

Children's, Families and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23rd September 2025

Walsall Youth Justice Service Annual Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Mark Statham, Childrens, Families and Lifelong Learning

Related portfolios: Councillor Hickin, Resilience Communities, Community, Leisure and Culture

1. Aim

- 1.1 Youth Justice partnerships have a statutory duty to produce an annual youth justice plan for submission to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales showing how youth justice services will be provided and funded.
- 1.2 The Youth Justice Plan is prepared on an annual basis in accordance with the guidance "Youth Justice Plans: guidance for youth justice services March 2024" and specific conditions as set within the Youth Justice Board Effective Practice Grant. The youth justice plan sets out key achievements over the past 12 months, how Walsall Youth Justice Service is structured and funded and also identifies risks to service delivery and improvement.
- 1.3 The plan, submitted to the national Youth Justice Board in June 2025, outlines the partnerships priorities for 2025 to 2028 and provides commentary on the three national performance indicators for youth justice services:
 - Rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system
 - The number and rate of custodial sentences
 - The proportion of young people re-offending

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the report and identify any further information required.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1.1 The Youth Justice Service (YJS) partnership recognise that these priorities will take time and as such we have published a 3-year plan. We know it will require investment and energy to achieve positive change. Our YJS Partnership Board members, managers and practitioners are committed to the Child First vision and to improving outcomes for our children.

❖ Transitions and Resettlement

To improve the transition experience of children in the justice system, the YJS will:

- Develop our close partnership with the Probation Service, to improve our Transition 2 Adulthood offer.

Strategic Lead: Head/Deputy Head of Probation

This priority is aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership reducing re-offending priority and the regional Transition 2 Adulthood policy framework.

❖ **Reducing Serious Youth Violence:**

To reduce incidents of serious youth violence in Walsall, the YJS will:

- Work collaboratively with the Safer Walsall Partnership to implement the serious violence strategy.
- Deliver effective violence and knife crime interventions for children.

Strategic Lead: Superintendent Walsall Police.

This priority is aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership and recognises the Serious Violence Duty (2021) and the delegated responsibilities on agencies and partnership.

❖ **Disproportionality**

To reduce disproportionality and improve outcomes for overrepresented children, the YJS will:

- Ensure the team are culturally competent and sufficiently skilled and confident in supporting children to explore identity and discrimination.
- Implement a bespoke offer for children with black and mixed ethnicity.

Strategic Lead: Head of Service – Children’s Social Care.

This priority is linked to the Council’s Corporate Equality Group and objectives within the Corporate Plan 2022-25.

❖ **Identifying and responding to unmet need (Health).**

To identify and respond to the unmet needs of children, the YJS will:

- Develop our ‘Unmet Need’ hub of education and health professionals in the team.
- Work with partners to secure long-term additional funding and resources to continue our Education Psychology and Speech and Language offer.

Strategic Lead: Head of CAMHS commissioning

Our partnership recognises that there is a clear need to ‘level up’ health provision for Walsall children in line with the Black country and regional developments.

❖ **Voice of our children**

To ensure the voice of our children is clearly heard and drives our strategic thinking and operational delivery, the YJS will:

- Ensure the voice of our children is heard within our strategic partnership board and influences the wider partnership.
- Employ a Youth Justice apprentice to find new ways to collaborate and consult with our children and ensure their feedback contributes to our data intelligence.

Strategic Lead: YJS Strategic Lead

Following the findings of the HMIP assurance review in 2021, the partnership is committed to better evidencing how we hear and are responsive to the voices of our children both strategically and operationally.

❖ **Data intelligence and Insight**

To continually develop the breadth and accuracy of our performance information, the YJS will:

- Improve the YJS performance dashboard
- Improve the ability of the partnership to measure the impact of interventions
- Encourage partners to present their own related performance information.

Council Plan priorities

- 3.2 Reducing the number of children entering the youth justice system is a corporate measure and a key performance indicator for the Youth Justice Board.
- 3.3 The YJS plan will contribute to the Council's priorities as follows:
- *Thriving and Happy* - the YJS Strategic Plan supports our families to integrate and make a positive contribution to their community whilst improving health and wellbeing.
 - *Healthy and Well* - working closely with the Safer Walsall Partnership, the YJS shares a priority to manage and reduce violence and to make our communities safer.

Improving outcomes for the children in the justice system is at the heart of the work undertaken by the Youth Justice Service and intrinsic to each of the priorities within the plan.

The strategic plan focusses on how partners in Walsall will ensure that Youth Justice Services are effectively delivered to reduce youth crime and re-offending, protect the public from harm and promote safeguarding

Risk management

- 3.4 The strategic plan recognises risks to future delivery, including the improvements needed surround the health pathways for children in the justice system and a change in Police policy which would negatively impact on the number of children as first-time entrants. The Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board maintains oversight of risks to delivery and mitigating action on a quarterly basis through detailed performance and quality assurance reports. Partners, including West Midlands Police, National Probation Service, Community Safety, Public Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Education, Employment and Skills, are required at each quarterly board meeting to confirm their resource allocation and are held accountable for the performance of their own organisation.

Legal implications

- 3.5 Under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement a youth justice plan for each year setting out how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area; and how the youth offending team

(Youth Justice Service) established by them are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out. The youth justice plan is required to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board and be published in such manner and by such date as the Secretary of State may direct.

4. Financial information

- 4.1 The strategic plan outlines the resource and funding arrangements for YJS including those from statutory partners, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Adopting the plan is not expected to incur any additional costs over and above the above budgeted costs detailed within the plan.

5. Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1 Inequality is inherent within the Criminal Justice System. The plan does not represent an adverse impact to children at risk of offending and re-offending. Indeed, it identifies that addressing disproportionality (the overrepresentation of children from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups) is a priority leading into 2025 and onwards; as is addressing unmet need. Significant work has been undertaken over the past 5 years and the Youth Justice partnership is in a stronger place to better understand these inequalities through data and consultation with families and partners.

6. Decide

- 6.1 A 'do nothing' option is not seen as viable as it is a statutory requirement for the council to have a Youth Justice Plan.
- 6.2 The report is scheduled at Cabinet on the 24.09.2025 with the recommendation:
1. That Walsall's Youth Justice Annual Strategic plan be approved.
 2. That the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder, be authorised to make any future minor amendments to the plan if and when required.

7. Respond

- 7.1 The Youth Justice Service will continue to fulfil its statutory functions and deliver services to children in Walsall to work towards those key performance indicators. The plan details some of the actions that the Youth Justice Service will take to reduce offending behaviour, manage risk of harm to the public, and safeguard both children open to the service and others. The strategic plan sets the vision and strategic direction of the service over the coming 12 months.

8. Review

- 8.1 There is an annual requirement to complete a YJS Strategic Plan and as such progress against priorities and a review of achievements will be completed in the planning schedule for 2026-27.
- 8.2 The YJS Performance and Partnership Board meets on a quarterly basis and will monitor, and review progress made against the priorities and the delivery plan.

Background papers

None

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