

Youth Justice Plan Stockton-on-Tees

2025-2026



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Introduction, Vision, and Strategy



Welcome to the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan for 2025-26. The plan looks back on our achievements to date and ongoing challenges. The plan will set out our ambitious priorities for the forthcoming year. This plan has been developed and agreed by the Youth Justice Partnership.

The Youth Justice Management Board are committed to our children and the principles of Child First practice. Across the partnership we have the ambition of wanting our children to thrive and achieve the best outcomes they can. We aspire to promote positive outcomes, reduce crime, and make our community safer.

As a Management Board we continue to be inspired by the Youth Justice Team (YJT) and the service they deliver. The session on participation helped the Board understand the lived experience of the children the team work with. In the last 12 months the Management Board have also received presentations on the speech and language work the team are doing with children and their families and the excellent work they are

doing in engaging victims in a restorative process.

We recognise we need to continue with our work around reducing serious youth violence and school exclusions. We also have work to do around reducing our custody numbers as they remain too high.

In 2024-25, the YJT relocated to sit within Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth support in Children's Services to refocus efforts to work with children and families at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation into statutory services. The move to our central base at Dunedin House has allowed the YJT to form even closer links with our Social Work teams and Care Leaver Service.

These are exciting times for Stockton-On-Tees Children Services as we start to shape our services in response to the Families First Partnership Programme. We have also embarked on embedding a systemic model of practice across all teams and this fits well with Child First and trauma informed principles.

Majella McCarthy, Chair of Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Management Board & Director of Children's Services

Local Context

Stockton-on-Tees is a diverse area of six towns covering mainly urban areas, with some rural villages. Its population is around 200,000 and growing. A total of 8% of the population are from a black or other minority ethnic groups. The population of 10–17-year-olds is just over 20,000.

There are areas of great affluence alongside some of the most deprived in England, with some significant differences around life and health outcomes. We know that socio-economic factors profoundly influence the lives and available opportunities for children. Many of the children who come into the justice system are from our most deprived communities.

Over the last ten years there has been a significant reduction in the number of children in the justice system. The current profile holds a small group of children who are considered to have complex needs, coupled with their experience of trauma, which renders them vulnerable to criminal exploitation. Children in the justice system are predominantly male and white British. A substantial number of children in the justice system are also known to Children Services.

Stockton-on-Tees YJT are currently working with an equal number of children subject to Court Orders and Out-Of-Court Disposals (OCD). The volume of statutory work is consistent with high levels of deprivation in the area and children being vulnerable to exploitation. Violence against the person is the most common offence for both statutory and OCD work. We have recently seen an increase in driving related offences. Referral Orders continue to be the most common disposal for Court Orders while Triage is most used for OCD.

Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

Youth Justice Management Board

The Management Board delivers strategic direction and coordinates the provision of local services. There is a clear focus on holding those functions, and the wider youth justice partnership to account for performance at both an operational and strategic level.

The membership and terms of reference for the Management Board were reviewed and refreshed in 2024 to ensure its continued effectiveness and compliance with 'Youth Justice Service Governance and Leadership, December 2021'. The main objectives of the Board are:

1. To ensure the preparation and implementation of the annual Youth Justice Plan; to consider and act upon feedback from the Youth Justice Board (YJB).
2. To determine how the Youth Justice Team is to be composed and funded, how it is to operate and what functions it is to carry out.
3. To agree measurable objectives linked to key performance indicators as part of the youth justice plan and evaluate service delivery to improve understanding of 'what works' in preventing offending and reoffending, including consideration of thematic inspections.
4. To influence other strategies and programmes from a youth offending perspective.
5. To agree annual funding arrangements and ensure the effective use of resource. To monitor quarterly financial position statements. To seek opportunities to gain additional resources which add value to core funding.
6. To oversee the appointment and designation of the Head of Service.

The Board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services. Board membership is comprised of representatives from statutory partners including the Local Authority; Police Service; Probation Service and the Integrated Health Board; and from local partners: the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), voluntary and community sector: and the courts. Management Board attendance throughout the last year has been good.

The Board meets quarterly as well as monitoring youth justice outcomes, the Board takes account of emerging trends, policy directives, legislation, research, and inspections. Information on compliance with the conditions of Youth Justice Board grant funding is overseen through the review of performance reports and quality assurance activity.

Location

The YJT is located in our Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth Support division within Children's Services.

The YJT sit alongside Family Hubs, Family Support Team, Family Group Conferencing, Therapeutic Services and Youth Support. There are two Services Leads one for Early Help and the other for Youth Justice and Youth Support.

The team are centrally located within the same building as Early Help and Statutory Teams, which provides opportunity for daily discussions where there is active Social Care involvement.

The Youth Justice Head of Service role is delivered by the Head of Service for Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth Support, with line management by the Assistant Director for Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care.

Resources and Value for Money

Resourcing for youth justice services comes from the Youth Justice Board and the local partnership. Youth justice functions are compliant with the minimum staffing requirements set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and a structure chart is presented on page 26.

A 100% of the youth justice grant is allocated to staffing costs within the YJT, accounting for over half of the employee costs for practitioners delivering statutory youth justice work in the courts, community and custody. The costs of seconded staff are met by their employing agencies. There is robust supervision and management oversight of case managers and other YJ staff. A management database is used to extract and track performance data.

The YJT has a diverse workforce comprising staff on substantive permanent and temporary contracts and community volunteers.

We are committed to delivering services that represent value for money. A significant amount of time has been spent on understanding the 'value' of services that are delivered, in terms of cost, outcomes and savings created through prevention and 'invest to save' approaches.

We will be delivering a range of services in partnership with others, to avoid duplication and to draw upon the skills and expertise of partners to maximise use of resources and expertise.



Partnership Arrangements

Youth justice services in Stockton-on-Tees have developed a range of strategic and operational linkages; outlined below:



The range of partners will be further expanded in the coming year as we consolidate arrangements to embed our Harm Outside the Home Team and jointly tackle and respond to serious youth violence across the Borough.

Most statutory youth justice interventions are delivered 'in house' or in partnership with key stakeholders. Our commissioned arrangement for speech, language, and communication services with Tees, Esk, Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust will continue.

Joint working arrangements with the Office of Police Crime and Commissioner (OPCC) funded Liaison and Diversion Service and Custody Navigators to support children in the police station are continuing; these are significant not only to ensure that children are properly supported but also to ensure a presence during those critical 'reachable moments'.

There is a close working relationship between the YJT and Children's Social Care for those deemed to be a Child in Need, Child in our Care and Care Leavers. Working protocols are in place. The reduction of criminalisation and offending by Children in our Care are corporate priorities and is well understood and embedded in local decision making by our partners in Police, Crown Prosecution Service, and the Courts.

Multi-agency pathways have been developed to support the 'Prevent' and Modern-Day Slavery legislation. The YJT is also an integral part of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). When a multi-agency approach is required to protect people from serious harm, information sharing agreements ensure information is available to support holistic assessments and planning for young people. All information is managed sensitively in accordance with Data Protection principles.

Update on the previous year

Help children stay out of the criminal justice system.

During 2024/25 we firmly established our 'Child First' bespoke OOCd panels. We invite professionals who have more knowledge from working with the child to contribute to the discussion and decision making. In the last year, the panel has diverted over 100 children away from the criminal justice system. We have also embedded the YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT) into practice and it is used for all OOCd and Turnaround.

The OPCC have agreed to provide a continuation of funding for Triage disposals and interventions to children for 2025/26. This is an essential component in our work as in the last 12 months we have delivered 112 OOCd. Triage continues to be our most widely used OOCd (79), followed by Outcome 22 (18) and Restorative Interventions (13). Although we have diverted significant numbers of children our FTE rate has increased from 125 to 173. This has been driven by children committing high gravity offences and charged straight to court.

The Ministry of Justice gave our Turnaround programme a target of delivering successful interventions to 97 children by March 2025. We have dedicated staff committed to the programme and subsequently we were able to achieve this goal by working with 98 children. Turnaround has provided a range of interventions which have included family work, positive activities, and support with Education, Training and Employment (ETE).

Reduce the use of custody and prioritise effective resettlement.

Our custody rate has continued to remain high over the last 12 months. It is currently at 0.28 which equates to six custodial sentences. This relates to four children of whom two received two terms of imprisonment. The main contributory factor behind these rates has been serious youth violence, child exploitation and the influence of Organised Crime Groups across the Borough. We have worked hard to keep our custody rates at a minimum and this was recognised during our YJB National Standards validation visit in January 2024. The YJT have worked closely with YJB Northeast Head of Oversight and reviewed the Pre-Sentencing Report's (PSR's) written where the children received custodial sentences. This was an exercise proposed at the Management Board meeting in January 2025. The review found that although all reports were strong, it was difficult to say if the custodial sentence could have been avoided. Nevertheless, there was some learning for the YJT. The team need to ensure PSR's have a consistent child focus lens, document the emotional and psychological impact of a custodial sentence and ensure it is balanced and accounts for positive aspects of the child's life, regardless of how small.

At the point of sentence, we hold bi-monthly resettlement meetings to ensure support is available on release. All children are subject to a range of licence conditions which include where appropriate electronic tags with trial monitoring. Our CAMHS, Speech And Language Team (SALT), Education To Employment (ETE) and support workers have been involved to ensure each child has consistent and individual support throughout the whole sentence. All

children have been released into suitable accommodation; however, we have had challenges in motivating the children towards appropriate ETE.

To reduce reoffending

We endeavour to ensure all children have a dedicated worker. Children who are receiving a Turnaround intervention will continue to have the same worker if they are charged with any offence. We have continued to review and develop our interventions. We have purchased two Virtual Reality Headsets and have extended learning packages for knife crime, gangs, and peer influences. The feedback from the children about these focused interventions has been very positive. In the last year we have also started a girl's group which focused on healthy relationships, self-esteem and keeping safe. Our interventions are under continuous review. Across Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth Support and Children's Social Care we have brought staff together to develop a range of interventions which incorporate all age ranges, styles and learning needs. The initial focus is on knife crime, peer influences and online safety, by bringing together a range of experts across all services, we in turn hope to produce innovative and effective interventions that resonate with children and reduce the risk of future offending. We have also strengthened our transition process and have undertaken a joint development session with our local Probation team, ensuring that young adult's transition seamlessly into the service.

We have continued to employ an ETE Worker to ensure children have intensive support to secure and engage them within appropriate ETE opportunities. We have a comprehensive health offer, with SALT and CAMHS workers, they have monthly health hub meetings where we can coordinate interventions. The SALT worker has worked with 41 children in a six-month period from April – September 24. All the children received comprehensive assessment along with at least two intervention sessions. We have reconfigured our trauma informed pathway and Tees Esk Wear Valley NHS Trust provide specialist workers that offer weekly consultations to staff on children with complex needs.

Strengthen our responses to Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation

The Youth Justice Management Board have advanced and shaped our multi-agency response to Serious Youth Violence. Nine partners completed the Joint Targeted Area Inspection Self-Assessment. This documented the wide range of work across the partnership and identified some gaps in provision. Consequently, we have worked in partnership with public health to complete a Rapid Needs Assessment which will establish local needs and identify best practice. The Management Board following publication of the needs assessment will meet in July 2025 to identify our priorities and to formulate a co-produced Serious Youth Violence Strategy. We have continued to work closely with Cleveland Unit for Reduction Violence (CURV) as they received further funding for the Custody Navigators scheme at Middlesbrough Custody Suite, where Children from Stockton-On-Tees are taken when arrested. This has ensured children have support at the earliest opportunity and trained staff can facilitate support. Research by Crest Advisory in November 2024 has indicated a promising impact the scheme has had on

first time attendees at the Police Station. We work closely with youth services across Stockton and are working with them to apply for funding from CURVE Knife Crime Action Fund so they can raise awareness amongst children of the consequences of carrying a knife, support families to strengthen relationships and improve communication. Our Turnaround Programme has continued to work with those children who have been arrested for violent offences but who have not been formally charged. Again, this early intervention response will have benefits of steering children away from becoming involved in serious youth violence.

To reduce the number of School Exclusions

We have worked closely with our colleagues in education to reduce the number of school exclusions. The Assistant Director of Education delivered a presentation to the Management Board in July 2024. He was able to provide an overview of the current work and initiatives. These include an attendance strategy, two risk of exclusions projects (St Michaels and Northfields), Pre-Exclusion Panels, governor training, Department for Education change programme and fair access policy. The YJT have also supported children to remain in education. This area of work remains a challenge as the above work has only slightly reduced the level of school exclusions. We acknowledge that there is further work to be done in this area.

To refresh our practice in our victim work and restorative practice.

Over the last 12 months we have refreshed our practice regarding victim work and restorative justice. We have appointed a Youth Justice Coordinator and have built some capacity with two support workers, who have also undertaken victim work. We recently refreshed our victim policy and have developed an action plan where we will continue to develop our practice in relation to a dedicated victim leaflet, victim safety plans and the creation of an audit tool for victim work. We are proud of the progress we have made in this area and details of our activity are documented in the restorative approaches and victims' section of this plan.

To Develop a Participation Model of Practice

The YJT created a participation group in June 2024, and they meet on a bi-monthly basis. The group has collated children's experiences of exploitation. We have developed a photography project so children can tell their stories in an innovative and creative way. We have gathered children's feedback about the resources they would like us to purchase for our child friendly space – the No limits Hub. Consequently, we are in the process of developing music, art, and podcast studios, to engage with children in a more creative and interest driven way.

We also delivered a participation workshop to the Management Board in July 2024, where a child attended and talked about his experience at Wetherby Young Offenders Institute. We are in the process of creating a 'mock' video of a Referral Order panel so this can be shared with children and families, so they know what to expect. We feel we still have work to do in this area and aim to build a participation group of children where we can regularly consult with them to

Performance over the last year.

First Time Entrants (FTE's)

The rate of FTE's has increased in the last year. The latest published YJB data currently has our rate at 173 and this is an increase in the last year from 125. The actual numbers of children who have become FTE's is 37 compared to 26 previously. Although our OOC Panel has contained this number (only two children received Youth Cautions) we have had 31 children who have been sentenced to Court Orders for high gravity offences. The other four children were sentenced at Court to either a Conditional Discharge or Compensation Order.

Although the rate has increased, we are lower than the Region of 186 and Cleveland PCC area of 218. However, we are higher than Family 156 and England and Wales 148.

Reoffending Rate

The latest reoffending rate is 47.4% which is a small increase on the previous year of 44.4%. The current rate is higher than other comparisons of the Region 38.9%, Cleveland PCC area 43.6%, Family 29.2% and England and Wales 31.6%. Our reoffending rate has fluctuated as in the period January - March 23 the rate was 41.7%. The YJB Youth Justice Statistics 2023/24 Insight Report (May 2025) documents that nationally there has been a rise in reoffending rates for the second consecutive year.

The current cohorts consist of 19 children, where nine reoffended. This is compared to last year of a cohort of 12, where five reoffended.

Reoffences/Reoffender

The current rate of reoffences/reoffender is 3.3 which is lower than the rate 12 months ago of 3.75. The latest rate is lower than all other comparisons. The rate for the Region 3.79 Cleveland PCC area 4.38, Family 4.75 and England and Wales 4.25. The reoffences/reoffender Rate is from nine reoffenders who committed a further 30 offences.

Use of Custody

The latest use of custody rate is 0.28, this is the same as the previous year. Our rate is higher than all other measures. The rate for the is region 0.16, Cleveland PCC 0.27, family 0.07 and England and Wales 0.10. The custody rate comes from six custodial sentences being given in the past year. All sentences were for violent offences, with two children being sentenced to two custodial sentences during this period.

Risks and Issues

Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice partnership continues to function in an ever-evolving landscape with the streamlining of services and pressures on resources.

It is evident the children in the youth justice system in Stockton remain some of the most vulnerable in our communities, particularly those in custody with links to exploitation. Reoffending behaviour by children in Stockton of a reducing cohort remains a challenge both in Stockton and nationally.

Serious Youth Violence continues to be a challenge in Stockton along with school exclusions. Our plan for 2025/26 documents how we are planning to address these issues.

The YJB grant allows us to maintain a comprehensive and effective service to the children we work with. We need to ensure we have sufficient resources in place to meet demand and expectations. This needs to be kept under constant review. Any reduction in the YJB grant would have serious implications. There are also risks with the Ministry of Justice Turnaround grant and OPCC Triage funding. Both funding streams are only for 2025/26 and if these do not continue beyond this period, we would need to redesign the services we offer.

The YJT moved to Pathways our new case management system in September 2024. We have worked hard to ensure any disruption is kept to a minimum. However, there are ongoing risks about our ability to fulfil our data reporting. Our provider NEC will be providing an upgrade in August 2025, and this should facilitate our KPI reporting by embedding the PDAT into the case management system.

The YJT along with many other teams from across Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council moved into Dunedin House (a big open office environment) in August 2025. The team has settled into this environment and have embraced co-location work and the benefits this brings. Last year we were concerned about not having a centralised venue for appointments with children and families. This was resolved in March 2025 when we were able to access the No Limits Hub in Stockton town centre.

Plans for the forthcoming year

Child First

The Child Focus¹ approach has 4 tenets, which are summarised as:

As children

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.



Building pro-social identity

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.

Collaborating with children

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

Diverting from stigma

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 Child First approach means that all staff consistently refer to our cohort as children and not young people. This is more effective when gaining access to appropriate services. We talk to children in a positive way about their strengths and ability for positive change.

We have promoted diversion throughout the team and partners and consequently have seen a significant number of children been dealt with by way of OOD. We aspire to avoid criminalising children unnecessarily. We adopted the PDAT assessment at an early stage, this has promoted better planning and use of language. We consistently talk about behaviours rather than offences, and safety for others rather than risk to others. The YJT strives to promote children with a pro-social identity.

In the past year we have collaborated with children and listened to their voices about experiences of the criminal justice system, purchased fidget tools and VR headsets. Intervention plans are more child friendly using language children understand and relate too.

We have continued to build a strong partnership approach to our work so we can continue to develop personalised child focus work. Our support workers have been creative in how they engage with children and have assisted children to attend music studios, bike projects and photography projects. We have speech, language and communication, health and education and training workers in place along with support workers who can work with children to develop inclusion, positive relations, interests, and activities.

We have started to use QR codes to make it easier for children and families to provide feedback. Children have consequently provided feedback about our Turnaround Programme and have helped to design resources for our children's space the 'No Limits Hub.'

We are committed to ensuring that children and their families have a voice; that they have an influence on their individual intervention programmes and in broader approaches to service delivery and developments. We aspire to deliver motivational, respectful, and strength-based approaches to promote desistance from crime.

Resources and services

Regular financial reports are presented to the YJ Management Board with recommendations for the board to discuss and agree. The income and projected expenditure represent finance estimates based upon the YJT structure, agreed funding and service initiative from a national and local level. As in previous years, staff costs will continue to constitute most of the expenditure. All monies carried forward in reserve are earmarked for planned Youth Justice business, and all future spend of the reserve would be agreed by the board.

There is currently no requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Service to contribute to remand costs, but this may change if the numbers increase.

We use 100% of our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver these services and we believe they produce improved benefits and outcomes, and our performance will be improved in 2025–26 by understanding and working with the diverse communities in Stockton. This will be delivered with a joined-up problem-solving approach, focusing on our response and long-term support, using a consistent approach in working with our most vulnerable, complex, and high-risk children and enhancing our offer for First-Time Entrants.

The table on page 26 represents the closing financial position for 2025-26. The budget has seen a slight increase in the YJB grant, due to an uplift in 2025.

The Ministry of Justice Turnaround programme financial profile will be presented as a separate report in the 2025-26 financial year. We have continued to receive payment in kind for Police, Probation and Health workers. The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner has committed further funding for our Triage programme for 2025/26.

Workforce Development

We updated our workforce development policy in November 2025 to ensure all YJT employees and seconded workers have sufficient skills to enable them to carry out their job effectively. Staff receive monthly supervision and yearly appraisal along with completing a range of mandatory training. All YJT in 2024-25 staff have received training on the YJB PDAT, Virtual Reality headset training, Harm Outside the Home, SALT, and Harmful Sexual Behaviour. The YJT has a monthly Effective Practice session with all staff. The sessions are designed to develop knowledge and skills. In 2024-25 we completed work on Court Skills, GPS tagging, Resources, and a Participation workshop. Our CAMHS worker has also continued to undertake reflective practice sessions with staff.

In the last year we worked in partnership with Family Action to recruit and train an additional three Referral Order volunteers. Consequently, we have a total of 10 panel members. Referral Order panel member meetings take place on a quarterly basis and an element of training is provided during these sessions. Panel members are also offered two 1:1 sessions each year. They also have access to Stockton Borough council training. We have continued to support our two apprentices, and one has found work in Children's Social Care.

In the last year we have had several new members of staff joining the team. All staff have received our two-week induction programme which includes meetings, training, and shadowing opportunities. Our training plan for 2025-26 covers such areas as systemic practice, transitions to probation and masterclasses in effective case management.

Evidence-based practice and innovation

Stockton-on-Tees YJT always seek to improve practice to ensure we achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families. Consequently, we continually work towards improving the services we provide and extend our offer based on best and evidence-based practice. We have built upon good practice over many years and desistance theory is embedded into our way of working. We ensure children have consistency of case managers so we can form relationships with the children and families we work with. We use trauma informed practice along with a child first mindset and restorative approach to engage children and families.

Over the last year we have had some excellent examples of good practice. These include a child's mother becoming a referral order panel member. A child created a lasting memorial for a family member and a child who won the Cleveland OPCC Christmas Card Competition. The participants of our Girls group provided excellent feedback. Our partnership approach/offer is an example of our current good practice. We have Police, Probation, ETE, SALT and CAMHS workers all in place and we are responsive to children's needs and is evident throughout our work with children.

Evaluation

During the last year we have undertaken an audit of 20 closed Turnaround cases. The audit found proactive engagement, a high level of contact and only a small number of children had gone on to commit an offence. However, there were also some areas of development where the screening tool and planning document we were using was not fit for purpose and staff needed to focus work on providing children with skills to manage difficult situations more effectively. Consequently, we introduced the use of the YJB PDAT for all Turnaround cases. We also ensured workers were encouraged to deliver programmes, for example, work on peer influences. Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth Support service area undertake a range of audits which include dip sampling, collaborative, and direct observations. Youth Justice cases are included in this work where learning is disseminated and acted upon.

Priorities for the coming year

1. Help children stay out of the criminal justice system.

We will:

- Continue to promote diversion principles at our OOC panels and use of Triage, Outcome 22, and Restorative Interventions.
- Continue to provide comprehensive interventions for children identified through our Turnaround programme.
- Continue to deliver Triage services in partnership with the Office Police Crime Commissioner.
- Co-ordinate quarterly meetings with the Police to review all cases where children became First-Time Entrants.
- Develop an action plan from the above to address any themes/patterns which emerge from these meetings.
- Work closely with Youth Support Team to ensure we identify children who may come into contact with the criminal justice system.

2. To reduce reoffending.

We will:

- To develop more modern programmes in relation to driving offences.
- Facilitate staff workshops on social skills training.
- Continue to develop our transition offer with Probation.
- Continue to focus on health needs with all children assessed for SALT, CAMHS and ETE needs.
- Continue to provide a comprehensive offer to the youth justice cohort regarding sports and physical activities.

3. Reduce the use of custody and prioritise effective resettlement.

We will:

- Continue to hold a pre-sentence meeting in all possible custody cases to ensure comprehensive Community Sentences are recommended to court. To ensure all reports are produced with a 'child first' lens emphasizing the child's difficulties and achievements.
- Propose appropriate Intensive Supervision and Surveillance with trial monitoring as this will promote confidence to the Court that children can be managed safely in the community.
- All resettlement cases will be discussed at Management Board meetings to ensure any gaps in provision are known and escalated to Board members whose seniority can make key decisions.
- Ensure early planning is in place for those children leaving custody. This will be monitored by monthly resettlement meetings.
- In appropriate cases liaise with Courts and defence solicitors to facilitate one sentencing exercise for children having multiple offences going through court.

4. Continue to Strengthen our responses to Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation.

We will:

- Identify children through the HOTH screening process to ensure they receive the appropriate level of support.
- Head of Service to sit on the Stockton Safer Partnership meetings.
- To continue to work closely with our Adolescent Social Work Team to develop positive pathways for children to steer them away from Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation.
- The YJ Management Board to develop our Serious Youth Violence strategy on completion of the Rapid Needs assessment.
- Work in partnership with CURV to develop Young futures Prevention Partnership panels.
- Work in partnership with Youth United Stockton Alliance to see funding opportunities to address serious youth violence for example, CURV Knife Crime action programme.
- To identify children at risk of serious youth violence at the earliest opportunity through our work with Custody Navigators and Turnaround Programmes and provide them with support.

5. To Focus on Reducing the number of school exclusions, improving school attendance, and providing opportunities for post 16 children.

We will:

- To continue to monitor school exclusion across the youth justice cohort.
- To work with education leaders to increase the capacity of alternative educational provision.
- To work with senior education leaders on strategy to increase school attendance.
- To work with Tees Valley Youth Trailblazer initiative to identify NEET children to provide support and work experience opportunities.
- Work with UK Youth to develop summer jobs project.

- Utilise Youth Justice child focused ETE meetings to raise concerns and find solutions around school attendance and exclusions.

6. To Continue to develop our Intervention programmes and our child friendly space.

We will:

- Develop our No Limits Hub and continue to work with our children to design the space.
- To explore a venue that would facilitate children's interest and creativity (arts, craft, and upcycling).
- Develop a range of resources on knife crime, peer influences and online safety.
- To deliver VR headset interventions.

National priority areas

Children from groups which are over-represented.

It is paramount Stockton-On-Tees YJT are aware of issues of disproportionality and take appropriate action. It is recognised that nationally children from some ethnic minority groups are more likely to be criminalized. We have continued to provide the Management Board with quarterly reports which document the ethnicity and diversity of the youth justice cohort.

The report compares information to the latest census data (2021) where Stockton's population in terms of ethnicity is 92% White, 4.6% Asian, 3.3% Other. Our current caseload consists of 95% white compared to 93% the previous year, which suggests a small over representation of this group. Although the numbers are relatively small, we are committed to continued scrutiny and analysis of data. We are not complacent about children facing discrimination and staff will use their professional curiosity to explore children's experience of racism. The YJB Ethnic Disparity tool 2025 has documented over representation is not statistically significant in Stockton. It does however state it is white children who are most likely to commit a serious offence and most likely to be sentenced at court rather than receive youth cautions or youth conditional cautions. In terms of gender the current caseload consists of 88% male and 13% female. This concurs with the national average of 85% male and 15% female. We also have a high percentage of children who are CIOC, Child Protection, Child in Need or Early Help. Over the last year this has ranged from 40-50% of children the YJT are working with.

Prevention

Our prevention offer mainly comes from our Youth Support Team. The team are responsible for direct work with children where there are risks or vulnerabilities. They also provide a dedicated response to children who go missing from home. Youth Support deliver interventions to prevent or reduce concerning behaviours that have been identified within the home or community, building social and emotional resilience. These are key parts of our work to prevent offending, safeguard children, identify risks and prevent further missing episodes.

All engagement with the Youth Support Team is voluntary and they prioritise face-to-face contact and direct work, taking full opportunity of any reachable moments presented between them and the child. All direct work is aimed to be individual to each child's needs, innovative and using evidence-based practice tools, which underpins our good practice and quality assurance framework.

Youth Support aims to reduce the need for statutory involvement by responding to the early indicators of concern and to prevent the need for social care intervention. Both YJT and Youth Support have close links with SBC Community Safety team who can identify children who are displaying anti-social behaviour in the community.

Diversion

Stockton-on-Tees YJT is committed to a diversionary approach in our work. We believe we should avoid unnecessary criminalisation of children and deal with them at the lowest possible level. The YJT are keen to ensure where there is a linked offence children receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record, avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system and associated stigmatisation. Our OOC framework has a range of disposals (Restorative Interventions, Outcome 22, Triage and Triage 2) that avoid children having a criminal record so we can, through assessment and intervention, help them form/maintain a pro-social identity. In the last 12 months we have had 112 children subject to one of the above and all children have been provided with an intervention. Only two children out of the 112 received either a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution and became FTE's. This is compared to 13 out of 116 OOC the previous year. We have therefore embedded our diversionary principles into practice.

Education

Access to opportunities for ETE for the youth justice cohort is fundamental for their prospects. The YJT have developed individual child focused meetings to consider children who are not fulfilling their potential. Colleagues from Careers Services, SEND and Education Improvement attend these meetings. Many children have low self-esteem, poor educational attainment, low attendance and motivation, SALT and SEND needs. The YJT has had a dedicated ETE worker in place since October 2023 to provide specialist advice and support. Our SALT worker has undertaken numerous assessments on children and has completed reports giving clear advice to parents and schools/training providers about how best to communicate with the child and provide strategies to engage them in their education / training. All YJT staff now have access to Stockton's Education department database EYES, and this provides 'live' information on children's schools, attendance, and educational needs. Our current ETE performance is 71%. There is, however, a contrast between school age and post 16 of 86% to 43%. It is acknowledged our post 16 ETE rates remain a significant challenge. Our ETE worker continues to explore opportunities with local providers such as NACRO and Princess Trust. We have also identified several children who have applied for the summer jobs programme through UK Youth.

Restorative approaches and victims

The YJT has a dedicated Youth Justice Coordinator role, and this post has responsibility for restorative justice and victim intervention. Most victims are contacted and an offer of involvement in a restorative process is initiated. This offer includes direct mediation, ensuring the voice of the victim is heard, direct/indirect reparation and letters of apology/explanation. During the last year we have made progress in gaining good victim information. From July 2024 to March 2025, we have had 113 victim referrals. A total of 66 victims shared their views and experiences of crime. It is therefore positive 58% of victims contacted engaged in the process and their views were heard. A total of 40 victims have had updates on the child's engagement with the YJT. Another 12 victims have been provided with specialist support, for example, VCAS, domestic violence or mental health. The Youth Justice Coordinator in the last six months has undertaken 49 victim awareness sessions with 24 children. This has allowed the

victim's experience to be incorporated into this work. We have also built capacity as two support workers can now undertake victim and restorative work.

We have also developed a portfolio of reparation projects, for example, Family Hub and allotment projects. We have also focused on more themed projects such as white ribbon day to raises awareness about ending violence towards women and girls and VE celebrations.

Serious violence and exploitation

The link between the exploitation of children and serious organised crime gangs and the connections with the supply of drugs and serious violence is well understood in Stockton, as is the intrafamilial harm whereby family members of children are involved in OCG and serious violence. It was evident the partnership in Stockton continues to develop a coordinated response to criminal exploitation and youth violence. We have robust information sharing processes and forums in place across the partnership. Stockton has responded to concerns by strengthening its response and building on its Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) with a dedicated service area with the creation of the Adolescent Team in December 2023.

The Adolescent and HOTH teams sit in Children's Social Care. The Adolescent Team has at its core the safeguarding of children who are being exploited or at risk of exploitation. They will work with children from the age of 10-18 years of age who are likely to suffer harm from exploitation, although this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The Service can work with children for as long as necessary or whilst there is consent, with regular Child Protection or Child in Need reviews taking place between 4-6 weeks (depending on the risk) to assess the effectiveness of the plan. The Adolescent Team and YJT have formed close working arrangements and will co-ordinate appointments and interventions for children at risk.

We continue to work in close partnership with Police, Health, Community Safety, Police Custody Navigators, health navigator from hospitals, Virtual School, and Youth Support (who co-ordinate our response to children Missing From Home).

In bringing together the knowledge, expertise and resources of all partners, the team can share information swiftly, create a full picture of risk and need and provide a creative and effective response that is always guided by the needs and wishes of the individual child, young person, and their family. A morning meeting is held each day where nominated staff from the Police, Adolescent Team, HOTH, YJT and Youth Support discuss 'live' cases, share information and coordinate a multi-agency response.

This is underpinned by our core principles which are: youth voice and experience, development and transitions in their lives, intervene early and help prevent further harm, intervention, disruption and information sharing and data analysis.

The HOTH arrangements provide assessment and risk management responses to those persons and locations where exploitation harm is present for children. Persons and locations of concern are managed in partnership through the Community Safety led Joint Action Group and Police led MARSOC management of which YJT are partners. As such, the partnership is

collectively responsive to support disruption of the contextual risks for children at risk of exploitation harm. In addition, there is the oversight of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) submissions through the Tees Strategic Exploitation Group (TSEG), as YJT work in partnership with HOTH and Adolescent Team to ensure appropriate referrals are made, and information is shared to support identification of children at risk of Modern Slavery and Trafficking.

The YJS partnership facilitates the seamless transfer of information on risk and vulnerabilities across a range of forums which include, the strategic HOTH Meetings, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). We continue to work closely with CURV, and the funded custody navigators scheme provides a holistic approach in engaging and intervening with children at the earliest opportunity.

We recognise serious youth violence and exploitation continues to be a significant challenge for Stockton. The YJB data on serious violence published in April 2025 showed an increase in the rate of serious youth violence in the year ending December 2024 with 14 offences compared to the previous year of 12. Stockton's rate of 6.6 is higher than other comparisons, for example, Northeast 4.8 and England and Wales 6.2.

Detention in police custody

We have established arrangements in place for children detained in custody. Youth Support Team provides an Appropriate Adult (AA) service during office hours 9 -5 and the Emergency Duty Team provide an after-hours service. All staff undertaking AA work have been PACE trained. Staff will work with the Police to facilitate that a parent/carer will attend in the first instance. If this is not possible, we will act as AA and ensure the child understands the process and any interview is conducted fairly. Furthermore, we will provide updates to parents/carers and relevant professionals.

Cleveland Youth Justice Services continue to hold a monthly Children in Custody meeting. This is aligned with a business priority for the YJB to ensure custody is used appropriately. The meeting is attended by the Police, Emergency Duty Team and Custody Team. We focus on all children who were held for more than 12 hours. Stockton on average has 10 – 12 cases each month which meet this criterion. The meeting looks for assurance that these children have support in place. We have found in most cases the reason children are held for over 12 hours is because a 'live' investigation is ongoing, or the child is not fit for interview due to intoxication. We have also had an agreement in place with Aycliffe Secure Home where they will provide a PACE bed if one is available. Over the last 12 months we have had four children who were placed in a PACE bed before attending court the following day.

In partnership with CURV, Hartlepool and South Tees YJT we launched a Custody Navigator scheme in April 2023. The scheme has been further funded for 2025/26 and trained staff available six days a week to support children in custody. Good communication channels are in place, so information is shared across partners in a timely fashion, so children's needs are addressed.

Remands

The YJB National Standards validation visit in January 2024 felt our work in this area was outstanding. In the last 18 months we have reviewed our bail and remand policy, and this has formed part of an effective practice session with staff. The YJT provides a trained and specialist

Youth Justice Officer to attend each day, if required. We have an extensive range of bail packages available to the Court including Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS). Good partnership relationships are in place with Police, CPS, defence solicitors, Children Services, and others. We work closely with Children Services, so appropriate support is provided if children have any accommodation issues. We have had high numbers of children appearing before Court who were at risk of being remanded in Custody. Over the past year we have had two children who have been remanded to custody. These were for serious offences which include Murder and Section 18 Wounding offences. However, within this period the YJT have provided robust bail packages to the Court which included the use of Bail Supervision and Support (BSS) and ISS. We have had 12 children subject to bail packages where either a remand or extensive bail conditions have been actively pursued by the CPS.

The Ministry of Justice issued the Remand Concordat in February 2025 for Youth Justice Partnerships to improve the outcomes of children on remand. The document was discussed at our Management Board meeting April 2025. We have also held a partnership benchmarking exercise with the Police and Children Services. Consequently, we have formulated an action plan which includes meeting more regularly with the Courts and CPS to discuss relevant issues.

Use of custody

In last year's plan we had proposed how to reduce the use of custody in Stockton-on-Tees. We developed clear mechanisms which included, holding a pre-sentence meeting in all possible custody cases to ensure comprehensive community sentences were recommended to the court. In appropriate cases we have proposed ISS and the use of electronic monitoring. Our custody rate is currently at 0.28 which is higher than all other comparisons. The figure currently relates to six custodial sentences. All the custodial sentences relate to serious violent offences. The feedback from the YJB validation visit said Stockton-On-Tees YJT are 'making every effort to steer children away from custody.' We recognise that two children received two custodial sentences in a short period. However, the children were remanded at the time of the first custodial sentence and the Court wanted to progress matters.

Constructive resettlement

Over the last 12 months Stockton-on-Tees YJT has continued to focus attention on resettlement. We have considered the learning from HMI Probation thematic report into resettlement in 2019 and Case Management Guidance – Custody and Resettlement and YJB – How to Make Resettlement Constructive (Sept 2018). We recognised the importance of appropriate accommodation and ETE intervention on release to build a positive identity for the child. Since our last Youth Justice plan, we have had three children released from custody. Two children returned home to live with their family, and one was found a suitable placement. Our YJT ETE worker has provided specialist support to explore suitable options. Our CAHMS worker has also provided seamless support by liaising with health professionals in custody to ensure appropriate appointments were made for their return to the community. We have also ensured we have a range of personal development sessions in place, and this can range from cooking to going to the gym. We have also embedded bi-monthly resettlement discussions between the Team Manager and Youth Justice Officers for each resettlement case. The meetings are designed to provide an update on the plan and to overcome any potential barriers to effective resettlement.

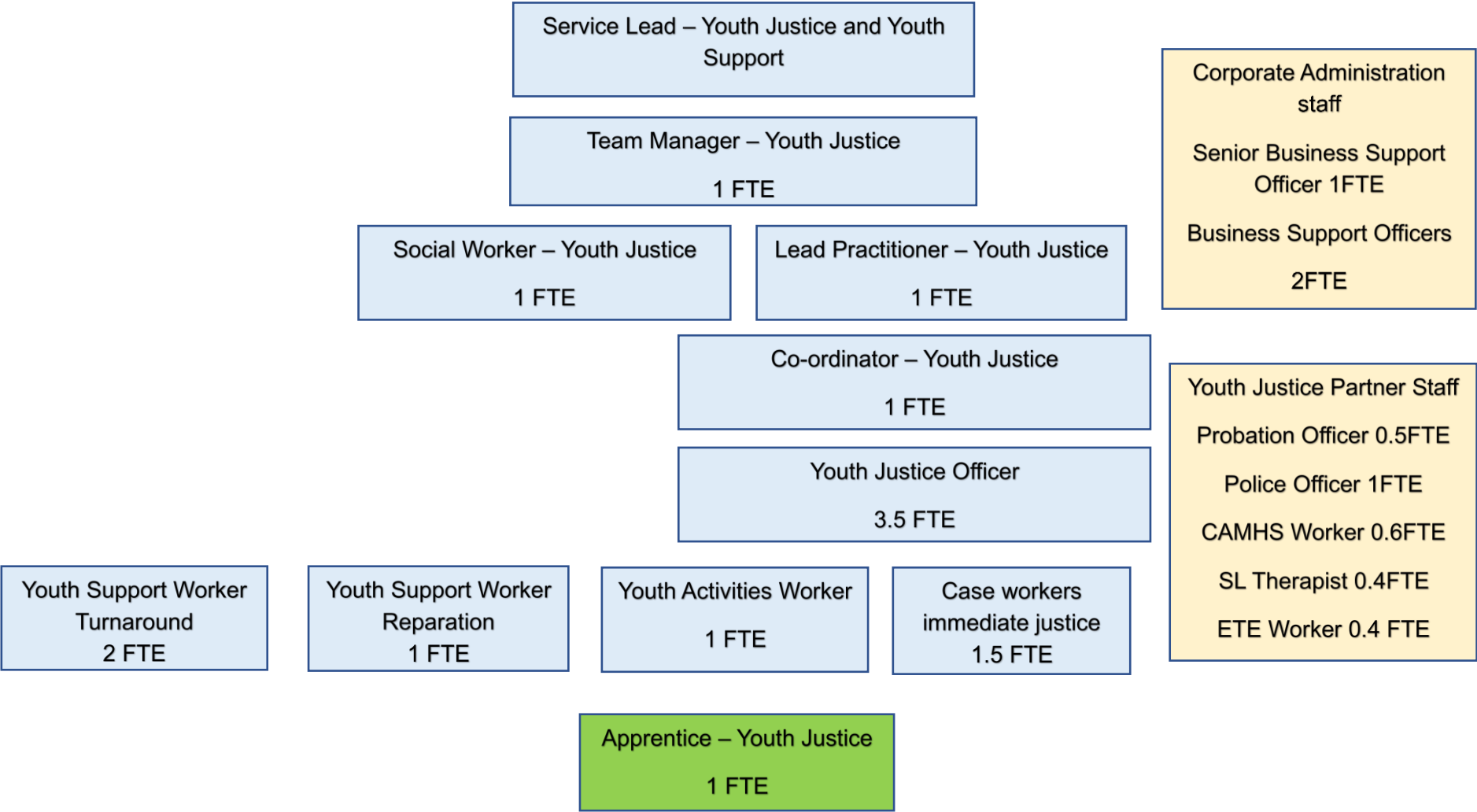
Standards for children in the justice system

The last YJB National Standards self-assessment was on standard two - At Court. The self-assessment determined our strategy as good and reports and process as outstanding. The YJB selected Stockton-On-Tees YJT for a validation visit. The YJB rated our work at court as outstanding across strategy, reports and process. They remarked, 'Outstanding practice is evidenced.' The YJB said in terms of an area of development Stockton needed to work with partners to re-establish a court user group. Consequently, we have achieved this although we still have an issue with the frequency of meetings. There was no requirement for a National Standards self-assessment for 2024-25. As the YJT have moved to Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth Support we have adopted the Service area approach to audit. This includes themed and collaborative audits. The latter cover key areas of work such as assessment, planning, intervention, and voice of the child. We anticipate undertaking 15 youth justice audits each year and we will aggregate our findings to continually develop and improve youth justice practice.

Appendix 1A: Staffing Demographics

Youth Justice Team staff demographics		
GENDER	Female	17
	Male	4
	Other	0
ETHNICITY	White	95.2%
	Asian	04.8%
	Black	0%
	Mixed	0%
	Other	0%
DISABILITY	YES	0
	NO	21

Appendix 1B: Youth Justice Team structure chart



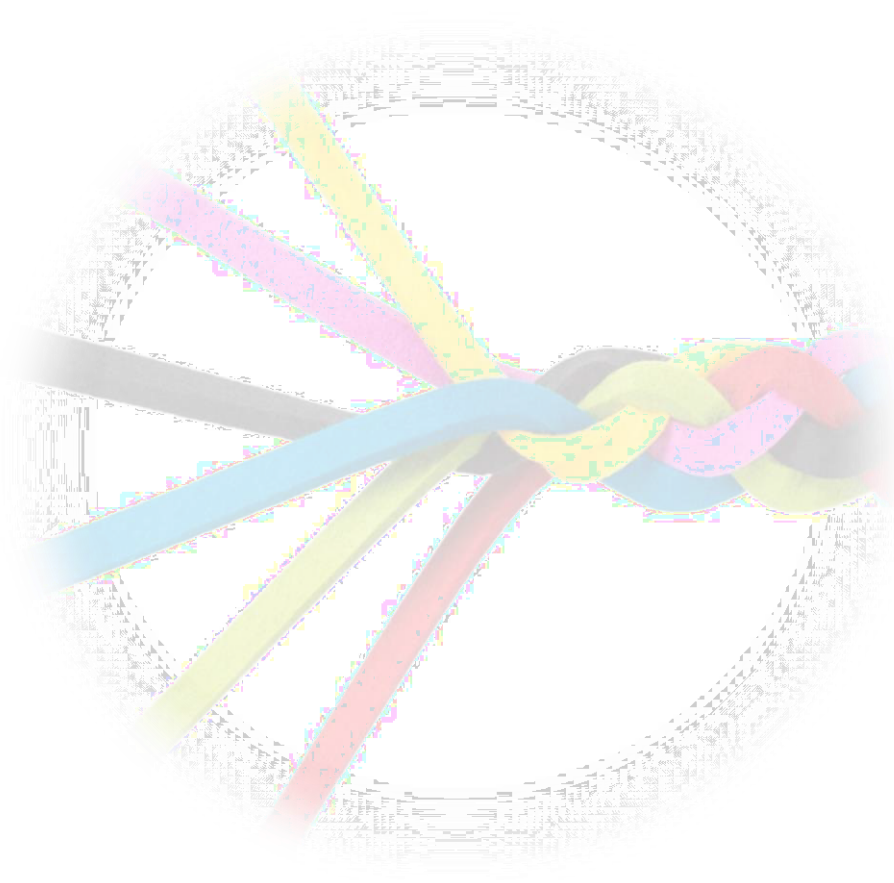
Appendix 2: Budget Costs and Contributions

Below is a summary of the YJT's financial profile for 2023-24. As in previous years, the majority of expenditure was on staffing costs.

BUDGET 2024/25	budget	outturn 2024/2025	outturn variance
Staff	832,086	832,086	0
Premises	42,778	42,778	0
Professional Services	31,500	31,500	
Indirect Staffing Costs (Transport & Training)	12,000	12,000	0
Office Costs	33,420	33,420	0
Central recharges	53,000	53,000	0
Total Expenditure	1,004,784	1,004,784	0
Income	1,004,784	1,004,784	0
Net Expenditure	0	0	0

Glossary

AssetPlus	A strengths based structured assessment tool based on research and developed by the Youth Justice Board looking at the child or young person's offence, personal circumstances and factors affecting desistance from crime
Child Exploitation	Safeguarding activity which focuses 'beyond the child's home and families,' to target those adults who are exploiting (targeting, tricking, and coercing) children for their own purposes and needs.
CURV	Cleveland's Unit for Reduction of Violence
ETAC	Exploitation Team Around the child.
ETE	Education, training, and employment; work to improve educational and learning outcomes
FTE	First-time entrants to the criminal justice system
HOTH	Harm Outside The Home
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
Justice System	Involves any or all of the agencies involved in upholding and implementing the law: police, courts, youth justice, probation, and custody providers.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
OPCC	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Pathways	The new YOT case management system
PDAT	Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool
Restorative Justice	The use of restorative approaches within a justice context. Brings those harmed by crime (victims) and those responsible for the harm (the offender) into communication, with a view to repairing the harm caused
Safety & Wellbeing	Terminology introduced by the YJB / AssetPlus to describe potential adverse outcomes where concerns exist that the young person's safety and well-being may be compromised through their own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts / omissions of others
Safeguarding	Action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YJT	Youth Justice Team



For more information on this Plan, please contact the Youth Justice Team

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