



Sheffield Youth
Justice Service

Sheffield Youth Justice Service

Youth Justice Plan 2026 – 2029



Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid



National
Probation
Service



Sheffield
City Council



Sheffield Children's
NHS Foundation Trust



South Yorkshire
POLICE

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1 Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Foreword / Chair's Statement

As Strategic Director of Children's Services and Chair of the Youth Justice Board, I am pleased to introduce this Youth Justice Plan, which sets out our shared ambition to support children, families and communities across Sheffield.

This Plan reflects our collective commitment to delivering a child centred, partnership driven approach to youth justice. We recognise that children who come into contact with the youth justice system are among the most vulnerable in our city, often facing complex challenges and inequalities. Our responsibility is not only to respond to offending behaviour, but to understand and address the underlying causes, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive and realise their potential.

Over the coming year, we will continue to build on our strengths, working closely with partners across education, health, police, probation and the voluntary sector to deliver a coordinated and effective response. Prevention and early intervention remain at the heart of our approach, alongside a strong focus on reducing reoffending, minimising the use of custody, and improving outcomes for victims and communities.

This Plan also reflects the voice of children. We are committed to listening, learning and adapting our services to ensure they are responsive, inclusive and trauma informed. We will continue to challenge ourselves as a system — using data, insight and lived experience to drive improvement and ensure accountability.

Importantly, this Plan sits within our wider vision for Children's Services and the ambitions of the Youth Justice Partnership Board. Through strong governance and shared ownership, we will monitor progress and ensure that our priorities translate into meaningful impact.

I would like to thank all partners and colleagues for their continued dedication to this work. Together, we will continue to strive for a youth justice system that is fair, effective and focused on creating better futures for our children

Meredith Dixon-Teasdale
Strategic Director for Children's Services



Local Context and Demographics

141 Languages
spoken in Sheffield

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

582,493

Total Population of Sheffield

36 Years

Median Age of the Population

135,721

Children aged 0-19 in Sheffield
23.3% of the Population

21%

Households claiming
universal credit or
housing benefit

24%

% Of people in the
most deprived areas
of the country

5%

Unemployment of
population

8%

Children living
in work-less
households

0.7 %

Amount of people
assessed as
homeless

20%

% Of children on the
poverty line

24%

Children who
are persistent
absentees

262

Pupils in Pupil
Referral Units

1669

Pupils in SEN
Schools

87,956

Pupils in
mainstream School

12

SEN Schools

175

Mainstream
Schools

<1%

Electively home
educated

5562

Children with
EHCPs

33% of Children
who have free
school meals

90 %

Schools rated good
or outstanding by
Ofsted

9%

16/17 Years old are
NEETs

19%

Total Population
with 0
Qualifications

i

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

Across This Plan

Across this plan, there are a small number of clear themes that run through all of our work. These are:

Keeping a strong Child First approach in how we work with children and families

Addressing disproportionality and improving fairness across the system

Strengthening prevention and diversion so fewer children enter the justice system

Working as a partnership to improve outcomes and respond to complexity

These themes underpin how we deliver our priorities in practice. They are interconnected and shape how we make decisions, deliver services and measure impact across the partnership.

Over the past three years, youth justice in Sheffield has shifted. There are fewer children entering the system, reoffending is reducing, and custody continues to be used rarely. At the same time, the children we are working with often have more complex needs, and issues such as disproportionality and serious violence remain challenges across the system.

Our focus now is on building on this progress by strengthening early intervention, improving consistency in decision-making, and making better use of data and partnership working to understand what is making the biggest difference.

Our ambition is simple – to reduce unnecessary involvement in the justice system, respond more effectively to complexity, and ensure that every child receives the right help at the right time, supported by a confident and accountable partnership.

Statutory Oversight and Governance



Partnership and Operational Arrangements

In Sheffield, responsibility for keeping children and communities safe is shared across several strategic plans and partnerships. Youth justice is recognised as a cross-cutting theme within these, including the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's Police and Crime Plan and the Safer Sheffield Partnership's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

Over the past year, the role of the Youth Justice Partnership Board has strengthened. The Board has moved from primarily overseeing activity to providing more consistent scrutiny, challenge and direction. The focus is now on understanding what is changing in practice and whether this is improving outcomes for children.

Performance data, audit findings and feedback from children are used more routinely to inform discussion and challenge. This has helped partners develop a clearer shared understanding of where improvement is needed, particularly in areas such as disproportionality, prevention and first-time entrants.

The Board is also more closely connected to frontline delivery. Case studies are used to ground discussion in the lived experience of children, and practitioners are increasingly involved in presenting work directly to the Board. This has made practice more visible and supported more meaningful oversight.

Partner contribution is more consistent, supported by improved attendance, clearer expectations and the introduction of deputies. This has strengthened collective ownership and the Board's ability to hold partners to account for their contribution to outcomes for children.

The Youth Justice Partnership Board provides the formal governance for the Youth Justice Service in Sheffield. It is chaired by the Strategic Director for Children's Services, with co-chairing arrangements within Children's Services, providing clear leadership, oversight and accountability.

The Board brings together key statutory partners including police, health, probation and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. It is well connected to wider partnership arrangements across the city, including safeguarding, community safety and the Local Criminal Justice Board.

Overall, these arrangements mean youth justice is not delivered in isolation. There is clear oversight, strong partnership alignment, and a shared focus on improving outcomes for children.

These arrangements are strengthened by strong working relationships across the local authority, particularly with education, prevention services and children's social care, alongside links with the judiciary and regional and national youth justice partners.

The Service Manager has overall responsibility for the Youth Justice Service and is supported by a management team covering governance, finance, quality assurance, business support and operational delivery. This structure supports clear decision-making, effective coordination of partnership work, and delivery of statutory responsibilities, while maintaining a Child First approach across partnership activity.

Partnership and Operational Arrangements Cont.....

Day-to-day work is delivered by Youth Justice Officers and Youth Justice Workers, supported through ongoing professional development to provide high quality, child-centred practice. The service is further strengthened by practitioners from key partner agencies, including police, probation, health and education, including CAMHS, speech and language therapy, substance use and accommodation support embedded within or closely aligned to the service.

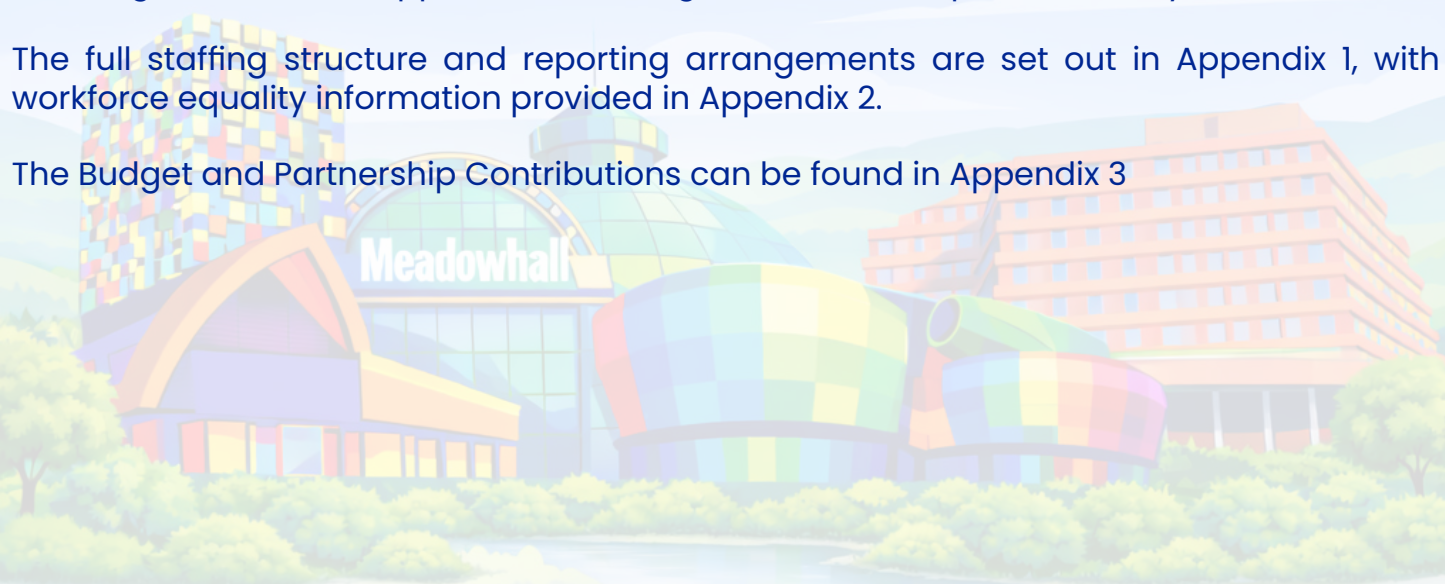
The service also works closely with voluntary and community sector organisations to broaden the support available, strengthening engagement and supporting positive outcomes for children.

Remedi is commissioned to deliver restorative justice services, alongside community reparation and mentoring. The service also works with partners such as Victim Support and Witness Support to ensure victims are informed and supported.

Roundabout provides transitional accommodation for children, supporting stability as part of resettlement and wider support plans. TAAS provides the Appropriate Adult service, ensuring children are supported and safeguarded while in police custody.

The full staffing structure and reporting arrangements are set out in Appendix 1, with workforce equality information provided in Appendix 2.

The Budget and Partnership Contributions can be found in Appendix 3



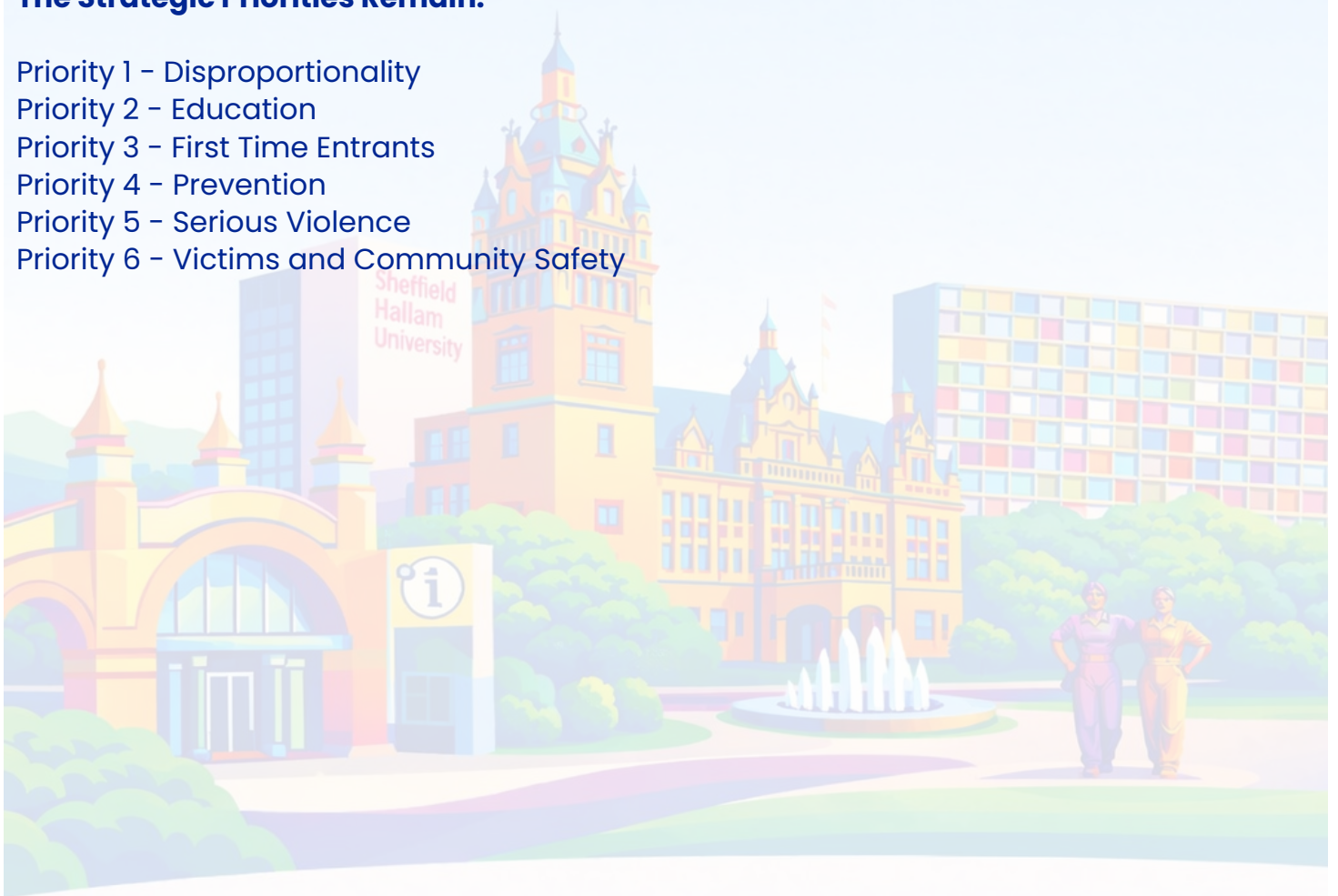
Progress on Priorities

The Youth Justice Partnership Board met at a dedicated extraordinary meeting in early 2025 to agree the priorities for the year ahead.

Throughout 2025/26, dedicated subgroups have played an active role in progressing this work. The priorities have remained a standing focus within quarterly Board meetings, providing ongoing oversight, challenge and direction. Board members have consistently acknowledged that partnership effort has been focused on the right areas to shape service development and support improvement, with the aim of achieving better outcomes for children.

The Strategic Priorities Remain:

- Priority 1 – Disproportionality
- Priority 2 – Education
- Priority 3 – First Time Entrants
- Priority 4 – Prevention
- Priority 5 – Serious Violence
- Priority 6 – Victims and Community Safety



Disproportionality

What we said we would do

Strengthen the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion focus group so it better reflects the diversity of the workforce, while also building staff cultural confidence to more effectively support children, particularly those who are over-represented in the youth justice system.

The Youth Justice Partnership Board will develop and oversee an action plan with partners to tackle over-representation, racism and disproportionality, working collaboratively to challenge where necessary, share learning, and advocate for children to prevent racial marginalisation.

What's changed in practice, culture, or confidence as a result of this work?

- Disproportionality is now a consistent and visible focus at Youth Justice Partnership Board level, reflecting its position as a core priority across the whole plan.
- Workforce confidence has increased, supported by a dedicated EDI lead, an active EDI focus group, and targeted cultural awareness and anti-racism training.
- Board members have developed their understanding through focused discussion on ethnic disparities, adultification and the need to explain or reform differences in outcomes.
- The service is engaging more confidently with partners to raise questions about fairness, escalation of concerns and proportionality, particularly around court progression and custody.

Which actions are underway but not fully embedded or consistent?

- The Disproportionality Subgroup is developing an action plan with the Youth Justice Partnership Board to monitor and support each partner to address over-representation, racism and disproportionality.
- The Youth Justice Service Diversity Toolkit is in development, with plans to roll out to wider staff in 2026.
- Planning is underway for an audit to explore whether the voices and lived experiences of over-represented children are being meaningfully reflected in assessments, planning and interventions.

What's been difficult or slower than expected?

- Staffing capacity has limited participation in the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion focus group.
- Data gaps across partners have made it harder to build a full and consistent picture. However, improved use of available data and Board oversight has already strengthened our ability to identify and challenge disproportionality.

What are we doing next to keep this moving?

- Strengthening Board-led oversight through a coordinated partnership action plan to tackle disproportionality.
- Continuing to build workforce confidence through targeted training on anti-racism and cultural competence and humility.
- Using audit activity to better understand where disproportionality emerges and what needs to change in practice.
- Continuing to challenge disproportional outcomes with partners, keeping equity central to Child First decision-making

Education

What we set out to improve

Strengthening access to education, belonging and influence for children known to Youth Justice Service.

How we planned to do this

- Embedding the Belonging Framework across the city so children feel safe, valued and connected in education.
- Expanding the Alternative Provision Framework so providers are consistently quality assured and better equipped to meet SEND needs.
- Strengthening the voice of children, particularly those in or leaving Youth Justice Service, so their experiences shape education policy and practice.

What's working well so far

- Stronger relationships across the education sector, supporting better joint working and more responsive support around individual children.
- The Education Subgroup has improved understanding among education partners of the needs of children open to Youth Justice Service, helping to identify barriers and consider solutions.
- Greater openness from partners to consider alternatives to exclusion, including more child-centred pathways such as planned moves between settings.
- Early progress in strengthening the child's voice within assessment and intervention, including work with partners on how to gather and use feedback from children.

How we planned to do this

- Accreditation of work completed with children open to Youth Justice Service is not yet in place, with options still being explored.
- Data collection needs to improve so we can better understand children's needs and target support more effectively, including clearer use of NEET and participation data.
- Links with Alternative Provision, Attendance and Inclusion services need to be more consistent and embedded.
- Children's voices are not yet systematically captured or influencing service delivery in a consistent way.
- Measures of success (both qualitative and quantitative) are not yet strong enough to consistently demonstrate impact. However, improvements in partnership working and education engagement mean we are in a stronger position to evidence this going forward.

What's made this harder than planned

- Understanding the full education landscape has taken longer than expected, but has been necessary to build relationships and clarify shared priorities.
- Different priorities across partners, particularly where school safety concerns can lead to decisions that do not always align with keeping children in education.

What we'll focus on next

- Delivering training with education partners to strengthen understanding of the needs of children known to Youth Justice Service and how best to respond.
- Building more consistent partnerships with Attendance, Inclusion and Alternative Provision services, with shared accountability for outcomes.
- Increasing visibility of Youth Justice Service within education settings, including stronger links with schools and clear points of contact.
- Improving case managers' understanding of education pathways and how to access support.
- Developing clearer, consistent ways to capture and respond to children's views about education.
- Strengthening how we measure impact, including clearer data and evidence of what is making a difference.

First Time Entrants

At a glance

We've got better at understanding why children are coming into the system and diverting them where we can. We've focused on improving early decision-making and system consistency.

What we said we would focus on

Stopping children entering the youth justice system for the first time by improving early decision-making, strengthening diversion, and working more closely with prevention partners.

What's changed this year

- First Time Entrants are now a regular, visible focus at Board and through the FTE subgroup no longer just a data line, but a shared problem to solve.
- We are using data more intelligently, looking at patterns, context and pathways, not just volumes.
- Links with Prevention Services have improved, with earlier conversations about children before formal justice routes are triggered.
- Stronger police and Youth Justice Service leadership links exist, with clearer oversight of interconnected issues such as ASB and youth crime.
- Introduction of the Youth Crime Prevention Officer role has enabled daily crime reviews and earlier identification of children who may benefit from support.
- Closer police working around specific escalation points, including no comment cases, ASB and driving offences help prevent unnecessary progression into court.
- We have a greater shared understanding that preventing First Time Entrants requires early intervention, consistency and confidence, rather than reliance on Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) processes alone.

What's still not where it needs to be

- Decision-making is not yet consistent across all cases, although there is now greater shared understanding across partners and clearer oversight of decision points than in previous years.
- Youth Outcome Panel processes have been reviewed, but we need to make sure the changes make a difference.

What's got in the way

- Capacity pressures across policing and youth justice.
- Data that is not always timely or complete enough to support quick action.
- Ongoing tension between risk management and diversion when children have complex needs.
- Challenge of changing long established practice and creating consistency amongst a large workforce.

What we're doing next

- Strengthening consistency in early decision-making across the partnership.
- Using the FTE subgroup to reduce drift and drive forward positive changes.
- Tightening Youth Outcome Panel processes so children get the right response first time.
- Making better links between FTE learning and prevention activity.
- Continuing to build confidence across the partnership in proportionate, Child First decisions.
- Keeping the emphasis on preventing escalation, not just managing entry into the system.

Prevention

What we planned to build on

Building on the Turnaround Programme, the focus has been on strengthening prevention so fewer children enter the criminal justice system. This has meant closer alignment with Prevention Services, reducing unnecessary transitions between teams, and embedding Child First, strengths-based practice.

How we intended to strengthen early help and diversion

We have worked to intervene earlier with children at risk, as part of a wider focus on prevention and reducing unnecessary involvement in the justice system, including those released under investigation (RUI) or receiving no further action (NFA). This has included simplifying pathways across Early Help, Prevention and Youth Justice Service, improving continuity for children and families, and increasing joint working.

What's gone well this year

- Strong partnership commitment to prevention, with the Prevention subgroup helping maintain focus and shared ownership.
- Learning from Turnaround continues to shape practice, particularly around early engagement, relational work with families, and diversion from formal justice routes.
- Improved joint working between Youth Justice Service and Prevention teams, with better day-to-day dialogue and clearer understanding of shared roles.
- Earlier conversations about children, helping to reduce reliance on formal thresholds and supporting more timely intervention.

What we've learned

- Acting early and building trusted relationships makes the biggest difference.
- Children engage better when pathways are clear, flexible and feel joined up, not service-led.
- Joint working is most effective where it is simple, consistent and focused on the child's wider context, not just presenting issues.

What hasn't progressed as planned

- Pathways for children who are RUI or receive NFA outcomes are not yet consistently clear or embedded.
- Joint group work for children and families is still developing.
- Alignment across Early Help, Prevention and Youth Justice Service remains inconsistent in some areas.

Where challenges remain

- Transitions between services can still feel complicated for children and families.
- Capacity pressures continue to affect how prevention is prioritised across the system.
- Short-term funding and workforce pressures impact pace and consistency.
- Increasing complexity of need makes early intervention more challenging.
- Legal restrictions can limit engagement with some children and families.

What we're doing next

- Simplifying prevention pathways so they are clearer and easier to navigate.
- Strengthening early identification, particularly for NFA and RUI children.
- Improving continuity so children experience more consistent, joined-up support.
- Developing clearer joint working arrangements across the Children Directorate.
- Building on the stability of the 3-year Turnaround funding to embed practice, not just pilot it.

Our priority remains

Keeping prevention timely, relationship-based and child-centred, so children get the right support earlier and are less likely to enter the criminal justice system.

Serious Violence

What we committed to doing

We are taking a partnership-led approach to serious violence, with a clear focus on safeguarding children. This includes working through established forums such as Safer Sheffield and contributing to the Sheffield Serious Violence Duty Delivery Plan.

We have set up a Serious Violence Subgroup to bring partners together, share practice, identify risks and drive activity forward.

What activity has taken place?

- Established the Serious Violence subgroup with key partners including the Serious Violence Partnership Manager and the Violence Reduction Unit.
- Contributed to city and regional forums linked to serious violence.
- Introduced a small number of new intervention approaches, including:
 - ◊ VR-based work to support decision-making and social understanding
 - ◊ Participation in the South Yorkshire rounded knives pilot
 - ◊ Early work with Sheffield Hallam University to evaluate impact and value for money

What's still emerging or being tested?

- The subgroup is still developing, with plans to align it fully to the Sheffield Serious Violence Plan and strengthen Youth Justice Service leadership around children.
- Evaluation of new interventions is underway but not yet complete, including university-led work (awaiting final ethics approval).
- The rounded knives pilot is progressing, with delivery due to begin shortly.
- A short pilot with Real Decisions will test digital resources with children, alongside exploration of a Sheffield-based project where children help create interactive content on issues such as relationships, exploitation and online harm.

What challenges have we faced?

- Delays in fully establishing the subgroup, although alignment with the wider Sheffield plan should strengthen this.
- Financial pressures and the time needed to commission and test new interventions.

What this means for the year ahead

- We are in a stronger position going into the year ahead, with a clearer focus on partnership delivery and a broader intervention offer.
- The Serious Violence subgroup will be fully established and linked into the city plan.
- Current pilots and new approaches will be delivered and evaluated, helping us build a more engaging, evidence-informed offer for children.

Victims and Community Safety

At a glance

Victims remain central to our work. Over the past year, we have strengthened how we support victims from first contact with the police through to restorative justice and ongoing support. Our focus has been on making sure victims are listened to, kept informed, and supported in a way that feels meaningful and safe.

What we said we would strengthen

Develop a clearer understanding of the victim journey and improve partnership working and information sharing, so victim needs are understood, risks are managed, and support is responsive.

What's changed this year

- Victim services are now a more consistent focus across partnership forums, including Board and South Yorkshire subgroups
- Stronger partnership working with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and South Yorkshire Police, improving shared oversight and learning
- Improved identification and support for children who are also victims, supported by new practitioner guidance
- Draft revised Victim Policy completed and aligned to the HMIP framework, supporting greater consistency across South Yorkshire
- Victim performance, case studies and practice are routinely discussed at Board, strengthening oversight and challenge
- Increased opportunities for partners to observe and understand victim work through shadowing
- Continued strong quality assurance, including internal audit and external thematic review, confirming good quality victim practice
- A stronger "Think Victim" approach embedded across the service, keeping victim impact central to practice

What's still developing

- Final sign-off and implementation of the revised Victim Policy
- Improving consistency and quality of victim data to better understand needs and outcomes

What's been challenging

- Limitations in current police systems restrict the collection of detailed victim data, including protected characteristics
- Until system improvements are in place, our ability to fully tailor services based on this information will remain limited

What we're doing next

- Confirming good quality victim practice
- Using the Victim Subgroup to embed learning from the Victim Charter and strengthen partnership practice
- Continuing audit activity to improve quality and consistency of victim work
- Strengthening how victim needs are considered within assessments, planning and risk management
- Improving recording and use of victim and community safety information
- Building wider partnership understanding and confidence in responding to victims
- Increasing practitioner awareness of referral routes, including strengthening links with Victim Support

Who are the children we work with?

The data shows a shrinking cohort of mainly older boys, with fewer first-time entrants, improving reoffending, low custody use, and a consistently high proportion of children from global majority backgrounds.

The cohort is getting smaller overall and remains predominantly male, with most children aged 15–17 and a modest rise in the proportion of girls over the three years.

2023 - 24	Under 15	15-16	17+	Totals
Female	12	9	7	28
Male	31	63	58	152
Totals	43	72	65	180

2024 - 25	Under 15	15-16	17+	Totals
Female	12	20	5	37
Male	19	56	57	132
Totals	31	76	62	169

2025 - 26	Under 15	15-16	17+	Totals
Female	9	16	9	34
Male	20	45	41	106
Totals	29	61	50	140

Why are the children working with us? (Primary offence)

Across all three years, the main reasons children are known to the service are violence against the person and motoring offences, with overall offence volumes falling by 18% since 2023–24.

Offences	2023 - 24	2024 - 25	2025 - 26
Arson	0	1	0
Breach of Bail	0	1	0
Breach of Statutory Order	1	2	0
Criminal Damage	14	24	22
Domestic Burglary	20	12	4
Drugs	30	20	29
Fraud and Forgery	5	0	3
Motoring Offences	77	63	60
Non Domestic Burglary	6	4	1
Other	4	4	5
Public Order	12	38	14
Racially Aggravated	10	4	2
Robbery	17	14	8
Sexual Offences	0	18	11
Theft and Handling Stolen Goods	25	14	15
Vehicle Theft / Unauthorised Taking	26	19	15
Violence Against the Person	115	116	108
Totals	362	354	297

First Time Entrants (FTE)

FTE levels were fairly stable through the first three quarters of 2025–26 before falling further in Q4, giving the lowest quarterly position of the year.

Year	Count	Rate per 10k
2023 – 24*	134	25.7
2024 – 25*	133	25.5
2025 – 26**	100	18.8



* 52060 – Sheffield 10 – 17 Population
** 53242 – Sheffield 10 – 17 Population

2025 – 26	Count	**Rate per 10k
Q1	28	5.3
Q2	24	4.5
Q3	28	5.3
Q4	20	3.8
Totals	100	18.8

First Time Entrants have fallen steadily, with the rate dropping from 25.7 to 18.8 per 10,000 over three years, suggesting fewer children are entering the justice system for the first time.

Both the actual and binary reoffending rates have improved over the past three years, showing fewer children are reoffending and those who do are committing fewer further offences.

Reoffending

Outcomes are increasingly shifting away from Youth Conditional Cautions and towards Youth Cautions, while Referral Orders remain the most common formal disposal.

Outcomes	2023 – 24	2024 – 25	2025 – 26
Absolute Discharge	2	3	2
Community and Punishment Order	0	1	0
Compensation Order	17	16	11
Conditional Discharge	23	14	16
Detention and Training Order	2	3	0
Fine	13	12	6
Referral Order	58	54	48
Section 250	2	0	4
Section 254	0	0	0
Section 259	1	6	1
Youth Caution	20	21	43
Youth Conditional Caution	62	58	25
Youth Rehabilitation Order	19	10	5
Totals	219	198	161

Year	Reoffences by Reoffender (Actual Rate)	Reoffending Rate % (binary rate)
2021 – 22	6.47	35.2%
2022 – 23	5.28	28.3%
2023 – 24	4.65	27.4%

2023 – 24	Reoffences by Reoffender (Actual Rate)	Reoffending Rate % (binary rate)
Q1	2.00	26.5%
Q2	7.90	27.0%
Q3	3.25	27.3%
Q4	6.00	28.6%
Totals	4.65	27.4%

Use of Custody

Custody use remains low overall and, despite a spike in 2024–25, has reduced again in 2025–26 to below 2023–24 levels.

Custody was used only in Q1 and Q3 in 2025–26, with no custodial outcomes in Q2 or Q4, reinforcing that its use remains infrequent but uneven.

Year	Count	Rate per 1k
2023 – 24*	5	0.10
2024 – 25*	9	0.17
2025 – 26**	5	0.09

i * 52060 – Sheffield 10 – 17 Population
 ** 53242 – Sheffield 10 – 17 Population

2025 – 26	Count	**Rate per 1k
Q1	1	0.02
Q2	0	0.00
Q3	4	0.08
Q4	0	0.00
Totals	5	0.09

Ethnic Disproportionality

Children from the global majority (racially minoritised communities who make up most of the world's population) are consistently overrepresented in our cohort compared with Sheffield population.

What this tells us about Sheffield Youth Justice Service is that when children come into the service, we are making a difference – numbers entering the system are reducing, reoffending is improving, those who do reoffend are committing less, and custody is used rarely – showing our work is helping children move away from the justice system despite ongoing complexity around violence and disproportionality.

Sheffield ethnicities 10 –17	2023 – 24 Count	Offending %	2024 – 25 Count	Offending %	2025 – 26 Count	Offending %
White (67%)	108	61%	88	53%	76	55%
Global Majority (33%)	70	39%	77	47%	63	45%
Mixed ethnicity (8%)	34	19%	38	23%	35	25%
Asian or Asian British (13%)	15	8%	10	6%	12	9%
Black or Black British (7%)	17	10%	20	12%	15	11%
Other ethnicity(5%)	4	2%	9	5%	1	1%
Totals	178		165		139	

Partnership governance and board effectiveness

If partners don't consistently take ownership, progress will slow and we won't achieve the changes we're aiming for.

Our response

- The Board is now more established, with better attendance and clearer use of performance and quality information to challenge and guide the work.
- There is a continued focus on shared responsibility, with partners working together locally and linking into regional and national work to improve outcomes.

Disproportionality

Children from some backgrounds continue to experience different outcomes, and this needs ongoing challenge across the partnership.

Our response

- We are improving how we use data, case reviews and feedback from children to understand where this happens and why.
- Work is linked to wider equality activity in Sheffield, and we are contributing to regional and national work to improve outcomes.

Increasing complexity of need among children

Children are coming into the service with more complex needs, which can make it harder to provide consistent and effective support.

This increases demand on services and means children often need support from several agencies at the same time.

Our response

- We are strengthening joint working so children get joined-up support across services.
- We are keeping a close focus on risk, safety and well-being, using performance and quality checks to make sure support is effective.

Serious violence and risk outside the home

Children from some backgrounds continue to experience different outcomes, and this needs ongoing challenge across the partnership.

Our response

- We are working with partners through the Serious Violence Duty to identify and support children at risk.
- We continue to deliver targeted support, including programmes like 'Your Stance', alongside wider regional work.

Children in police custody and use of PACE accommodation

There is not always suitable accommodation available, which means some children spend longer than they should in police custody.

Our response

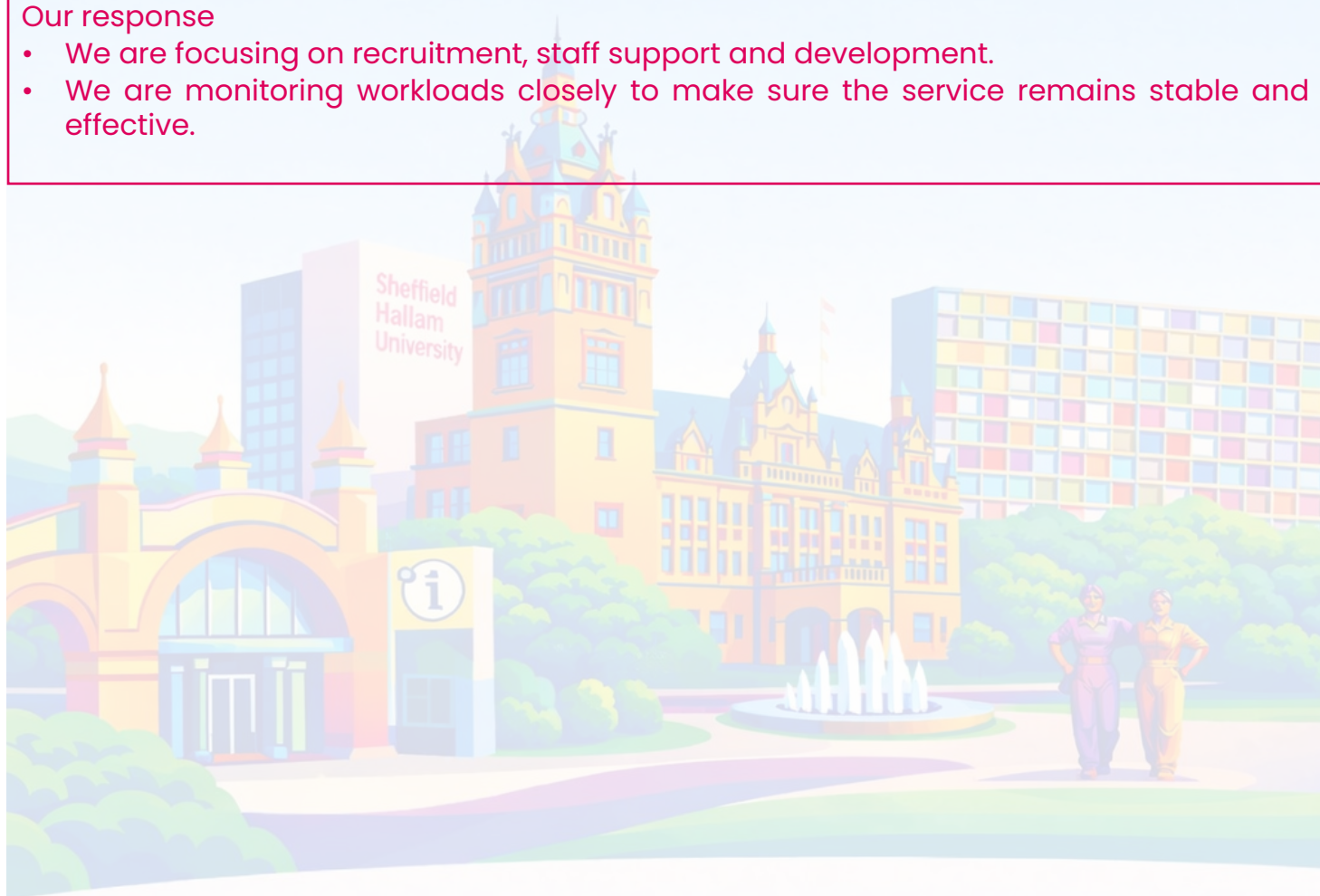
- Work is underway across South Yorkshire to find better, shared solutions.
- We continue to work with police and partners to reduce this where possible and find safer alternatives.

Workforce capacity and sustainability

Staffing pressures can affect consistency and continuity for children.

Our response

- We are focusing on recruitment, staff support and development.
- We are monitoring workloads closely to make sure the service remains stable and effective.



Child First

We take a Child First approach in how we work with children and families. In practice, that means getting to know each child properly, what's going on in their life, what they're good at, and what they need, and working with them to agree support that actually works for them.

Child First isn't separate to what we do. It runs through our day to day work, from first contact, through court, to the support we provide and how we work with partners.

Putting Child First into practice

Prioritising the child's needs, rights and development

We take a child-focused and developmentally informed approach. This includes:

Creating safe, welcoming environments such as Burton Street, which children describe as:

"somewhere you can go"

"a safe space... with a lockable door"

We recognise and respond to individual needs, including neurodiversity, mental health and trauma (e.g. adapting appointment times, environments and communication) Children are supported through the presence of family, legal representatives and Youth Justice Service staff.

Ensuring children are supported at key points such as court, where children consistently report feeling:

"Nervous, anxious, worried or stressed"

Building on strengths and supporting positive identity

We focus on what matters to children and what they are good at, helping them to see a positive future:

Children talk about education, training and ambitions during court and intervention work (e.g. college, careers, hobbies)

Feedback shows the impact of strong relationships with staff:

"They helped me change my life for the better"

"I am a changed person"

"She always listened to me and understood everything"

"I like the chance to meet other people the same age as me"

Children value opportunities to socialise and build confidence:

Working collaboratively with children and families

Children consistently tell us that relationships and communication matter most:

The highest area children want to influence is:

- How we communicate with them (29%)

Children value:

- Being listened to at court
- Regular one-to-one engagement
- Direct, informal communication (texts, calls, face-to-face)

This aligns with what children tell us about their experience:

"I can speak to my worker"

"If I didn't like something... I would just tell them straight"

"She always kept me in the loop... fantastic"

"The help has been invaluable"

Parents and carers also describe feeling involved and supported:

Partner feedback further evidences this approach, highlighting:

- Strong multi-agency working
- Clear communication
- Practitioners working alongside families in a supportive and respectful way

Promoting diversion and minimising stigma

We recognise the impact of stigma and work to reduce it:

Children highlight concerns about being identified as involved with youth justice:

"If other children know you're working with youth justice, they wouldn't want to listen to me"

This informs our focus on:

- Safe spaces
- Relationship-based practice
- Minimising unnecessary system contact

Our continued focus on prevention, diversion and tailored intervention aims to keep children out of the formal system wherever possible

How we gather and use feedback

We use a range of approaches to understand children's and families' experiences, and are continuing to strengthen this as part of our developing Participation Strategy.

Recent engagement has included:

- Joint focus groups with Sheffield City Council's Young Voice and Influence (YV&I) team
- A QR code survey to gather wider feedback
- Consultation with managers and case managers to shape the strategy
- Initial feedback shared and used to inform the next draft

While numbers were small, these sessions provided useful insight and confirmed strong alignment with the overall vision for participation.

Our wider methods include:

- Feedback postcards (child and parent/carer)
- Voice of the Child in Court recording
- Partner feedback
- Parenting group feedback

Children continue to tell us they prefer direct, informal and accessible ways to share their views, including:

- Talking to staff
- Being listened to at court
- Small groups and safe spaces
- Simple tools such as QR codes

We analyse feedback through:

- Thematic review of survey and focus group findings
- Reporting to the Youth Justice Partnership Board
- Integration into quality assurance and audit activity

We recognise that feedback from parents and carers is currently limited and are taking steps to improve this.

What children have told us and what we have done

We are starting to strengthen a clearer **“you said, we did”** approach. Current examples include:

You said: Communication matters most

We Did: Reviewing how we communicate with children to make this clearer, more consistent and more accessible

You said: You value safe, welcoming spaces

We Did: We are doing: Continuing to develop Burton Street as a child-friendly environment and exploring additional activities (e.g. games, creative options)

You said: You want different ways to express yourself

We Did: Exploring options such as art-based interventions and practical activities as part of our delivery offer

You said: Being heard at court matters

We Did: Completed a targeted audit and staff training
Impact: Improved recording of children’s actual words rather than professional interpretation

Ongoing development

We are strengthening how we embed participation across the service. Key next steps include:

- Finalising the Participation Strategy, incorporating feedback from children, partners and SaLT
- Increasing participation from parents and carers
- Delivering targeted consultation with girls to better understand safety, needs and experiences
- Developing further consultation on children’s experiences of education while in Youth Justice Service
- Strengthening our “You said, we did” approach so feedback and impact are clearer
- Exploring more independent approaches to gathering feedback
- Improving how we evidence impact, not just activity

Resources and Services

What we do

We use our Youth Justice Core Grant, alongside partner contributions, to deliver a single, joined-up service that reduces offending, keeps the community and children safe and improves outcomes for children.

Where the money goes

- People: a skilled, multi-agency workforce
- Practice: high-quality, relationship-based work with children
- Interventions: targeted support tailored to need and complexity

What it delivers

- Prevention and diversion
- Effective court and out of court work
- Safeguarding and public protection
- Support for victims
- Strong governance and performance oversight

Why it works

Support that is consistent, personalised and relationship led leads to better engagement and stronger outcomes. Children tell us they feel listened to and supported to make positive change.

What we're improving (2026–27)

- Targeting resources more tightly around identified need and cohort trends
- Reinvesting funding to address known gaps in workforce capability and intervention delivery
- Strengthening consistency and quality of practice across the service
- Developing targeted offers in response to increasing complexity (e.g. neurodiversity, education and engagement)
- Using data and evidence more clearly to inform commissioning and demonstrate impact
- Ensuring all funding is used transparently, in line with grant conditions and partner expectations

Key outcomes supported by our investment

- Reduced reoffending, with fewer children committing further offences over time
- Sustained reduction in first time entrants, reflecting stronger prevention and diversion
- Continued low use of custody, with a focus on community-based outcomes
- A smaller cohort with increasing complexity, requiring more targeted and intensive support
- Stronger engagement from children through consistent, relationship-based practice
- More effective early identification and intervention, particularly through prevention and Turnaround activity
- Improved multi-agency focus on managing risk, safeguarding and serious violence
- Continued focus on addressing disproportionality across the system

Board Development

The YJB expects partnership boards to provide clear governance, strategic leadership, and assurance of high-quality services for children. Strengthening Board effectiveness has been a priority for Sheffield Youth Justice Service over the past year.

Context

Board effectiveness has been a known area for improvement since the 2019 inspection and subsequent YJB oversight. Previous feedback highlighted inconsistent partner engagement and limited clarity around the Board's role and impact. This was identified as a risk in last year's strategic plan.

Over the past 12 months, the Board considers this the area of most significant progress.

Progress this year

Stronger partnership and structure

- Stable, well-attended Board with senior representation
- Introduction of dedicated deputies, improving consistency and accountability

Improved focus of meetings

- Shift towards scrutiny, challenge and oversight
- Better use of data, QA and lived experience

Clearer Board identity and visibility

- Board member profiles shared with staff
- Increased opportunities for staff to engage with the Board

Stronger link to practice

- Regular use of case studies
- Case managers presenting directly to the Board

Shadowing and development

- 10 of 22 members (45.5%) have taken part in shadowing
- Activity includes service visits, panels, MASP, and practice observation

Partnership reflection:
A Board self-reflection session in April 2026 identified clear progress:

"The Board has moved from a passive role to a more active and engaged partnership, but further development is needed to demonstrate consistent impact, visibility and leadership".

Strengths

- Strong attendance and commitment
- Open, constructive challenge
- Good performance reporting and transparency

Key development areas

- Clarity of role and decision-making
- Stronger visibility with staff (identified as weakest area)
- Greater depth of scrutiny
- Clearer evidence of impact
- More consistent partner accountability

Board Development Cont

Overall position

The Board is now more cohesive, engaged and informed.

The next phase is to move from a well-functioning Board to one that is focused, visible, and able to clearly evidence its impact on outcomes for children.

Next Steps for the Youth Justice Partnership Board

- Clarify Board role and remit (via updated Terms of Reference)
- Improve focus and structure of meetings
- Strengthen links between data, decisions and impact
- Increase Board visibility in front-line practice
- Improve consistency of partner contribution
- Introduce a structured induction and development programme
- Better evidence how Board activity leads to improved outcomes



Workforce Development

Our Workforce Development Plan continues to support professional growth, progression and succession planning to deliver a trauma-informed service aligned to our Youth Justice vision.

We are focused on retaining and developing skilled staff by 'growing our own' managers, setting clear expectations for practice, and providing structured development for both new and experienced staff. This includes refresher training to maintain consistent standards across the service, alongside induction and ongoing support for new starters.

We continue to support staff to access additional qualifications, including the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate, with protected time to complete learning alongside practice. Training is informed by quality assurance activity, thematic audits and feedback from children and families to ensure it reflects real areas of need in practice.

Alongside formal training, we prioritise learning through reflection, peer support and supervision. This includes coaching, peer development and opportunities for progression in line with our workforce strategy.

Supporting the workforce, maintaining motivation and promoting well-being remain key priorities

We support staff through

- Monthly individual reflective supervision, including oversight of well-being and workload
- Monthly protected reflective and CPD time
- Monthly team meetings
- Quarterly trauma-informed group reflection facilitated by a forensic clinical psychologist
- Quarterly peer development sessions
- Ongoing debriefs following challenging work
- A workload management tool, with regular oversight, to ensure fairness and manageable caseloads
- Regular recognition and opportunities for staff to contribute to service development

A planned service development day will bring staff together to reflect on practice, share learning and agree priorities for the year ahead, helping maintain focus and motivation across the service.

Staff surveys and engagement sessions continue to shape service improvement. Feedback is used to develop clear "you said, we did" actions, shared across the service. This approach supports a culture where staff feel listened to, valued and able to influence how the service develops.

Knife possession guidance

In line with the Government's Child Knife Possession Offences Guidance (2026), the partnership has clear arrangements in place to respond to knife possession offences involving children, including recording the rationale where cases depart from the guidance.

Police provide daily updates on new investigations, enabling early identification of children involved in knife-related incidents and ensuring timely notification to the Youth Justice Service.

Multi-agency triage arrangements are in place to assess risk and agree the most appropriate response at the earliest opportunity. This supports a swift, child-centred approach, including the use of voluntary intervention where appropriate to prevent further offending.

Decisions about how cases are progressed are made in line with national guidance, with a clear focus on proportionate and evidence-based responses. Where a case is diverted from court, the rationale for this decision, including any departure from guidance, is clearly recorded on the child's record to ensure transparency and accountability.

All knife possession cases are tracked and subject to multi-agency scrutiny. This provides oversight of decision-making and helps ensure that responses are consistent, robust, and focused on achieving the best outcomes for children.

Where children are involved in multiple related offences, a coordinated approach is taken to avoid duplication and ensure a single, proportionate outcome wherever possible.

Evidence-based practice and innovation

Mentoring

We've recommissioned our restorative mentoring offer with Remedi, building on what we know works well for our children.

At its core, this is about relationships giving children someone consistent who will work alongside them, challenge them when needed, and help them think differently about their choices and what's going on in their lives.

Support is flexible and shaped around the child. This includes:

- One-to-one intervention work
- Support to work through conflict and relationships
- Access to positive activities

It's not a fixed programme, it adjusts as the child's needs change. The offer is also open to all children, not just those meeting a particular threshold.

This approach is in line with the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit, which highlights mentoring as having a moderate impact on reducing violence and offending, particularly where there is a consistent, trusted relationship and a focus on building skills and confidence.

This year's activity:

- 51 referrals
- 349 sessions arranged
- 77% attendance

Engagement has stayed strong, which reflects the way mentors build trust and stick with children.

What children have said:

"Fun experience. It was also really informative and truly helpful to get where I need to be."

"My mentor opened doors for me... I've now made my own music album."

"You gave me something to look forward to every week when I was struggling mentally."

"I would have been getting into trouble if I hadn't had a mentor."

"Without my mentor I would probably have reoffended again... I've learnt I have a voice."

This is consistent with what we saw last year, when it works, it really works. Children talk about feeling more confident, more in control, and having better options. Recommissioning the service reflects that and mentoring continues to be a key part of how we support children to move away from offending.

Partnership Research: Community Sentencing for Children

We are part of a national Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) study led by Manchester Metropolitan University looking at how community sentences are used with children. Sheffield is one of four case study sites.

Focus of the work

The study looks at variation and disparity in sentencing decisions across England and Wales, including:

- How decisions are made in practice
- Why outcomes differ between children
- Racial and intersectional disparity
- How sentence requirements are selected
- Children's lived experience
- What works, including links to first-time entrants

It combines national data, case file analysis, fieldwork and direct work with children.

What this means for Sheffield

We will receive tailored feedback on our local practice alongside the national findings, supporting service improvement and partnership decision-making.

Outputs will include:

- National report with recommendations
- Local Sheffield report and recommendations
- Racial equity and practitioner briefings
- Child-friendly summary
- National dissemination

Findings will inform YEF Youth Justice Practice Guidance (2027).

Why this matters

This work will strengthen our understanding of decision-making and disparity, helping us improve consistency, reduce unnecessary system involvement, and ensure children receive the right support.

It directly supports our Disproportionality priority by strengthening our understanding of racial and intersectional differences in outcomes, and improving how we challenge and respond to them in practice.

It also supports our First Time Entrants and Prevention priorities, by identifying where sentencing decisions may be contributing to unnecessary escalation, and helping us take a more proportionate, informed approach to keeping children out of the formal system where appropriate.

More broadly, this work supports improved partnership decision-making and consistency, aligning with our wider focus on community safety and fair, effective use of sentencing.

VR Headsets Pilot

Sheffield Youth Justice Service has commissioned Virtual Decisions to provide VR headsets for an initial 12 month pilot focused on knife crime, decision-making and social skills.

Why it matters

The programme places children in realistic scenarios where they experience the consequences of decisions in a safe environment, supported by discussion and reflection. This approach aligns with the Youth Endowment Fund evidence that social and emotional learning has a high impact on preventing involvement in violence, and with the Government's Protecting Lives, Building Hope strategy emphasising early intervention and prevention.

Intended impact

The pilot aims to support children to better understand risk, develop safer responses to conflict and peer pressure, and build the skills needed to make positive decisions. Outcomes from the pilot will inform future commissioning and wider use as part of our response to serious violence.

Evaluation approach

An independent evaluation will run alongside the pilot to understand its impact and inform future use. This will include observing sessions, gathering feedback from children, and looking at how different groups respond. The findings will help us decide whether to continue or expand the approach and contribute to wider learning on using this kind of technology in youth justice.

This work directly supports our Prevention priority, by helping children develop the skills and awareness needed to avoid escalation into offending.

It also contributes to our Serious Violence priority, through a targeted focus on knife crime and decision-making in high-risk situations.

More broadly, it supports our approach to First Time Entrants, by strengthening early intervention and reducing the likelihood of children becoming involved in the formal justice system.

Rounded Knives Pilot – A Different Approach to Harm

What we're trying to do

Alongside the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), we've been testing a simple idea: if we can't remove risk entirely, can we reduce the harm?

The pilot replaces pointed kitchen knives with rounded alternatives, alongside conversations with children and families about safety, risk and choices.

What the evidence tells us (so far)

There is some evidence that rounded knives are less likely to cause serious injury in a stabbing situation.

However, there is no robust evaluation yet showing that knife replacement schemes reduce offending, reoffending or serious violence. At this stage, this is best understood as promising practice rather than proven impact.

What this looks like in practice

- We've used the approach flexibly, often as part of wider safety planning:
- Targeting children where there are known concerns about knife carrying or risk
- Working alongside police and other partners to coordinate knife swaps
- Using professional judgement to act quickly where risk is high, including outside of formal pilot processes

Early work across South Yorkshire has also shown positive feedback and demand, particularly in residential settings.

What we're learning

- This approach fits well with a Child First, harm reduction model
- It creates a practical way to have conversations with children and families about safety
- It works best when used alongside wider intervention, not on its own

Where next

We are working with the VRU and partners to take stock of the pilot and explore how it can be properly evaluated, so we can better understand its impact and where it adds most value.

This work directly supports our Serious Violence priority, by focusing on reducing the harm associated with knife use and responding pragmatically to risk where it already exists.

It also contributes to our Prevention priority, by creating opportunities to engage children and families in conversations about risk, safety and alternative choices before harm occurs.

More broadly, it supports our approach to Community Safety, through partnership working with the VRU and police, and by testing practical, scalable responses to knife-related risk.

Street Doctors

Street Doctors is a national charity that works with children to be part of the solution to violence in their communities. It focuses on building confidence, raising aspirations and helping children make safe, informed choices.

Targeted where it matters most

Sheffield Youth Justice Service has commissioned Street Doctors to deliver targeted sessions locally, in line with the criteria developed and shared by Clare Gibson. This ensures the offer is focused on children most at risk of harm, including those affected by violence or exploitation.

Skills that save lives

Sessions are delivered by healthcare professionals and youth workers using a public health, trauma-informed approach. Children learn practical, lifesaving first aid alongside wider skills such as communication, resilience and leadership.

Real impact on community safety

This work supports both outcomes for children and community safety by:

- Equipping children with skills to respond to incidents of violence
- Building confidence and positive identity
- Encouraging peer influence and role modelling
- Contributing to the prevention of harm in local communities

This work directly supports our Serious Violence priority, by equipping children with the skills and confidence to respond safely in high-risk situations and reduce the harm associated with violence.

It also contributes to our Prevention priority, by building resilience, awareness and positive decision-making before issues escalate.

More broadly, it supports our Community Safety priority, through strengthening peer influence, local confidence and the ability of children to act as part of the solution within their communities.

Skill Mill

The Skill Mill is a social enterprise that supports children involved in the justice system. The focus is on building confidence, practical skills and a sense of purpose through real-world experience.

Support combines:

This work supports both outcomes for children and community safety by:

- Equipping children with skills to respond to incidents of violence
- Building confidence and positive identity
- Encouraging peer influence and role modelling
- Contributing to the prevention of harm in local communities

This offer provides an alternative to classroom-based routes, engaging children who may have struggled in education in a more practical and accessible way.

The model relies on strong partnership working across youth justice, local authority services, employers and environmental organisations, alongside national partners including the Youth Endowment Fund and Bridges Outcomes Partnerships.

This approach helps to:

- Re-engage children furthest from education or employment
- Build confidence, resilience and employability
- Create pathways into training and work
- Reduce the risk of reoffending through stability and opportunity

Independent evaluation shows strong engagement and outcomes, including high rates of qualification achievement and sustained non-reoffending during and after the programme.

Priorities for the coming year

Throughout 2025/26, Board members have met regularly to progress work against the agreed priority areas. There is shared confidence that time, focus and effort are being directed in the right places. Subgroups are now established, partner commitment is in place, and there are early signs of stronger partnership working and better use of data.

While this work is still developing, it represents real progress and provides a stronger foundation for improving outcomes for children. On that basis, the Board agreed to continue with the current priorities, confirming that they remain the right focus for collective effort in the year ahead.

The Key Priorities for Sheffield are:

- Priority 1 – Disproportionality
- Priority 2 – Education
- Priority 3 – First Time Entrants
- Priority 4 – Prevention
- Priority 5 – Serious Violence
- Priority 6 – Victims and Community Safety

Given this, the Board has also agreed to align the strategic plan with grant funding and has set the ambition for this to be a three-year plan.

Over the coming year, the partnership will focus on delivering tangible progress against these priorities by:

- Driving further reductions in first-time entrants and reoffending through earlier intervention and diversion
- Taking a more targeted and evidence-led approach to tackling disproportionality
- Strengthening prevention and safeguarding activity, particularly in relation to serious violence and exploitation
- Improving children's access to education, training and wider opportunities
- Ensuring victims' voices are heard and that work to repair harm is consistent and effective
- Making better use of shared data to understand need, track impact, and inform joint decision-making

The Board will maintain oversight of delivery through its subgroups, with a clear expectation that each priority area translates into measurable impact for children, families and communities.

Standards for children

Sheffield Youth Justice Service operates a comprehensive and well-established quality assurance framework. This includes a range of assurance activity such as thematic audits, peer audits, management oversight, supervision and regular review processes across all areas of practice.

To strengthen this further, and to ensure independent challenge, the service commissioned an external audit, rather than relying solely on internal review. This was intended to provide an objective assessment of practice and complement our existing quality assurance activity.

Strengths identified include:

- High-quality victim work, with strong engagement, communication and safety planning in the majority of cases
- Effective work to support positive change, including strong understanding of children's strengths, motivation and individual needs
- Consistent delivery of interventions, supported by multi-agency services across education, health and emotional well-being

The audit also identified a need to improve the consistency of practice in some areas. The findings from this independent audit broadly reflect the strengths already identified through our internal framework, alongside areas where greater consistency is required.

These findings provide a clear and evidence-based focus for the next phase of service improvement.

Actions taken to address identified gaps

Our existing quality assurance framework has enabled us to respond quickly and systematically to the findings.

Actions already implemented include:

- Strengthening our quality assurance framework, with a clearer emphasis on consistency, audit trails and learning across all audit activity
- Introduction of focused thematic improvement work, targeting key areas such as risk assessment, planning quality and use of information
- Delivery of targeted practice development sessions, focused on improving analytical depth, risk understanding and outcome-focused planning
- Introduction of practice guidance and tools to support staff, including prompts to strengthen the use of partner information and contextual analysis
- Embedding audit learning within supervision and team discussions, to ensure continuous reflection and improvement

This work builds on, rather than replaces, our existing robust QA arrangements

Standards for Children Cont....

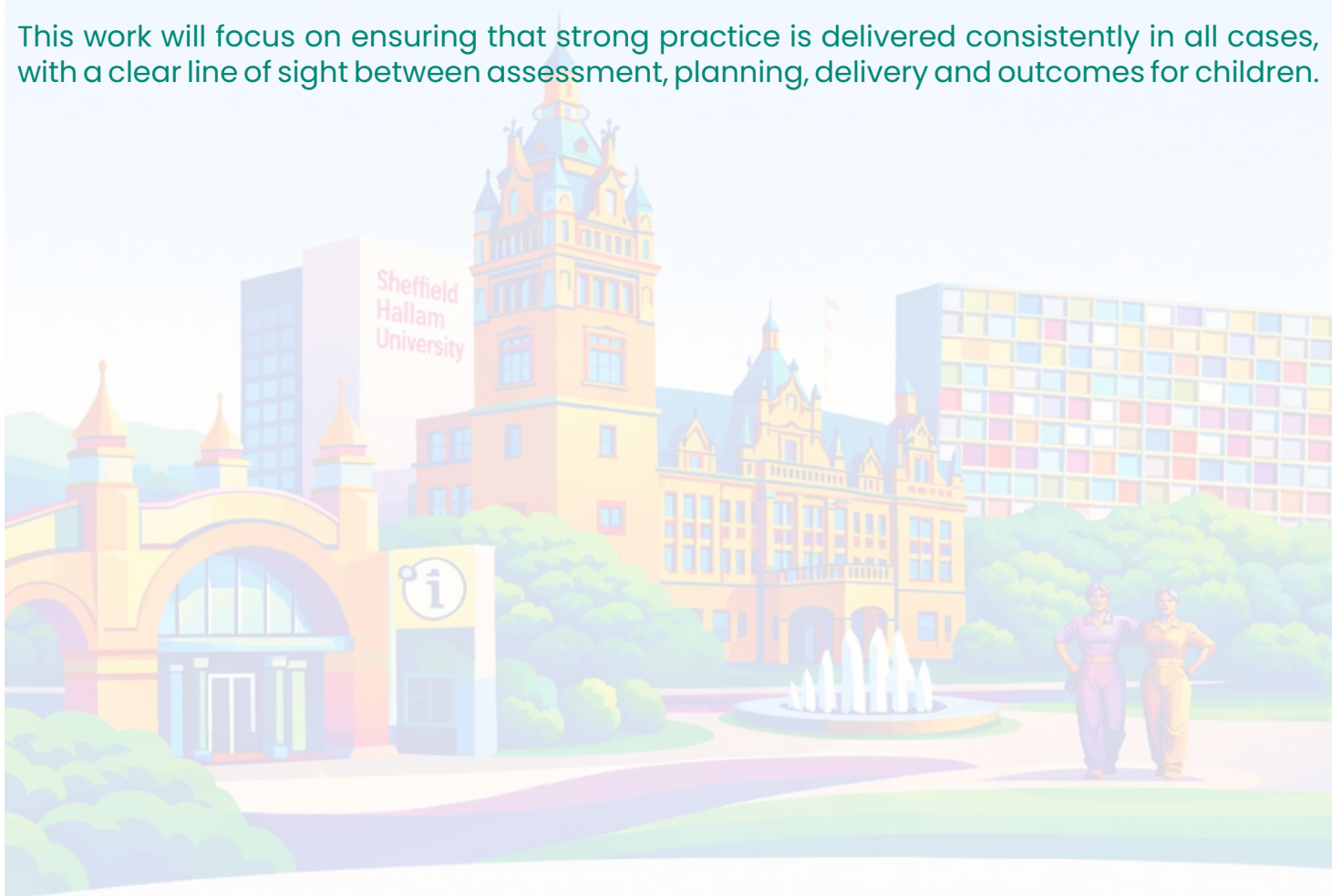
Planned activity for the coming year

Our improvement activity for 2026–27 will focus on embedding greater consistency in key areas of practice, informed by both internal and independent assurance activity.

Next Steps include:

- Strengthening the quality and consistency of risk and safety assessment
- Improving the clarity and effectiveness of planning and interventions
- Ensuring practice is consistently informed by relevant information and clearly evidenced
- Continuing to develop a strong and consistent quality assurance approach across the service

This work will focus on ensuring that strong practice is delivered consistently in all cases, with a clear line of sight between assessment, planning, delivery and outcomes for children.



Children from groups which are over-represented

We want fair and equal justice for all children. Tackling disproportionality and over-representation is a golden thread throughout this plan and our work.

As set out earlier, some groups of children are more likely to come into contact with the youth justice system locally, including children from Black and Mixed heritage backgrounds, children known to social care, and those excluded from education. We are continuing to strengthen our understanding of this through better use of data and partnership intelligence.

Addressing this is a shared responsibility across the partnership. Disproportionality is now a clear strategic priority, with Board-level oversight and a developing action plan focused on improving outcomes and challenging imbalance.

Our work includes:

- Building staff cultural competence through targeted training and reflective practice
- Developing a more diverse workforce over time, alongside strengthening the role of our EDI lead and subgroup
- Working with partners, including the judiciary and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), to raise awareness of adultification and its impact on decision-making
- Creating a culture where differences in outcomes are questioned and addressed, not accepted

This work will focus on ensuring that strong practice is delivered consistently in all cases, with a clear line of sight between assessment, planning, delivery and outcomes for children.

Policing

Policing plays an important role in supporting outcomes for children in Sheffield through strong partnership working with the Youth Justice Service and wider agencies. Co-location within multi-agency arrangements enables timely information sharing, joint risk identification and coordinated decision-making, supporting a consistent and child-focused approach to safeguarding and reducing offending.

There is a clear shared emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Police work with partners to identify children at the earliest opportunity and deliver proportionate responses that address emerging risks, particularly for those vulnerable to exploitation or involvement in serious violence. This includes preventative work in schools and communities and close collaboration with specialist services to support children most at risk.

Recent joint work has strengthened responses across the system. This includes improved arrangements following changes to knife crime legislation, a shared approach to out-of-court resolutions to support diversion, and coordinated responses to children at risk of knife carrying, including the development of wider harm reduction approaches.

There are recognised challenges in sustaining preventative activity, particularly in relation to workforce capacity and resources. However, prevention and early intervention remain a shared priority, with continued focus on strengthening diversion and improving outcomes for children.

Prevention

In Sheffield, prevention is central to reducing the number of children entering the youth justice system. Our approach is Child First, trauma-informed and rooted in strong partnership working, with a focus on early identification, timely intervention and addressing risk before it escalates.

Prevention is delivered through a coordinated offer across the partnership, including targeted support for children at risk of exploitation, serious violence and future offending. This includes joint working with education, children's social care, early help and policing to ensure children and families receive the right support at the right time.

There is a strong emphasis on contextual safeguarding, with partners working together to identify and respond to harm beyond the home, including within communities and peer groups. Information sharing and multi-agency forums support earlier identification of risk and more consistent, joined-up responses.

Engagement with prevention services remains strong, and locally this approach is associated with fewer children entering the justice system. However, partners recognise ongoing challenges, including increasing complexity of need and pressures on workforce and resources.

Risk Outside the Home (ROTH)

In Sheffield, we recognise that many children experience harm beyond the family home, including within peer groups, neighbourhoods, schools and online spaces. Our approach to Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) is embedded within our local strategy and partnership arrangements, ensuring that risk is understood in the context in which it occurs and responded to collectively.

ROTH in Sheffield includes risks such as exploitation, serious youth violence, peer-on-peer abuse, online harm, missing episodes and radicalisation. These risks are often interconnected and can change quickly, requiring a dynamic and coordinated response.

Our approach is underpinned by contextual safeguarding. This means we look beyond the individual child to understand the influence of peers, locations and wider networks, and work with communities, families and partners to reduce harm and improve safety.

There is a strong multi-agency response to ROTH across Sheffield, with effective information sharing and joint planning through established safeguarding and community safety forums. Intelligence from services such as Return Home Interviews is used to identify emerging risks and inform targeted interventions.

Our response combines prevention, safeguarding and disruption activity. This includes targeted support for children, work with families, and action with partners to address risk in specific locations or networks.

ROTH remains a key priority for Sheffield. We continue to strengthen our approach through improved use of data, greater consistency in practice, and a stronger focus on community-based responses to keep children safe.

Diversion

Diversion is a key part of Sheffield's approach to reducing unnecessary entry into the youth justice system. Our approach is Child First and focuses on providing timely, proportionate responses that address behaviour while avoiding escalation into formal processes wherever appropriate.

Children are identified for diversion through a range of routes, including police contact, out-of-court disposal processes and wider partnership intelligence. There is a strong emphasis on early identification, including children released under investigation or where no further action is taken, ensuring opportunities for intervention are not missed.

Delivery is coordinated across the partnership, with the Youth Justice Service working alongside police, education and other services to provide tailored interventions based on individual need. This includes both short-term programmes and more targeted support for children at risk of further offending or involvement in serious violence.

Recent developments have strengthened the diversion offer, including improved joint decision-making, earlier Youth Justice Service involvement in disposal decisions, and targeted initiatives such as the focused deterrence approach. This has supported a more consistent and proactive response to children at risk, alongside increased engagement in diversionary programmes.

Performance and practice are monitored through established governance arrangements, including oversight of out-of-court disposals and multi-agency scrutiny. This ensures that decisions are proportionate, consistent and aligned with a child-first approach.

Diversion remains a shared priority across partners, with ongoing focus on strengthening pathways, improving consistency and reducing first-time entry into the justice system.

Education

The partnership works closely to make sure children known to the Youth Justice Service have the right education in place. This includes strong links between Youth Justice Service staff, the local authority, schools, colleges and voluntary sector partners. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioners provide targeted support to reduce the risk of children becoming NEET and to help them move into education, employment or training. This includes early identification of risk through Risk of Neet Indicators (RONI) processes and the NEET Risk Scoring (NEETS) system, along with one-to-one support for transitions and re-engagement.

Work with Sheffield College has strengthened the identification of children known to Youth Justice Service, enabling earlier support, clearer planning and more appropriate provision at post-16. This is overseen through the Youth Justice Service Education subgroup, which brings partners together to share information, plan support and address gaps. There is clear education representation within Youth Justice Service governance to link into schools, trusts and local authority inclusion services.

The partnership keeps a strong focus on children who are not receiving their full education entitlement, including those who are excluded, on part-time timetables, electively home educated or missing education. These groups are tracked and reviewed jointly, with data (including NEETS) used to identify patterns and any disproportionality, including for children in care.

Multi-agency plans are put in place to address barriers such as SEND, mental health and disengagement, and to support return to full-time education wherever possible. Work across Inclusion and Alternative Provision is strengthening the range of suitable placements and improving reintegration pathways. A safeguarding-led approach underpins all activity, recognising that being in education is a key protective factor in reducing offending and supporting positive outcomes.

Restorative approaches and victims

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Youth Justice Services have a statutory duty to contact victims of youth crime and offer restorative approaches in line with the Victims' Code. In Sheffield, this work is delivered through our commissioned provider, Remedi, working alongside South Yorkshire Police, Probation and wider partners.

Victims are central to our approach. Over the past year we have sharpened our focus on making sure every victim is offered a timely, clear and meaningful service. This includes being kept informed, having their views heard, and having a real opportunity to influence how harm is put right. This supports victims to recover and helps keep children and communities safe.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a voluntary process. It gives victims the chance to explain the impact of what has happened, ask questions, and say what matters to them. It also supports children to take responsibility, understand the impact of their actions, and make amends. This helps reduce further harm and supports safer communities.

All victims are offered RJ, from out-of-court disposals through to custody. Victim details are shared by South Yorkshire Police officers based within the service, and contact is made within 5 working days (or within 24 hours for vulnerable victims), in line with the Victims' Code. Victims are given clear information about their rights and options.

Victims can choose how they engage:

- Indirect RJ, such as letters of apology, sharing views through a practitioner, or reparation completed by the child
- Direct RJ, including face-to-face or virtual meetings where it is safe and appropriate

- We also offer Victim Impact Statements, which (with consent) are used to shape the work the child completes. Victims are supported throughout, including signposting to other services and safety planning where needed.
- Our work is supported by our local victim policy, which sets out what victims can expect and how we make sure this happens in practice.
- We are also working with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and regional colleagues, to strengthen our approach to victims across South Yorkshire and make sure services are consistent and effective.

Outcomes 2025/26

- 132 victims contacted and offered RJ
- 117 victims engaged (89% engagement rate)
- 289 indirect interventions completed (96 victims, 88 children)
- 51 direct interventions completed (39 victims, 34 children)

Victim feedback shows the impact of this work:

- 100% would recommend RJ
- 91% said RJ helped them cope and recover
- 91% reported increased satisfaction with the criminal justice system
- 89% reported improved well-being

Restorative approaches and victims Cont..

This gives us confidence that victims are being listened to and supported, and that children are being supported to understand and repair the harm they have caused.

What victims tell us

Victims consistently describe feeling listened to, informed and reassured through the process:

"Thank you for the updates and sharing our views. The child apologised and we were grateful to receive a picture of the hate crime poster they have completed."

"It is good to know he has received the education needed to realise how his actions affect others."

"We are grateful for the letter and are happy that the child is turning his life around."

What children tell us

Children's feedback reflects increased understanding, accountability and engagement:

"I thought that the sessions wouldn't really help me, but in reality I learned a lot and now know how to keep myself to myself."

"I enjoyed working with the Reparation Practitioner. She helped me and made it enjoyable. I have learnt that there are consequences for actions."

"Reparation sessions are good for people to improve themselves, learn new skills and have the chance to talk."

Serious Violence

Serious violence remains a key priority for Sheffield, with clear links to exploitation, vulnerability and wider community safety concerns. Addressing this requires a coordinated, partnership-led response that focuses on prevention, early intervention and diversion away from the criminal justice system.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our approach through the development of a Preventing Serious Violence Strategy and Action Plan. This provides a clear, shared framework for delivery across partners, supported by the VRU and strengthened governance through the Safer Sheffield Partnership and Serious Violence Executive Board. Together, this has improved alignment, accountability and oversight across the system.

We have also reset partnership arrangements, including the Serious Violence subgroup, to drive delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan. This has strengthened collaboration between Youth Justice, Police, Community Safety, health, education and the voluntary and community sector, supporting a more proactive and evidence-informed approach. Alongside this, we have continued to develop targeted prevention work, including community-based knife crime initiatives, strengthened early intervention and diversion pathways, and enhanced multi-agency responses to exploitation and risk through forums such as Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting and local safety panels.

In the coming year, we will focus on delivering the Serious Violence Strategy and Action Plan, with clear ownership, monitoring and accountability. We will strengthen partnership delivery through a relaunched Serious Violence subgroup and continue to develop a coordinated city-wide approach to knife crime.

We will also expand targeted interventions for children at greatest risk, including focused deterrence approaches, while strengthening prevention and early help pathways to support children earlier. This will be underpinned by a stronger focus on place-based working with schools, communities and the voluntary sector, alongside continued development of evidence-informed interventions to reduce violent offending.

Through this approach, we will build on strong progress to deliver a coordinated and effective response to serious violence by reducing harm, improving outcomes for children, and supporting safer communities across Sheffield.

Working with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) remains a key partner in Sheffield's response to serious violence. With new leadership in place, the VRU is refreshing its Serious Violence Strategy and developing a three-year Preventing Knife Crime Approach (2026–2029), which includes a clear commitment to working closely with Youth Justice Services across South Yorkshire to identify and address gaps in intervention.

In Sheffield, this partnership supports a more coordinated, preventative approach, aligning youth justice, community safety and public health responses. Current work includes:

- A dedicated Sheffield Partnership Manager to support local delivery and lead on knife crime work
- Ongoing funding and support aligned to Safer Sheffield and wider partnership priorities
- A 2026/27 grant programme to support community-based violence prevention activity
- Introduction of Pol-Ed resources to education and community settings, supporting consistent messages and engagement with children
- Development work to improve data sharing and visibility across agencies, helping reduce system fragmentation
- A focused deterrence mentoring programme for children identified as carrying knives (running to January 2027), with independent evaluation underway

Funding beyond 2026–27 is subject to Home Office confirmation. Securing this will support longer-term planning and more sustainable delivery across the partnership.

Detention in police custody

Children are only brought into police custody where necessary and appropriate, with a clear focus across the partnership on minimising the use of custody and reducing time spent there. A child-first approach underpins decision-making, with alternatives to custody actively considered wherever possible.

There are established processes in place to support compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). This includes regular reviews of detention, oversight of decision-making, and a focus on ensuring children's rights are upheld, including timely access to an appropriate adult.

Appropriate adult services are delivered through local arrangements, ensuring children receive consistent support during custody. The partnership works closely to respond to children who present outside normal hours and to ensure safeguarding needs are addressed.

There is strong governance and scrutiny of children in custody. This includes monitoring of time spent in custody, review processes for key decisions, and oversight through multi-agency forums. Data and performance information are used to understand patterns, support challenge and improve practice.

Joint work between police, Youth Justice Service and partners has strengthened the local approach. This includes initiatives such as 'ring before you bring' processes, increased focus on early decision-making, and improvements to the custody environment to better meet the needs of children.

There remain ongoing challenges, including the availability of suitable accommodation for children refused bail under PACE, with work continuing at a regional level to develop sustainable solutions. Despite this, partners remain committed to reducing reliance on custody and improving outcomes for children.

Remands

Children can be remanded either to Local Authority Accommodation (RLAA) or to Youth Detention Accommodation (RYDA). Numbers are low across South Yorkshire, but the profile is consistent.

Local data shows:

- Around 7% of arrests lead to a remand
- Most are 17-year-old boys
- We have a clear understanding of their needs, including care experience, ethnicity, accommodation and education

We use this information to challenge decisions and improve practice.

Reducing the use of remand

Sheffield is leading a South Yorkshire Remand Partnership with Barnsley and Doncaster. This is backed by three years of Ministry of Justice funding to reduce the use of custodial remands and explore a more joined up regional approach.

The approach is simple:

- Shared leadership across partners
- A dedicated Project Manager to keep things moving
- Clear oversight, focused on outcomes

Building alternatives

We know children are often remanded because there isn't a workable alternative, not just because of risk.

The partnership is focused on putting better options in place:

- Specialist remand foster care where appropriate
- Supported accommodation, including dedicated provision
- Stronger bail packages with more intensive support
- Help for children to stay safely at home where possible

This reflects national learning that good accommodation and the right support reduce the use of custody.

Strengthening the system around the child

Alongside this, we are improving the wider system by:

- Building confidence in community options with the courts
- Developing practice together across partners
- Using data better to understand and challenge decisions
- Strengthening education and support offers

Locally, regular reporting to the Youth Justice Partnership Board helps maintain oversight and challenge where needed.

Use of custody and constructive resettlement

Custody remains low in Sheffield, but when it is used, the impact on children can be significant. These are often the most vulnerable children, so strong and consistent planning across the partnership matters.

Resettlement planning starts from the point of sentence. We work with partners to plan safe returns to the community, with a focus on education, accommodation and emotional well-being. All children on remand are discussed at the Multi-Agency Safety Panel (MASP), where plans are agreed, including ROTL, licence conditions and contingency planning.

We continue to work closely with the South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium. This helps us stay connected to regional learning and keeps a focus on improving outcomes for children leaving custody.

A key issue locally and regionally is the number of older children moving into the adult estate. We are working with partners to strengthen how we support these transitions so children do not lose support at this point.

Our focus is straightforward in helping children settle safely back into their communities, build positive relationships, and move forward from their time in custody.

We will continue to advocate for children in custody, challenging decisions where needed to make sure their needs, risks and vulnerabilities are properly understood.

Working with families

Working with families and wider support networks is central to Sheffield's Child First approach. We recognise the important role that parents and carers play in supporting children to make positive changes, and services are designed to involve and work alongside the whole family wherever possible.

The Youth Justice Service works closely with the Supporting Families programme to ensure a coordinated, whole-family response. This helps ensure that children and families receive consistent, joined-up support, with a focus on addressing underlying needs such as education, emotional well-being and family relationships.

Support is delivered through a combination of direct work with families, parenting interventions and wider partnership activity. This includes close links with community and voluntary sector provision, enabling families to access a broader network of support.

Working with families is also embedded across prevention, diversion and statutory work, ensuring that engagement with parents and carers is consistent throughout a child's journey. This approach supports better outcomes for children and helps sustain positive change over time.

Services are delivered in line with local authority requirements, and arrangements are in place to respond to language and communication needs where required.

This plan has been submitted with the approval of the Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership 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 15 December 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.



Meredith Dixon-Teasdale
Strategic Director of Childrens Service
Chair of Sheffield Youth Justice Partnership Board

Appendix 1: Sheffield City Council Staffing Structure

Job Title / Role	Number of Posts	Total FTE	Funding Source	Permanent/Temporary
Service Manager	1	1.00	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Assistant Service Manager	2	1.40	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Operations and Development Manager	1	0.59	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Youth Justice Team Manager	6	5.32	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Youth Justice Officer	17	14.73	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent & Fixed Term
Youth Justice Worker	2	2	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Youth Justice Support Worker	3	2.21	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Sessional
Quality and Assurance & Standards Manager	1	1.00	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Secondment
Business Support Manager	1	1.00	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Senior Business Support Officer	4	2.65	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Business Support Officer	3	3.00	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Programme/Panel Coordinator	1	1.00	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Education Officer	1	1.00	SCC/YJ Core Grant	Permanent
Total (SCC Funded Establishment)	43	36.90		

Appendix 2: Sheffield City Council Workforce Profile

Role	Male	Female	Not Recorded
Manager	3	9	0
Practitioners	10	16	0
Administrators	0	9	0
Sessional	4	1	0
Totals	17	35	0

Role / Ethnicity	Asian British	Black British	Mixed / Multiple Ethnicity	White	Any other ethnic group	Not Recorded
Manager	2	0	0	10	0	0
Practitioner	2	3	3	18	0	0
Administrators	2	0	0	6	0	1
Sessional	0	0	1	3	1	0
Totals	6	3	4	37	1	1

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Notes:
 Zero Welsh Speaking Staff
 Ethnicity Data for Seconded Staff Not available
 Ethnicity and Gender Data not available for Volunteers

Appendix 3: Funding Profile

Agency	Contribution	Staffing Costs	Total
Youth Justice Board	£ 1,079,281	-	£ 1,079,281
Sheffield City Council	£ 876,700	-	£ 876, 700
South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority	£ 233,000	£ 172,800	£ 405,800
National Probation Service	£60,908	-	£60,908
Health Service	£ 114,800	£54,000	£ 168,800
Total	£ 2,364,689	£226,800	£2, 591,489



Sheffield Youth Justice Plan – On a Page

Our focus

Fewer children, more complex needs.

We are focusing on earlier intervention, better decisions, and fairer outcomes.

Priorities

Priority 1 – Disproportionality

- Reducing unequal outcomes and strengthening challenge across partners

Priority 2 – Education

- Improving access, stability and reducing exclusions

Priority 3 – First Time Entrants

- Improving consistency in early decision-making and diversion

Priority 4 – Prevention

- Early help and diversion so fewer children enter the system

Priority 5 – Serious Violence

- Better joint working to identify risk and keep children safe

Priority 6 – Victims and Community Safety

- Stronger support, restorative practice and repairing harm

How we will work

- Child First
- Partnership-led
- Strengths-based and relational
- Evidence-informed
- Focused on impact

What will improve

- Fewer children entering the system
- Continued reduction in reoffending
- Stronger, more consistent decision-making
- Better outcomes for over-represented children
- Improved access to education
- Clearer impact from partnership work

Overall aim

- To reduce offending and harm by making sure children get the right help, at the right time, from a confident and accountable partnership.

Sheffield Youth Justice Plan

To the children we work with ...

What this means for you

We want you to feel safe, supported and listened to.

We know that being involved with youth justice can feel worrying or confusing.

Our job is to make sure you are treated fairly and get the help they need.

What you can expect

- To be treated with respect and kindness
- To be listened to and taken seriously
- To have things explained clearly, not in complicated words
- To be supported to make safer choices and move forward

What we will do

- Get to know you and what's going on in your life
- Work with your family and the people who support them
- Help you stay in school or get back into education or training
- Help you feel safe from harm, violence and exploitation
- Support you to understand what has happened and how to make things right

What we are trying to change

- Fewer children coming into the justice system in the first place
- Better and fairer decisions about what happens to children
- Making sure children from all backgrounds are treated equally
- Helping children build a positive future

Our message to You

You are more than what has happened.

We are here to help you feel safe, be heard, and move forward.