

Walsall Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan

2022 - 2025

Updated June 2023



Child First

Service	Walsall Youth Justice Service
Service Manager/ Lead	Phil Rutherford
Chair of YJS Board	Colleen Male
Date	Update June 2023

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Foreword from Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership:



As we move into the 2nd year of the Youth Justice Partnership's three-year plan it gives me great pleasure to look back over the past twelve months to recognise the progress the service and its partners are making to support some of the most vulnerable children in Walsall. We still have work to do, but we are in a good position to further improve practice and ensure that the Service has the necessary strategic partnerships and resources it needs.

The YJS Performance and Partnership Board has grown and matured since 2022 and we are able to influence and support wider systems through the Safer Walsall Partnership and Safeguarding Partnership. We are pleased to welcome partners from our closest secure estate, Werrington HMYOI, along with colleagues from Public Health and the Integrated Care Board. Our strategic governance model is developing as key leaders from the partnership take the lead delivering upon our priorities. We are a learning partnership and know from our data and thematic reviews how we can improve outcomes for children. But perhaps more importantly our strategic thinking and operational delivery is now better informed by the voice and lived experience of our children. The YJS Partnership have commissioned a strategic needs assessment of children in the justice system to ensure that our direction continues to be informed by data and evidence based effective practice.

The YJS partnership maintains its 'Child First' vision and we are committed to sharing this vision with all partners that work with children in the justice system and beyond. These principles align with our Walsall Right 4 Children vision aimed at ensuring the right children are in the right place with the right support for as long as it is needed so they are safe from harm, happy and learning well.

At the start of June 2023, Walsall Youth Justice Partnership welcomed an HMIP joint thematic inspection of remanded children. A team of inspectors arrived in Walsall to evaluate practice for these children and considered their journey from the Police Station to Court and ultimately into the secure estate. We have seen an increase in the number of Walsall children sent to YOIs over the past 12 months and therefore the inspection presented us with an opportunity to learn and consider our practice for these children. The YJS partnership were pleased with the findings of the inspection.

The partners have worked together to identify the youth justice strategic priorities for 2022 – 2025 by listening to our children, our practitioners and managers, and aligning our strategy with the Safer Walsall Partnership, the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership. In 2023 we have reviewed these priorities and they are still relevant, although our recent experience tells us where we need to focus. As strategic partners and Board members, we are asking more of each other to take ownership of youth

justice priorities, to drive forward progress and provide oversight, and to better represent children in the justice system throughout wider strategic networks.

Colleen Male
Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership

Introduction:

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 2022 to 2025. A review of this plan has been approved by the YJS Performance and Partnership Board in June 2023.

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

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. We believe in understanding the adversity and trauma a child goes through and having a strength-based approach to build resilience for a sustainable crime free life.

Executive Summary:

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 principle aim of the YJS partnership is to prevent and reduce offending and re-offending behaviour in children and young people and have three main national key performance indicators (KPI):

- a) Reducing the number of young people entering the system for the first time
- b) Reducing re-offending
- c) Reducing the use of custodial disposals.

In addition to the above, from April 2023, 10 new KPIs will be reported to the YJB:

- Accommodation:
- Education, training and employment (ETE):
- Special Educational Needs/Additional Learning Needs:
- Mental and emotional wellbeing:
- Substance misuse:
- Out of court disposals (OOCs):
- Management Board attendance:
- Wider Services:
- Serious youth violence (SYV):
- Victims:

Reducing the number of young people entering the Youth Justice System also remains a key Council objective. Between January 2022 and December 2022, the number of first-time entrants in Walsall reduced when compared to the previous 12-month period. The total number at the end of March had accumulated to 47, compared to 58 for the same period the year before. Our local tracking of the data suggests an increasing trajectory since 2019 and the impact of the pandemic was first felt, although this includes additional children who were normally resident out of borough.

Published re-offending data for Walsall YJS has demonstrated a further 3% improvement in the binary rate when compared to the previous 12-month period. The latest proportion of young people re-offending is measured at 26.6% which is better than the national average. Positively, alongside an improving binary rate, the number of re-offences that are committed has reduced significantly on the previous year and is now measured at 2.48 per child. This is a 43% improvement.

In Walsall we are worried about the number of our children on remand and sentenced to custody, and particularly concerned about the serious violence that underpins those custodial outcomes. Our current published performance is 0.29 per 1000 of the 10-17 population which is higher than our regional and national comparators. This is equating to 9 custodial sentences between April 2022 to March 2023. This number will likely rise over the next 12 months due to 16 children being remanded over the same period.

Key achievements from the past 12 months:

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

- *HMIP Thematic Inspection- Remand*; The YJS and its partners received a thematic inspection of children who had been remanded. The partnership approached the inspection positively, were keen to learn and to promote the effective practice occurring within the team. Practitioners enjoyed the experience and used the time to reflect on their own practice and helped partners understand their part in supporting children in custody. The inspectors found effective practice here in Walsall and have helped us make improvements across the system.
- *Practice Week*: the YJS held its first practice week in January 2022 where YJS Board members and senior leaders from across children's services spent time with the

managers and practitioners within the service, observing our practice and models of delivery. But more importantly they got to meet some of our children, both in the community and in custody. Practice week aims to close the gap between the strategic and operational and for the lived experience of our children to influence decision makers.

- *Ministry of Justice- Turnaround*: Turnaround went live in December 2022 and provided funding to youth justice services to work with children on the periphery of the justice system who can be diverted. In Walsall we have used our funding to second an Early Help working into the YJS and to commission a local organisation to deliver sport coaching, positive activities and one to one mentoring.
- *Development of the YJS partnership panel and our diversion offer*; our joint decision-making partnership panel has established a clear pathway with the Police to identify diversion opportunities for children at risk of violence. We are joined by health partners, Early Help and the Violence Reduction Partnership to make sure we have the right partners meeting the needs of our children.
- *Walsall's Exploitation and Missing Hub*; the YJS is working closely with our partners in Social Care and the Police to develop Walsall's Exploitation Hub. YJS managers chair and support the daily multi-agency exploitation and missing triage discussions. YJS practitioners' complete exploitation assessments and National Referral Mechanism (NRM) notifications where appropriate with support of the Exploitation Hub. Our co-location in 2022 has strengthened this partnership.
- *Lived Experienced Mentors*; the YJS was successful in securing funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), through the Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP), to work with St-Giles and provide a mentor for our young people involved in serious violence and criminal exploitation. We have had positive outcomes for young people and as such we have committed to providing lived experienced mentors for the next 2 years.
- *Work to address Disproportionality*; building upon our progress from 2020 and in the wake of George Floyd's death, the YJS established its Equality and Disproportionality Forum. In 2021 the Forum has provided practitioners with a safe space to discuss equality and the overrepresentation of boys with black and mixed ethnicity in the justice system. The Forum oversees progress and has set up a practice improvement sub-group. In 2022 we have worked closely with:
 - *Open Lens Media*- a local media and training organisation who have worked with our boys with black and mixed ethnicity to deliver a coaching programme and to create a documentary based on their lived experiences they have faced growing up. We are working with Open Lens to develop a partnership strategy to address overrepresentation across Walsall.
 - *Resettlement Mentor*- through Safer Walsall Partnership funding we have commissioned a local mentor to work directly with black boys within the secure estate to help them navigate their time in custody and to help them plan and effectively resettle back in the community.
- *Virtual School & Inclusion Hub*: our work with the Virtual School for children in care and the Inclusion Hub has continued over 2022. We have developed our links with the

Inclusion team and have improved our performance monitoring in relation to attendance, exclusions and special educational needs. The Virtual School has also improved our support for children who are remanded in custody, especially for those who have an education and health care plan.

- *Improving the skills and expertise of the team:* our partners in Public Health have secured funding for the Youth Justice partnership to employ a nurse, situated within the YJS, to assess and support the health needs of children open to the YJS. Similarly, our pathways to access speech and language therapy for children has improved through the Virtual School.
- *Youth Justice Apprenticeship:* responding our aims of improving the employment outcomes of young people in the justice system, the YJS established an apprenticeship post. The main functions of the role are to bridge the gap between practitioners and children and seek their views on service delivery and issues affecting them in their communities. Our apprentice led our annual safer lives surveys with children to understand their experiences of community safety. We are exploring recruiting further apprenticeships with the Probation Service to improve our transitions offer and with Unitas to develop our practitioner workforce.
- *Loughborough University- Child First Research:* we are working with researchers from Loughborough University and have established a project reference group with Walsall children who are helping them design research methods to better collaborate with children across the justice system.
- *Effective response to increased numbers of children in the secure estate:* the YJS has improved its partnership with Werrington YOI, has regular oversight meetings and works with the local safeguarding partnership to monitor incidents of restraint. The increased levels of serious youth violence and resulting children in the secure estate, has led the YJS partnership to instigate a coalition with the Safer Walsall Partnership and Safeguarding Partnership to consider how to prevent the next generation of children becoming involved in violence.
- *Our Youth Offer:* as we have move away from the pandemic it is important to ensure that our positive activity offer for our children has remained strong and focusses on strength-based approaches and building resilience. Mostly through external funding and strong partnership our offer has included;
 - Sport: our partnership continues with the Inspire Group to deliver multi-sports diversion activities and mentoring across Walsall and provides children with links to local sport clubs and coaching qualifications.
 - Co-Lab YTH; our music studio mentoring programme has continued throughout 2022. Co-Lab YTH consists of a local music artist, producer and Walsall youth worker who provide our young people with a safe space to express themselves through music who also receive support to avoid exploitation, issues around gangs and knife crime.

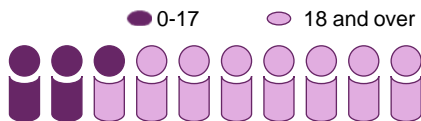
2. Local context

Children living in Walsall

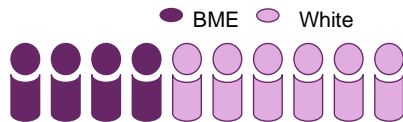
Population of 284,130
68,274 (24.0%) of whom are children aged 0-17
2021 census

Children and young people have more health challenges than their peers

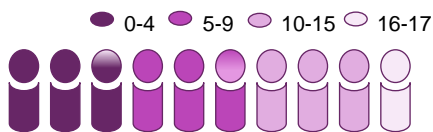
**number of children and young people aged 0-17 is projected to rise to 71,822 by 2030*



24.0% of the population are children and young people 2021 census



40.3% of Children are from BME backgrounds.
2021 Census



27% of children are aged 0-4,
29% are aged 5-9, 34% are aged 10-15 and
11% are aged 16-17 2021 Census



38% of children live in poverty after housing costs Campaign to end child poverty – July 2022

3.7% of babies are born with a low birth weight
compared with 3.0% the West Midlands and 2.8% nationally (2021 data)

5.6 per 1,000 children die before their first birthday
compared with 5.6 in the West Midlands and 3.9 nationally (2019-2021 data)

1.8% of young girls get pregnant at 15, 16 or 17
Compared with 1.5% in the West Midlands and 1.3% nationally (2021 data)

95 per 100,000 are admitted to hospital inpatient for mental health issues
compared with 91 in the West Midlands and 100 nationally (2021-22 data)

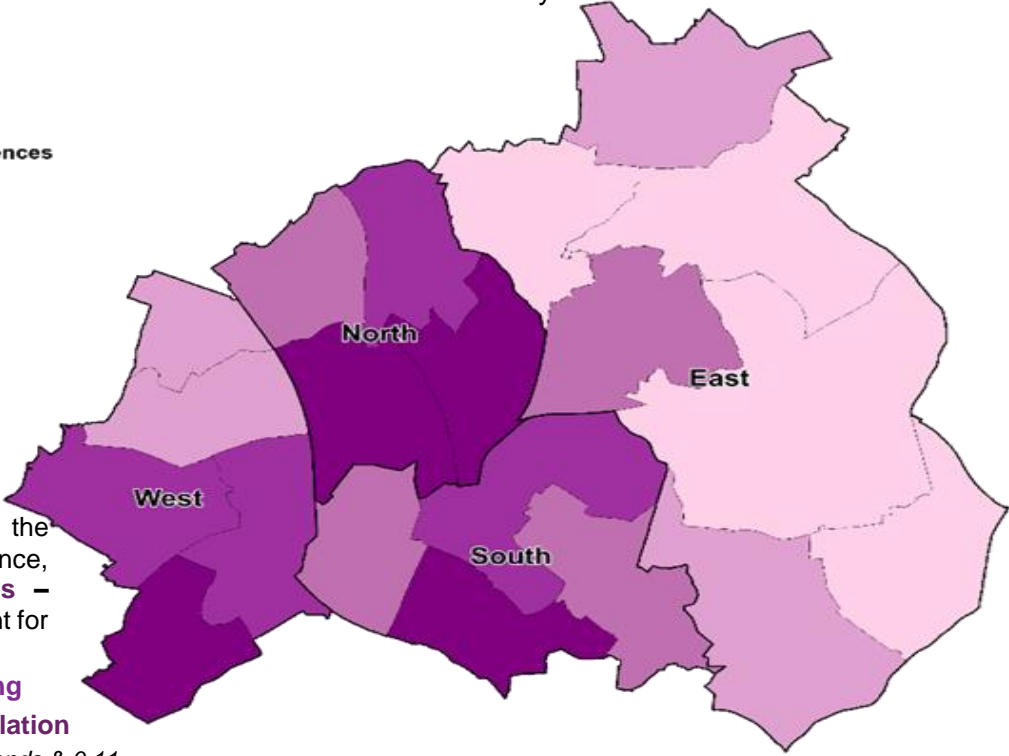
4.5 per 100,000 admitted to hospital alcohol related issues
Compared with 24.9 in the West Midlands and 29.3 nationally (2018-19 – 2020-21 data)

Deprivation levels are high

In the Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI), Walsall is the **19th most deprived Local Authority** in the country with 29% of neighbourhoods in the top 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods nationally which is the 15 highest. **Two of Walsall's three parliamentary constituencies are in the top 50 constituencies with the highest levels of child poverty.**

Crime in Walsall is broadly in line with the deprivation profile of each locality.

35.3% of children who commit 34.7% of offences live in North locality.
 15.1% of children who commit 20.5% of offences live in East locality.
 25.9% of children who commit 19.0% of offences live in South locality.
 23.7% of children who commit 25.9% of offences live in West locality.



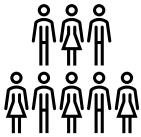
First Time Entrants
154 per 100,000 population
aged 10-17
compared with 104 West Midlands & 149 nationally.

Violence against a person is the most common type of offence, followed by **Motoring Offences** – these two types of offence account for around half of all offences.

Children in custody is increasing
0.29 per 1000 of the 10-17 population
compared with 0.21 in the West Midlands & 0.11 nationally

9 young people received a custodial sentence

There is ethnic and gender disproportionality within the youth justice system in Walsall



- 85% of children who enter the youth justice system are male.
- 43% of children in the justice system are from ethnic minorities.

Education-June 2023

CME- 3%
SEN and SEN Support- 59%
EHCP- 27%
Fixed term exclusions- 33%
Attendance below 75%- 39%
SLC- 10% had difficulty understanding, 30% had difficulty with social skills.

Health- June 2023

56% report drug or alcohol use
46% report cannabis misuse
50% report feelings of sadness, anxiety or stress

3. Child First

Walsall YJS are a trauma aware 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.

The YJS is committed to enabling practitioners to undertake the Child First Effective Practice Award and this year more of the practitioners are completing the award. This course explores four tenets of Child First practice, focussed on supporting practitioners to build constructive relationships with their children and families. Our training offer for staff is good and we expect all our managers and practitioners to complete the wider Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate as an additional vocational qualification.

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 are partnering with Loughborough University to support their current research project determining the extent of Child First principles and collaborative approaches in youth justice. Our children and practitioners are working with researchers to help develop a methodology and approach to the study and have established a Project Reference Group. Our Youth Justice Partnership is looking forward to working with Loughborough to learn from a best practice toolkit.

Our children have found the activity empowering and fun and their feedback is making a good contribution.

Collaborating with children is an important part of the work we do help positively change their lives, but we also want the views of our children to be central to our strategic direction and to influence our partners. A practice example 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. An example of how these principles make a strategic difference is how our local Community Safety Manager leads an anti-social behaviour forum and challenges partners who don't sign up to the 'Child First' approach. The focus of the meeting is to divert children to avoid criminalisation and its stigmas.

Learning from the HMIP thematic review of working with young people during the Covid pandemic, Walsall YJS routinely assess our children's technical ability and access to technology. More and more, interventions and contacts can be delivered with technology, and it is important to ensure our children have the same opportunities as others.

Our disproportionality champion has developed a tool to support practitioners to have complicated conversations with children to better understand their views, experiences and perceptions of ethnicity and identity. To further improve practitioner confidence, they have also delivered workshops with the team to promote these conversations and to share best practice and case studies of what has worked well for specific children.

As part of our Turnaround offer for children on the periphery of the justice system, we have worked with a local media organisation to create a short video for children and parents who are eligible for the programme. The video is created specifically to let children know what the offer entails and how support plans will be designed by collaboration. The video aims to distance itself from the stigma of the criminal justice system and focusses on strengths, interests and positive diversion. We are exploring using a voiceover with a local accent to make it more accessible.

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.

4. Voice of the child

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. Practitioners use this information to help tailor their work and the interventions that work best for that child. 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. We have embedded a restorative 'MyPlan' for our children and families to ensure that the support they receive is owned by them and inclusive.

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

Since 2022, the YJS Partnership adopted a strategic priority to ensure that the voice of children in the justice system impacts upon our strategic direction and helps Board members understand the lived experience of the children we support. Each of our meetings is based upon a thematic priority and children's voice underpins the discussions and decision making. Below are examples of how the Board have done this:

- M spoke to the Board about his experiences of being a black boy growing up in Walsall and his involvement with the Police and Youth Justice. He powerfully talked about the trauma he still revisits when he hears a police siren, his emotions when remembering police and professionals coming into his house and how practitioners could have made more of a difference. M passionately implored the YJS and its partners to do more!
- The Board reviewed a serious incident within Walsall where a young boy seriously stabbed another boy with a knife who tragically had life changing injuries. The Board heard about how the experiences of the boy who committed the offence had led to him to that fateful night and how partners missed opportunities to divert him along the way. To complete the story, the Board heard from the YJS Victim Officer who had spent many hours with the victim and his mother and was able to show strategic partners how youth violence can destroy lives and how the justice system can be traumatic for all children.

- Our Disproportionality Resettlement Mentor talked to the Board, alongside safeguarding leads from Werrington YOI, to help partners understand the experiences of boys within custody. He articulated how the thoughts and feelings of the boys as they navigated their way through the custody regime and their conflicting emotions attached to toxic masculinity, survival, guilty and remorse. Board members were determined to practice 'child first' principles in their approach to caring for these boys.

The YJS facilitated a 'practice week' where our strategic and senior leaders from across the partnership could engage with the operational service, spend some time with practitioners and directly engage with the children we support. Board members got first-hand experience of models of delivery and gave our children the opportunity for them to tell them the positives and negatives of the experiences in the justice system. Board members found it eye opening and productive!

The voices of children in the justice system are beginning to impact upon wider partnership thinking, M's story is being 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.

We have continued our work this year with Open Lens, a local media and training organisation, to develop our response to addressing disproportionality in the justice system. Open Lens have worked with boys with black and mixed ethnicity to understand their experience of growing up in Walsall. These boys, in collaboration with Open Lens and strategic leaders, have developed a documentary detailing how structural barriers, trauma, discrimination and individual experience have impacted their lives. Clips of the film have been used to influence the wider children's services and the findings will contribute to a partnership strategy to address overrepresentation.

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

Our partnership with Loughborough University has continued in 2023 and our children are helping create a research project designed to influence 'child first' principles in the justice system. The voice of our children is instrumental in improving services locally in Walsall and further afield.

In 2022, Walsall YJS employed our second Youth Justice Apprentice. The role was created as our young people 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. We are proud to offer the opportunity 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 early 2023 our apprentice led our safer lives survey (see appendix 3) to better understand issues around violence, knife crime and community safety.

This year we are looking to further expand our apprenticeship offer. Firstly, we are working closely with the Probation Service to improve the transition of teenagers between the youth and adult justice systems. To support this activity, we are working with Brinsford YOI and an organisation called Invested Man to identify apprentices to join our newly developed Transitions Hub. Secondly, we are working with Unitas to access the full Youth Justice practitioner level 5 apprenticeship for dedicated values driven people from across Children's Services.

As part of our consultation with our families, we understood that sometimes they received mixed messages at different stages of the system and these messages were difficult to understand. As a result, we developed literature detailing what was happening and what to expect. Our children suggested wording and we consulted with CAMHs to understand if the leaflets were accessible for those with SEN. We also worked closely with our Education Psychology colleagues to develop videos for our children and parents helping them to understand their diagnosis of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and autistic spectrum disorder, accessible through a QR code.

5. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Walsall YJS sits within the Children's Services directorate and the Strategic Lead for the YJS reports into the Director for Early Help and Partnerships with close alignment to Social Care and Education. A disproportionate number of children are open to Social Care Services and there are clear links between children in the youth justice system and those involved in exploitation, going missing or who are excluded from education. The YJS Strategic Lead is part of the senior leadership team within Children's Services.

Walsall Youth Justice Service Performance and Partnership Board meet quarterly and is chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services. Partners from the Local Authority, Children's Services, Health, Police and National Probation Service regularly attend. 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.

- **Safer Walsall Community Safety Partnership (SWP)**

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 Strategic Lead also leads the criminal justice strand of Walsall's Violence Reduction Strategy.

a) Strategic Violence Reduction sub-group

b) Violence Against Women and Girls sub-group

The YJS Performance and Partnership Board has strengthened the ties with the Safer Walsall Partnership in 2022 and ensures connectivity through Walsall's Police Superintendent -the strategic lead for the Serious Violence Duty for both partnerships.

- **West Midlands Local Criminal Justice Board**

The YJS participates in the regional LCJB Youth Improvement Subgroup to ensure that the desistance 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.

- **West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP).**

The YJS is a key partner to the VRP and the Strategic Lead sits on the West Midlands VRP Strategic Board and Programme Delivery Board. To support strategic delivery, the YJS Strategic lead also supports the;

a) VRP Sports Strategic Partnership Board.

b) School Exclusion sub-group

c) Commissioning sub-group

- **Contest (the UK's strategy for counter terrorism: Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare)**

The Strategic Lead for Walsall YJS is the Chair of the Local Authority's Channel Panel and as sits on Walsall's Contest Board which is responsible for driving forward the delivery and implementation of the government's Contest Strategy.

- **Walsall Safeguarding Partnership**

The YJS Strategic Lead sits on the WSCB and contributes to the following:

a) Performance and Quality Assurance (PQA) subcommittee

b) Exploitation subcommittee

c) Strategic Exploitation Panel

- **Children's Services Performance Board**

The YJS Strategic Lead sits on the Children's Services Performance Board and presents YJS data against key performance indicators and locally agreed priorities- including the Social Care/YJS interface and first time entrants.

6. Board Development

For 2022 onwards, the YJS Board aligned its structure with the Safer Walsall Partnership, reviewed its terms of reference and adopted a model of quarterly themed learning meetings based upon our strategic priorities. Below this structure, leaders from the partnership will drive progress within sub-groups dedicated to the strategic priorities. 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. This was evident in the successful YJS Practice Week in January 2023. Board members spent the week with YJS to better understand models of delivery, our practice and challenges. Practice Week closes the strategic and operational gap and gives leaders an opportunity to meet our children to understand their experience. Board members with lead for the YJS partnership priorities engaged with a Board development day in January 2023 to explore how to drive forward improvements in the governance structure of the Board and to confirm commitment to the YJS strategic priorities.

Our Board has grown and matured over the past twelve months, and we have welcomed new members. We have responded to our growing population in the secure estate, and we are pleased to have colleagues from Werrington YOI join our membership to provide better oversight of this group of children. Our Board induction document was introduced to help new members be clear as to their roles and responsibilities towards the partnership, so they can effectively represent the partnership at each meeting and within their wider strategic networks.

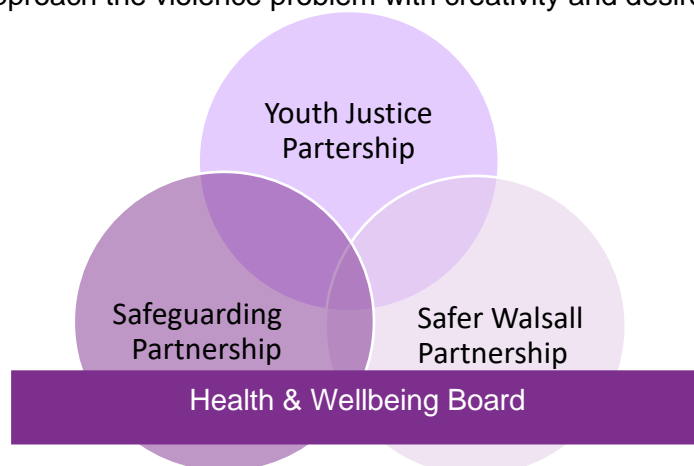
The national Youth Justice Board launched its new oversight framework in April 2023 to increase their understanding of performance across the system. In Walsall we have been placed into quadrant 2 and will engage with the local YJB oversight manager for support on a regular basis. Our YJS Partnership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

Strategic Youth Violence Collaborative:

Walsall has seen a series of serious youth violence incidents over the last 12 months leading to 16 young people being remanded and 9 children given a custodial sentence within the secure estate. Following the scale of a recent serious incident, the Youth Justice partnership instigated a coalition with the Safeguarding and Safer Walsall Partnership to seek assurance that:

- We are effectively supporting the young people remanded into custody.
- There is an effective plan to respond and safeguard children and the wider community.
- Effective structures are in place to identify learning for the medium and long term.

The coalition, which meets monthly, sits outside of normal governance procedures and indicates a shared vision to approach the violence problem with creativity and desire to change.



7. Resources and services

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 of 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, through Children's Services, supports the YJB grant and ensures that YJS staff are equipped to meet the needs of the children we support. Our connectivity improved in 2022 as the YJS became co-located space with the Exploitation and Missing Team and Walsall Partnership Police. This exciting development strengthened our partnership, improving information sharing and collaboration for our shared cohort of children at risk.

The Police also make a significant contribution to the 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 provide a 0.6 full time equivalent (fte) Probation Officer who oversees transition to adulthood work, the role currently filled through long term agency provision, 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 strategic priority to strengthen transitions. Through the clinical commissioning group, health provides funding for a 0.5 (fte) CAMHS practitioner to support our children with mental health needs. We are incredibly pleased that Public Health are committing funding to the YJS partnership to employ a 0.6 (fte) school nurse for 2023/24 dedicated to assessing and supporting the physical health needs of our children. The education needs of children open to the YJS are supported and monitored by Walsall's Vulnerable Learners Hub and a named specialist lead for this cohort of children. Over 2022, the Council's Employment Team have deployed an Impact Worker to work with children aged over 16, however Impact funding will end in July and the partnership need to consider a mainstream offer for vulnerable children.

Walsall YJS 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 2023-24 and the establishment is fully funded.

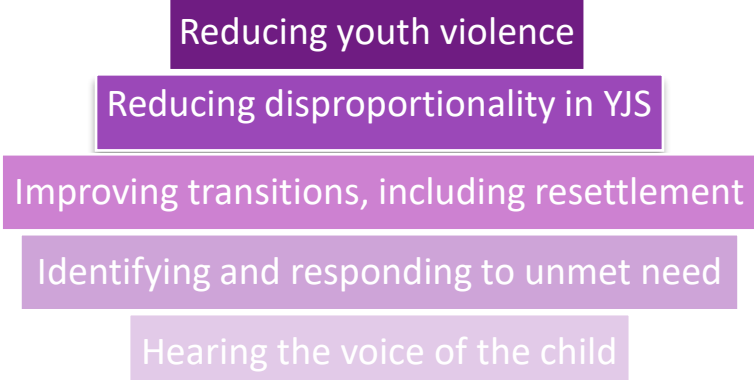
Workforce demographics:

As of 1st April 2023, the YJS has 18.5 permanent posts paid by the local authority who are supported by 2 business support officers. A service structure can be found in appendix 2. The management team is stable and has been in place for over 12 months, although we have seen changes within the practitioner group during 2022 and are holding 2.5 vacancies currently covered by agency staff. Our current workforce demographics 35% male and 65% female with 15% Asian and 30% black ethnicity.



8. Progress on previous plan

The YJS Performance and Partnership Board reviewed its progress against last year's priorities in June 2023. This activity was informed by an independent review of progress against HMIP recommendations from Walsall YJS' inspection in 2019 and our learning from the HMIP thematic inspection of children on remand in June 2023. Walsall YJS' strategic plan for 2022-2025 identified the following priorities:



Reducing 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. Over the past 12 month, we witnessed a number of tragic incidents where lives have been lost which have left communities and Walsall as a whole shaken. These incidents deepen the resolve of the partnership to address the root causes of violence.

The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) was introduced by government through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, to commence in January 2023. For Walsall, it was agreed that the lead is the Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP). There are key requirements for the duty holder authorities to fulfil together:

- Undertake an evidence-based analysis of the causes of serious violence in their area.
- Develop a strategic needs assessment (SNA) based on the analysis.
- Develop and implement a strategy with solutions to prevent and reduce serious violence in their area, which will need to be reviewed every year.

Walsall's SNA is important for all of us to identify our needs and assets in our communities and understand local trends. We can then intervene appropriately, using both a universal and targeted approach to prevent violence. We combined national, regional, and local intelligence, using both data to develop this assessment. The voice of YJS children is strong within the SNA:



Walsall Serious
Violence Duty Strateg

Our local Police Superintendent is the youth justice partnership's strategic lead for our reducing youth violence priority. Our priority is combined with the preventing violence priority of the Safer Walsall Partnership. Underneath the YJS Partnership Board and the Safer Walsall Partnership Board, there is a Violence and Harm Prevention Subgroup and an Operational Delivery Group.

The YJS are developing our individual response, within the above structures, to preventing and reducing youth violence. Our work is always in partnership. We have delivered interventions and programmes such as the Street Doctors knife crime programme and we have commissioned a Virtual Reality Knife Crime Decision Making Programme. The YJS commissioned an intensive youth work offer during the summer of 2022 as a result of increasing evidence of weapons

carrying in the town centre. We also supported the VRP Step Together Programme which have 'chaperone' routes from schools in Walsall and Walsall College. The Violence Reduction Partnership has a strong and growing presence in Walsall and the YJS are a key partner.

During 2023/24, the YJS Partnership will continue to learn from the serious violence incidents within 2022 and early 2023 and will develop action plans for the partnership to own. Our YJS Strategic Needs Assessment will further inform our learning and activities for the next 3 years.

Reducing disproportionality in the youth justice system.

When HMIP visited Walsall in June 2023, they commented that our work to address disproportionality was meaningful and that we responded well to the learning and recommendations within the HMIP thematic report that explored the experience of boys with black and mixed ethnicity. We responded well to that important report, and we continued to make progress during 2022. Our YJS partnership lead from children's social care, led on a themed partnership board in September 2022 where we explored data, our response and considered next steps. This strategic leader has also taken this priority into the Safeguarding Partnership's exploitation subgroup and within the Children's Learning Alliance. Our disproportionality work has also influenced the Safer Walsall Partnership who have now adopted an equality priority.

Within the Service, our Disproportionality Forum meets regularly to provide a safe space for youth justice staff and our partners to come together to discuss factors impacting upon under and overrepresentation in Walsall. In support, we have a practice improvement group that makes changes to our practice as a result of best practice and our discussions in the forum. A good recent example is how we have reviewed our compliance and engagement policy as our data told us that boys with black and mixed ethnicity were disproportionately involved in bail offences.

We have continued our partnership with Open Lens, a local media and training organisation who have delivered an Identity Programme for our boys with black and mixed ethnicity. Through this work we commissioned Open Lens to create a documentary exploring what it's like for black boys to grow up in Walsall and a partnership strategy to reduce the number of boys with black and mixed ethnicity entering the justice system. We have also established a training and employment pathway for black boys through Open Lens. Using Safer Walsall Partnership funding, we have commissioned a local mentor, a former professional footballer with lived experience of the justice system, to support our boys in custody and to help them resettle back in their communities. We delivered stop and search workshops for our children in partnership with the police and crime commissioner and will be expanding this work to other vulnerable children across Walsall.

Improving transitions, including resettlement.

HMIP commented during their thematic inspection of remand that although they were pleased that we had transitions as a strategic priority, they suggested it should be our focus for the coming year. Our cohort in custody is changing as children transition to adulthood whilst serving lengthy sentences and therefore our partnership with Probation becomes more important. Our Head of Probation is the YJS Partnership's strategic lead for this priority and for governance we have established a transitions and re-offending subgroup for both the YJS and Safer Walsall Partnership. We are developing a Transitions Hub with dedicated probation officers who will work complete transition and maturity interventions to manage a smooth transition into Probation. Through our growing partnership with HMYOI Brinsford we are exploring a transitions apprentice to support our young people from the age of 17. In support of both our disproportionality and transitions work, our resettlement mentor is a strong addition to the transition's hub.

Our preparation for the HMIP thematic was a good experience for the partnership and brought the needs of the children on remand into focus. The partnership completed a multi-agency audit of remanded children and their journey from early years to this point and we have in place an action plan. Our partnership response to children in the secure estate is good and practitioners are knowledgeable and work well together. Our partnership with Werrington YOI is strong and monthly planning meetings occur where issues are resolved. We need to do more to robustly explore alternatives to remand at Court with our partners in Social Care and we need to better improve transitions within the secure estate, with adult services and back into the community. HMIP recognised the impact the Vulnerable Learners Hub (now Inclusion Hub) was beginning to have on children in the secure estate to help the transition of children from the community, especially for those with identified education and health care plans or special education needs.

Identifying and responding to unmet need.

Due to significantly high number of children in the secure estate we will prioritise improving the unmet needs of that cohort along with overrepresented groups over the next twelve months. There is clear overlap between our strategic priorities. We know that children in the justice system disproportionately have a high number of adverse childhood experiences, but alongside this they have a range of needs that are yet to be recognised. Often, our children have had a poor experience of education and in some cases have missed a lot of school through behaviour and exclusion. It is not uncommon for our children to not have a registered doctor. Their limited access to services means that when they enter the justice system, they do so with a host of unmet need. We recognise that our health offer needs to improve to bring it closer in line with our neighbours.

Our strategic lead for this priority is the head of CAMHS commissioning for the Black Country. In February 2023 we held a themed Board dedicated to improving our response to unmet need. We are working with CAMHS to review the youth justice mental health worker role to ensure that it is fit for purpose, especially following an increase in mental health concerns during the pandemic. To further support children's health needs, our partners in Public Health have agreed to fund a nurse, deployed into the YJS, to assess all children for unmet needs, provide interventions and signpost. This is an excellent development for the partnership. As per findings from HMIP, we are also keen to better understand the trauma needs of children who have travelled to the UK.

Our partnership with the Virtual School & Inclusion Hub has improved. We have a Vulnerability Matrix which helps target support for children who are struggling with education attendance and attainment. Staff within the Inclusion Hub complete education assessments for children identified within the matrix, monitor education and health care plans and support those classed as missing education (CME). We can now access speech and language therapists through the Virtual School. We know communication difficulties can be linked to behaviour and exclusions in school. We are continuing to work with commissioners to increase our speech and language resource.

Hearing the voice of our children.

Improving how the YJS and the strategic partnership board hears and responds to the voice of our children was rightly identified as a strategic and operational priority. We have improved and diversified how Board members can better understand the lived experience of our children and have had opportunities to hear first-hand and through other means what our children have to say. Sections 3 and 4 of this plan details our work to ensure that we remain 'Child First', we collaborate with our young people and ensure their voice can influence models of delivery and wider systems.

9. Performance, Priorities and National Key Performance Indicators

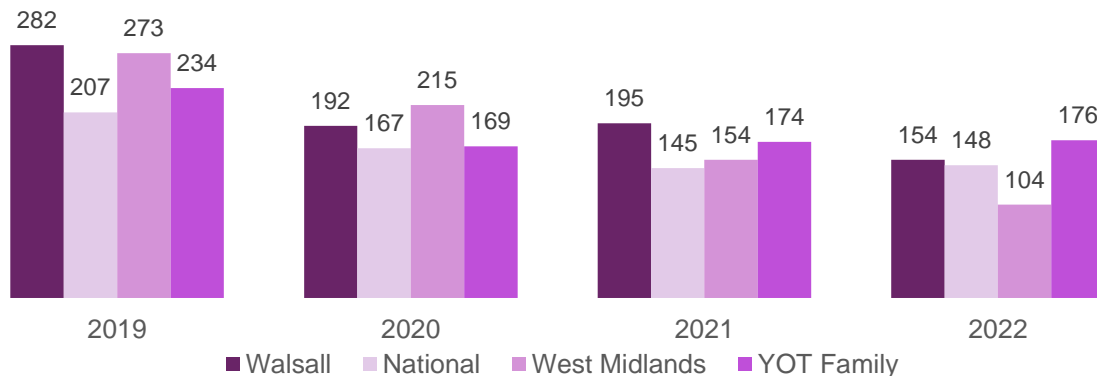
Over the past twelve months the YJS Performance and Partnership Board have continued to work with performance analysts to improve the partnership's ability to monitor and respond to data, KPIs and local information. This resulted in an improving monthly performance scorecard which steers our audit process and our ability to learn and change practice. Board members and YJS managers and practitioners have an improved and more detailed understanding of the cohort we are working with from diversion interventions to custodial sentences. In depth analysis such as the YJS Ethnicity Report and audit reports have furthered the partnership's knowledge of some of the challenges we face and enable us to make evidence-based practice decisions. Our main key performance indicators are detailed in this section.

First Time Entrants:

What we have done to reduce first time entrants during 2022/23:

- Launched the MOJ Turnaround Programme for those on the periphery of the YJS.
- Operation Checkpoint- diversion for children involved in non-aggravated knife crime.
- Use of Outcome 22 deferred prosecution for children involved in low level offending.
- Held an established Youth Justice Partnership Panel which identifies and supports children at risk of engaging in offending and violent behaviour.
- The YJS is a key partner in Exploitation Hub and chairs the daily multi-agency exploitation triage with Social Care and the Police.
- Close relationship with the VRP and developing a Reducing Exclusion Pathway.

FTE - PNC Rate per 100,000 0-17 Population



The above FTE chart is the latest published information from the Youth Justice Board and details a rolling 12-month period. It relates to 47 children entering the system for the first time between January 2022 and December 2022, 11 children less than the previous period. Our local monitoring of FTE tells us that 81% are boys, which represents an increase in the number of girls receiving a formal disposal for the first time. We also know that currently 55% of FTE are from a minority ethnic background. Children from Black ethnicity groups enter the system at a younger age, compared to other ethnicity groups. Due to the increase in young people charged for serious violence offences, we are currently seeing 60% of the FTE cohort receiving a conviction in Court.

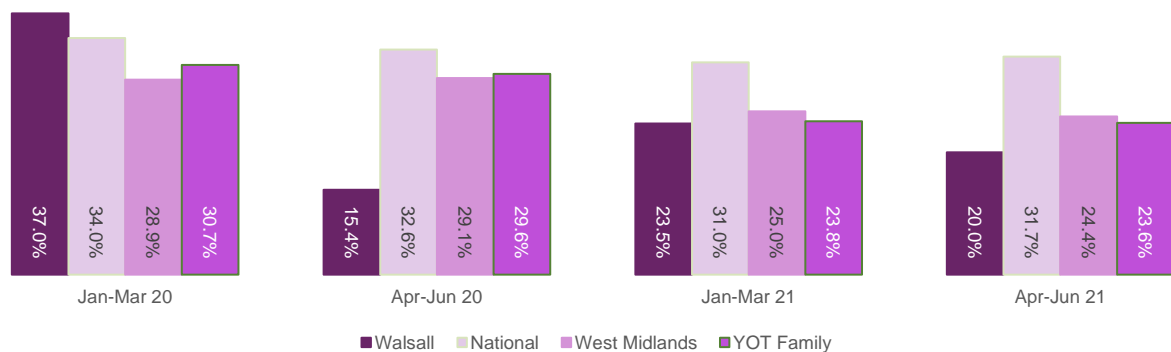
Re-offending:

What we have done during 2022/23 to reduce re-offending:

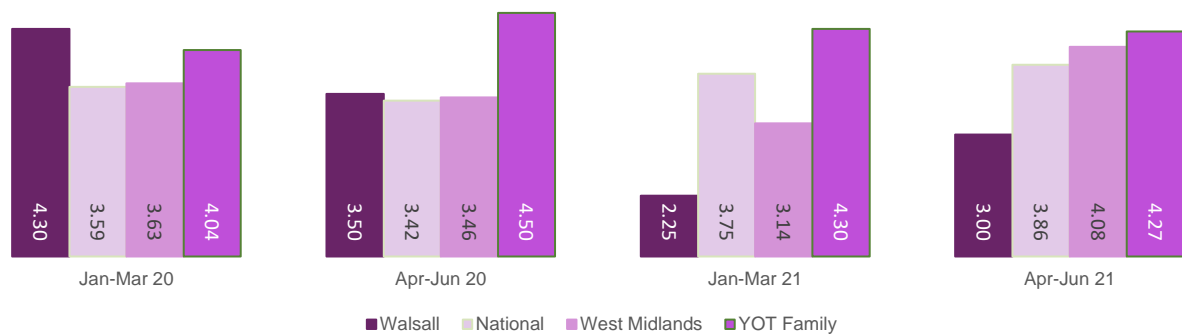
- The YJS has focussed on improving the assessment practice of youth justice officers, including a focus on reviewing and safely reducing risk in the right circumstances.
- Walsall have continued to embed the use of a restorative 'MyPlan' with our children subject to both out of court disposals and court 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, such as culture, identity, victims and important external controls.
- We have a good partnership in place with pro-active and supportive Police colleagues within the Offender Management Unit.
- 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 our sport programmes. Positive activities are further strengthened by a growing community reparation offer.
- We have worked with the Fire Service to deliver virtual reality interventions to those children involved in vehicle and driving related offending.
- Our partnership with St-Giles is set to continue over the next 2 years to provide lived experienced mentors to some of our most vulnerable and risky children.

% Reoffending - Binary Rate



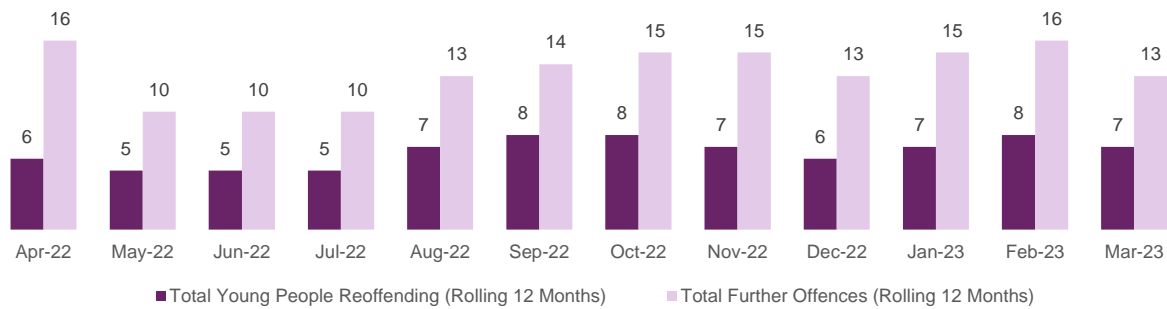
Reoffending Rates After 12 Months - Reoffences per child



The above charts represent the latest quarterly published re-offending data for Walsall in comparison to its regional, national and statistical comparators. If we consider the full 12-month period our binary rate rises to 26.6% (a 0.34% improvement on the same period, the previous year). This relates to 21 children re-offending committing a further 52 offences. This gives us a frequency rate of 2.48 re-offences per child which is better than our statistical neighbours. Our assessments of desistance remain good and our offer to children involved in offending is strong.

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 responder quickly to emerging patters and trends and support individual children who may need rapid wrap around car.

Number of Reoffenders & Further Offences



Children from overrepresented groups

What we have done during 2022/23 to reduce disproportionality and improve outcomes for children with black and mixed ethnicities:

- HMIP were clear that our partnerships work to address disproportionality was meaningful and well embedded across the service.
- Reviewed the partnership full Ethnicity Analysis for 2020-2022 with a focus on the overrepresentation of children with mixed ethnicity.
- Our YJS Equality and Disproportionality Forum provides oversight of an action plan and enables youth justice professionals a safe space to discuss equality and diversity issues.
- The Disproportionality Practice Improvement Sub-Group meets regularly to consider practice developments needed as identified by the overarching Disproportionality Forum.
- The YJS have used funding through the Safer Walsall Partnership to set up a partnership with Open Lens Media to develop a Development Programme for boys with black and mixed ethnicities, using film, media and personal coaching to improve outcomes.
- The YJS have also used funding to commission a mentor to support black children within the secure estate and help prepare them to resettle back in the community.
- We have identified practitioner Disproportionality Champions to help lead on issues impacting our children.
- We have identified a lead for working with fathers to improve our practice.
- In 2022 and again in 2023, the YJS have supported Palfrey One Big Local in the schools Lionheart Challenge to help local children develop ideas to reduce the levels of violence.
- Although the number we work with is small, the YJS have supported a regional working group to improve outcomes for girls in the justice system.
- In partnership with the police and crime commissioner we deliver Stop and Search Programmes for children to improve their understanding of the law and their rights.

Ethnicity by Population 1.4.20 – 31.3.22			
Ethnicity	Percentage 10-17 Population	Percentage	Difference
Asian or Asian British	19% (5,473)	7% (10)	-12%
Black or Black British	3% (723)	12% (17) 1 less	9%
Chinese or other ethnic group	1% (423)	1% (2) 1 more	0%
Mixed	5% (1,396)	25% (37) 8 less	20%
White	72% (20,253)	55% (81) 26 less	-17%

Ethnicity by Offence Type						
Offence Type	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese or other ethnic group	Mixed	White	Total
Acquisitive Crime	1 (5%)	13 (17%)	1 (33%)	8 (11%)	57 (34%)	80 (24%)
Breach	0 (0%)	7 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (4%)	14 (4%)
Drugs Offences	6 (30%)	14 (19%)	0 (0%)	10 (14%)	9 (5%)	39 (12%)
Violent Offences	13 (65%)	41 (55%)	2 (67%)	52 (74%)	95 (57%)	203 (60%)
Grand Total	20	75	3	70	168	336

The youth justice partnership has reviewed its full ethnicity analysis to help us understand local disproportionality in the justice system, in addition to monthly monitoring. This year we were keen for this analysis to help us better understand children with mixed ethnicity. The charts above tell us that similarly to the national picture we continue to see the overrepresentation of black boys and boys with mixed ethnicity within the local justice system. The latest YJB data suggests 100% of custodial sentences between April 2022 - March 2023 were children with non-white ethnicity.

We have seen a slight increase in the number of Asian young people entering the system again this year, however overall, this group remains underrepresented in the formal justice system when considering the wider population in Walsall. 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 disproportionately represented in the numbers of children involved with breach of bail offences, and they are more likely to enter the system on average at a younger age of 14 or below. Our audits based upon the recommendations from the HMIP Thematic also highlighted that our service needs to improve how we engage with fathers and understand the impact of a missing father. This was further supported in our thematic multi-agency audits of children involved in the commission of serious violence and our audits of remanded children. Although absent fathers remain an ongoing issue for our boys, our audits told us that we also need to better understand the impact of anti-social fathers upon our children.

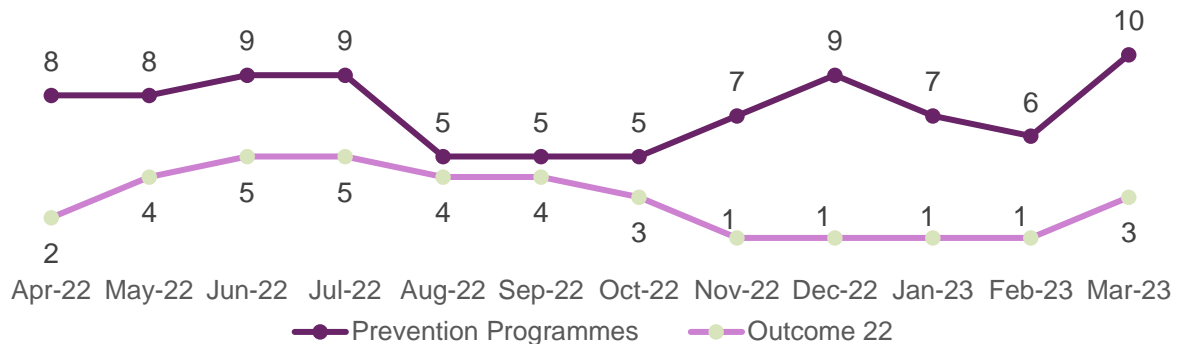
Reducing disproportionality has been a priority for the YJS during 2022-23 and will continue to be a priority over the next 2-year period.

Prevention, Diversion and Out of Court Disposals

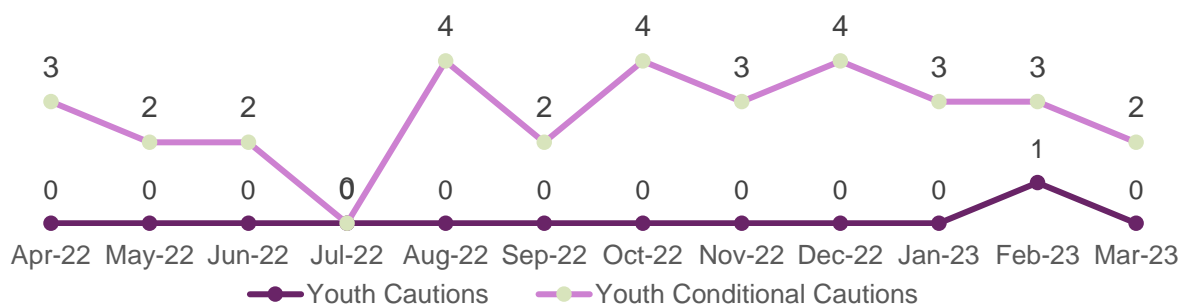
What we have done to improve prevention and diversion interventions and out of court disposals during 2022/23:

- Established a well-resourced Youth Justice Partnership Panel to provide oversight of diversion referrals and joint out of court disposal decisions.
- Early Help are a valued partner to the panel and the relationship with the Violence Reduction Partnership provides additional capacity and resource.
- The YJS have increased its practitioner capacity to work with children through the diversion pathway or who receive out of court disposals.
- Children are now assessed using the YJB's pre-court assessment tool after volunteering to pilot the tool.
- YJS practitioners deliver a range of creative and bespoke interventions for our children and have access to a strong youth offer.
- Quickly implemented the Ministry of Justice Turnaround Programme for children who meet the eligibility criteria.
- Continue to support children who have been referred from schools and children's services who have clear desistance concerns.

Prevention and Diversion



Out of Court Disposals



During the period between April 2022 and March 2023, Walsall YJS supported 33 children who received a type of caution. The vast majority of these disposals were Cautions with mandatory conditions. This number is directly comparable to previous years, although the number of children receiving an Outcome 22 decision or a diversion referral has increased. Over that period 14 children were given an Outcome 22 through the YJS Partnership Panel. Up until March 2023 we had supported 6 children through the Turnaround Programme and were working with a further 7.

The MOJ Turnaround Programme went live in December 2022 following a short preparation period. The MOJ are providing multi-year grant to YJS' across England and Wales over three years, funding them to intervene earlier and improve outcomes for children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system. 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 will be the lead professional for these children, who will assess, plan and co-ordinate interventions. We have also 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. We can track offending performance of the Turnaround cohort and will report more in next year's plan.

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

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

Research in Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service found that prosecuting children increased the likelihood of them re-offending even when considering different offence types and personal characteristics (*Kemp V, Sorsby A, Liddle M, Merrington S (2002). Assessing responses to youth offending in Northamptonshire. Nacro Research briefing 2.*)

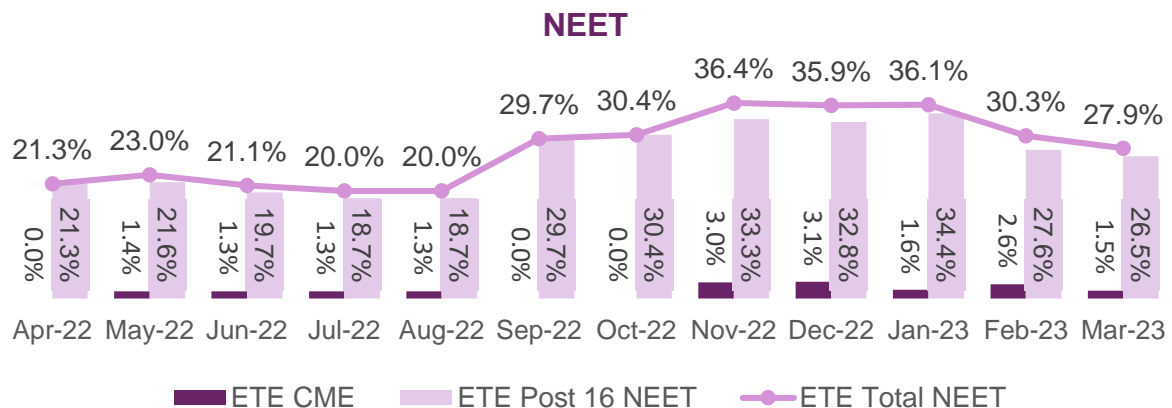
The Youth Justice Partnership approved a diversion pathway for children at risk of engaging in violent behaviour, offending and harmful sexual behaviour. In partnership with Walsall police, we established a daily triage process to identify children involved in violent behaviour. The panel is well resourced with colleagues from Children's Services, Early Help, NHS Liaison and Diversion, Beacon Drug and Alcohol Services, representatives from the VRP and commissioned intervention providers such as the Inspire Group. The panel identify the need for assessment and assign a lead professional to engage with the child and deliver intervention and support. All children eligible for out of court police disposals are also discussed at the Youth Justice Partnership Panel. A joint decision is made regarding eligibility and then allocated to a youth justice prevention officer to undertake an assessment and make a proposal for suitability based on risk, need, offence seriousness and the wishes of victims. The partnership is developing our ability to track the offending behaviour of this group of children to demonstrate effectiveness.

Education

What we have done work to improve education, training and employment outcomes during 2022/23:

- The YJS' partnership with the Virtual School/Inclusion Hub is strong and support our children under the age of 16.
- We have introduced 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 children remanded into custody.
- The YJS has had an Impact worker deployed to the team to support 16+ young people.
- We have a 16+ training pathway via Open Lens Media for our black boys.
- Our partnership with the Local Authority's employment and skills team actively monitors and manages our 16+ children with a NEET Action Group

- We are supported by Walsall Works, an initiative supported by local businesses to help young people find employment to develop work experience opportunities.
- The YJS is in partnership with the VRP to develop a reducing exclusion pathway.



Over the last 12 months the overall number and percentage of children not in education, training and employment has fluctuated from a very low 21.3% to 27.9%. We are aware through regular and close monitoring that the numbers of school age children missing education (CME) is low and that our partnership with the Virtual School works quickly to ensure that suitable school places are found and that we support those at risk of exclusion. Education outcomes for children CME improve when they receive our support. We are developing our partnership with Newleaf Pupil Referral Unit, alongside Early Help, to improve our prevention offer for children at risk of entering the justice system

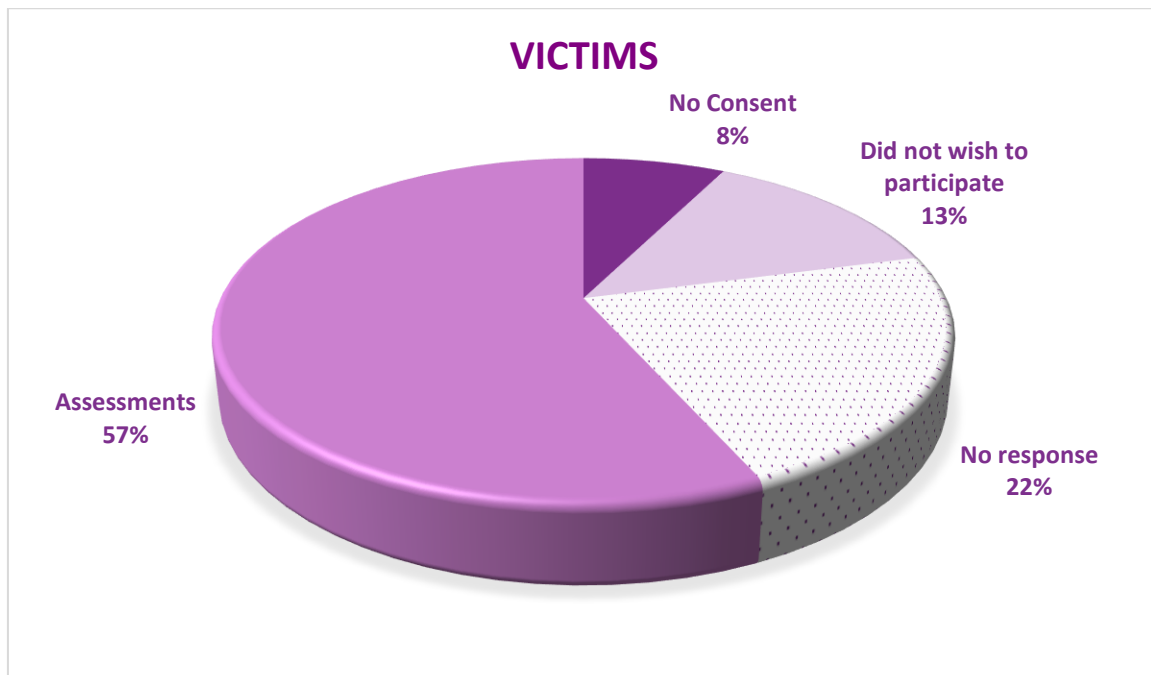
We do recognise that children often enter the youth justice system with special educational needs (currently 43%) and that children completing their intervention with us will often have reduced timetables, receive their education in short stay 'pupil referral units' (17%) and have experienced exclusion. 33% of our children have on average experienced at least 1 fixed term exclusion. 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

Walsall YJS has had a new Victim and Restorative Justice Officer in post for 12 months who contacts all victims where consent has been obtained. Where contact has been made with victims the interaction has overall been positive and support has been offered to those that have requested it in a variety of different ways. This has included referrals to other services such as counselling/support groups, drawing and talking therapy and face to face restorative meetings.

Over the past 12 months we have had 95 victims of crime committed by children. During the early stages of the new post being implemented we had difficulties with regards to gaining details for adult victims. This has since been rectified with the Police, but it did mean that we were unable to make contact with 28 victims over that period.

Below is a breakdown of the remaining 67 victims. 47 victims were contacted and 38 assessments were completed with those that wished to engage- 11 of them required or requested further support. In all cases where the victim was contacted, they were satisfied with the service that they received.

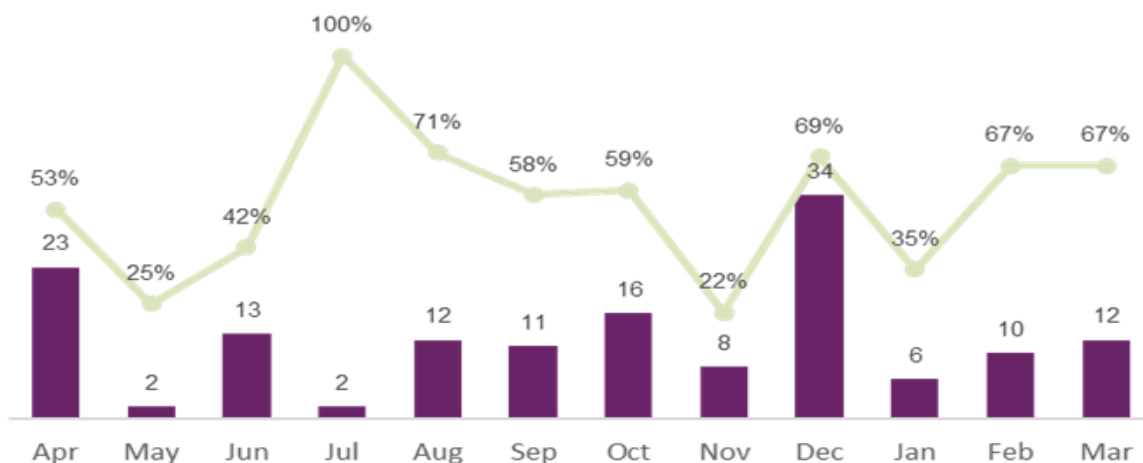


Serious Violence and Exploitation

Preventing and reducing youth violence is a strategic priority for the partnership. Between April 2022 and March 2023, Walsall YJS reported serious incident notifications for a total of 14 children in relation to offence such as wounding, attempted murder and murder. 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 within section 8 of this plan.

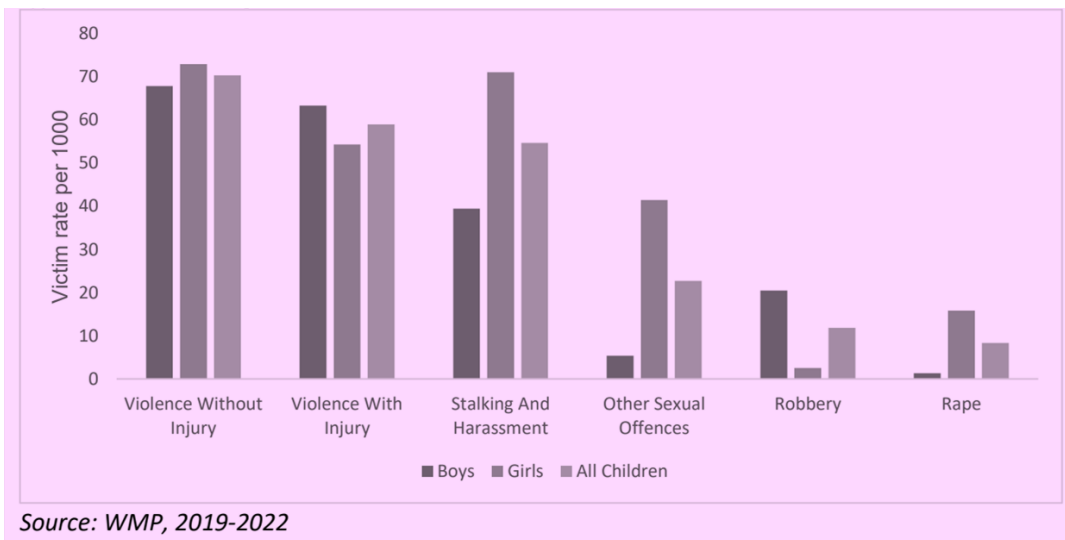
Violent offending is monitored on a monthly basis through the YJS performance scorecard. If we consider the period between April 2022 and March 2023, we can see that violent offences make up a significant percentage (56%) of all offences committed with a youth justice outcome.

Number and Percentage of Violent Offences April 22 - March 23



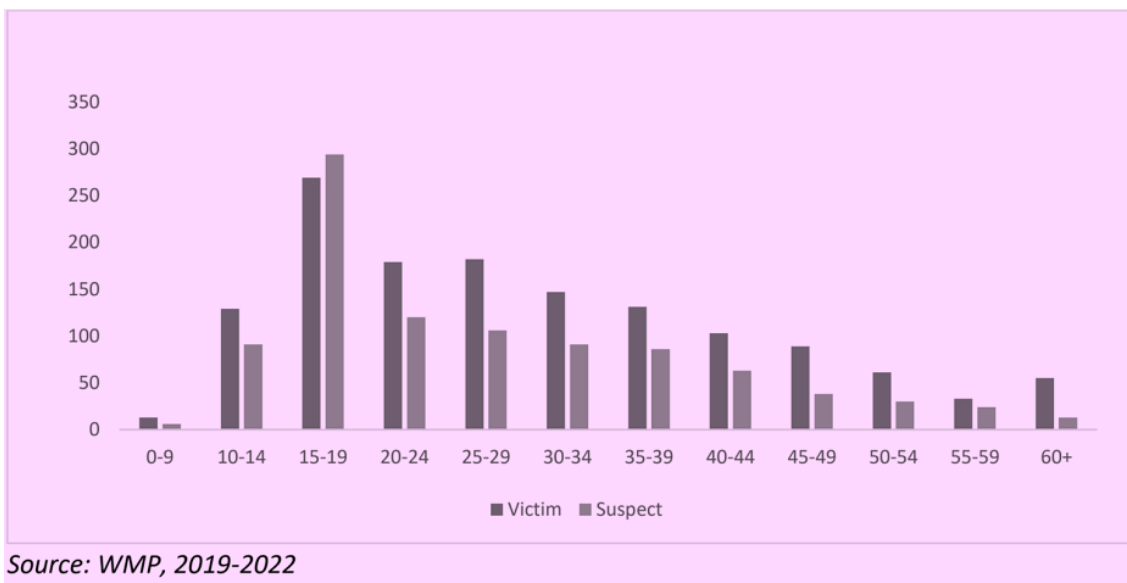
Further data can be found in Walsall's Serious Youth Violence Strategic Needs Assessment. Information from the Police suggests that girls were similarly impacted by violence when compared to boys and for some offence types, more likely to be victims.

Rate of children aged 13-17 years who were victims of violence, Walsall residents, by type of violence and gender.



We can see from the chart below that knife crime predominantly impacts upon children aged 15-19 and the probability decreases with age.

Volume of Knife Crime, victims and suspects, by age group, living in Walsall.



Learning from Serious Incidents:

The YJS has undertaken a review of children who have been involved serious violent incidents in 2022. This followed an excellent partnership review, written by a Head of Service from Children’s Social Care, which explored the journey of a 15-year-old boy who ultimately become involved in a fight and seriously injured another boy with a knife. The review was presented to the YJS Performance and Partnership Board in February 2023, alongside a case study which detailed the impact on the victim and the support provided to him and his family. The main learning points and recommendations from the review are detailed below:

Learning Points	Recommendations
Maintaining a focus on the child	Ensure clear training opportunities are in place for staff in conducting effective direct work with children when assessing their needs.
Issues of neglect and how we work with families where it is a long-standing issue	Ensuring that our assessment guidance regarding neglect is clear and that professionals involved understand its long-term impact in line with the current Walsall partnership Neglect Strategy.
Use of fixed term exclusions for younger children:	Ensure that staff within the Virtual School and Inclusion Hub provide support, challenge and training to schools who are excluding, ensuring they fully understand the implications and how they impact on outcomes
EHCP processes – when learning difficulties are identified	Ensure staff within the Virtual School and Inclusion Hub work alongside the SEN Team to ensure EHCPs are prioritised for children with a social worker/YJO and are, wherever possible, completed within timescales
Working with fathers and ensuring this is incorporated into children's plans:	A recent audit has been completed regarding working with fathers and the findings of this will be incorporated into overall practice development.
Step up/step down processes:	Within both MASH and across the localities, we need to ensure that the new step up/step down processes are working effectively, and that staff understand them clearly.
Earlier identification of Young People at risk of Serious Youth Violence:	A strategic needs assessment for youth violence has now been commissioned to provide an analysis and context in relation to incidents of serious youth violence here in Walsall and will inform a strategic coordinated approach to reduce youth violence and secure better outcomes for children, young people within their community.

The recommendations from the review of serious incidents in 2022, align with the above recommendations.

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

Walsall YJS are one of the three main statutory partners (YJS, Police and Social Care) who have joined together with Street Teams, a local organisation working with exploitation, to form Walsall's exploitation hub. The Hub meets daily to triage exploitation 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. Between April 2022 and March 2023, the YJS completed 12 exploitation assessments and associated referrals into the hub. Over the same period, 17 YJS children were referred into the NRM.

Children vulnerable to exploitation are also vulnerable to radicalisation and involvement with violent extremism. Although no children open to the YJS have been referred into prevent or Channel Panel over the past year, it is important that YJS staff are appropriately trained. As such, all staff are required to complete Prevent Training as part of their inductions. In February 2023 YJS practitioners attended a Synergy Training event at Bescot Stadium delivered by West Midlands Police Counter Terrorism Unit. The YJS Strategic Lead is the Chair of Channel Panel Walsall's Prevent Co-ordinator now is based alongside the YJS for increased connectivity.

Detention in Police Custody

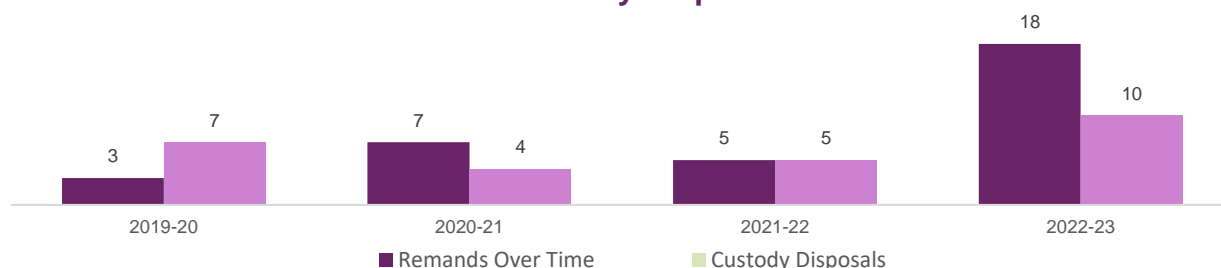
Between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023, there were 23 times, relating to 17 children, where a child was kept overnight in police custody. On 3 occasions a child was transferred to accommodation under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). There is good dialogue between the Police and the Local Authority (LA), however there is a mixture of outcomes. There is an even split between the LA reporting no beds available, with the decision being made that due to the time, transferring a child was inappropriate. 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.

Use of Remands, Custody and Constructive Resettlement

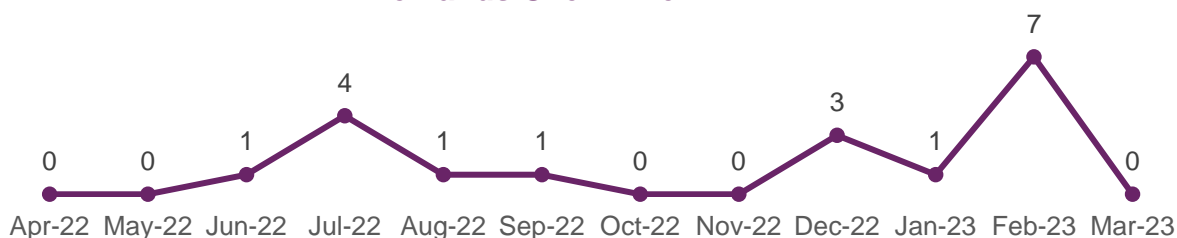
What we have done during 2022/23 to reduce the use of custody and improve outcomes:

- The partnership closely monitors children who enter the secure estate, undertakes audits and learning has been shared with the YJS Performance Board.
- A 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. We have effective and child first practice in Walsall.
- The partnership completed a multi-agency audit of remanded children and held a reflection event with partners to understand practice and issues impacting these boys.

Total Remands & Custody Disposals



Remands Over Time



The number of boys remanded into custody since April 2022 has been of huge concern to the partnership. The above chart highlights 18 remand episodes relating to 16 children, with 11 of these remands occurring between December and February. In February, 7 children were remanded for a murder offence committed in January. The violence behind these remands is concerning with 10 children remanded for murder. 8 of the children had not received YJS input prior to the remand and 8 children were receiving support from Social Care at the point of remand. The audit will help us drive forward improvements for children in the secure estate but will also support the partnership in understanding how to intervene earlier. We are working to make sure that all alternatives to remand are robustly considered on each occasion. Children receiving custodial sentences is a KPI and between April 2022 to March 2023 the number doubled to 10 when compared to the year before. 5 were imposed in December 2022 (total 28 offences), the majority of which were for violence. Overrepresentation can be seen with 63% of the cohort from an ethnic minority. Four children were first-time entrants.

10. Standards for children in the justice system

The introduction of 'Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019' required all youth justice services to undertake a base-line self-assessment in 2020. In 2020, Walsall YJS Performance Board assigned strategic leaders from across the partnership to ensure joint accountability and oversight of each of the standards within the self-assessment process. The self-assessment was split into two parts: an operational audit and a strategic audit of governance. The operational audits were undertaken by youth justice managers using audit tools adapted from the YJB template. The findings from the operational audits were shared with the relevant strategic leads to start the strategic assessment process. Please refer to Walsall YJS' Strategic Plan 2020-21 and 2021-22 for details. An action plan was put in place following the self-assessment and despite the pandemic, significant progress was made across all five standards.

As per communication from the YJB, a new national standards audit is due during 2023-2024. In consultation with the Lord Chancellor, the YJB have agreed that all youth justice services should complete a self-assessment against one selected Standard in 2023-2024. Selecting just one Standard reduces 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 means that time and attention can be given to the quality and accuracy of the self-assessment. The Standard selected is 2: At Court. Guidance on the content and process of the self-assessment will follow over the next months. Services will be required to return their self-assessment by the 31st October; and will receive individual feedback and support in developing a plan to address gaps from YJB Operations staff. The findings from this audit will be detailed in next year's plan.

11. Workforce development

The strengths of the Youth Justice Service are dependent upon the people working hard each day to improve outcomes for children. Our offer for staff is good and information throughout this plan details how the service has delivered training that is focussed on priorities and improving performance for children. Training has focussed on subjects such as motivational interviewing, restorative practice, cultural competence and unconscious bias, risk assessment and planning, speech and language, RESPECT family conflict training and many more. Walsall YJS are committed to investing in its staff to complete the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate (YJEPC) and the Child First qualification through Unitas. We currently have 3 new practitioners undertaking the YJEPC and two more planned for Autumn. In 2023, linked to our strategic priorities and our thematic learning, we have identified the need for further training to improve trauma awareness for children involved in serious youth violence, 'cultural competence' of our staff in engaging with complex and changing communities, confidence skills working within the criminal courts and bail assessment training. Following our thematic HMIP inspection of children on remand, we are keen to work together with colleagues in Social Care to deliver training on the lived experience of boys within the secure estate.

Our practice in 2022 was informed by a training plan 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. As a result of the pandemic, we now have trained Mental Health First Aiders and managers have been trained in supporting staff who are receiving clinical supervision with psychologists. Our wellbeing offer for the team will continue in 2023/24 and as our workforce changes, we are developing a new skills training plan for practitioners. We also undertake a yearly health check with staff and action findings to improve wellness at work. As mentioned previously in this plan, we are also staunch supporters of apprenticeships and are looking to upskill and attract positive values-based practitioners who have an interest in supporting children involved in offending. We need to diversify our offer to staff as we continue to struggle to recruit since the pandemic. This is detailed further in the section 12 of this plan.

12. Evidence-based practice and innovation

Continuing through 2022 we have worked closely with Children's Service's performance team to develop our quality assurance framework. This is ongoing and reflects new thinking and programmes, the introduction of new KPIs and changing priorities. Our performance scorecard continues to mature, and we have an audit process aligned with early help and children's social care. Combined with learning from practice reviews and inspections, the improvements in our oversight and the evidence gained from better analysis have supported changes in practice.

The evidence base of 'what works' to support and prevent children becoming involved in violence is growing. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) have recently 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.

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 of 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 the Inspire Group 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.

Below are other examples of how the YJS has adopted evidence-based practice:

Virtual Reality Interventions:

The YJS currently has two virtual reality intervention offers for our children. Firstly, we work with West Midlands Fire Service to deliver one to one virtual reality interventions with children involved with vehicle crime and secondly, 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 with YJS children and have high engagement rates.

'Punishing Abuse'

Dr Alex Chard and the West Midlands Combined Authority published the 'Punishing Abuse' research report in 2021 and the findings still resonate on practice today. Walsall YJS used funding to train all our practitioners and managers in undertaking the action research used to provide the research base for Punishing Abuse. Its goal was to fully understand the extent of abuse and childhood adversity that children in the justice system have experienced. Through the commission of the research, the ALTAR™ framework was developed by Dr Chard which focused on Abuse, Loss, Trauma, Attachment and Resilience (ALTAR).

The Walsall YJS specific research report identified that within the sample group that our children had experienced a significant amount of Adverse childhood Experiences (ACEs) with one of the children experiencing 11 of the 12 recognised ACEs. Within this, the research found a number of themes through the narratives and storylines of the children considered. This included, but not limited to; high levels of household violence, increase levels of emotional abuse and neglect, the extent of poverty these children experienced and a disproportionate amount of parental substance misuse and poor mental health. However, in addition to this the research uncovered further childhood adversity not traditionally considered within the ACE model. These included:

- Radicalisation within a family.
- Trafficking and Criminal exploitation.
- Witnessing the near death of a parent.
- Being left abroad without parents.
- Possible substance abuse during pregnancy; and,
- The impact of immigration

As an example of practice change as a result of increased trauma awareness, the YJS adapted our policy on compliance and engagement. We adopted a 'was not brought' approach to appointments, rather than 'did not attend' and we implemented 'engagement meetings with parents to uncover barriers to participation. Managers adapted their quality assurance processes to provide a spotlight on issues of childhood adversity within our assessments, plans and reports.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Through CAMHS we have a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) offer for our children. There is a wealth of evidence supporting the use of DBT and since its inception to support those suffering with borderline personality disorders, the use of DBT has been developed to help children with a variety of conditions or health concerns. In Walsall, our trained therapists understand that the adolescent brain does not stop developing until the age of 25 and as such there are opportunities to engage with children to help stop stigmatised diagnoses as an adult. When practitioners recognise potential trauma in our children, our CAMHS therapist will use DBT to develop the skills of our children to better manage distress before going on to try and address the pain through trauma therapy. We use DBT to help our children address several issues they are facing such as deliberate self-harm, anger, relationships and difficulties with sense of self.

Motivational Interviewing:

Our YJS practitioners are trained in Motivational Interviewing, and this works well in support of our DBT offer. Motivation Interviewing (MI) is an evidence-based method of communication that is used to support behaviour change. *"MI is a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal..within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion."* (Miller & Rollnick, 2013)

"MI is a collaborative, goal-orientated style of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion"
(Miller and Rollnick, 2013)

13. 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 2021-24. Our service improvements contained within this strategic plan will have a basis on that approach. Informed by an independent review of progress, our local Performance and Partnership Board originally developed our strategic direction and priorities in January 2022 in support of this plan and determined governance arrangements that will drive forward service improvements. An update to our multi-year plan (2022-25) was considered in June 2023 and our priorities were confirmed. Board members will own strategic priorities and chair sub-groups to ensure progress is being made with oversight from the YJS Performance and Partnership Board.

The YJS changed office space in 2022 to co-locate with colleagues in the Police, Walsall's Exploitation Team and the MASH. We believe there are clear strategic and operational benefits to be had from the co-location of managers and practitioners:

- Improve our focus on our Reducing Serious Youth Violence strategic priority.
- Improve our strong relationship with the police and support of high-risk children.
- Develop our partnership with the Multi-agency Exploitation Hub and work to reduce exploitation.
- Better information sharing between partners and more efficient daily triage processes.
- Develop our pathways with Children's Social Care through the MASH front door.

The YJS Partnership has reviewed the incidents of serious youth violence that occurred in 2022. We had an unprecedented number of children involved in violent offences that met the threshold for notification to the Youth Justice Board and as such the partnership completed a multi-agency audit exploring the journey of these children from early years until their current circumstances. There were a number of findings and recommendations that were consistent across the children such as overrepresentation of boys with black and mixed ethnicity, the impact of both absent and present fathers, poor experience of education including exclusions and family involvement with early help and social care services. These learning reviews, alongside a wide range of youth justice information and data contributed towards the Safer Walsall Partnership's Serious Violence Needs Assessment. The YJS partnership is a leading agency in the development of the wider serious youth violence strategy.

Thematic Review:

The YJS partnership received an HMIP thematic inspection in June 2023 which focussed on children remanded into the secure estate. We know we have had an increase in the numbers of remanded children between April 2022 and March 2023 and we used this opportunity to pull the partnership together to better understand the journeys behind these children, learn from audit and activity and ultimately improve practice. The serious youth violence and the disproportionality that underpins these remands is a priority for our partnership.

In preparation, we delivered a learning and reflection event following a multi-agency audit of all the children who were in scope for this inspection. This included children who were remanded into YOIs and those who were subject to a substantive bail programme as a direct alternative. In addition to the YJS, partners from Social Care, Police, Early Help and Education audited practice including assessment, planning, multi-agency working and child and family engagement, with an overall grade based on the impact and difference made for the child or young person. A wider lens was given to consider the historical context for these children to understand if there were any potential missed opportunities. We have in place an audit action plan.

We are pleased that the inspectors found effective practice here in Walsall and that 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.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) Assurance Review 2021:

In a desire to continually move forward, the YJS Partnership commissioned an independent assurance review of progress based on the recommendations made within Walsall's HMIP inspection report in 2019. The findings from this review continue to be relevant today and have helped shape our direction and priorities.



Context and methodology of the HMIP Assurance Review:

It is important to place the review in context as the evidence examined will reflect what had been happening to the service. The unprecedented challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be underestimated particularly which significantly curtailed the delivery of public services.

In keeping with the peer-review ethos, the process was essentially evidence based with desktop analysis and review of key documentation. Over 80 separate local documents were examined alongside national guidance including the revised HMIP Inspection Standards. The written evidence ranged from operational policies to partnership board papers and performance data. Of particular importance were the statutory YJS Plan and the 2019 Inspection report. Triangulation of evidence was through an analysis of a small number of case records.

Areas Considered within the HMIP Assurance Review	Summary of Progress	Actions and Response
Out of Court Disposal Model	The issues raised by HMIP have been successfully addressed & practice has been adjusted to provide a more robust approach to OOC. Some minor adjustments are needed to reflect the updated inspection standards.	Develop the performance reporting of the YJS 'front door': Performance Scorecard now reflects prevention, diversion & OOC. Review the YJS Crime Prevention Strategy: Reviewed. Review the pre-court assessment tool The YJS piloted the YJB pre-court assessment tool & have implemented it.
Management of risk of harm	The main issues with respect to practice highlighted by HMIP have been successfully addressed through training & ongoing quality assurance. However there have been consequences that may have led to unsustainable levels of high-risk cases placing pressure on the service. Partnership commitment to working with high-risk cases needs refreshing.	Implement review assessment training with practitioners. Asset training implemented with the team. Review ToR for the YJS high risk panel. Completed. Improve the use of MyPlan to capture external controls. Completed Review the partnership with the Police: A regional OOC model & JD for youth crime officers is being developed.
Victim Model	Despite swift actions to respond to HMIP findings, it became clear the arrangements did not deliver the improvements required. However, the YJS deserves credit for keeping this under review & Board approved the recruitment of a victim officer.	Recruit a dedicated victim officer to lead on practice. Our Victim Officer has been in post for over 12 months and make a clear difference to practice.
Performance and Partnership Board	The issues raised by HMIP with respect to information provided to the Partnership Board have been successfully addressed with comprehensive routine data provided. This is supported by more in-depth reports on priority topics. The Board responded decisively to the areas identified by HMIP. It will be aided by creating a firmer relationship with the operational service, deepening its understanding of youth justice activity and ensuring the child's voice plays a more prominent role.	Improve the performance scorecard to include diversion work: Performance Scorecard reflects prevention, diversion & OOC. Commission a deep dive analysis of FTE: A further joint audit with the Police is underway. Performance is improving. Develop the links between the operational service and Board members. Ensure children's voice is heard at Board. The Board model was reviewed, themed meetings led by partners, examples of children's voice influencing strategy. YJS Practice week occurred Jan 2023

The recommendations from the review have supported the partnership in identifying its strategic priorities for 2022 to 2025 and actions will be included within delivery plans.

14. Challenges, risks and issues

Although our offer for staff is strong, since the covid pandemic the YJS has continued to struggle to recruit youth justice officers and has relied upon agency staff to cover vacancies. We recognise that this is a national issue, but we are trying to address the problem in several ways. Our recruitment processes are being reviewed to update how we advertise and select candidates in an effort to reach talent. Our flexible working arrangements are strong, and we are considering innovations such as a 9-day fortnight to encourage practitioners to apply. We are also supporters of apprenticeships and are looking to upskill and attract positive values-based people from across children's services who are interested in supporting children involved in offending.

Our Workforce and Inclusion Strategy now details career pathways for our staff who are looking for progression or who are wanting to develop their skills and opportunities within their current role. It also expands upon the welfare support that is on offer to managers and practitioners who undertake a difficult and challenging job. Walsall YJS are committed to investing in the workforce.

The YJB have recently written to Youth Justice partnerships to detail the national issue of high vacancy rates for Probation Officers (POs) and Probation Support Officers (PSOs). We recognise the unique expertise that Probation staff bring to our multi-agency partnership, especially in relation to MAPPA procedures, safeguarding and managing transitions to adult justice services. In Walsall, we have held a Probation Officer vacancy for nearly 12 months, although we have covered transition work through agency staff. The level of Probation vacancies is reflective of the current national resource pressures in the Probation Service. The risks associated with Probation Officer recruitment are linked to an exciting opportunity we have here in Walsall with the development of a dedicated transition hub. We agency staff undertaking the YJS role and we are working with our Probation colleagues to recruit specialist PO and PSOs who will work closely with youth justice officers to complete transition and maturity interventions. We are improving our links with Brinsford YOI (18 to 21) and are exploring a transition apprenticeship post.

The service has worked through the challenges of remote working and with new co-located office space in the Civic Centre we have moved into a new phase of blended working. This has provided the team with the much-needed physical space to more effectively manage risk and support our children. It also improves our ability to monitor the wellbeing of the team and provide space to support each other. Our Workforce and Inclusion Strategy also put other measures in place to ensure that our team are resilient enough to work with the most vulnerable 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 children's services exploitation team to address the levels of violence in these areas. The YJS has improved its community links, has engaged with local community associations and established intervention centres in localities where there is often concerning behaviour. We have linked in with local schools, have engaged in community events such as the Lionheart Project, and provided diversion interventions to those children caught on the periphery of disorder. However, these are long term multi-generational issues and continued work in these localities will need to continue.

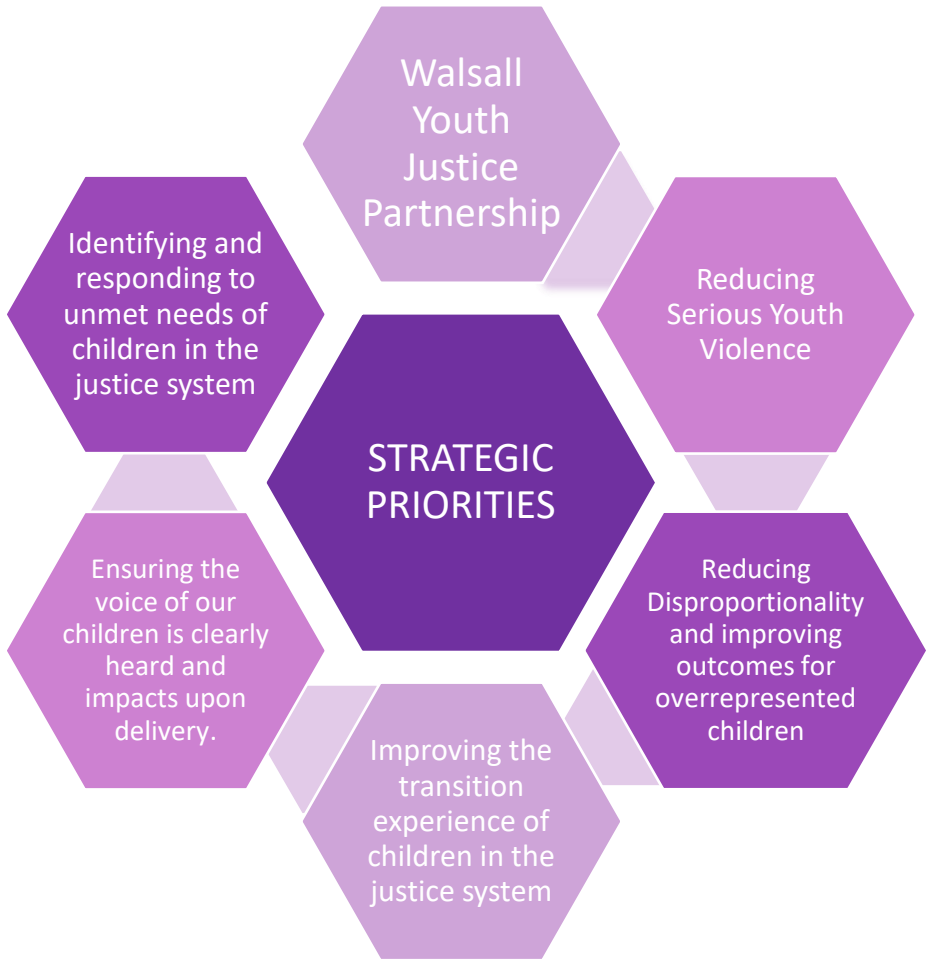
Our children have told us that often they feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods and that they carry knives as this makes them feel safer. Serious youth violence within their communities is a priority for them. The children that we have consulted with overwhelmingly believe that one of the major contributing factors to the increase in youth violence is that there is a lack of positive activities for them in their communities. As a Youth Justice Service, we recognise the need to have a strong and varied positive activity offer for our children which includes sport, music and other projects. We also know that the children we work with can be additionally vulnerable to exploitation or

abuse outside of the family or school environment. This can take a variety of different forms including exploitation by criminal gangs such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and radicalisation. As a key partner within the Exploitation Hub and daily exploitation triage, we are working together to identify and respond to safeguarding risks as soon as possible. As first responders our practitioners' complete referrals through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and undertake exploitation assessments. The YJS has also established a clear pathway between exploitation triage and the YJS partnership panel to offer diversion where appropriate.

Our youth justice partnership recognises that our health pathways for children in the justice system in Walsall need to improve and level up with other local authorities in the Black Country. Speech, language and communication provision and pathways need to be further developed locally. The partnership has identified this as a key priority for 2022 to 2025. We have secured Public Health funding for a school nurse post for the YJS and have established a speech and language offer through the Virtual School. This being said, we still have a lot of work to do to increase our health resource to a comparable level with other services in the West Midlands.

15. Looking forward

Walsall youth justice partnership are 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 one year into our 3-year plan and recognise the hard work needed to make a long-lasting difference to children in the justice system.



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.**

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:**

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**

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

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

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

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**

Strategic Lead: YJS Strategic Lead



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

Walsall YJS Performance and Partnership Board are determined to improve its governance of the partnership in line with HMIP inspections standards and reviewed governance from the Youth Justice Board. As such we have reviewed the terms of reference for the Board and its members, and we have created a new infrastructure where full board meetings are focussed upon individual themed priorities. Underneath this model, the strategic leads identified above will chair sub-groups based upon the priorities to drive forward progress.

For 2022 onwards, Board members want to be more involved in service delivery and better understand the complex lives of the children we support. Therefore, we have reviewed our Board member induction pack and, in addition to the priority sub-groups, introduced a series of observations and participation activities for Board members with the practitioners and managers within the YJS. To further improve our understanding of the lived experience of our children we have identified hearing their voice as a priority for 2022 and we are exploring different ways to highlight their stories and bring their voices closer to strategic decision makers.

These are exciting developments for Walsall’s youth justice partnership in 2023. The Youth Justice Service practitioners and managers, alongside our strategic board members, are committed to driving forward delivery for children in the justice system and continuing to improve their outcomes.

16. Sign off, submission and approval

Chair of YJS Board	Sally Rowe- Executive Director of Childrens Services	Phil Rutherford- YJS Strategic Lead
Signature		
Date	04.09.2023	28.07.2023

17. Appendices

Appendix 1

Current YJS Performance and Partnership Board membership:

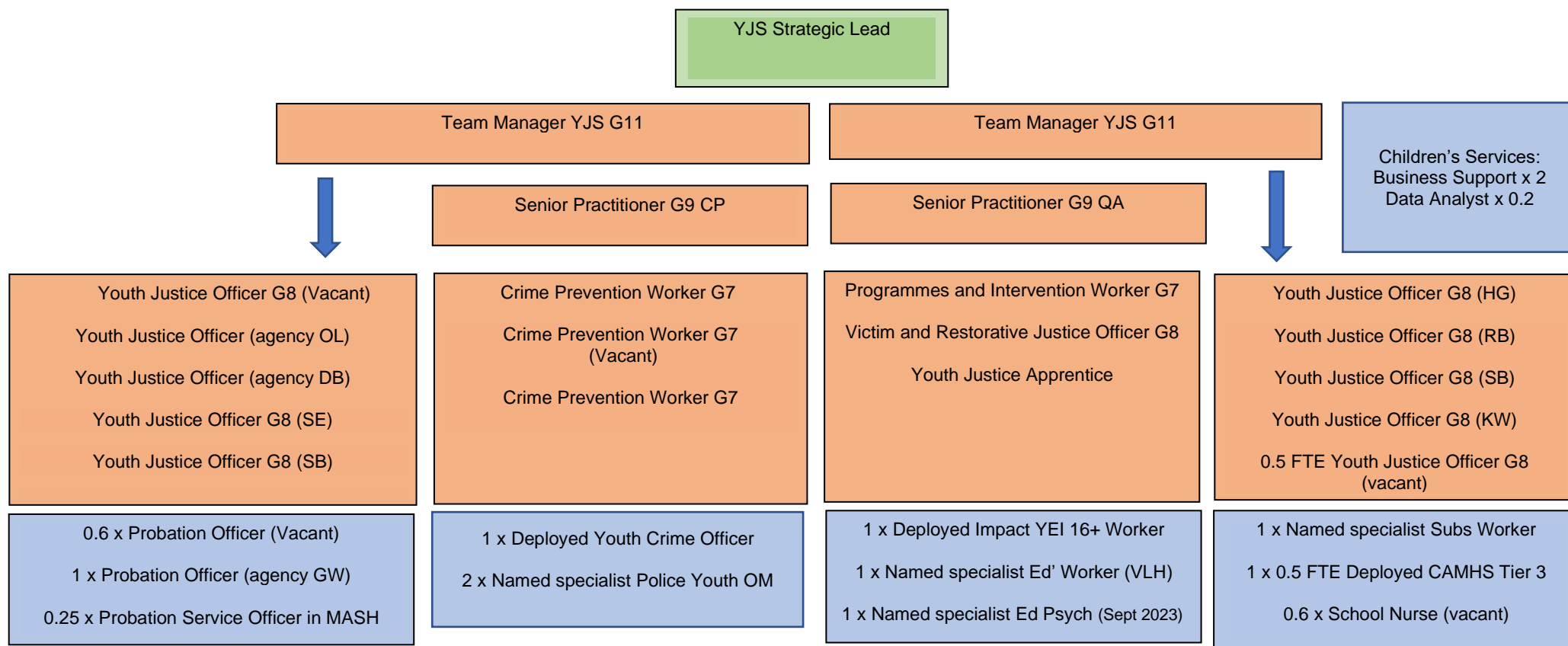
- West Midlands Police – Superintendent
- National Probation Service – NPS lead for the Black Country
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services- Head of Commissioning
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services- Clinical Lead
- Black Country Magistrates Youth Panel Chair
- Head of Safeguarding – HMYOI Werrington
- Local Authority –
 - Director of Children’s Services (Chair)
 - Public Health – Lead Consultant
 - Head of Resilient Communities
 - Community Safety Manager
 - Education- Director of Access and Achievement
 - Education- Virtual School Lead
 - Education- Head of Inclusion
 - 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- Head of Innovation and Engagement
- Local Authority Accountant – finance.
- Local Authority Performance Officer
- Administrative Support, Youth Justice Service

Last 4 Performance & Partnership Board Meeting Attendees					
Name	Job Title	10/05/2022	23/09/2022	17/02/2023	14/06/2023
Sally Rowe (Chair)	Director of Children's Services	x	x		x
Frances Bate	Team Manager, Walsall Youth Justice Service	x	x		
Phil Rutherford	Strategic Lead, Youth Justice Service (YJS)	x	x	x	x
Mamps Gill	YJB, Head of Region for Midlands	x	x	x	x
Lorraine Thompson	Virtual Schools for Looked After Children	x		x	x
Lee Allen	Senior Performance Officer, Children & Social Care	x	x		
Samantha Jones	Superintendent for West Midlands Police	x			
Lee Westlake	Special Advisor to the P&P Board Meeting	x	x	x	x
David Elrington	Regulatory Services Manager	x	x		
Leanne Barnet	Deputy Head of Walsall & Wolverhampton Probation Service	x			
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Service, QA and Performance Improvement	x		x	
Margaret Courts	Head of CAMHS Commissioning for the Black Country And West Birmingham CCG	x	x	x	x
Ann Williams	Finance- accountant	x			
Isabel Vanderheeren	Director of Early Help Partnership Children's Services	x	x	x	x
Jane Kaur-Gill	Employment & Skills Manager, Regeneration	x			
Zoe Morgan	Head of Service for Health, Protection & Support	x	x		x
Mark Patrick	Team Manager, Walsall Youth Justice Service	x			
Khalique Shah	Business Support Officer	x	x	x	x
Tanya Collier	Lead Accountant, Children's Services		x		
Sharon Kelly	Director of Access & Inclusion, Children's Services		x	x	
Paramjit Bains	Chair of Black Country Youth Panel		x		x
Shona Chand	Victim Liaison Officer, Walsall Youth Justice Service		x	x	
Daina Anderson	Founder & CEO of Open Lens Media		x		
Natalie Lau	Head of Walsall & Wolverhampton Probation		x	x	x
Malachi Edwards	Young person		x		
Kelly Rutherford	Senior Practitioner, Walsall Youth Justice Service			x	
Samuel Booth	Apprentice, Walsall Youth Justice Service			x	
Emma Thomas	Deputy Head of Service & Partnership Lead for Business Insights			x	
Nadia Ingles	Consultant in Public Health – Inequalities & Mental Well-being			x	x
Emma Fletcher	Seconded Service Manager & Clinical Lead, Walsall CAMHS			x	
Steve Gittins	Community Safety Manager, Walsall Council			x	x
Esther Higdon	Public Health for Children & Young People			x	
Rob Thomas	Head of Access & Education			x	
Maria Kilcoyne	Associate Director for Safeguarding & Partnerships			x	x
Jonathan Parkes	Head of Safeguarding - Werrington YO1				x
David McNally	Youth Justice Board- regional advisor				x
Pervez Mohammed	West Midlands Police- Superintendent				x
Ricky Otto	Disproportionality Resettlement Officer				x
John O'Connor	Team Manager – Walsall YJS				x

Walsall Youth Justice Service- Structure Chart June 2023



Position (no known disabilities)	Sex	Ethnicity
Strategic Lead	Male	White
Team Managers	1 x male and 1 x female	2 x White
Senior Practitioners	2 x female	2 x White
Youth Justice Officers	7 x female	2 x white, 3 x black, 1 x Asian, 1 x mixed (1.5 x vacancy)
Crime Prevention Workers	2 x female	1 x white, w x Asian (1 x vacancy)
Programme Worker	Male	Black

Appendix 3

Safer Lives Survey Summary 2023:

Exposure to violent media: 53% of young people surveyed stated that they saw violent images or videos on social media on a daily basis. 60% watched violent TV or films that contained violence on a weekly basis and 40% played violent computer games on a weekly basis. Over 90% of young people surveyed listened to violent lyrics each day.

Exposure to violence in daily life: 40% of the young people had seen violence within their school or college on a monthly basis, with only 2 stating that this occurred each week. The majority (40%) had seen violence within the local neighbourhood during the past month, with 27% stating this occurred on a weekly basis. When considering violence in other areas, similarly, 40% had experienced violence each month, 13% had experienced violence in other areas.

How safe do our young people feel?: 40% of young people surveyed expressed that they felt safe within their school or college with 40% stating that they neither felt safe or unsafe. 53% neither felt safe or unsafe in the local area or surrounding areas. With 13% stating that they felt very unsafe in their local area.

The people they know: All children surveyed knew someone who had previously been the victim of serious violence and someone who needed hospital treatment. 20% of young people stated that they know 10 or more young people who had been the victim of violence. 60% of the young people knew at least one person who carried a knife, with 40% knowing someone involved in the supply of drugs. The majority of young people in the survey felt they could talk to their parents if they were worried about violence. Only 2 of the young people felt confident in approaching the police. Majority of young 73% would turn to a friend and 27% felt they could talk to their YJS worker.

What is important to our young people:

Only 7% of young people thought that the Police make the lives of young people safer. 40% of young people surveyed did not feel that young people should be sent to prison if found in possession of a knife. A staggering 73% thought that young people carry knives to feel safe. 53% of young people felt that working hard on education and getting good grades was important. 40% felt that having expensive clothes and jewellery was not important to them, with 27% believing they are important. Positively 87% of young people felt that they could talk to their parents/carers if they were worried about violence.

What would they do to make things safer? 40% of the young people believed that banning knives/taking knives off the streets would make things safer. 14% acknowledged that having activities/youth clubs in the community would help. 14% of young people identified that listening more and understanding the reasons why young people carry knives would be helpful in tackling the issue. Knives featured in over 70% of the responses received with all identifying more awareness is needed.

Appendix 4

Breakdown of expenditure to accompany certificate, 2022-23

Walsall

INCOME	Youth Justice Board ¹	Local Authority	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Welsh Government	Other	Total
Cash	£467,647	£591,988	£21,888	£76,885	£5,000				£1,163,408
In-kind									£0
Total income	£467,647	£591,988	£21,888	£76,885	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	£1,163,408

1. This includes *all* grants received from YJB

If possible, please provide a breakdown against each funding source. If this information is not retained, please give details of the total amounts spent against each area.

EXPENDITURE	Youth Justice Board ²	Local Authority	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Welsh Government	Other	Total
Salaries	£349,537	£421,264	£21,888	£76,885					£869,574
Activity costs	£9,907	£9,916							£19,823
Accommodation	£0								£0
Overheads	£102,538	£147,556			£5,000				£255,094
Equipment	£5,665	£13,252							£18,917
Total expenditure	£467,647	£591,988	£21,888	£76,885	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	£1,163,408

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

Appendix 5

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:
Ensure that all children have a comprehensive ETE assessment.	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.
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>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/families are being offered appropriate support. They also work closely with Youth Justice staff to offer support & guidance when managing complex situations.</p> <p>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>
Develop ambitious aims for ETE work in the YJS, including the achievement of Level 2 English and Maths by every child.	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.
Establish a greater range of occupational training opportunities for those children beyond compulsory school age	<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.</p> <p>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>
Monitor & evaluate the levels of educational engagement & attainment in disproportionately represented groups within the YOT caseload in order to develop improvement.	<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	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

assess, review and improve the quality and suitability of service provision	
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

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
MAPP	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