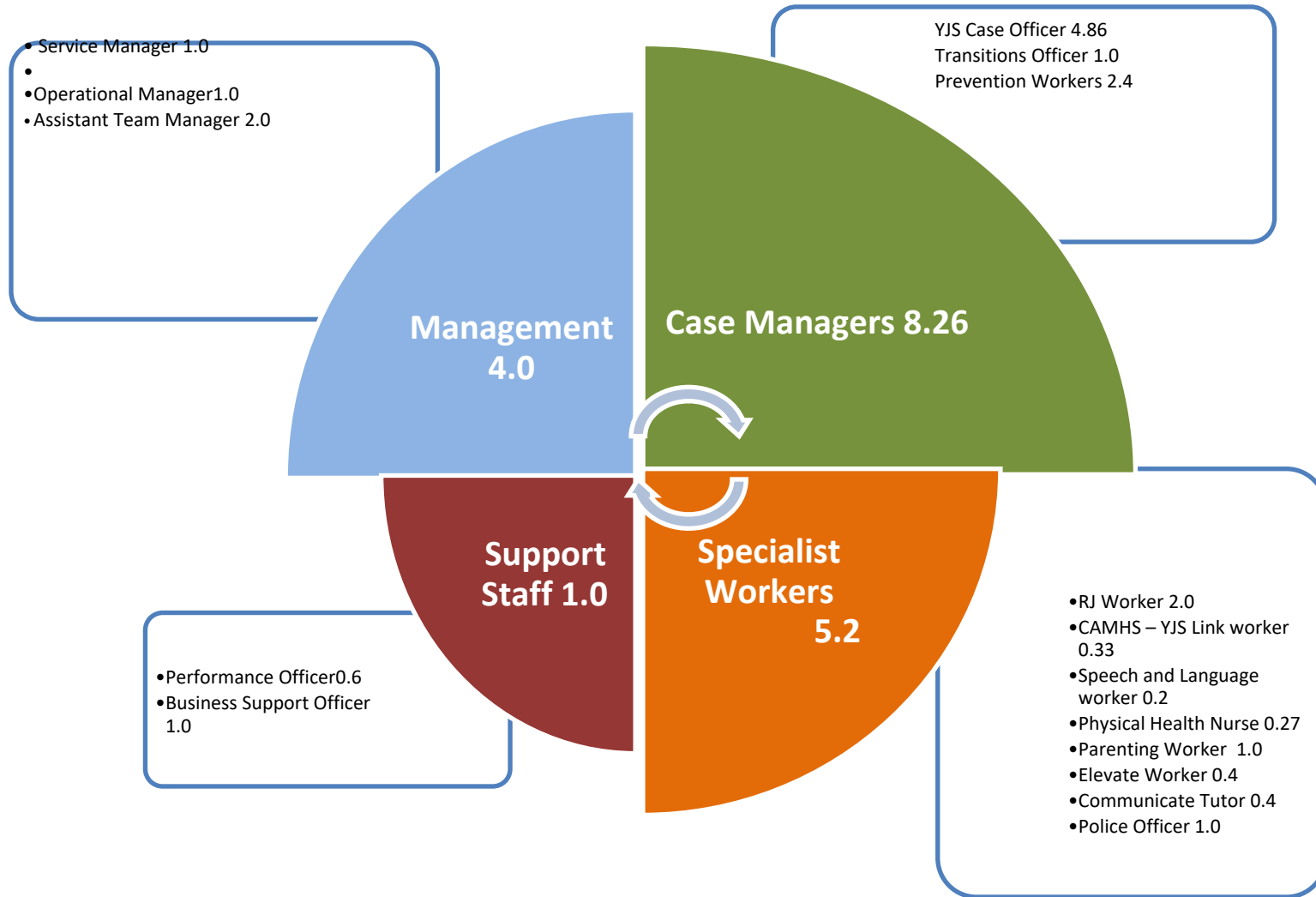
Gender	
Female	12

Appendix Two - YJS Structure and staffing

Male	6
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Role	Establishment	In Post (Mar25)	Funding source
Service Manager	1.0	1.0	
Team Manager	1.0	1.0	
Assistant Team manager	2.0	2.0	
Performance Officer	0.6	0.5	
Business Support Officer	1.0	0.5	
YJS Case Officers	4.86	2.86	
Transitions Officer	1.0	1.0	Part funded by Probation funding
Prevention Officers	2.4	1.0	1 x Funded by Turnaround (MoJ) 1.4 x funded by OPCC
RJ Worker	2.0	1.0	
YJS Parenting Worker	1.0	1.0	
Rapid English	0.4	0.4	
Elevate Worker	0.4	0.4	
<b>DOCs staff</b>	<b>17.66</b>	<b>12.66</b>	
<b>Other Specialist Posts (not employed by RBC)</b>			
Police	1.0	1.0	
Probation	0.7	0.0	(funding used for Transitions Officer)
CAMHS Clinician	0.33	0.33	
S & L Therapist	0.2	0.2	
Physical Health Nurse	0.27	0.27	
<b>Seconded staff</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20.16</b>	<b>14.86</b>	

Ethnicity	
White	15
Black	0
Asian	3
Mixed	0
Other	0



## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

**08 July 2026**

<b>Title</b>	Procurement of Child and School Transport and Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement 2027/2028
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director Commissioning Report</b>	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
<b>Report author</b>	Brian Grady, Director of Education
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children
<b>Council priority</b>	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve consultation on updating the Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement for 2027/28 (draft attached as Appendix A), delegating the form of consultation to the Executive Director of Children's Services, with the results of consultation to be considered at ACE Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> October. Proposed updates to the Policy Statement include:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) emphasis on supporting independent travel to access education, enabling positive transitions to adulthood and promoting independence;</li> <li>b) revised eligibility criteria; and</li> <li>c) introduction of charging contributions when transport is required to be organised by Reading Borough Council, while retaining discretionary transport and assessing cases individually.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education &amp; Public Health, the Lead Councillor for Children, the Director of Finance and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Procure and enter into a framework contract with successful tenderers for the delivery of transport services to meet our statutory duty to provide travel assistance for eligible pupils, to provide transport for families working with Social Care and to deliver transport requirements for children in our care;</li> <li>b) Negotiate with the successful tenderers to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.</li> <li>c) Delegate to Director level the ability to enter call off contracts from successful tenderers to the framework contract.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Local Authorities have duties to arrange school transport for eligible children of compulsory school age and children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). There is no corresponding legal duty that requires Local Authorities to provide free transport for children over compulsory school age.
- 1.2. School Transport has continued to be a significant budget and growth pressure in Reading. In order for the Council to maintain its statutory duties of providing essential services to children, the Council's priority for the next three years is to put in place a range of measures to deliver positive outcomes for Reading's children whilst reducing demand and cost.
- 1.3. The 2025/26 budget outturn includes an overspend of £1.25m within home to school transport, which remains a key area of financial risk due to sustained increases in demand and associated cost pressures. The financial position highlights the continued challenge within the Education Directorate, with Home to School Transport remaining a significant driver of overspend. This will require continued focus as part of forward financial planning, including the development of demand management strategies, review of policy and practice, and alignment with wider SEND and sufficiency initiatives to ensure the service is sustainable in the medium term.
- 1.4. This report covers two of those measures; establishing a new procurement approach for school transport and revising discretionary travel support for post 16 learners.
- 1.5. A new procurement approach is proposed, to replace the current Dynamic Purchasing System contract which is due to expire on 30 September 2026.
- 1.6. The new framework will be an Open Framework and has an emphasis on value for money. The new contract will support work being completed on the feasibility of moving to using larger vehicles and reducing the number of routes, with expectation this will further reduce spend and promote increased independence of children travelling to school.
- 1.7. Local Authorities have discretion to decide what transport and financial support is required, from travel allowances to the provision of a shared minibus, to assist young people over the age of 16, including those with SEND, attend school or college. When making decisions, local authorities consider the needs of their population, local transport infrastructure, and the resources they have available. They must also act reasonably and consider all relevant legislation and statutory guidance.
- 1.8. To support a smooth transition to independence and adulthood for children, and to encourage the most active and independent forms of travel, the Council proposes consulting on a revised Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement. The changes aim to simplify language and promote active travel options for learners in Reading, aligning with the Council's strategic commitment to fostering independence.
- 1.9. The proposed new Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement (Appendix A) will support the Council's aims and objectives to help children prepare for adulthood as well as achieve savings against current levels of transport spend. The proposed approach retains support for those with the greatest need while ensuring that resources are used fairly and sustainably.
- 1.10. This report invites Committee to approve the proposed consultation on the Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement 2027/2028. Specifically, the consultation will consider the following elements:
  - An enhanced emphasis on supporting independent travel to access education, enabling positive transitions to adulthood and promoting independence and improved outcomes for young people;
  - A proposed revised set of eligibility criteria for post-16 travel assistance;

- A proposed introduction of charging contributions when transport is required to be organised by Reading Borough Council, while retaining discretionary transport and assessing cases individually.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council currently provides discretionary transport support to post-16 learners with SEND, which goes beyond the statutory minimum requirements set out in the national guidance.
- 2.2. Discretionary transport refers to travel assistance provided by the Council that is not required by law. For post-16 learners with SEND, the Council is not legally obliged to provide free or subsidised transport but may choose to do so in accordance with its local transport policy. A number of Local Authorities charge for the support which they provide. Research and benchmarking with other authorities such as Slough Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and others outside of Berkshire demonstrate a range of Local Authorities already charge for Post-16 Transport.
- 2.3. The support provided may include free transport for eligible young learners aged 16-18 who meet the eligibility criteria. The Council currently offers fully paid travel support, mileage allowance or Council organised transport, which includes solo taxis in some cases.
- 2.4. The current post 16 transport approach fosters dependency and does not deliver value for money. We are therefore proposing a targeted revision to the Post-16 SEND transport offer that shifts the focus from reliance on Council-provided transport to promoting independence and active travel.
- 2.5. More independent and active travel is expected to lead to significant benefits for young people, with improved outcomes and readiness for adulthood. There is a strong and growing evidence base showing that the ability to travel independently is a critical enabler of post-16 outcomes. Research demonstrates that independent travel improves young people's access to education, employment and social opportunities, and builds the confidence and life skills needed for adulthood. While national datasets do not yet directly link specific transport policies to improved employment or education outcomes, the wider evidence is clear that removing transport barriers, and actively equipping young people to travel independently, supports better long-term life chances and reduces the risk of disengagement.
- 2.6. Whilst ensuring it is legally compliant, equitable, and financially sustainable, this approach continues to support those with the greatest need while encouraging young people to develop the skills and confidence for independent travel, ensuring resources are used fairly and sustainably.

## **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. The current Dynamic Purchasing System contract for school transport commenced on 1 November 2020 and is due to expire on 30 September 2026, with no opportunity for further extensions.
- 3.2. The new framework will be an Open Framework as the previous contract has proven resource heavy to administer and provides the Council with little control over escalating costs. The new tender has an emphasis on value for money and, by moving away from a Dynamic Purchasing System to a fixed price framework, one where we will have greater control over costs.
- 3.3. The new contract will support work being completed on the feasibility of moving to using larger vehicles and reducing the number of routes, with expectation this will further reduce spend and promote increased independence of children travelling to school.
- 3.4. It is proposed that successful tenderers will be eligible to provide the delivery of transport services to meet our statutory duty to provide travel assistance for eligible pupils, to

provide transport for families working with Social Care and to deliver transport requirements for children in our care. Following the tender process, officers would engage with the successful tenderers to mobilise the contract and by establishing individual contracts for identified routes and actively manage the contracts for routes throughout its lifecycle, promoting sustainable and efficient transport routes for eligible children.

3.5. A consultation on a new Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement for academic year 2027/2028 is proposed. The consultation would take place between 13 July and 10 September 2026. The new proposed Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement to be consulted upon is appended to this report at Appendix A.

3.6. The key changes from the current Post-16 Transport Policy (2025/26) are set out below.

3.7. **Scope and Terminology**

- A clearer definition of 'Post-16' is provided;
- The statement emphasises the requirement for annual reapplication for learners;
- Independence is actively promoted within the policy.

3.8. **Eligibility Criteria**

- It is proposed that for learners to be eligible for travel assistance they must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the appended Policy Statement, which are summarised below for ease and convenience:
  - a) Student must be a **resident of the Council area**;
  - b) Student must have an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** with a named school or educational setting;
  - c) Student must attend their **nearest allocated provider**, as set out in the EHCP, or a nearer qualifying provider and not a placement chosen on the basis of parental preference;
  - d) Student is **unable to use public transport independently** due to special educational needs, disability, or mobility difficulty;
  - e) Programme of learning is **full-time** ( $\geq 540$  guided learning hours per year, planned and funded);
  - f) Student lives **more than 3 miles walking distance** from the setting (as measured by the Council), or is unable to walk the distance due to SEN, disability, or mobility difficulty;
  - g) **Low income**: without the Council's transport assistance, the student would be unable to attend the educational placement due to financial constraints;

We will explore with applicants and their families alternative travel offers such as the [Reading Concessionary Travel Scheme - Reading Borough Council](#) as part of this process. Where these offers are able to be utilised, we will expect them to be used.

3.9. **Financial Support and Contribution Charging**

- The review of our Draft Policy Statement provides an opportunity to propose offering a bursary (personal transport budget) to families as a first option to fund transport where learners are eligible. It is proposed to develop bursary options through the consultation process.
- This consultation also gives us the opportunity to consider a contribution charging policy for eligible learners where the Council supports travel assistance through Council-organised transport. This could be a standard contribution of £330 per term or a reduced rate of £175 per term for those in a low-income household. Any charging

rate would be agreed through the consultation process and would be benchmarked against appropriate public transport options available to all young people.

- Other local authority charging policies, a summary of which are included in the table below, are provided for illustrative purposes:

Council	Charges for Post-16 SEND or Specialist Transport
Slough	If travel assistance is provided, there is usually a contribution charge of £750 per academic year per student for travel support. This applies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students from <i>low-income families</i> qualifying for travel support;</li> <li>• Students with an <i>Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)</i> if travel support is provided;</li> <li>• Other applicants needing assistance.</li> </ul>
West Berkshire	Contribution for Post-16 SEN Transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If eligible for Post-16 SEN home-to-school/college transport assistance, a contribution of £1,038 is required for the 2025/26 academic year.</li> </ul>
Wokingham	Standard fee is £1026.00 per year: <i>Eligible P16 students starting new courses are all provided with Personal Transport Budgets, but some with special circumstances are awarded transport on appeal.</i> <i>In the case of P16's continuing into '6th form' at schools, such as Addington, they will usually be offered transport, but a financial contribution is required.</i>
Buckinghamshire Council	A Personal Transport Budget which allows them to arrange their own transport, or Council-arranged transport for an annual fee, with sliding scales based on days per week from £1,072 (5 days) to £213 (1 day) for the 2025/26 academic year. Families facing financial hardship may be eligible for reduced fees (e.g. £715 for 5 days, down to £143 for 1 day)
Plymouth City Council	Requires a contribution: £613.30 per year (or £551.97 if paid in a single instalment), with the option to use own transport at 45p per mile to avoid the fee.
Shropshire Council	Offers a contribution scheme: £1,140 per year, reduced to £330 for families on defined benefits.
Surrey County Council	Charges for travel assistance: £659.01 for low-income students; £908.85 for others, though exemptions may apply in cases of financial hardship.
Torbay Council	Specialist transport support is chargeable: £936 per year, or a fuel allowance of 40p/mile.
Cambridgeshire County Council	A contribution is required unless the household is eligible for low-income support; otherwise, it's £269.50 per term.
Peterborough City Council	Those not qualifying as low-income or without an EHCP must pay: £690 per year, or £345 for half-year, or six-monthly payments of £115.
West Northamptonshire Council	A charge of £1,000 per year for transport assistance; £500 for low-income families.
Bradford Council	Charges £370 per year for travel assistance under its Travel Assistance Service.

### 3.10. Impact analysis

- 3.11. Officers have undertaken a risk and impact analysis to ensure that learners are supported through the transition period in implementing proposed changes.

- 3.12. The total number of Post-16 SEND learners currently receiving transport support is 166. The table below provides a breakdown as to the types of support currently being offered:

Travel Support Offer	Breakdown of post-16 students
Council Organised Transport	Solo Taxi – 11 students Multiple occupancy Taxi – 77 students Minibus – 25 students Specialist Transport, e.g. Ambulance - 2
Personal Travel Budget	£2,000/yr – 6 students £3,000/yr – 1 student
Reimbursement/Mileage allowance	44 students approx.
Total no. of students on travel support	166 students

- 3.13. The following key risks and mitigations have been identified in implementing the new proposed Policy Statement:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Legal challenge from families	Medium	High	Engagement and review with Reading Families Forum; ensure legal compliance; individual case consideration.
Reputational damage	Medium	Medium	Effective communications and engagement on support available for learners and reasons for change; public consultation.
Disruption to learners' access to education	Low	High	Hardship fund; travel training; case-by-case support.
Increased workload on appeals team	High	Medium	Engagement with families and learners; review process.

#### 4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement contribute to the aims of ensuring that there are good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading.
- 4.2. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:
- Promote more equal communities in Reading;
  - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success;
  - Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint;
  - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children;
  - Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future.

4.3. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first;
- Building on strong foundations;
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities;
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents;
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading.

4.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website: [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

4.5. Supporting access to education helps the Council achieve its objectives to promote more equal communities in Reading and secure Reading's economic and cultural success.

## **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. Although the policy is emphasising a new charging policy there is a reinvigorated promotion of independent, active and sustainable travel. The use of public transport instead of minibuses and taxis to access education is a positive contributor to addressing environmental and climate implications of school travel.

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. In preparing the Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement the Council is proposing to consult with the following stakeholders:

- Reading Families Forum;
- any other local authorities it considers appropriate (for example cross border transport);
- governing bodies of schools and Further Education institutions;
- the appropriate transport administration body for the area;
- persons who will be of sixth form age at the time of the Transport Policy Statement and their parents/carers;
- other bodies including education and training providers, higher education institutions, transport companies and authorities operating in the locality, public sector bodies, community groups, voluntary organisations and groups/organisations with an interest in disability issues should also be consulted where appropriate.

6.2. Feedback will be used to finalise the revised travel assistance statement for publication by 31 May 2027.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken. The EqIA is appended to this report. The results of the screening assessment evidence considerations which need to be taken into account to avoid risks of potential impacts for persons with a protected characteristic.
- 7.3. Compliance with statutory guidance will ensure that, as a public authority, Reading Borough Council will have determined travel assistance arrangements which work to prevent discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

## 8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. School travel assistance arrangements need to be compliant with the Statutory Guidance [“Statutory guidance for local authorities on supplying transport to students and trainees aged 16 and over”](#).
- 8.2. Under the Education Act 1996 (Section 509AA & 509AB), local authorities are required to publish a Post-16 Transport Policy Statement each year but are not legally obliged to provide free or subsidised transport for learners aged 16 to 18 with SEND.
- 8.3. Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that learners can access education, not to provide transport. Support should be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.4. The [SEND Code of Practice \(2015\)](#) and Equality Act 2010 require authorities to consider reasonable adjustments and ensure no discrimination.
- 8.5. In preparing this updated Policy Statement, Reading Borough Council has also considered the Education and Skills Act 2008, under which local authorities in England have broad duties to encourage, enable, and assist all young people to participate in education or training who are aged 13 to 19, as well as those aged between 20 and 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

## 9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. The 2025/26 budget outturn includes an overspend of £1.25m within home to school transport, which remains a key area of financial risk due to sustained increases in demand and associated cost pressures. The financial position highlights the continued challenge within the Education Directorate, with Home to School Transport remaining a significant driver of overspend. This will require continued focus as part of forward financial planning, including the development of demand management strategies, review of policy and practice, and alignment with wider SEND and sufficiency initiatives to ensure the service is sustainable in the medium term
- 9.2. The introduction of contributions is expected to generate a net saving of approximately per annum of £341k;
- 2027/28 - £199k from September 2027
- 2028/29 – a further £142k through a full year effect
- 9.3. The promotion of more independent travel is anticipated to result in reduced expenditure and generate further savings from academic year 2027/28.
- 9.4. The proposed changes will help to offset rising transport costs and support the long-term sustainability of the service. The main impact from this change will be seen within the Special Schools Transport spend.

## 10. Timetable for Implementation

- 10.1. Statutory guidance sets out the timeframes for consultations, with a requirement to consult for a period of 28 days.
- 10.2. The timetable for consultation is set out below

Action	Deadline
Launch of consultation on draft Post 16-Travel Assistance Policy Statement following consideration and approval by ACE Committee	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2026
Consultation period	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2026-1 <sup>st</sup> October 2026
Review of responses to consultation and preparation of final Post 16-Travel Assistance Policy Statement for consideration by ACE committee	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2026-7 <sup>th</sup> October 2026
Publication of ACE Committee papers including final draft of Post 16-Travel Assistance Policy Statement for consideration and review	7 <sup>th</sup> October 2026
ACE Committee date for decision on Post 16-Travel Assistance Policy Statement	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2026
Transition period to new arrangements	October 2026 – May 2027
Implementation date	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2027

- 10.3. The outcome and final documents will be presented to the October 2026 ACE Committee for final decision.
- 10.4. The final 2027/28 Post 16-Travel Assistance Policy Statement will be published as required by statutory guidance by 31 May 2027.
- 10.5. The following high level implementation plan will be followed to ensure any new charging process and policy are in place by September 2027.
- 10.5.1. Update operational guidance for SEND and Transport teams;
  - 10.5.2. Update application forms, criteria, and assessment workflows;
  - 10.5.3. Train staff on new eligibility and decision-making criteria;
  - 10.5.4. Update website, customer guidance, and parent information packs;
  - 10.5.5. Develop comms plan for families, schools, colleges;
  - 10.5.6. Scope charging arrangements;
  - 10.5.7. Confirm transitional arrangements (e.g., phased changes, legacy cases);
  - 10.5.8. Open Post-16 applications under new criteria;
  - 10.5.9. Provide helpline support for families during first month/

## 11. Background Papers

- 11.1. There are none.

Appendix A: Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy Statement 2027/28

Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment



# Post-16 Transport Policy 2027-28

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## Summary

This document details the arrangements for post 16 transport.

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### Owner

Alex Lowe – School Transport Manager

### Version

V1.0

### Date

May 2026

### Review Date

Sept 2026



## Contents

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Post-16 Transport Policy 2027-28 .....	1
Summary.....	1
Contents.....	2
1. Introduction .....	3
2. Responsibilities and duties .....	3
3. Travel assistance .....	3
4. General transport availability .....	4
5. Support for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) aged 16 to 18.....	- 4
6. Support for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) - aged 19 to 25 .....	5
6.1 Circumstances Not Normally Considered for Eligibility.....	6
7. How to Apply .....	7
8. Medical Grounds .....	7
9. Application and review process .....	7
10. How to Appeal a Decision .....	8
11. How to make a complaint or seek remedy for an issue with transport .....	10



## 1. Introduction

Local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement by 31 May each year.

This statement specifies the arrangements for transport that Reading Borough Council (RBC) considers is necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of Post 16 students receiving education or training.

Reading Borough Council's Post-16 Transport Policy Statement provides information on travel and transport arrangements that are available to young people who are above statutory school age, which ends on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they turn 16.

***RBC's ambition is that every student in the borough achieves their full potential. We are committed to ensuring that those aged 16 and over as explained above (including those with Education, Health and Care Plans up to the age of 25) have access to educational opportunities at school, college, or other education settings. Part of this ambition is for as many students as possible to travel independently using a sustainable form of transport.***

Research for the Motability Foundation finds that **ability to travel independently directly affects young people's:**

- independence
- social connections
- ability to participate in education, employment and wider society

The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement sets out how we support young people access education as independently and actively as possible, to support young people achieve their goals and ambitions and achieve positive outcomes.

This Statement applies to any young person who is living in the Reading Borough Council area. Students who do not live in the Reading Borough Council area should refer to the Transport Policy and Statement issued by their home Local Authority.

## 2. Responsibilities and duties

The statement is published in line with the statutory duties under the Education Act 1996, including s.509AA and s.509AB and takes into account the Department for Education statutory guidance – Post-16 transport to education and training, January 2019.

## 3. Travel assistance

Students are now required to be in education, employment or training until their 18th birthday, which could involve mixing full-time work with study, following an apprenticeship,



continuing full time in school or college, or combining part-time training with volunteering. There has not, however, been any change to statutory school age which ends at the end of the academic year in which the student turns 16.

Reading Borough Council is required to facilitate the attendance of all those of Post 16 age i.e. those students in school years 12 to 14 or who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday. This may involve travel assistance, but Reading Borough Council does not have to provide this assistance free of charge.

Responsibility for attendance at an education setting lies with the student and their parents/carers.

#### **4. General transport availability**

We encourage all young people to consider public transport as a first principle in accessing post 16 education. Public transport offers the opportunity for young people to develop their social skills, confidence, communications skills and independence.

There are a number of public transport service providers in Reading. Some colleges and schools in Reading and surrounding boroughs have their own transport arrangements but each arrangement can vary.

Young people should check with their setting about the transport arrangements and ticketing prices that can apply to both bus and train travel.

Reading Borough Council has arrangements with some local bus and train operators for the purchase of annual season tickets at preferential rates, including Reading Buses.

Interested parents, carers and young people should contact the relevant transport provider to purchase tickets.

Certain Colleges such as Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) provide buses from Reading to the College at a charge. For further information please contact the respective college.

#### **5. Support for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) - aged 16 to 18**

To qualify for travel assistance from Reading Borough Council, the following criteria will be applied. Transport needs will be assessed as part of the Education, Health and Care Plan annual review process.

Transport assistance is based on travel from the home address, as defined in the Home to School Transport Policy, to the educational placement(s) named in Section I of the



Education, Health & Care Plan. A student may be eligible for transport assistance if they meet the following criteria.

- The student is resident in the Reading Borough Council area.
- The student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with a named school or educational setting, AND
- The named school or educational setting is the nearest suitable school or educational setting as defined in the Home to School Transport Policy and not a placement chosen on the basis of parental preference, AND
- The programme of learning is full-time (i.e. at least 540 plus guided learning (planned and funded) hours per year, AND
- The student is unable to travel on public transport to the educational setting due to their Special Educational Needs, disability or mobility difficulty, OR
- The student lives more than 3 miles walking distance from the school or educational setting as measured by RBC, OR
- The student is unable to walk the distance because of their mobility difficulty OR
- **Low income:** without the Council's transport assistance, the student would be unable to attend the educational placement due to financial constraints

## **6. Support for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) - aged 19 to 25**

There are additional responsibilities under Section 508F and Section 508G of the Education Act 1996 for Reading Borough Council to provide transport for some students over the age of 19. These students must meet the following criteria:

- The student has commenced their course at the setting before the age of 19
- The student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with a named school or educational setting.
- The named school or educational setting must be the nearest suitable provision, as defined in the Home to School Transport Policy, and not a placement chosen on the basis of preference.
- The student is unable to travel on public transport to their educational setting due to their Special Educational Needs, disability or mobility difficulty. Eligibility under this criterion must be evidenced through written professional documentation that clearly explains why the student cannot reasonably be expected to use public transport, even with support. Evidence may include (but is not limited to) medical reports,



educational psychologist or other relevant professional assessment confirming the nature and impact of the need.

- The programme of learning is full-time (i.e. at least 540 plus guided learning (planned and funded) hours per year.
- The student:
  - a. lives more than 3 miles walking distance from the school or educational setting as measured by OR
  - b. they are unable to walk the distance because of their mobility difficulty.

### **6.1 Circumstances Not Normally Considered for Eligibility**

The following circumstances, in isolation, would not normally be considered sufficient to meet this criterion:

- **Parental work or other commitments**

A parent or carer being unavailable to accompany the student due to work, childcare, or other personal commitments.

- **Lack of confidence or limited independent travel experience**

The student has not previously used public transport or lacks confidence, where there is no supporting professional evidence that this is due to their Special Educational Needs or disability.

- **Behaviour that is not linked to SEND or disability**

Behavioural difficulties that are not evidenced as arising from the student's Special Educational Needs or disability.

- **Preference for private or arranged transport**

A preference for council-arranged or private transport over available public transport options.

- **General anxiety without professional evidence**

Reports of anxiety or distress related to travel where this is not supported by relevant professional evidence demonstrating a significant impact on the student's ability to travel.

- **Cost of transport**

The cost of public transport, where suitable transport is available.



Each application will be considered on its individual merits, taking into account all supporting evidence provided.

Students who have been assessed and are eligible for travel assistance will be allocated travel assistance appropriate to their assessed needs. This may be specialised if they require equipment to enable them to be transported.

Travel assistance to the educational setting must be re-applied for every academic year **OR** before the start of any new course, or before the change of a home address.

Where a student with an EHCP **starts a course at aged 19 or older**, as adult learners any transport assistance is at the discretion of Reading Borough Council. Applications will be considered by the relevant Reading Borough Council team with responsibility for adults.

## 7. How to Apply

To apply for travel assistance please complete and submit the form that can be found via [School transport - Reading Borough Council](#) webpage or via the following link [SEND Transport Assistance Application Form 2026](#) .

For advice on financial support to access higher education please contact Student Finance England on 0300 100 0607.

## 8. Medical Grounds

If a young person has a temporary or enduring medical condition making it impossible to walk to school, then assistance **may** be provided. Applications for assistance on this basis will need to be supported by appropriate evidence from the medical profession. Evidence required by the council may include, but may not be restricted to, a letter from the young person's General Practitioner or Consultant or both and must be supplied at no cost to the RBC. The evidence must have been provided in the 6 months prior to the date of application.

If a parent feels the young person may be eligible, they need to contact and discuss this with the SEN Team.

Reading Borough Council reserves the right to consult with relevant health professionals for further advice and may choose to seek comment from the educational institution or school attended by the child or young person.



## 9. Application and review process

### Pupils with an EHCP

Applications are made to the SEND Team and assessed by the SEND Panel to make a decision on an annual basis.

### Review process

Provision of travel assistance at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement and the requirement will be reviewed by the Local authority on a regular basis.

All students who receive travel assistance will be subject to review:

- At the annual review meeting if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Following a change in circumstances.

If during the course of any academic year Reading Borough Council determines that the provision of travel assistance is no longer appropriate, it will stop at the end of the term in which the decision was made.

Travel assistance is only awarded for one academic year, for courses longer than one year, a new application has to be made each year.

## 10. How to Appeal a Decision

If you applied for travel assistance and your child is not offered assistance or the transport being provided is unsuitable, you do have a right to challenge the decision through the appeals process. This guide will take you through the appeals process.

### Grounds for Challenge

There are only two grounds for appeal, and these are:

- That you believe the policy has NOT been applied correctly.
- That you believe the policy HAS been properly applied correctly but the exceptional circumstances outlined in the application have not been fully considered.

### How to make an appeal.

If you believe that one of the two grounds for appeal apply you can challenge the decision. There are two stages to the appeals process.



## Stage One

This appeal will be reviewed by a senior officer in the School Transport Service, the Reviewing Officer.

An appeal should be submitted, via the online form [Appeal against a school transport decision Stage 1](#)

This should be completed and submitted within 20 working days from the receipt of the Authority's written decision not to award assistance. The form will ask you to state which of the two grounds you are appealing on and why you are appealing.

If you are appealing on exceptional circumstances or low income you will be able to upload further evidence not included in your original application. Do not include the evidence submitted with your original application.

The Reviewing Officer will review your original application within 20 working days of receipt and parents/carers/young person will be notified in writing of the outcome.

The outcome will clearly explain:

- whether they have upheld the local authority's original decision;
- why they reached that decision;
- how the review was conducted;
- the factors considered in reaching their decision;
- any other agencies or departments that were consulted as part of the review.

Where The Reviewing Officer upholds the original decision, the parent/carer/young person may escalate their appeal to stage two of the process as outlined below.

## Stage Two

If your appeal is not upheld, and the original decision remains you have a second chance to challenge the decision.

This should be completed and submitted within 20 working days from the receipt of the Reviewing Officers written decision not to award assistance (stage 1 outcome). The form will ask you to state which of the two grounds you are appealing on and why you are appealing.

The parent/carer/young person should request that their appeal be progressed to Stage Two where it will be reviewed by an Independent Officer Panel headed by a senior officer from Reading Borough Council. This will be independent of the original decision-making process. The officer will have the knowledge, skills and experience to ensure that the local authority complies with its statutory duties



Parents/carers/young person can submit additional information and will be invited to attend. Officers on this panel will have had no involvement in the original decision making. The appeal date will be within 40 working days of receipt of your request and any additional supporting information. Prior to the case being heard, a full copy of all correspondence will be sent to the parent/carer/young person.

Parent/carer/young person will be informed of the outcome within 5 days of the hearing. Full details of the decision will be provided including:

An explanation of:

- whether they have upheld the local authority's original decision;
- why they reached that decision;
- how the review was conducted;
- the factors considered in reaching their decision;
- which other agencies or departments were consulted as part of the review, if any.

### **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**

If you believe there has been an administrative fault, at any time during your appeal, with the way Reading Borough Council has handled your appeal, you may contact the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSO) who investigates complaints about Councils:

PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH (Tel: 0300 061 0641) [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

If a parent considers that the decision of the independent appeal panel is flawed on public law grounds, they may seek to challenge the decision by applying for a judicial review.

## **11. How to make a complaint or seek remedy for an issue with transport**

If things go wrong, the School Transport Service will endeavour to rectify the situation swiftly, to the satisfaction of all parties, as long as the solution is not outside the boundaries of this policy

For issues identified by schools or families that require a remedy relating to the delivery of service from the provider e.g.:

- lateness of transport
- changing schedule (within policy reasons; e.g. sickness, INSET days etc.)

Please refer to your travel schedule and contact the operator directly in the first instance. This will likely remedy your concern quicker than reporting to a third party first. If you have



an issue that persists, please contact the School Transport service on [school.transport@reading.gov.uk](mailto:school.transport@reading.gov.uk)

Any pupil, parent or carer wishing to make a formal complaint relating to school travel assistance arrangements, should contact the Customer Relations Team:

Call: 0118 937 3787

Write:

Freepost RTLS-CKGX-RKLL

Reading Borough Council

Customer Relations Team

Bridge Street

Reading RG1 2LU

Email us at: [complaints@reading.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@reading.gov.uk)

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## Equality Impact Assessment

### A. Information about the policy

<b>Policy title</b>	Post 16 Transport Policy 2027/28
<b>Lead officer (name and role)</b>	Carly Price, Strategic Lead SEND
<b>Date of assessment (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	May 2026
<b>Summary of the policy</b>	<p>The council currently provides discretionary transport support to post-16 learners with SEND, which goes beyond the statutory minimum requirements set out in the national guidance.</p> <p>Discretionary transport refers to travel assistance provided by the council that is not required by law. For post-16 learners with SEND, the council is not legally obliged to provide free or subsidised transport but may choose to do so in accordance with its local transport policy.</p> <p>This support includes free transport for eligible young learners 16-18 who meet the eligibility criteria.</p> <p>The council currently offers fully paid travel support, mileage allowance or council organised transport (COT) which includes solo taxis in some cases.</p> <p>Rising demand and financial pressures have prompted a review of this provision to ensure it is legally compliant, equitable, and financially sustainable.</p> <p>We are proposing a targeted revision to the current Post-16 SEND transport offer. This approach retains support for those with the greatest need while ensuring that resources are used fairly and sustainably.</p> <p>After an in-depth research on the offering from other councils, we believe the proposed changes to charge for some transport offerings will promote independence and positive outcomes for young people, as well as more efficient use of council resources</p>

### B. Initial assessment

	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>PSED Aim 1 (unlawful behaviour):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could your policy lead to <a href="#">direct or indirect discrimination</a>, <a href="#">harassment</a>,</li> </ul>	Yes – As the service supports those with SEND, we are talking about those with a disability which is a protected characteristic. It may impact those from

<p><u>victimisation</u>, or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>a low socio-economic household. As we are requesting a fee for arranging and managing transport.</p> <p>However, we do not have a legal responsibility to provide free transport and other authorities have a charging policy in place for Post 16.</p> <p>There still remains the potential it will cause distress to those the policy covers, which will need to be mitigated through consultation and engagement with stakeholders and individuals who may be impacted.</p>
<p><b>PSED Aim 2 (equal opportunities):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could your policy affect how service users or employees access services or participate in activities relevant to your policy area?</li> <li>• Could it impact people with particular protected characteristics who have a disproportionately low level of access to services, participation in public life, or other activities?</li> <li>• Could it create or worsen disadvantages and inequalities in your community?</li> <li>• Could it remove or minimise disadvantages and inequalities in your community?</li> </ul>	<p>Yes – We will be asking service users with SEND to access a bursary from their school, to fund their own transport to school or council organised transport which we are introducing a fee for. Although the bursary has been an available resource to 16+ learners and we made reference to this in the existing policy we have not previously requested this be used to mitigate transportation costs for learners.</p> <p>However, we do not have a legal responsibility to provide free transport for this cohort.</p>
<p><b>PSED Aim 3 (good relations):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could your policy affect how people perceive or interact with others?</li> <li>• Could it help tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people with different protected characteristics?</li> <li>• Could it lead to prejudice, community tensions, conflicts, isolation, or segregation?</li> </ul>	<p>No – People will still be able to access the same level of services as before.</p> <p>Yes – promoting more independent travel and access to public transport could positively introduce and include more young people with SEND to more public spaces.</p>

## C. Full assessment

### i. Impact on protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Expected impact	Evidence
--------------------------	-----------------	----------

Age	16-19 year olds will have the introduction of charges which have not been the case previously.	This has been introduced successfully in several authorities and although difficult is not anticipate to impact the ability to attend education within this age range, as there are alternative funding mechanisms beyond council funded transport (e.g. Bursary)
Disability	All pupils on transport will have Special Educational needs and/or Disabilities  Introduction of charges  Although there is no duty on councils to transport post 16 all applications will be assessed on their own individual merit through a person-centred approach	The service will look at each request on a case by case basis within their annual review and will support learners to access Bursary and identify independent travel options where appropriate and can support in finding training to strengthen this skill.
Gender reassignment	None	
Pregnancy and maternity	None	
Race	None	
Religion or belief	None	
Sex	None	
Sexual orientation	None	
Marriage and civil partnership	None	
Membership of the armed forces community*	None	
Socio-economic disadvantage*	Introduction of charges which were not previously requested. Some may find this a difficult additional financial pressure – however there are avenues to support with this e.g. the use of the bursary.  Although there is no duty on councils to transport post 16 all applications will be assessed on their own individual merit	The service will look at each request on a case by case basis within their annual review and will support learners to access Bursary and identify independent travel options where appropriate and can support in finding training to strengthen this skill.

	through a person-centered approach	
Experience of care*	<p>All pupils on transport will have Special Educational needs and/or Disabilities and potentially have experienced some care.</p> <p>Introduction of charges</p> <p>Although there is no duty on councils to transport post 16 all applications will be assessed on their own individual merit through a person-centred approach, ensuring that the Local Authority as corporate parent is promoting independence whilst supporting the needs of each individual child and young person.</p>	<p>The service will look at each request on a case by case basis within the annual review for the child or young person and will support learners to access Bursary and identify independent travel options where appropriate and can support in finding training to strengthen this skill.</p>

\*Additional characteristics identified by the Council to be considered in Equality Impact Assessments.

## ii. Mitigating Actions

Negative impact	Mitigating action
New financial pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We will be working with educational settings to identify those with the potential to travel independently and supporting them to identify relevant training to strengthen this lifelong skill.</li> <li>- We will discuss travel arrangements as part of the annual review.</li> <li>- We will support learners to access the bursary which can be used to fund transport costs.</li> <li>- Where there is evidence the household is of 'low income' we have reduced the contribution to allow for those to still access education.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All cases will be assessed on their own merit and individual needs will be considered.</li> </ul>
Impact on attendance at educational setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We will work with the educational setting to support the individual in creating and managing a travel plan.</li> <li>- All cases will be assessed on their own merit and individual needs will be considered.</li> <li>- We will be working with educational settings to identify those with the potential to travel independently and supporting them to identify relevant training to strengthen this lifelong skill.</li> </ul>

### iii. Monitoring and Review

The Post 16 travel statement must be re-published annually. Therefore we will closely monitor the impact the introduction of this has on learner, and we will be able to alter the policy annually where there is evidence unfair/unlawful impact to those with protected characteristics.

### D. Approval

Approving officer (name and role)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)
Brian Grady Director of Education	1/5/2026

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