

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".

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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

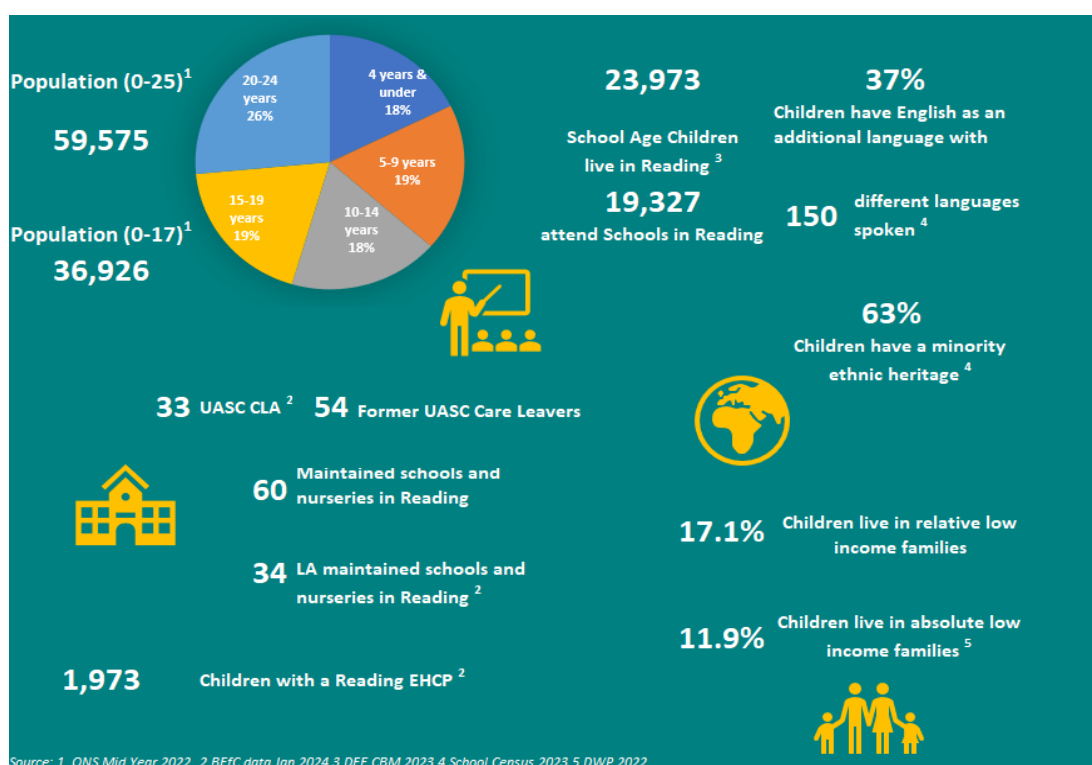
2. Local Context

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
Governance and Leadership	
<p>Objective: Enhance operational involvement and leadership to address disproportionality:</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of work to support girls leading to improvements in practice 	<p>The following data was produced in September 2025 to address this action:</p> <p>Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of girls entering Reading YJS are stable to declining overall, in line with much of Thames Valley. Girls remain a small but increasingly visible cohort, requiring continued gender-informed focus. <p>Age profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading shows a notable shift toward older girls (16–17+), while younger entrants are decreasing. This may indicate later identification of need or escalation at a later stage, highlighting missed early intervention opportunities. <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversion is the most common outcome, reflecting a positive focus on early intervention. However, Reading has a higher proportion of formal out-of-court disposals and court outcomes than some neighbouring areas, suggesting scope to review consistency and access to gender-responsive diversion. <p>First Time Entrants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion of girls who are FTEs has reduced over time, now broadly aligned with national levels (16%). A short-term increase in 2023–24 reduced the following year. <p>Offending and re-offending</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence against the person 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. 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Short-term re-offending is rare, though some emerging longer-term re-offending is evident, remaining below national averages.</i>
<p>Objective: Ensure there is a strategic and operational lead for victims</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Undertake detailed needs analysis of victims to support the board in understanding the profile of victims in Reading.</i> 	<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 victimisation and offending among children, 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 trauma, vulnerability, and unmet need.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Core Insight</p> <p><i>Children involved in violence are more likely to be victims than purely perpetrators.</i> <i>This challenges traditional justice approaches and reinforces the need for child-centred, trauma-informed responses.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Key Messages</p> <p>1. Violence is Rooted in Trauma and Adversity <i>Children involved in violent behaviour commonly experience:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Abuse, neglect, or family instability</i> • <i>Loss, separation, or absence of positive role models</i> • <i>Ongoing exposure to fear and insecurity</i> <p><i>Violent behaviour is often a response to lived experience, not simply deliberate wrongdoing</i></p> <hr/> <p>2. Victimisation Drives Offending Pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Victims of violence are at significantly increased risk of becoming offenders</i> • <i>Cycles of harm are reinforced through:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Retaliation</i>

- Peer group dynamics
- Lack of protective intervention

Early victim support is **critical to preventing future offending**

3. Fear and Self-Protection are Key Motivators

Many children:

- Carry weapons
- Engage in violence

Primarily due to:

- Fear of harm
- Lack of trust in authorities
- Need for self-protection within peer environments

Violence is frequently **defensive and situational**

4. Youth Violence is Highly Gendered

- Predominantly involves boys and young men
- Influenced by:
 - Masculinity norms
 - Status, identity, and peer pressure

Effective responses must include **gender-informed approaches**

5. Systems Often Respond Too Late

- Intervention tends to occur after behaviour escalates
- Earlier signs of vulnerability and victimisation are missed

Greater emphasis is needed on **early identification and prevention**

Strategic Implication

A system focused primarily on enforcement risks:

- Reinforcing trauma

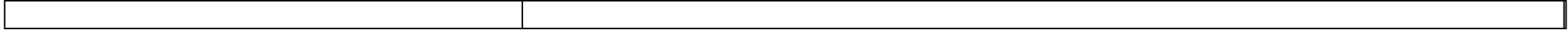
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Missing root causes</i> • <i>Failing to reduce reoffending</i> <p><i>Instead, violence reduction depends on recognising and responding to victimisation early and holistically</i></p> <hr/> <p>What the Evidence Points Toward <i>Effective responses should prioritise:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trauma-informed, child-first practice</i> • <i>Early intervention for victims of violence</i> • <i>Strong, trusted relationships with professionals</i> • <i>Community-based and preventative support</i> • <i>Positive identity and development opportunities</i> <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"> • <i>Extension of Ministry of Justice funded Turnaround support for children ‘on the cusp of’ entry to the Youth Justice system</i> • <i>Delivery of Police and Crime Commissioner funded Serious Violence initiatives, outlined in greater detail later in this plan.</i> • <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>
<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"> • <i>Operationalise Young People’s board</i> 	<p>Young People’s Board – Purpose and Progress</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>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>What Children Have Told Us</p> <p>Children reported feeling valued, respected and safe 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"> • Traditional, consequence-focused weapons awareness work was perceived as ineffective, leading YJS to redesign this offer through co-production with children and police colleagues. • A strong emphasis on the need for legitimate employment opportunities, influencing YJS participation in The Skill Mill Social Outcomes Partnership, which aims to provide structured employment, qualifications and sustained work for young people aged 16–18. • The importance of constructive activities, resulting in the creation of a bike repair workshop and the funding of gym memberships to support positive activities, interactions and roles. • 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. • A desire for recognition and celebration of achievement, including interest in an awards event involving families. <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"> • <i>Deliver school navigators project</i> 	<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>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deliver positive outcomes as a result of the Kickz tier 1 and 2 projects</i> 	<p>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</p> <p>Premier League Inspires</p> <p><i>Unique participants - 17</i> <i>Spaces allocated - 142</i> <i>Average contact hours per person - 18.33</i> <i>Sessions delivered - 20</i> <i>Session hours delivered - 45</i> <i>Participants from under represented groups - 4 (23.52%)</i> <i>Females - 9 (52.94%)</i> <i>Male - 8</i> <i>White - 13</i> <i>Black - 2</i> <i>Mixed heritage - 1</i> <i>Other - 1</i></p> <p>Kickz Targeted</p> <p><i>Unique participants - 7</i> <i>Spaces allocated - 50</i> <i>Average contact hours per person - 14:17</i> <i>Sessions delivered - 57</i> <i>Session hours delivered - 114</i> <i>Participants from under global majority groups – 57%</i> <i>Females - 1 (14.29%)</i></p>
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Workforce Development	
<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"> • <i>Transitions Officer supports the evaluation and improvement of the transitions process demonstrating positive impact for young adults.</i> 	<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"> • <i>Deliver training for staff that leads to improvements in practice.</i> • <i>Consider specialist intervention support regarding masculinity and the impact of the online world.</i> • <i>Develop response to children at risk of radicalisation in the YJ cohort</i> 	<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>
Partnership and Services	
<p>Objective: Enhance the operational and strategic response to serious violence.</p>	

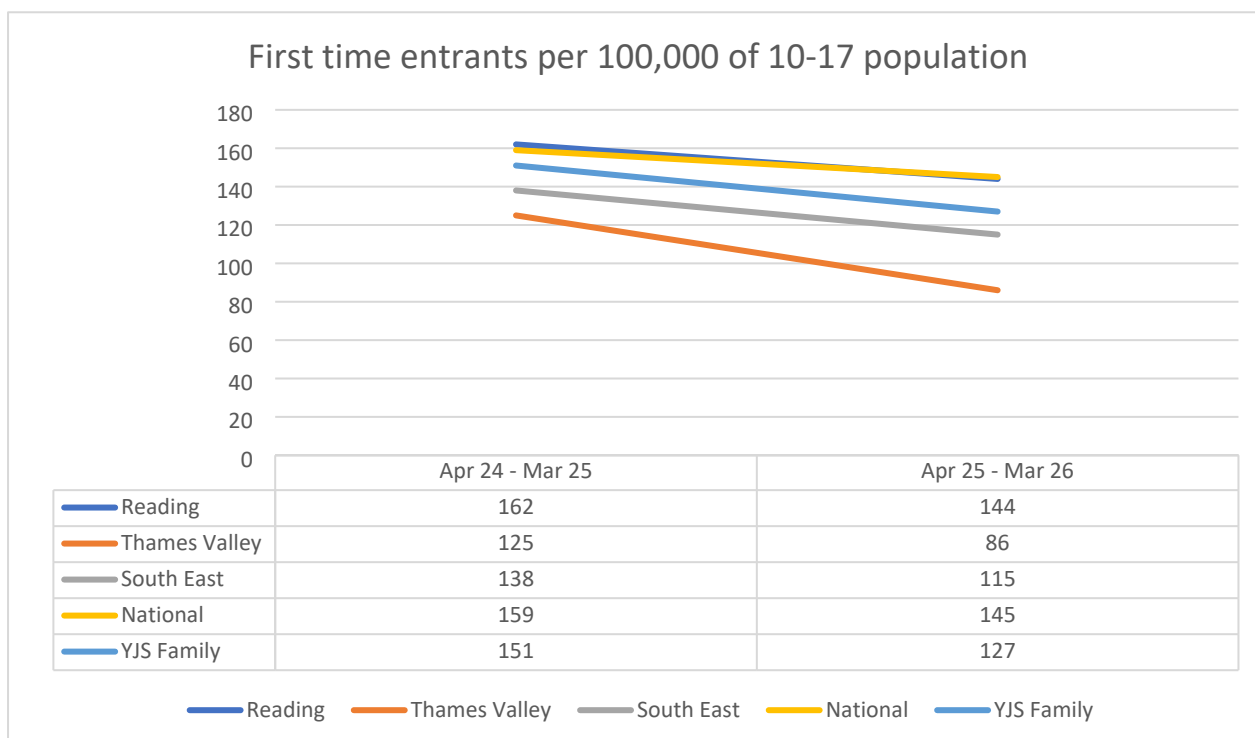
<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with partners to support the transition of the serious violence duty from the VPP to the local authority</i> • <i>Successfully deliver the Act Now intervention project demonstrating positive impact.</i> • <i>Successfully deliver the additional support programme in Cranbery college with NewAngle</i> 	<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>Processes Systems and Quality of Practice</p>	
<p>Objective: Reduce numbers of children becoming first time entrants:</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Embed the use of Youth Diversionary Programme (YDPs) demonstrating positive impact on the number of children becoming FTEs.</i> 	<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>



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

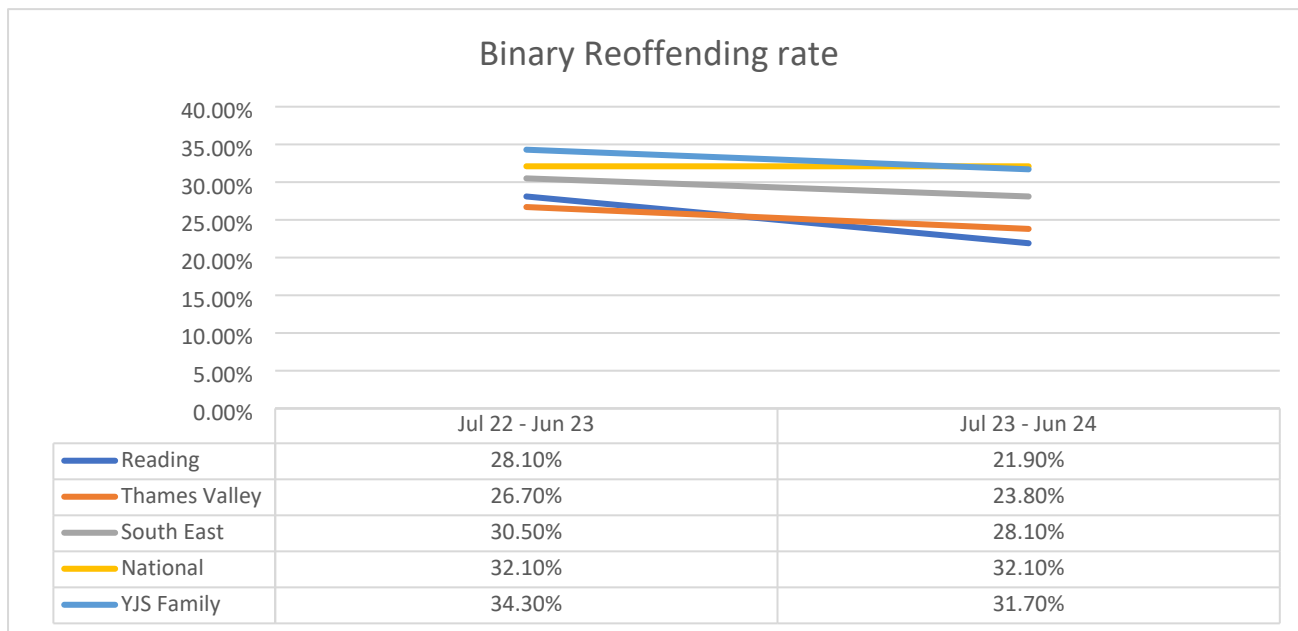


Performance data for the most recently available 12-month period demonstrates a 10.7% reduction in the rate of children entering the Youth Justice System for the first time in Reading, when compared with the equivalent period in the previous year. This follows a 27% reduction over the previous year. 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.

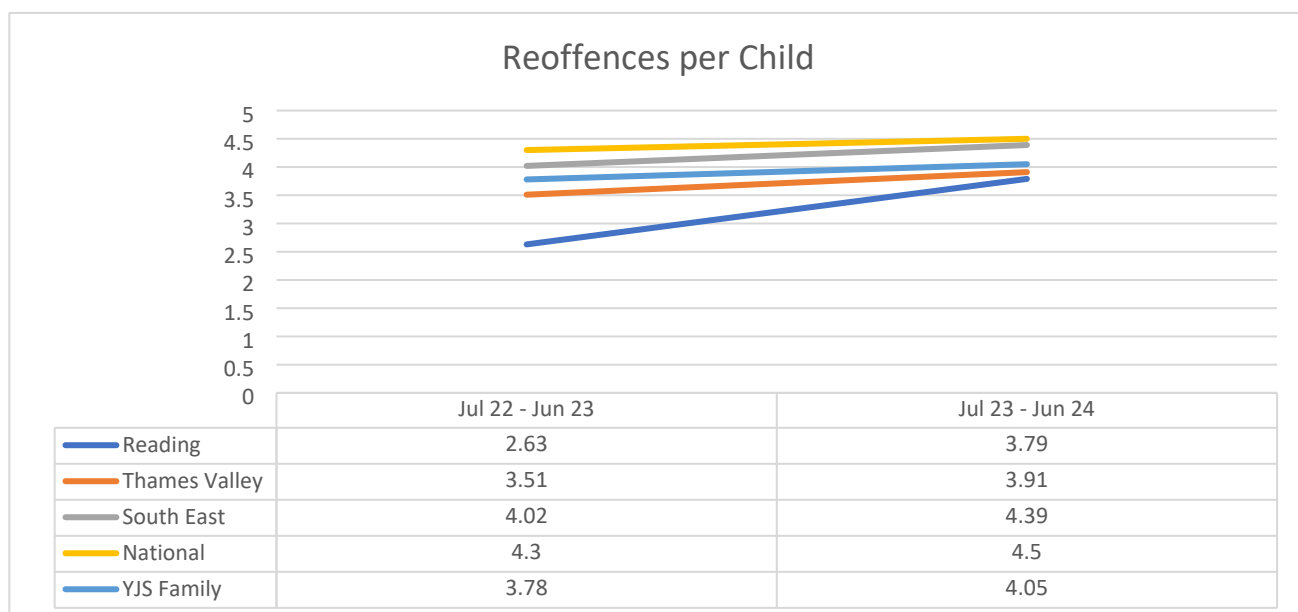
The consistent reduction in first time entrants follows the implementation of the Out of Court disposal Joint Decision-making panel in May 2025 and the hard work by YJS staff and partners within this forum, to divert children from formal entry to the Youth Justice System. In April 2026, Thames Valley 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



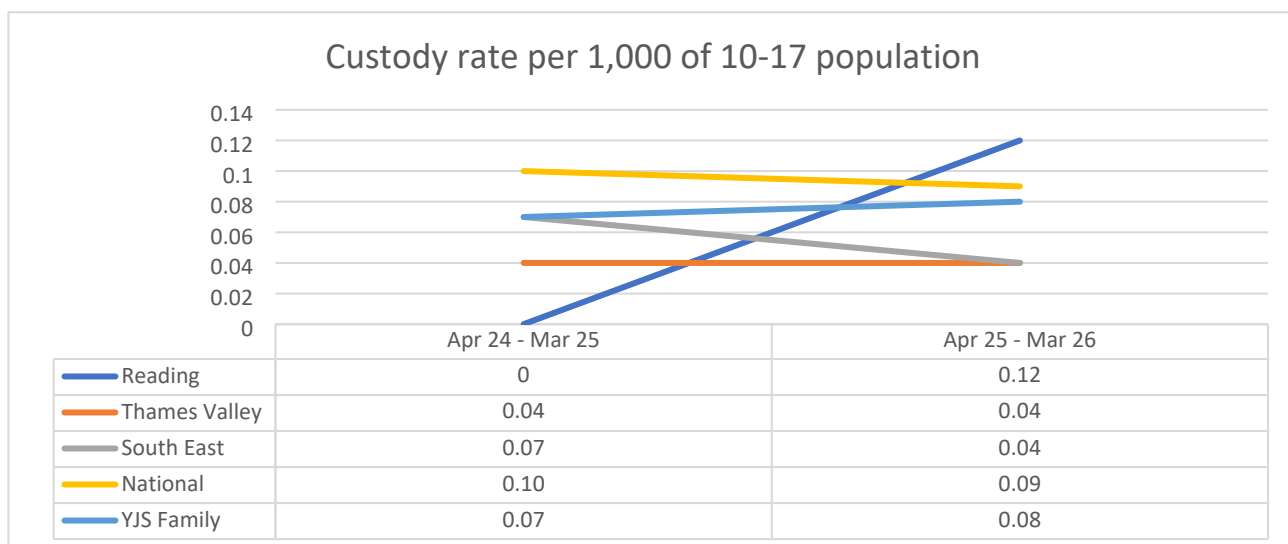
Performance data demonstrates that the rate of children reoffending has further reduced, from 28.1% in the 12 months to June 23 to 21.9% in the 12 months to June 24. This amounts to a 6.2% reduction and follows a 7.5% reduction over the previous year. This means that the rate of reoffending remains below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

	No. of Children	No. of Bed Nights
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.

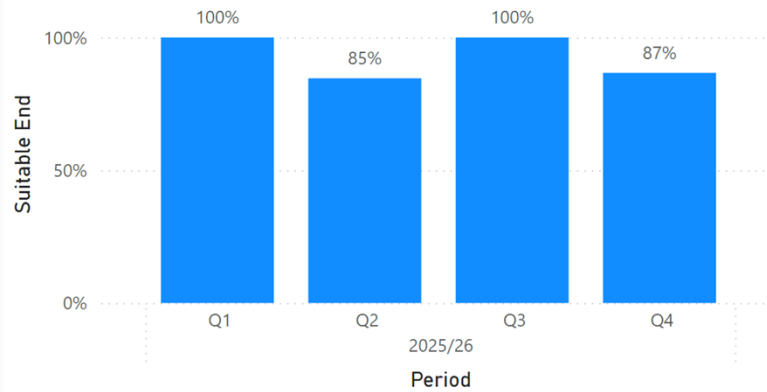
KPI	Definition
KPI 1 - Accommodation	The proportion of children with suitable accommodation arrangements
KPI 2 - Education, training and employment (ETE)	The proportion of children attending a suitable ETE arrangement
KPI 3 - Special educational needs or disability (SEND)	The proportion of children who 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



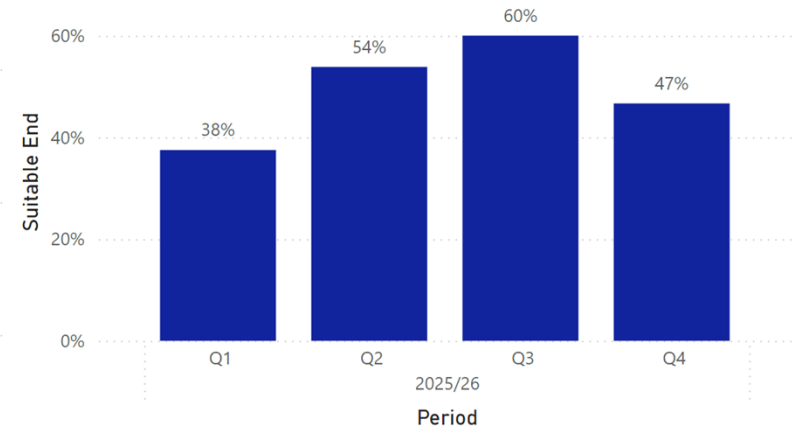
KPIs

1. Accomodation Suitability End

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

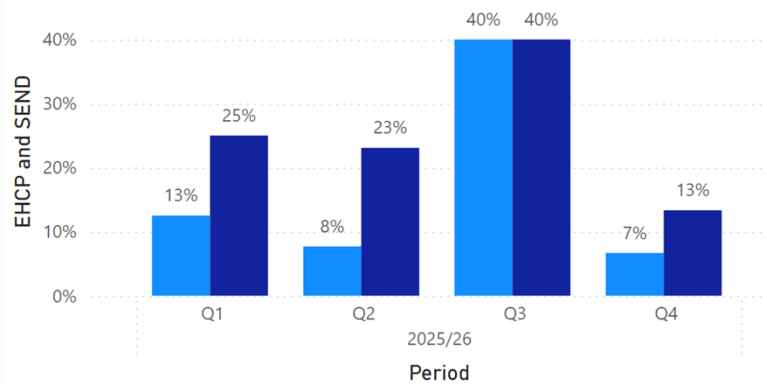


2. Suitable ETE End



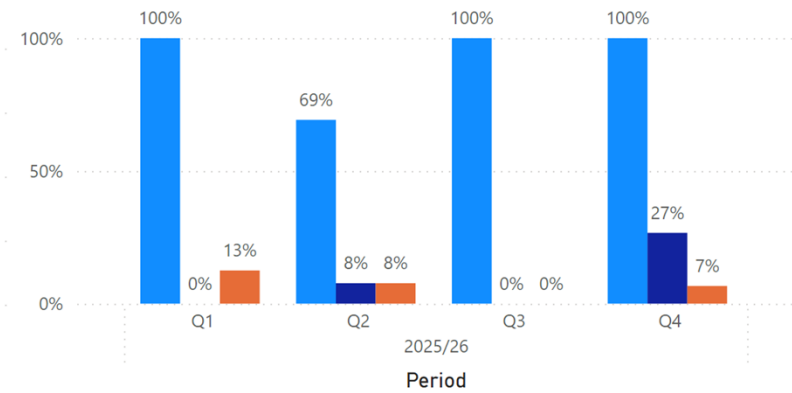
3. Percentage of children with SEND/EHCP at end of order

● EHCP ● SEND



4. Percentage of orders ending screened/identified for MH

● Screen For WB&MH ● Attending intervention getting help ● Attending intervention getting advice



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.

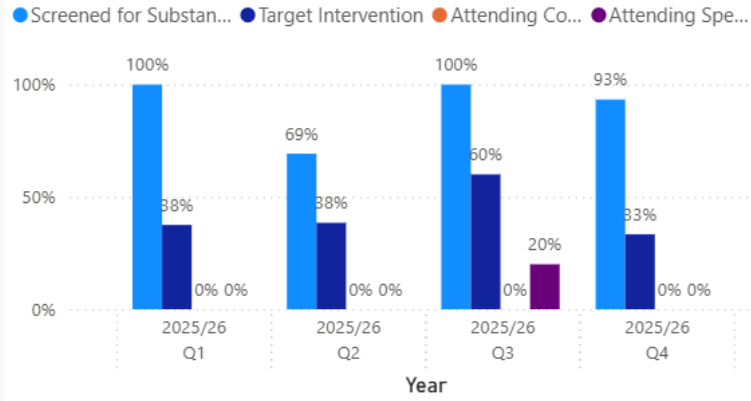
4. Mental health and wellbeing

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.

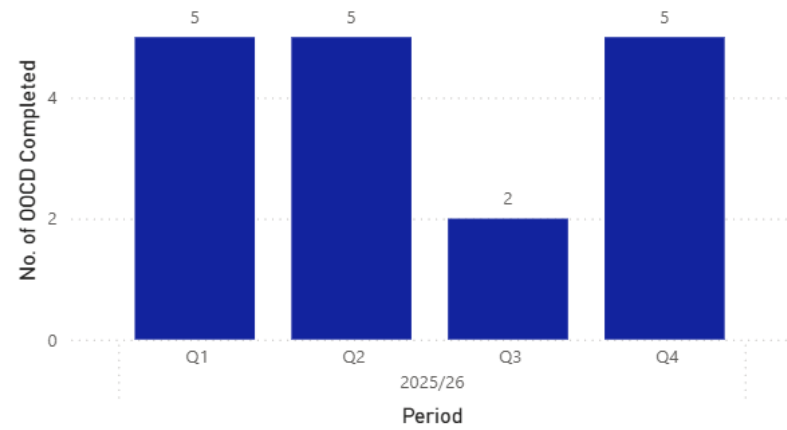


KPIs

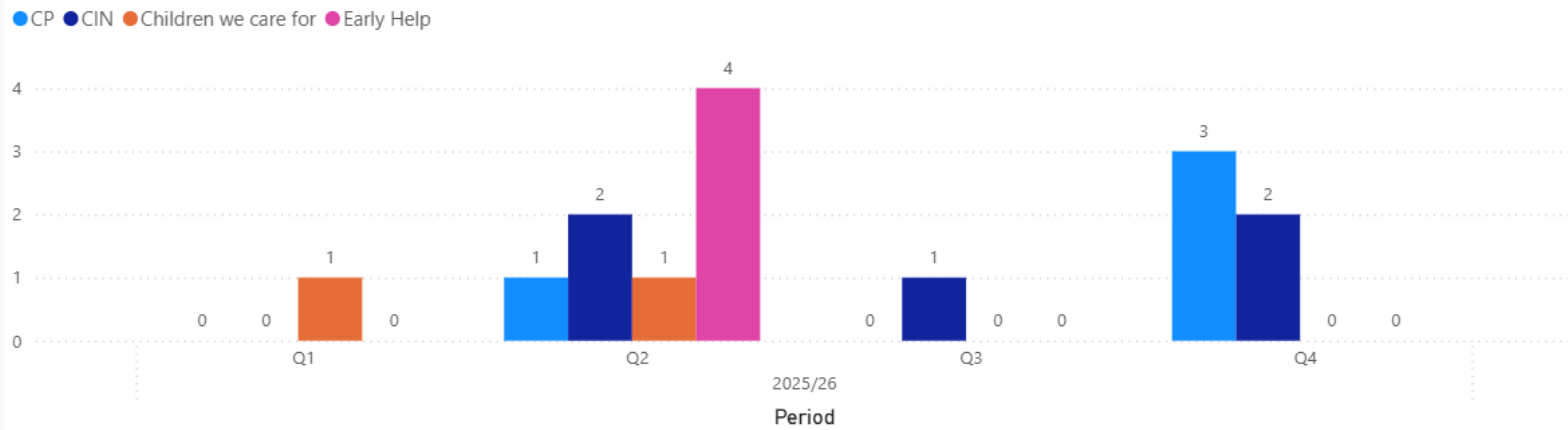
5. Percentage of orders ending screen/identified for substance misuse



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.

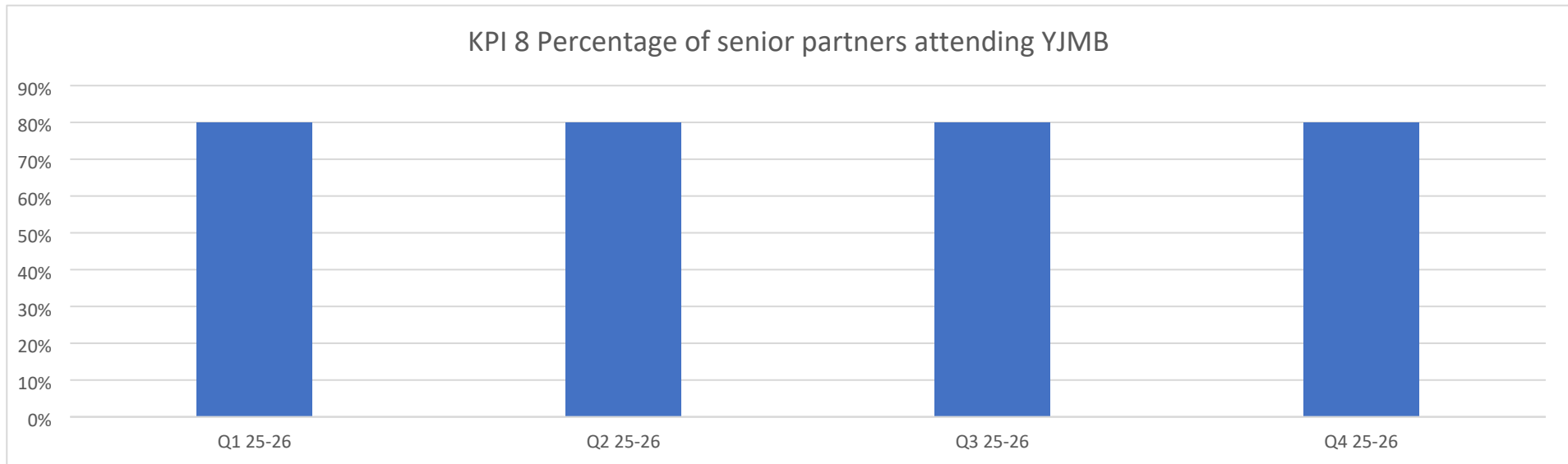
7. Wider Services

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.

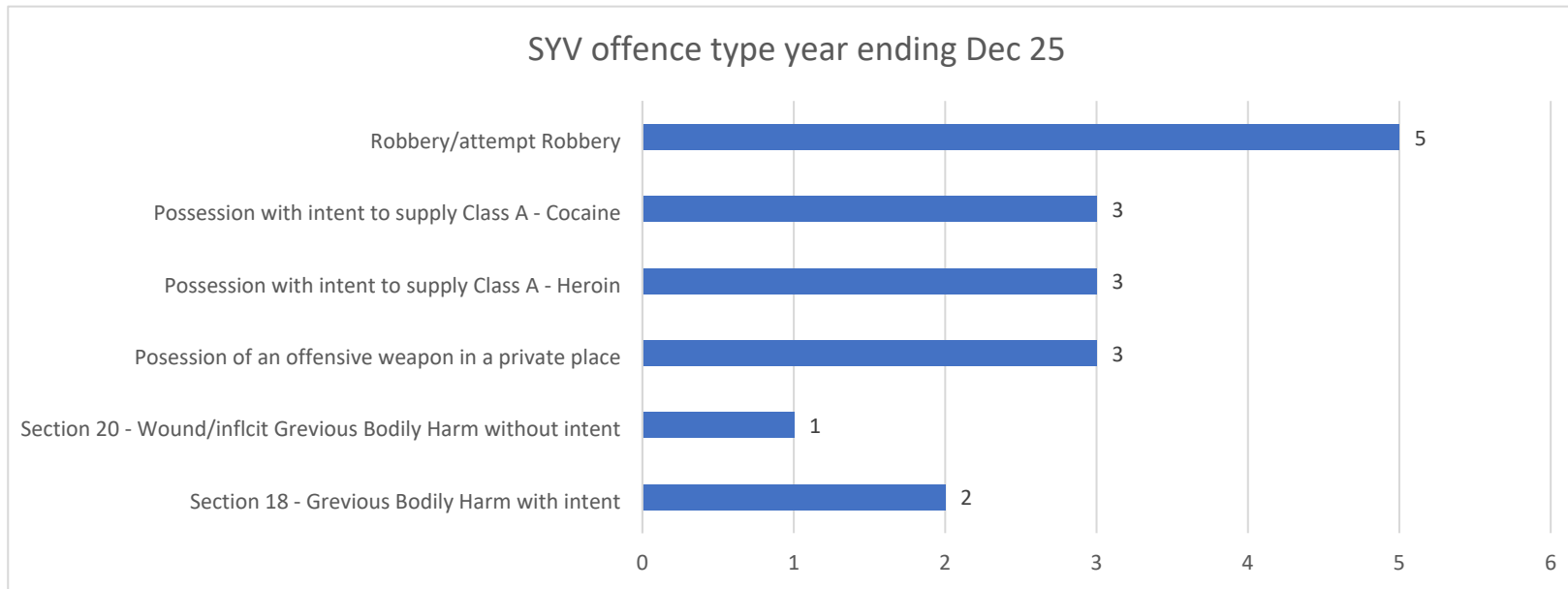
9 Serious Youth Violence

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	
YJS family	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
Reading	19	12.0	12	7.2	16	9.5	17	10.1
Family average	21	5.7	20	5.2	25	6.6	20	5.3
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
Reading	19	12.0	12	7.2	16	9.5	17	10.1
South East	283	3.6	312	3.9	425	5.2	397	4.5
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.

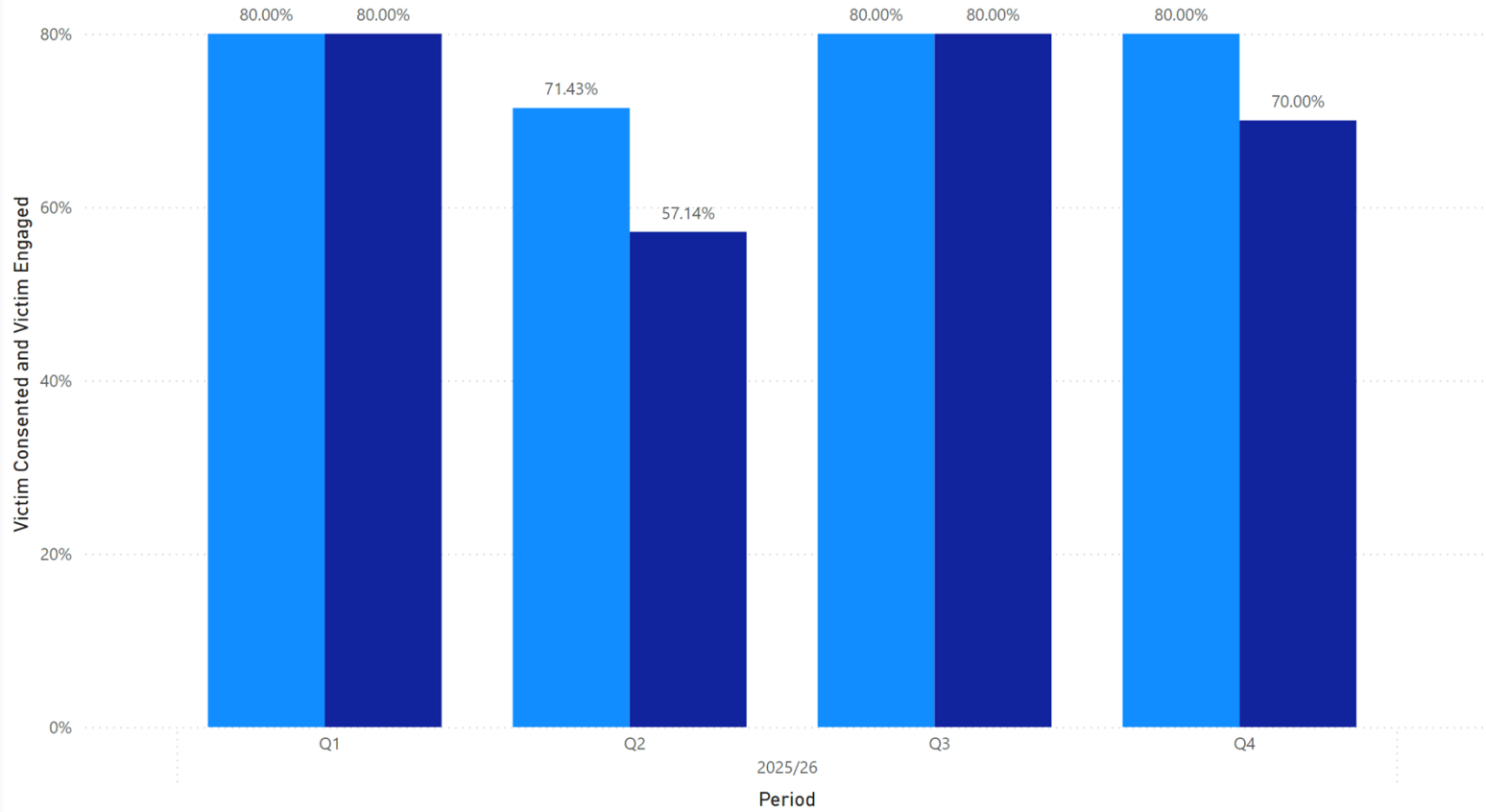
Addressing the ongoing risks presented as a result of serious youth violence will continue to be a priority for the YJS and the partnership in 2026-27. The YJS will work in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime commissioner in 2026-27 to deliver Op Deter Youth (Act Now) – a teachable to 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.

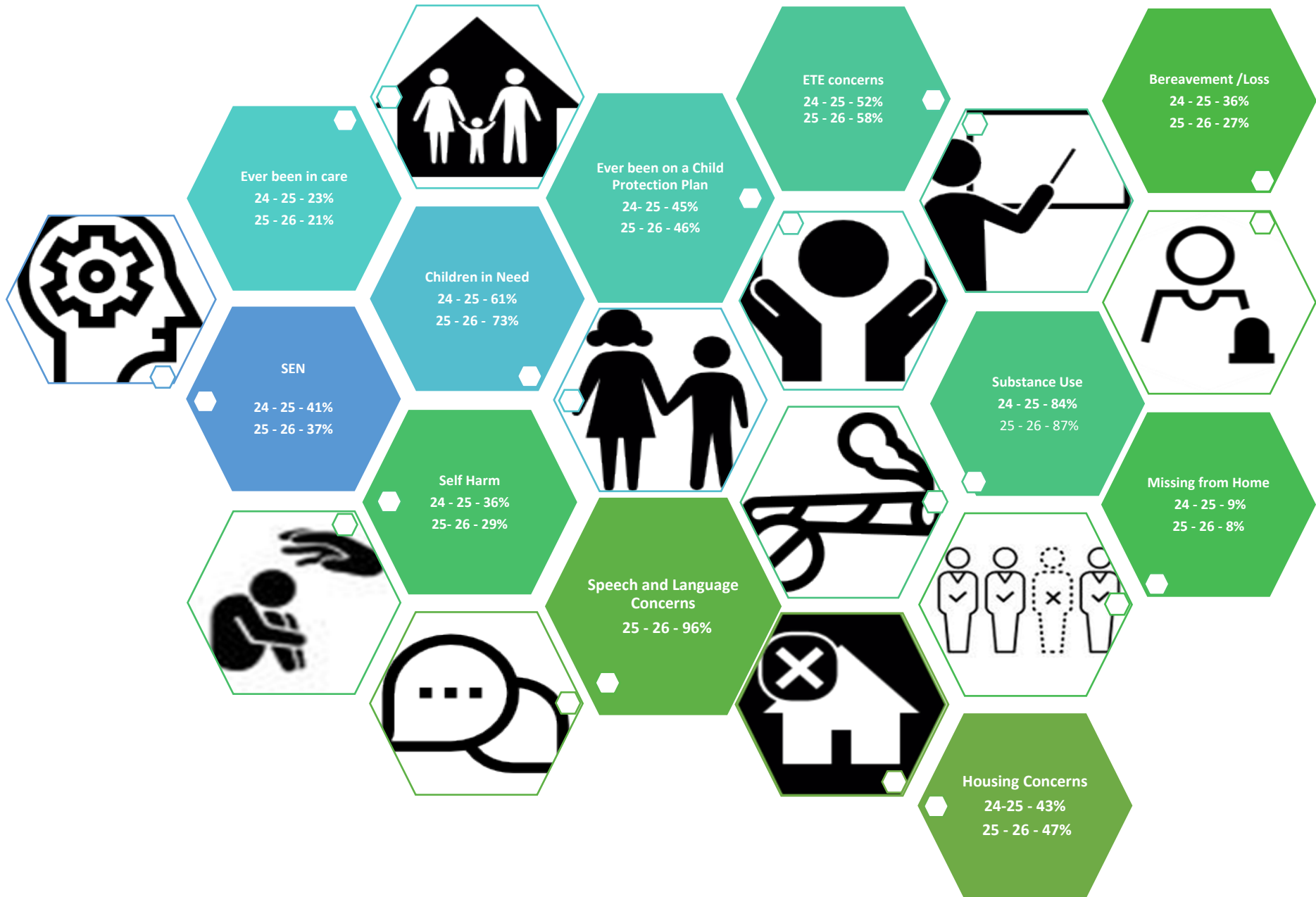
Local Data

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%

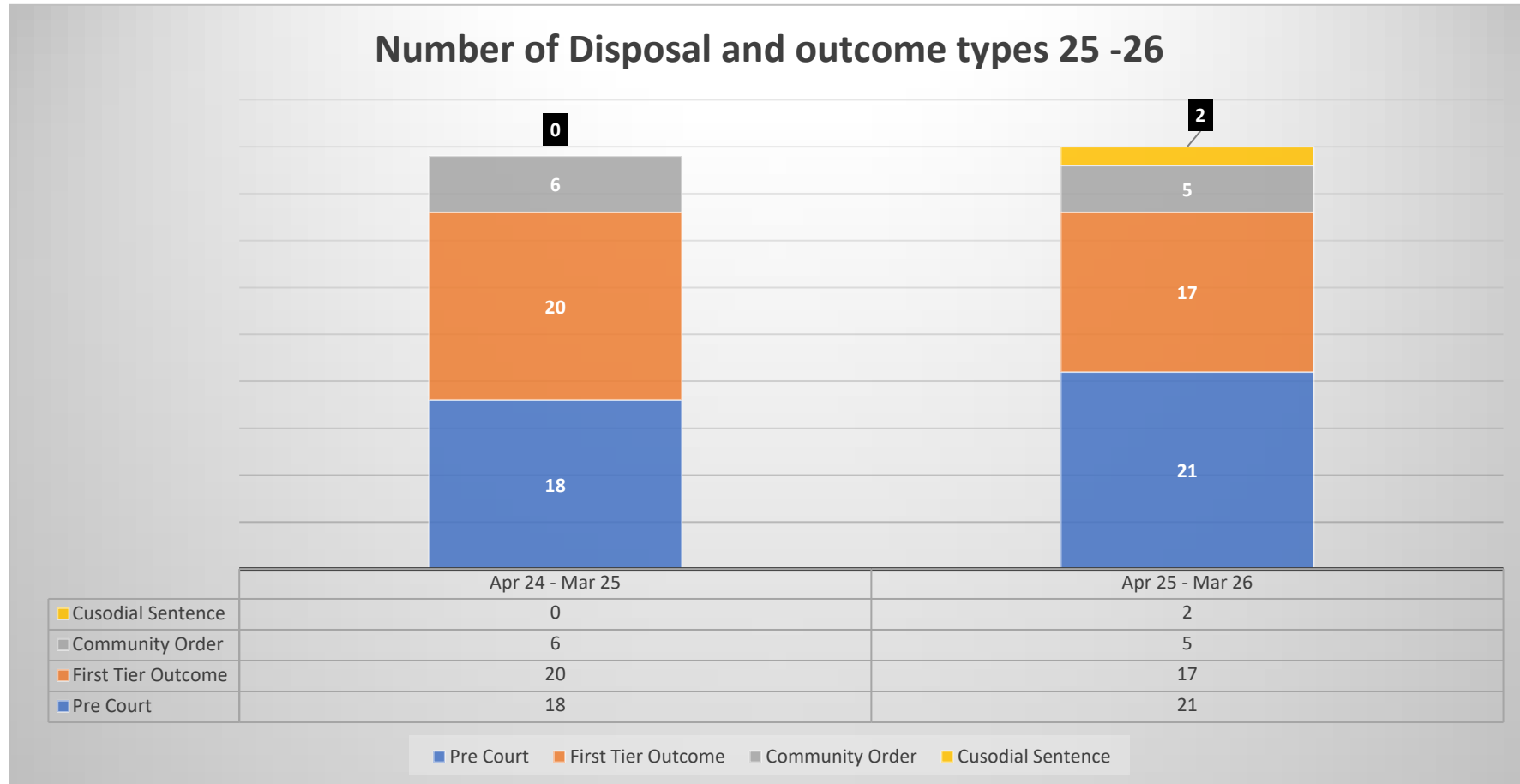
	 Physical	 Sexual	 Emotional	 Mental Illness	 Family member involved in crime	 Parental Separation	 Substance Abuse	 Domestic Abuse
2024/25	5%	0%	0%	50%	18%	68%	22% (parents)	29%
2025/26	6%	0%	0%	68%	25%	76%	29% (parents)	36%



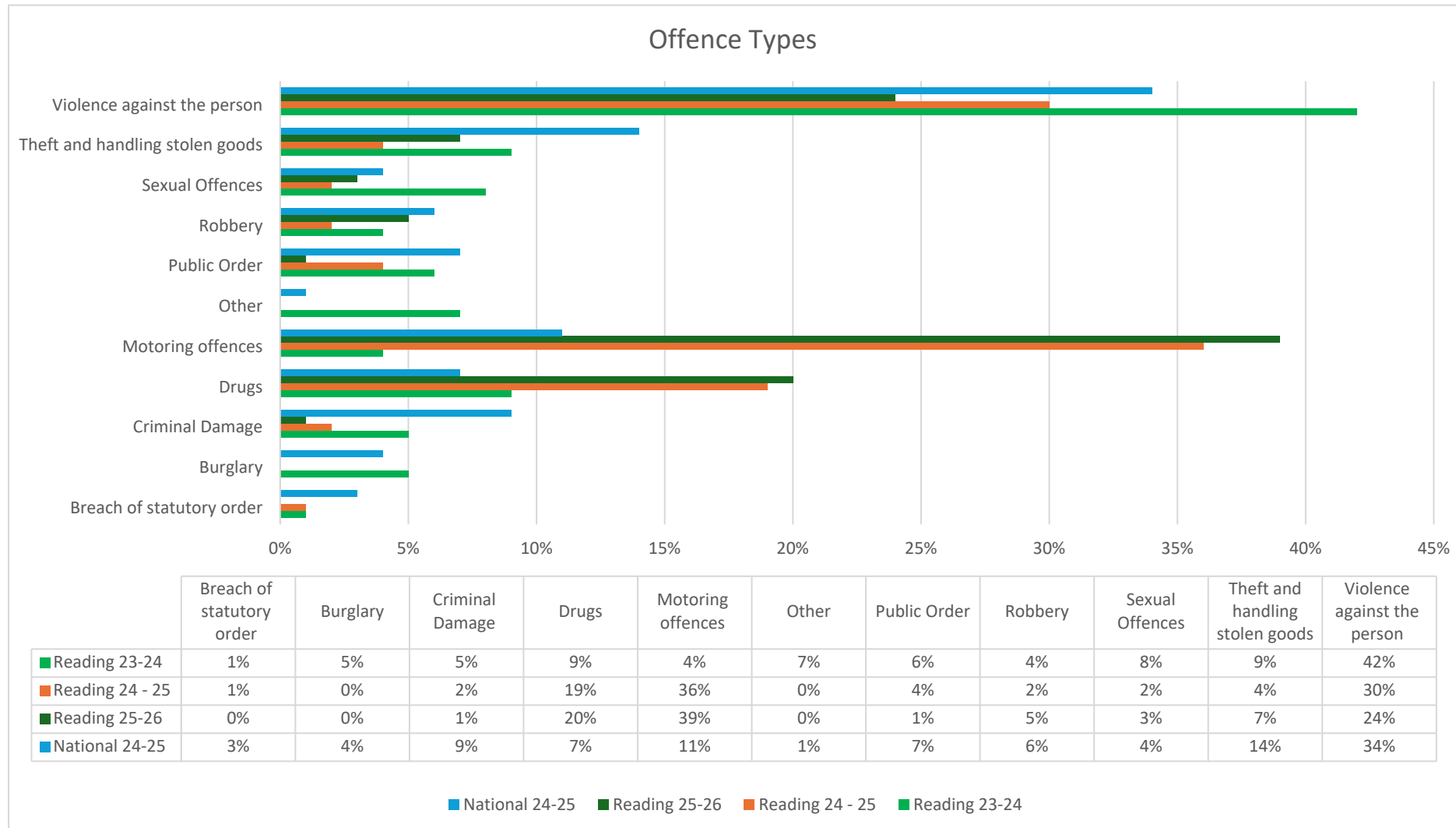
The data demonstrates that the vast majority of children, 90%, have experienced 2 or more adverse childhood experiences and that there has been an increase in factors affecting this, from the previous year. The data demonstrates that children in the Youth Justice System in Reading have multiple and highly 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



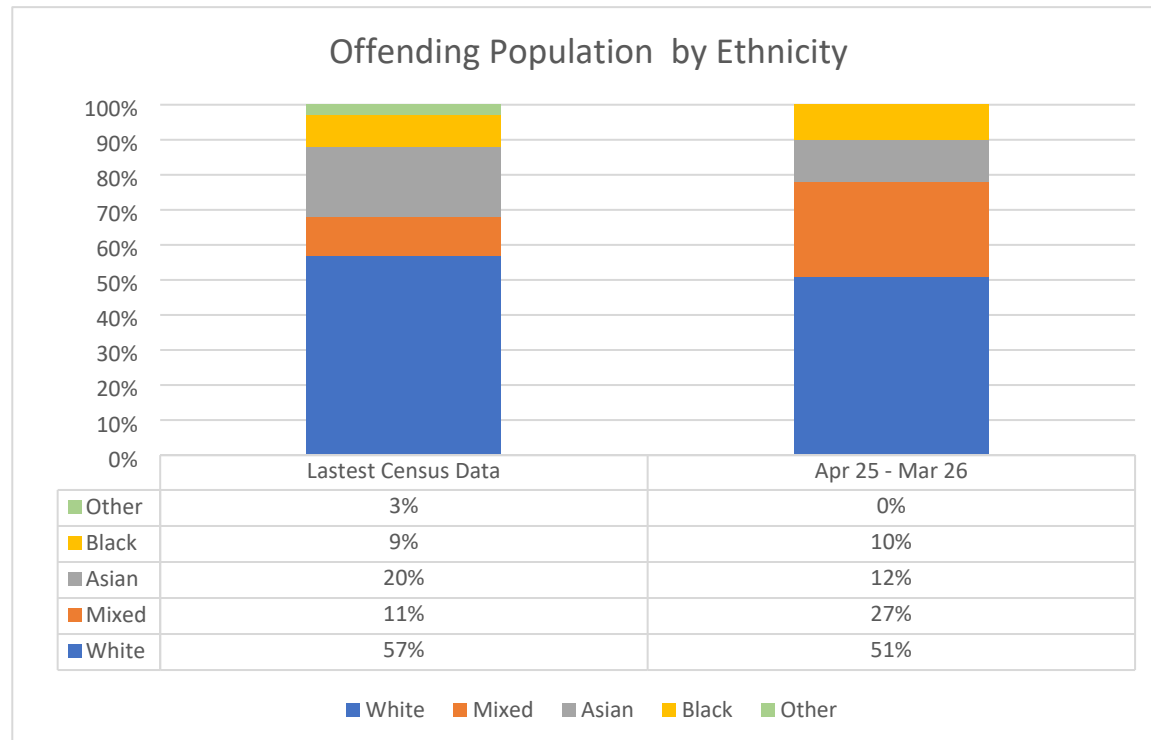
The total number of formal outcomes (excluding Community Resolutions) increased slightly from 44 in 2024-25 to 45 in 2025-26. It is notable that there were no custodial sentences in 2024-25 but 2 in 2025-26.



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.

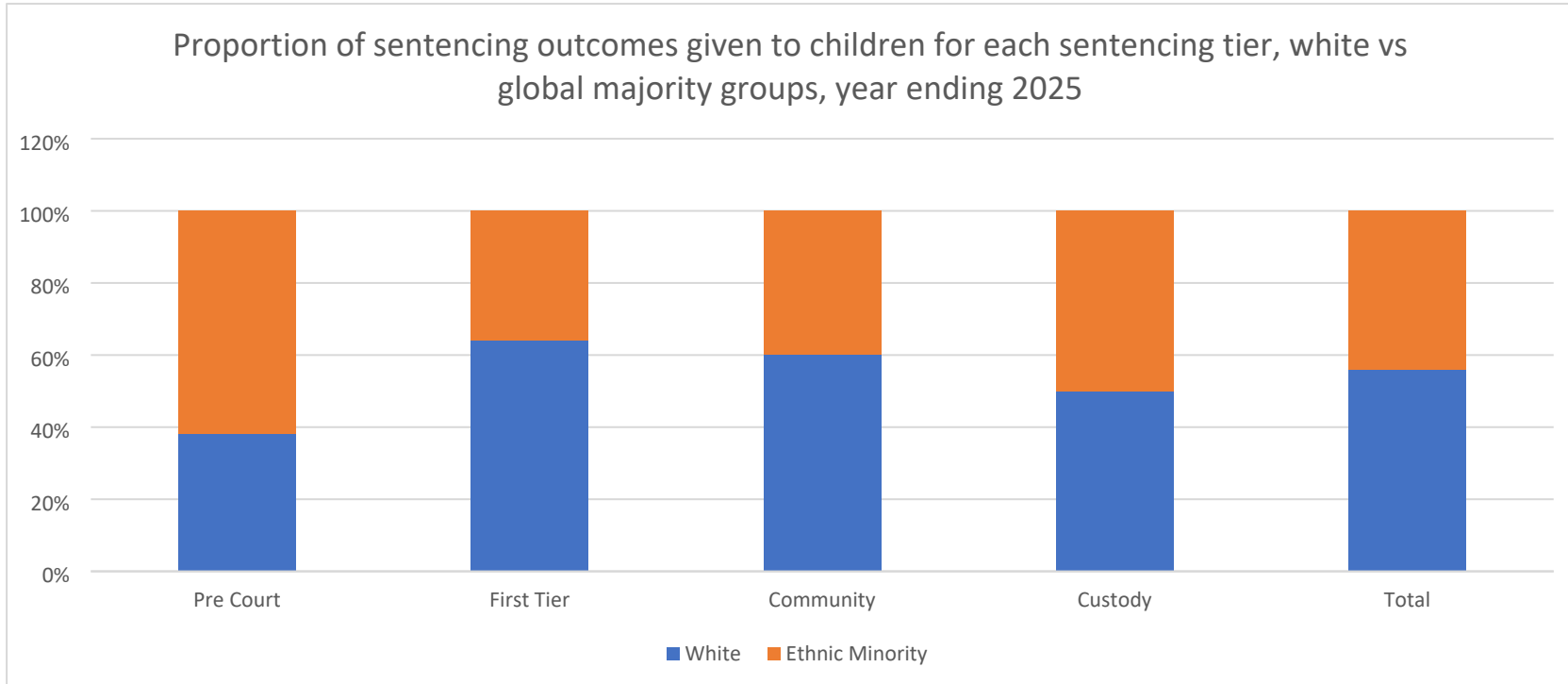
Contextual analysis of first time entrants presented to the YJMB in March 2025, indicated that all but 1 child who became a first time entrant in the 12 months to December 2024, had committed either violence against the person, driving or drugs offences. Overall, this analysis of the offence types supports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

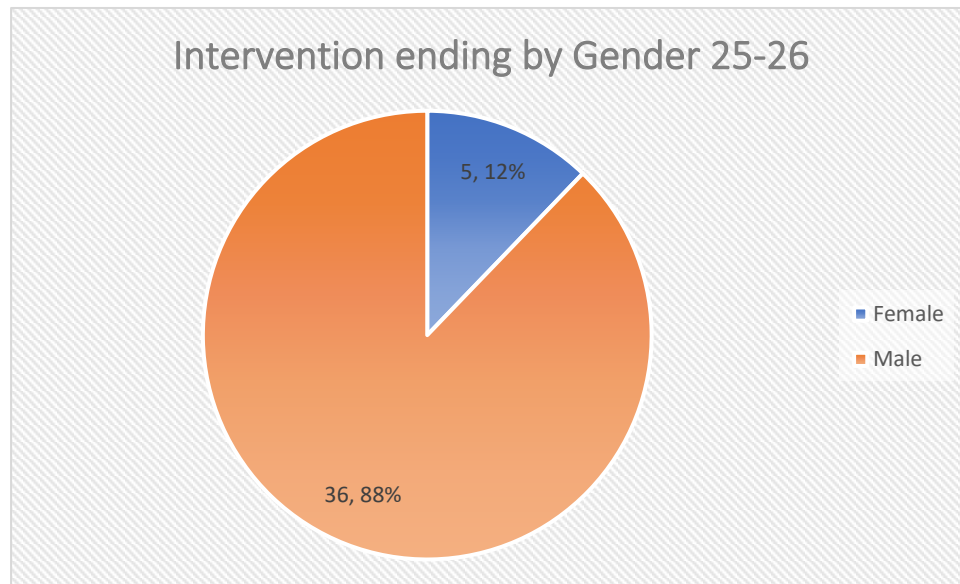
Proportion of offences committed by ethnicity within each gravity score, year ending March 2025



	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.

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- 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.

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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>Relationships are no longer incidental but are the intervention</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>Planning is organised around pro-social identity development</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>Workers and children plan intervention choices together</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>Children are helped to move beyond offence-based identity</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>Good is mirrored back to the child to create opportunity</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>Parents are supported to</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>understand a Child First approach</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>Youth justice moves away from adult/probation logic</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>Children are involved in redesigning interventions- Collaboration</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>

		they always double check. So, yeah, I feel pretty involved'	
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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.

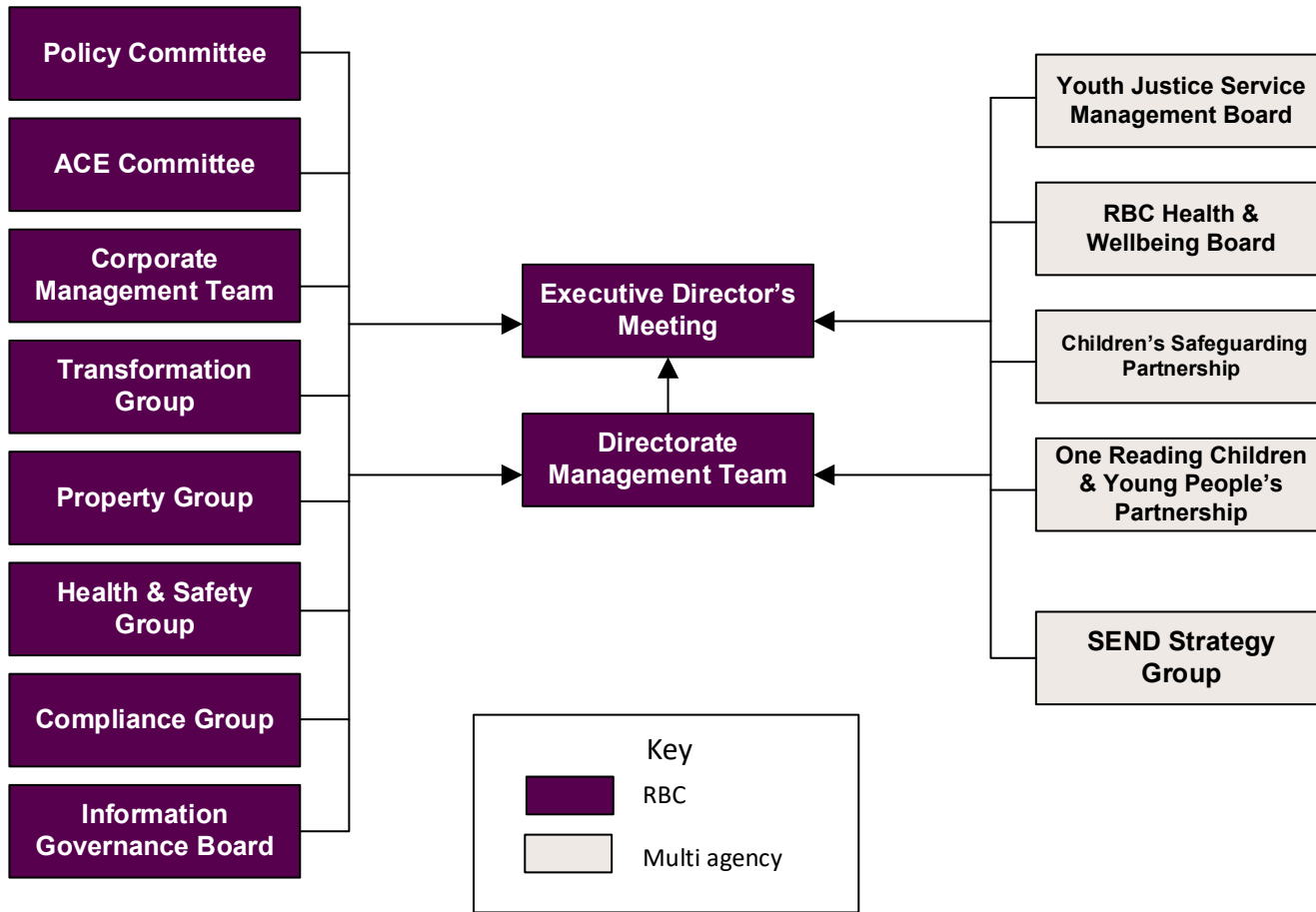
Board membership, Sign off Submission and Approval

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



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	
DOCs staff	17.66	12.66	
Other Specialist Posts (not employed by RBC)			
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	
Seconded staff	2.5	1.8	
TOTAL	20.16	14.86	

Ethnicity	
White	15
Black	0
Asian	3
Mixed	0
Other	0

