

# Walsall Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025

Updated June 2024






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## 1.Introduction, vision and strategy

### **Foreword from Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership:**



We are now in the final year of the Youth Justice Partnership's three-year plan and this review gives us an opportunity to look back at some achievements of the past 12 months and space to consider how to best continue improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children in Walsall. The partnership remains in a good position to improve practice and ensure that the Youth Justice Service is well resourced. This being said, there is more work to be done!

Our partnership commitment to the Youth Justice 'Child First' vision continues and this aligns well with the Walsall Right 4 Children vision aimed at ensuring "every Child and Family in Walsall is understood, feels happy and safe, with a strong sense of belonging enabling them to learn, achieve and succeed." It is encouraging to hear our partners in the justice system and beyond recognise the 'Child First' vision and use language that supports it.

It's an exciting time in Walsall. Our Youth Justice Service led on a West Midlands wide bid to create an Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder Project which will develop services for vulnerable children of black and mixed heritage in Walsall, in or on the periphery of the youth justice system. Similarly in March 2024 Walsall received confirmation that they had been successful in their bid to be a Families First Wave Two Pathfinder commencing in July 2024. This is an exciting opportunity to lead national level reforms of Children's Services and partnership working to protect children and help and support families. The Pathfinder Programme represents an exciting opportunity for Walsall Council and Children's Services to be at the forefront of sector-wide reforms, to design and test those reforms, and support their implementation nationally.

We continue as a learning organisation and have commissioned a strategic needs assessment of the children within the youth justice system here in Walsall. This has helped our strategic partnership better understand the children we support and to identify the areas on which we need to focus over the coming year and beyond. Children's views have helped shape this analysis and although this has told us that our youth justice practitioners are excellent at forming strong and positive relationship, we also know that often these children enter the system with unmet needs.

This year the YJS Performance and Partnership Board has continued to grow and mature, and it is closely aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership and Safeguarding Partnership. Our partners from our closest secure estate, Werrington HMYOI and Brinsford HMYOI, have been a welcome addition and have helped us get assurance regarding the care of children in the secure estate.

The HMIP joint thematic inspection in June 2023 has had a lasting impact upon local practice and brought the complex needs of children in the secure estate into focus. There has been an increase in the number of Walsall children sent to YOIs over the past two years and therefore the inspection presented us with an opportunity to learn and consider our practice for these children across the partnership.

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 2024 we have reviewed these priorities, and the below plan sets out where we want to focus our attention over the next 12 months and beyond. Over the coming year the YJS Board will consider the successes and areas to improve whilst preparing for our next multi-year plan from 2025.

**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 May 2024.

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

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. Our Child First vision, aligns well with Walsall Children's Services aspirations, foundations, and priorities for our children:

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



## Our Foundations

We will focus on understanding children’s lived experience and how we can improve them	We will work with children, young people and families and their local communities enabling them to make positive and sustainable connections	We will focus on or actively addressing gaps in equality and racism.	We will learn and improve together – we will drive a culture of continuous improvement by diligently closing the learning loop	We will continue to be proud of what we do and celebrate our achievements
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### 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 the below national key performance indicators (KPI):

Main KPI	New KPI from April 2023
Reducing the number of young people entering the system for the first time	Accommodation suitability:
Reducing re-offending	Education, training & employment (ETE):
Reducing the use of custodial disposals.	Special Educational Needs
	Mental and emotional wellbeing:
	Substance misuse needs & intervention:
	Out of court disposals (OOCs):
	Management Board attendance:
	Serious youth violence (SYV):
	Victim referrals and intervention:

Reducing the number of young people entering the Youth Justice System also remains a key Council objective. According to the YJB database, between January 2023 and December 2023, the number of first-time entrants in Walsall reduced by 13% when compared to the previous 12-month period.

Published re-offending data for Walsall YJS has demonstrated a further 1% improvement in the binary rate when compared to the previous 12-month period. The latest proportion of young people re-offending is measured at 25.3% which is better than the national and regional average. Positively, alongside an improving binary rate, the number of re-offences that are committed at 3.65 per child is low when compared to national and regional performance.

In Walsall we are worried about the number of our children that have been remand and sentenced to custody, and particularly concerned about the serious violence that underpins those custodial outcomes. Our current published performance is 0.38 per 1000 of the 10-17 population which is higher than our regional and national comparators. This is equating to 12 custodial sentences between January and December 2023. These numbers include a single serious incident in Walsall in January 2023 where 7 children were remanded and 5 were eventually sentenced to lengthy custodial sentences.

## 2. Local context



# Our Children in Walsall

## POPULATION1: 286,105

### 0-17 POPULATION : 69,375 (24.2%)

The Number of Children and Young People aged 0-17 is projected to rise to 71,570 by 2034 (increase of 3.5%)

Almost 1 in 4 people are children aged below 16, 24.2% (69,375) of walsall's population (286,105) are children and young people under the age of 18 years with under 16s have 12.1% increase over the decade.



18,179(26.3%) are under 5  
19,630(28.4%) are aged 5-9  
20,045(29%) are aged 10-14  
11,267(16.3%) are aged 15-17



## Children and Young People's Health

Life Expectancy at Birth is 81.7 years for females and 77.8 years for males

Compared to 82.6(F) and 78.7 (M) in the west Midlands and 83.2(F) and 79.3(M) nationally

### Children we Support At 31st May 2024

Children in Care: 658

Child Protection Plans: 220

Children in Need: 1002

Children receiving Early Help: 1,835



## Education

At 31st May 2024 X Children and young people had an EHCP (X per 10,000 aged 0-25)

4,661 of EHCPs are supporting Autistic Spectrum Disorder  
19.7% are supporting Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties

23.9% are supporting moderate learning difficulties

22.1% are supporting Social, Mental and Emotional Difficulties

### Special Education Needs

#### At 31st May 2024

7,140 Children and young people receiving SEN support. Those receiving SEN support in schools is 11,801 Children



## EDUCATION & WELFARE

65% of the children in schools have 75% or above attendance.

15% of children are a part of Education and Health Care Plan

46% In total with Special Education Needs

30% of the SEN Support are being met

In 2023, 35.3% of children in walsall lived in low income families, compared to 23.4% in 2015.



Walsall is a diverse city and is expected to become even more diverse with more than one-third of Walsall from BME Backgrounds.

37.4% of walsall's School children are from BME background



## Deprivation Levels are High

In the indices of Deprivation affecting children (IDACI), Walsall is the 17th most deprived LA in the country with 26% of the neighbourhood in the top 10% of the most deprived nationally

### Economic Activity

6% of people aged 16 and over are unemployed compared to 4.5% across the West Midlands and 3.7% Nationally

5.5% of people aged 16-64 claim unemployment related benefits compared to 3.6% across the West Midlands

## 5.4 per 1000 Children die before their first birthday

Compared to 5.6 in the west Midlands and 3.9 nationally



## 1.9% of girls become pregnant at age 15, 16 or 17

Compared to 1.5% in the west Midlands and 1.3% nationally



## 28.5% of children in year 6 are living with obesity or severe obesity

Compared to 25.2% in the west Midlands and 22.7% nationally

### Free school Meals

37% Children are eligible for FSM

6% of these have a postcode in the North Locality



### Neglect

22.3% of CYP subject to neglect had substance misuse as a factor  
Of all CYP referred for neglect, 34.7% are aged 0-4, 25% 5-9, 31.9% 10-14 and 8.3% 15-17

## Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements



Walsall YJS sits within the Children's Services directorate and the Strategic Lead for the YJS reports into the Head of Service for Family Hubs, Early Help and Youth Justice within the partnership's portfolio within the Children's Services directorate. There are clear links between children in the youth justice system, children's social care 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. Full board membership and attendance can be found in Appendix 1. The agenda is set by the Chair of the Performance and Partnership Board and contains regular reports on issues that impact upon YJS delivery, factors that are impacting on the daily lives of children in Walsall and seeks to hear to voice of our children at each meeting.

- **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 attend:*

- 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 2023, the Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership is an SWP member 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 desistence needs of children are given the appropriate focus. Within this forum, the YJS are also able to engage with regional criminal justice partners, including West Midlands Police and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to horizon scan.*

- **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 also support the:*

- a) VRP Sports Strategic Partnership Board.*
- b) School Exclusion 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 Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership represents the YJS on the Safeguarding Partnership executive group and the YJS Strategic Lead sits on the Safeguarding Leadership Group and contributes to the following:*

- a) Exploitation subcommittee*
- b) 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.*

## 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:

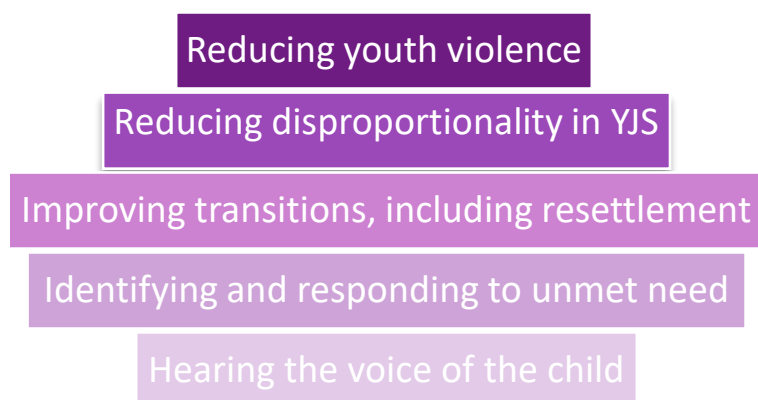
- *HMIP Thematic Inspection- Remand;* The YJS and its partners received a thematic inspection of children who had been remanded in June 2023. The partnership was keen to learn and to promote the effective practice occurring within the team. Practitioners used the time to reflect on their practice and 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 to reduce unnecessary remands.
- *Ministry of Justice- Turnaround;* In December 2022, the Home Office provided funding to youth justice services to work with children on the periphery of crime who can be diverted. We used our funding to second an Early Help worker into the YJS and commission the Inspire Group to deliver sport coaching and mentoring. In 2023, we were invited by the Home Officer to present our successful sport model at the national Turnaround celebration event.
- *Development of the YJS partnership panel and our diversion offer;* Our joint decision-making partnership panel has improved significantly over the past year. It is well resourced by partners including, Police, Liaison & Diversion (NHS), Early Help, Substance Misuse and more. Panels members and YJS staff completed training with the Youth Justice Legal Centre to develop child first approaches to diverting children at the lowest and safest level possible. As a result, there is a reduction in children entering the justice system for the first time.
- *Walsall's Exploitation and Missing Hub;* YJS managers chair and support the daily multi-agency exploitation triage discussions. We have bolstered this resource by introducing two exploitation practitioner champions to support discussions, completed assessments and National Referral Mechanism (NRM) notifications. Our co-location 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;* In April 2024, Walsall and the 6 other Youth Justice Services in the West Midlands were successful in applying for regional pathfinder to support children with black children in the justice system. It is multi-year funding and will be academically evaluated. The learning from the pathfinder will then be used to inform practice across the country. In 2023 we have worked closely with:

- *Open Lens Media-* we launched the Reformation 2 documentary film in Black History month in partnership with Open Lens local. Through the creation of the film and the contributions of our boys with black and mixed ethnicity, we produced a partner recommendations report to consider a disproportionality strategy across Walsall.
- *Resettlement Mentor-* through Safer Walsall Partnership funding we commissioned a local mentor, Ricky Otto, to work with black boys within the secure estate to help them navigate their time in custody and help them effectively resettle back home. We will be developing our ability to demonstrate impact of this work over 2024.
- *Equality and Disproportionality Forum-* provides practitioners with a safe space to discuss equality and overrepresentation of children in the justice system. The Forum oversees progress and has set up a practice improvement sub-group.
- *Virtual School & Inclusion Hub:* The partnership between YJS and the Virtual School and the Inclusion Hub remains strong. We are actively tackling the issue of attendance, exclusions, SEN and more via our regular Education Support Meetings. The Inclusion Hub lead is committed and pro-active is supporting this vulnerable group of children.
- *Improving the skills and expertise of the team:* we are developing our exciting 'health hub' approach within the YJS and, with the support of health partners, we are currently recruiting to employ; a nurse, situated within the YJS, to assess and support the health needs of our children, a Speech and Language Therapist and a Specialist Education Psychologist. These additions to the team, will work alongside our new CAMHS psychologist who has been recently appointed.
- *Youth Justice Apprenticeship:* Our level 3 apprentice consults with children on service delivery and issues affecting them in their communities. They also support with end of order interviews, and we are re-profiling the post to provide support and mentoring to 16+ children who need extra help to access jobs or training. Our apprentice led our annual safer lives surveys to understand children's experiences of community safety. In March 2024 we advertised for an additional level 5 youth justice apprenticeship through Unitas.
- *Loughborough University- Child First Research:* we have continued working with researchers from Loughborough University, establishing a project reference group with Walsall children who are helping design 'Child First' research methods.
- *Effective response to increased numbers of children in the secure estate:* the YJS has improved its partnership with Werrington YOI and has regular oversight meetings. 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:* Our structured positive activity offer for children is excellent 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. In addition to this, we have formed a new partnership with Impower, a local martial arts and mentoring organisation.
- Music: our music studio mentoring programme has continued throughout 2023. '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.

### Progress on previous plan

The YJS Performance and Partnership Board reviewed its progress against last year's priorities in May 2024. This activity was informed by our strategic needs assessment 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. To respond to this, the Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board, the Safer Walsall Partnership and the Safeguarding Partnership have joined together to explore if our current systems and ways of working are most effective in reducing serious youth violence in Walsall. To support this work, the partnerships above alongside the Probation Service, have commissioned multi-year academic research to understand any driving factors, best practice, and recommendations for models of delivery.

Over the past 12 months, communities in Walsall have been shaken by a high-profile violent incident involving multiple children, adults and a young man losing his life. Many people have been affected by the crime and we have seen tensions rise across Walsall. The ensuing increase in remanded children and a lengthy trial out of area has strained YJS resources, but the team have responded well to this adversity. 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. We also supported the VRP Step Together Programme which have 'chaperone' routes from schools in Walsall. The VRP has a strong and growing presence in Walsall and the YJS are a key partner.

Our YJS Strategic Needs Assessment will inform our learning and activities for the next 3 years.

### Reducing disproportionality in the youth justice system.

We have continued our partnership with Open Lens, a local media and training organisation who have consulted with and delivered interventions with 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 were incredibly excited to launch the documentary film at the Light Cinema in Walsall town centre in Black History Month. People from across the partnership attended the event, asked questions of our distinguished panel and pledged to do more in their local organisations. We will be working with Open Lens in 2024 to re-develop the film into a training package for partners. We have also established a training and employment pathway for black boys through Open Lens.

Using Safer Walsall Partnership funding, we commissioned a local mentor, a former professional footballer with lived experience of the justice system, to support our boys in custody and help them resettle back in their communities. This support has helped our boys in Werrington better manage their time with the aims to reduce violence, restraints, and engagement with services.

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. Our disproportionality work has also influenced the Safer Walsall Partnership who have now adopted a strategic equality priority.



Within the service, our Disproportionality Forum provides a safe space for youth justice staff and our partners to come together to discuss factors impacting upon under and over-representation in Walsall. In support, we have a practice improvement group that makes changes to delivery learning from 'best practice' and our discussions in the forum. In 2024, the Disproportionality Forum will once again self-evaluate our practice against the HMIP Thematic inspection on the experiences of boys with black and mixed ethnicity.

### **Improving transitions, including resettlement.**

HMIP stated in their thematic inspection of remand that they were happy to see that we had transitions as a strategic priority, but they recommended it should be our focus for the next year. Our cohort in custody is changing as children become adults while serving long sentences and therefore our partnership with Probation becomes more crucial. Our Head of Probation is the YJS Partnership's strategic lead for this priority and for governance we have set up a transitions and re-offending subgroup for both the YJS and Safer Walsall Partnership. Our partnership is developing a Transitions Hub with dedicated probation officers who will work complete transition and maturity interventions to ensure a smooth transition into Probation. We have invited HMYOI Brinsford onto our Performance and Partnership Board to ensure the needs of this cohort receive the necessary focus. In support of both our disproportionality and transitions work, our resettlement mentor is a valuable addition to our transitions work.

The HMIP thematic preparation was a positive opportunity for the partnership and highlighted the needs of the children on remand. The partnership completed a multi-agency audit of remanded children and their history from early years, and we have an action plan in place. Our partnership work with children in the secure estate is good and practitioners are skilled and work well together. Our partnership with Werrington YOI is strong and monthly planning meetings happen where issues are solved. We need to continue our work to better consider alternatives to remand at Court with our partners in Social Care and we need to better support transitions within the secure estate, with adult services and back to the community. HMIP noted the influence Walsall's Inclusion Hub was starting to have on children in the secure estate to help the transition of children from the community, especially for those with education and health care plans or special education needs. As our cohort has become older, the accommodation needs of 17- and 18-year-old children and young people has become increasingly more difficult to solve.

### **Identifying and responding to unmet need.**

Our YJS Strategic Needs Analysis tells us that in October 2023, 13% of children had a diagnosed special education need with 23% having a education and health care plan. We know that 61% of our children at this point had been excluded from school and 55% had at least four recorded adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The research undertaken within the Strategic Needs Assessment tells us that children in the justice system are the most vulnerable, that have been exposed to multiple traumatic experiences in their short lives, they are often not in school and as a result their needs have not been properly identified and met.

Our strategic lead for this priority is the head of CAMHS commissioning for the Black Country and we are working with CAMHS to review the youth justice mental health worker role. Limited access to services means that children enter the justice system with a host of unmet need. Our partnership recognises that our health offer needs to improve. We identified funding to improve our education psychology model to work with our CAMHS Psychologist. This model is being joined by a Speech Therapist and a school nurse funded through the Public Health contract for the 0-19 Health Child Programme.

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

### 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. This has included children and young people attending our strategic boards to share their experiences. We have also appointed an apprentice whose role is to focus on seeking the views of our children. Later section 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.

### Performance, Priorities and National Key Performance Indicators

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

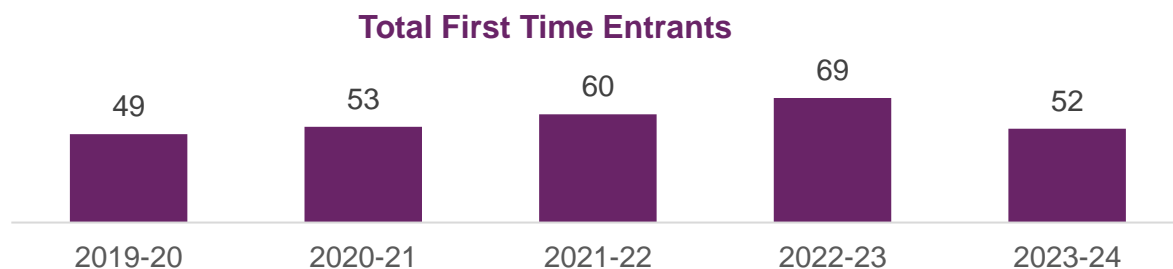
The YJS Performance and Partnership Board have been working with performance analysts over the last year to enhance the partnership's data monitoring, KPIs and local information. This led to a better monthly performance scorecard that guides our audit process and our capacity to learn and change practice. Board members, YJS managers and practitioners have a clearer and more comprehensive view of the cohort we are working with from diversion interventions to custodial sentences. Detailed analysis such as the YJS Ethnicity Report and audit reports have increased the partnership's awareness of some of the difficulties we face and enable us to make practice decisions based on evidence. Our key performance indicators are shown in this section.

### First Time Entrants:

What we have done to reduce first time entrants during 2023/24:

- Jointly audited our first-time entrants with the Police to understand the effectiveness of voluntary interventions and to review our joint decision-making processes.
- Completed joint training with Police and the Youth Justice Legal Centre to promote diversion and child first decision making.
- Embedded 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.





First Time Entrants rate per 100,000 of 10-17 population				
	Walsall	PCC Area	Family	England
April 23- March 24	163	121	191	161
April 22- March 23	220	163	213	172
Percentage change	-26.1%	-25.6%	-10.4%	-6.9%

The above First Time Entrants (FTE) chart details the rate per 100,000 of the 10-17 population. Positively we have improved by over 26% when compared to the previous year, however we are still higher than the West Midlands Police Force area. Locally we have made significant progress as a partnership to ensure that we work with children at the lowest safest level. Our local monitoring of FTE tells us that 84% are boys. We also know that currently 32% 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 63% of the FTE cohort receiving a conviction in Court.

### Re-offending:

What we have done during 2023/24 to reduce re-offending:

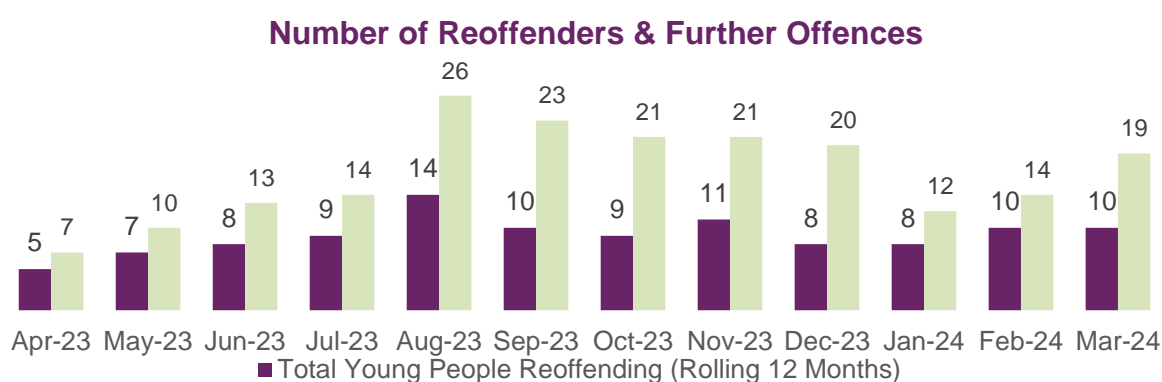
- The YJS has focussed on improving the assessment practice of youth justice officers, including a focus on reviewing and safely reducing risk in the right circumstances.
- Walsall have continued to embed the use of a restorative 'MyPlan' with our children subject to both out of court disposals and court 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 Police offender manager colleagues.
- The YJS have created a Programmes Officer to co-ordinate and deliver group activities and programmes for children, alongside responding to emerging risks and issues.
- There is a strong positive activity offer for our children with multiple projects available such as the Co-LAB YTH music programme and our sport programmes.
- Our partnership with St-Giles is set to continue over the next year to provide lived experienced mentors to some of our most vulnerable and risky children.

	Number in Cohort	# Re-offenders	# Re-offences	Reoffences/re-offender	Re-offences/offender	% Reoffending
July 21- June 22	91	26	90	3.46	0.99	28.6%
July 20 – June 21	79	21	52	2.48	0.66	26.6%
July 19 – June 20	104	28	121	4.32	1.16	26.9%

The above chart represents the most up to date published re-offending data for Walsall and how it compares to the same period for the previous three years. The below chart presents a current comparison to the national, regional, and family data. Walsall YJS regularly performs better than comparators although our binary rate of re-offending has increase by 2% and there have been 40 more re-offences when considering the previous 12 month.

July 21 – June 22	Re offences/re-offender	% Reoffending
England	4.33	32.6%
Family	4.34	28.9%
PCC West Midlands regio	3.51	27.9%

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 to respond quickly to emerging patterns and better respond to children.

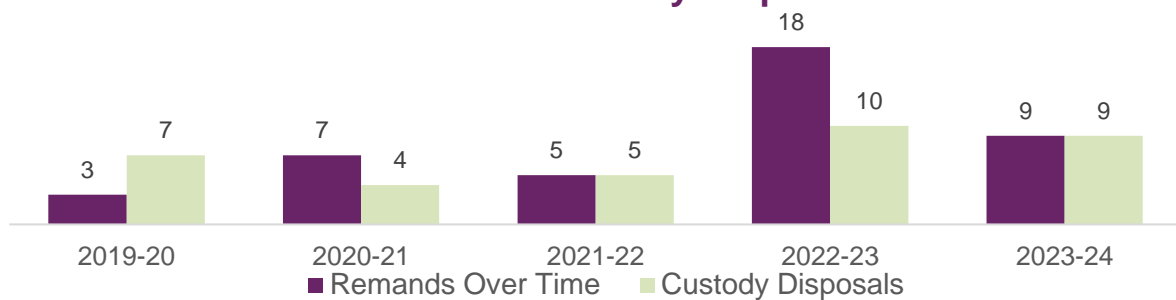


### Use of Remands, Custody and Constructive Resettlement

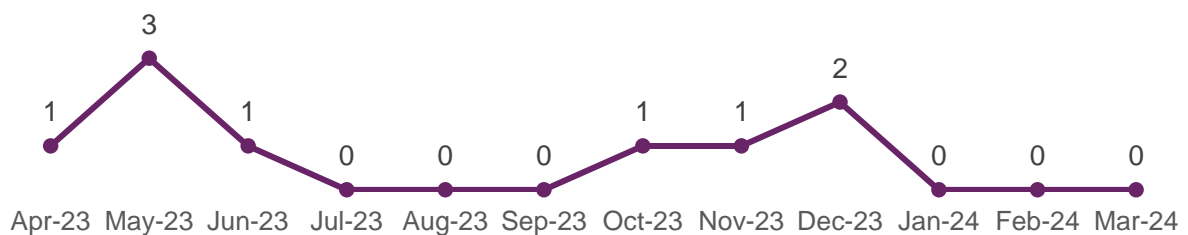
What we have done during 2023/24 to reduce the use of custody and improve outcomes:

- The partnership closely monitors children in the secure estate, undertakes audits and learning has been shared with the YJS Performance Board.
- 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 in June 2023. 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.
- Sought accommodation for children at risk of remand and provided robust remand to local authority accommodation packages.
- Delivered training to Children's Social Care improving awareness of the experience of children in custody.

## 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 9 remand episodes, however this represents a significant reduction when compared to the previous year (18). In February 2023, 7 children were remanded for a murder offence until they appeared for trial and sentencing in May 2024. The violence behind these remands is concerning with 10 children remanded for murder over a two-year period. 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 2023 to March 2024 the number reduced from 10 to 9 when compared to the year before. Overrepresentation can be seen with 66% of the cohort from an ethnic minority. Four children were first-time entrants.

## 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 reach talent. Our flexible working arrangements are strong, and we are implementing a 9-day fortnight to improve the welfare of the team. We are supporters of apprenticeships and are looking to upskill and attract positive values-based people who are interested in supporting our children. Our Workforce and Inclusion Strategy now details career pathways for those who are looking for progression and expands upon the welfare support that is on offer. We are committed to investing in the workforce.

Serious youth violence in the borough remains a concern for the partnership and will again be a priority for us to work on. Violence remains the most common offence type our children are

committing and we are seeing increases in violent behaviour in specific localities in Walsall. We are working closely with partners in the Police, community safety team and exploitation team to address the levels of violence in these areas. The YJS has improved its community links, and established intervention centres in localities where there is often concerning behaviour. We have linked in with local schools, have engaged in community events such as the Lionheart Project, and provided interventions to those children caught on the periphery of disorder. However, these are multi-generational issues and continued work in these localities will need to continue.

Our youth justice partnership recognises that our health pathways for children in the justice system in Walsall need to improve. The YJS Board approved an Education Psychology model in February 2024, and have recruited to a Senior Education Psychology post. Speech, language, and communication provision also needs to be further developed locally and positively we have recruited to a new post. Similarly, we have identified funding through Public Health 0-19 service contract for a school nurse. The children in the YJS that require support from the above are part of a vulnerable group that struggle with inclusion in school and are disproportionately excluded. The partnership has identified responding to unmet need as a key priority. This being said, we still have work to do to promote the inclusion of children in school and ensure correct provision is in place. We need to work with our partners to identify long-term mainstream funding.

Through our board development day in June, partners identified that the quality of data intelligence was a risk for the partnership. Our strategic needs assessment for 2024 identified that our children have experienced a disproportionate number of adverse childhood experiences prior to entering the justice system, however our strategic decision making is not fully informed by partnership data and specialist insight and analysis. This issue will form part of our strategic priorities for 2024/25 in preparation for a new multi-year plan next year.

Over the past 12 months, we have reduced the number of first-time entrants by over 26% through positive collaboration with our local Police partners. There is a current risk associated with a potential change in West Midlands Police policy which could negate the established joint-decision making process across the region and would once again increase the numbers of children in the formal justice system as first-time entrants. This is yet to materialise but should a change in policy be forced onto Youth Justice Services, there will be additional consequences to children on a local level, such as increased exclusions from schools and college and longer term associated impact. It would also impact upon the success of future inspections.

We've been notified that Ministry of Justice Turnaround funding will be coming to an end in March 2025. There is a risk that children who were eligible for support under the Turnaround scheme will no longer receive desistance diversionary desistance interventions due to capacity within the current YJS structure. If the partnership wishes to continue to support this group of children in 2025, without additional funding streams being identified, we will need to consider re-profiling already overstretched children's services resource.

### **Looking forward – Plan for the forthcoming year** **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 enables practitioners to undertake the Child First Effective Practice Award and this forms part of our offer to our apprentices. 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 currently have three of the team undertaking the 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 continue to partner 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 to 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.

Our disproportionality champions have 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 have explored using a voiceover with a local accent to make it more accessible. Our children, and their parents, can access the video on YouTube using a QR code that we share.

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

### **Voice of the child**

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:**

To help Board members understand the lived experience of the children we work with, the YJS Partnership adopted a strategic priority to ensure that the voice of children in the justice system impacts upon our strategic direction. Our Board meetings in 2023 have been 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:

- 'K', a young man on licence from custody, spoke to the Board about his experiences with the Police, Youth Justice and eventually the secure estate. He talked to Board members about what life was like as a young man that had transitioned into the adult secure estate and the difficulties he faced. Through a mentoring scheme he was able to successfully rehabilitate and through additional support he had started his own mentoring organisation.
- As part of our YJS Strategic Needs Assessment, we consulted with over 50 children we were working with to understand their views on life in Walsall and their experiences of being supported in the justice system. Managers and practitioners were proud to hear how they were positively received by children, but it is apparent that the fear of knife crime is central to their thinking.
- 'S' wrote about his experiences of entering into a YOI for the first time. This semi-structured interview enabled him to talk freely about his fears and anxieties that he faced when he first went through his custody induction and how he managed to survive his sentence. S is also helping us support other children who are facing custodial sentences.
- On film, 'D' spoke about how our Disproportionality Resettlement Mentor had provided him with a safe space to explore his self-identity as a black boy in the criminal justice system. He explained that having someone who he could relate to helped him open up, improve his self-esteem and develop his aspirations. In addition to speaking to our



Board members, our mentor had the opportunity to talk about his work at the Youth Justice Leaders Summit in February 2024.

- Our mentor talked to the Board, alongside safeguarding leads from Werrington YOI, to help partners understand the experiences of boys within custody. He articulated 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 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.

Walsall YJS believes in recruiting youth justice apprentices. 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. This opportunity is open to someone who has experienced the youth justice system, who has made positive changes to their life and is keen to help others do the same. The purpose of the apprenticeship is to bridge the gap between staff and children and collaborate with them to seek their views. In 2024 our new 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 and are working with Unitas to access the full Youth Justice practitioner level 5 apprenticeship.

As part of our consultation with our families, we understand 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 Special Educational Needs. 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.

### 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 strengthened our partnership, improved 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, and a 0.25 (fte) Probation Service Officer based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) who contributes to daily referral screenings. These posts are crucial in driving forward improvements within our priority to strengthen transitions.

Our health 'hub' model is improving this year. CAMHS provide a 0.5 (fte) Psychologist to support our children with mental health needs. We are pleased that Public Health are committing funding through the 0-19 service to the YJS partnership to employ a 0.6 (fte) school nurse for 2024/25 dedicated to assessing and supporting the physical health needs of our children. Although we have had difficulties recruiting to the post, we are optimistic that we will be successful before the summer. The Beacon Substance Misuse Service remains a strong partner and we have a named worker who bases themselves in the YJS. And lastly, in partnership with the Youth Insights Team, we are being joined by a specialist Speech and Language Therapist who will be based within the team and will assess our children as they enter the service.

The education needs of children open to the YJS are supported and monitored by Walsall's Inclusion Hub and a named specialist lead for this cohort of children. The Council's Employment and Skills Team have deployed an information, advice and guidance worker to support children aged over 16 and we have a dedicated employment skills pathway for our black boys. In 2024, we have used YJS funding to recruit to a specialist Education Psychologist to support our children with undiagnosed and diagnosed special educational needs to provide specialist support and help youth justice staff ensure their plans and interventions are accessible.

Our mentoring and positive activity offer is strong. We have mentors to work with children involved with gangs and a dedicated mentor to work with black children in the secure estate. We have two established sport partners who deliver weekly multi-sports and another that delivers mixed martial arts. We also commission a local music studio to support our children.

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 2024-25 and the establishment is fully funded.

## **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.

Following our Board development day in January 2023, our Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board held a workshop in October with an independent facilitator. This supported strategic leaders from across the partnership to improve their working knowledge of court work in youth justice, to review practice in a busy combined court with other services in the Black Country and to understand how this experience impacts upon children. Board members were joined by operational managers from the Youth Justice Service who provided knowledge and oversight, and received an input from our youth justice practitioner who has lead for court work who took them through a 'day in the life of a youth justice court officer'. The workshop was well attended with positive contributions. Following this workshop, the Director for Partnerships in Children's Service went to observe court first hand. In May and June 2024, we have held two further Board development workshops to review our strengths and areas for improvement as a partnership. We have considered the current risks to the partnership and confirmed our strategic priorities for 2024-25. Board members agreed to review the strategic governance structure of the Board in the final year of our three-year plan to ensure that the partnerships drive forward improvements for children in the justice system by using higher quality data intelligence. Importantly, these development days gave our managers and practitioners a further opportunity to meet with Board members and take them through some of the excellent practice they deliver with young people.

Our Board has continued to grow 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 and Brinsford YOIs join our membership to provide better oversight of this group of children. Our Board induction document has been reviewed to help new members be clear of their roles and responsibilities towards the partnership, so they can effectively represent the partnership within their wider strategic networks.

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 have also worked 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 two years leading to a high number of children being remanded into the secure estate. Following the scale of a recent serious incident, the Youth Justice Partnership instigated a coalition with the Safeguarding Partnership and Safer Walsall Partnership to seek assurance that:

- There is an effective plan to safeguard our communities from violence.
- 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.

Through this coalition, the partners have come together to commission a two-year academic research project to help us challenge our current perceptions of violence and to consider whether our current systems are based on best practice and evidence. The research started in March 2024.



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 2024.


Following our thematic HMIP inspection of children on remand, we were keen to work together with colleagues in Social Care to deliver training on the lived experience of boys within the secure estate and to improve our shared planning. This proved a huge success with over 100 attendees from Social Care where we heard from practitioners involved in the care of these children and directly from children who had experienced a remand episode. In addition to the above, our audits and self-assessment prior to inspection told us that we needed to improve the skills and confidence of those practitioners who worked in Court to ensure that the risks and needs of children were properly understood by decision-makers and that we do all we can to avoid unnecessary remands. We commissioned the Youth Justice Legal Centre to deliver bespoke training for the team which was well received.

In 2023, linked to our strategic priorities and our thematic learning, we identified the need for further training to improve trauma awareness for children involved in serious youth violence and as such, in partnership with Early Help, we received funding in 2024 to train our workforce in Drawing and Talking Therapy. More details can be found in the 'Evidence-based practice and innovation' section of this plan.

Our practice in 2023 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. We 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 2024/25, we have recommissioned clinical supervision with a local psychology service and as our workforce changes, we are reviewing our training plan for practitioners. We undertake a yearly health check with staff and action findings to improve wellness at work. As mentioned previously in this plan, we are 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.

### Workforce demographics:

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, 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 22% black ethnicity.

	Qualifications	YJEPC	Specialisms	Practice Champions
	Probation x 3 Social Work x 4 Youth Work x 4 Other x 7	CPWs x 4 YJOs x 6 Managers x 5 (1 x in progress)	Court Victims and RJ Programmes & Interventions	Girls, DA & VAWG Exploitation Equality & Disproportionality Children's Voice

### Evidence-based practice and innovation

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 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:

### Working with girls

*Fewer girls than boys offend. In England and Wales, they make up just one in five of the caseload of youth justice services and the population of children in custody. Girls tend to commit less serious crimes than boys and normally pose little risk of harm to other people. Their offending is often a response to emotional problems and relationship difficulties, with parents, partners, and friends. Because of their relatively low number the distinct needs of girls*

*sometimes get overlooked in a juvenile criminal justice system primarily designed to deal with offending by boys. (HMIP Girls in the Criminal Justice System 2014).*

Over 2023, we saw an increase in the number of girls that were coming into the YJS. To respond to this trend, we improved our services and created a dedicated group intervention for girls. The Girls Glow group is run by our girls practice champion. It is a girls only safe space with intervention topics surrounding staying safe and out of trouble, relationships and health, self-esteem, and aspirations. Girls that attend receive advice and guidance from female practitioners and specialists within the team. They are also provided with care packages which include sanitary products, toiletries, and sportswear to enable them to confidently attend and engage with our other interventions offers, such as reparation activities and our mixed martial arts groups.

### **Virtual Reality Interventions:**

The YJS currently has two virtual reality intervention offers for our children. Firstly, we have worked 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.

### **Sport**

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

In Walsall we have a strong sport offer for the children in the YJS. Our partnership with the Inspire Group multi-sports organisation continues to grow and they are an integral part of our prevention Turnaround offer. All children who come through the prevention pathway are given the opportunity to take part in weekly sports activity and are given a mentor who helps them attend the sessions, access community sport and has a keen focus on improving school attendance. Our children often tell us that they are interested in taking part in contact sports. As such, we have commissioned a local organisation called Impower who deliver excellent mixed martial arts tuition with a real focus on personal development and discipline.

We are working with the Street Games charity who, through Youth Endowment Fund funding, are considering Walsall as a pilot site due to our strong history with sport intervention and our local trusted organisations. This could be an exciting development for 2024.

### **Drawing and Talking Therapy**

We have identified ‘Drawing and Talking’ as a therapeutic intervention for children and have trained the YJS workforce as a sustainable response to health inequalities related to youth violence. Drawing and Talking training is designed to educate practitioners in a short-term proactive intervention intended to complement, rather than replace, the work of specialist mental health services. Drawing and Talking therapy will provide a creative outlet for children to

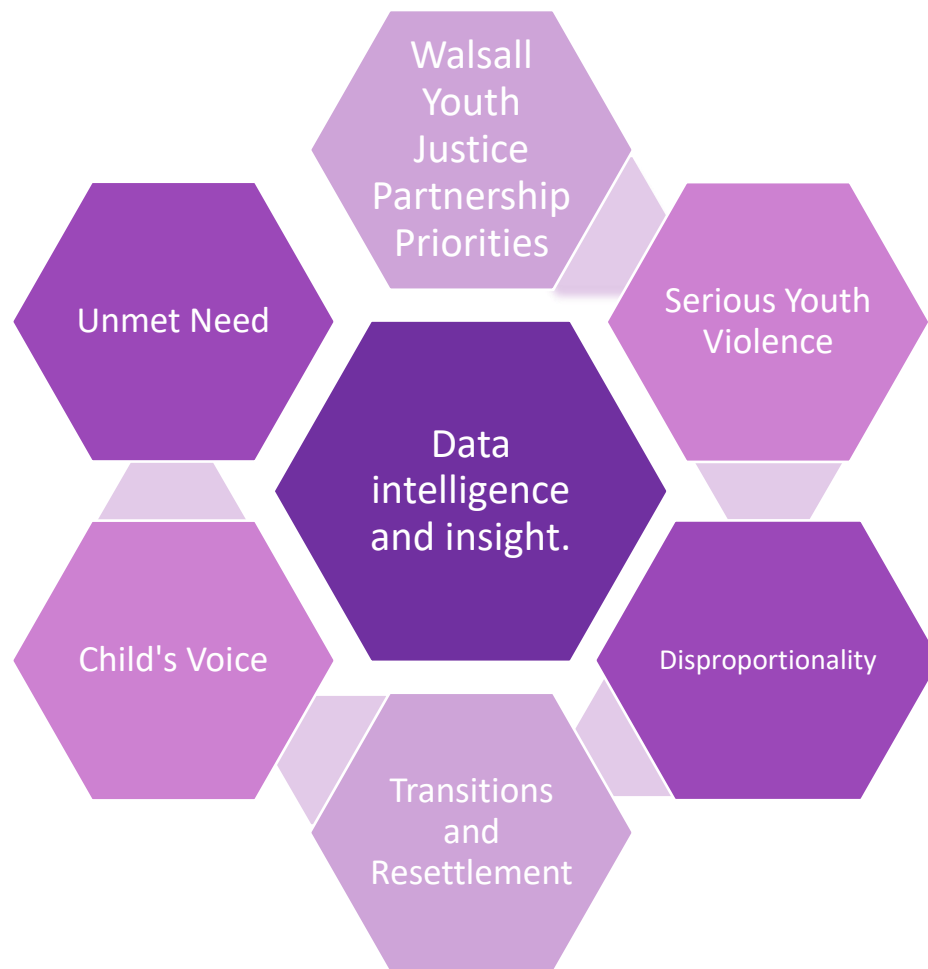
develop better engagement with services and improve overall wellbeing specifically targeted at those children most vulnerable to youth violence.

A recent publication of a collaboration between Sandwell Youth Offending Service and the University of Wolverhampton was able to evidence how a move towards engagement through the arts in youth justice fits within a contemporary 'Child First' approach by developing services that are authentic to children. Drawing and talking therapy utilise drawing to help children express their feelings differently in ordinary verbal language. The Drawing and Talking therapeutic approach allow individuals to discover and communicate emotions through a non-directed technique. This is especially important when recognising that it is approximated that 60-90% of children within the youth justice system have some level of Speech, Language and Communication Needs compared to 10 % of the wider population.

## Strategic Priorities

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





The YJS partnership recognise that these priorities will take time and as such we have published a 3-year plan. As we are working through the final year of that plan, we have chosen to add an additional priority to improve the partnerships data intelligence and specialist insight. In addition to our Strategic Needs Assessment 2024, this will place us in a strong position in early 2025 to enter into a new multi-year plan. We know it will require investment and energy to achieve positive change. Our YJS board members, managers and practitioners are committed to the child first vision and to improving outcomes for our children.

#### ❖ **Transitions and Resettlement.**

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

- develop our close partnership with the Probation Service, to improve our Transition 2 Adulthood offer.
- Develop our relationship with HMYOI Werrington to improve our resettlement offer for children and transition into the adult estate.

Strategic Lead: Head of Probation

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

#### ❖ **Reducing Serious Youth Violence:**

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

- Work collaboratively with the Safer Walsall Partnership to implement the serious violence strategy.
- Deliver effective violence and knife crime interventions for children.
- Ensure the YJS is sufficiently resourced to manage risk to others.

Strategic Lead: Superintendent Walsall Police.



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

❖ **Disproportionality**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategic Lead: Head of CAMHS commissioning

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

❖ **Voice of our children**

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

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

Strategic Lead: YJS Strategic Lead

*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.*

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

## **Standards for children in the justice system**

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 was 'Standard 2: At Court'. Services were required to return their self-assessment by the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2023.

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

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

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

Please see appendix 8 for the detailed action plan and progress made.

### **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 2022-25. 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 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 then again in June 2024.

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
- Better information sharing between partners and more efficient daily triage processes.
- Develop our pathways with Children's Social Care through the MASH front door.

In 2023, 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 was 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 remanded children. We 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 ultimately improve practice. The violence and the disproportionality underpinning 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 inspection. In addition to the YJS, partners from Social Care, Police, and Education audited assessment practice, planning, multi-agency working and family engagement. A wider lens was given to consider the historical context for these children to identify any potential missed opportunities. We 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.

<b>A joint thematic inspection youth remand: A review by HMI Probation June 2023.</b>	
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"> <li>lived experience of boys in custody</li> <li>practitioner confidence in court</li> <li>trauma training- UASC.</li> </ul>	Children and young people's need over the course of the remand period were assessed and responded to in a proportionate manner by joint working between Youth Justice and Social Care.
The YJS Partnership needs to ensure 'Child First' thinking within agencies such as Police, Solicitors Firms and Youth Custody Service.	Evidence of positive relationships with children from both youth justice and social care and there was evidence of 'child first' and respectful practice.
The partnership needs to strengthen speech and language support for these children.	Evidence of support for the wider families within the community from both YJS and Children Social Care.
Strengthening our transition planning, through the development of a transition toolkit and T2A Hub with the Probation Service.	Work to address disproportionality within the Service was meaningful.
In some instances, poor info sharing between Police, YJS and HMYOI to approve contacts	Appropriate Adult provision was robust.

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

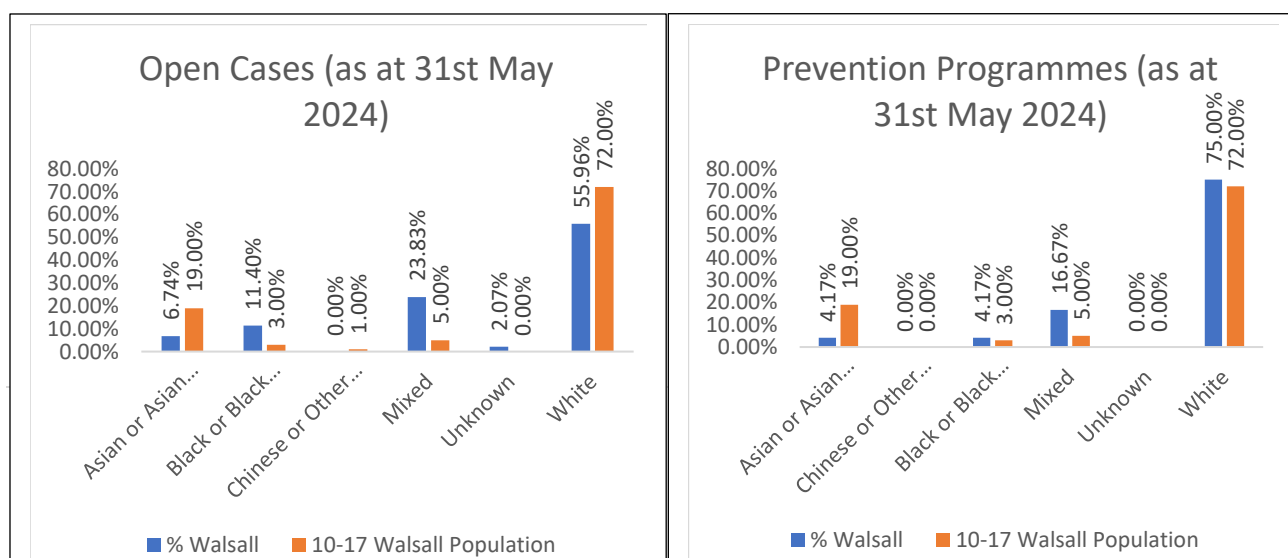
## National Priority Areas

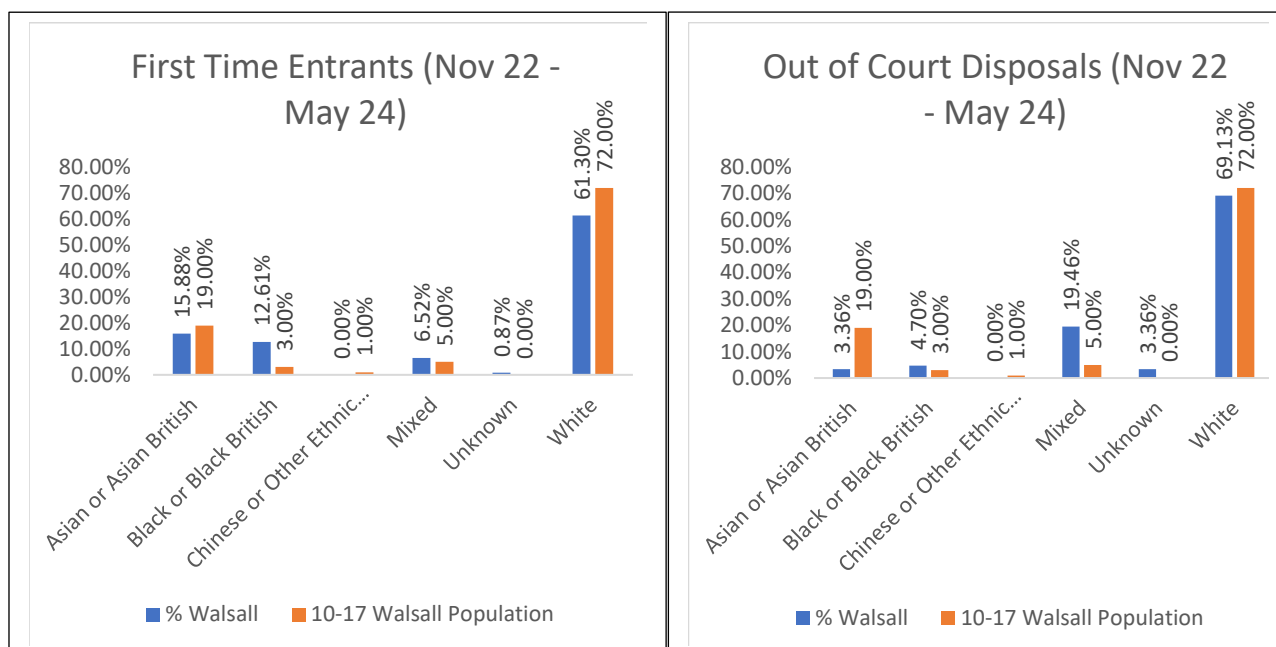
### Children from overrepresented groups

What we have done during 2023/24 to reduce disproportionality and improve outcomes for children from over and under-represented groups:

- 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. A further 2-year analysis is required.
- 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.
- In partnership with Open Lens Media to deliver a programme for boys with black and mixed ethnicities, using film, media and personal coaching to improve outcomes.
- Established a dedicated training and employment pathway for boys with black and mixed ethnicity.
- The YJS have also used funding to commission a mentor to support black children within the secure estate and help prepare them to resettlement back in the community.
- We have identified two 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.
- Established a Girls Intervention Group
- 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.

The charts below 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.





Our latest scorecard data also tell us that just over 50% of all custodial sentences and remand episodes in Walsall between April 2023 - March 2024 were given to 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.

Reducing disproportionality has been a priority for the YJS during 2023-24 and will continue to be a priority over the next 2-year period.

## Policing

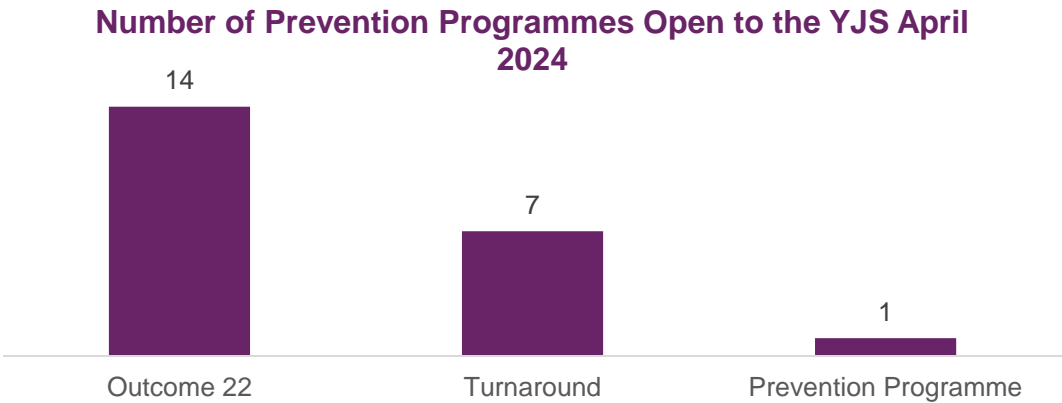
Our local policing partnership is strong. Our superintendent is the deputy chair of the Board and the strategic lead across both the youth justice and the community safety partnership in reducing serious youth violence. Operationally, we have 1.5 youth crime officers who work with the YJS to manage out of court disposals. Similarly, our alignment with Police Offender Manager team means that we are able to work closely to put in place robust and supportive risk management plans. Our local police have taken part with us in joint training with the Youth Justice Legal Centre to help us embed Child First principles and the effectiveness of diverting children from the formal criminal justice system.

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

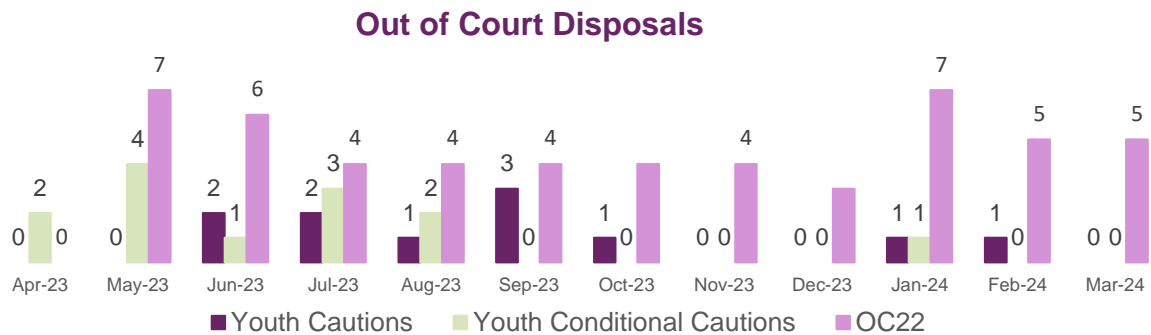
**Prevention, Diversion and Out of Court Disposals**

What we have done to improve prevention and diversion interventions and out of court disposals during 2023/24:

- Delivered an excellent Ministry of Justice Turnaround offer for children on the periphery of the justice system seconding an Early Help lead and a sport mentoring service.
- Established a well-resourced Youth Justice Partnership Panel to provide oversight of diversion referrals and joint out of court disposal decisions.
- Early Help remain 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.
- Continue to support children who have been referred from schools and children’s services who have clear desistance concerns.







During the period between April 2023 and March 2024, Walsall YJS supported 24 children who received a type of caution which positively demonstrates a reduction from 33 over the previous year. This positive reduction in cautions is a direct result of an increase in the use of outcome 22 and Turnaround interventions. By working closely together through jointly auditing first time entrants we were able to demonstrate that children who receive a voluntary diversion intervention engage better than on compulsory interventions and had better re-offending rates.

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. In 2024, we were asked by the Ministry of Justice to present our offer during the national celebration event as a model of good practice.

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



## 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.*)

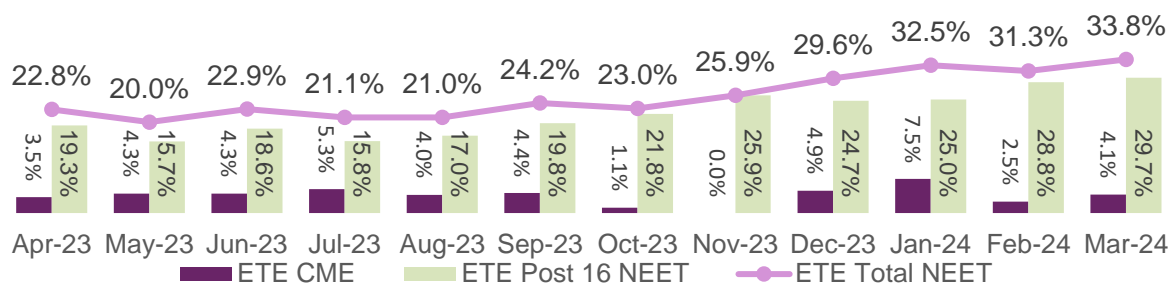
The Youth Justice Partnership approved a diversion pathway for children at risk of engaging in violent behaviour, offending and harmful sexual behaviour. In partnership with Walsall police, we established a daily triage process to identify children involved in violent behaviour. The panel is well resourced with colleagues from Children's Services, Early Help, NHS Liaison and Diversion, Beacon Drug and Alcohol Services 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 interventions. 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 worker 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 to improve education, training, and employment outcomes during 2023/24:

- The YJS' strong partnership with the Inclusion Hub supports our children under 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 remanded children.
- 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.
- We have identified funding for an Education Psychologist to be embedded within the team to improve our 'unmet need' and communication model.

### Not in Education, Employment or Training



The total percentage of children open to the YJS who are not in suitable education, training or employment have increased over the past 6 months. In March 2024 there were 6 children classed as missing education (CME) and not in school and support has been put in place through the YJS to get them back into education. Through robust scrutiny, these children have YJS education plans in place to explore how YJS workers can support the CME process. We believe that these numbers are steadily increasing as our cohort is slowly changing, combined with a reduction in the total cohort of children we are working with. This includes:

- Fewer children in custody
- Older children entering the YJS (mostly 17, some 18)
- The pre-court and post-court split is shifting with more pre-court disposals being put in place. This means that older NEET children enter the YJS, and although support is put in place, 3 months is not enough time to demonstrate solid outcomes.

#### Education performance management and education plans:

Although it is clear that the majority of school age children open to the YJS do not achieve over 90% attendance, we are confident that the cohort of children has good oversight. The partnership working between the YJS, and the Inclusion Hub is strong and we have started a new Education Support Meeting initiative where there is combined oversight of these children, a separate education plan is created and progress is reviewed. The addition of an Education Psychologist to the team will only strengthen the planning and support provided to these children.

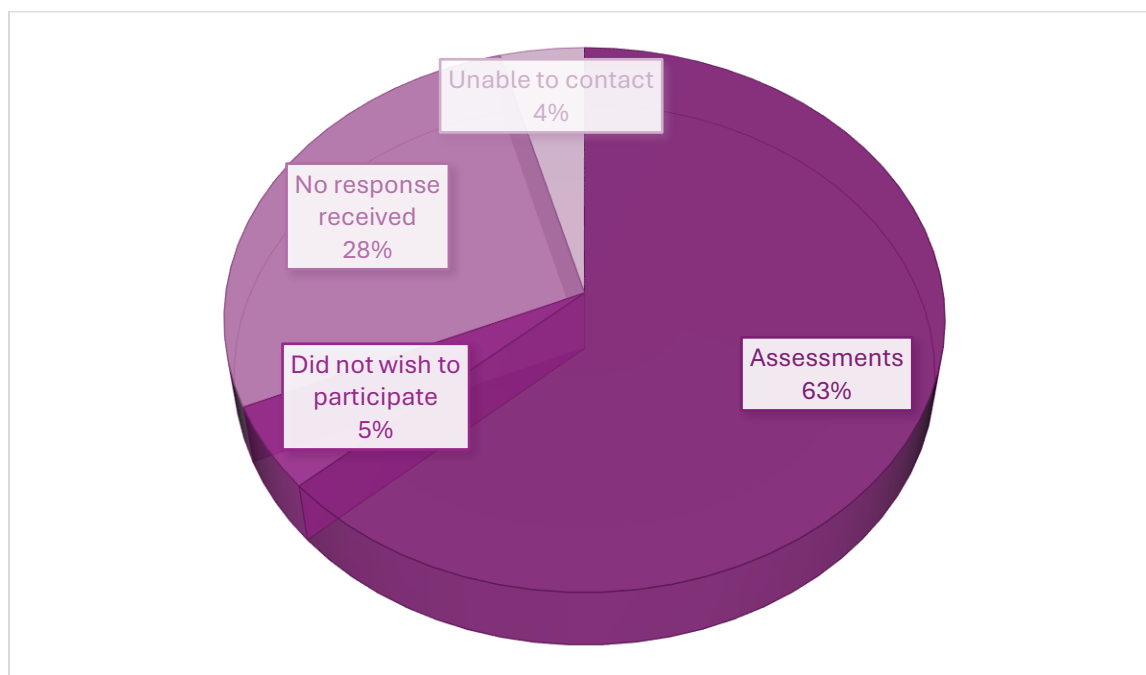
We do recognise that children often enter the youth justice system with special educational needs (currently 49%) and that children completing their intervention with us will often have reduced timetables, receive their education in short stay 'pupil referral units' and have experienced exclusion. 61%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

### Restorative approaches and Victims

Our victim and restorative justice offer is now well established. Feedback received from victims where we have offered support has been incredibly positive with 93% rating the service they received as being 'excellent'.

Over the past 12 months we have had 130 victims of crime committed by children. 115 of those victims have been contacted or attempts have been made to contact them. 5 were unable to be contacted, we didn't receive a response from 33 and 6 victims did not wish to participate. We completed assessments with 76 victims, the outcomes of which included signposting to

other agencies/services, offering direct support and intervention to the victims, direct reparation, and restorative justice.



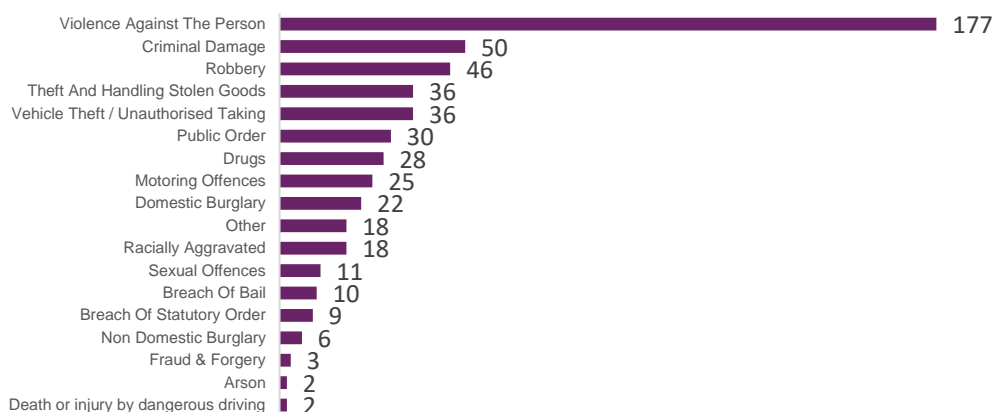
### **Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding**

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 offences such as wounding, attempted murder, and murder. From April 2023, the number of notifications to the YJB has significantly reduced to 2. Violence is the most common offence type we see, and we are seeing a larger number of children entering the formal youth justice system for the first time by receiving custodial sentences. Work to address the strategic priority to prevent and reduce youth violence is detailed earlier within this plan and our close alignment to the Safer Walsall Partnership. Walsall's Serious Violence Strategy is embedded on page 9 of this plan and details of the Serious Violence Collaborative is contained on page 21.

From April 2023 to March 2024, Walsall has experienced a noteworthy 9.76% decrease in serious youth violence (SYV) among individuals under 25 years of age. This reduction is part of an encouraging trend of year-on-year decreases, evidencing the positive impact of our multifaceted prevention strategies. Despite the overall positive trend, a concerning development has emerged regarding knife-related offences within the context of serious youth violence. There has been a specific increase in knife-related incidents, with nine additional offences recorded during this 12-month period. Although these figures represent a small number in absolute terms, they are significant enough to warrant specific attention and action due to their potential impact and the broader national trend towards increased knife violence among youth.

Violent offending is monitored monthly through the YJS performance scorecard. If we consider the period between April 2023 and March 2024, we can see that violence against the person makes up a significant percentage (35%) of all offences linked to children in the Youth Justice Service.

## Offence Type

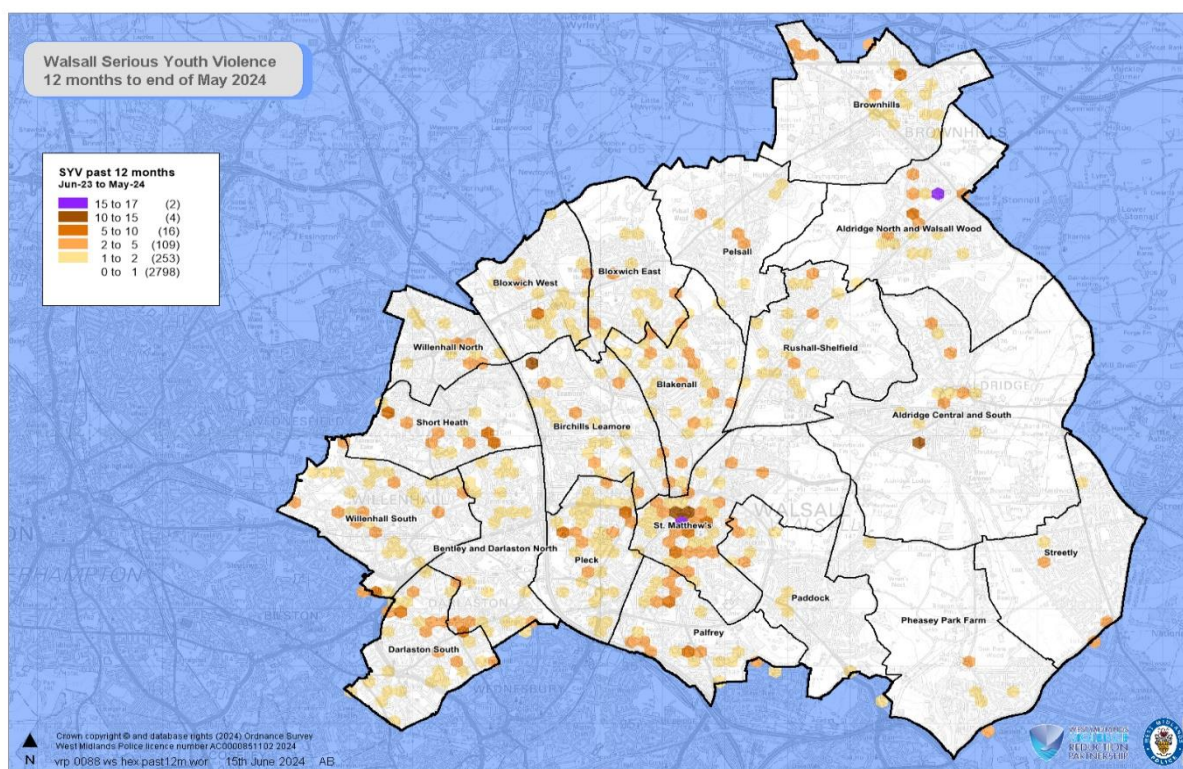


Further data can be found in Walsall's Serious Youth Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and our Youth Justice Service Needs Analysis. Our relationship with the Police analysts is improving and the Youth Justice Partnership now is in receipt of detailed data relating to victims and suspects, aged 0-25,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

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

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





## Exploitation:

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

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

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 assessments and review incidents. Professionals within the hub also oversee missing children. From daily triage, professionals coordinate disruption meetings for the perpetrators of exploitation and safety plans for victims. This activity is supported by our co-location in office space. In February 2024, the YJS managers completed child journey and dip sample audits focussing on children who were identified as being at risk of exploitation. Of the 25, 4 girls were assessed as being at risk of sexual exploitation and 21 boys assessed as being at risk of criminal exploitation. 12 of the children had been referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and 22 of the children had been referred into the exploitation hub for information sharing.

Children vulnerable to exploitation are also vulnerable to radicalisation and involvement with violent extremism. 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 Counter Terrorism Police and in December 2023, Walsall held a Channel

Conference led by the YJS Strategic Lead (Chair of Channel Panel) and Walsall's Prevent Co-ordinator.

### Detention in Police Custody

Between January and December 2023, there were 15 times, relating to 15 children, where a child was kept overnight in police custody. On only one occasion 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.

### Working with Families

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

### 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 both reviews 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:	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.



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.
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## 16. Sign off, submission and approval

Chair of YJS Board	Collen Male- Executive Director of Childrens Services	Phil Rutherford- YJS Strategic Lead
Signature		
Date	28.06.2024	28/6/24

## 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
- ICB- Managing Director Walsall Place
- Head of Safeguarding – HMYOI Werrington
- Head of Resettlement – HMYOI Werrington
- Senior Probation Officer – HMYOI Brinsford
- Local Authority –
  - Executive Director of Children’s Services (Chair)
  - Director of Children’s Services - Partnerships
  - Social Care Head of Service- Corporate Parenting
  - 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- Regional Advisor
- Local Authority Accountant – finance.
- Local Authority Performance Officer
- Administrative Support, Youth Justice Service

## Appendix 2

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

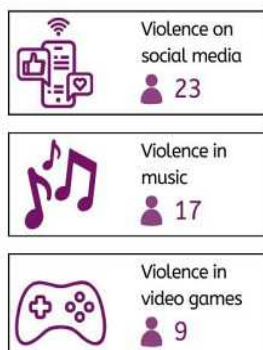
## Appendix 3

# Safer Lives Survey Findings

Exploring youth experiences with violence, safety perceptions, and community resilience.

\*These are findings taken from the Safer Lives Survey 2024 which were asked to 25 children aged 13 - 18 in the Walsall area

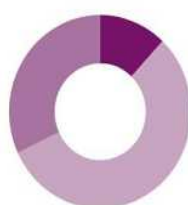
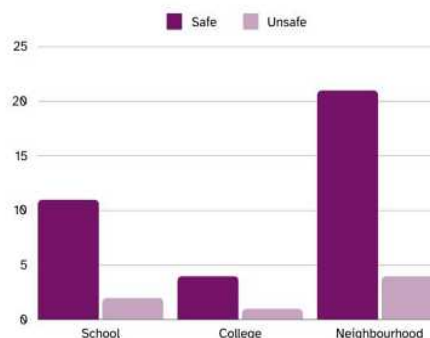
## Where children are exposed to violent content



# 80%

of children said they are exposed to violence on social media at least once a week

## Where children feel safe



Police make the lives of children safer

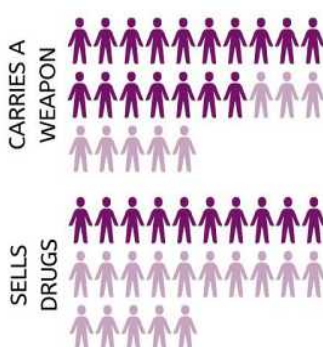
AGREE : 3  
NEUTRAL : 8  
DISAGREE : 14

"I don't feel safe at school, that's why I don't go anymore"

3/5 of children ranked their safety in this order



## HOW MANY CHILDREN KNOW SOMEBODY WHO:



"I ONLY CARRY A KNIFE FOR PROTECTION, I'D RATHER GET LOCKED UP FOR HAVING IT THAN DIE FOR NOT HAVING IT"

32% of children know at least 2 people who have been victims to serious violence in the past 5 years

**76%** of children would feel comfortable asking a parent, friend, family member or professional for help or advice if they felt worried about being a victim of violence. **24%** of children said there is nobody they could speak to.

IF THERE WAS ONE THING YOU COULD CHANGE THAT YOU THINK WOULD MAKE CHILDREN SAFER, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

WOULD TEACH THEM HOW TO RUN SO THEY COULD RUN AWAY FROM VIOLENCE AND BE SAFE

MORE JOB AVAILABILITY TO KEEP CHILDREN OFF THE STREETS AND KEEP THEM BUSY

METAL DETECTORS AT SCHOOLS, MORE POLICE PRESENCE, MORE CCTV

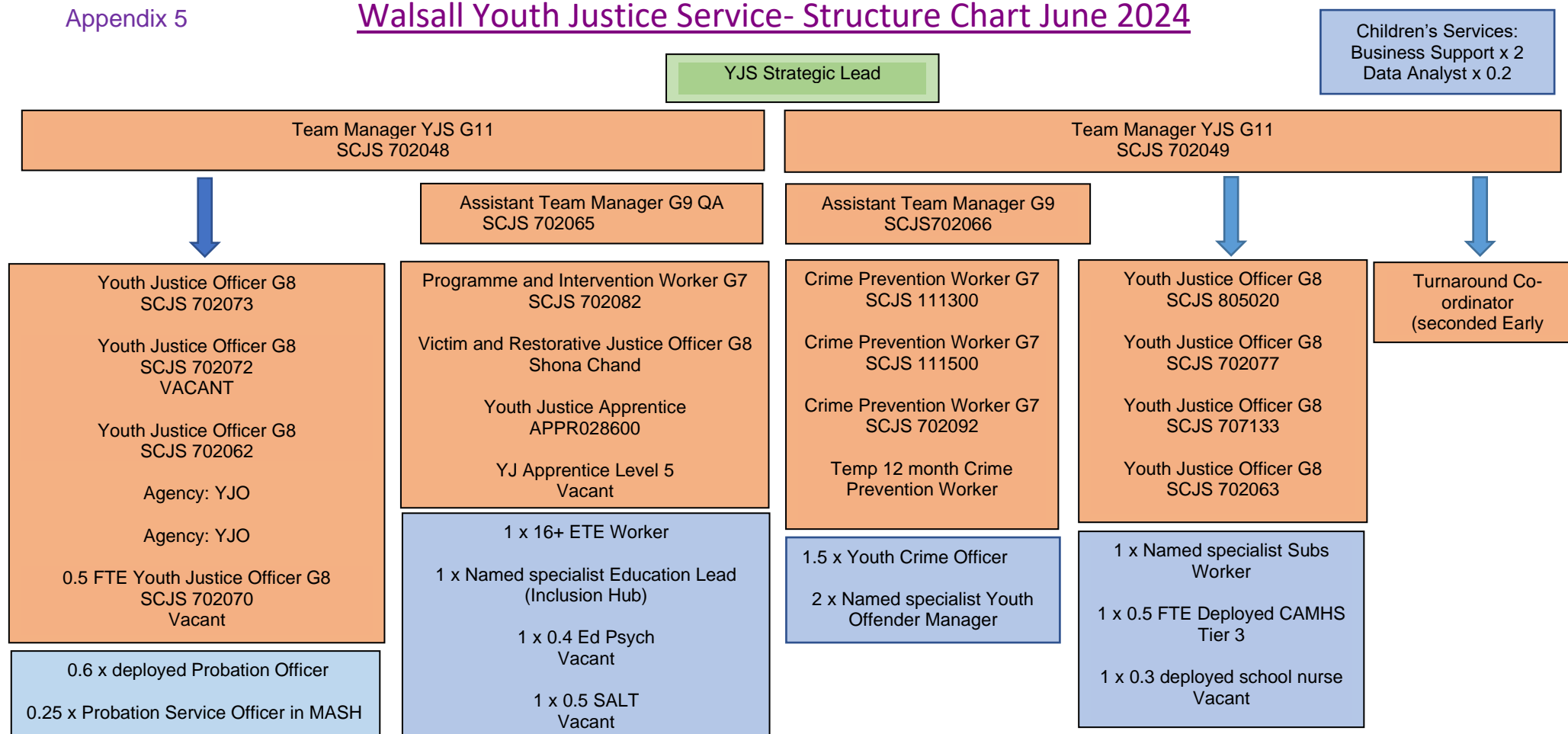
## Appendix 4



\*Taken from Walsall Youth Justice Service Strategic Needs Assessment 2024.



## Walsall Youth Justice Service- Structure Chart June 2024



Position (no reported disabilities)	Sex	Ethnicity
Strategic Lead	Male	White
Team Managers	1 x male and 1 x female	2 x White
Assistant Team Manager	2 x female	2 x White
G8 Officers	7 x female 2 x male	5 x white, 2 x black, 1 x Asian, 1 x mixed (1.5 x vacancy)
Crime Prevention Workers G7	4 x female	3 x white, w x Asian
Programme Worker	Male	Black

Apprentice	Female	Black
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## Appendix 6

## Breakdown of expenditure to accompany certificate, 2023-24

### Walsall

INCOME	Youth Justice Board <sup>1</sup>	Local Authority	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Welsh Government	Other	Total
Cash	£493,835	£542,150	£21,888	£76,885	£5,000			£2,660	£1,142,418
In-kind									£0
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£493,835</b>	<b>£542,150</b>	<b>£21,888</b>	<b>£76,885</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£2,660</b>	<b>£1,142,418</b>

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 <sup>2</sup>	Local Authority	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Welsh Government	Other	Total
Salaries	£467,093	£514,689	£21,888	£76,885					£1,080,555
Activity costs	£17,130	£19,838						£2,660	£39,628
Accommodation	£0								£0
Overheads	£6,497	£3,533			£5,000				£15,030
Equipment	£3,115	£4,090							£7,205
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£493,835</b>	<b>£542,150</b>	<b>£21,888</b>	<b>£76,885</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£2,660</b>	<b>£1,142,418</b>

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

### Notes:

Other income of £2,660 is contribution from Youth Justice Board towards the Youth Justice Leaders summit film. Corresponding expenditure is included within activity costs

## Appendix 7

<b>A joint inspection of education, training &amp; employment services in youth offending teams in England &amp; Wales, A review by HM Inspectorate of Probation June 2022.</b>	
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, EHCP 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 &amp; remand meetings to ensure children/families are being offered appropriate support. They also work closely with Youth Justice staff to offer support &amp; 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 &amp; guidance to children post 16, identifying their interests, strengths, abilities &amp; 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 &amp; 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 &amp; Turnaround.</p> <p>Open Lens work with boys from black and mixed heritage boys as we understand &amp; acknowledge that they may require a different type of support.</p>

<b>A thematic review of the work of youth offending services during the COVID-19 pandemic A review by HM Inspectorate of Probation November 2020</b>	
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.

<b>The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021</b>	
YJS partnership boards should:	What we did:
have a vision and strategy for improving outcomes for black and mixed heritage boys, and make sure these are understood by staff and partner agencies	Funding through the PCC and SWP has enabled the YJS to work with a local organisation to develop our Disproportionality Strategy in 2022
ensure that all board members contribute data from their individual services that identifies areas of disproportionality and the action being taken to address them, and that this data is used to develop a joint strategic needs assessment	Following the YJS ethnicity analysis, children's services commissioned analysis from across all part of CS, including education and supported this will a full locality analysis
have a joint set of targets, for example with children's services, for improving service delivery for these boys, and make sure mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate outcomes.	Reducing disproportionality remains a priority for the YJS with a Board member, (Head of Children's Social Care) taking strategic lead for this work across the partnership
YJS managers should:	

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

## Appendix 8

Self-Assessment Standard 2: Work in Court Action Plan			
Operational Actions	Lead	By when	Notes
Review the YJS Quality Assurance Policy	Kelly Rutherford	December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023	Completed.
Review the YJS Court Procedures to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting the needs of children with special or alternative needs i.e. interpreters</li> <li>- Provision for specialist assessments</li> <li>- Action to ensure parental attendance at court</li> <li>- Use of standard case recording tool to capture information sharing with children/parents post court and evidence levels of understanding</li> </ul>	Kelly Rutherford	December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023	Completed.
Amend the quality assurance tool to include a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of interpreters (child and parents)</li> <li>- Engaging with fathers in report preparation</li> </ul>	Kelly Rutherford	November 30 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Completed.
Improve management oversight on ChildView and record weekly Court preparation meeting.	Kelly Rutherford	End of October 2023	Completed
Implement Court Skills training with the YJS team (action from multi-agency audit for remand thematic)	Phil Rutherford	March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024	Completed. YJLC commissioned.
The YJS should develop a post-court questionnaire/session, in conjunction with speech and language therapists, to be used with children during their induction appointments to help the service improve practice and to recognise levels of comprehension (Q7)	Kelly Rutherford	December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023	In progress.
Improve information sharing with children and parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘Going to Court’ literature to be shared with local custody suite for use when charging child to Court</li> <li>- Referral Order video to be created to explain panel processes to children and parents/carers</li> <li>- Joint co-creation with Werrington YOI of secure estate information packs to ensure parents and children have all available information at the earliest opportunity to offer reassurance and understanding of next steps.</li> </ul>	Fran Bate	March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024	Completed.
Strategic Actions			
The YJS Board to consider if the YJS Partnership Panel would benefit from additional ‘standing’ members from across Children’s Services (Q1)	Zoe Morgan (HOS Social Care) & Phil Rutherford	November 2023	Completed. Early Help represented on Partnership Panel.
The YJS board members requested that pre-court and diversion work is discussed at a Board meeting in the next 6 months. (Q1)	Phil Rutherford	April 2024	Completed.



The YJS lead should ensure that our Remand and Custody procedures include suitable preparation time for practitioners to complete full assessments and reports to better advise the Court. (Q2)	John O'Connor	January 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024	Completed.
The YJS and children's social care should review their joint-working protocols in support of the finding from the inspection. (Q2)	John O'Connor	December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023	Ongoing.
Board members were aware that Walsall boys with black and mixed ethnicity were overrepresented in the secure estate in Walsall and wanted further assurance that this is considered within monthly performance reporting and within the YJS Disproportionality Forum. (Q2)	Mark Patrick	December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023	Completed. Scorecard includes ethnicity breakdown.
The YJS Board to develop an escalation pathway through to the Chair and Vice Chair of the YJS partnership board if there are observed occurrences of unfair treatment of children within the Court. (Q3) To be included in review YJS Court procedures.	Phil Rutherford	November 30 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Completed.
The Board wanted to increase its visibility within the Court arena to support this agenda and considered observation opportunities for board members and highlighted YJS Practice Week in February 2024 as a suitable vehicle. (Q4)	Phil Rutherford	February 28 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Completed. Board members have observed Youth Court.
The Board wished to ensure that they were periodically informed of data and trends relating to disproportionality within court, but also wanted to consider individual case studies to highlight the issues and impact. (Q4)	Phil Rutherford	April 30 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Ongoing.
The Board would benefit from future inputs from youth justice practitioners to improve the engagement of strategic leaders in our delivery. (Q5)	Fran Bate	April 30 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Completed. YJS practitioners invited to attend Board.
The Board should continually monitor YJS resourcing to cover Court, especially when there are unforeseen challenges such as events including multiple children or planning for multi-handed trials (Q5)	Phil Rutherford	April 30 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Completed. Discussed at February Board.
Walsall YJS should, in partnership with the 3 other Black Country YJS, approach the Sentencers and HMCTS to attempt to establish a system for report feedback. (Q7)	Phil Rutherford	December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023	Ongoing. Regional attempts made, not yet implemented.
The YJS partnership should extend its membership to HMCTS and review Court attendance at the YJS Performance and Partnership Board. (Q7)	Phil Rutherford	November 30 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Ongoing. Regional attempts made through YJB.
The YJS should work closely with Children's Social Care to ensure children in the justice system are involved in wider engagement and participation work with the Children's Champion (Q7)	Phil Rutherford	February 28 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Completed. YJ involved in developing CS Participation strategy
Joint learning sessions are planned between the YJS and Children's Social Care to improve knowledge and understanding of the experiences of children who attend Court and also are sent to custody (Q7)	Jenny Cockroft (HOA QA Social Care) and Phil Rutherford	1 <sup>st</sup> session November 2023	Completed. November 2023.

## Appendix 9

### Common youth justice terms

Please add any locally used terminology

<b>ACE</b>	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
<b>AIM 2 and 3</b>	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
<b>ASB</b>	Anti-social behaviour
<b>AssetPlus</b>	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and adolescent mental health services
<b>CCE</b>	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
<b>Children</b>	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.
<b>Child First</b>	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
<b>Child looked-after</b>	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
<b>CME</b>	Child Missing Education
<b>Constructive resettlement</b>	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
<b>Contextual safeguarding</b>	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety

<b>Community resolution</b>	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
<b>EHCP</b>	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
<b>ETE</b>	Education, training or employment
<b>EHE</b>	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
<b>EOTAS</b>	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
<b>FTE</b>	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
<b>HSB</b>	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
<b>JAC</b>	Junior Attendance Centre
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi agency public protection arrangements
<b>MFH</b>	Missing from Home
<b>NRM</b>	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
<b>OOCD</b>	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
<b>Outcome 22/21</b>	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
<b>Over-represented children</b>	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
<b>RHI</b>	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
<b>SLCN</b>	Speech, Language and communication needs
<b>STC</b>	Secure training centre
<b>SCH</b>	Secure children's home

<b>Young adult</b>	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.
<b>YJS</b>	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
<b>YOI</b>	Young offender institution