

Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan

2024/25



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Welcome to our annual Youth Justice Strategy for 2024/25

As Chair of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Board and the Executive Director for Nottinghamshire County Council with responsibility for Children, Young People and Family Services I am delighted to present, endorse and introduce our Youth Justice Strategy for 2024/25.

This strategy builds on the strong foundations of our partnership, as recognised by our most recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspection, and through our approach of listening and learning, building strong relationships and acting with fairness and respect will further improve the difference that we make to our children and young people's lives and the experience of our wider communities.

This strategy updates on the progress made against the priorities identified in the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategy 2023/24 and sets out new priorities for the year ahead. Priorities which have been developed in collaboration with members of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board taking into considerations recommendations made by HMIP. Key contributors to this plan include police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Violence Reduction Partnership, Health, the Youth Justice Service, Probation, district councils, Children's Social Care and Education. There have also been contributions from children who have been part of our newly formed 'Young Voices' participation group.

As well as supporting the Youth Justice Service to carry out its statutory functions and meet its key aims, this plan also supports the work of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in relation to its identified strategic objectives.

This annual strategy is supported by a range of service and project plans which set out more detail on the steps we will take in pursuit of the high-level actions contained in this strategy.

Introduction

The Youth Justice Service in Nottinghamshire meets all the statutory requirements of a youth justice service as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and includes seconded staff from police, Probation and Futures (Education, Training and Employment advisers). The service is made up of three multi-agency locality teams and a county wide interventions team. The team also carry out early targeted preventative intervention and detached youth work in areas where there is identified anti-social behaviour.

In addition to the multi-agency teams, the service can access resources from a specialist Clinical Nursing Team and commissions external providers to help it deliver key statutory functions, such as substance misuse (Change Grow Live), reparation and victim services (Remedi) and appropriate adult work (The Appropriate Adult Service).

The key aims of the Youth Justice Service is to:

- ▶ reduce the number of children entering the criminal justice system (CJS)
- ▶ reduce the frequency and rate of reoffending by children who are already within the youth justice system
- ▶ keep the numbers of children experiencing custody – either on remand or as a sentence of the court – to a minimum.

Over the past year, performance against these measures has been good with data showing that Nottinghamshire is performing better than the national average.

The youth justice service is part of the local authority's Children and Families department. The activities of the service are monitored by Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board, which is chaired by the Service Director for Youth, Families and Social Work. The service's group manager is also responsible for early help services and represents youth justice at the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Safer Nottinghamshire Board.

In addition to its statutory partners, Nottinghamshire the partnership board benefits from having representatives from education (Education and Inclusion and Educational Psychology Service), commissioning (Accommodation), Youth Custody Secure (YCS), the Community Safety Partnership and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The partnership board reports to the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, which feeds into the Health and Wellbeing Board. The partnership board meets on a quarterly basis with good attendance from all key partners who are represented at a senior level.

Progress and priorities

Progress

Over the past year four priority areas were given focus, driving activity across the partnership.

These areas were:

1 Developing a shared diversionary vision across the partnership
The partnership wanted to develop further joint working arrangements to improve opportunities for providing early targeted preventative intervention and diverting children away from the criminal justice system.

Youth justice staff have attended network meetings promoting preventative work and exploring how they can support educational settings in the delivery of early preventative interventions. This has led to some targeted intervention delivery within schools by the youth justice service and improved joint working practices.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire youth justice services and the police have worked together to review the local knife crime protocol for children and young people. This has led to some positive developments and more children are now being offered an opportunity to engage in diversionary interventions outside of the criminal justice system.

Work continues to take place on a revised joint working protocol (youth justice service and police); this will assist in the full range of out of court disposals being used for children who have committed lower-level offences. Arrangements are soon to be finalised to base youth justice staff within police custody suites, providing opportunities for consultation in relation to preventative/diversionary interventions and reducing delays for children accessing non statutory interventions.

2 Improving arrangements for children on multiple pathways
The partnership wanted to improve the co-ordination of resources and services to prevent duplication and improve the experiences of children and families. The service has continued to build relationships with partner agencies, actively considering opportunities to improve processes for joint working with children and families. Some developments that have been made in the last year are:

- ▶ where there are staff from both children's social care and the youth justice service working with a child and their family, joint supervision is taking place promoting joint planning and co-ordination
- ▶ youth justice and social care meetings are being combined to reduce the number of meetings that workers are attending to discuss the same child/family, streamlining resources and joining up individual plans
- ▶ for the benefit of the child, where possible, plans from different services are being combined so children and their parents/carers have increased clarity regarding the work that is taking place
- ▶ the youth justice service, youth service and early help unit are holding fortnightly meetings to discuss referrals and how services can best meet children's needs within the community

- ▶ the youth justice service has increased its contribution to strategy meetings where there are child criminal exploitation concerns, aiding the co-ordination of the proposed interventions.

3 Strengthening the approach to addressing serious youth violence and exploitation
In line with requirements for the Serious Violence Duty, a steering group leads on the development of shared data products and insights across the partnership. Serious violence profiles have been created for each district to inform partnership activity. Youth justice staff are active participants in Neighbourhood Safety and Disruption meetings across all seven districts.

The Violence Reduction Partnership has shared its Serious Violence Strategic Needs assessment (January 2024) with the partnership board, highlighting potential areas of interest. These insights are being used by the partnership to inform future strategic plans.

Data in relation to ten new key performance indicators (KPI) is now being discussed at the partnership board. This will assist the partnership in developing a better understanding of the characteristics and needs of children who are working with the youth justice service. KPI data has also contributed to building a local picture in relation to serious youth violence. Positively, neighbourhood safeguarding and disruption have now been embedded within each of the seven districts. Chaired by neighbourhood police, the monthly meetings bring together youth justice, social care and other key partners to promote joined-up work.

4 Improving access to mental health and speech and language provision
The partnership wanted to address the shortfall in health provision for children who were working with the youth justice service on a non-statutory basis. This included improving access to speech and language provision for all children encountering the criminal justice system. A revised service model is soon to be completed increasing resources to work with children who are working with the service on a voluntary basis in relation to their social, emotional and mental health. There has also been increased resources allocated to the service to support children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Recognising the need to provide early specialist support to our most vulnerable children, where there are identified concerns, there is an agreement that children working with the youth justice service can be considered for escalation within the neurodevelopmental behaviour service for an initial assessment to take place.

Priorities for 2024/25

This year the partnership has chosen to focus on five priority areas of service delivery.

These are:

- ✓ for education to be an increasingly protective factor for children
- ✓ to improve the health outcomes for children that are working with the youth justice service
- ✓ for the partnership to identify and meet the needs of children in the community, reducing their vulnerability and risk
- ✓ to ensure that children who are subject to bail and remand processes receive a high quality of service
- ✓ to develop and implement a diversity strategy and framework to support staff in assessing and delivering interventions that reflect children's diverse needs.

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1. For education to be an increasingly protective factor for children.

The partnership wants to work with schools and settings to make sure that children are getting the right support at the right time.

We want to ensure that, where there are behaviours which place children at risk of coming into contact with the police, they are identified early and there is support in place to enable them to safely remain in education and be diverted away from the criminal justice system. This includes setting up a clear framework for joint working between the youth justice service, schools and the police.

The partnership also wants services to work together to ensure that children working with the youth justice service are in appropriate educational provision which meets their individual needs and are receiving adequate support.

This story is representative of one boy's experience of education, highlighting the importance of considering the attendance levels of children beyond suspensions/exclusions and the importance of education settings exploring wider contextual issues which could be impacting upon children's behaviour within an educational setting.

Speaking about his experience as a young carer, 'Jo' said he would arrive to school late which resulted in detentions which caused stress at home as he wasn't home on time. Jo reported that this had resulted in high levels of stress and a decline in his mental health, and, at the time, he had thoughts of suicide. Whilst he spoke about pastoral support, he stated that the school were more concerned about what was happening in school and not what was going on for him outside of the school environment.



2. To improve the health outcomes for children that are working with the youth justice service.

During a recent inspection, HMIP recommended that Nottinghamshire healthcare partners should make sure that provision for youth justice service children meets their emotional, mental health and wellbeing and speech, language and communication needs.

As indicated, the partnership has been successful in securing resource to address this, increasing emotional and mental health provision for children working with the youth justice service. This year, working with partners to help shape that provision, embedding in new services and pathways for children who are working with the service will be a priority.

The partnership also wants to increase its understanding of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are working with the service and to strengthen the autism pathway for those children who are struggling to access services.

We have become increasingly concerned about online sexual harm involving children in Nottinghamshire. An area of focus for the partnership will be to explore the incidence of online sexual harm and develop a service response plan.

The service is finalising a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) about the health and wellbeing needs of children who are known to the service. Focused on improving the health outcomes of children who are known to the service, this JSNA sets a number of recommendations for partners which will be overseen by the partnership board.



3. For the partnership to identify and meet the needs of children in the community, reducing their vulnerability and risk.

Children's involvement in anti-social behaviour (ASB) serves as an early warning to a range of risk and vulnerability issues which partners need to work together to respond. Agreeing an overarching multi-agency policy which outlines a shared vision/approach to reducing ASB, and related concerning behaviour, has been identified as a priority. Agreeing joint working practices, reinforced with up-to-date policies and pathways, will serve to improve joined up working between partners (police/neighbourhood policing teams/community safeguarding partnership/youth justice service) and better meet the needs of children in the community reducing vulnerability.

Working with the police to expand the Immediate Justice scheme for children in Nottinghamshire will also be an area of focus for the partnership. The Immediate Justice scheme sees those who have committed anti-social behaviour paying back to the community through unpaid work, restorative activities, and repairing damage and harm they may have caused.



These reflections are representative of one young girl's experiences leading up to her involvement with the YJS. This highlights the multiple vulnerabilities of children who are encountering the YJS.

In relation to her offence, Aimee reported that she had fallen out with someone who had asked her via Snapchat to meet for a fight which she did, along with all her friends. Aimee stated that; "things got out of hand and made me mad. I got done for an assault which was filmed on a phone and uploaded to Snapchat".

Talking about her experience before encountering the JYS, Aimee tells us that; her parents broke up and 'that messed her up'. She says that she has struggled with her mental health and used self-harm by cutting herself. Aimee has had previous contact with the mental health crisis team.

Aimee tells us that her mum and stepdad think that she has ASD/ADHD, and she has been on the waiting list 'for assessment for ages'. In relation to her education experience, Aimee says that this had not been positive, and she has been bullied for a long time which meant that she didn't always attend school. As a result of this offence, Aimee has been permanently excluded from school and is currently being home schooled which she does not like.

Talking about the support she has had from the YJS, Aimee tells us she sees a mentor once a week and they talk about her emotions and her anger. She has received education in relation to the dangers of social media; "I learned about how to stay safe and not give my personal information to anyone I didn't know". She reports that the YJS have assisted her in accessing support from other services, including the youth club, health services and education; "My worker helped me see a nurse and that helped me feel better. She even helped me get a school offer." Aimee's mum tells us that the YJS has also supported in getting an appointment for Aimee with the Neurodevelopmental Support Team.



4. To ensure that children who are subject to bail and remand processes receive a high quality of service.

The partnership wants to make sure that partners are doing all they can to avoid the unnecessary detention of children and to maximise support during transition from custody (police and youth detention accommodation) into the community.

The partnership is keen to review current working practices across services, avoiding inappropriate remands and improving the use of appropriate police bail to effectively support children who have been arrested.

Responding to recommendations as outlined in the joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention (HMIP, 2023); the partnership will use this as a benchmark to review current practice.



5. To develop and implement a diversity strategy and framework to support staff in assessing and delivering interventions that reflect children's diverse needs.

During a recent inspection, HMIP identified that whilst the service was committed to improving its understanding of diversity and disproportionality the service did not have its own diversity strategy. HMIP recommended that the service should consider implementing a framework to support staff in assessing children's diverse characteristics and delivering interventions to reflect these. This recommendation forms the fifth priority area for this year's strategy which will be overseen by the partnership board.

A group of children from White, Black and Mixed ethnicity backgrounds spoke about their lived experiences. This case study highlights the importance of services actively considering disproportionality across all areas and the impact of being out of education on children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Black children felt that they were stereotyped as 'offenders' after getting into trouble and felt that they were routinely challenged by teachers and suffered harsher disciplinary measures in the form of detentions. They spoke about the impact of receiving repeat detentions and isolations which resulted in them pulling away from the educational system and thinking 'what's the point of going to school!' which impacted upon their attendance. Children reflected on the pressure they received from peers who should have been in school but were not, alongside perceptions that peers were making 'easy money'. Black children also spoke about being targeted by other children to carry drugs / weapons for them.



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