



# Sheffield Youth Justice Service

Youth Justice Plan 2025/26



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Directorate: Children and Families  
Service: Youth Justice Service  
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Chair of Youth Justice Board: Meredith Dixon-Teasdale

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# 1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

## Forward

As the Strategic Director of Children's at Sheffield City Council and Chair of the Youth Justice Board, I am proud to present this year's Youth Justice Plan. This has been co-created and produced by all partners and shows the strengthening of the Board and partnership over the last year.

Over the past year, we have made significant strides in fostering a sense of belonging among the children and young people we serve. Our commitment to belonging has been instrumental in embedding a child-centred approach across the city and within the council. Belonging emphasizes the importance of every child feeling they belong in a loving family, a good quality home, their local school, their community, and as a valued member of the City.

Our efforts have been focused on collaboration and partnership to improve outcomes for children. The Youth Justice Board has played a crucial role in upholding the vision and priorities for children in the youth justice system. The Board's representation across other strategic boards has strengthened alignment and shared responsibility, ensuring that our work is integrated and impactful.

Over the past year, we have made notable progress on several priorities:

1. **First Time Entrants:** We have worked diligently to understand and address the higher rate of first-time entrants in Sheffield compared to similar areas. Our efforts included analysing data, consulting with the Youth Justice Legal Centre, and exploring diversionary outcomes with South Yorkshire Police
2. **Employment, Training, and Education:** We have strengthened our partnership with the education team to re-engage children through alternative education provision and support those at risk of exclusion or chronic absence. Our joint efforts have led to a reduction in the number of children not in education, employment, or training (NEET)
3. **Over representation and Disproportionality:** We have continued our commitment to reducing the over representation of certain groups of children in the youth justice system. Our dedicated diversity lead and EDI focus group have championed equity, diversity, and inclusion, providing training and development opportunities to staff and engaging in collaborative work with partners
4. **Prevention:** Recognising the value of early intervention, we have aligned our prevention services with the Youth Justice Service and expanded our support to children at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Our collaborative efforts have strengthened our ability to provide effective prevention and diversion

These achievements reflect our unwavering dedication to ensuring that every child in Sheffield feels a sense of belonging and is supported to achieve their full potential. As we look ahead, we remain committed to building on this progress and continuing to work collaboratively with our partners to create a brighter future for our children and young people



Meredith Dixon - Teasdale

Strategic Director of  
Children's Services

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Every local authority has a duty to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan. The plan should set out how Youth Justice Services are to be provided, how they are funded, leadership and governance arrangements and key information to provide assurance that the service will be effective in achieving its key functions. Sheffield's plan has been prepared in conjunction with stakeholders and key board members to reflect the partner engagement efforts and collaborative approach to ensure that children are at the centre of what we do.

## Local Context

**141** Languages spoken in Sheffield

**24%** Speak English as an additional language

**573,252**  
Total population of Sheffield

**37** Years  
Average age of population

**59,252** Children aged 10-18  
10.34% of total population

**21%**  
Households claiming universal credit or housing benefit  
49,383

**24%**  
% of people in the most deprived areas of the country

**5%**  
Unemployment of population  
16,240

**8%**  
Children living in workless households

**0.7%**  
Amount of people assessed as homeless  
4000

**20%**  
% of children on the poverty line  
25,937

- 24%** Children who are persistent absentees
- 262** Pupils in Pupil Referral Units
- 1669** Pupils in SEN schools
- 87,956** Pupils in main-stream school
- 12** Number of SEN schools
- 175** Number of main-stream schools
- <1%** % Electively home educated
- 5562** Children with Education Health and Care plans
- 33%** % of children who have free school meals
- 90%** Schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted  
159 Schools
- 9%** 16/17 - year-olds not in education, employment or training
- 88,425** % of people with no qualifications  
19%

Sources: LG inform, ONS Census, Insight, locally held data.

## 2. Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

### Governance

Adopted in January 2025, Sheffield's Belonging Together Framework embeds a child centred approach across the City and within the Council. The approach encourages collaboration to improve outcomes for children -

"Every child should belong in a loving family, a good quality home, in their local school where they feel they belong and thrive and attain, in their local community where they are valued and respected and a member of the City of Sheffield where their voice is heard and they can see the impact of their voice on decisions"

Youth Justice Services were established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with a principal aim to prevent offending behaviour by children. Each local authority in England and Wales has a duty to work with its statutory partners – police, health, and probation – along with wider services, to ensure that effective Youth Justice Services are available in their area

The Youth Justice Service in Sheffield is within the Children and Families Directorate. The Youth Justice Management Board is chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's Services, with the Deputy Chair being an Assistant Director in Children and Families. Board members have a wide sphere of influence and play a key role in upholding the vision and priorities for children in the youth justice system. Their representation across other strategic boards strengthens alignment and shared responsibility, including:

Sheffield Children's Safeguarding Partnership

Violence Reduction Executive Board

Local Criminal Justice Board

Sheffield Health and Well-being Board

Serious Violence Executive Board

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board

Inclusion Task force

SEND and Alternative Provision Strategic Partnership Board

Safer Sheffield Partnership Board

NEETs Task force

Children's and Young People's Delivery Group

Early Help Partnership Board

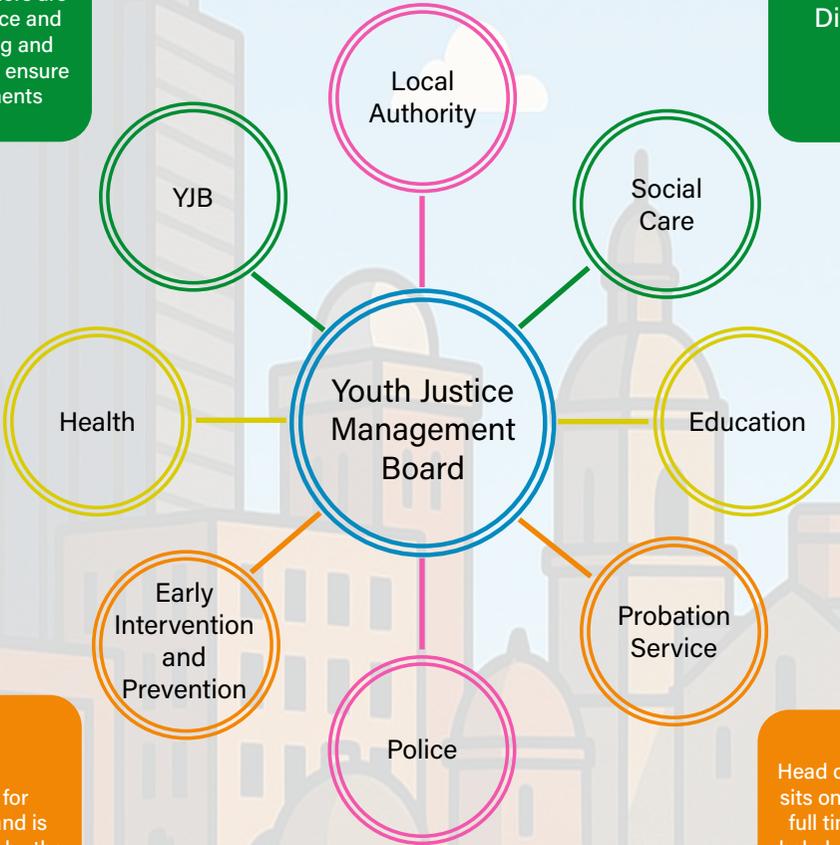
Sheffield Safeguarding Hub Partnership Board

# Youth Justice Partnership Board

The Board is led by the Strategic Director of Children's Services

The responsibility of the YJB is to monitor activity to ensure that local services and their statutory and delivery partners are accountable for their performance and have mechanisms for measuring and scrutinising their performance to ensure delivery and enable improvements

The Deputy Chair is an Assistant Director in the Children and Families Directorate



Assistant Director of Transformation and Delivery for the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board contributes to the board. One Child and Adolescent Mental Health Nurse (CAMHS) nurse, 1.5 Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) and .5 specialist nurses all support the health and well-being of the children in Youth Justice

Represented by the Assistant Director of Education, a local Headteacher of a secondary and sixth form school, and a Vice Principal of a local college; our work is supported operationally by an education concentrator to offer consultation and advocacy for children in the justice system

Assistant Director responsible for Communities sits on the Board and is often supported and deputised for by the Service Manager for Prevention Services

Head of Sheffield Probation Delivery Unit sits on the Management Board, with one full time Probation Officer seconded to help keep communities safe and support transitions of children into the adult system

Superintendent for Neighbourhoods and Partnership supports the Board. Two police officers are seconded to the Youth Justice Service

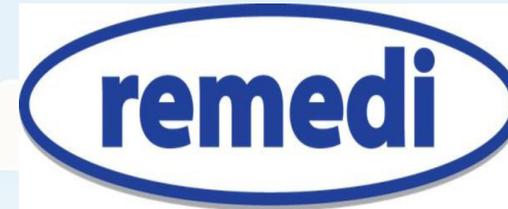
**i** Statutory partners actively contribute to the Youth Justice Management Board and support service delivery in line with the Youth Justice Board's governance guidance. The Board has more recently expanded its reach with new partners joining to support children affected by wider vulnerabilities such as exploitation, serious violence, school exclusion, mental health needs and disproportionality. A full list of board representatives can be found in Appendix 3

## Children, Community Safety & Leadership

In Sheffield, the responsibility for keeping children and communities safe is embedded across several strategic plans. Youth justice is recognised as a cross-cutting theme within several, including:

- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's Police and Crime Plan
- Safer Sheffield Partnership's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy which sets out contributions to the City Goals and Council Plan
- The Youth Justice Service Manager leads the delivery of youth justice in Sheffield, supported by an Assistant Service Manager and a team of specialist and operational managers. The day-to-day work is carried out by Youth Justice Officers and Youth Justice Workers, some of whom are working towards a formal Youth Justice qualification. They're supported by a business support team based within the service, providing sector-specific support to help everything run effectively

## Local Partnership Arrangements



Providing Restorative Justice, Victim Contact and Mentoring



Providing accommodation and tenancy support



Providing Substance use prevention and intervention

# 3. Update on the Previous Year

## Progress on priorities in previous plan

### Priority One – First Time Entrants

YJB data showed Sheffield had a higher rate of First Time Entrants compared to similar areas; our commitment was to understand this data fully and work with partners to address these challenges

#### What we did –

- Analyse the data to observe trends
- Keep the YJ Management Board updated on performance
- Have constructive discussions with the Crown Prosecution Service
- Consult with the Youth Justice Legal Centre for specialist advice
- Consider best practice from other areas to address no comment pathways and the use of diversionary outcomes
- Begin explorative work with South Yorkshire Police for the routine use of diversionary outcomes including Outcome 22
- Consistently receive positive feedback for high-quality assessments and strong decision-making skills in both local and regional scrutiny panels
- Contribute to research and evaluation around diversion from the youth justice system
- Introduce police consultancy for all cases that are committed to court

#### What's next?

Sheffield's rate of First Time Entrants is still higher than in similar areas. Although we have gained a clearer understanding of this group and how our diversion outcomes compare, the numbers have remained steady. Continued partnership efforts are important to better support children and help prevent their involvement in the criminal justice system and there is a clear commitment to further progress this priority.

### Priority Two - Employment Training and Education

Education and training were highlighted as key areas for increased focus due to concerns about attendance, fixed-term exclusions, and children's access to provision

#### What we did –

- The Education team strengthened its partnership with the Youth Justice Service (YJS)
- Focus on re-engaging children through alternative education provision
- Early identification of those at risk of exclusion or chronic absence as a priority, with close collaboration with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities services (SEND) to support children with additional needs through appropriate Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Joint efforts have increased awareness among schools and providers about the educational needs of children involved with YJS
- Education teams fully participate in multi-agency panels reviewing complex cases and advocate for children to access their full educational entitlement

#### What's next?

As a result of the concerted efforts, the number of YJS-involved children not in education, employment, or training (NEET) has reduced. While the overall number has modestly decreased, it represents a meaningful percentage reduction given the larger cohort size. With natural staff changes in our youth justice education team, we have a valuable opportunity to reflect on and improve how we support children's access to education, meet additional needs, and assist their transition into further education, training, or employment. Ongoing collaboration with the wider education team will help keep this work a priority.

## Progress on priorities in previous plan - Continued

### Priority Three - Over Representation and Disproportionality

Our commitment to continue reducing the over representation of certain groups of children in the youth justice system and to ensure their experience is fair, positive, and equitable

#### What we did –

- We have a dedicated diversity lead who champions our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) work and leads our EDI focus group. This group holds bi-monthly information sessions covering all protected characteristics, with a focus on race and cultural awareness, believing that everyone's unique perspectives and experiences strengthen our service
- We commissioned cultural awareness training to support staff working with children from diverse backgrounds. The training covered topics like disproportionality and important considerations when working with Black children, helping staff gain a basic understanding of the challenges these children face in the community
- Continue to diversify our workforce by offering development opportunities at all levels, including apprenticeships and pathways to management, so staff can build skills and contribute to our long-term plan for a skilled, diverse team that reflects the children we work with
- Upskill the Youth Justice Management Board through a presentation on Ethnic Disparity, discussions around adultification and the influence of media as well as the importance of a "explain or reform" culture
- Worked with the Equality Team to promote expressions of interest for joining the YJS Management Board and filling the vacant EDI representative position
- Engaged in collaborative work with partners and stakeholders around EDI to bring a youth focus, including groups within Children and Families and specific race disproportionality groups, such as with the Local Criminal Justice Board
- Dedicated themed audit activity to exploring how effectively the voices and experiences of children from over represented groups are captured and reflected in assessments, planning, and intervention
- A review of the diversity activity to measure progress, identify gaps, and plan next steps for embedding equity and inclusion more deeply across all areas of youth justice practice

### Priority Three - Continued

#### What's next?

Eradicating overrepresentation and disproportionality in the criminal justice system requires long-term, collective effort beyond a single year. While diversity remains a core focus, there is strong commitment to continue this priority, with scope for our Youth Justice Management Board to lead a coordinated plan to drive systemic change, we can upskill and empower our workforce, strengthen our quality assurance framework, and continuously challenge culture and bias.

### Priority Four – Prevention

Recognising the value of the Turnaround programme in supporting children at risk of entering the criminal justice system, the commitment was to explore how prevention and diversion can continue to provide early intervention in partnership with wider children's services and the third sector.

#### What we did –

- Accept the grant to deliver the turnaround programme for a further 12 months allowing us to work with children on the cusp of the criminal justice system
- Make a commitment to closely align Prevention services with YJS
- Develop joint triage processes for the allocation of children referred from the police to minimise reallocation
- Expand the scope of children we offered support to
- Consider collaborative working to avoid duplication of resources and increase positive outcomes for children

#### What's next?

The realignment of Prevention Services within the Children and Families Directorate has naturally strengthened our collaboration with Community Youth Services. Whilst youth justice services cannot control the caseload of children we work with, effective prevention is key to reducing the number of children entering the youth justice system and improving outcomes for children across Sheffield. Prevention strategies and these strong working relationships will continue to be a priority in the year ahead.

## Performance over the Previous Year

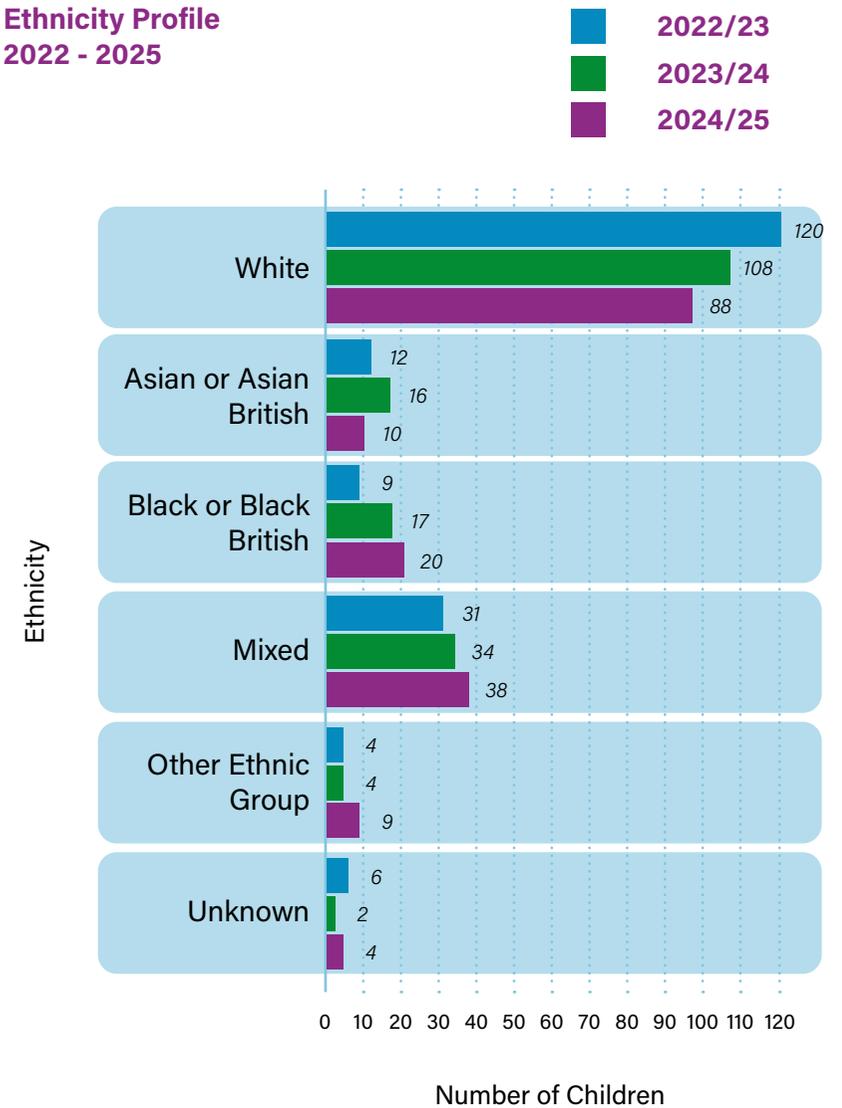
Latest available published data highlights the Youth Justice Service cohort as below.

Age, gender and ethnicity profiles are closely monitored through regular performance reports.

### Age and Gender Profiles 2022 - 2025



### Ethnicity Profile 2022 - 2025



## Performance over the Previous Year Continued

### First Time Entrants Rates 2022 - 2025

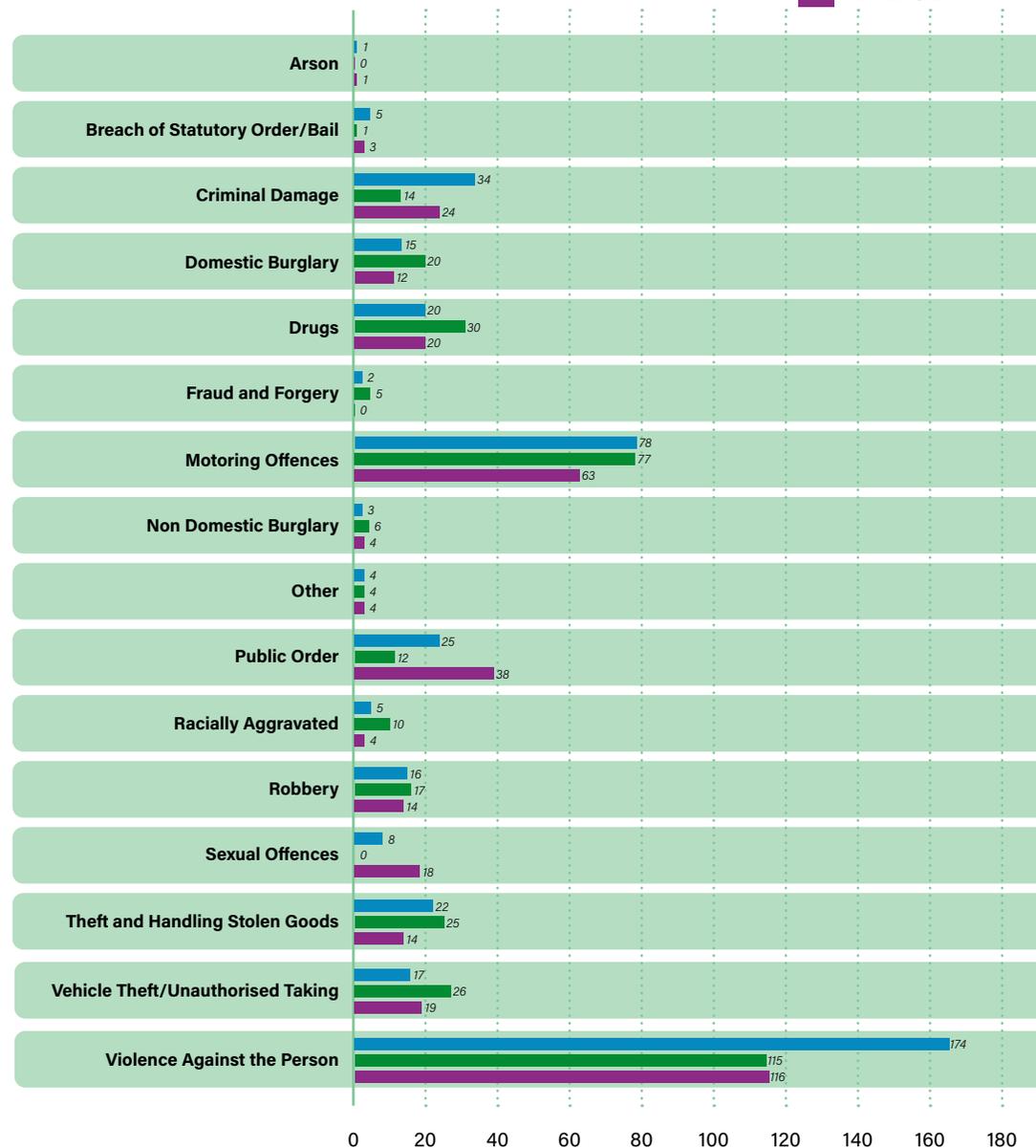
	Number of FTE	*FTE Rate
2022 - 23	144	280
2023 - 24	134	257
2024 - 25	133	255



\*rate per 100 000 of 10-17 population

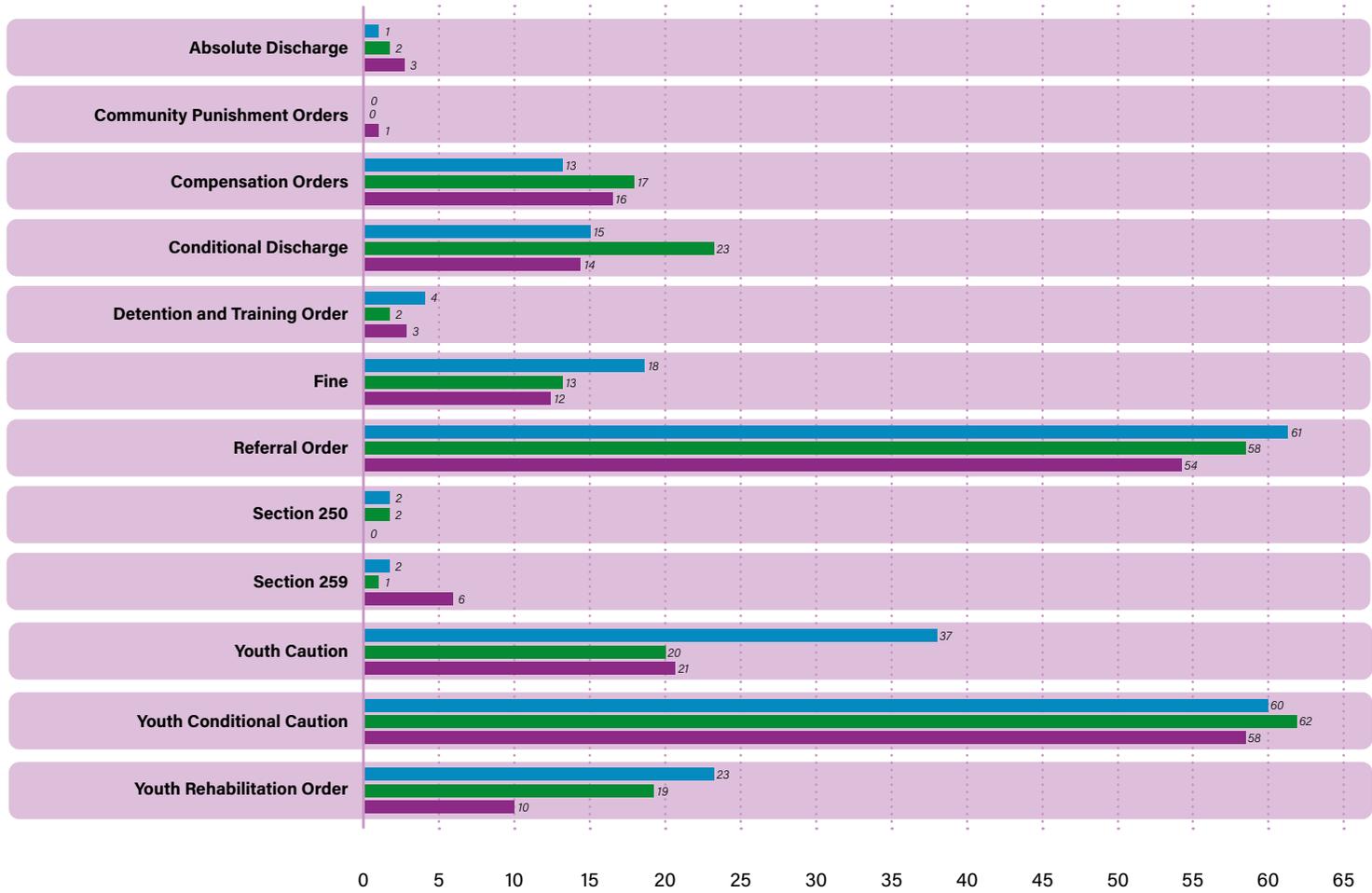
### Offence Type 2022 - 2025

■ 2022/23  
■ 2023/24  
■ 2024/25



## Performance over the Previous Year Continued

### Outcomes 2022 - 2025



## National Indicators

### Reoffending

Sheffield's annual reoffending rate for the period July 2022 to June 2023 was 30.3%, showing a small improvement from 30.7% the previous year.

This puts Sheffield below both the regional average for Yorkshire (35.1%) and the national average for England and Wales (32.1%). The rate is slightly higher than South Yorkshire (29.5%), but overall, Sheffield continues to perform well in comparison to other areas.

While there's always room for improvement, this stable performance reflects the hard work going into supporting children and helping them move away from offending. Continued focus on prevention and tailored support will be key to building on this progress.

### First Time Entrants

Between July 2023 and June 2024, Sheffield recorded a First Time Entrant (FTE) rate of 238 per 100,000 children aged 10 to 17. This is higher than the rates seen across Yorkshire (184), South Yorkshire (202), and England and Wales (167).

The rate for Sheffield peaked at 273 per 100,000 in the January to December 2024 reporting period, before easing slightly to 255 in the most recent period (April 2024 to March 2025). Despite this small drop, the rate remains above regional and national levels. This suggests there is scope to strengthen local early intervention and diversion efforts further to help reduce the number of children entering the justice system. Continued focus on preventative approaches and joined-up working with partners will be key in bringing Sheffield's rate in line with, or ideally below, national benchmarks.

### Custody

Sheffield has consistently reported higher custody rates for 10 to 17 year-olds than regional and national averages between January 2021 and March 2025.

The custody rate peaked sharply at 0.38 per 1,000 in April–June 2021, significantly higher than the national rate of 0.11 during the same period. This increase is attributed to two groups of children being sentenced simultaneously (as co-defendants) following pandemic-related delays. After this peak, Sheffield experienced a steady decline, reaching a low of 0.06 by April–June 2024.

Our recent data shows a slight upward shift, with the rate rising to 0.17 by January–March 2025. This increase again resulted from children being sentenced together as co-defendants. Given the small cohort size, even one additional child can substantially impact percentages, potentially distorting the perception of broader trends.

Despite the improvements since 2021, Sheffield's rates have remained above both the England and Wales and Yorkshire average figures for most of the reporting period. This suggests some progress in reducing youth custody but also highlights the ongoing need for a renewed focus on prevention and diversion and strategies to address serious violence in addition to targeted local interventions to sustain and build on this reduction.

### Ethnic Disproportionality

Sheffield's youth population (aged 10–17) is 67% White and 33% from ethnic minority backgrounds (excluding White minorities), based on the mid-2021 population estimates. Within this, 7% are Black or Black British.

Looking at the 169 children from April 2024 to March 2025:

- 54% of the offending population were White and 46% from ethnic minority backgrounds, including 12% Black or Black British.
- Custodial sentences were given to 56% White and 44% ethnic minority children. Notably, no custodial outcomes were recorded for Black or Black British children in this period.

These figures indicate a clear disproportionality, particularly in relation to Black and minority ethnic children being over-represented among those within the justice system. For example, while only 7% of the general youth population are Black or Black British, they accounted for 12% of the offending population – nearly double their population share. While no Black or Black British children received custody in this period, the broader ethnic minority group still made up 44% of custodial outcomes, despite representing just a third of the youth population.

This pattern highlights the importance of continued focus on equity, cultural competence, and bias-aware practice across all decision points and from all partners, from early intervention to court outcomes. Ongoing partnership work and data monitoring remain essential to address and reduce these disproportionalities.

## Risks and Issues

### An effective and engaged Youth Justice Board

The effectiveness of the board was first formally highlighted in our 2019 inspection and has been identified in informal reviews and meetings with the YJB oversight team in more recent years. The active engagement of strategic partners has been questioned, which at times has limited the Board's ability to provide cohesive strategic direction and oversight.

#### Our response

Over the past year, the Youth Justice Management Board has seen significant growth. A permanent and committed Chair is now in place, and the Board has been strengthened and diversified over the last two years to better reflect the children we serve. In-person meetings are now well attended, with members actively engaged and contributing to shared goals. A comprehensive induction package supports all partners, and ongoing work continues to align the Board more closely with operational delivery. Extraordinary meetings have helped clarify roles, agree shared priorities, and shape future objectives. While still developing, Sheffield is confident that the Board is now well placed to govern youth justice work effectively and to collectively shape a service that meets the needs of local children, families, victims, and communities.

## Education

The rate of school exclusions in Sheffield has risen sharply and continues to be higher than the national average. In 2024, more than one in every 1,660 pupils in Sheffield were permanently excluded highlighting deeper, systemic issues not seen to the same extent elsewhere.

#### How are children affected?

In the spring term of 2023–24, the national rate of permanent exclusion was 0.04 per 100 pupils (around 1 in every 2,500). In Sheffield, the rate was higher at 0.06 per 100 pupils. Between September and May of this academic year, 190 exclusions were recorded in the city, 160 in secondary schools, 25 in primary schools, and 5 in special schools. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and from ethnic minority groups are over-represented in these figures.

#### Our response

Urgent and coordinated action is underway. A city-wide exclusions strategy has been drafted and will be developed further with the Learn Sheffield partnership and children's services. The Sheffield Inclusion Centre has expanded its capacity to support excluded pupils, and exclusion data is being closely monitored to help spot risks early and target support where it's needed most.

### Children who are detained in custody

Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, local authorities have a legal duty to provide suitable accommodation known as a PACE bed for children who are refused bail by the police. This can be either secure or non-secure, depending on the risk the child poses to themselves or others. There is currently no specific PACE provision available in Sheffield and therefore children may be held overnight in police custody, which is not appropriate and can be harmful to their wellbeing.

#### Our response

To address this, discussions are underway with all stakeholders in South Yorkshire to explore a regional PACE bed arrangement that could provide a more consistent and effective response, offering alternatives to remand and ensuring children are placed in safe and suitable accommodation.

## Serious Violence

Serious violence is a key risk for youth justice services. It puts children at risk of harm, exploitation, or becoming further involved in crime. It is often linked to gangs, drugs, and weapons, making it harder to support children to make positive changes. These cases are more complex and require greater time and resources. If not addressed effectively, serious violence also affects wider community safety and trust in services.

#### Our response

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) continues to lead the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. This includes bringing together all key partners including Youth Justice through the Serious Violence Executive Board to provide leadership and oversight. Following the 2023/24 Serious Violence Duty Strategy, the VRU has developed a South Yorkshire Knife Crime Approach, which sets out the key factors driving knife crime and shares evidence about what works to reduce it.

#### What children experience

In Youth Justice, our specialist nurse delivers the 'Your Stance' programme to children. These sessions focus on essential life-saving skills, so that if a child ever witnesses or experiences a serious incident, they have the confidence and knowledge to act in an emergency.

This is what children who have completed Your Stance tell us -

My friend was injured by a knife and I remembered to put pressure on the wound

Y-Stance was educational and fun

I learnt so much, I wish school was like this

I enjoyed Y Stance sessions the most as I learnt a lot of skills from them

# 4. Plan for forthcoming Year

## Child First

Encouraging children to take part in planning and decision-making helps bring the four Child First principles to life: seeing the child as a child, building a positive sense of who they are, working together with others, and keeping them away from the formal justice system where possible. When children are included and listened to, they are more likely to feel valued, understood, and supported to make positive changes in their lives.

### What happens next?

We share feedback from children in several ways. Their comments are displayed on feedback postcards within the service, visible to both staff and visitors. This feedback is also featured in our internal newsletter and shared quarterly with the Youth Justice Management Board. This ensures that children's voices are recognised and valued at every level, supporting continuous reflection on practice and helping us celebrate positive experiences directly from the children themselves.

### We capture children's voices in the following ways -

- Through regular one-to-one sessions with Youth Justice staff, where children are encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences
- By using self-assessment tools that help children reflect on their strengths, needs, and progress
- During assessment and planning meetings, where their views help shape decisions and inform support
- In review meetings, where children reflect on their progress and contribute to setting future goals
- By encouraging creative expression—such as drawing, writing, or music—to help children communicate how they feel in a way that suits them
- Through trusted relationships with professionals who actively listen, advocate on their behalf, and ensure their voices are heard
- By offering safe spaces where children feel respected, heard, and involved in decisions about their own journey
- By listening to children at court, with a dedicated section on the court results form to record their thoughts and feelings
- By providing a QR code card during the final session of their intervention, inviting them to rate and comment on their overall experience with the Youth Justice Service
- By inviting children to attend the Youth Justice Management Board to share their views directly and influence discussions on matters that affect them

## Child First - Continued

Feedback from children about their court experiences prompted a targeted audit to review how well we were capturing their voices. In response, we delivered staff training to strengthen this area of practice. As a result, we saw a marked improvement in how children's voices were recorded ensuring the focus was on the child's actual words, rather than a practitioner's interpretation of what the child might be thinking or feeling.

We're also exploring the use of an independent service to gather children's views, helping us to better understand what is working well and improve the experience and outcomes for children

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### What happens next?

We plan to introduce a "You said, we did" approach to show children how their feedback leads to change and builds trust. This method has been successful in other areas of our work and helps build trust and transparency

## Over the past year our children have said

**"Thank you, you have given me a better understanding on how my ADHD affects my life"**

**"All the staff have been kind. Kindness is the best part of being with YJS. It has helped with my anxiety and how I feel inside"**

**"It's going to be strange not having YJS, you explain things in a way that makes sense. I couldn't have got through this without your support" "Case managers are welcoming, supportive, work hard and good at developing relationships and skilled at tackling difficult subjects"**

**"YJS helped me through my exams and get my CSCS card"**

**"Case managers are welcoming, supportive, work hard and good at developing relationships and skilled at tackling difficult subjects"**

**"I would stay if I could, it was good, and everyone was nice and helped build my confidence"**

## Voice of the Parents

Listening to parents helps us understand the child's background, build better support plans, and strengthen relationships. When parents feel heard and involved, they're more likely to work with us, which leads to more joined-up support and better outcomes for the child.

### We listen to parents and carers in the following ways:

- Through regular check-ins and one-to-one conversations
- During assessment and planning meetings
- By asking for their views in reviews and home visits
- Parent and carer contact is included in a dedicated section of case audits to ensure their views are heard and recorded
- Through feedback forms, surveys and via our dedicated QR code
- By creating a safe space where they feel comfortable to share concerns or ideas
- Involving them in decision-making about their child's support

### What parents and carers have told us

"The case worker really understood my child's needs, interests and hobbies. She always kept me in the loop, she was fantastic"

"The case managers help has been invaluable, she has gone above and beyond to help me and keep my daughter in school"

"Thank you for everything you have done, my son has changed and quickly become someone who siblings look up to and respect"

## Resources and Services

Sheffield Youth Justice Service (YJS) uses its Youth Justice Board (YJB) core grant, alongside local authority funding and partner contributions to deliver a high-quality, child-centred service. Our resources are directed to areas that support our strategic priorities: reducing first-time entrants, preventing reoffending, promoting education and positive outcomes, and reducing the use of custody.

A significant proportion of our spend is on staffing, reflecting our commitment to direct work with children and families. All operational roles contribute to prevention whether through early intervention, court work, or out-of-court disposals, and our integrated model avoids duplication, ensures efficient use of resources and promotes child first principles.

Multi-agency partnership remains central to how we deliver services. Funding supports the coordination of the Youth Outcome Panel, ensuring consistent, informed decisions on out-of-court disposals. Commissioned services, such as our victim engagement and restorative justice work, bring additional impact ensuring the voices of victims are heard and integrated into planning.

We plan to invest in targeted responses to serious youth violence through innovative methods to engage children and will continue with our public health model of emergency first aid. Our education role is also central, helping to identify and overcome barriers to learning and re-engage children with education, training, or employment pathways.

In the year ahead, we will continue to focus on improving outcomes by strengthening our prevention work, using data and feedback to guide decisions, and maintaining strong links with partners including community youth teams and inclusion.

## Youth Justice Partnership Board development

Over the past year, developing the Youth Justice Management Board has been a priority. Staff surveys consistently show that the weakest area is how connected staff feel to the Board and how supported they perceive their work to be. This was also highlighted in an independent review, which recommended strengthening the Board to increase engagement and provide more effective challenge.

Activity to address this included -

- Attendance at the appropriate level encouraged by the chair
- New members invited to join the partnership, including a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) representative to lead on Serious Violence, additional education representatives, and a member to champion anti-racist work aimed at improving race outcomes for staff and children in the YJS
- Displaying board member profiles in the office
- A rota for case managers to attend the board and showcase their work
- A dedicated session at a whole service meeting to "get to know your board"
- Board members invited to whole service meetings and offered shadowing opportunities across all areas of our work, with a positive take-up rate

## Workforce Development

Our workforce development plan supports professional growth, progression, and succession planning to deliver a trauma-informed service aligned with our Youth Justice vision.

We are committed to retaining and developing talented staff by 'growing our own' managers, setting clear learning expectations for all practitioners, and providing training for volunteer panel members. We support additional qualifications, track training needs, and send staff to relevant conferences expecting them to share knowledge across teams and the wider service. Recent training includes launching the YJ apprenticeship pathway, youth legislation sessions about themed audits, diversity training, specialist briefings, and individual coaching for managers.

Supporting the workforce and prioritising staff safety and welfare during the pandemic remained a key focus in our post-pandemic plans. We have dedicated significant time and initiatives to promote ongoing engagement, greater autonomy, increased resilience, reduced absence, and sustained performance.

## We support staff through -

- Monthly individual reflective supervision
- Monthly dedicated protected reflective time for continual professional development
- Monthly team meetings
- Quarterly trauma informed group reflection and learning, facilitated by a forensic clinical psychologist
- Quarterly peer development sessions to share learning and skills
- Quarterly reward and recognition scheme
- Quarterly anonymous staff satisfaction survey
- 24/7 suggestion box
- Shared learning through biannual peer audits
- Biannual Service Manager facilitated staff engagement and feedback sessions
- Feedback postcards for children, parents, carers and professionals to provide feedback constructive feedback, comments and compliments

## What Staff have told us

**"This is the best service I have worked for over the last 22 years, where I feel that I have a good work life balance. I feel that it is improving the way that I work"**

**"Reflection time and flexible working is great"**

**"Working part time fits perfectly with my disabilities"**

**"I have a good work life balance, at times it can be difficult, but I remain confident that I am supported by management"**

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Staff surveys are conducted quarterly with 10 scaled questions. Feedback drives an action plan shared in whole service meetings as "you said, we did." The highest scoring question consistently relates to work-life balance, most recently rated 4.43 out of 5 with many positive comments.

## Evidence-based practice and innovation

### Mentors

In October 2023, Sheffield Youth Justice commissioned Remedi to provide a mentoring service for our children. We have two full-time mentors, who each support around 7-12 children at a time. Since launch, they've worked with 92 children, offering between 6-12 sessions depending on individual needs. The level of support is based on the mentor's assessment during the support planning stage, but this remains flexible as needs change.

Between December 2023 and June 2025, the mentors have booked 616 sessions, with a strong engagement rate of 79%. Sessions are tailored to each child and cover a wide range of support, such as writing CVs, building confidence to use public transport, encouraging physical activity through gym sessions or runs, and helping children feel more comfortable in the community through activities like football, pool, or skateboarding.

Feedback from children and their parents and carers has been overwhelmingly positive. In addition, 92% of the children who have had a mentor have not reoffended, highlighting the positive impact of the support provided.

### Some of the feedback from children

**"Working with my mentor has improved my social skills and made me realise there are lots of things available to me. My mentor opened doors for me that I never thought were possible. I've now made my own music and gained so much knowledge. I think having a mentor has been the best experience of my youth justice work."**

**"I might have ended my life if I didn't have a mentor. I love speaking to her, I can say anything, and I feel so relaxed, it's been amazing."**

**"I tried new things such as golf, walking in the countryside, and got back into boxing. I have been able to confide in someone who understands me and communicate with someone like my mentor."**

**"I have enjoyed the sessions with my mentor. We have been boxing and she helped me with my reparation too. I have been going to school every day which I struggled with before and have been trying my best to stay out of trouble."**

**"I got out of bed and learnt the skills to build a CV and apply for jobs. I now have the confidence to openly hand out my CV and promote myself. I have really enjoyed the sessions and appreciate what my mentor has done for me."**

### What parents and carers have said

**"There's a difference between someone who does a job for the sake of it and someone who does it because they actually care. I have been comforted by the fact that you've built a great relationship with my child and put a smile on his face when nobody else has been able to. I cannot thank you enough"**

**"Thank you for your unwavering support, it means the world to me. I'm grateful for your constant encouragement, it keeps me going when times are tough. Your belief in my son has been a driving support, I couldn't have come so far without the continuing encouragement. Your support is like a sturdy foundation beneath my feet. Thank you."**

### What happens next?

We are exploring the use of virtual reality headsets to support informed decision-making, helping children pause before acting, understand others' perspectives, communicate better, and manage impulsiveness or aggression. Social skills training, which has strong evidence base and a high impact on reducing violent crime, will be enhanced by this technology. We aim to introduce VR headsets by Summer 2025.

Together with the Community Youth Service, we are developing prevention programmes focused on empowerment for girls and identity-building for boys to promote positive self and social identities. When children engage in diversionary interventions to avoid contact with the criminal justice system, these activities also aim to enhance their opportunities by building skills and pro-social behaviours that help steer them away from reoffending

## Evaluation

### Speech and Language

Our commissioned Speech and Language Therapist contributed to creating the fact-sheet on Youth Justice for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, detailing our own case study and showing how speech and language therapy can change lives.

[RCSLT-Supporting-children-and-young-people-in-the-justice-system-Factsheet-2024.pdf](#)

Speech, language and communication needs may be hidden and not immediately obvious. Children can become adept at hiding their difficulties and good surface language skills can mask their difficulties. As a result, the significance of communication needs is often overlooked.

- Over 60% of children in contact with the youth justice system have difficulties with speech, language or communication
- The Youth Justice Board found that in one year, 71% of children sentenced had speech, language and communication concerns
- Only around 5% of children with communication needs have their needs identified before entering the youth justice system
- 40% of children in contact with the justice system find it difficult to access and benefit from verbal interventions and programmes

### Case Study – Alex’s story

**Alex\* is 16. He received a 7-month referral order from the courts for an assault and possession to supply drugs. Alex lives between his parents who are separated. He had a heroin exposed pregnancy, was hospitalised with meningitis at 3 months and had a history of social care involvement.**

**Alex was diagnosed with ADHD when he was 6 years old, and at the time of the referral to the Youth Justice Service (YJS) he was self-medicating using cannabis. Alex had a history of school exclusions and attended a primary pupil referral unit in year 6, where he received an education health and care plan (EHCP) for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). He intermittently attended 3 mainstream secondary schools, before he stopped attending in year 9.**

**Alex was initially reluctant to attend his YJS appointments saying that he didn’t trust professionals and had always been let down. Following an AssetPlus screening, Alex was referred for a SLCN assessment. This revealed that he had an unidentified developmental language disorder (DLD) and social communication difficulties. Alex agreed to attend weekly sessions to develop skills and strategies in the following areas: emotional regulation, comprehension monitoring, problem solving and consequential thinking, telling the time and learning the months and developing his confidence in social situations.**

**At the end of his order, Alex and his parents said speech and language therapy input had enabled him to build trust, develop his language and communication skills and re-engage in education. They reported there had been no further instances of him damaging property in the home, smoking cannabis or re-offending.**

**\*Alex is an anonymised name.**

## Standards for children

We show our commitment to high standards for children by making quality assurance a core part of everyday practice. This means regularly checking standards to make sure children get the right support at every stage from arrest to resettlement. Our managers review cases every month, not to blame but to learn and improve, and we use both data and direct feedback from children, families, and staff to understand what's working. We encourage open conversations about practice, and our leadership team stays closely involved to make sure we're always improving and putting children first.

### Our 2024/25 audit activity told us

#### Areas for improvement

- Timeliness of assessments
- Case notes needing better quality
- Missing management oversight

#### Areas of strong practice

- Clear analysis of the safety of children and the community
- Voice of the child captured well
- Barriers to progress identified
- Regular contact with children

## Feedback from children

"The worker understood me"

"I felt listened to"

"I've not been in trouble since"

## Feedback from case workers after completing peer audits

"Better than expected"

"I find them interesting"

"I found it uncomfortable but satisfying once complete"

"Positive experience, good way to reflect on your own practice"

## Feedback from parents and carers

"Contact was good and I was kept updated"

"I give YJS 10/10 for the support they have provided my child. He has now become a very important part of the household"

YJS provided excellent support on son's previous order"

"Thank you for everything you have done, my son has changed and quickly become someone who siblings look up to and respect"

"You've done a sterling job, thank you for everything you have done for my son"

"The worker's help has been invaluable, she has gone above and beyond to help me and keep my daughter in school"

"It has been amazing, very helpful, my son has loved being part of Sheffield Wednesday. Thank you, amazing lady!"

## Standards for children continued

### Our 2024/25 audit activity told us –

#### Timeliness of assessments

- Reinforced internal deadlines for completing assessments
- Use centrally generated reminders in Outlook
- Regularly monitor assessment timeliness
- Offer support or coaching to staff who are struggling to complete assessments on time

#### Case notes needing better quality

- Provide training on what makes a good case note (clear, factual, reflective)
- Use examples of strong case notes to guide staff
- Encourage regular supervision to review and improve recording
- Implement the CRISS (Context, Risk, Intervention, Strengths Summary) model for staff to follow to ensure clear, purposeful, and reflective case notes

#### Missing management oversight

- Ensure and monitor there are regular supervision sessions
- Make sure management decisions are clearly recorded in case files
- Introduce audit spot checks to identify gaps in oversight
- Use supervision records to track actions and follow-up

## Service development

Alongside our agreed priorities, ongoing Board development, and a continued focus on staff wellbeing, our service development will focus on embedding consistent quality standards, strengthening partnerships, and intervening earlier to improve outcomes for children. Over the past year, we have responded to learning from local audits, serious incident reviews, and inspection findings by strengthening oversight, improving the timeliness of assessments, and supporting reflective practice. We are actively engaged in YJB effective practice forums and seek to replicate what works, sharing learning with partners to support a joined-up approach.

We will continue to build on this by using feedback from children, families, and practitioners to shape our work. As the YJB's 2024–2027 Strategic Plan is published, we will review and align our local improvement plan to ensure we contribute to national priorities while tailoring delivery to the needs of children, families, and communities in Sheffield.

# 5. National Priorities

## Policing and Diversion

Policing continues to play a vital role in preventing offending and supporting positive outcomes for children. Over the past year, Sheffield has worked closely with South Yorkshire Police (SYP) to improve consistency in Out of Court Disposals (OOCs), recognising that a lack of standardised decision-making across the four local authority areas had led to variation in outcomes. In response, joint regional YJS/Police meetings are now held quarterly, and bi-monthly SYP Inspector meetings and quarterly standardisation panels are in place to review cases and improve consistency.

Child-Centred Policing is firmly embedded in SYP's strategic vision, with local work under way to ensure early intervention is prioritised. Since the appointment of a dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Service (SNS) Inspector, we have jointly introduced a range of positive practices, including:

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) early intervention - Referrals to CYT are now automatic following delivery of ASB warning letters, enabling earlier support for low-level behaviours

Knife crime index - Shared data allows for targeted visits and offers of diversionary activities alongside safety interventions

8/9-year-old pathway - Proactive identification of children below the age of criminal responsibility suspected of offending leads to joint triage and prevention work

Gate keeping of no-comment interviews - Now embedded locally, this process reduces inappropriate court outcomes and increases the use of OOCs and diversion where appropriate

Multi Agency Safety Panel (MASP) meetings - Local police neighbourhood teams attend regularly to support place-based information sharing and partnership planning.

Drugs possession referrals - Officers now directly refer to The Corner, enhancing take-up of substance misuse support

Importantly, SYP has invested in two full-time officers co-located with YJS, ensuring OOC decisions are timely, consistent, and child-focused. The SNS Sergeant and Inspector are also embedded within the service, increasing day-to-day collaboration and visibility.

Looking ahead, succession planning is under way in anticipation of key personnel changes, and there is an ambition to secure a dedicated early intervention officer to build on existing developments. The SNS Inspectors across South Yorkshire remain committed to aligning practices to ensure that every child across the region receives a fair and consistent service.

While Deferred Prosecution is not currently standard practice in South Yorkshire, there is active consideration at force level about its future viability. The force lead for Child-Centred Policing is reviewing how such an approach could complement the existing early intervention work already underway. This includes triage processes with Community Youth Teams, the ASB intervention pathway, and efforts to divert children from the criminal justice system at the earliest opportunity. Discussions are ongoing to explore how Deferred Prosecution could be introduced in a way that enhances this preventative offer and aligns with local priorities and partnership arrangements.

## Prevention

Sheffield YJS works with children and families at the earliest opportunity to prevent them from entering the youth justice system. We take a child-first, trauma-informed approach that focuses on each child's strengths, needs, and wider support network.

Our prevention work includes the Turnaround programme, which supports children aged 10–17 who have been arrested but not charged. This offers a valuable opportunity for early intervention, helping children re-engage with education, access emotional wellbeing support, and take part in positive activities. The programme is short-term and tailored to each child and their family.

Prevention services in Sheffield also include the Community Youth Team (CYT), a needs-led service supporting vulnerable children referred by professionals, parents, or through self-referral. Police officers can also refer children directly when there are concerns about anti-social or criminal behaviour that do not require formal youth justice intervention.

The Contextual Safeguarding Practice Lead and worker are based within the Prevention Team. They support the development of knowledge and skills across Sheffield City Council (including care homes) and with wider partners such as schools, community groups, local businesses, and the Safeguarding Children Partnership. Their work promotes understanding of risks outside the home and encourages stronger, community-based safeguarding partnerships.

Referrals into Prevention come from a range of services, including police, education, children's social care, and Early Help. All referrals are reviewed promptly to ensure the right support is put in place at the right time.

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Prevention is underpinned by strong multi-agency working. Sheffield YJS contributes to a wide range of panels and forums focused on safeguarding and community safety, including:

- Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE)
- Criminal Exploitation Tactical Group (CETG)
- Safer Schools Partnership
- Local Area Panels for serious youth violence
- Early Help planning and intervention forums

Through these partnerships, we make sure children and families receive joined-up support that meets their needs and reduces safety concerns. We continue to monitor the number of children supported through prevention and the outcomes of this work. Engagement remains strong, and most children do not go on to offend. Prevention remains a key part of our strategy to reduce first-time entry into the youth justice system and improve outcomes for children.

Community Engagement is an important part of our prevention response and we promote the importance of understanding safety outside the home for children, by raising awareness and providing training around the core concepts and principles of Contextual Safeguarding. This is delivered to community groups, local business, schools and professionals. Sessions for parents are also offered all of which enables stronger universal community-based collaboration and partnerships.

Our Prevention Service includes work with children who go missing from home as they are often targeted by criminals online or in the community which is often a key indicator that a child may be at risk of exploitation. The Return Home Interview Team gives every child reported missing in Sheffield the opportunity to speak to them about why they went missing and try to uncover information that can help further protect children and reduce further missing episodes.

Targeted group work also takes place for children in school, youth club and community settings. Groups such as artwork and cookery are also run for children on prevention caseloads. Children are also encouraged to take part in activities during the school holidays which can provide new opportunities and develop social learning experiences.

## Education

Children in the youth justice system are more likely to have special educational needs or be in alternative provision. National data suggests around 70–90% of children known to youth justice services have a recognised SEND need. Many have also experienced school exclusions, which can lead to placements in alternative provision. This shows how important it is that the Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Partnership understands and responds to the needs of this group to support better outcomes and reduce reoffending.

### **The Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Partnership\* is finalising a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy**

1. The Partnership recognises that too many children in Sheffield miss out on the early support they need, with services often reacting only once issues escalate
2. The new Strategy sets out a shared understanding of healthy child development from pregnancy to the end of secondary school, guiding earlier identification of need and better joined-up working across education, health and care
3. It promotes a whole-system, child-centred approach where support is timely, personalised, and based on strong relationships
4. Delivery will focus on strong leadership, inclusive practice, skilled workforces, and making sure children's voices shape services
5. Over time, this will help improve outcomes, reduce children entering the youth justice system, lower NEET rates, raise attainment, and better support first-time entrants

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The Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Partnership comprises of Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Learn Sheffield, Voluntary Sector Partners including Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust

## Restorative approaches and victims

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Youth Justice have a statutory responsibility to contact the victims of youth crime and offer restorative services which are in line with the minimum standards under the Code of Practice for Victims 2024.

Remedi is commissioned to deliver Restorative Justice services on behalf of Sheffield Youth Justice Service. They work closely with local communities and liaise with the National Probation Service to ensure collaboration between the two victim services

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a voluntary process that facilitates communication between those harmed by crime and those responsible. It gives victims the chance to express the impact of the offence and ask questions, while offering the child who caused harm an opportunity to take responsibility, explain their actions, make amends, and apologise.

Our Restorative Justice (RJ) Practitioners contact all victims of youth crime, from pre-court disposals to custodial outcomes. Victim details are provided by South Yorkshire Police officers based within Sheffield Youth Justice Service, and victims are contacted within 5 working days (or within 24 hours for vulnerable victims), in line with the Victims Code of Practice. They are offered the opportunity to take part in RJ and informed of the outcome the child has received.

Our aim is to complete a Victim Impact Statement with the victim, which with their consent is shared with Youth Justice professionals to help shape the interventions the child will undertake during their order. Victims can choose to engage indirectly, directly, or both. Additionally, we offer signposting to support services and the option to create a safety plan to help reduce the likelihood of further harm.

### Indirect RJ can include

Indirect reparation, such as community hours completed by the child

Passing verbal messages between the child and victim through a Restorative Practitioner

Representing the victim's views

Indirect reparation, such as community hours completed by the child

### Direct RJ can include

A direct meeting (in person or virtual)

Representing the victim's views

In 2024/25, 162 victims were contacted and offered the opportunity to take part in Restorative Justice, with 155 agreeing to participate. We completed 284 indirect processes involving 119 victims and 111 children, and 54 direct processes involving 40 victims and 37 children.

Additionally, 66 victims completed an evaluation form, of whom 51 reported that RJ helped them cope and recover from the offence.

The overall engagement rate for our victim service in 2024/25 was 96%

## Feedback from Victims

I appreciate that you have been contacting me every time you have an update and taking the time to do that. If it has been positive for the child since this happened, it was worth it. It sounds like his actions would change if he was in the same situation again

Thank you so much for listening to me. I am really struggling with nightmares, flashbacks and nosebleeds. Thank you for referring me for some help. I hope it works. It's also been helpful that you came out and really listened to me, and also knowing it's quite natural to feel this way has helped too

My son is doing really well now. I am so pleased to hear the child has engaged well. It is also good to hear that it was mistaken identity, and my son was not targeted due to his cleft pallet. I hope the child stays out of trouble and learns from his mistakes. Thank you so much for the updates. I am really pleased with the outcome

I feel it is always better to use Restorative Justice than criminal prosecution or a fine as a result of the learning by RJ. I was kept very well informed throughout the RJ and asked my opinions which was nice

## Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

Sheffield YJS works closely with social care and wider partners to identify, assess and respond to children at risk of, or affected by, serious violence and exploitation. This includes supporting children subject to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), particularly where there are concerns around modern slavery or trafficking. These children often present with complex needs, requiring a joined-up, trauma-informed approach to care and safety planning.

Through robust assessment and professional curiosity, YJS practitioners help identify signs of exploitation and share relevant information at multi-agency forums such as MACE and MASP to ensure consistent planning and support. Therapeutic responses and access to specialist services are central to our practice.

Prevention activity focuses on understanding a “day in the life” of each child, using this insight to build trusted relationships, promote healthy behaviours and encourage strengths-based diversion. A contextual safeguarding approach helps us understand the wider environments children are exposed to by recognising risks beyond the family and responding through community partnerships.

Work linked to radicalisation or extremism is managed through Prevent pathways, with YJS contributing to safety assessments and intervention planning where appropriate.

## Detention in police custody

Sheffield continues to work closely with South Yorkshire Police (SYP) to ensure that children are only detained in custody when necessary, and that their rights, welfare and individual needs are prioritised throughout. Custody is never used as a place of safety, and all children are treated in line with their age, vulnerability and circumstances, with child-centred policing principles embedded in practice.

From 01/06/2024 to 31/05/2025, there were 529 children detained in custody suites across South Yorkshire, accounting for 4.1% of all detainees, with an average detention time of 9 hours and 27 minutes

This compares with 904 children detained between 01/01/2024 and 01/01/2025 (3.5% of all detainees), with an average detention time of 8 hours and 5 minutes

While these figures are force-wide and not specific to Sheffield, they suggest an ongoing trend towards reduced use of custody for children. By comparison, average detention time for adults is around 12 hours

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While we are not yet able to break down custody data specifically for Sheffield, local oversight of practice continues through multi-agency forums. We remain committed to a child-first approach, recognising that the experience of custody can be traumatic and that every interaction with the police should minimise harm and support better outcomes.

All children in custody are seen by Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services, unless released overnight before 7am, in which case a referral is made. Every child is also subject to a Child Needs Assessment, and SYP policy ensures a vulnerability notification is submitted for every child arrest. The force has a strong scrutiny process in place for strip searches, including independent review of all incidents involving children. Most recent figures show only eight recorded strip searches at Shepcote Lane (covering both Sheffield and Rotherham), including cases where clothing is replaced for safety reasons.

Timeliness of Appropriate Adults (AA) - The current average time for rights to be delivered in the presence of an AA is 5.25 hours. If this exceeds two hours, escalation to the Custody Inspector is required. This compares favourably with the adult average of 9 hours

Remand decisions - All decisions to remand a child in police custody require Police Inspector authority and are only used in exceptional circumstances. Most children are remanded to local authority accommodation in line with Section 38(6) of PACE, and a task and finish group, led by a Chief Inspector, is working to secure appropriate placements where needed

Out-of-Hours Provision - Sheffield commissions and manages the Appropriate Adult contract on behalf of three South Yorkshire Local Authorities. After a thorough process, the contract was most recently awarded to The Appropriate Adult Service in December 2024 and will run for three years. An appropriate adult is provided for any child in police custody when a responsible adult or parent is unavailable, ensuring 24/7 coverage. Processes are in place to minimise delay and maintain consistent standards of care

Safeguarding referrals - Referrals are routinely made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) based on needs identified during detention, supporting wider safeguarding responses

PACE compliance - Reviews are carried out every 4 hours (which exceeds the minimum 6-hour expectation), and custody sergeants escalate any concerns promptly

## Remands

We collect and analyse information about children held on remand, providing the Youth Justice Management Board with detailed profiles and summaries. The Board reviews this data to identify trends, anomalies, and disparities in outcomes, taking action to address issues and apply lessons learned.

Following the Ministry of Justice's 2022 expectations for enhanced oversight, scrutiny, and audit of remand decisions and outcomes, collaboration between Youth Justice Services and the South and West Resettlement Consortium led to a joint approach for annual regional remand audits. This parallel auditing for both the Local Criminal Justice Board and the Consortium enables area comparisons, sharing of good practice, and joint progress on challenges through existing structures, especially since most South and West Yorkshire children are remanded at HMYOI Wetherby or local secure children's homes.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Justice published the Youth Remand Concordat, highlighting South and West Yorkshire's audit approach as a positive case study to encourage others to adopt it. The Concordat sets clear expectations for the roles and responsibilities of agencies at each stage of the youth remand journey. We are currently reviewing it in detail to identify any needed changes to our practices, procedures, or remand arrangements.

## Use of custody and constructive resettlement

Sheffield remains an active partner in the South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium at both strategic and operational levels. Established in 2014 with support from Sheffield YJS, the Consortium aims to improve resettlement outcomes for children in custody and on release by working closely with partners. Its work includes resettlement clinics, stronger multi-agency collaboration, increased advocacy for children in custody, and the development of an Accommodation Standard for children, enhanced in 2022 after consultation with Directors of Children's Services and now adopted nationally. The Consortium has also addressed challenges in youth custody, including Operation Safeguard and the admission of girls to Wetherby YOI. Efforts continue to increase the use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) to support successful accommodation placements and reassure children about their living arrangements upon release.

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The use of custody nationally has decreased significantly over the past ten years. In Sheffield, 5 children were sentenced to custody in the 12 months from April 2024, representing an decrease from 7 in 2023.

Resettlement planning starts from the point of sentence. We work closely with partners to support a safe and well-planned return to the community, focusing on education, emotional wellbeing and reducing the risk of further offending. All children on remand are discussed at the Multi-Agency Safety Panel (MASP) to agree plans for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), licence conditions and a holistic, multi-agency resettlement and contingency plan.

We continually advocate for children, upholding the principles of Child First. Recently, we appealed to the Youth Custody Service to review the placement of a 15-year-old boy in a Young Offenders Institute, asking the decision was reviewed with the lens of adultification, racial disparity and unconscious bias.

## Working with families

In Sheffield, we know how important it is to support the whole family when a child is involved in the youth justice system. Parents and carers play a key role in helping children make positive changes, and we aim to work with them wherever possible.

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The YJS also works closely with the Supporting Families programme in Sheffield, so that children and families who need extra help are picked up early and given the right support.

We have a Youth Justice Officer who is trained in delivering the Triple P parenting programme. They are linked in with the Sheffield Parent Hub and attend regular meetings with the city's parenting team. This helps make sure the needs of YJS families are understood and supported across services.

From September 2025, we plan to run a Triple P Teens course for parents and carers of children working with the Youth Justice Service. This will give families practical support and advice to help them manage difficult behaviour and build better relationships at home.

Sheffield Parent Hub is an experienced service that runs parenting courses across the city, using well-known models like Triple P, Incredible Years, and Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC). These programmes are also offered through Early Help and Social Care, which helps make sure families get joined-up support.

## Feedback from Parent

I'd just like to offer you my huge thanks to you and the youth justice team.

From the moment C found himself in trouble and under your team he has been treated with care and compassion, and you really have helped him stay on track. You was very approachable very professional but also very empathetic to his neurodiverse needs, C being autistic and having ADHD you were so aware of his needs and how to navigate your interaction with him was great I'm forever grateful. Whether it was in a court room or at the offices no matter the situation you understood him and u got to know him he wasn't just a case load, I felt as a mum u went above and beyond and for me as a mum I always knew I could call you ask for guidance or just vent my frustration at the situation and you was always there at the end of the phone.

C can be easily judged because he is of his ethnicity, but he never felt judged from you and your team even now if he has a problem he says "get Yvonne or Jon they will know". So just wanted to share my appreciation to you and thanks for everything during his time with you and after.

ANY young people who enters your services will be very lucky to have you and your team support them . C got to know you and knew he could trust you and that is a massive statement coming from him, let's not forget he has been around numerous agencies and services for a lot of years and never trusted anyone.

## 6. Key Priorities for Sheffield

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Partners of the Youth Justice Management Board met for a dedicated extraordinary meeting to collectively discuss and agree the priorities for the year ahead. Together six local priorities were agreed. Detailed delivery plans will be created locally by the Youth Justice Service in conjunction with other crucial partners and underpinned by an ongoing improvement plan.

### Priority One - Prevention

Prevention in youth crime is crucial to prevent children from entering the criminal justice system. We are committed to working together to divert children from the youth justice system and support them to achieve positive outcomes.

What will we do -

- Build on the successful outcomes and lessons learned from the Turnaround Programme (Ministry of Justice initiative supporting children at risk of entering the criminal justice system)
- Extend support to more children, including those released under investigation or where no further action is taken by police or court
- Align more closely with the Prevention Services within the Children and Families Directorate
- Reduce unnecessary transitions between YJS and Prevention teams, focussing on Child First principles
- Jointly develop and deliver group work for children, alongside tailored packages for parents and carers
- Explore new and innovative opportunities for early intervention to expand our prevention offer
- Increase community and partnership engagement by raising awareness and providing training around the core concepts and principles of Contextual Safeguarding/Risk Outside the Home
- Hold regular joint service meetings to build shared understanding, strengthen professional relationships, and promote good practice

## Key Priorities for Sheffield

### Priority Two – Disproportionality

Addressing and reducing disproportionality and overrepresentation of minoritised groups aims to ensure fairness, equality, and unbiased support within the youth justice system. We want to strengthen equity, diversity and inclusion to benefit the workforce and children we work with.

What we will do –

- Strengthen the diversity of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion focus group to better reflect the workforce by including staff with varied views and lived experiences
- The Youth Justice Management Board will develop an action plan to monitor and support each partner's efforts to tackle overrepresentation, racism, and disproportionality in the Youth Justice System
- To support workforce development, we will help staff build cultural confidence to better support children, especially those who are often overrepresented in the criminal justice system
- We will collaborate with partner agencies and children's services to address disproportionality and race, challenge partners when needed, share our knowledge, and advocate for children to prevent racial marginalisation
- Audit cases on diversity to identify strengths and areas for improvement in supporting children and families of different races, ensuring the youth justice service is effective and fair
- Take responsibility to upskilling our partner and stakeholders about adultification and Child First approaches
- The workforce development plan will prioritise training on anti-racism, unconscious bias, cultural sensitivity, and how staff can challenge disproportionality in the criminal justice system
- To promote an anti-racist culture and create a safe, inclusive environment for minoritised staff, we must start by changing the service's culture. This means leadership must lead by example, showing confidence and competence in helping staff understand the lived experiences of children from marginalized backgrounds and the systemic causes of their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system

### Priority Three - First Time Entrants

Reducing First-Time Entrants in youth justice improves outcomes for children, lowers reoffending rates, ultimately saves costs, whilst enhancing community safety.

What we will do –

- Monitor and analyse data on children entering the criminal justice system to identify patterns, trends, and common features, including protected characteristics
- Continue exploring diversionary options such as deferred cautions, Outcome 22, and the possibility of a no comment pathway
- Review and revise joint protocols for Youth Outcome Panels
- Enhance working relationships with Prevention Services

## Key Priorities for Sheffield

### Priority Four - Community Safety

Victims are at the heart of our work and working in a restorative way helps create safer communities and rebuild trust between children and the communities they live in.

What we will do -

- We aim to work with South Yorkshire Police to get better equal opportunity data on victims, especially from ethnic minorities, disabled, and LGBTQ+ groups. This will help us tailor Restorative Justice support and improve data completeness beyond those who opt in
- Track children in the YJS who are also victims to improve support using a Victim Support Services guide to help Practitioners signpost to local and national resources
- Implement a Victims' Policy aligned with the revised inspection framework to guide all work and processes involving victims and children
- Increase input at board meetings by providing more data, sharing case studies, inviting victims to share their RJ experiences, and offering partners shadowing opportunities to better understand the victims we support
- Embed quality and assurance processes of victim work within the audit framework to ensure our victims are consistently receiving a high quality and bespoke service
- Continue to be an active partner in the Community Safety Partnership to share information, respond to risks early, and work together to keep children and communities safe
- Work with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority colleagues to ensure we understand the wider victim services available and how they can support victims

### Priority Five - Serious Violence

A focus on addressing serious violence will help protect children, reduce harm, prevent future offending and support the safety of all children and the communities in which they live

What we will do -

- Actively participate in the Serious Violence Theme group and drive forward activity around the Serious Violence Duty
- Work with the Community Safety Partnership to develop a knife crime reduction strategy
- Participate in the Focused Deterrence Project to pilot a new approach of intensive support to children regularly involved in violent crime in Sheffield, working with the Police and children's and youth prevention services on a new way of diverting children away from repetitive criminal activity
- Continue delivering Your Stance sessions a preventative education project that empowers children to make informed decisions in emergencies by teaching lifesaving skills
- Consider creative ways to engage children utilising the key evidence and insights from the YJB in looking at what the evidence tells us is effective, specially exploring Targeted Prevention Programmes through social skills training

## Key Priorities for Sheffield

### Priority Six – Education

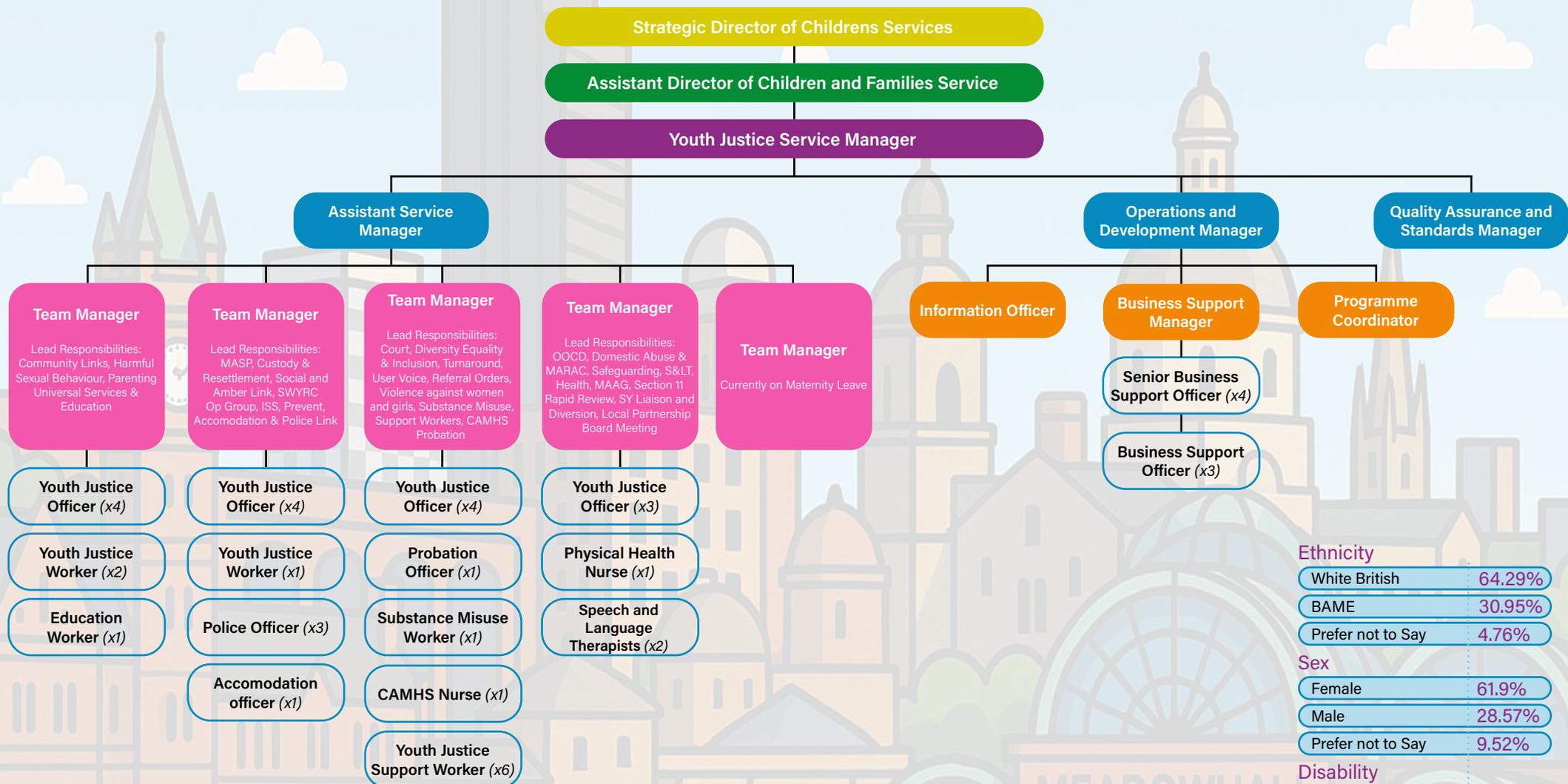
Every child should have access to education; education helps children build skills, improve future opportunities, reduce reoffending, and support positive personal development and identity

What we will do –

- Continue embedding the “Belonging Framework” citywide to ensure all children in contact with the YJS feel safe, valued, and connected within their education settings
- Expand the Alternative Provision Framework to ensure all providers supporting children in the YJS are quality assured to a higher standard and equipped to meet the needs of those with SEND
- Strengthen the voice of children, especially those in or leaving the YJS, ensuring their experiences inform and shape local education policy and practice

# 7. Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Staffing Structure



Ethnicity	
White British	64.29%
BAME	30.95%
Prefer not to Say	4.76%
Sex	
Female	61.9%
Male	28.57%
Prefer not to Say	9.52%
Disability	
No	73.81%
Yes	21.43%
Prefer not to Say	4.76%

## Appendix 2 - Budget and Contributions

2025 - 2026 Youth Justice Service Budget

Agency	Contribution	Staffing Costs	Total
Youth Justice Board	£ 1,079,421	£ -	£ 1,079,421
Sheffield City Council - Local Authority	£ 655,300	£ -	£ 655,300
South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority	£ 233,000	£ 172,800	£ 405,800
National Probation Service	£ 5000	£ 43,730	£ 48,730
Health Service	£ 114,305	£ 54,000	£ 168,305
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 2,087,026</b>	<b>£ 270,530</b>	<b>£ 2,357,556</b>

## Appendix 3. Youth Justice Partnership Board Members

Designation	Organisation	Representing
Strategic Director for Children's Services (Chair)	Sheffield City Council	Local Authority - Children's Services
Assistant Director for Children's Services (Co-Chair)	Sheffield City Council	Local Authority - Children's Services
Head of South Yorkshire Probation Service (Duputy Chair)	National Probation Service	Probation
Neighbourhoods and Partnership Superintendent	South Yorkshire Police	South Yorkshire Police
Assistant Director of Transformation and Delivery at Sheffield	NHS - South Yorkshire ICB	Health - Integrated Care Board
Head of Partnerships and Commissioning	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority	Policing and Crime
Chair of the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee	Local Councillor	Elected Member - Education and Children
Youth Justice Board Oversight Manager	Youth Justice Board	Youth Justice - National Oversight
Equalities & Engagement Officer	Sheffield City Council	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Regional Manager	Remedi	Victims
Assistant Director for Early Years and School Effectiveness	Sheffield City Council	Education
Headteacher	Secondary Education	Education
Vice Principal Student Experience	The Sheffield College	Education
Head of Service Lifelong Learning and Skills	Sheffield City Council	Education
Partnership Manager	Violence Reduction Unit	Community Safety
Assistant Director of Community Youth Services	Sheffield City Council	Local Authority - Children's Services
Head of Communities	Sheffield City Council	Community Safety Partnership
Commissioning Manager	Sheffield City Council	Public Health & Integrated Commissioning
Service Manager	Change, Grow, Live (CGL)	Substance Misuse

## Sign off, submission and approval

Chair of YJS Partnership Board	Meredith Dixon-Teasdale
Signature:	
Date:	24 July 2025

This plan has been submitted with the approval of the Chair of the Youth Justice Management Board, confirming that it has been endorsed by the full board. Formal sign-off by the local authority will be completed at the Education, Children and Families Committee on 4 November 2025.

In accordance with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, youth justice plans in England must be approved by full Council. The Chair's sign-off reflects the Board's collective agreement on the contents of the plan.



# Youth Justice Service – Plan on a Page 2025–2026

## Vision

To prevent offending and reoffending by children through positive relationships, early help, and fair opportunities - supporting every child to thrive, contribute, and stay safe

### Priorities for the Year Ahead

#### 1. Prevention

- ▶ Early support to stop children entering the justice system
- ▶ Build on Turnaround Programme
- ▶ Expand support to more children
- ▶ Align closely with early help services

#### 2. Disproportionality

- ▶ Promote fairness, equity, and representation
- ▶ Develop EDI-led action plans
- ▶ Build cultural confidence across the workforce
- ▶ Challenge disproportionality through audit, training, and leadership

#### 3. First-Time Entrants

- ▶ Reduce the number of children entering the system for the first time
- ▶ Use data to identify trends
- ▶ Expand diversionary routes like deferred cautions

#### 4. Community Safety

- ▶ Support victims, restore relationships, and reduce harm
- ▶ Improve victim support and restorative justice
- ▶ Embed victim-focused policy and auditing
- ▶ Share insight through Community Safety Partnership

#### 5. Serious Violence

- ▶ Keep children safe, reduce the risk of exploitation, and repeat offending
- ▶ Engage in the Serious Violence Duty and knife crime strategy
- ▶ Pilot focused deterrence for high-risk children
- ▶ Deliver emergency life skills via Your Stance

#### 6. Education

- ▶ Help every child to access learning and build a positive future
- ▶ Embed the Belonging Framework citywide
- ▶ Expand quality-assured Alternative Provision
- ▶ Use children's voices to shape inclusive education

### Performance and Monitoring

- ▶ Live data dashboards to track trends and gaps
- ▶ Case audits and thematic reviews linked to each priority
- ▶ Quarterly reporting to the Youth Justice Management Board
- ▶ Feedback from children, parents, carers, and partners

### Our Approach

- ▶ Child First – See the child first, not the offence. Focus on strengths, participation, and positive identity
- ▶ Trauma-Informed – Understand children's experiences and respond with empathy, safety, and consistency

### How We Work

- ▶ Partnership-led with children, families, and communities
- ▶ Strengths-based, promoting hope and positive identity
- ▶ Data-informed, with ongoing review and reflection
- ▶ Restorative and proportionate, placing relationships and fairness at the centre