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| Title | Reading Youth Justice Plan 2025/26 |
| Purpose of the report | To make a decision. |
| Report status | Public report |
| Executive Director Commissioning Report | Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services |
| Report author | Jonny Bradish, Head of Service, Family Help and Partnerships |
| Lead Councillor | Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children |
| Corporate priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote more equal communities in Reading• Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children |
| Recommendations | That the 2025/26 Youth Justice plan be approved. |

1. Executive Summary

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

2. Policy Context

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

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. This year's Youth Justice plan has been completed, signed off by the Youth Justice Management board, and submitted to the Youth Justice board for England and Wales, as required by the deadline of 30th June 2025. It has also been presented to and signed off by the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on 2nd July 2025.
- 3.2. The Youth Justice plan includes a review of performance for 2024/25. Notable performance updates include:
 - 27 children became first time entrants, a 27% reduction on the number in the previous year which was 37. This amounts to a rate of 161 per 100,000 children. Whilst the rate remains above comparator groups, this is now marginal.
 - This 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. The launch of Youth Diversionary Disposals (Outcome 22) by Thames Valley Police, following challenge from the Youth Justice Management Board and from YJS's across Thames Valley, will further assist the work of the YJS in this area in 2025-26 and beyond.

- We have also seen a significant reduction in the number and rate of children reoffending, from 35.6% in the 12 months to June 22 to 28.1% in the 12 months to June 23. This amounts to a 21% reduction.
- This moves the YJS from a position where the rate of children reoffending was above all comparator groups in the 12 months to June 22, to being below comparator groups except the Thames Valley, which has a marginally lower rate, in the 12 months to June 23.
- The number of reoffences per child has also reduced significantly from 4.9% to 2.6% in the period most recently available for tracking this data. This represents a 46.5% reduction and is lower than all comparator groups.
- Custodial sentences have also reduced significantly to the point where there were none in the 12 months to March 25. Whilst this coincides with a positive national trend of reducing custodial sentences for children, this represents good progress locally.

3.3. The Youth Justice Management Board met on 4th June and agreed on priorities for 2025/26. The board agreed to retain the same seven priorities as last year, outlined below, with the slight amendment, adding to priority 4 the need for a sharper focus on extremist behaviour including violence against women and girls. Seeking to improve educational outcomes for children in the YJS cohort will continue to cut across all seven priorities.

- Reducing First Time Entrants
- Reducing Reoffending
- Reducing the use of custody
- Reducing ethnic disproportionality
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence
- Embedding Child First and Identity Development Practice as the practice model across the partnership
- Improving outcomes for victims of youth crime

The Youth Justice Management Board agreed for these targets to be merged with the HMIP inspection action plan, which becomes our one delivery plan for continuous improvement.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The Youth Justice plan contributes towards safeguarding and supporting the health and wellbeing of adults and children in Reading.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

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

6. Community Engagement

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

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Addressing disproportionality within the criminal justice system is one of the priorities for the

Youth Justice Service and partnership as outlined in the Annual Youth Justice Plan 2025/26.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. Following the inspection outcome, the Youth Justice Service has moved to quadrant 3 of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) 4 quadrant oversight framework. The criteria for this are that there is an identified improvement need or concern and that the service is considered a 'priority service'. The classification enables the Youth Justice Board to undertake focused engagement at a service level (or across regional statutory and/or delivery partners) and, where appropriate, provide support on their improvement journey. De-escalation from quadrants 3 and/or 4 can only be achieved through meeting the agreed exit criteria. These criteria will be defined through engagement with the Youth Justice Board and the Youth Justice Service.
- 8.2. Within the quarterly review meeting held in June, the YJB Oversight Manager was encouraged by the progress that has been made in response to inspection, noted the significant improvement in performance in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 and indicated that the service is on course to move from quadrant 3 to quadrant 2.

9. Legal Implications

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

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The Youth Justice Plan sets out the financial contributions from the relevant statutory partners, which is determined at a local level and is expected to continue in line with the financial envelope of 2025/26. The Youth Justice Board contribution (the national contribution) is based on a national funding formula and has been confirmed as £324,156 for 2025/26, a small increase from £319,498.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. 4 June 2025 Youth Justice Management Board workshop for partner agency contribution to the annual plan 2025/26
- 11.2. 6 June 2025 Youth Justice Board 'Youth data summary' published.
- 11.3. 19 June 2025, draft plan was shared with partners
- 11.4. 25 June 2025, draft plan was made available for Councillors.
- 11.5. 26 June 2025 Youth Justice Management Board sign off plan having already had oversight.
- 11.6. 30 June 2025 plan submitted to Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.
- 11.7. 14 October 2025 Youth Justice Plan to be presented to Council.

12. Appendices

- 12.1 Youth Justice Plan 2025-26