

Walsall Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan

2025-28



Child First

Service	Walsall Youth Justice Service
Service Manager/ Lead	Phil Rutherford
Chair of YJS Board	Colleen Male
Date	20th June 2025

Contents	
<p><u>Introduction, vision and strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forward by the Chair of the YJS Performance and Partnership Board (Page 2) - Introduction (Page 3) - Vision (Page 4) - Local Context (Page 6) 	<p><u>National Priority Areas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children from groups which are overrepresented. (Page 46) - Policing and Prevention and Diversion (Page 47) - Education (Page 50) - Restorative approaches and victims (Page 51) - Serious violence, exploitation, and contextual safeguarding (Page 52) - Exploitation (Page 54) - Detention in police custody (Page 55) - Working with families (Page 56)
<p><u>Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance and Leadership Arrangements (Page 7) - Update on the previous year- key achievements. (Page 8) - Progress on priorities in previous plan (Page 11) - Performance over the previous year (Page 17) - Challenges, Risks and issues (Page 21) 	<p><u>Sign off submission and approval (56)</u></p> <p>Appendix 1 YJS Board Membership (Page 57)</p> <p>Appendix 2 Board attendance (Page 58)</p> <p>Appendix 3 Safer Lives Survey Findings (Page 59)</p> <p>Appendix 4 Staffing structure chart and staff demographics (Page 60)</p> <p>Appendix 5 YJS Expenditure (Page 62)</p> <p>Appendix 6 Thematic review summary (Page 63)</p> <p>Appendix 7 Youth Justice Service Delivery Plan 2025/26 (Page 66)</p> <p>Appendix 8 Common Youth Justice terms (Page 74)</p>
<p><u>Plan for the forthcoming year</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looking forward- child first and child's voice (Page 23) - Children and Young People's Alliance (Page 28) - Resources and services (Page 29) - Board Development (Page 31) - Workforce Development (Page 33) - Evidence based practice and innovation (Page 34) - Priorities for the coming year (Page 39) - Standards for children and Service Development (Page 42) - Thematic Review (Page 43) 	

Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Foreword from Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership:



I'm pleased to introduce the latest iteration of our youth justice strategic plan for 2025 – 2028.

We have once again seen our youth justice partnership take strides forward. Partners are committed to improving the lives of children in the justice system and we are all speaking the common language of 'Child First'. It is encouraging to hear those words and the principles behind them, in many different strategic and operational forums and partners are alive to the incredibly complex and vulnerable children that find themselves in trouble with the law. Through the insights of our strategic needs assessment, we have raised the profile of these children, and we have increased the partnership resources that are needed to support them and to bring about change. This work has also influenced the development of our wider prevention offer and the creation of our Adolescent Steering Group. We know we have more to do, and we are working with crucial partners to close any gaps.

Serious youth violence remains a real concern for all agencies working with children and it is a top priority for our communities. People want to be and feel safer. The Youth Justice Service has a crucial role to play in this, but we have recognised locally that preventing and reducing violence in the borough requires everyone to come together to think and act differently for children before they enter the justice system. I am pleased that our youth justice partnership has instigated the reducing and preventing violence collaborative between the strategic boards in Walsall and have jointly commissioned academic research helping us to understand how partnerships can better align and think differently about the solutions to violence.

It has been another busy 12 months for Walsall with visits from both His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) and more recently Ofsted. In March we hosted a HMIP thematic inspection focussing on children who had received out of court disposals. I'm proud of the way the partnership came together to prepare for the inspection and really pleased with the feedback. We welcome inspections in Walsall as they not only help us validate our improvement journey, but give our partnership further learning opportunities. We have more to do, but the effective practice that was identified here in Walsall was a testament to the team.

The Youth Justice Service and wider partnership are in a good position to achieve better outcomes for children in 2025 and beyond and we look forward to the challenge.

Colleen Male- Executive Director of Children's Services
Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership

Introduction and Vision

On behalf of the Youth Justice Service Performance and Partnership Board we are proud to introduce Walsall Youth Justice Service's (YJS) Strategic Plan for 2025-2028. A review of this plan has been approved by the YJS Performance and Partnership Board in May 2025.

Walsall Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a statutory multi-agency service under Section 37 of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act in partnership with the Local Authority, Walsall Children's Services, West Midlands Police, National Probation Service and Health. The YJS is also supported by numerous other partners who contribute to the YJS' agenda. The principal aim of the YJS partnership is to prevent and reduce offending and re-offending behaviour in children, whilst addressing the 12 national key performance indicators (KPI). The annual plan is completed using the template mandated by the Youth Justice Board and builds upon the previous 3-year plan which ended in March 2025.

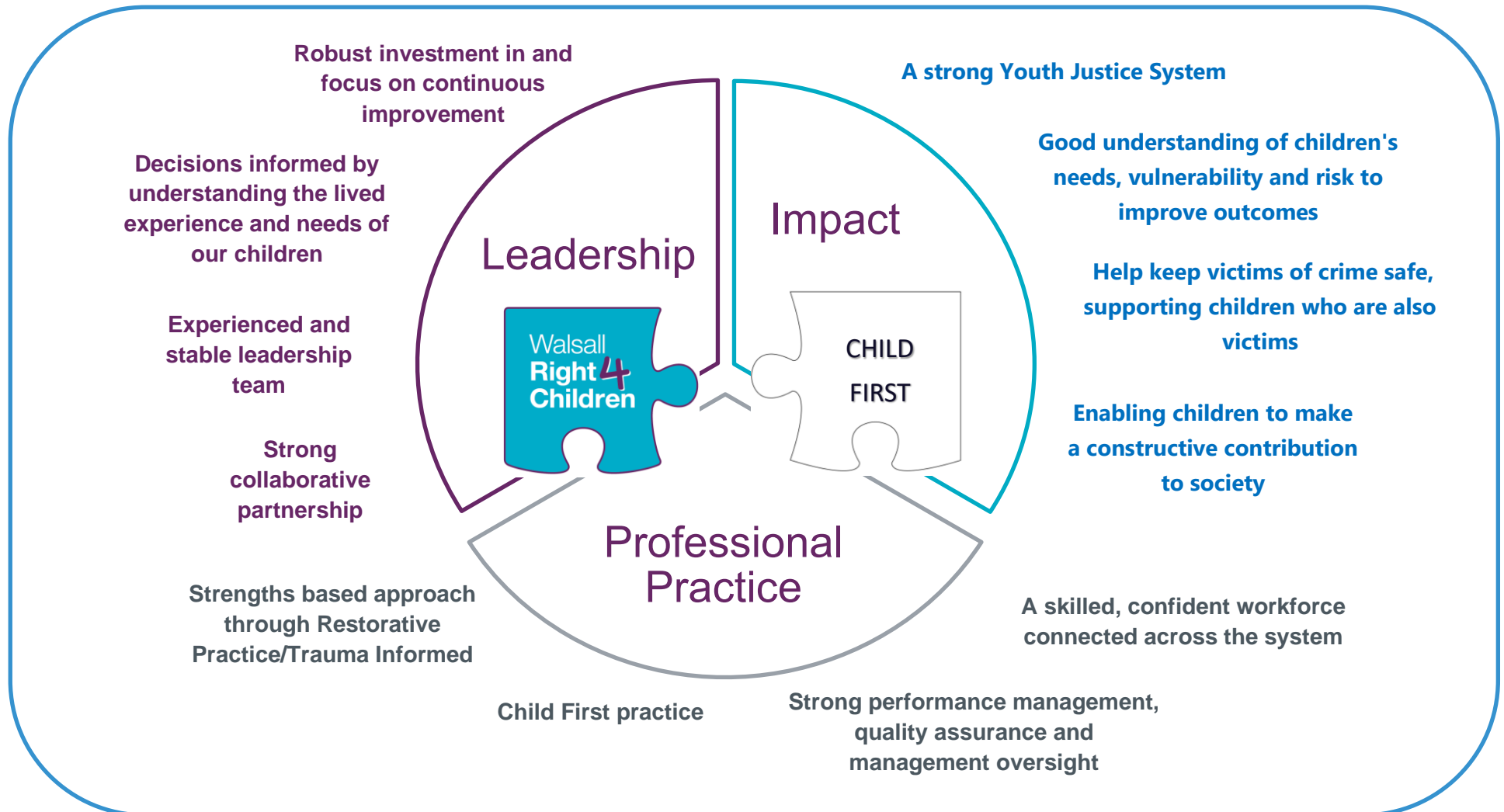
Reducing the number of children entering the Youth Justice System remains a key partnership objective. According to the YJB database, between January 2024 and December 2024, the number of first-time entrants in Walsall reduced by 9.2% when compared to the previous 12-month period. This relates to 52 children.

Published re-offending data for Walsall YJS has increased by 5.9% when compared to the previous 12-month period. The latest proportion of children re-offending is measured at 31.3%, which is better than the national and regional average and relates to 25 children re-offending. Positively, the number of re-offences that are committed at 3.08 per child has reduced by 15% when compared to the previous 12 months, which means fewer victims of crime.

In Walsall we are worried about the number of our children that have been sentenced to custody and particularly concerned about the serious violence that underpins those custodial outcomes. Our current published performance, although marginally better than the previous 12 months, is 0.34 per 1000 of the 10-17 population, which is higher than our regional and national comparators. This is equating to 11 children receiving custodial sentences between January and December 2024.

Our Youth Justice partnership is committed to continual learning and development to improve life outcomes for children and families, to have fewer victims of youth crime, and a safer Walsall.

Our YJS Vision in Summary



We share the Youth Justice Board’s vision for a ‘Child First’ youth justice system:

“A youth justice system that sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society.”

Behind our partnership’s vision for children in the Youth Justice System, and for those at risk of entering it, is a desire to ensure that they are seen as children first, that their uniqueness is understood and responded to and that their voices are clear and strong within our delivery. Our Child First Vision, aligns well with Walsall Right 4 Children’s (WR4C) aspirations for our children:

“Every Child and Family in Walsall is understood, feels happy and safe, with a strong sense of belonging enabling them to learn, achieve and succeed”

The recently published West Midlands Police Children’s and Young Person’s Strategy 2025 is a positive step forward and aligns well with our ‘child first’ principles within the Youth Justice System. The West Midlands Police strategy aims:

“To embed a culture of Child Centred Policing, which puts children and young people at the heart of all policing activity and protects them from harm”

The principles of Child Centred Policing that underpin the new West Midlands Police strategy are designed to achieve positive outcomes such as; fewer child victims of crime, a reduction in re-offending rates, an absence of victim blaming language and adultification in policing, and the child’s vulnerability considered at the earliest opportunity at point of contact.

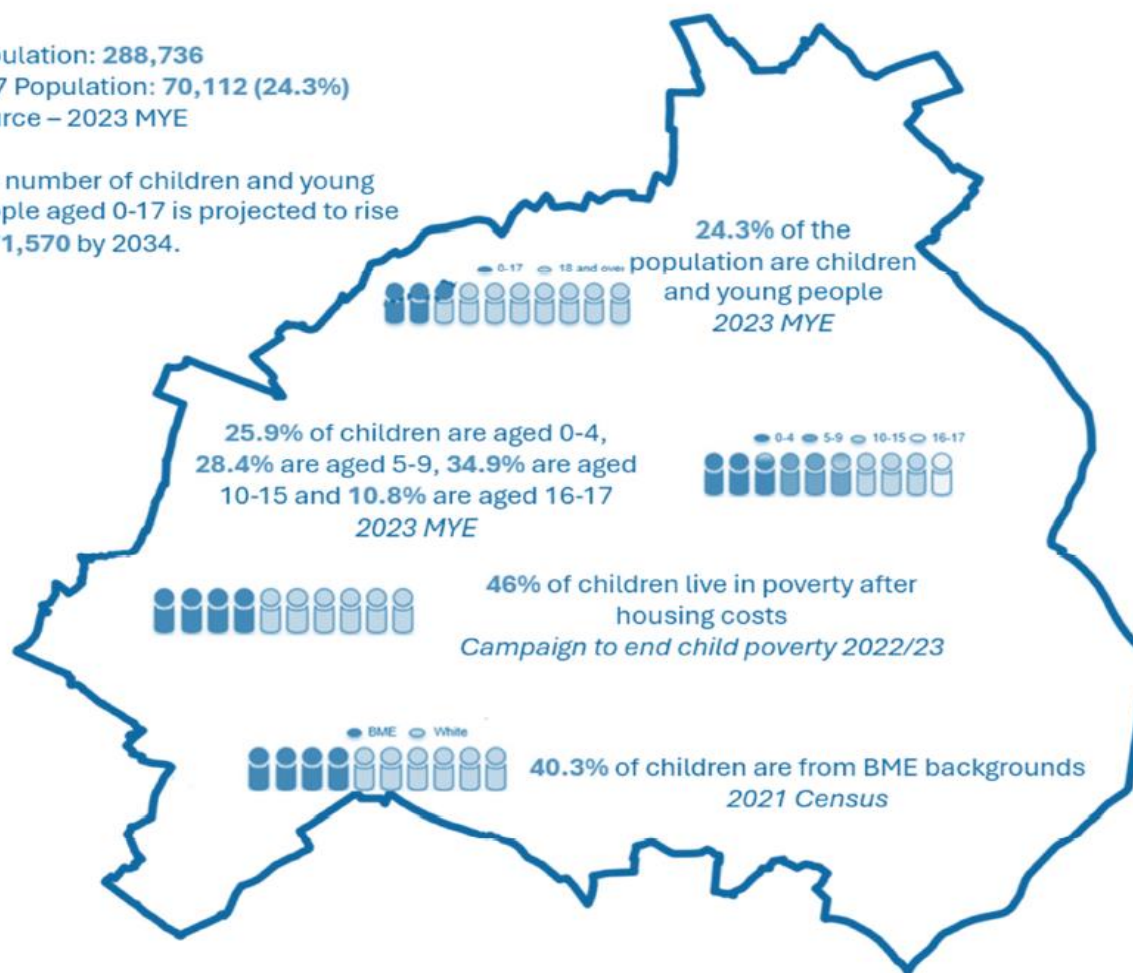
The visions of the Walsall YJS’ partnership, Walsall Children’s Services and West Midlands Police demonstrate that we are working together for common goals.

Local context

Children growing up in Walsall

Population: 288,736
0-17 Population: 70,112 (24.3%)
Source – 2023 MYE

The number of children and young people aged 0-17 is projected to rise to 71,570 by 2034.



Children and young people have more health challenges than their peers

3.4% of babies are born with a low birth weight
West Midlands: 3% - England: 2.9%

5.3 per 1,000 children die before their first birthday
West Midlands: 5.9 - England: 4.1

1.0% are teenage mothers
West Midlands: 0.8% - England: 0.6%

108.5 per 100,000 hospital admissions for mental health issues (<18 years)
West Midlands: 77.5 - England: 80.8

54.9 per 100,000 hospital admissions for substance misuse issues (15-24 years)
West Midlands: 45.3 England: 58.3

Deprivation levels are high

In the Indices Affecting Children Index (IACI), Walsall is the **19th** most deprived Local Authority in the country with 29 of neighbourhoods in the top 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods nationally.

Two of Walsall's three parliamentary constituencies are in the top 50 constituencies with the highest levels of child poverty.

Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

Walsall YJS sits within the Children’s Services directorate and the Strategic Lead for the YJS reports into the Head of Service for Family Hubs, Early Help and Youth Justice. There are clear links between children in the youth justice system, children’s social care, ‘family help’ and those involved in exploitation, going missing or who are excluded/missing from education. The YJS Strategic Lead is part of the senior leadership team within Children’s Services. The Walsall YJS Performance and Partnership Board meets quarterly and is chaired by the Executive Director of Children’s Services and supported by a vice-chair from the Police. Partners from the Local Authority, Children’s Services, Health, Police and National Probation Service regularly attend. Full board membership and attendance can be found in Appendix 1. The agenda is set by the Chair of the Performance and Partnership Board and contains regular reports on issues that impact upon YJS delivery, factors that are impacting on the daily lives of children in Walsall and seeks to hear to voice of our children at each meeting.

<p>Safer Walsall Community Safety Partnership (SWP)</p> <p>The YJS Strategic Lead sits on the Safer Walsall Partnership Board and ensures alignment with the YJS Performance and Partnership Board with shared strategic priorities. The YJS attend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strategic Violence Reduction sub-group b) Violence Against Women and Girls sub-group <p>There are strong ties between the Youth Justice and Safer Walsall Partnership.</p>	<p>West Midlands Local Criminal Justice Board</p> <p>Walsall YJS participates in the regional LCJB Youth Improvement Subgroup to ensure that the desistence needs of children are given the appropriate focus. Within this forum, the YJS are also able to engage with regional criminal justice partners, including West Midlands Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to horizon scan.</p>	<p>West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP)</p> <p>The YJS is a key partner to the VRP and the Head of Erly Help, Family Hubs and Youth Justice West Midlands VRP Strategic Board. To support strategic delivery, the YJS also supports the VRP Sports Strategic Partnership Board.</p>	<p>Contest (the UK’s strategy for counter terrorism: Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare)</p> <p>The Strategic Lead for Walsall YJS is the Chair of the Local Authority’s Channel Panel. The Lead also sits on Walsall’s Contest Board which is responsible for driving forward the delivery and implementation of the government’s Contest Strategy.</p>	<p>Walsall Safeguarding Partnership</p> <p>The Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership represents the YJS on the Safeguarding Partnership executive group and the YJS sits on the Safeguarding Leadership Group and contributes to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Exploitation subcommittee b) Strategic Exploitation Panel
--	--	--	---	---

Key Achievements from the last 12 months:

YJS practitioners and managers should feel incredibly proud of what they have achieved during the past 12 months

- **HMIP Thematic Inspection- Out of Court Disposals:** The YJS received a joint thematic inspection of children subject to out of court disposals in March 2025. HMIP were joined by HMIC to explore decision making in this space and to understand best practice. The feedback from the lead inspector was very positive, praising the YJS staff and the quality of our assessments. This inspection helped us focus our attention, especially regarding victim work, as we prepare for a full inspection under the new framework.

“The focus on addressing disproportionality in the service is notable, and it is clear that this issue has been taken into account in the commissioning of services”

“The diverse needs of children were thoroughly considered in both casework and service delivery.”

“There is sufficient and clear rationale recorded to explain and support the disposal decisions made.”

- **Our Offer for children:** HMIP commented on the breadth of our excellent positive activity offer for children. These opportunities focus on strength-based approaches and building resilience. Mostly through external funding and strong partnership, our offer has included:
 - **Sport:** our partnership continues with two sport organisations in Walsall. The Inspire Group deliver multi-sports diversion activities and mentoring across Walsall and provide children with links to local sport clubs and coaching qualifications. In addition to this, our partnership with Inpower Academy, a local martial arts and mentoring organisation, has continued to grow.
 - **Music:** our music studio mentoring programme has continued throughout 2024. ‘Co-Lab YTH’ consists of a local music artist, producer and Walsall youth worker who provide our children with a safe space to express themselves through music who also receive support to avoid exploitation, issues around gangs and knife crime.
- **Ministry of Justice - Turnaround:** Our Turnaround Programme continued throughout 2024 and has provided diversion opportunities for children. Positively, the Home Office has again provided funding to youth justice services for 2025/26 to work with children on the periphery of crime. Although there has been a significant drop in funding levels this year, we continue to use it to second an Early Help worker into the YJS and commission the Inspire Group to deliver sport coaching and mentoring.

- **Development of the YJS partnership panel;** Our joint decision-making partnership panel has again improved in 2024 with the inclusion of a police arrest notification process which enables the YJS to intervene earlier, ensure appropriate safeguarding referrals are made and diversion interventions can be considered. The partnership panel is well resourced by partners including, Police, Family Help, Substance Misuse. Panels members and YJS staff completed training with the Youth Justice Legal Centre to develop child first approaches to diverting children at the lowest and safest level possible.
- **Assessment;** The YJS has further strengthened our assessment practice in 2024 by successfully embedding the prevention and diversion assessment for children subject to out of court disposals. The quality of these assessments was highlighted by HMIP as an area of good practice, which is has since been developed further by implementing ‘writing to the child’ aligning to wider children’s service practice. This has enabled assessors to carefully consider the analysis of both risk and need, whilst articulating the child’s identity and diversity.
- **Lived Experienced Mentors;** the YJS once again was successful in securing funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), through the Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP), to work with St Giles to provide a mentor for children involved in serious violence and exploitation.
- **Work to address Disproportionality;** When HMIP visited Walsall YJS in March 2025, they commented that our work to address disproportionality was notable. In 2024, Walsall and the 6 other Youth Justice Services in the West Midlands were successful in applying for a regional pathfinder to address the system challenges within the area of ethnic disparity to support sector wide development, identify exemplar and innovative practices in order to ensure that children who are Black, mixed heritage, Asian and from other ethnic minorities achieve better outcomes. It is multi-year funding and will be academically evaluated. The learning from the pathfinder will then be used to inform practice across the country. In 2024 we have worked closely with:
 - ❖ **Open Lens Media-** following the success of our documentary, Reformation 2, and our partnership recommendations report with Open Lens, we have created an employment pathway programme for boys with black and mixed heritage.
 - ❖ **Disproportionality Mentor-** through Safer Walsall Partnership funding we commissioned a local mentor, Ricky Otto, to work with boys with black and mixed heritage in the community and to help them navigate their time in custody and help them effectively resettle back home.
 - ❖ **Equality and Disproportionality Forum-** provides practitioners with a safe space to discuss equality and overrepresentation of children in the justice system. The Forum oversees progress and has set up a practice improvement sub-group.
- **YJS Unmet Needs- Health Offer;** We now have a speech and language therapist, and an Education Psychologist embedded in the team who work alongside our CAMHs psychologist. We have developed an unmet need model and communication pathway to help us solve complex problems relating to health and education needs of children who have not had access to universal services. Practitioners are completing comprehensive speech and language screenings for children and through in depth assessment with our embedded therapist we are able to provide support and information for school.

- **Virtual School & Inclusion Hub:** The partnership between YJS and the Virtual School and the Inclusion Hub remains strong. We are actively tackling the issue of attendance, exclusions, SEN and more via our regular Education Support Meetings. The Inclusion Hub lead is committed and pro-active is supporting this vulnerable group of children.
- **Youth Justice Apprenticeships:** Our level 3 apprentice consults with children on service delivery and issues affecting them in their communities. They also support with end of interventions interviews to help us understand what support has made an impact on their lives. To improve our offer and build practitioner resilience, we have recruited to a level 5 youth justice apprenticeship through Unitas. This post is supporting children who have received Police disposals.
- **Probation and Transition work;** working closely with our partners in Walsall Probation, we have a seconded Probation Officer in post and are developing our transition offer for a growing cohort of 17-year-olds in the service. This involves better information sharing and collaboration with the Young Adults Team in Probation (who work with 18–25-year-olds).



Progress on the priorities in the previous plan:

Reducing Serious Youth Violence

Reducing youth violence is shared priority across several different partnerships and systems in Walsall as the impact of serious incidents weighs so heavily upon individuals, their families, and the wider community. In Walsall, the lead for the Serious Youth Violence Duty is the Safer Walsall Partnership who completed the partnership's strategic needs assessment in 2023 which has been reviewed in 2025 (see appendix). Our local Police Superintendent is the youth justice partnership's strategic lead for our reducing youth violence priority which aligns with the preventing violence priority of the Safer Walsall Partnership.

What have we done and how has it made a difference?

Commissioned multi-year serious youth violence research alongside the SWP, Safeguarding Partnership, Public Health, Walsall Police and the Probation Service. The report is due in 2026 and will help all partnerships understand causal factors, best practice and recommendations for delivery.

Developed a close working relationship with Walsall Police Offender Manager Unit (OMU) to implement robust plans for high-risk children. We work together for 'youth one day one conversation' meetings and the YJS High Risk Panel to complete assessments, plans and reports for court.

Designed an early notification process with Walsall Police to monitor and triage all children who have been arrested, ensuring the right children receive a quality diversion offer.

Commissioned a St Giles mentor to support children involved in gangs and exploitation. Our mentor uses his personal experience to break down barriers with children who require a persistent and different approach to engagement.

Completed excellent work with victims of crime using drawing and talking therapy and restorative practice interventions which has helped victims come to terms with serious assaults.

The YJS delivers a range of interventions with children who are involved in or at risk of causing harm to others. This includes virtual reality interventions exploring the decision making of children who carry knives and offering alternative pathways for them to avoid getting into trouble and hurting others.

Plans for future improvements:

- Improving how the partnership measures the impact of interventions
- Developing our risk assessments for children who are the victims of crime
- Monitoring the impact of the West Midlands Police Knife Crime Policy and ensuring 'child first' decision and proportionate decisions are made.

Reducing disproportionality in the youth justice system

When HMIP visited Walsall in March 2025, they commented that our work to address disproportionality was notable. They were impressed with the quality of assessment practice and the way practitioners explore issues of identity and diversity, and how this is considered within our decision making. HMIP also praised the YJS for commissioning services to respond to the needs of overrepresented children in the justice system.

What have we done and how has it made a difference?

In 2024, Walsall YJS led a coalition funding bid for the 7 Youth Justice Services in the West Midlands policing area to address ethnic disparity. After a competitive process, the West Midlands won the bid.

Our alignment with the SWP secured us funding to support this priority. We commissioned a local mentor, a former professional footballer with lived experience, to support black and mixed heritage children. This support has helped boys in HMYOI Werrington reduce violence, restraints, and engagement with services.

Girls in our diversion space increased in 2024 and as such we used MoJ Turnaround funding to design an employment and training programme for girls based on their views. The girls wished to explore careers in health and beauty and 5 passed the course with Walsall College with high marks. The programme was such a success that the group of girls have now gone on to undertake a further accredited course in developing their entrepreneurial skills. We make sure that all our programmes and activities are accessible for girls.

We continued our partnership with Open Lens, a local media and training organisation, who consulted with and delivered interventions with our boys with black and mixed heritage. We commissioned Open Lens to establish a training and employment pathway for boys with black and mixed heritage.

We have appointed a dedicated and experienced programme lead and have subsequently commissioned a specialist delivery partner to undertake the work and a research evaluation partner to design a theory of change and ensure we understand what works.

Within the service, our Disproportionality Forum provides a safe space for youth justice staff and our partners to come together to discuss factors impacting upon under and over-representation in Walsall. In support, we have a practice improvement group, chaired by our disproportionality champions, that makes changes to delivery learning from 'best practice' and our discussions in the forum.

Plans for future improvements:

- As the new HMIP inspection framework is now in place, the YJS is keen to revisit the HMIP thematic report for the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the justice system and to self-assess our progress. The findings will be included in our disproportionality delivery plan.
- Develop the cultural competence of the team through local community and cultural exchange days

Improving transitions, including resettlement

The average age of a child open to the YJS is currently 17 years old. This highlights the need for us to try and ensure the transitions of these children into adulthood are as smooth as possible and that our local partnerships support this. Our local Head of Probation and YJS Performance and Partnership Board member is the partnership's strategic lead for transitions.

What have we done and how has it made a difference?

Our relationship with Walsall Probation is strong. We have a seconded Probation Officer in post who is rolling out delivery of the Next Steps transition programme. The programme helps us understand maturity and provides opportunities for children to prepare for adulthood, including being supervised by Probation.

We have a dedicated Young Adults Team and a Women's Team in Probation who we work closely with. YJS children who are undergoing the transition process as they near their 18th birthday will be allocated a Probation Officer who specialises in working with these cohorts.

To support this partnership, in April 2025 we had the first of a series of shared learning days between the YJS and Probation to bring the two services closer together and to improve joint working. We developed an information sharing pathway with probation to ensure that risk information is shared for both children transferring over and for those who offend as young adults. We are also supporting trainee Probation Officers as part of their training.

Children in the YJS are often open to other services due to complex multiple needs. Therefore, in 2024, the YJS reviewed its joint working protocol and practice guidelines with children's social care. The principles of our joint working protocol state that services will not close just because children are open to another service and that the best interests of children come first. HMIP identified in March 2025 that 'exit planning' was a strength of the YJS.

Our cohort in custody is changing as children become adults while serving long sentences. HMYOI Werrington is our closest secure estate, and we have a good working relationship with the team there. Both the Head of Safeguarding and Resettlement are YJS Board members, and we have monthly operational oversight meetings to discuss the transition and resettlement needs of the children and young adults that are residing there.

Plans for future improvements:

- As our cohort has become older, the accommodation needs of 17- and 18-year-old children and young people has become increasingly more difficult to solve. The YJS have worked closely with the Transition and Leaving Care Team and the Housing Team within the Local Authority to consider the challenges that this cohort face and begin to explore options for this older cohort.

Identifying and responding to unmet need

Limited access to services means that children enter the justice system with a host of unmet need. Our YJS Strategic Needs Analysis continues to influence the way our partnership thinks and responds to our children. It tells us that 13% of children had a diagnosed special education need with 23% having a education and health care plan. We know that 61% of our children at this point had been excluded from school and 55% had at least four recorded adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The research undertaken within the Strategic Needs Assessment tells us that children in the justice system are the most vulnerable, that have been exposed to multiple traumatic experiences in their short lives.

What have we done and how has it made a difference?

Our strategic lead for this priority is the head of CAMHS commissioning for the Black Country who has ensured that that YJS has an embedded CAMHS psychologist within the team supporting the mental health needs of our children.

We have developed an unmet needs model and communication pathway within the YJS, led by our deployed Education Psychologist and joined by our Speech and Language Therapist.

We hold a monthly unmet needs panel where a team of health and education professionals come together with youth justice practitioners to problem-solve complex issues and put in place plans to help them. This initiative is discussed further later in this document.

Implemented and reviewed a speech and language screening tool and assessment to be used by fully trained youth justice practitioners.

Delivered special educational needs training to the YJS workforce, including Referral Order Panel volunteers.

Our partnership with the Virtual School & Inclusion Hub keeps growing. We have a Vulnerability Matrix which helps target support for children who struggle with education attendance. Inclusion Hub staff complete personal education plans for children in care and on remand, monitor education and health care plans and support those missing education. Through our education support meetings, we have education plans in place for children where attendance is a concern.

Plans for future improvements:

- Working with our Public Health Partners and funding that has been secured to recruit a YJS school nurse to join our growing health model
- Exploring with the ICB how to fund our SALT and Education Psychology model sustainably for the future

Hearing the voice of our children

Our Strategic Needs Assessment contained the views of 47 children open to the YJS who consented to be interviewed. Our children told us that 53% of them felt positive about working with the YJS after being arrested or going to Court and that 90% liked their Youth Justice worker and found them helpful. 85% of those who were interviewed believed their lives had improved because of working with the YJS and they were able to identify which pieces of support were most impactful for them. These interviews focused on a range of different issues affecting YJS children and the findings can be found in the full report.

What have we done and how has it made a difference?

In 2024, we finished our collaboration with Loughborough University in support of Professor Steve Case's Child First research project exploring the third tenet 'collaboration with children'. Walsall YJS were chosen as an essential partner in the research, and we identified children to form a Project Reference Group. The study utilised an innovative participatory methodology, which prioritised co-constructing the research with justice-involved children to ensure child-centric, Child First, co-creation of all of the research elements. Walsall YJS children were recruited to collaborate with researchers throughout the life of the project to co-create the project design (including exploring creative methods) and interpretation of findings.

The voices of YJS children are impacting upon strategic thinking. The voice of children is heard with our strategic YJS Performance and Partnership Board with a recent example of a victim of knife crime talking to partners about his experience.

The YJS identified funding to appoint a level 3 youth justice support worker apprenticeship and a level 5 youth justice apprenticeship through Unitas. We believe that we need to be creative in the ways we build resilience into the YJS workforce, and we are able to bring in different skills and experience through the apprenticeship route. The primary function of our apprenticeships is to talk to our children, hear their views on matters that affect their daily lives and ensure that this consultation changes practice and delivery. Our apprentices speak to children at the end of their interventions to understand what worked for them and also lead on regular consultation exercises such as our annual Safer Lives Survey or the Children's Services Big Conversation.

Our children were given the opportunity to support the YJB's Youth Justice Leaders' Summit and helped managers from across the country consider different perspectives on a range of subjects affecting children. Similarly, our Chief Superintendent has made the time to speak to YJS children about their experiences to help him shape thinking about child centred policing in Walsall.

Plans for future improvements:

- Recruitment to a new level 3 apprenticeship in 2025
- Data Intelligence and Insight.

Data Intelligence and Insight

Following the completion of the YJS Partnership's Strategic Needs Assessment in 2024 and through Development Day discussions, the YJS Performance and Partnership Board adopted an additional priority for 2024-25 to improve the partnership's use of data.

What have we done and how has it made a difference?

Our Head of Performance and Improvement is a YJS Performance and Partnership Board member and is leading for the partnership in developing our ability to measure the impact of the work we do with children. This will involve working with partners to contribute more data, insight and information into the partnership and will encourage wider services to take greater ownership for children in the justice system.

The YJS Performance and Partnership Board have been working with performance analysts over the last year to enhance the partnership's data monitoring, KPIs and local information. This led to a better monthly performance scorecard that guides our audit process and our capacity to learn and change practice. Board members, YJS managers and practitioners have a clearer and more comprehensive view of the cohort we are working with from diversion interventions to custodial sentences.

Detailed analysis such as the YJS Ethnicity Report and audit reports have increased the partnership's awareness of some of the difficulties we face and enable us to make practice decisions based on evidence.

YJS Performance and Partnership Board has amended its governance structure in early 2025 to empower partners to provide data and performance reports to each board meeting to support the partnership's ability to measure impact

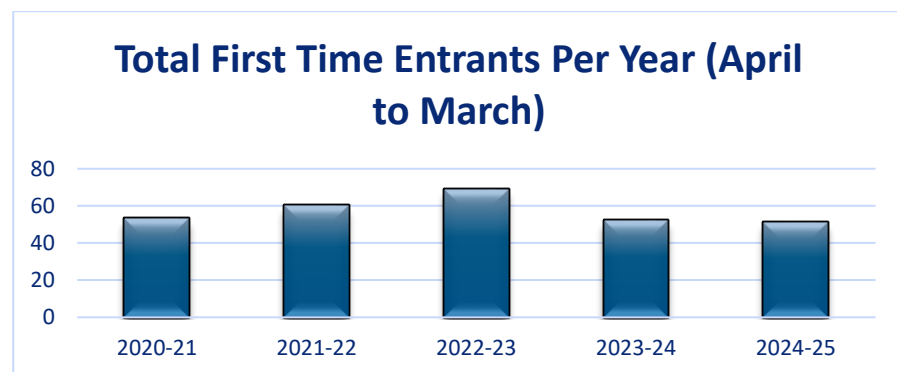
Plans for future improvements:

- Improve the partnership's ability to measure the impact of out of court disposals
- Develop a tool to improve how we measure the outcomes of mentoring services

Performance, Priorities and National Key Performance Indicators

A detailed performance scorecard is shared with the YJS Performance and Partnership Board on a quarterly basis and monthly with the senior leadership within Children’s Services. This enables detailed performance conversations to be had on a regular basis with managers and practitioners and enables strategic leaders to better understand the cohort of children we work with and challenge our delivery.

First Time Entrants:



Current Published First Time Entrants rate per 100,000 of 10-17 population				
	Walsall	PCC Area	Family	England
Jan 23- Dec 24	162	150	195	160
Jan 22- Dec 23	179	132	203	167
Percentage change	-9.2%	13.6%	-3.9%	-4.3%

The charts above detail both the actual number of children who became First Time Entrants (FTE) and the rate per 100,000 of the 10-17 population. This remains a positive story in Walsall and a reflection of the hard work of the youth justice partnership to insure that children are receiving the right outcome based on the seriousness of the offence and their individual needs and risks. The partnership understood, through audit and observation, that our disposals were disproportionate in 2022-2023, and through joint training and increased oversight, we have successfully and safely reduced the number of children by using deferred prosecutions and community resolutions.

We have seen a reduction in both the actual number of children entering the system and percentage decrease when considering the rate per 100,000 of the 10-17 population of 9.2%. We know that 88% of FTE are boys and the most common offence type is violence against the person. 37% of FTE are from a minority ethnic background with 11 children having dual heritage. Due to the increase in young people charged for serious violence offences, we are currently seeing 65% of the FTE cohort receiving a conviction in Court.

What we have done to reduce first time entrants during 2024/25:

- Continued our successful MOJ Turnaround Programme to provide diversion interventions for children on the periphery of the justice system.
- Held an established our joint-decision making Youth Justice Partnership Panel which identifies and supports children at risk of engaging in offending and violent behaviour.
- Created an early identification triage system with the Police to review children that have been arrested over the previous 24 hours to consider the need for a quick response.
- Worked with West Midlands Police to support and advise the implementation of their new knife crime policy and the deletion of Outcome 22 Deferred Prosecution as an option.
- Ensure that Community Resolutions are used by consistently using the gravity score matrix and when safe to do so.
- Jointly audited our first-time entrants with the Police to understand the effectiveness of voluntary interventions and to review our joint decision-making processes.
- The YJS is a key partner in Exploitation Hub and has chaired the daily multi-agency exploitation triage with Social Care and the Police in 2024.

Re-offending:

	Number in Cohort	# Re-offenders	# Re-offences	Reoffences/re-offender	Re-offences/offender	% Reoffending
Apr 22 – Mar 23	80	25	77	3.08	0.96	31.3%
Apr 21 – Mar 22	72	19	47	2.47	0.65	26.4%

** Published re-offending data is always over 18 months old.*

We have seen an increase in the number of children within the cohort and the number of those who have re-offended. This has meant that there has been a notable increase in the number of re-offences (30) that have been committed which ultimately means more victims. The below chart presents a current comparison to the national and regional data. We can see that although our local performance has declined between 2022 and 2023, it remains better than the comparators below.

Apr 22 – Mar 23	Re-offences/re-offender	% Reoffending
England	4.36	32.3%
PCC West Midlands region	3.70	33.3%

The YJS is working closely with our colleagues in the local authority performance hub to develop our local ability to monitor and track when children open to the YJS re-offend. This will give us the ability to respond quickly to emerging patterns and better respond to children.

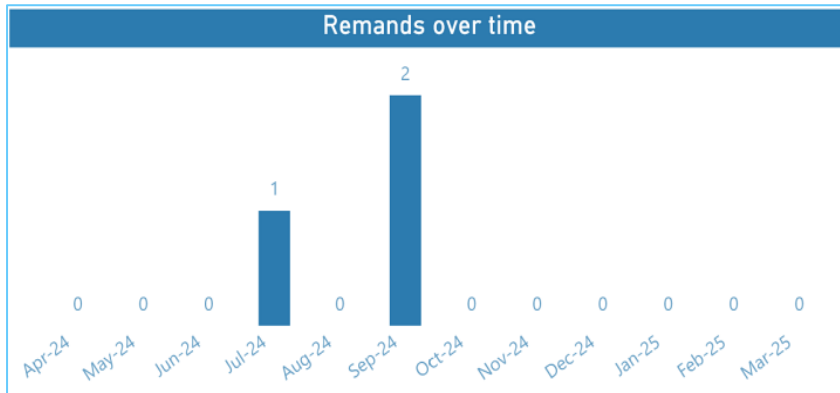
What we have done during 2024/25 to reduce re-offending:

- The YJS has focussed on improving the assessment practice of youth justice officers and crime prevention workers through training and developing our quality assurance.
- Walsall have continued to embed the use of a restorative ‘MyPlan’ with our children subject to both out of court disposals and court orders. The MyPlan helps children and families take ownership of some of the problems impacting upon their lives.
- Reviewed and implemented QA processes to provide better focus on issues impacting desistance, culture, identity, victims, and external controls.
- We have a good partnership in place with pro-active Police offender manager colleagues.
- The YJS have created a Programmes Officer to co-ordinate and deliver group activities and programmes for children, alongside responding to emerging risks and issues.
- There is a strong positive activity offer for our children with multiple projects available such as the Co-LAB YTH music programme and sport programmes.
- Our partnership with St-Giles is set to continue over the next year to provide lived experienced mentors to some of our most vulnerable and risky children.

Use of Remands, Custody and Constructive Resettlement

Our published performance remains a concern for the YJS partnership as too many children are receiving custodial sentences. Between January and December 2024, there were 11 custodial sentences. Our local data tells us that between April 2024 and March 2025 that there were also 11 custodial sentences, which means that our performance is not improving.

Current Published First Time Entrants rate per 100,000 of 10-17 population				
	Walsall	PCC Area	Family	England
Jan 24- Dec 24	0.34	0.13	0.11	0.10
Jan 23- Dec 23	0.35	0.15	0.18	0.11
Change from baseline	0.1	0.2	0.7	0.1



Positively we have only had 3 children remanded over the past 12 months, the lowest number in over 3 years, which suggests that we could see a reduction in the total number of children receiving custodial sentences in the next year. We are working, in line with our joint working protocol with social care, to make sure that all alternatives to remand are robustly considered on each occasion.

The violence behind these remands and custodial sentences is concerning, however we are seeing an increase in children committing a combination of violent offences and vehicle theft. Overrepresentation of children from minority ethnic backgrounds can be seen with 44% of the cohort from an ethnic minority.

What we have done during 2024/25 to reduce the use of custody and improve outcomes:

- The partnership closely monitors children in the secure estate, undertakes audits and learning has been shared with the YJS Performance Board.
- Our partnership with HMYOI Werrington is strong with monthly oversight meetings between the Head of Resettlement and the YJS Strategic Lead.
- We have reviewed the joint working protocol between the YJS and Children’s Social Care and delivered joint training sessions to social workers and early help workers to improve the effectiveness of multi-agency work.
- A custody resettlement policy is in place in partnership with Social Care.
- As part of the YJS High Risk process, dedicated resettlement support panels are held for children subject to custodial sentences to support release plans.
- We welcomed HMIP to Walsall to support their joint thematic inspection of remanded children in June 2023 who identified we have effective and child first practice in Walsall.
- Sought accommodation for children at risk of remand and provided robust remand to local authority accommodation packages

Challenges, Risks and Issues

If we are to take on the many challenges that the Youth Justice Partnership faces and support the children in the justice system to a high level, we need to make sure the YJS workforce is suitably resilient and skilled to take on these difficulties. Over the past 24 months we have relied upon the use of agency staff to cover vacancies when we have, at times, struggled to recruit permanent youth justice officers. This places a strain on the workforce and also on an already overstretched budget. This issue isn't specific to Walsall, and we understand that services across the region are experiencing similar concerns. This being said, we now have a consistent management team and the number of agency practitioners employed is at its lowest in 3 years. We are working hard to address the issue by improving conditions for staff, including a clinical supervision offer and 9-day flexible working arrangements should people wish to take it up. We continue to be supporters of apprenticeships, currently we have a level 3 and level 5 apprentice in post, and we have reviewed our workforce and inclusion strategy to support those who are looking for progression.

Our offer for children is good and we have a wide range of opportunities that practitioners can utilise to meet the needs of the children they support. However current funding arrangements mean that there is a continual risk to delivery. The Ministry of Justice has positively confirmed that they will once again provide funding for the Turnaround Programme to continue from April 2025 to March 2026, but single year funding means strategic planning for children, especially when commissioning and working with partners, becomes very difficult. Should the Ministry of Justice decide not to continue to fund this diversion programme, it is probable that more children will enter the formal justice system and there will be more victims of crime.

Similarly, we have managed to find short-term funding solutions to greatly improve out health and education offer for children. By doing so we have recruited an Education Psychologist and a Speech and Language Therapist who have been instrumental in developing our unmet needs pathway for children with complex health and education problems. The partnership is working with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to consider how these vital services for our children can be maintained on a long-term basis. Our 2024 Strategic Needs Analysis tells us about that children in the YJS have experienced a disproportionate amount of trauma in their short lives and that their education and health needs are going unreported and clearly unmet. Our Public Health partners have identified funding for the YJS to employ a school nurse to help us improve this, although recruiting to this position has proved challenging over the past 12 months.

The Youth Justice Partnership has taken great strides over the past two years to safely reduce the number of first-time entrants by improving training, joint working and increasing our oversight of the issue through joint auditing. However, in September 2024, West Midlands Police implemented a new knife crime policy which could result in an increase in the number of FTEs. The policy instructs police officers to deal with children in possession of a knife following arrest within the police station and without the benefit of an assessment or a joint decision-making panel. Outcome 22 deferred prosecution is no longer a disposal that is being used by West Midlands Police under the new policy and there are concerns from some agencies that the changes to decision-making could up-tariff children and mean they

are more likely to appear in Court. The region is working closely with West Midlands Police to monitor outcomes and there is a pathway, that Walsall YJS has successfully used to escalate decisions which are believed to be made without all the available information. Our local YJS performance and partnership board is closely monitoring our performance data and the direct impact on children.

Serious youth violence in the borough remains a concern for the partnership and will again be a priority for us to work on. Violence remains the most common offence type our children are committing and we are seeing increases in violent behaviour in specific localities in Walsall. We are working closely with partners in the Police, community safety team and exploitation team to address the levels of violence in these areas. The YJS has improved its community links, and established intervention centres in localities where there is often concerning behaviour. However, these are multi-generational issues and continued work in these localities will need to continue.

Through our strategic needs assessment and board development day in 2024, partners identified that the quality of data intelligence was a risk for the partnership. When HMIP visited Walsall in March 2025, they encouraged the YJS Performance and Partnership Board to consider how to improve the way we measure the impact of our polices, processes and our interventions. This will mean that our partners need to improve the performance data available to the partnership, including police data on outcomes such as 'street' community resolutions and re-offending outcomes for young adults. The partnership is committed to working together to change the way we think about performance and as such we have established a data intelligence sub-group of the Board.

Looking Forward- Plan for the forthcoming year

Walsall YJS is a trauma informed organisation. We understand that our children have experienced significant childhood adversity during their short lives which includes a range of trauma and abuse. Involvement within the justice system can at times re-traumatise them. Child First practice is about working in a way that reduces the stigmatisation that contact with the justice system brings. Our youth justice partnership shares the YJB's Child First vision, and our delivery is based upon the YJB's approach:

1. 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.

2. Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.

3. Encourage children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.

4. 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.

We know that sustainable desistance is achieved by building pro-social identities through the identification of strengths, and to do this practitioners need time and space to develop relationships with children. The YJS are committed to improving our collaborative approaches. We continued our partnership with Loughborough

University in 2024 to support their research project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, determining the extent of Child First principles and collaborative approaches in youth justice. Our Walsall children and practitioners worked with researchers to help develop the methodology and approach to the study and established a Project Reference Special Advisory Group. The full report was published in December 2024 and the link can be found below:

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/social-policy-studies/research/child-first-justice/examining-childrens-perspectives/>



“I found the activity empowering and fun. Good to know I’m making things better for others”

Child who attended PRG

The Walsall YJS Project Reference Group (PRG) was instrumental in shaping the research and the findings. The use of creative methods and child-appropriate ways of communicating are the foundations to all work with all children in the justice system. Our PRG identified the importance of asking children about their circumstances, goals and interests, being listened to and their views being considered when developing interventions plans with their worker. The research findings clearly articulated that collaboration with children makes interventions more effective, and that although Youth Justice Services are leading the way, collaboration in other parts of the criminal justice system is inconsistent at best.

Collaborating with children is an important part of the work we do. Practice examples could be how we use a 'MyPlan' approach to working with children to identify the things in their lives that will make a positive change and also the creation of our Turnaround video that explains the offer and how plans will be designed by collaboration. Children can access the video on YouTube using a QR code that we share. As part of our consultation with families, we understand that sometimes messaging was inconsistent and difficult to understand. As a result, we developed literature detailing what was happening to them and what to expect. Our children suggested wording and we consulted with SALT to ensure the leaflets were accessible for those with special educational needs. We also worked closely with Education Psychology to develop videos, accessible through a QR code, helping children to understand their diagnosis of ADHD.



Walsall YJS children created a rap as part of their engagement in the PRG.

View it here....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2EwPihKC1g>

The 'Child First' approach is not limited to the practice examples given above. Strategically our partnership is determined to ensure that the Child First tenets are visible within our Performance and Partnership Board, that our children are central to discussions and that we hear their voice.

Voice of the Child

To help Board members understand the lived experience of the children we work with, the YJS Partnership adopted a strategic priority to ensure that the voice of children in the justice system impacts upon our strategic direction. The YJS seeks to hear the views of our children in the time we spend with them every day and have implemented a recording tool that helps capture what they have to say. Through comprehensive screening and assessments, our Speech and Language Therapist also provides direct advice to practitioners to help tailor their work and the interventions so they can be most effective. We also seek the views of children to consider models of delivery, changes in practice and reviews of policy. They also help us recruit new staff and their views can be incredibly insightful. We have embedded a restorative 'MyPlan' for our children and families to ensure that the support they receive is owned by them and inclusive.

As part of our YJS Strategic Needs Assessment, we consulted with over 50 children we were working with to understand their views on life in Walsall and their experiences of being supported in the justice system. Managers and practitioners were proud to hear how they were positively received by children, but it is apparent that the fear of knife crime is central to their thinking. Children in the justice system want the same for their future as other children.

What I really find helpful with my worker, is that they explain the information in good detail

I've stopped speaking to the people that would get me in trouble, because my worker has been speaking to me about this, because it was negative for me. I've listened and backed away from them people

I'm listening to my dad more cos he's been in jail, and he don't want that for me. We don't want it. I'm trying to do the right things to get a good lie and stay focussed

Go back into education to do business studies. Set up a business

If I'm being honest, you're a pain. Always contacting me, checking I'm OK. I know it's supposed to be for my benefit, but I don't need you. I've been with you for a month, and I know you're trying to help me, but I did nothing wrong. I'm OK talking to you, you know this,

My youth justice worker] reassured me about what is going to happen whilst working with the youth

I want a good job- the building trade probably. Just wanna live on my own with no drama

My worker helps me, especially with my reading because she knows I struggle with that. She helps me through stuff, like at education or if I need to say something about an issue, she will do that on my behalf

'I've not assaulted anyone since starting with my youth justice support worker'

I think I'm making changes now. I'm not rolling with some old friends who are always in trouble. I ain't been arrested for ages and I don't intend to.

Enabling children in the YJS to shape the wider strategic partnership discussions:

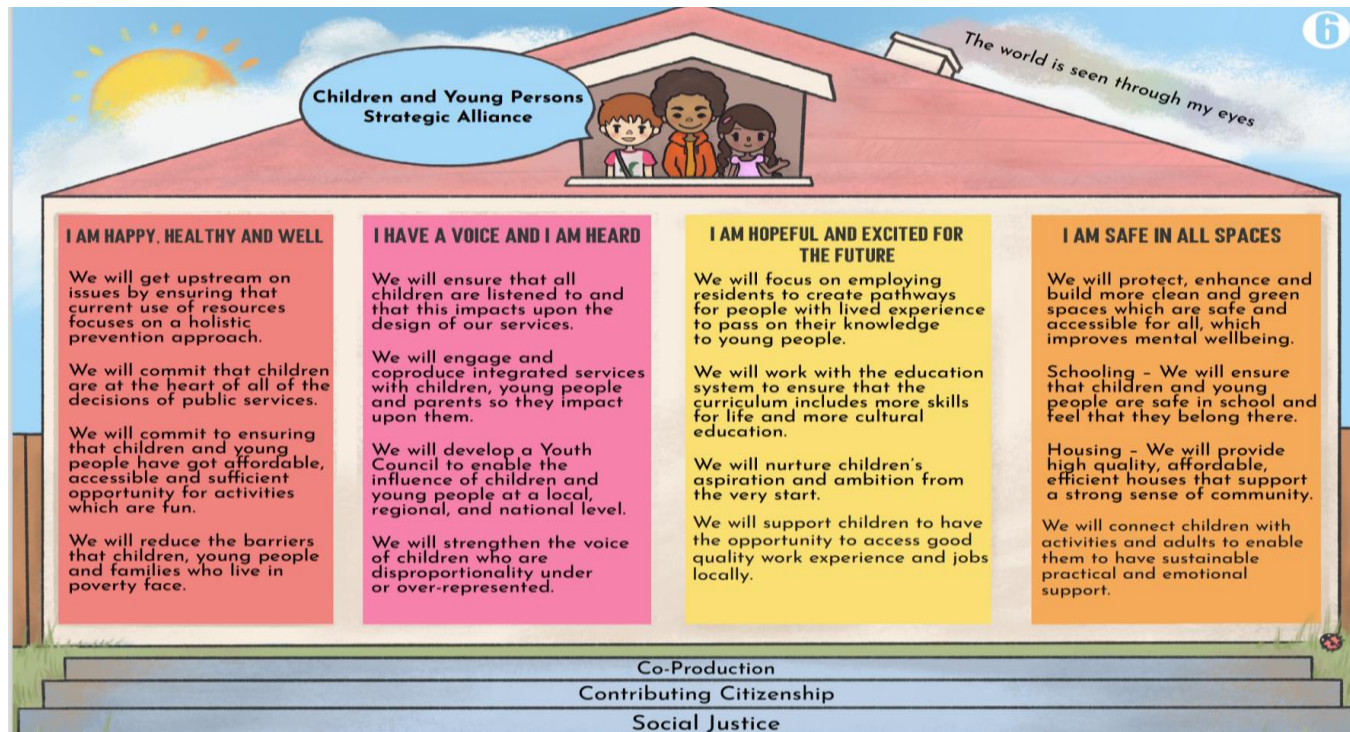
The voices of children in the justice system are impacting upon wider partnership thinking, M's story (a child previously open to the YJS) has been heard within the Children's Alliance and is shaping strategies to address over and underrepresentation across the partnership. Similarly, the experiences of boys in the secure estate have influenced strategic partnership boards to collaborate and consider wider system thinking about addressing serious youth violence.

In 2024 we continued our work with Open Lens, a local media and training organisation, following the success of our documentary film 'Reformation 2' detailing how structural barriers, trauma, discrimination and individual experience have impacted the lives of black boys in the justice system living in Walsall. These boys, in collaboration with Open Lens and strategic leaders, have continued to influence strategy and thinking within the local authority and children's services.



Children and Young People's Alliance

In Walsall, we have worked hard to develop a strong Children and Young People's Alliance to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families. In 2022 the alliance committed to "regularly consider how the lived experience of children and young people in Walsall can be improved". This, in turn, led to the "Children and Young People 2040" strategy, recognising that children born in 2022 will be adults in 2040. Looking at longer term outcomes for these children has enabled the partnership to explore more effective strategic collaborations and long-term decision making across partnerships. The four key priority areas in the illustration are based on what children have told the alliance, and the learning from their work so far. Through its work the Alliance is joining the dots with other partnership boards to maximise opportunities to nudge system change to improve the lived experience of children growing up in Walsall.



The Children's Alliance is championing the needs of children in the justice system and have prioritised the need to develop better prevention support through a growing adolescent offer and the recruitment of youth workers.

Enabling children in the justice system to shape youth justice services:

We are proud of our 2024 partnership with Loughborough University where Walsall children contributed to a project aimed at promoting 'child first' principles in the justice system. Their input is vital for enhancing services locally in Walsall and nationally. In 2024 and again in early 2025, our Disproportionality Mentor, Ricky Otto, supported boys to attend the national Youth Justice Leaders' Summit, to facilitate workshops, provide unique insight and to challenge 'adult' thinking about key issues facing the youth justice system.

Walsall YJS believes in recruiting youth justice apprentices. These roles were created as our children told us that earning money is a priority for them, they struggle to find training and employment opportunities that interest them and that having a criminal record can destroy their chances. This opportunity is open to someone who has experienced the youth justice system, who has made positive changes to their life and is keen to help others do the same. The purpose of the apprenticeship is to bridge the gap between staff and children and collaborate with them to seek their views. In 2025 our apprentice led our safer lives survey (see appendix 3) to better understand issues around violence, knife crime and community safety. In 2024 we have further expanded our apprenticeship offer and are working with Unitas to support a Youth Justice practitioner level 5 apprenticeship.

Resources and Services

Walsall Youth Justice Partnership confirms that it is compliant with the minimum staffing requirements as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Partners have confirmed that their contributions to the Service have been maintained for 2025-26 and the establishment is fully funded. For the full financial breakdown, see appendix 6

Walsall YJS is resourced through a range of partnership funding, deployed staff and dedicated pathways which are overseen by the YJS Performance and Partnership Board. The YJB grant is a mainstream funding which the partnership uses to finance staffing and resources to deliver functions across the youth justice partnership and within the YJS (see appendix 4). The local authority's financial contribution supports the YJB grant and ensures that YJS staff are equipped to meet the needs of our children. The MoJ Turnaround Grant enables us to second a programme coordinator in from Early Help, strengthening our close working relationship and ensuring children on the periphery of the justice system have access to universal services. The YJS is co-located with the Exploitation and Missing Team and Walsall Partnership Police. This strengthened our partnership and improved collaboration for our shared cohort of children at risk.

The Police continue to make a significant contribution to the youth justice partnership. Walsall Police provide a financial contribution, deploy a Youth Crime Officer and have nominated Youth Officers aligned to the YJS. This is in addition to a financial contribution from the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which

is used to fund practitioners who deliver crime prevention and diversion interventions. PCC funding, through the Safer Walsall Partnership, is also used to focus on our strategic priorities in improving outcomes for those children involved in serious youth violence and criminal exploitation through lived experienced mentors and providing a dedicated offer for boys with black and mixed ethnicities who are overrepresented in the justice system.

The National Probation Service provides a 0.6 full time equivalent (fte) Probation Officer who oversees transition to adulthood work, and a 0.25 (fte) Probation Service Officer based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) who contributes to daily referral screenings. These posts are crucial in driving forward improvements within our priority to strengthen transitions. This year our partnership with the Probation Service has grown in strength. The Head of Walsall and Wolverhampton Probation is a staunch supporter of the YJS and has locally developed a young adults and a women's team in which we are closely aligned. There are excellent examples of Youth Justice and Probation Officers working closely together to support children transition between services. We are pleased to be developing the Next Steps Programme for those aged 17 and half years and have improved our information sharing protocols locally.

Our 'health hub' model continues to improve. We used funding to employ a dedicated Senior Education Psychologist 0.4(fte) who leads and chairs our unmet needs model, in partnership with a 0.5 (fte) Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and our 0.5 (fte) CAMHS Psychologist. The Beacon Substance Misuse Services remains a strong partner, and we have a named worker who bases themselves in the YJS. Although we still have identified Public Health funding available, it has been difficult to recruit a school nurse to support the physical health needs of children in the justice system. This exciting post is currently being recruited to. Further work is needed across the partnership and the Integrated Care Board to ensure that our 'health hub' model has long-term sustainable funding options.

We recognise that the educational needs of our children are closely linked to their health needs and therefore we have aligned our education partners with our unmet needs model. Our partnership with Walsall's Virtual School and Inclusion Hub remains a strength and our named specialist within that service provides a crucial role in supporting our children. We closely monitor the attendance, exclusions, special education needs and education and health care plans (EHCPs) through our vulnerability matrix, which enables us to engage directly with schools and education providers to improve outcomes for these children. The Council's Employment and Skills Team have a pathway into the Walsall Works Programme to support children aged over 16 and over and we are working hard to improve our ability to measure the impact of this work. Through a local partner, Open Lens Media, we also have a dedicated employment programme for Black boys.

When HMIP visited Walsall in March 2025 they noted that our breadth of offer and opportunities for our children was impressive. Our mentoring and positive activity offer is strong. We have mentors to work with children involved with gangs and a dedicated mentor to work with black children at risk of going to custody. We have two established sport partners who deliver weekly multi-sports and another that delivers mixed martial arts. We also commission a local music studio to support our children.

Board Development

The YJS Performance and Partnership Board continues to meet at a minimum on a quarterly basis. In advance of our HMIP Thematic Inspection exploring out of court disposals, the Board met more frequently to support the service in preparation for the inspection team and to ensure that the effective practice across the partnership was highlighted. The Board's responsibilities are detailed within a terms of reference, however, in summary, the Board is required to:

- Determine the strategic direction of youth justice services and ensure the partnership is fully engaged in the prevention of youth crime agenda
- To oversee and monitor the operational work of the YJS
- To ensure the YJS is adequately resourced to carry out its statutory functions.

When HMIP visited Walsall in March 2025, they noted that Walsall's Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board was proactive and engaged in supporting children in the justice system but commented that we have more work to do to truly measure the partnership impact of our interventions.

The YJS Board continues to align its structure with the Safer Walsall Partnership with dotted lines of accountability, with the YJS Strategic Lead providing quarterly updates to the partnership. In May and June 2024, we held two Board development workshops to review our strengths and areas for improvement as a partnership. We considered the risks to the partnership. Importantly, these development days gave our managers and practitioners a further opportunity to meet with Board members and take them through some of the excellent practice they deliver with children.

The YJS Board reviewed its terms of reference in 2024 following our Board development days in May and June and partners reviewed different structures for the board to ensure we had maximum engagement from members with greater oversight on issues impact the children within the service. A new structure was implemented where strategic partners own specific issues arising from the Board and hold a series of task and finish groups. This model enables Board members to become closer to the practice and the service and to get to know the children better. The YJS Board are committed to engaging with the youth justice agenda and responding to what our children have to say, advocating for them within their strategic networks.

Our Board has continued to grow over the past twelve months, and we have welcomed new members from the Integrated Care Board to better support the health and education needs of our children. Our Board induction document has been reviewed to help new members be clear of their roles and responsibilities towards the partnership, so they can effectively represent the partnership within their wider strategic networks.

We know that the best youth justice boards are the ones that understand the children in the justice system well and are close to delivery and the staff working with them. Walsall YJS' Performance and Partnership Board is engaged with the youth agenda, and such expects its board members to observe practice, and both meet

the practitioners and the children they support. Fantastic recent examples have been our Executive Director of Children’s Services observing our joint-decision-making partnership panel, our Police Borough Commander observing (and participating) in our knife crime interventions, or our Head of Probation observing Youth Court. Our Children’s Services Director of Partnerships leads on this for the Board to ensure that we have a rolling and growing offer to Board members to bring them closer to the action.

The National Youth Justice Board launched its new oversight framework in April 2023 to increase their understanding of performance across the system. In Walsall we have been placed into quadrant 2 and will engage with the local YJB oversight manager for support on a regular basis. Our YJS Partnership is keen to work with the YJB to consider best national practice. We also worked with an independent youth justice specialist in 2024 to help shape the strategic governance model we have in place and to provide ongoing support. This support builds on the ‘Review of progress against HMIP recommendations’ completed in 2021.

Chairs of Boards Collaborative – working together to drive forward a strategic approach to prevent youth violence

Walsall has seen a series of serious youth violence incidents over the last two years leading to a high number of children being remanded into the secure estate and receiving lengthy custodial sentences. As a result, the Youth Justice Partnership instigated a coalition with the Safeguarding Partnership and Safer Walsall Partnership to seek assurance that there is an effective plan to safeguard our communities from violence and structures are in place to identify long term learning.

The coalition, which meets quarterly, sits outside of normal governance procedures, and indicates a shared vision to approach the violence problem with creativity and desire to change. Through this coalition, in 2024 the partners came together to commission a two-year academic research project with an eminent professor in youth justice, to help us challenge current perceptions of violence and to consider whether our systems are based on best practice and evidence.



Oversight of activity

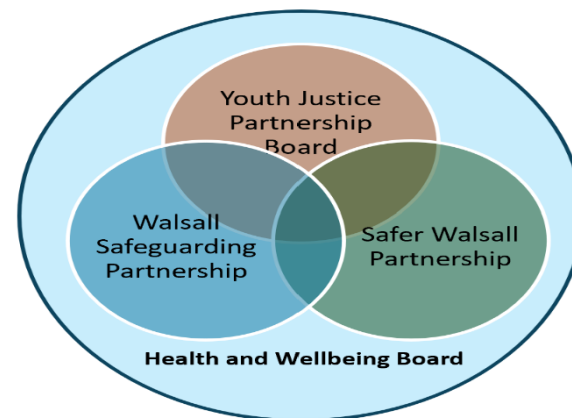


Provide Assurance



Joined up work

- Initiated in 2023 as a response to serious youth violence incidents.
- Effective structures to review and identify learning, medium and long term, as a partnership.
- Use the learning to inform our work to prevent violence and offending.



Workforce Development

The strengths of the YJS are dependent upon the people working hard each day to improve outcomes for children. Our team is continually changing, and we have been joined by new practitioners this year who are skilled at working with our children. In January 2025, the YJS had a service development day to bond the team, but also to review an incredibly successful 2024 and to look forward in exploring strategic and operational priorities for 2025 onwards!

Our offer for staff is good. There has been significant training for the team in 2024, detailed within the YJS training plan, which focussed on the findings from audits and inspections and informed by a practitioner skills audit in October. Specifically, we have a focus in Walsall on developing our response to the unmet needs of the children that have entered the justice system and as such we have undertaken special educational needs, neurodiversity, and speech and language training in pursuant of a SEND quality mark in 2025/26. This specific programme of training has been rolled out for our volunteers and forms a continual programme of work.


Walsall YJS are committed to investing in its staff to complete the Unitas Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate (YJEPC) and had four practitioners achieving the qualification in 2024. It is a requirement in the job description of our practitioners to undertake the YJEPC within the first 12 months of joining the service as we believe a specific youth justice qualification is essential to the difficult and challenging work the team undertakes.

Following our thematic HMIP of out of court disposals in March 2025, we were keen to work together with colleagues in Social Care to deliver training on the findings from the inspection and the recently reviewed joint working protocol between the service areas. This proved a huge success with over 100 attendees from Social Care, Family Help coming together to further improve our multi-agency working for better outcomes for this group of children. In our preparation for this inspection, we identified that we need to improve our focus on victim work and as such we commissioned an organisation to deliver a two-day training event to support us on that journey. This was received very well by practitioners and managers.

Our training plan is linked to our Workforce and Inclusion Strategy supporting practitioners and managers within the service to develop in their current roles and to aspire for progression. We also have trained Mental Health First Aiders, and an excellent clinical supervision offer for staff from a local psychology service. In addition to the above, we have implemented a 9-day fortnight for staff, should they wish to improve their work-life balance. We undertake a yearly health check with staff and action findings to improve wellness at work. This will continue through 2025/26.

Workforce Demographics

As of 1st April 2025, the YJS has 20 posts paid by the local authority. The team are also supported by 2 business support officers. A service structure can be found in appendix 5. The management team is stable, although we have seen changes within the practitioner group during 2024 and are currently holding 1 practitioner vacancy covered by agency staff. Our current local authority workforce demographics are 25% male and 75% female with 11% Asian and 25% black ethnicity. Including our deployed partners and commissioned specialists, the YJS workforce has 28 posts in total. The total workforce demographics are 29% male and 21% female with 14% Asian and 25% Black ethnicity.

	Qualifications	YJEP	Specialisms	Practice Champions
	Probation x 3 Social Work x 4 Youth Work x 3 Other x 10	CPWs x 3 YJOs x 7 Managers x 5 Other Practitioners x 2 (3 x in progress)	Court Victims and RJ Programmes & Interventions	Girls, DA & VAWG Exploitation Equality & Disproportionality Children’s Voice Prevent

Evidence Based Practice and Innovation

The evidence base of ‘what works’ to support and prevent children becoming involved in violence is growing. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) have released a toolkit to support those working with children and young people. It summarises the best available research evidence about different approaches to preventing serious youth violence. Below are other examples of how the YJS has adopted innovative evidence-based practice:

Diversion

The YEF’s research states that pre-court diversion leads to greater reductions in offending than processing through the courts. It suggests that pre-court diversion reduces reoffending by 13%. Furthermore, if children are diverted but do commit another offence, this offence is likely to be less serious. There is also evidence that pre-court diversion has a greater impact than diversion after a charge is made. This provides support for the argument that you can achieve greater impacts by limiting a child’s experience of the criminal justice system. Current evidence suggests the impact of pre-court diversion has been greater with younger children (aged 12-14). Our work with the Ministry of Justice Turnaround Programme and our diversion work through the YJS partnership panel has been detailed earlier in this document.



The YEF also evaluated research into sport-based programmes which found desirable impacts on reducing aggression, promoting mental health and responding to other behavioural difficulties. We know that for sport programmes to be effective, coaches running the programmes need to form trusted relationships with children, the sessions need to be in safe and accessible locations and times and are best utilised when they link children into other positive activities. Our partnership with both the Inspire Group and Inpower is strong and now based on several years of development. We have established sport programmes to work with children on the periphery of the justice system, but we also have an offer for children currently involved in violence and offending. The creation of Turnaround FC, our YJS football team, has been a huge success with our children, and although the scores may not have gone in our favour, the team building and improvement in social skills and self-esteem has been invaluable.

The YJS the Inspire Group supported a group of children to attend the Woodlands Outdoor Activity Centre in Walsall over the Easter holidays. Our activities were a chance for children to venture out into a new environment and experience a range of activities that they may not have taken part in before. Our staff and the Inspire mentors were able to create a safe space for our children to overcome their fears and raise aspirations for their future. By engaging with children in the school holidays, we are successfully diverting them from getting into further trouble.



Street Games- Evaluation and Pilot

According to the Youth Endowment Fund evidence base toolkit, the estimated impact on reducing violence through the provision of sport programmes is high. *“The review also found desirable impacts on reducing aggression, promoting mental health and responding to other behavioural difficulties.”* The research suggests that the relationship between adults running the sessions, and the children involved is likely to be an important driver of impact. Ideally staff can become a mentor, role model, and trusted person who children will turn to for advice.

Since 2007, StreetGames has been working with community organisations across the UK to transform young people’s lives through sport. Their network now totals over 1600 community organisations from sport clubs and community groups to housing associations. These organisations are uniquely placed to support young people in their communities, by offering a safe place with trusted coaches and organisers who know their neighbourhood and those that live there. Walsall has become a pilot site for an exciting pilot and evaluation in partnership with Street Games and the YJS is at the heart of it. In partnership with the YEF, StreetGames is delivering, through three local trusted sport organisations, a multi-site trial on sports interventions that aim to reduce serious youth violence. The trial will be aiming to ascertain the impact of sports-based interventions on serious youth violence and offending.

Walsall YJS’ was chosen to be part of the pilot due to our strong history in working with sport organisations, and we are excited to contribute towards the growing body of evidence in support of sport and reducing violence and offending. YJS children involved in the scheme will receive 24 weeks of sport intervention and mentoring and the evaluation of impact will be available for publication in Summer 2026.



YJS Unmet Needs Panel

In a review of youth offending, Taylor (2016) highlighted the need for staff training in Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) due to the high level of need. The 'Bercow 10 Years On' review of the Bercow Report (2008) also identified the need for a national strategy to prioritise SLCN and emphasised the need for YJS staff training and the development of a clear referral pathway (ICAN / RCSLT, 2018). Sixty to ninety per cent of children in the YJS were found to have low language skills, which can impact upon their participation and engagement in YJS processes and hinder desistance (Anderson et al., 2016; Bryan et al., 2007).

81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have unidentified language difficulties (Bercow: Ten years on 2018). The evidence base is strong for the impact of early language skills, vocabulary and narrative development on long term literacy. Employment and behavioural outcomes. If left untreated 33% of children with SLCN will develop mental illness and over 50% will become involved in criminal activity (Breakthrough Britain – The Centre for Social Justice). 88% of unemployed men have underlying SLCN and 60% of young people in justice system have SLCN which are often going undiagnosed.

The YJS Unmet Needs Panel is a multi-agency panel with members from educational psychology, speech and language, CAMHS and Education, along with YJS. Practitioners in YJS refer a child for consultation using the 'request for support' form, highlighting the presenting concerns. All referrals are triaged with panel members and are prioritised using factors that affect urgency. Based on triage level, a multi-agency or individual consultation is scheduled. The panel sits every month and on average three children are discussed at each panel. This allows sufficient time for case consultations, allowing each agency the opportunity to share the concerns/knowledge of the child. Record of the consultation is recorded on a central database and shared with the case manager, along with actions. Review meetings will be scheduled based on the individuals needs/priority.

Working with girls

Fewer girls than boys offend. Their offending is often a response to emotional problems and relationship difficulties, with parents, partners, and friends. Because of their relatively low number the distinct needs of girls sometimes get overlooked in a juvenile criminal justice system primarily designed to deal with offending by boys.

(HMIP Girls in the Criminal Justice System 2014).

Although the number of girls open to us has plateaued in 2024, they still require a dedicated offer from the YJS to meet their needs. To respond, we have a girls' practitioner champion who has helped us improve access to our services and created a dedicated interventions group. It is a girls only safe space with intervention topics surrounding staying safe and out of trouble, relationships and health, self-esteem, and aspirations. Girls that attend receive advice and guidance from female practitioners and specialists within the team. They are also provided with care packages which include sanitary products, toiletries, and sportswear to enable them

to confidently attend and engage with our other interventions offers, such as reparation activities and our mixed martial arts groups. Our girls working with the Turnaround Programme wanted to develop their skills and qualifications in health and beauty and as such we used funding to support them in a qualification at Walsall College. Some of these girls have gone on to take further education courses in setting up their own businesses.

Arts and Creative Interventions:

The YJS currently has a virtual reality intervention offer for our children. We have commissioned Round Midnight knife crime virtual reality interventions for children involved in knife crime. The programme is based on research and collaboration with 1200 children and developed through Birmingham University. Children believed that exploring risk taking behaviour through this lens was powerful and impactful. These interventions are popular and have high engagement rates.

We have trained the workforce in 'Drawing and Talking' therapeutic intervention for children as a sustainable response to health inequalities related to youth violence. Drawing and Talking Therapy provides practitioners with a short-term pro-active intervention intended to complement, rather than replace, the work of specialist mental health services. It provides a creative outlet for children to develop better engagement with services and improve overall wellbeing specifically targeted at those children most vulnerable to youth violence.

Following on from our successful partnership with Loughborough and Aberystwyth University and support the Child First Research, the YJS is keen to continue this momentum by developing our understanding of the effectiveness of creative engagement methods and as such we are in early conversations with eminent academic researchers to explore an exciting new project at the end of 2025. Watch this space!

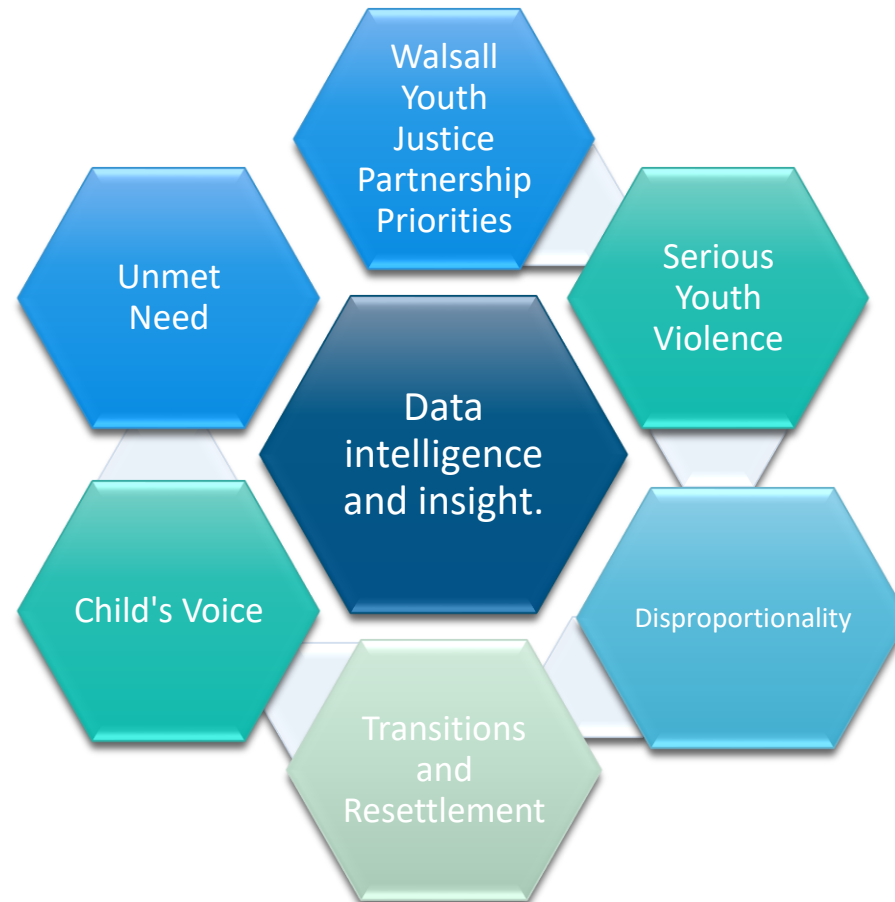


Evaluation:

Over the past 18 months Outcome 22 has been the most widely used outcome for children referred via police for Out of Court consideration. Therefore, the need for evaluation of the effectiveness of this outcome in relation to re-offending rates instigated an audit in August 2024. Our auditing found that of the 95 children considered over a 2-year period, only 8% had re-offended and came back through into the Youth Justice Service for a further disposal. This demonstrates significantly better re-offending rates for children than at any other stage of the justice system. The audit found that engagement rates for children subject to Outcome 22 were excellent, with very little difference between those children who were subject to a voluntary intervention or a deferred prosecution, and this is testimony to the skills of the YJS Crime Prevention Workers.

Strategic Priorities 2025-2028

Walsall youth justice partnership is a forward-facing learning organisation that has a Child First Vision at its heart. We have aligned our priorities with our strategic partners, and we have listened to our young people and practitioners that experience the justice system every day. We are in the final year our 3-year plan and recognise the hard work needed to make a long-lasting difference to children in the justice system. Our strategic priorities have been reviewed following our Board development day in 2024 and once again confirmed in a Board meeting in May 2025.



The 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 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.
- Develop our relationship with HMYOI Werrington to improve our resettlement offer for children and transition into the adult estate.

Strategic Lead: 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.
- Ensure the YJS is sufficiently resourced to manage risk to others.

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:

- Lead on the YJB regional ethnic disparity pathfinder.
- 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.

- ❖ 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.
- Ensure the voice of our children is clear within our assessments, plans and interventions.
- Employ a youth justice apprentice to find new ways to collaborate and consult with our children and ensure their feedback contribute to our data intelligence.

Strategic Lead: YJS Strategic Lead

The partnership is committed to better evidencing how we hear and are responsive to the voices of our children both strategically and operationally.

The above strategic priorities and objectives are expanded further in detailed delivery plans.

Please see appendix 8 for the detailed action plan.

Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System

The most recent national standards audit took place in 2023. In consultation with the Lord Chancellor, the YJB agreed that all youth justice services should complete a self-assessment against one selected Standard in 2023-2024. Selecting just one 'Standard' reduced the burden on services in a year when there are a number of substantial changes being implemented to drive improvements in outcomes for children. It also meant that attention could be given to the quality and accuracy of the self-assessment. The Standard selected was 'Standard 2: At Court'. Services were required to return their self-assessment in October 2023.

The YJS operational managers completed audits, based on the questions within this self-assessment template and the Standard 2: At Court document. A random sample of 20 children was chosen within the date range provided. Following completion of the audits, the YJS management team met to moderate the results and discuss examples of good practice and short- and medium-term changes to delivery that were needed. An action plan was put into place and all actions are now completed.

In support of this audit, Walsall Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board held a workshop in October 2023 with an independent facilitator. This supported strategic leaders from across the partnership to improve their working knowledge of court work in youth justice and to review the available evidence. Board members were joined by operational managers from the Youth Justice Service who provided knowledge and oversight and presented the findings of the audit. Board members were assured of the audit methodology and heard the practice that sits behind delivery within court and were satisfied that any gaps and improvements needed were being addressed. To reinforce the audit, Board members heard a presentation directly from the YJS's lead court officer which detailed 'a day in the life of a youth justice court officer' working in a busy and complex shared court across the Black Country.

The Board used that workshop to complete section A of the self-assessment and to review the operational audit findings.

Service Development

Walsall YJS's Child First vision is built upon the 4 tenets of Youth Justice Board's Child First approach as outlined in its Strategic Plan. Our service improvements contained within this strategic plan will have a basis on that approach. Our children and staff have been instrumental in giving us focus of what's most important to them and most effective in making a positive impact. We held workshops at our service development day in January 2025 to pull together key practice themes that needed developing and we listened to the views of our children. Service development is a continual process in Walsall and operational and strategic objectives are captured in a development plan (see appendix 8). This being said, we made significant advancements as a Service following the 2023 HMIP remand thematic inspection and in preparation for the 2025 HMIP out of court disposal thematic inspection that occurred here in Walsall.

Thematic Review:

In March 2025, His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) visited Walsall YJS to undertake a joint thematic inspection of out of court disposals. Twelve youth justice partnerships covering six regions were selected for the inspection and HMIP were joined by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Fire and Rescue Services (HMCFRS). The inspection explored how effective was the work in diverting children from the youth justice system, including the delivery of interventions that address needs, ensure their safety and that of the community, and reduce offending. Our preparation for the inspection was intense and through joint learning and a multi-agency audit, we were placed in a good position to receive the inspectors. Board members embraced the opportunity to highlight the good practice here in Walsall and observed practice including youth court, referral order panel, our joint decision-making partnership panel and our high-risk panel. HMIP noted that our Board was proactive and engaged in improving outcomes for children-

The inspectors found high level effective practice here in Walsall and the strengths far outweighed any areas for development. We are most proud of how well our practitioners performed throughout the inspection week. HMIP commented “the YJS staff we met have a good understanding of the children they work with. They recognise the complexities in the children’s lives and thy take these into account during their interactions. They are experienced in engaging children; their approach is reflected in the overall positive feedback we received from both children and parents.”

A joint thematic inspection out of court disposal: HMIP <i>March 2025.</i>	
YJS considerations:	Effective and Positive Practice
Insufficient effort was made to gather and consider the victims' perspectives in decision-making. When the victim was known to the child, case managers did not always address ongoing tensions or risks or take necessary actions to manage them.	Children often come to the attention of the police before receiving an intervention from the youth justice service, resulting in missed opportunities for early intervention. It is positive that this issue is being considered, and the PENY triage process is now in place to identify these children earlier, ensuring that interventions and support can be provided at the earliest opportunity.
Planning did not always address all identified needs and risks from the assessment + need to consider when needs will be supported for longer than 3 months.	Assessments are well-balanced, considering the child's background and needs, their safety and well-being, as well as concerns about the safety of others and reoffending. All aspects of the child's situation are captured and analysed.
	There were clear rationales and consistent decision making, whilst flexibly using the gravity score matrix
	The focus on addressing disproportionality in the service is notable and it is clear that this issue has been taken into account in the commissioning of services.
	Skilled and experienced staff. Reflective practitioners.

	The diverse needs of children were thoroughly considered in both casework and service delivery. There is a broad offer of activities. The children themselves also highlighted the continued positive activities available to them and the value of this.
	Exit plans are put in place in all cases.
YJS management board considerations	Effective and Positive Practice
The board should improve its focus on outcomes for children receiving out-of-court disposals by ensuring all partners provide consistent, regular information from their respective areas and address challenges related to service access and progress for this group.	There is a strong commitment within the partnership to intervene early and support children and families, and there is an understanding of the needs of children in the Youth Justice Service.
Information sharing from partners could be improved to help the board measure impact, including data on street community resolutions and post-18 offending, to enable effective monitoring of reoffending.	HMIP commented that it was good that the partnership had made significant efforts to understand the effectiveness of OOCd, but more work from the partnership was needed.
Limited evidence on the child social care system that safeguarding referrals were sent by the police when the children first came to notice	The Board is engaged in the agenda and proactive.

The findings from the HMIP thematic in out of court disposals will be included within our development action plan.

In February 2025, the YJS Disproportionality Practice Improvement Sub-Group completed a self-assessment against the User Voice report ‘Experiences of Black and Mixed Heritage Boys in Youth Justice Services- June 2021’. This report was a supporting report for the HMIP thematic inspection report published in October 2021. The User Voice Report offered a range of solutions to their findings of which the YJS team assessed our current practice and reviewed our current disproportionality delivery plan.

The YJS partnership received an HMIP thematic inspection in June 2023 which focussed on remanded children. We had an increase in the numbers of remanded children between during 2022/2023 and we used this opportunity to pull the partnership together to better understand the journeys behind these children, learn from audit and ultimately improve practice. The violence and the disproportionality underpinning remands is a priority for our partnership. In preparation for this inspection, we delivered a learning and reflection event following a multi-agency audit of all the children who were in scope for inspection. In addition to the YJS, partners from Social Care, Police, and Education audited assessment practice, planning, multi-agency working and family engagement. A wider lens was given to consider the historical context for these children to identify any potential missed opportunities.

We are pleased that the inspectors found effective practice here in Walsall and, as per the out of court disposal thematic, the strengths far outweighed any areas for consideration. Inspectors found that the YJS practitioners were knowledgeable and manage these children well. The inspection recognised the national issues

impacting upon these children, such as placement sufficiency and a small and challenged secure estate. However, despite these challenges outside of the YJS' control, the Service supports remanded children well and works closely with partners in Social Care, the Police and YOI staff.

A joint thematic inspection youth remand: A review by HMI Probation June 2023.	
YJS management board considerations:	Effective and Positive Practice
Robust and consistent decision making is needed to consider remand into care of the local authority	Practitioners and managers are knowledgeable and manage these children well.
Review of practice of completion of Bail A+, to support Bail packages and negotiation with YCS.	Strong evidence of effective care planning for children on remand, including good information sharing between the partnership including the secure estate.
Review of risk of harm classifications for children in custody- improved consideration of evidence not related to the offence.	Evidence of good multi-agency plans of support for some children on ISS bail and evidence that they were being safely managed in the community.
Develop partnership training- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lived experience of boys in custody • practitioner confidence in court • trauma training- UASC. 	Children and young people's need over the course of the remand period were assessed and responded to in a proportionate manner by joint working between Youth Justice and Social Care.
The YJS Partnership needs to ensure 'Child First' thinking within agencies such as Police, Solicitors Firms and Youth Custody Service.	Evidence of positive relationships with children from both youth justice and social care and there was evidence of 'child first' and respectful practice.
The partnership needs to strengthen speech and language support for these children.	Evidence of support for the wider families within the community from both YJS and Children Social Care.
Strengthening our transition planning, through the development of a transition toolkit and T2A Hub with the Probation Service.	Work to address disproportionality within the Service was meaningful.
In some instances, poor info sharing between Police, YJS and HMYOI to approve contacts	Appropriate Adult provision was robust.

To support the partnership's improvement journey, during 2021/2022 the YJS Partnership have discussed learning from HMIP thematic reports exploring '*education, training & employment services in youth offending teams- June 2022*', '*the work of youth offending services during the COVID-19 pandemic- November 2020*' & '*experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system- October 2021*'. The summary of these reviews is in Appendix 4.

National Priority Areas

Children from overrepresented groups

Our latest scorecard data tells us that 56% of custodial sentences over the past 12 months have been given to white boys from Walsall. When considering white children (10-17) make up 72% of that population, this means that children from Asian, Black or mixed ethnicity backgrounds are overrepresented in the secure estate. In general, Asian children remain underrepresented in the youth justice system, however we have seen an increase in the number of Asian children that have participated in our prevention programmes through Turnaround. We know that most recorded violent offences are committed by white children, however a disproportionate amount of violence is committed by children with black and mixed ethnicity. Our data also tells us that black children are more likely to enter the system on average at a younger age of 14 or below.

Reducing disproportionality has been a priority for the YJS during 2024-25 and will continue to be a priority over the next 2-year period.

What we have done during 2024/25 to reduce disproportionality and improve outcomes for children from over and under-represented groups:

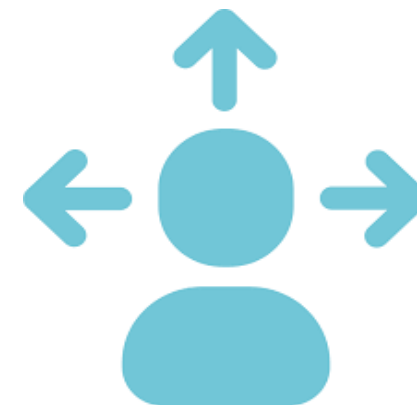
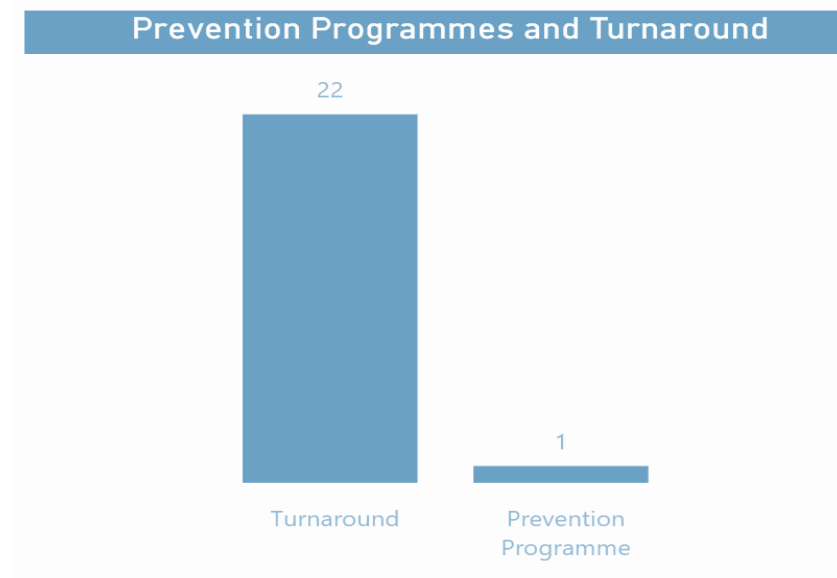
- In March 2025 HMIP were clear that our partnerships work to address disproportionality was notable and services had been commissioned as a result.
- In 2024 Walsall YJS led a regional bid to work on a West Midlands wide Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder. We have commissioned a delivery partner and an evaluation partner to support us on this journey.
- Reviewed the partnership full Ethnicity Analysis for 2022-2024.
- Our YJS Equality and Disproportionality Forum provides oversight of an action plan and enables practitioners a safe space to discuss issues.
- The Disproportionality Practice Improvement Sub-Group meets regularly to consider practice developments needed as identified by the overarching Disproportionality Forum.
- Established a dedicated training and employment pathway for boys with black and mixed ethnicity through a local organisation called Open Lens Media.
- The YJS have committed to extend funding to commission a mentor to support black children and mixed heritage who are at risk of entering custody.
- We have a practitioner Disproportionality Champion to help lead on issues and Established a Girls Intervention and ETE Group

Policing

Our local policing partnership is strong. Our superintendent is the deputy chair of the Board and the strategic lead across both the youth justice and the community safety partnership in reducing serious youth violence. Operationally, we have a deployed youth crime officer in the YJS who works with the team to manage out of court disposals. Similarly, our alignment with Police Offender Manager team means that we are able to work closely to put in place robust and supportive risk management plans for children. Our local police have taken part with us in joint training with the Youth Justice Legal Centre to help us embed Child First principles and the effectiveness of diverting children from the formal criminal justice system. Positively, HMIP noted in March 2025 that our joint partnership decision making for out of court disposals was good and they agreed with our rationale and use of the gravity score matrix.

Our YJS Performance and Partnership Board identified an increase in first time entrants in 2023 and as such commissioned a joint audit with the police to examine the effectiveness of our diversion interventions compared to our formal Youth Conditional Caution interventions. As a result, and in combination with the training completed as detailed above, has meant we were able to strengthen our joint decision-making partnership panel and provide more robust diversion interventions. As a result, our first-time entrants' rates have safely reduced. Our work to understand the effectiveness of the use of deferred prosecutions was noted by HMIP.

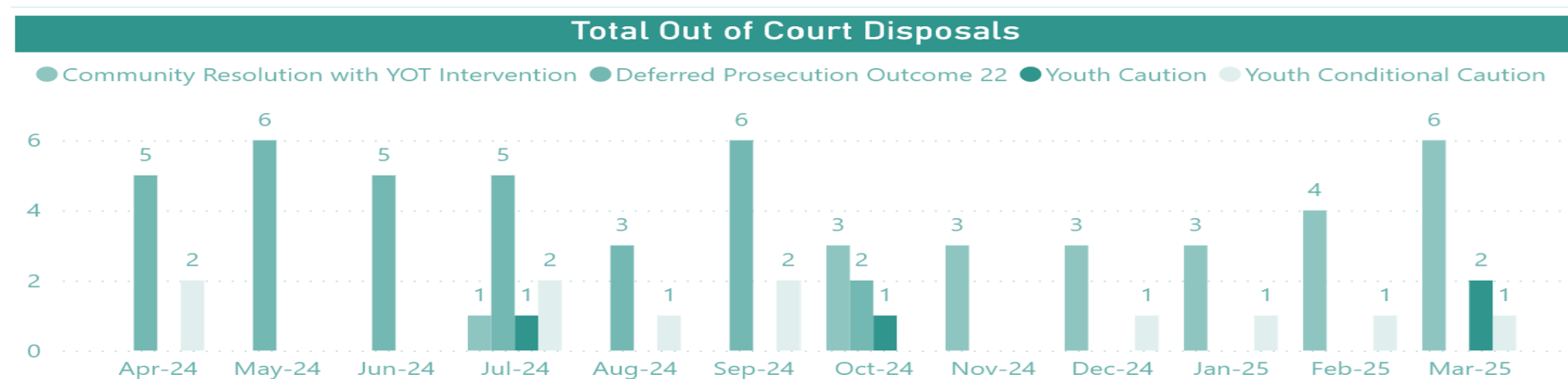
Prevention, Diversion and Out of Court Disposals



The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Turnaround Programme went live in December 2022 with the initial multi-year funding ending in March 2025. Encouragingly, the MOJ have committed funding, albeit greatly reduced, for 2025/26. The overall aims of the Turnaround programme are to:

- Achieve positive outcomes for children with the aim of preventing them from offending.
- Ensure children are consistently offered a needs assessment and opportunity for support.
- Improve the socio-emotional, mental health and wellbeing of children.

In Walsall we have used Turnaround funding to second an Early Help worker who is the lead professional for these children, who will assess, plan and co-ordinate interventions. We have again used funding to commission a local sports organisation to deliver positive activities and 121 mentoring sessions. Learning from Youth Endowment Fund research, we know that sport and mentoring are evidence based to reduce levels of violence within communities. In 2024, we were asked by the Ministry of Justice to present our offer during the national celebration event as a model of good practice



The impact of the WMP knife crime policy and the changes in Police disposals being issued is quite stark when considering the chart above. The use of Outcome 22 deferred prosecutions are no longer permitted by West Midlands Police. Positively, the most common type of disposal being used by our local Police partnership is community resolution, therefore we are not currently seeing an impact upon first time entrants as a direct result of WMP knife crime policy.

The Centre for Justice Innovation argue that for most children involved in crime, formal criminal justice processing makes them more likely to commit crime again. There is a strong evidence base that shows that youth diversion is a better way of addressing low level criminal behaviour, can reduce crime, cut costs, and create better outcomes.

What we have done to improve prevention and diversion interventions and out of court disposals during 2024/25:

- Delivered an excellent Ministry of Justice Turnaround offer for children on the periphery of the justice system seconding an Early Help lead and a sport mentoring service.
- Established a well-resourced Youth Justice Partnership Panel to provide oversight of diversion referrals and joint out of court disposal decisions.
- Implemented with the Police an innovative early diversion screening of children that have been arrested to ensure we can respond quickly at times of crisis.
- Early Help remain a valued partner to the panel and we have improved attendance of Social Workers
- The YJS have increased its practitioner capacity to work with children through the diversion pathway or who receive out of court disposals.
- Children are assessed using the YJB's prevention and diversion assessment tool after volunteering to pilot the tool and have implemented 'writing to the child' practice.
- YJS practitioners deliver a range of creative and bespoke interventions for our children and have access to a strong youth offer.

Core principles of youth diversion *(The Centre for Justice Innovation Toolkit)*

Minimise labelling: Youth diversion schemes should take all reasonable steps to avoid stigmatising the young people they work with, and to prevent them from forming deviant or delinquent identities that may interfere with their development.

Avoid net-widening: Ensure that the scheme operates as an alternative to the formal justice system, rather than as a supplement to it. Diversion should only be for young people who would otherwise be dealt with formally in the criminal justice system.

- Do not overdose young people: Programming offered through diversion should be therapeutic and targeted. For most diverted young people, this will generally be light touch and informal

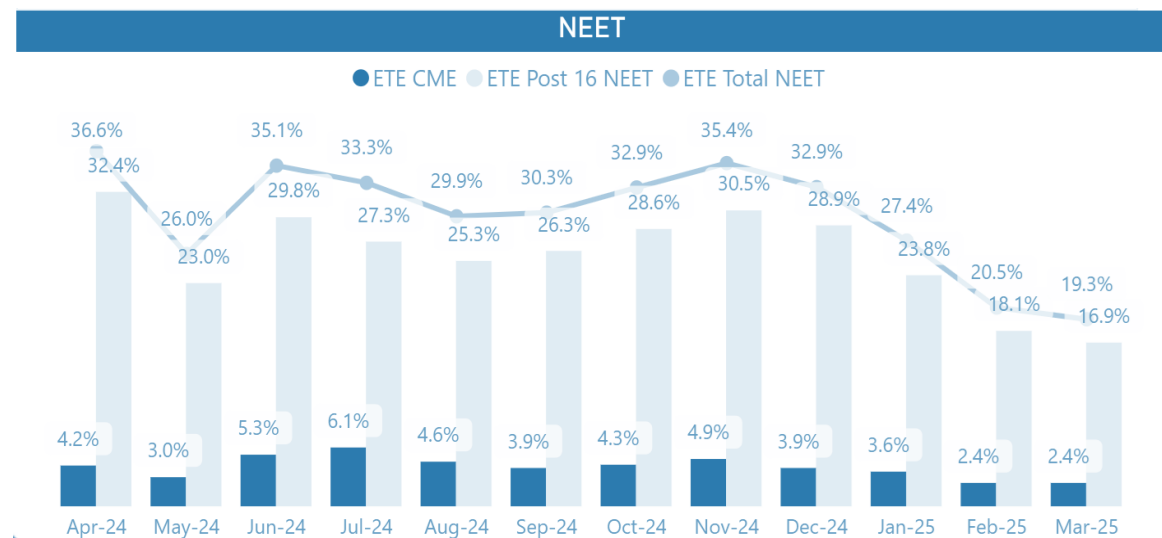
All children eligible for out of court police disposals are discussed at the Youth Justice Partnership Panel. A joint decision is made regarding eligibility and then allocated to a youth justice worker to undertake an assessment and make a proposal for suitability based on risk, need, offence seriousness and the wishes of victims.

The police gravity score matrix is consistently used in our decision making and HMIP commented that our rationale for decisions was clear. The partnership is developing our ability to track the offending behaviour of this group of children to demonstrate effectiveness.

Education

What we have done to improve education, training, and employment outcomes during 2024/25:

- The YJS' strong partnership with the Virtual School and Inclusion Hub supports our children under 16.
- We have a youth justice personal education plan for children where issues have been identified around attendance, exclusion, and SEN.
- The Virtual School complete Personal Education Plans (PEP) for all remanded children.
- We have recruited a Senior Education Psychologist who leads on our 'unmet need' and communication model.
- We also now have a Speech and Language Therapist embedded in the team who screens and assesses communication issues and provides support for practitioners and schools.
- We have a 16+ training pathway via Open Lens Media for our black boys and have utilised funding to establish group work and programmes.
- We have a pathway with the Local Authority's employment and skills team who receive referrals for our 16+ children who are NEET.
- We are supported by Walsall Works, an initiative supported by local businesses to help young people find employment.



Over the past three months we have seen a reduction in the total number of children open to the Service who are not in suitable education, training and employment. The reduction has occurred due to a change in the demographics of the cohort with a number of children becoming adults whilst open to us and transferring into adult services. There is more work to do to ensure that we have an appropriate support offer in place for this group of children. However, all NEET children have YJS education plans in place to explore how YJS workers can support the CME process.

Education performance management and education plans:

Although it is clear that the majority of school age children open to the YJS do not achieve over 90% attendance, we are confident that the cohort of children has good oversight. We know we need to do more. The partnership working between the YJS, and the Inclusion Hub is strong and our Education Support Meeting initiative where dedicated education plans are created and progress is reviewed, provide a positive forum to achieve outcome for these children. The addition of an Education Psychologist to our team has massively strengthened the planning and support provided to these complex children

We do recognise that children often enter the youth justice system with special educational needs (currently 49%) and that children completing their intervention with us will often have reduced timetables, receive their education in short stay 'pupil referral units and have experienced exclusion. 61% of our children have on average experienced at least 1 type of exclusion from school. We continue to be faced with challenges when supporting Children in Walsall over the age of 16. Often the 'pull' of working for 'cash in hand' is greater than attending a training provision with longer term benefits, combined with difficulties created by a difficult education history, experience of exclusion and few qualifications.

Restorative approaches and Victims

Our victim and restorative justice offer is now well established and we have a good offer for victims per the requirements of the Victim's Code of Practice. Over the past 12 months, the YJS has learnt to respond more quickly at times of absence to ensure that services continue and has built in resilience. We know that we have further work to do as a service to ensure that victim's voices influence decision-making, but also victim safety planning is improved within our assessments and interventions. As a result, the YJS commissioned an organisation to help improve our focus on victim safety and we completed two days of training for all managers and practitioners. To further embed the learning we have reviewed our quality assurance framework and gate-keeping tools and will complete an audit in the Autumn 2025 to demonstrate impact and improvement.

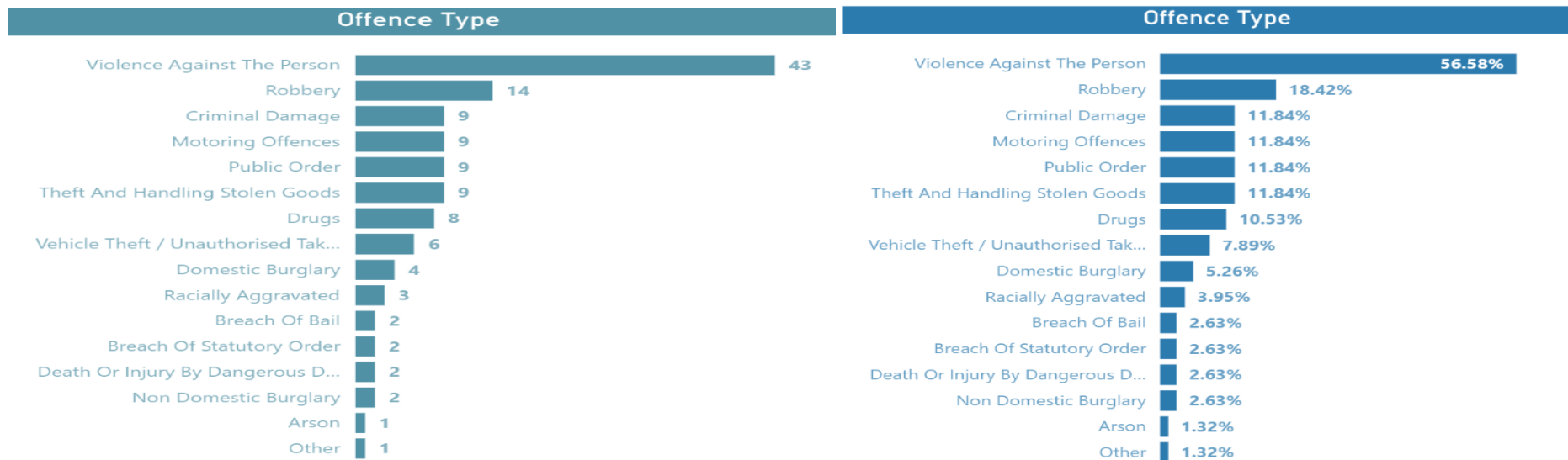
Walsall's Community Safety Partnership Strategic Needs Assessment review, published in April 2025, details the below information from Police systems regarding the victims of knife crime and assault.

- By age group and gender, the most common victim profile during this strategic period was 15- to 19-year-old Males. This was also the most common victim profile during the previous strategic period.
- By age group and gender, the most common victim profile during this strategic period was 30- to 34-year-old Females. Similarly, the most common victim profile during the previous strategic period was 35- to 39-year-old Females.

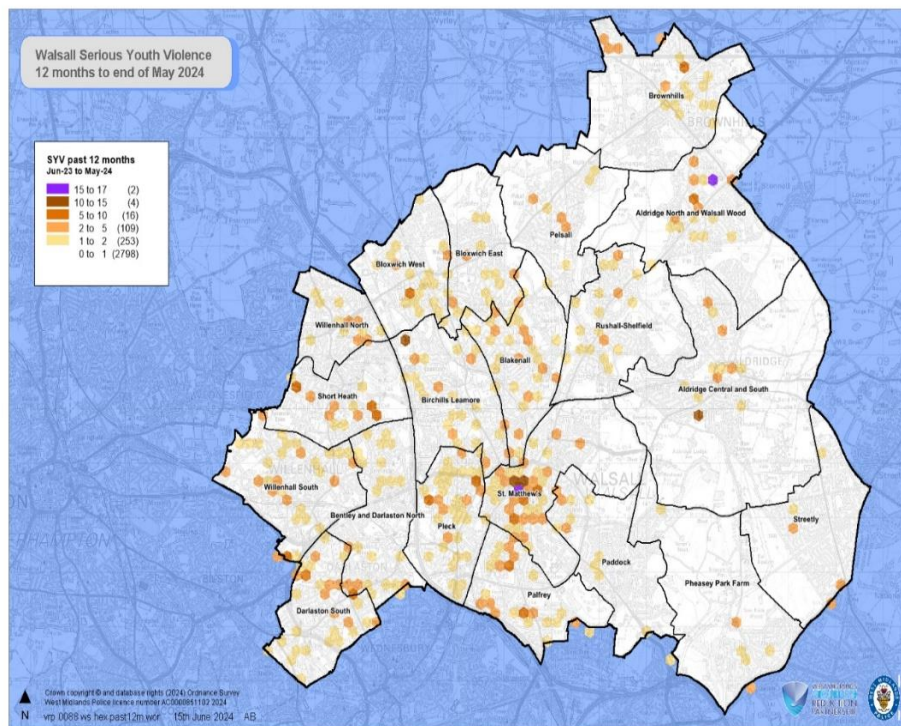
Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

Preventing and reducing youth violence is a strategic priority for the partnership. Violence is the most common offence type we see, and we are seeing a larger number of children entering the formal youth justice system for the first time by receiving custodial sentences. Work to address the strategic priority to prevent and reduce youth violence is detailed earlier within this plan and our close alignment to the Safer Walsall Partnership.

From April 2024 to March 2025, Walsall has experienced a noteworthy 9.76% decrease in serious youth violence (SYV) among individuals under 25 years of age. This reduction is part of an encouraging trend of year-on-year decreases, evidencing the positive impact of the wider multifaceted prevention strategies. Despite the overall positive trend, a concerning development has emerged regarding knife-related offences. There has been a specific increase, with nine additional offences recorded during this 12-month period. According to West Midlands Police data, by age and gender, the two most common profiles during this strategic period of those who commit knife crime were 15-year-old Males and 16-year-old Males. Robbery of Personal Property, involving a knife, offences decreased by 15.7%, while overall Robbery of Personal Property offences remained similar. There was an increase in Attempted Murder offences which was driven by one gang-related incident within Pleck (accounting for 5 offences) – the offences relating to this incident were both gun and knife offences. Violent offending is monitored monthly through the YJS performance scorecard. If we consider the period between April 2024 and March 2025, we can see that violence against the person makes up a significant percentage (57%) of all offences linked to children in the Youth Justice Service.



Further data can be found in Walsall’s Serious Youth Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and our Youth Justice Service Needs Analysis. Our relationship with the Police analysts is improving and the Youth Justice Partnership now is in receipt of detailed data relating to victims and suspects, aged 0-25, who are involved in serious youth violence. This information is regularly shared with the Safer Walsall Partnership through the local Police Superintendent who leads on addressing violence for the partnership. The below data is taken from Police data and relates to individuals that are classified as a suspect involved in serious violence.



Walsall Serious Youth Violence, Age Band and Gender of Suspect 1 st May 2023- 31 st May 2024				
Age Band	Female	Male	Unknown	All Genders
5-9	2	2	0	4
10-14	58	84	19	161
15-19	33	83	4	120
20-24	11	32	0	43
25-29	5	18	0	23
30-34	17	25	1	43
35-39	13	11	1	25
40-44	7	10	1	18
45-49	3	10	1	14
50-54	2	4	0	6
55-59	5	4	0	6
60-64	1	2	0	3
65+	1	3	0	4
Not known	4	4	0	9
All Age Bands	162	292	27	481

We know from Police data that most suspects in relations to serious youth violence are boys aged 19 and under. The richness of Police information received also helps the partnership understand which areas of Walsall experience the highest levels of serious violence incidents, during which days and times. This information is allowing us to prepare additional mentoring and youth outreach work for the summer holidays and beyond. The below diagram tells us that most violent incidents occur in the west of Walsall and the St Matthews area.

Exploitation:

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework that assesses potential victims of modern slavery. Victims may not be aware that they are being exploited or trafficked and may have agreed to elements of their exploitation, or accepted their situation (NRM, Gov.uk, 2022). Between January 2019 and December 2022 there were 209 persons referred to the NRM for exploitation in Walsall, of which there were 77 victims referred between September 2021 to September 2022. The local authority is the biggest referrer (56% of all referrals), followed by West Midlands Polices (32%). Two thirds of people referred for exploitation were male (69%). Children aged 14 to 17 years are at the greatest risk of being exploited.

Walsall Serious Violence Duty Strategic Needs Assessment – Dr Helen Lowey 2023

There were 110 NRM referrals during 2024-25 for both sexual and criminal exploitation, in comparison to 92 during the previous period – an increase of 19.6% (18 referrals). While the most common nationality of potential victims was British, there were also potential victims of 17 different non-British nationalities. Similarly, there were potential victims of 16 different non-British nationalities during the previous 12 months.

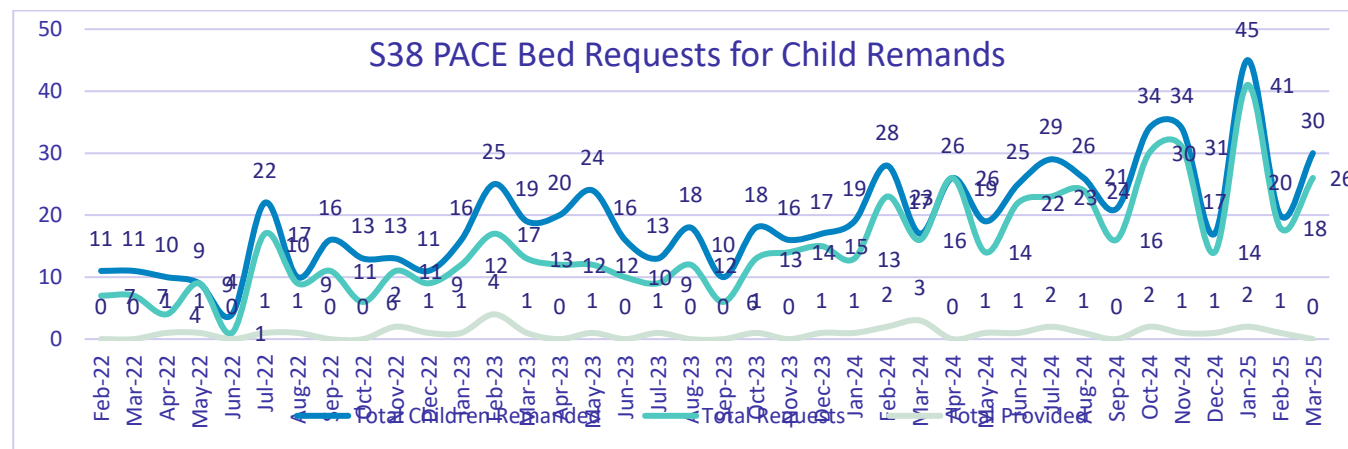
During 2024-25, 72.7% of NRM referrals concerned potential victims under the age of 18 years old, and 27.3% concerned potential victims aged 18 years old or over. During the previous strategic period, 68.1% of NRM referrals concerned potential victims under the age of 18 years old, and 31.9% concerned potential victims aged 18 years old or over. There were 45 Criminal Exploitation NRM referrals during this period, in comparison to 36 during the previous 12 months – an increase of 25.0% (nine referrals). By age and gender, the two most common potential victim profiles were 15-year-old Males and 16-year-old boys.

The 'All-Age Exploitation Strategic Needs Assessment' produced on behalf of the Safer Walsall Partnership states that during the period of 1 October 2022 to 31 January 2024, there were 542 individuals referred into Walsall's Exploitation Hub. The three most common ages of individuals referred to the Exploitation Hub were 15 years old (20%), 16 years old (16%), and 14 years old (16%). In terms of exploitation type, 53% of individuals were referred for Criminal Exploitation and 30% were referred for Sexual Exploitation. 8% of individuals were found to have not been at risk of exploitation once the assessments had been completed.

Walsall YJS along with Police and Social Care have joined together to form Walsall's exploitation hub. The Hub meets daily to triage assessments and review incidents. Professionals within the hub also oversee missing children. From daily triage, professionals coordinate disruption meetings for the perpetrators of exploitation and safety plans for victims. This activity is supported by our co-location in office space. In 2024, the YJS managers completed audits focussing on children identified as at risk of exploitation. Of the 25, 4 girls were assessed as being at risk of sexual exploitation and 21 boys assessed as being at risk of criminal exploitation. 12 of the children had been referred to the NRM and 22 of the children had been referred into the exploitation hub for information sharing.

Children vulnerable to exploitation are also vulnerable to radicalisation and involvement with violent extremism. We are currently supporting one child open to the YJS who has been referred into prevent and Channel Panel. As such, it is important that YJS staff are appropriately trained therefore are required to complete Prevent Training as part of their inductions. In May 2025, YJS managers and practitioners attended a Synergy Training event at Bescot Stadium delivered by West Midlands Counter Terrorism Police and will be supported by our YJS Prevent practitioner champion.

Detention in Police Custody

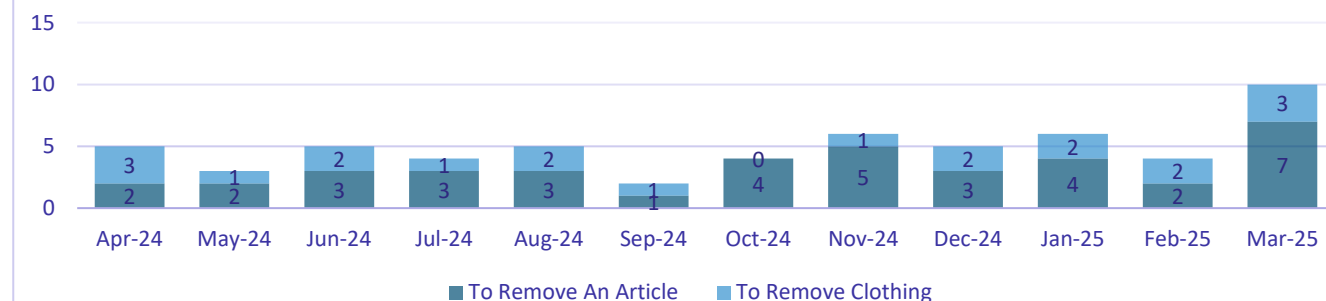


Between January and December 2024, there were 15 times, relating to 15 children, where a child was kept overnight in police custody. During this period, no children were transferred to accommodation under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). There is evidence of good dialogue between the Police and the Local Authority (LA), however there is a mixture of outcomes. Regularly, a secure PACE bed is requested at a time where it would be inappropriate to transfer a child to a distant location for them to re-appear at Court the next day. Within normal working hours, YJS staff undertake the Appropriate Adult (AA) role if family are not available. Outside of this, the YJS has dedicated staff who undertake the AA role through the Emergency Duty Team.

SUMMARY

- Total number of Children remanded between Jan-25 and Mar-25 was 95. Out of these, PACE Beds were applicable to 75 (79%). Others were kept in custody for court for other reasons (breaches of court bail, warrants etc.).
- The total number of beds provided in the same period was 3. This equates to 4% of all requests made to Local Authorities.

TOTAL CHILDREN STRIP SEARCHES





SUMMARY

- 20 Strip Searches conducted in Q4 on children in custody.
- Out of the 13 searches conducted to find a specific article (rather than change/remove clothing only) - an Appropriate Adult was present on all but one occasion. The one occasion where this was not the case, there was a full rationale on the Custody Record and the detainee had been arrested for possession of ammunition/firearms and drugs. The search was conducted ASAP without an AA for urgent safety reasons.

Working with Families

The YJS has trained practitioners in 'Respect' training for supporting families where there is child to parent abuse, and we have also had training in reducing parental conflict. The parents of our children are integral to the process and are included in My Plans and planning meetings. Through our consultation with families, we understand that fathers are not involved enough in the work that we do with children in the justice system. Research has highlighted that men are too frequently overlooked and are poorly engaged by universal and specialist services. This then appears to set a pattern that is evident through targeted and specialist services, including care proceedings and certainly the youth justice system. Based on this understanding, Walsall has developed a Father's Strategy. In support, the YJS has identified a practitioner fathers champion who links into the father's offer through the Family Hubs.

Sign off, Submission and Approval

Chair of YJS Board	Collen Male- Executive Director of Childrens Services	Phil Rutherford- YJS Strategic Lead
Signature		
Date	20/6/25	20/6/25

Appendices

Appendix 1

Current YJS Performance and Partnership Board membership:

- West Midlands Police – Superintendent
- National Probation Service – NPS lead for the Black Country
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services- Head of Commissioning
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services- Clinical Lead
- Black Country Magistrates Youth Panel Chair
- ICB- Managing Director Walsall Place
- Head of Safeguarding – HMYOI Werrington
- Head of Resettlement – HMYOI Werrington
- Local Authority –
 - Executive Director of Children’s Services (Chair)
 - Director of Children’s Services - Partnerships
 - Social Care Head of Service- Corporate Parenting
 - Public Health – Director of Public Health
 - Head of Resilient Communities
 - Community Safety Manager
 - Education- Director of Access and Achievement
 - Education- Virtual School Lead
 - 16+ Education- Employment and Skills Manager

Supporting Officers-

- Youth Justice Service Strategic Lead, Walsall Children’s Services
- Youth Justice Service Team Managers
- Youth Justice Board- Regional Advisor
- Local Authority Accountant – finance.
- Local Authority Performance Officer
- Administrative Support, Youth Justice Service

Appendix 2

Previous Performance & Partnership Board Meeting Attendees							
Name	Job Title	16/10/2023	01/02/2024	16/05/2024	19/09/2024	16/12/2024	03/03/2025
Colleen Male (Chair)	Director of Children's Services	x	x	x	x	x	x
Frances Bate	Team Manager, Walsall Youth Justice Service	x	x	x	x	x	
Phil Rutherford	Strategic Lead, Youth Justice Service (YJS)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rachael Phillips	Head of Early Help, Family Support & Youth Justice Service	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mamps Gill	YJB, Head of Region for Midlands			x			
Lorraine Thompson	Virtual Schools for Looked After Children	x	x	x	x		x
Lee Allen	Senior Performance Officer, Children & Social Care			x	x		
Jennifer Pearson	Detective Chief Inspector from Walsall	x		x			
Lee Westlake	Special Advisor to the P&P Board Meeting		x	x			
David Elrington	Regulatory Services Manager			x			
Leanne Barnet	Deputy Head of Walsall & Wolverhampton Probation Service			x			
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Service, QA and Performance Improvement			x			
Margaret Courts	Head of CAMHS Commissioning for the Black Country And West Birmingham CCG			x	x		x
Isabel Vanderheeren	Director of Early Help Partnership Children's Services	x	x	x	x	x	x
Jane Kaur-Gill	Employment & Skills Manager, Regeneration	x	x	x	x		x
Zoe Morgan	Head of Service for Health, Protection & Support		x	x			
Mark Patrick	Team Manager, Walsall Youth Justice Service			x			
Khalique Shah	Business Support Officer	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tanya Collier	Lead Accountant, Childrens Services			x			
Sharon Kelly	Director of Access & Inclusion, Children's Services			x			x
Shona Chand	Victim Liaison Officer, Walsall Youth Justice Service			x		x	
Natalie Lau	Head of Walsall & Wolverhampton Probation	x	x	x	x	x	x
Emma Thomas	Deputy Head of Service & Partnership Lead for Business Insights		x	x			x
Nadia Inglis	Director of Public Health			x	x	x	
Emma Fletcher-Lee	Seconded Service Manager & Clinical Lead, Walsall CAMHS			x	x	x	
Steve Gittins	Community Safety Manager, Walsall Council	x	x	x	x	x	x
Esther Higdon	Public Health for Children & Young People			x			
Rob Thomas	Head of Access & Education			x	x		x
Maria Kilcoyne	Associate Director for Safeguarding & Partnerships			x			
Jonathan Parkes	Head of Safeguarding at HMYOI Werrington	x	x	x			
David McNally	Youth Justice Board	x	x	x		x	
Pervez Mohammed	West Midlands Police		x	x	x	x	
Helen Lowey	Interim Worker - Walsall Council	x	x	x			
Jayne Jerrison	Head of Offender Management Delivery at Brinsford	x	x	x			
Paulette Myers	Consultant in Public Health		x	x			
Sophie Read-Willetts	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children - Walsall NHS		x	x		x	
Gail Beeley	Walsall YJS Crime Prevention Worker		x	x			
Stephen Tinsley	HMYOI Werrington Head of Resettlement		x	x		x	
Dipak Choudhry	Senior Educational Psychologist		x	x			
Jessica Westwood	Youth Justice Officer				x		
Louise Wright	Head of Service - Support & Protection				x		x
Lara Dauncey	Assistant Team Manager - Walsall YJS						x
David Wilson	Head of Service: Performance and Improvement, Childrens Services					x	x
Anna Wright	Head of Service – Children's Social Work						x
Louise Rayfield	Educational Psychologist, Walsall YJS					x	
Zebra Chowdhury	Criminal Justice & Exploitation Delivery Manager					x	
Pali Obhi	Regional YJB Pathfinder Project Lead					x	

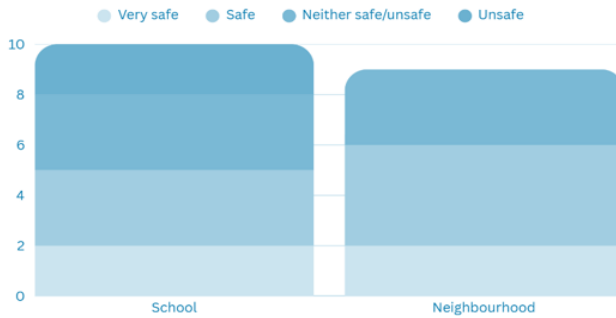
Appendix 3

Safer Lives Survey Findings 2025

Exploring youth experiences with violence, safety perceptions and community resilience

These findings are taken from the Safer Lives Survey 2025, a small group of 10 children were consulted between the ages of 14-16 in the Walsall area.

How safe do children feel at school and in their local neighbourhood?



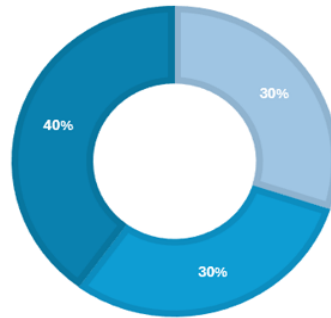
50%

of children carry knives to feel safer

Being a female, I think the risks I face are different to a boy when I go into Walsall town centre. When I was in town a car stopped full of boys and started saying stuff to me. Sometimes men/boys will say nasty things to girls. It doesn't make me feel safe when I am out in Walsall.

POLICE MAKE LIVES SAFER?

Agree Neither agree/disagree Disagree

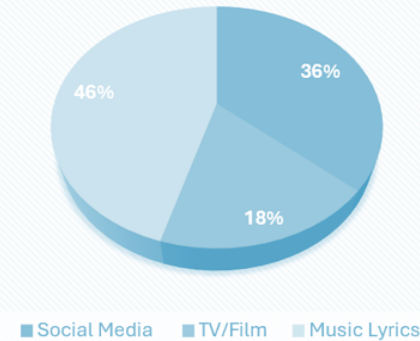


50%

of children knew at least one person who had been a victim of violence

Parents should keep a closer on their young children's phones etc in case of grooming and stuff

Where are children exposed to violent content on a daily basis



If there was one thing you could change that you think would make young people safer, what would it be?

There needs to be tighter security around knife crime, the police could stop and chat to young people more rather than just stop and search. They need to know their community and get to know people in it.

Walsall Youth Justice Service- Structure Chart April 2025

Children's Services:
Business Support x 2 Data
Analyst x 0.2

YJS Strategic Lead
Phil Rutherford
SCJS807214

Team Manager YJS G11
SCJS 702048 Owen Langton

Team Manager YJS G11
SCJS 702049 Fran Bate

Assistant Team Manager G9 QA
SCJS 702065 Kelly Rutherford

Assistant Team Manager G9
SCJS702066 Lara Dauncey

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 702072
Michelle Holden

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 702077
Samantha Booth

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 702063
Vacant

Agency YJO: Gary Whittingham

Programme and Intervention Worker G7
Garfield Meredith
SCJS 702082

Victim and Restorative Justice Officer
SCJS702067
Shona Chand

Youth Justice Apprentice
APPR028600
Cyanne Hales

YJ Apprentice Level 5
Mikhalia Thomas

Crime Prevention Worker G7
SCJS 111300
Gail Beeley

Crime Prevention Worker G7
SCJS 111500
Marie Jackson

Crime Prevention Worker G7
SCJS 702092
Bhupinder Sandhu

Crime Prevention Worker G7
SCJS111400
Rio Waldoock

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 805020
Jodie Lowndes

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 707132
Jessica Westwood

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 702073
David Lambert

Youth Justice Officer G8
SCJS 702062
Sarah Boddice

Turnaround Co-ordinator G8
Rachael Aubrook
(seconded Early Help)

0.6 x deployed Probation Officer
Heather Cooper

0.25 x Probation Service Officer in MASH
Vacant

St Giles Mentor – 0.5
Jordan Lowe

Disproportionality Mentor- 0.3
Ricky Otto

1 x Named specialist Education Lead
Kristian Green (Inclusion Hub)

1 x 0.4 Ed Psych
Louise Rayfield

1 x 0.5 Speech and Language Therapist
Beatrice Klee

1 x Youth Crime Officer
PC Nick Gilbert

2 x Named specialist Youth
Offender Manager
PC Lee Fellows
PC Daryl Adams

1 x Named specialist Subs Worker
Georgie Fear

1 x 0.5 FTE Deployed CAMHS
Psychologist
Pria Sandhu

1 x 0.6 deployed school nurse
Vacant

1 x Named specialist SHB
Senior Practitioner
Kelly Adcock

Position (no reported disabilities)	Sex	Ethnicity
Strategic Lead	Male	White
Team Managers	1 x male and 1 x female	2 x White
Assistant Team Manager	2 x female	2 x White
G8 Youth Justice Officers	7 x female 2 x male	5 x white, 2 x black, 1 x Asian, 1 x mixed (1 x vacancy)
Crime Prevention Workers G7	4 x female	3 x white, 1 x Asian
Programme Worker	Male	Black
Apprentice	2 x Female	2 x Black

Appendix 5

Breakdown of expenditure to accompany certificate, 2024-25

Breakdown of expenditure to accompany certificate, 2024-25

Walsall

INCOME	Youth Justice Board ¹	Local Authority	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Welsh Government	Other ²	Total
Cash	£690,904	£575,031	£21,888	£76,885	£5,000				£1,369,708
In-kind									£0
Total income	£690,904	£575,031	£21,888	£76,885	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	£1,369,708

1. This includes *all* grants received from YJB.

2. This includes all funding received from any source other than the statutory partners listed; e.g. Turnaround grant. Details should be recorded in the Notes below.

EXPENDITURE ⁴	Youth Justice Board ³	All Other Funders	Total
Salaries	£509,788	£646,513	£1,156,301
All other costs	£180,818	£32,291	£213,109
Total expenditure	£690,606	£678,804	£1,369,410

3. Figures provided in sheet (1a), *plus* sheet (1b) if applicable.

4. Income in-kind should be included in expenditure.

Appendix 6

A joint inspection of education, training & employment services in youth offending teams in England & Wales, A review by HM Inspectorate of Probation June 2022.	
YJS management boards should:	What we did:
<p>Ensure that all children have a comprehensive ETE assessment.</p>	<p>All children that enter the YJS have an assessment of their ETE. Where issues are highlighted, a comprehensive assessment is completed by the Virtual School & Inclusion Hub, including those on remand in custody (PEPs). This ensures that where needs are identified these are promptly shared with establishments to make sure the child is receiving the correct level of support.</p>
<p>Monitor, alongside the local authority, key aspects of ETE work for children working with the YJS, including school exclusion, level of attendance, extent of additional support provided to children with SEN/ ALN, ECHP reviews.</p>	<p>YJS and VLH meet on a monthly basis to discuss primarily those children that are of concern, regarding low attendance, exclusions, SEN/EHCP including children that are remanded into custody. VLH pro-actively attend professionals' meetings, risk discussions & remand meetings to ensure children are offered appropriate support. They also work closely with Youth Justice staff to offer support & guidance when managing complex situations. Monthly monitoring of EHCPs has been introduced to ensure that reviews are completed in line with timescales, where this does not occur this is escalated via the appropriate channels. Monthly YJS performance scorecard allows us to monitor and pick up any trends or issues. The scorecard breaks down types of provisions, no. of NEET children, attendance, SEN and EHCP's.</p>
<p>Develop ambitious aims for ETE work in the YJS, including the achievement of Level 2 English and Maths by every child.</p>	<p>For some children when they enter the YJS, we know that their schooling has been disrupted for reasons such as exclusion, managed moves or poor attendance. We work hard, through Black Country Impact & the Local Authority Walsall Works employment & skills offer, to ensure children are offered opportunities to complete their Level 2 in English and Maths, alongside other key skills/training. Going into 2023/24, we need to further develop our pathways for post 16 children.</p>
<p>Establish a greater range of occupational training opportunities for those children beyond compulsory school age</p>	<p>The YJS have introduced a training pathway for black and mixed heritage boys, the Triangle Trust Pathway, via Open Lens. This supports our transition for children into adulthood up to the age 29. Black Country Impact offers advice & guidance to children post 16, identifying their interests, strengths, abilities & supporting them into a provision/activity that best suits their needs.</p> <p>Virtual School works with children in care post 16 to offer advice & guidance and support them to access appropriate provision/training.</p>
<p>Monitor & evaluate the levels of educational engagement & attainment in disproportionately represented groups within the YOT caseload in order to develop improvement.</p>	<p>YJS report on ETE status for all children including OOC & Turnaround.</p> <p>Open Lens work with boys from black and mixed heritage boys as we understand & acknowledge that they may require a different type of support.</p>

A thematic review of the work of youth offending services during the COVID-19 pandemic *A review by HM Inspectorate of Probation November 2020*

YJS management boards should:	What we did:
Identify the backlog of cases that are being processed through courts, and ensure that there is sufficient workforce capacity to deal with increased caseloads	The backlog within the Youth Court was quickly worked through by the summer of 2021. Court staff were provided with the technology to engage virtually and attended Court in person. Caseloads consistently monitored and resources re-purposed for the increase in Out of Court Disposals
Work with partners to include children who are defined as high vulnerability by YOTs within the local definition of vulnerable children.	Children in the YJS cohort were defined locally as highly vulnerable and our partner the Virtual School prioritised support this group.
Consider how this group of children are to be reintroduced to school, education and employment and how any attainment gap is to be addressed.	YJS children were provided with the opportunity to receive laptops to enable them to better re-engage with school. School hours, attendance and placement suitable monitored on a monthly basis.
YJSs should:	
Routinely assess children’s access to IT and remote communication methods as a standard part of assessments.	QA process updated to ensure that upon entering the YJS children were assessed for IT capability.

The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system *A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021*

YJS partnership boards should:	What we did:
have a vision and strategy for improving outcomes for black and mixed heritage boys, and make sure these are understood by staff and partner agencies	Funding through the PCC and SWP has enabled the YJS to work with a local organisation to develop our Disproportionality Strategy in 2022
ensure that all board members contribute data from their individual services that identifies areas of disproportionality and the action being taken to address them, and that this data is used to develop a joint strategic needs assessment	Following the YJS ethnicity analysis, children’s services commissioned analysis from across all part of CS, including education and supported this will a full locality analysis
have a joint set of targets, for example with children’s services, for improving service delivery for these boys, and make sure mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate outcomes.	Reducing disproportionality remains a priority for the YJS with a Board member, (Head of Children’s Social Care) taking strategic lead for this work across the partnership

YJS managers should:	
establish effective processes for gaining feedback from black and mixed heritage boys on the services they receive and use this feedback to assess, review and improve the quality and suitability of service provision	The role of the YJS apprentice is to gather the views of our children. Our work with Open Lens will have a child steering group to gather feedback from children as part of the engagement and development programme to establish legacy
make sure that staff understand what is expected of them in their work with black and mixed heritage boys and that they are inducted, trained and supported to work effectively with this group of children	YJS staff have been trained in engaging our black children and we undertook commissioned unconscious bias training. Further training is planned for 2022 and we are working local community leaders to support this.
improve the quality of management oversight to make sure it is sufficiently focused on diversity, what this means in practice and that there are clear escalation routes to address any barriers to black and mixed heritage boys accessing services	Audit tools and QA gatekeeping tools have been amended to improve our oversight of this cohort of children. We have also undertaken audits based on the recommendations of this thematic review
address gaps in specialist provision for black and mixed heritage boys, either by delivering it in-house or by commissioning it from appropriate local community organisations and evaluate referral and uptake rates for the services provided	We have commissioned specialist provision for our black and mixed heritage boys- an engagement and development programme based on improving ETE skills through media.
offer suitable support and intervention to the parents/carers of black and mixed heritage boys and review the suitability of this provision	We have continued to work with first class legacy during 2021 to refer parents to the kitchen table talks programme

Appendix 7

Youth Justice Service Delivery Plan 2025/26

Serious Youth Violence (and exploitation)			
	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Deliver Virtual Reality knife crime interventions group with children at risk of carrying a knife	Kelly Rutherford	Fortnightly
2	Deliver the Street Doctors programme for children at risk of being involved in violence and knife crime	Kelly Rutherford	Monthly
3	Review YJS Out of Court Disposal Policy in light of the change in WMP Knife Crime Policy	Lara Dauncey	Sept 2025
4	YJS to continue to support daily exploitation and missing triage with WMP and Social Care Exploitation Team	Frances Bate	2025/26
5	Commission and embed a St Giles Lived Experienced Mentor within the YJS and improve ability to measure impact.	Owen Langton	April 2025
6	Undertake an Exploitation Dip Sample Audit to review whether we are completing the necessary exploitation screening forms and referring into the multi-agency hub	Frances Bate	August 2025
7	YJS to attend the quarterly Operational Violence Delivery Group	Phil Rutherford	Quarterly
8	Review the YJS Risk Management Policy	Owen Langton	Aug 2025
	Strategic Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Support the strategic partnerships collaborative and the SYV Research being undertaken by Professor Steve Case	Phil Rutherford	2025/26
2	Increase alignment between Safer Walsall Partnership and YJ Partnership to include shared priorities and processes	Steve Gittins	May 25

3	To work with Safer Walsall Partnership to explore funding opportunities and commission services to address SYV	Phil Rutherford	2025/26
4	YJS Management Board to monitor and challenge impact on children following changes to WMP knife crime policy	Colleen Male	2025/26
Identifying and responding to Unmet Need			
	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Develop our SALT offer, including improving our screening tool and undertaking speech and language training.	Kelly Rutherford	Oct 2025
2	Aim for the YJS to achieve the SEND quality mark	Louise Rayfield	Mar 2026
3	Establish and embed our Unmet Needs Panel to implement plans for children with complex needs	Louise Rayfield	May 2025
4	Undertake SEND training for the team, including AA and Referral Order Volunteers	Louise Rayfield	July 2025
5	Improve monitoring of attendance, Children Missing Education and SEND	Kristian Green	2025/26
6	Develop our partnership with the Inclusion Hub and additionally vulnerable learner hub and the EHCP team	Kelly Rutherford	Mar 26
7	Improve our offer for NEET 16+ children and work with Walsall Works and partners to secure a dedicated YJ advisor	Kelly Rutherford	July 25
8	Review service level agreement with CGL Beacon Substance Misuse	Fran	July 25
	Strategic Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Work with Public Health to secure funding for a YJS school nurse post and support recruitment	Nadia Inglis	Aug 25
2	Develop our Unmet Needs Model and our partnership with the Education Psychology Service	Dipak Choudry	July 25

3	Work with the ICB to ensure appropriate representation on the YJS Board and secure additional funding for SALT provision for children in the YJS	Isabel Vanderheeren	June 25
4	Improve our CAMHS resource for YJS's across the Black Country	Mags Courts	Sept 25
Disproportionality			
	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Review the ToR for the YJS Equality and Disproportionality Forum and Practice Improvement Subgroup	Phil Rutherford	June 2025
2	Establish an ETE pathway for Black and Mixed Heritage Boys	Kelly Rutherford	April 2025
3	Commission mentoring services for black and mixed heritage boys	Phil Rutherford	April 2025
4	Grow our practice champions roles to include disproportionality, girls and prevent	Phil Rutherford	April 2025
5	Source, commission or develop Stop and Search interventions for YJS children and other vulnerable groups	Kelly Rutherford	Sept 2025
6	Undertake a self-assessment against the HMIP Thematic Inspection on the experiences of black children in YJ	Kelly Rutherford	July 2025
7	Audit our services for girls with a focus on accessibility of support.	Lara Dauncey	Aug 2025
8	Review our training offer for practitioners to include unconscious bias and racial trauma training.	Phil Rutherford	Oct 2024
9	Hold a cultural celebration and appreciation day for the YJS	Phil Rutherford	June 2024
10	YJS Managers to undertake Compassionate Leadership Training	Phil Rutherford	Aug 2024
	Strategic Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Lead the Regional Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder and the Project Lead, ensuring Walsall's YJ Partnership is engaged.	Phil Rutherford	2025/26
2	Develop our partnership data set and ensure that partners contribute to the wider understanding of disproportionality in the YJS and other agencies	David Wilson	Sept 2025

3	YJS Board to commission a review of the 2-year Ethnicity Analysis	Jonathan Weller	Nov 2025
Voice of our Children			
	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Develop our Apprenticeship Offer by recruiting to both a level 3 and level 5 apprentice	Kelly Rutherford	2025/26
2	Develop our ability to report on 'end of intervention' feedback from children to change services	Kelly Rutherford	July 2025
3	Consult with our children for our annual 'safer lives' survey to understand perception and experience of violence	Kelly Rutherford	May 2025
4	Improve how we evaluate impact of mentoring services to include children's voice, wishes and feelings	Owen Langton	July 2025
5	Continue to work with children as part of our recruitment processes	Phil Rutherford	2025/26
6	Develop more creative methods to gather children's voice including media, technology and art.	Kelly Rutherford	Sept 2025
7	Work with partners and our mentor to establish a forum for black boys to share the views of the justice system to enable us to improve practice	Phil Rutherford	Sept 2025
	Strategic Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Ensure that children's voice is clear in our strategic partnership by exploring different approaches within Board	Phil Rutherford	Quarterly
2	Ensure that Board members have opportunities to engage with and observe practice and meet our children	Isabel Vanderheeren	Quarterly
Transitions and Resettlement			
	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Review our local transition to adult protocol in partnership with Probation	Fran Bate	Sept 25

2	Improve the operational links with the young adult's team and women's team in Probation	Fran Bate	June 25
3	Ensure smooth transition of ETE services between YJS and Probation by embedded ETE into T2A policy	Heather Cooper	August 25
4	Deliver the Next Steps Transitions Programme into practice for children transitioning to Probation	Heather Cooper	Apr to Mar 26
5	Improve the information sharing process between YJS and Probation, including assessments for young adults.	Fran Bate	April 25
6	Ensure mentoring services are in place for children preparing for release into the community.	Owen Langton	2025/26
7	Review custody policy and ensure implementation of strategic remand/resettlement reviews.	Owen Langton	Nov 25
	Strategic Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Review of the YJS and Social Care Joint Working Protocol with a focus on effective partnership working of children in custody and deliver training for practitioners	Phil Rutheford	Apr 25
2	Work with strategic partners in the LA and from the third sector to develop pathways for complex teenagers in the community or leaving custody	Isabel Vanderheeren	
3	Maintain the good Probation Officer resource for the YJS, ensuring the PO secondment and partnership with the Probation Young Adults Team.	Natalie Lau	2025/26
Data Intelligence and Insight			
	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
1	Improve the consistency and accuracy of the data in the YJS Dashboard	David Wilson	Sept 25
2	Develop the partnerships' ability to report on the new YJB KPI's – new specification to be developed	David Wilson	Sept 25

3	Implement training for YJS practitioners and managers to improve recording for KPIs	Kelly Rutherford	Apr 25
4	Improve our recording and reporting of ETE within the dashboard to bring it in line with education standards RE attendance	Kelly Rutherford	Apr 25
5	Improve how we report evaluation from the voice of children at the end of their intervention	Kelly Rutherford	Jul 25
6	Develop our ability to evaluate impact and effectiveness of our mentoring offers (Lived experience and Disproportionality)	Owen Langton	Aug 25
7	Review our audit tool following release of new inspection framework and amend audit delivery plan	Kelly Rutherford	Jul 25
Strategic Objectives		Lead	By When
1	Implement a performance and insight sub-group and develop a new partnership data dashboard	David Wilson	Jul 25
2	Review the YJS ethnicity analysis for 2025	Jonathan Weller	Nov 25
3	Alongside other strategic partnerships, provide data and insights to inform the SYV academic research	Phil Rutherford	Aug 25
4	Improve the ability of the partnership to measure the impact of interventions and disposals	David Wilson	Sept 25
5	Develop a system where partners provide quarterly information and performance data to the YJS Board	David Wilson	Sept 25
HMIP- OOC Thematic Development Plan			
Priority	Operational Objectives	Lead	By When
Victim views and victim safety are	Review Victim and RJ Policy	Kelly Rutherford	May 2025

not consistently and sufficiently considered in all assessment, planning and interventions	Review QA framework and gate-keeping tool to focus on victim safety and recording.	Kelly Rutherford	April 2025
	Commission service training to ensure focus on victims in assessments, plans & interventions.	Kelly Rutherford	April 2025
	Implement a more robust victim safety planning assessment process for child victims.	Kelly Rutherford	June 2025
	Undertake a victim themed Audit to check improvement against training and changes in policy	Kelly Rutherford	Dec 2025
	The YJS Performance and Partnership Board should identify a strategic lead board member to provide oversight and assurance to the Board that progress is being made.	Phil Rutherford	May 2025
	Facilitate shadowing and observation of Board members and victim strategic lead.	Phil Rutherford	May 2025
	Undertake regular data analysis of victim work, including protected characteristics.	Kelly Rutherford	Oct 25
Planning did not always address assessed needs & risks.	Undertake training for practitioners to improve planning skills- ensuring that all risks and needs are addressed, including victim safety, mental health and substance misuse	Kelly Rutherford	May 2025
	Strategic Objectives	Lead	By When
Regional scrutiny arrangements must ensure a balanced focus on children.	The Youth Justice Partnership will influence West Midlands Police's regional scrutiny arrangement to recommend that separate scrutiny panel for children is established.	Phil Rutherford	Aug 2025

<p>There are currently too few reliable mechanisms to assess the impact of the interventions delivered to children.</p>	<p>The board should improve its focus on outcomes for children receiving out-of-court disposals by ensuring all partners provide consistent, regular information from their respective areas and address challenges related to service access and progress for this group. Specifically, the police need to remove barriers to information sharing, including data on street community resolutions and post-18 offending, to enable effective monitoring of reoffending.</p>	<p>David Wilson</p>	
---	--	---------------------	--

Appendix 8

Common youth justice terms

Please add any locally used terminology

ACE	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
AIM 2 and 3	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
AssetPlus	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
CCE	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
Children	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
Child First	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
Child looked-after	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
CME	Child Missing Education
Constructive resettlement	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
Contextual safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety

Community resolution	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
EHCP	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
ETE	Education, training or employment
EHE	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
EOTAS	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
FTE	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
HMIP	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
JAC	Junior Attendance Centre
MAPPA	Multi agency public protection arrangements
MFH	Missing from Home
NRM	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
OOCD	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
Outcome 22/21	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
Over-represented children	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
RHI	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing

SLCN	Speech, Language and communication needs
STC	Secure training centre
SCH	Secure children's home
Young adult	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
YJS	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
YOI	Young offender institution