

Youth justice plan template

Service	Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service
Service Manager/ Lead	Diz Minnitt, Head of Youth Justice and Support Service
Chair of YJS Board	Dr Mac Heath, Director of Children's Services

Contents

1. [Introduction, vision and strategy and local context](#)
2. [Child First](#)
3. [Voice of the child](#)
4. [Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements](#)
5. [Board Development](#)
6. [Progress on previous plan](#)
7. [Resources and services](#)
8. [Performance and priorities](#)

[Children from groups which are over-represented](#)

- Prevention
- Diversion
- Education
- Restorative approaches and victims
- Serious violence and exploitation
- Detention in Police Custody
- Remands
- Use of Custody
- Constructive Resettlement

9. [National standards \(Standards for children in the youth justice system\)](#)
10. [Work force development](#)
11. [Evidence-based practice and innovation](#)
12. [Service development plan](#)
 - a) [Challenges, risks and issues](#)
13. [Sign off, submission and approval](#)
14. [Appendix 1](#) - Full board membership; linked to Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements
15. [Appendix 2](#) – Service Structure Chart

1. Introduction, vision and strategy

As the Director of Milton Keynes City Council Children's Services (DCS) and the chair of the multi-agency youth justice partnership, I am pleased to set out and endorse our strategic partnership plan for 2023/24. The plan sets out our core achievements over the past year both at a statutory and at a proactive preventative level. Our focus on diverting young people from the criminal justice system and engaged in positive activities that will improve the opportunities for them to realise their potential is central to our work.

We believe that the Plan evidences the successes and core achievements over the last year for both young people in contact with the criminal justice system as both First Time Entrants and for those that have engaged through single or repeat contact with our Youth Justice Service or the range of statutory and community partners.

We retain and grow strong representation at our Board from a range of partners who continue to be committed in sharing their knowledge, skills, time and experience which has continued to contribute to the effectiveness of the service. We consider the quality of the leadership, management and governance demonstrated by the Board helps bring stronger scrutiny and improved innovations and investment to ensure the best service for our young people. Our focus on the delivery of multi-agency community based prevention programmes, alongside targeted highly specialist interventions, has enabled us to achieve the outcomes that we can be proud of.

This Plan makes clear our intention to continue to co-ordinate our area of partnerships arrangements to further strengthen our approaches, expertise and impact so we can continue to achieve our shared ambition for a thriving, safe and resilient population of young people in Milton Keynes. We are clear as to the barriers many of our young people can face in their journey of success and are clear as to our responsibilities in helping them achieve and be ambitious in their lives and support them in reaching their potential, and we know we see much success when working within and across strong multi-professional services.

1. The 2023/24 Youth Justice Plan (YJ Plan) outlines the vision and strategy of the multi-agency youth justice partnership in Milton Keynes and details the focus, priorities and plans for delivery of youth justice services. The YJ Plan has been prepared in consultation with the Youth Justice Strategic Board (YJSB), the local Community Safety Partnership (SaferMK), staff from the Youth Justice and Support Service (YJSS) and children. In developing the YJ Plan we have considered the Community Safety Partnership priorities for Milton Keynes and the Serious Violence Strategy 2022-2025, the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit Response Strategy 2023-24 as well as the focus, direction, and detail of the Thames Valley Police and Criminal Justice Plan 2021 –2025. We have also considered the Youth Justice Board Business plan 2023 –24, the Milton Keynes Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018 – 2028, the Milton Keynes City Council Plan 2022-26 and the Milton Keynes City Council Delivery Plan 2023 - 24. The YJ Plan has also been informed by the outcome of the most recent Single Agency Inspection undertaken by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in May 2021.

1.1 Local context

2. Milton Keynes, which achieved City status in 2022, was originally created as a ‘New Town’ in 1967 bringing together the existing towns of Bletchley, Fenny Stratford, Wolverton, and Stony Stratford, along with another fifteen villages. This created a mix of urban and rural areas with the urban element accounting for 20% by area, but 90% by population. The most recent figures identify the population of Milton Keynes as 287,060 (2021), and it has a proportionately young community, with 45.6% of residents under the age of 35 and 26.1% under the age of 19. Milton Keynes is one of the UK’s fastest growing cities and is now the size of a large outer London borough. The population of Milton Keynes has expanded by 18% between 2004 and 2014 and this increase has continued, with a 15.3% increase between 2011 and 2021 (the South East average was 7.5%), and a projection that between 2011 and 2026 the population will have increased by 24% (compared to 11% growth in England over the same period). The Office for National Statistics estimate that the population will reach 300,000 by 2025.
3. The change in demography amongst the young population is captured in both local and national data. Milton Keynes City Council’s report in May 2021 on ‘Equality and

Diversity in Milton Keynes' highlights the changing demographics and growing diversity, outlining that "the proportion of the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) school population has increased from 31% in 2010 to 45.51% in 2020". These demographic changes are also reflected in the 2021 National Census data which identified that for the Youth population White young people made up 60%; Asian young people 14%; Black young people 15%; Mixed (Dual heritage) young people 8% and 'Other' young people are 2% of the population.

4. Overall, there is positive school age education provision with outcomes for 96% of schools achieving Ofsted rating of 'Good' or better. The economic and associated population growth of Milton Keynes reflects its position at the centre of The Oxford – Cambridge Arc with good transport links with road and rail networks. Alongside the economic success of Milton Keynes, there are areas of deprivation and disadvantage, with Milton Keynes ranking alongside places like the Isle of Wight and Medway for child deprivation. There is a strong focus on partnership approaches aimed at closing these inequalities in regard to health and prosperity across the city. Milton Keynes City Council Plan gives a high priority to children and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets the course for further improvement with strong multi-agency sign up.

2. Child First

5. The Youth Justice Partnership has implemented the four tenants of the Child First principles into practical service delivery.
6. Child First principles are integrated across all elements of the Youth Justice Support Service, including statutory case work and within the Youth Diversion and Prevention Service and the Youth Resilience Project (youth mentoring service). Child First and Strengths-Based training has been delivered to YJSS staff in order to promote the tenants associated within the approach and to develop staff knowledge, skills, and confidence within this area.
7. We have integrated the Child First Principles in the following ways:
 - a) Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally

informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.

- The best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential are captured within Asset Plus assessments and plans across all statutory, diversion and prevention work. Asset Plus is used to ensure that all areas associated with strengths, needs and risks are holistically identified and understood so that interventions are child-focused and developmentally informed. All children and young people are offered a Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessment and this informs the developmental approach adopted by YJSS staff to support the child's understanding. Interventions are delivered to children and young people alongside addressing structural barriers (e.g., housing / education / health needs) to ensure that a parallel approach is adopted to addressing the needs and risks of children.
- b) Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
- All work across the service has a focus on supporting children and young people to lead safe, healthy, and pro-social lives. Within this, supporting young people to become stakeholders in their local communities and increased social capital is key. The Youth Resilience Project, our youth mentoring service, has a significant role to play within this in terms of promoting pro-social attitudes and behaviours that we hope will lead to having better outcomes for young people, safer communities, and fewer victims. Intervention plans are balanced to reflect the needs, risks, and strengths of young people with a focus on moving young people towards a brighter future where they can get their needs met without involvement in offending and anti-social behaviour.

- c) Encourage children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
- Young people and their parents are encouraged to actively contribute to the creation and review of their intervention plans and they also provide independent feedback at the end of their interventions so that this can be used to improve practice and service delivery. We use the Participation and Engagement Team that was developed in 2021 to discuss the young person's feedback so that this is independent and not completed by a member of the Youth Justice and Support Service.
 - Within our Out of Court Disposals Policy, we obtain regular feedback from young people, parents, and stakeholders in order to inform our annual review of policy updates so that it improves the service as a whole and addresses any wider and systematic challenges that need to be addressed.
 - Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion, and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system:
- d) The Youth Diversion and Prevention Service actively promotes pre-emptive prevention and diversion and seeks to minimise criminogenic stigma from contact across the system. Children and young people can receive an early intervention service from the Diversion and Prevention team via several pathways that have been created to ensure that we are working 'upstream' to identify young people at the earliest point. Within our Prevention service offer, we have developed the Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusions (PRRE) Speech and Language Therapy project with primary and secondary schools. This project enables participating settings to refer children and young people for a Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessment should the child be at greatest risk of school suspensions or a move to alternative education. Offering a fast-tracked SLCN assessment with one of our three Speech and Language Therapists works towards identifying previously unidentified needs and supporting the setting to instigate alternative approaches to support the child further.

Youth Resilience Project

8. Youth violence and crime has become a priority for the MK Together Partnership due to the increase in incidents over the last four years. This is a national trend linked to various factors including County Drug Lines, Criminal Exploitation, and increased gang activity. The impact on individuals and the community is significant. For the children it includes entry into the criminal justice system, reduction in opportunities to thrive, poor education and employment prospects, physical harm and even death. For families it includes stress and tension, risks of younger siblings being exploited, family breakdown, etc. For communities it increases the fear of being a victim of crime. All of the above have a significant impact on our resources including police, education, and children's services. Our vision is to create a happier, safer, and healthier Milton Keynes.
9. The Youth Resilience Project (YRP) considers research from the Punishing Abuse research published in 2021. Punishing Abuse is unique ground-breaking research into the extent of childhood adversity, abuse, loss, and trauma in children involved in the criminal justice system in the West Midlands. Two critical areas frequently cited in research on how resilience is developed and maintained are the importance of a relationship with an adult who cares and meaningful engagement in education. The Youth Resilience Project provides a positive relationship between the Mentor and Mentee to allow the young people to build resilience to tackle past, current, and future adversity. The YRP works to prevent young people from becoming involved in youth violence, crime or being exploited and support those who have found themselves in difficult situations that they need help to get out of.
10. Professionals complete an exploitation screening tool and following a discussion at the Missing and Exploitation Panel (MEP) Meeting, they will be directed to make a referral. The young people must be 10 – 17 years old, experiencing, or experienced adversity and living in Milton Keynes. A mentor then supports young person to choose up to three targets to work towards for a duration of up to six months. For example, to get back to School, be more confident, get on better with their family. Mentors meet with the child/ young person in the community or at school on an agreed day and time.

3. Voice of the child

11. The users of youth justice services are considered a 'hard to reach' group as far as participation is concerned. Most do not volunteer, or choose, to be service users, but are supervised by the service as a result of a criminal sanction or Out of Court Disposals (OOCDD). Despite these challenges, the YJSS is committed to ensuring that children and their parents/carers have the same opportunity to contribute to service developments and have their voice heard.

e) Children are encouraged to participate by:

- Being actively involved in the creation of, and reviewing of, their intervention plans.
- Providing feedback following initiatives or activities, in order to inform and steer improvements to the service.
- Within our Speech and Language Therapy project in schools (PRRE), at the end of a completed intervention, our Speech and Language Therapists obtain feedback from children and young people (where they have wanted to contribute), parents / carers (where appropriate) and other stakeholders including school staff. Comments are captured on a short feedback form that is attached to the child / young people's ChildView record.

f) In 2021 we introduced independent evaluation using the Participation and Engagement Team of Youth Workers. At the end of every intervention, young people are given the opportunity to meet with a participation worker who is independent from the Youth Justice and Support Service and complete a questionnaire on their experience during their time with YJSS and also their experience of partner agencies. This service has been expanded to meet with all young people who engage with our Early Support Project, alongside using volunteers from the Youth Resilience Project to complete independent evaluations with young people. Latest data shows that the overall feedback from those working with YJSS is positive, with 85% of respondents reflecting that their experience was okay, good or excellent. This was an increase from last year which showed 82%.

- g) The OOC and Custody, Resettlement and Transitions policies also include evaluation feedback forms from both young people and their parent / carer as well as professionals involved. The information from the evaluations is presented to YJSB on a quarterly basis for review and feedback and this provides an opportunity for all members to analyse the data produced and look at good practice examples and areas for improvement. The information received from this feedback is used to inform individual staff / team and service development.
- h) Young people open to the service have also attended the quarterly Youth Court Users meetings and have contributed to staff and volunteer training events.
- i) Young people also have the opportunity to engage in research being conducted by the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University. The research is focusing on the impact of the relationship between young people and key professionals working with them. Those young people who engage with the research have their hours counted towards Community Enrichment (Reparation).
- j) As well as the voice of young people, parents / carers views are sought through the use of the self-assessments. Parents who also attend group work interventions are also provided opportunities to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Further work is being explored on how to collate this feedback to ensure it informs practice development going forward.
- k) The views obtained will continue to inform policy developments and the Youth Justice Plan going forward.

4. Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

Governance and Leadership

12. Governance of local youth justice arrangements is delivered through a multi-agency partnership convened by the Chief Executive of the Local Authority and, at a minimum, comprising senior representation from the Police, Health (CCG), Probation, Local Authority (principally children's social care, Public Health and education services); with these agencies additionally being charged with financially resourcing the Youth Justice Support Service and providing staff. In Milton Keynes the local governance group is known as the Youth Justice Strategic Board (YJSB).
13. The YJSB is chaired by the Director of Children's Services. The board receives regular performance reports and budget information.
14. The Board receives highlight reports and analysis from the YJSS Head of Service, including papers, presentations and other contributions from staff, partners, and service users. The forward plan for the Board ensures that sufficient space is given to monitoring the implementation of the Youth Justice Plan, discussing and analysing risks and challenges, and planning for the future. Opportunities are ensured to discuss items that from a youth justice perspective are required by national standards and / or conditions of grant.
15. The Youth Justice and Support Service also has an informal reporting line to the Community Safety Partnership – Safer MK. The Chief Executive and lead cabinet member are also briefed as required, as is the Local Police Area Commander. Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service is one of nine Youth Justice Services in the Thames Valley who share a Police and Crime Commissioner and reporting lines are in place with that office through the Local Criminal Justice Board on which the Milton Keynes YJSS Head of Service is also the representative for the other Thames Valley YOTs / YJS's.
16. The creation of the MK Together Board combining the Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership as part of wider changes to partnership

arrangements created a more streamlined and closer alignment of boards avoiding duplicated work streams.

17. The current YJSS Head of Service is employed by Milton Keynes City Council and is managed within the Children's Services Directorate by the Group Head of Children and Families who in turn reports to the Director of Children's Services.

18. The YJSS Head of Service has a wide range of responsibilities encompassed within the expanded Youth Justice and Support Service including, in addition to the Youth Justice Service, both strategic and operational lead responsibility for the Contextual Safeguarding Team, the Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team (YPDA) and the Stay Safe Team (specialist Youth Workers / Youth Support Workers).

Partnership Arrangements

19. The Youth Justice and Support Service has, over many years, developed and maintained strong links with a range of multi-agency groups:

- l) The YJSS Head of Service is one of the advisers to the Safer MK (community safety) Partnership Board.
- m) The YJSS Head of Service is also the Strategic Lead for Exploitation responsible for developing and delivering the local approach to tackling child exploitation and co-chairs the Contextual Safeguarding Board (CSB) along with a Detective Chief Inspector from Thames Valley Police.
- n) The YJSS Head of Service is a member of the MK Together Risk Board which identifies new and emerging areas of risk and exploitation and responses. The Risk Board has oversight of case-based panels (Channel, CSB, Vulnerable Adults / Children, MARAC, etc.).
- o) The YJSS Head of Service attends the South-East Region and Thames Valley YOT Managers meetings focusing on Youth Justice Services and issues impacting Youth Justice Services across the respective regions of the South-East/Thames Valley.

- p) The YJSS Head of Service is a member of the Thames Valley Together Programme Board
- q) One of the team members is a core member of the regular Joint Decision-Making Panel with the Police, CAMHS / Liaison and Diversion and the Professional Lead for Missing and Exploitation considering Out of Court Disposals (OOCD).
- r) The YJSS Head of Service is a member of the Local Criminal Justice Board, representing the nine Thames Valley YOT managers.
- s) The YJSS Head of Service has made a significant contribution to the development of professional practice in the YJS around Speech, Language and Communication Needs and SEND including direct advice to Government Departments at Director level in the Department of Education and Department of Health as a member of the Communication Council. The developments in these key areas have informed and been informed by local, national, and international research in these areas. The YJSS Head of Service draws on experience gained at a national level, including as a member of the Executive of the Association of YOT Managers (AYM) and as the AYM lead for SEND, Speech and Language, and Transitions
- t) The YJSS Head of Service is a member of the Channel Panel providing information and specialist advice to assist in the preparation of risk and threat assessments to help support and manage risks posed by children involved in extremism behaviour.
- u) The YJSS Deputy Manager co-ordinates the MK Harmful Sexual Behaviour (AIM2 / AIM3) Programme which is delivered via a virtual multi-agency team.
- v) The Youth Justice and Support Service is a standing member of the Schools Behaviour Partnership alternative education panel and is able to influence discussions on appropriate education provision.
- w) The YJSS Family Support and Intervention Coordinator is responsible for partnership working with Strengthening Families, Children and Family

Practices and Social Work Teams in identifying and working with parents who would benefit from the specialist parenting courses delivered by the YJSS.

- x) The Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention is a standing member of the Contextual Safeguarding Group which aims to reduce serious youth violence, knife crime and exploitation through drug related crimes in line with the national public health approach of early identification, engagement, intervention, and diversion. The meeting provides a forum to discuss children where there are concerns around: -
- Gang activity participation or gang associations
 - ASB group associations where there is a risk of serious youth violence and/or increase in criminality
 - Concerns of local or county drug line exploitation.
 - Weapon carriers
 - Any other risky behaviours, which increase the risk of youth violence to that child or any other person or groups
- y) The Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention is a core member of the Missing and Exploitation Panel ensuring that plans to address missing and exploitation concerns are robust and reflect a multi-agency approach.
- z) The Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention is a member of the Legacy Panel, a multi-agency group scrutinising Part Time Timetables that have been in place for longer than six weeks to ensure appropriate steps are taken to re-engage children in full time education.
- aa) In addition to the statutory partners and linkages identified above the Youth Justice and Support Service has wider partnership arrangements with - Youth Information Service (YIS); Primary and Secondary Schools; HMCTS Youth and Crown Court; Speech and Language Therapy (SLT); Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND); Education, Sufficiency, Access and Attendance; Youth Information Advice and Guidance; NHS England Health and Justice; Thames Valley Police Violence Reduction Unit, Problem Solving Team, YMCA and SOFEA.

5. Board Development

20. We have in the past 12 months made changes and improvements to ensure that the Youth Justice Strategic Board (YJSB) has a clearer focus on the key priorities as outlined in 'Youth Justice Service Governance and Leadership'. The main changes implemented have been around ensuring that the way meetings are conducted provide an opportunity to explore the range of development and delivery of youth justice services and approaches encompassing both the direct work of the Youth Justice and Support Service, and the key contributions of the wider partnership. This has helped to create an environment in which there is a positive degree of peer challenge, ensuring that the wider partnership has greater ownership of its contribution to, involvement in and advocacy for the services provided. Alongside this we have embedded a greater voice for the wider community with the introduction of a Community Volunteer representative who has added a more inquisitive dynamic and this helps to ensure that specific partner feedback at each YJSB Meeting avoids professional jargon, enabling more accessible joint reflection, participation, and discussion. This is alongside the inclusion of the Chair of the Youth Panel as a core member of the YJSB, enabling greater engagement with Magistrates as key community representatives amongst sentencers, serving to maintain confidence with the role of the YJSS Partnership in balancing their responsibilities reflecting the needs of children, victims and the wider community.

21. For the year ahead we will continue to revisit the mechanisms of governance and scrutiny, identifying how these are best achieved both through the meetings we have and the way they work, and the membership of the YJSB itself, enabling us to sense check whether there are other key parties not represented that would add significant value. When benchmarking against other effective services in the sector a notable consideration in Milton Keynes is around including senior councillor representation, as several YJ Services now include the Lead member for Children's Services, or other lead councillors, as a core member. Milton Keynes benefits from having both a Cabinet Member responsible for Youth Justice alongside a number of different Members for which the opportunity for direct involvement in the YJSB. This may provide greater insight into the work of the youth justice partnership and link explicitly into their portfolio responsibilities and focus, providing the opportunity to both scrutinise and champion the work of the youth justice partnership. This will therefore

be an area for further consideration around expanded Board membership to explore whether a councillor representative could assist in providing greater understanding and links into wider council responsibilities. In addition, given the potential for competing priorities there are several high functioning services that have identified the benefit of an independent chair ensuring that the focus of the Board is upon Youth Justice Services and those children within or at risk of coming into the Youth Justice System. This will therefore be explored in more depth as part of Board development for the coming year, as membership is continually reviewed.

22. Whilst we have seen more involvement of YJSB members engaging directly with front line staff and managers through their involvement in YJSB Meetings, there are still further benefits that can be realised through more direct links between the YJSB Members, staff and children who have had experience of youth justice provision, including diversion and prevention. Likewise, there are greater opportunities for YJSB Members to build upon their advocacy and championing role for YJ Services, utilising their position to strengthen two way links by inviting in YJ Staff, Managers and specialist professionals more regularly into their parent organisation to help foster a culture of greater understanding. These areas will be further explored to build on and enhance the positive benefits of the Board members role beyond the regular YJSB meetings.

6. Progress on Previous Plan

23. In considering the focus for the coming year it is useful to reflect on the progress in relation to the aims we set for 2022 /2023. The YJSS and its partners have made good progress against the actions and targets set out in the 2022/23 Youth Justice Plan along with other additional achievements, notably:

a) We developed and implemented a multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team (CS Team), which launched in February 2023 as a new element of the Youth Justice and Support Service. The CS Team was built around the existing Missing and Exploitation Hub and was created to reflect both our identified offending profile, and insight into the impact of extra familial harm in relation to the criminal exploitation of children, and the overlap with serious youth violence. The specialist team and improved partnership working, information

sharing and forward planning has helped to embed partnership and individual service approaches to address child exploitation, knife crime, serious youth violence, county lines, gangs, trafficking and modern-day slavery.

- b) We have continued to work closely with partners to address the needs of the high number of children continuing to enter the YJS in Milton Keynes with unrecognised and unmet Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). We are working closely with the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University who have recently commenced a project scrutinising the data collected through the Promoting Reintegration Reducing Exclusion (PRRE) project between 2018 – 2023 to explore the impact of Adultification and other considerations when identifying why children’s needs around SLCN and SEND remain unrecognised prior to potential school exclusion, or managed moves to Alternative Education. The data we collect through SLCN assessments evidences the significant disproportionality in relation to this group of children and underpins the continuing development of positive proactive outreach work, in collaboration with the Education Psychology Service, to highlight the specific risks around children being drawn into offending and criminal exploitation linked to unrecognised SLCN and SEND.
- c) Through evaluation and data analysis, we have ensured that the additional resources available from the NHS funded Health and Justice Early Support Project (ESP) and PRRE continue to support and enhance the targeted work around diversion, prevention, and early intervention including funding a joint post for young people linked to both ESP and the Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service and supporting the capacity of the Contextual Safeguarding Team. This has also included sharing the learning and effective practice across other services, within the partnership, and nationally as part of the Ministry of Justice Turnaround project , as well as reaching hundreds of multi-agency professionals through a number of different national webinars on behalf of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University , the University of Central London , the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (a Thames Valley Knife Crime Conference) and finally a webinar for Microlink and the Association of YOT Managers (which has been included on the Youth Justice Board Resource Hub). The innovative effective practice of the partnership work in this area has, for a

significant number of years, been led and championed by the Youth Offending Service / Youth Justice and Support Service, and the quality, breadth and impact of this work was formally recognised by Microlink and the Association of YOT Managers with the YJSS achieving the Youth Justice SEND Quality Lead Redesignation with a Child First Commendation in November 2022, continuing the original designation which was established in 2018.

- d) The ongoing evaluation of the ESP's effectiveness and positive outcomes continues to demonstrate the highly effective nature of the scheme in reducing future offending with only 2.66%, being involved in offending within two years. During the lifetime of the project since March 2018 we have worked with 895 young people of whom only 41 (4.58%) have reoffended at any point in the last 5 years. We have further realised opportunities to build on this evidenced model of best practice by upscaling as part of the Serious Violence Reduction Strategy, with the development of the new ESP Knife Carrier Project initiative (ACT - Now) which was launched in January 2023 as part of a wider programme, Op Deter, to address knife offences and violence, and this new addition is currently fully funded until the end of December 2023 by the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner. The project is due to be independently evaluated and there remains the opportunity to explore the development of ESP and / or ACT- Now across other areas of the Thames Valley.
- e) Alongside this there was active cross –agency collaboration to address knife related offending around the Knife Angel visit to Milton Keynes from the beginning of December 2022, with active participation of the wider YJ Partnership (YJSS/Milton Keynes City Council, Thames Valley Police) alongside the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner and the third sector (MK Dons Sports and Education Trust, Hazard Alley Safety Centre). This focus was both as an element of the wider partnership 40 days of action from 1 December 2022 – 9 January 2023 and in support of additional measures implemented to address knife crime, with ACT– Now being a key example. There were over 25,000 positive engagements with children and adults visiting the Knife Angel between 10:00 – 18:00 with an estimated 20,000 other visits outside these hours. Additionally, this was accompanied by 5,000 children aged 9-18 and 285 parents accessing educational input around knife crime from MK Dons and the Safety Centre. 293

knives were surrendered as part of the knife amnesty and this was in addition to the 107 knives seized as part of the wider Police Operation Dina that operated for a number of months both prior to and following the Knife Angel visit.

- f) We have established with secondary schools and partners, that there is a need to continue to address the issues related to attendance at school and access to appropriate timetables and levels of individual support that meets their needs to reduce the risk of children getting involved in offending behaviour or being exploited. In November 2022, we introduced the Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Panel chaired by the Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention (Youth Justice Service) to offer strategic oversight of young people who were in receipt of reduced schooling, were refusing to attend school or were not attending due to complex factors, including safety and risk concerns. The core panel attendees include representatives from the Youth Justice Service (including health and Speech and Language therapy contributions), Children's Social Care, Virtual School, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Youth Information, Advice and Guidance and Sufficiency and Access colleagues including the School Attendance Officer.

- g) We have significantly increased our work strengthening engagement with Victims and restorative justice, through collaborative work with the Police increasing both the level of victim information and engagement and ensuring an upturn in both direct and indirect restorative approaches. This helps ensure that the needs of victims are paramount, and that we continue to embed a culture that values and encourages greater input and uptake by victims, reflecting the effective person – centred and child first approach developed for post-court and pre-court disposals, as well as all elements of the Diversion work of the YJSS and key partners in the Youth Justice System (YJS).

- h) We have continued the development work around capturing the voice of children who have offended, and their lived experiences of involvement in the YJS, and working with the YJSS and its partners. This continuing development which is expanding to include trained community volunteers will continue to help us to enable the voice of children and families involved in the YJS, alongside that of staff , volunteers and victims, to more meaningfully contribute to a holistic

coproduction model of the vision of the service going forward and also the way, how and where it is delivered.

- i) As outlined in last year's Youth Justice Plan, feedback from children, volunteers and staff identified that crucial to the success of developments in this area was greater access to child-centred safe and confidential places, to enable effective working in particular with those children who pose a high risk of harm to others, including to other children and professionals. We have increased access to more appropriate spaces in the interim that can accommodate separate entrance and exits to bring together victims and young people, and alongside this consider other provision to ensure best practice is able to be maintained.

- j) We continue to address the national difficulties surrounding securing opportunities for children aged over 16 including the need to explore greater access to employment, training and education opportunities for children who have offended through collaborative work with relevant partners including Young People's Careers Information Advice and Guidance, Milton Keynes College, other local providers, and employers. We have a Link Youth, Information, Advice and Guidance (YIAG) Worker who offers 1-2-1 support to our young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). This work includes offering support with job searches, CV writing, applying for jobs, training opportunities, and offering disclosure sessions to support young people to appropriately disclose their offending to ETE providers / employers (where required). This list is not exhaustive, and the work offered to young people is bespoke depending on their presenting needs.

- k) Greater engagement and closer co-ordinated partnership working with Alternative Education providers has supported improvements to address the issues related to reduced attendance at school and helped to mitigate the risk of this highly vulnerable cohort of children becoming involved in offending behaviour or being criminally exploited. This has resulted in significant improvements in reducing the number of children moving into Alternative Education from mainstream schooling and ensuring that, for those that do make this transition, there is a clearer understanding of their individual needs through greater access to Speech Language and Communication Needs assessments. This follows the expansion

of the Promoting Reintegration Reducing Exclusion (PRRE) part of the ESP, extending the bespoke Prevention offer to vulnerable children at risk of becoming involved in offending/exploitation in the vast majority of Secondary School and a significant proportion of Primary School settings. Supporting these providers to better identify and make adjustments to provision to meet needs and therefore reduce both permanent exclusions and moves into Alternative Education Placements.

- l) We are continuing to identify and consider the longer-term impact that the Covid pandemic has had on our work with children and their families including through their reduced education engagement, by exploring the opportunities for innovative approaches to support those not accessing appropriate levels of Education.

- m) We need to develop further the local physical health offer for our young people as this remains a key area that does not fully meet the needs of our client group at the present time. Discussions have been ongoing; however, this still needs to be resolved to ensure children have access to appropriate assessment of needs and any support / health provision that is identified.

- n) The identified increase in serious youth violence within Milton Keynes has been a partnership focus with coordinated steps to address this as a key priority. This has been, and will continue to be, an ongoing challenge. We have continued to strengthen and build upon the established close links between the Youth Justice and Support Service (YJSS) with the Thames Valley Police Problem Solving Team and the Violence Reduction Unit. In addition, as outlined above the creation and launch of the multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team (CS Team) in February 2023 has expanded the level of close cooperation and closely integrated working.

- o) The changes made to the Youth Justice Strategic Board (YJSB) has created a more inquisitive dynamic, and this is actively encouraged by specific partner feedback at each YJSB Meeting, enabling greater joint reflection, participation, and dialogue. This has improved both impetus and focus for more informed discussion and embedded a greater sense of ownership by the YJSB Members in their roles as both representatives of their parent organisation and as champions

of the work of the Youth Justice and Support Service in the delivery of the Youth Justice Partnership Strategy as outlined in the Youth Justice Plan. In addition, we have reintroduced regular updates by key staff and teams within the Youth Justice and Support Service providing greater integration and insight for Board members and enabling a direct two-way process for consultation, challenge and learning between the Board and those staff directly involved in the front-line services with children, families and victims.

- p) We have explored more targeted recruitment approaches and have seen an increase in the diversity of the staff and volunteers within the service , which better reflects the demography of Milton Keynes and the children and families who work with the service. This is an ongoing process and there is still further progress to be made so the continued work on this objective is reflected in the current plan.
- q) We have established succession planning for key roles, although there remains further work to progress around the Business Support and Information Manager role in particular reflecting similar challenges experienced by other Youth Justice Services in the Thames Valley / South-East area around the equivalent Performance Manager role.
- r) We have continued to expand and distribute a dynamic single profile document, collating, and presenting key details around desistance and unmet needs that is shared on a monthly / quarterly basis. The profile reflects identified specific desistance needs and demands, enabling both analysis and evidence gathering to support the identification of potential gaps in service provision across the partnership.
- s) We have introduced and undertaken inhouse learning review process for swift learning to identify early lessons in relevant cases. This is structured to complement both the MK Together partnership arrangements and the Youth Justice Board expectations around serious case reviews.
- t) We have further developed solutions to effectively capture the voice of children who have engaged with the Youth Justice and Support Service, expanding this to

include those working with the Early Support Project. Their experiences of involvement in the YJS and working with the YJSS and its partners continue to inform the future development of the service as the feedback informs the vision of the service going forward as well as the way, how and where it is delivered.

24. In the next 12 months we will continue to develop the service in these areas, alongside building on the other strengths identified by the most recent HMIP Single Agency Inspection. Central to this strategy are the opportunities that have been provided by the closer partnership alignment of the Youth Justice and Support Service with Children's Social Care Services particularly the recent implementation of the multi-agency/multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team as a key component of ensuring improved coordination and delivery of work supporting a cohort of children that overlap both Youth Justice and Social Care Services. The multi-agency work with Children's Social Care in particular reflects the significant overlap between the cohort of children with complex needs who are involved in working with the YJSS, with regular monitoring and analysis identifying that 10% having been looked after at some point, 36% having been subject to a Child Protection Plan and 75% either currently or previously on a Child in Need plan.
25. The analysis identified similar overlaps around issues of Criminal Exploitation with 46% having been identified as Exploited (16%), Targeted for Exploitation (7%) or Vulnerable to Exploitation (23%). This is in a context in which offences of Violence Against the Person currently represent the most prevalent type of offending and this, coupled with offending related to drugs, continues to represent the evolving context of changing behaviour and offending within Milton Keynes. This is in a wider context that has seen a change in the nature of offending by children in relation to serious violence. In 2016 serious violence offences by children accounted for 1.1% of all serious violence. In 2021 children accounted for 19.4% of all serious violence offences. An analysis of the past 12 months identified that offences committed by children sentenced in court in the last year that 40% were offences of violence and 5% public order offences. In relation to offences dealt with by Out of Court Disposal, 38% were offences of violence and 9% public order. 57% of all children identified as involved in serious violence between 2016-21 were previously reported missing. This is in the context that we have also seen an increase in the number of reported missing episodes for all children rising by 214% between 2018 and 2021, from 398

missing incidents to 1,253. In the past year to March 2023, we have had 1430 reported missing episodes in relation to 486 children of which 1240 episodes related to 374 children aged 13 – 17 years, equating to 86% of all missing children. In the Thames Valley Police area 49% of all missing cases (children and adults) from 2019-21 were aged 13-17yrs.

26. This evolving picture of converging themes and interrelated risk and safeguarding considerations has, as outlined, necessitated stronger links across the partnership in developing and delivering co-ordinated strategies and individual and systemic interventions that bring about change. These are aimed at influencing individuals and impacting on systems to effectively address the needs and risks of these children in this context of direct involvement in or impacted by serious youth violence, drug dealing and knife offences who may have missing episodes and evidence of gang involvement, but who are also frequently themselves victims of exploitation, youth violence and knife crime and the majority of whom, recent analysis has also demonstrated, have unrecognised unmet speech language and communication needs (2019/ 2020 – 80%; 2020/2021 – 84% ; 2021/2022 - 87% ; 2022/2023 - 88%).

27. To achieve change it is essential to have a clear vision and set of principles underpinning the YJ Plan and our professional practice. The work of the YJSS will therefore continue to be guided by the following principles:

28. We adopt a child-first approach across prevention, diversion, and statutory work. In order to achieve this, we strive to work in the best interests of children, we recognise potential, needs and capacities and we identify strengths and build on the positive factors within a child's world:

- a) Through strong case work and multi-agency working, we support and encourage children to build pro-social identities to support their desistance from crime and reducing victims of crime and we work hard to offer victims of crime a voice.
- b) Through continued staff support and supervision, we strive to ensure that interventions are constructive and meaningful, and that we remain future-focused and support children to make positive contributions to wider society.
- c) We aim to work in partnership with children and their parents/carers/families, and whilst doing this, have a strong commitment to addressing social exclusion,

marginalisation, social injustices, and structural barriers.

- d) We recognise the need to address structural inequalities in tandem with interventions to support children's desistance from crime.
- e) We seek to minimise stigma. Within the diversion and prevention elements of the service, we have our own personalised branding, 'The Early Support Project' to reduce the stigma that can be attached to children working with a Youth Justice Team.

29. Since 2008 Milton Keynes YOT (now YJSS) have developed and refined an innovative approach, placing the routine identification of Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), by assessments undertaken by Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapists (SLT), as a core component across the service. This means that all children working with the team are assessed unless we have conclusive evidence that they don't have any SLCN, an approach referred to as 'Screening Out rather than Screening In'. This approach, which has informed and been informed by, local, national and international research, and frequently evaluated since its introduction, has proved effective in identifying those with SLCN (a hidden disability) whether present as a primary need, as a coexisting condition with other needs such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) ; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) ; Dyslexia etc., or as a consequence of other factors such as Attachment Disorder; Adverse Childhood Experiences; Trauma and Loss ; Domestic Abuse ; Family breakdown ; Sexual Abuse ; Criminal or Sexual Exploitation etc. Central to this approach is the recognition that the majority of children in the Youth Justice System (60%-90% Based on research; 65% - 88% based on local data; 71% based on YJB Asset Plus data) have SLCN but, as this is a hidden disability, for the majority of children this is not accurately recognised prior to them being assessed by the YJSS.

30. Evidence in Milton Keynes collated over a number of years, found that of those with SLCN, between 61% and 85% had not had their needs accurately identified prior to assessment by the YJSS Speech and Language Therapists. Analysis of collated data and individual case studies has also confirmed how frequently a child's presenting behaviour, including offending and anti-social behaviour, can be an indicator of other, as yet unrecognised, or unidentified, needs or factors. This methodology in both assessing the SLCN and identifying approaches to work

effectively with and engage the child, has proved invaluable not only in enabling work by the YJSS to be tailored in a bespoke way to the child's needs, but also in providing evidence and strategies to the child and parents / carers, as well as to key professionals and others working with the child or who may have interactions with them, including Youth Offender Panel members; HMCTS; Judges; Magistrates; Defence Solicitors; CPS; Police; Education staff; Health; Children's Social Care; Youth Workers; Secure Estate staff; Supported Accommodation and this assessment is shared when transitioning as an adult to other services such as Probation and Adult Social Care staff, etc.

31. In December 2021, we identified that the percentage of young people with Speech, Language or Communication Needs (SLCN) whose needs were accurately identified before being referred to the Youth Justice and Support Service (YJSS) or Early Support Project (ESP) was just 15%.
32. We have also identified that between April 2022 – March 2023, 88% of young people assessed for SLCN within the YJSS and ESP were identified as having a recognised SLCN. In addition to this, with regards for those children and young people that access our Speech and Language Therapy project in primary and secondary schools for those most at risk of school suspensions or managed moves to alternative education, we have identified that between 2022 / 2023, 98% of those assessed, had a recognised SLCN. The most prevalent level of need identified is 'Moderate' needs, and this equates to young people have an assessed SLC need that is greater than 94% of their peer group.
33. The evidence collected through the SLCN assessments, as well as providing further lines of enquiry about related additional needs or causal experiences (see above), is available to support decisions around justice processes (Bail applications ; Sentencing ; Joint Decision Meetings / Charging and outcome decisions) as well as key health and education processes including identification of SEND (for SEN Support and EHC Plans) and as evidence with referrals to Paediatricians (to support ASD Assessments) or to CAMHS / FCAMHS (ADHD / AIM3 assessments). Over the last few years there has been a change in the complexity of needs amongst those children working with the Youth Justice Service. This has also been mirrored amongst young people working with colleagues in Children's Social Care and there

has been a significant increase in the overlap between the two areas. The most recent available data identifies 3% of the YJSS cohort are currently Children in Care (rising to 10% when considering those who have previously been in care); 14% are on Child Protection Plans (rising to 36% when considering both current and previous CP Plans) and 32% are Children in Need (rising to 75% when also considering previous Child in Need episodes). Likewise, with the most recent analysis we have seen a significant shift in the seriousness of those experiencing / vulnerable to exploitation with those who are assessed as vulnerable to exploitation reducing from 39% to 23%, being actively targeted or groomed has reduced from 11% to 7%, but those identified as being criminally (or sexually) exploited has risen significantly from 4% to 16%. Currently 10% of the Youth Justice and Support Service cohort have 'Reasonable Grounds' status following referral to the National Referral Mechanism, with a further 4% having 'Conclusive Grounds' outcomes following referral.

34. These changing and coalescing cohorts continue to follow a pattern first identified in 2018 when Thames Valley Police and Children's; Social Care (CSC) jointly commissioned a Predictive Harm Analysis (PHA) The PHA identified a number of emerging ASB Groups / Gangs in Milton Keynes and a cohort of children and young adults at greatest risk of involvement in gang behaviour or vulnerable to exploitation. As the PHA had not considered any of the YOT data as part of the analysis (an oversight at the outset of the process) this provided the opportunity to cross reference with YOT data and identify not only the level of correlation across YOT / CSC, but also the level of SLCN amongst the cohort who had already been involved with the YOT. Of the identified individuals in the cohort 71% were previously or currently open to the YOT at that point and therefore SLCN Assessments were available. The completed SLCN assessments identified that of the cohort who had worked with the YOT, 92% had SLCN and the remaining 8% had ADHD. This additional information not only provided key evidence in tailoring the way that both the YOT and partner agencies worked collaboratively with those individuals identified, but also provided important insight into a key risk factor relating to gang / exploitation involvement in highlighting the disproportionately high level of unrecognised SLCN – 92%, compared to 5%-8% amongst the general child population of the same age. The findings coincided with the introduction in Milton Keynes of the Early Support Project (ESP) funded by NHS England as a diversion project with SLCN Assessments as a core component. The evidence from the PHA

provided the opportunity to adapt both the focus and scope of the ESP project to consider a number of different risk factors around both offending and exploitation and to broaden the remit to include prevention work.

35. The Early Support Project has been evaluated by NHS England as a model of effective practice and was highlighted by the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND Inspection in October 2018, the Joint Targeted Area Inspection on Mental Health in October 2019, and the HMIP Single Agency Inspection in May 2021 as good practice and a key service to support the diversion and prevention work in Milton Keynes. The most recent reoffending rate for ESP measured over 2 years for those engaged by the project is currently 2.66%.
36. In the last couple of years the ESP has been extended to include the Promoting Reintegration Reducing Exclusion (PRRE) project which is focused on identifying any underlying SLCN amongst those children at greatest risk of school suspensions and to provide both an SLCN assessment and specialist training to enable schools to work more effectively to keep the child in education, or, if already in alternative education, to reintegrate back into mainstream schooling (recognising the higher risks around offending ; exploitation and missing episodes associated with education exclusion or involvement in Alternative Education provision).
37. The additional access to the SLTs through ESP / PRRE alongside further expansion of the referral routes into the ESP has enabled us to fast track SLCN assessments for a broader group of vulnerable children, including those referred to and accepted by the Channel Panel.
38. In June 2019, the current YOS Manager (Head of Youth Justice and Support Service) also became the Strategic Lead for Missing and Exploitation and created a multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Missing and Exploitation Hub (ME Hub) operationally led by the Professional Lead for Missing and Exploitation (PLME) and co-locating staff from Children's Social Care (CSC), Police, Youth Offending Team along with Youth Workers / Return From Missing Co-ordinator. The ME Hub became part of the wider Youth Offending Service in April 2021, alongside the YOT, Young Peoples Drug and Alcohol Service and the Stay Safe Team of Youth Workers / Youth Support Workers. With the expansion of the ME Hub to become the multi-agency / multi-

disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team in January 2023 and the renaming of the Youth Offending Service to become the Youth Justice and Support Service (YJSS), the integrated YJSS is therefore key to the co-ordination, planning and delivery of both Youth Justice Services and the Tackling Child Exploitation Strategy in Milton Keynes. Key elements in this focus on both offending and exploitation are the multi-agency meeting arrangements such as the MK Contextual Safeguarding Group bringing together key professionals from YJSS / Police / Education / Children's Social Care / Probation / Youth Services / Health etc. to enable a shared understanding and coordinated professional strategy, including ensuring issues of harm and safeguarding are appropriately considered, for those children who are identified as at risk of or being exploited, involved in County Drug Lines, Gangs, Serious Youth Violence and / or Knife Crime.

39. In addition coordinated partnership working between the YJSS, Police (Problem Solving Team / Violence Reduction Team), Health, CSC and the CS Team is enhanced by the involvement of the Professional Lead for Missing and Exploitation (PLME) and YJSS representatives providing effective YJSS / CSC input to the Police Daily Management Meetings ; Tactical Tasking Core Group and Police Silver Meetings around specific Police operations addressing gangs, child exploitation, knife crime, serious youth violence. These arrangements are significantly enhancing the partnership working arrangements in Milton Keynes and have already led to better outcomes and swifter appropriate information sharing ensuring joint child safeguarding actions by the Police, YJSS, Health and CSC in circumstances where there is a potential for high risk of harm.

7. Resources and services

40. Currently the YJSS management team directly responsible for the Youth Justice Service consists of the YJSS Head of Service, two YJSS Deputy Managers one of whom is the Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention, three Senior YOT Officers and a Business Support and Information Manager.

41. In total there are 31 practitioner and administrative staff (27.78 FTE).

42. As part of the YJS staffing team some members of staff are qualified Social Workers. In addition to 14 YOT Officers, the service also includes a seconded Police Officer, seconded Probation Officer, a CAMHS senior mental health practitioner, a Family Support and Intervention Coordinator, victim liaison officer, 3 Speech and Language Therapists, and an Education Training and Employment Coordinator. In addition, we have a full time PhD Student Speech and Language Therapist placed with the team for the next 3 years undertaking research on effective interventions with children with Developmental Language Disorder in the Youth Justice System. We also currently have two researchers from the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University, one of whom is undertaking research into the relationships between young people and key professionals and the second is undertaking an evaluation and learning review of the Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusion (PREE) project.
43. The above includes 3 YOT Officers on 12-month recruited on fixed term contracts to deliver the Achieving Change Together – Now (ACT-Now) knife crime pilot that was launched on 3rd January 2023 in partnership with Thames Valley Police to address knife-crime across Milton Keynes. We have recruited 1 of these YOT Officers to 37 hours ‘core hours’ post, and the other 2 YOT Officers on 32 hours per week each, who will be operating mainly outside of core hours from 4pm-10pm daily and from 9am – 10pm on Saturday and Sunday so that between the 3 they can engage within 90 minutes, 7 days a week with children in Police Custody arrested for knife carrying offences. The pilot has been funded by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for 12-months. The project is managed by the Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention and coordinated by an Acting Up (12-month opportunity) Senior YOT Officer.
44. A physical health provision is provided through an off-site screening process situated within the School Nursing Team, but this is currently subject to review and the identification and implementation of a more effective replacement arrangement remains a key component of the YJ Plan for the coming year.
45. Volunteer Youth Offender Panel members, Youth Resilience Project Mentors and Appropriate Adults are recruited, trained, and supported by the YJSS; the Appropriate Adults also provide support to vulnerable adults.

46. The team base in Bletchley was closed during the pandemic and was moved to the main Civic office in Central Milton Keynes and the majority of the staff work from this location, with some working from home 1 to 2 days a week. Wider solutions for accommodation to enable greater co-location of multi-agency staff and a child centred safe environment in which to work directly with children have been identified and a number of these are fully in place at key locations around the city and further accommodation in Bletchley is due to become fully accessible for this purpose imminently. Additionally, other locations around the City managed by the Council and partners are available to use for contact with children and their families, with colleagues adopting the Council's policy for flexible working.

47. In addition to the above, the integrated Youth Justice and Support Service in Milton Keynes benefits from a more integrated approach to co-ordinated partnership working with colleagues in the Young People's Drug and Alcohol team; the Stay Safe Team of Workers / Youth Support Workers and the multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team. All of these teams, alongside the more integrated working with partners in Children's Social Care, SEND and Virtual School has been strengthened by the YJSS relocation to Civic Offices, and the imminent co-location with TVP Problem Solving Team.

48. The Youth Justice Grant, alongside partner contributions, both in staffing and financial, enable us to deliver the activities and services that contribute to the aims and outcomes of the plan. The benefits and impact of these services are evidenced by the KPI outcomes achieved and documented, alongside further commentary around these services and their direct and indirect benefits that are referenced and illustrated throughout this plan.

A summary of activities provided for and on behalf of the YJSS are:

- **Youth Diversion and Prevention** - "Early Support Project" The ESP offers children and young people early support and intervention including prevention work to reduce the likelihood of the child or young person becoming known to the formal Youth Justice System, targeted prevention for children and young people that have accessed the formal Youth Justice System previously, yet require further support, and diversionary work for young people who had some low-level and informal Police

contact. The ESP service offer includes the Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusions (PRRE) Speech and Language Therapy project in primary and secondary schools. Our offending rate is 2.66% (rolling period over 2 years) and our previous published First Time Entrants (FTE) rate for Oct 2021 – Sept 2022 was 128 per 100,00 however we have experienced a sudden upturn following the additional quarters data with the figure rising to 172 per 100,000 for Jan 2021 – Dec 2022. A combination of current offending levels, which have been increasing, being progressed more swiftly, combined with a concerted drive to clear any backlog within the system.

- **Turnaround** - We have identified Turnaround eligible young people that have been offered the Early Support Project (ESP) or have been offered our knife-crime pilot with Thames Valley Police, Achieving Change Together-Now (ACT-Now) since the launch of Turnaround at the beginning of December 2022. There are specific criteria that must be met for eligibility. We have submitted our data for the first quarter, and we have met our expected engagement target. We remain on track to be able to meet the engagement target for children eligible for Turnaround this financial year. The Milton Keynes Early Support Project (ESP) has been cited as a model of effective practice and commended as a model for other youth justice teams to follow by the Ministry of Justice in their updated guidance around the use of Turnaround funding.
- **Achieving Change Together – Now (ACT-Now)** - The youth element (Phase 3) of the multi-agency Op Deter approach to tackle knife-related violence and homicides in Milton Keynes commenced on 3rd January 2023. Since that time, the commitment for us to respond to young people within Police custody for knife-enabled offending within 90 minutes and to offer these young people the opportunity to engage with the ACT-Now project, with a follow up appointment within 48 hours has been broadly met. It has been a continuous learning process with both the scheme and the methodology evolving as we identify and resolve new challenges (children arrested from other areas; children arrested who are on current interventions; lack of notification to YJSS when young person is in custody etc). ACT-Now comes under the broader scope of our Early Support Project (ESP) and since its launch in January, we have responded to over 42 young people in Police custody for knife-enabled offending.

- **Appropriate Adult (AA)** services are provided to the Police Station: A volunteer scheme, maintained by the YJSS, is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This service is offered to vulnerable adults as well as children.
- **Out of Court Disposals:** Arrangements are in place with Thames Valley Police and Thames Valley Youth Justice Teams to provide the range of disposals (Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions). A Joint Decision-Making Panel is held which includes representatives from the Youth Justice Service, Police, Professional Lead for Missing and Exploitation and Liaison and Diversion Services.
- **Court Services:** YJSS staff advise the Youth Court regarding available sentences. YJSS staff prepare Pre-Sentence Reports and operate a duty system to address remand issues and ensure bail packages are available when necessary. Speech Language and Communication Needs assessment reports are also provided alongside pre-sentence reports to both Youth Court and Crown Court so that Courts are fully aware of children's additional needs given the disproportionality high prevalence of SLCN in the Youth Justice System (88% last data for Milton Keynes) compared to the general population (5-8%). A protocol exists with children's social care regarding management of remands to local authority accommodation and Youth Detention Accommodation. YJSS staff also liaise with Thames Valley Police directly to ensure additional support is in place where significant risks are identified due to opposing Youths being present within the Court at the same time, Thames Valley Police have been responding providing additional officer support where needed.
- **Court Orders** including Intensive Supervision and Surveillance: The YJSS provides YOT Officers for children made subject to Court Orders and manages these in accordance with National Standards. This will include managing children subject to custodial sentences and planning and supervising for their release.
- **Victims:** A member of the team contacts victims of children working with YJSS offering support, including being kept informed of case progression, support to attend Youth Offender Panels and meeting the child face-to-face for a restorative conference.

YJSS staff are trained to YJB/Restorative Justice Council standards for the facilitation of restorative conversations.

- **Volunteers:** There are currently three volunteering projects to support young people. Volunteers are recruited to be Youth Offender Panel members - people from the community who meet with the child, parents, and victim to agree a contract which will prevent further offending and repair harm. Volunteer mentors are recruited to mentor vulnerable young people open to the Youth Resilience Project. Finally, the YJSS also manage the Appropriate adult scheme, supporting young people and vulnerable adults in custody. The YJSS continue to encourage volunteers from diverse backgrounds in order to offer a diverse pool of volunteers to meet the needs of the young people.
- **Stay Safe** who are now part of the wider Youth Justice and Support Service are a team of Youth Workers and Youth Support Workers providing one to one support to children working with the YJSS and are also responsible for delivery of our Reparation / Community Enrichment Service. They meet with children and their YOT Officers as part of the induction process and seek to either develop new bespoke projects or appropriately match children's interests with the projects available. Children can achieve awards through the work they complete with Stay Safe.
- **Young People's Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)** Team provide a worker to assist children in finding Education, Training and Employment opportunities amongst our post-16 cohort, as part of their Information, Advice and Guidance Service. This service has established links with training and education providers within Milton Keynes and surrounding areas and services to monitor those post 16 out of ETE allowing for continued monitoring and support to be offered both during intervention with YJSS and post intervention. In January 2023, we introduced a new element of support within this area, centred around voluntary Criminal Convictions Disclosure sessions to support young people in entering the workplace and transitioning into further Education, Training and Employment.
- **Education, Training and Employment Coordinator:** We have a Coordinator who has links with schools and alternative education provisions, and they support children

who are experiencing difficulties with school attendance including advocating for children and challenging part-time timetables. The Coordinator is also a core member of the Alternative Education Panel and has championed and promoted the offer of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessments by our Speech and Language Therapists to children at the greatest risk of a move to an alternative provision. We have recently introduced a Youth Justice Education, Training and Employment Panel that sits every 8 weeks with core membership representation across key stakeholders including; Virtual School, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Sufficiency and Access, Children's Social Care, Youth Justice, Youth Information, Advice and Guidance and Speech and Language Therapy. The panel operates as a trouble-shooting and problem-solving panel for children and young people who are school refusing and / or are educated on a reduced school timetable.

- **Milton Keynes Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team (YPDA)** work with anyone up to the age of 18 but will work with people up to the age of 25 if they have additional needs. YPDA team offer advice and support for anyone who would like to learn more about drugs and alcohol, whether they use substances or not. We also support anyone who is or has been affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use, referred to as Hidden Harm. YPDA team work closely with other professionals to ensure safeguarding, effective partnership working, and information sharing where appropriate. Additionally, YPDA team develops and delivers personalised drug and alcohol awareness training sessions for professionals, schools and young people throughout Milton Keynes. The YPDA team have recently delivered training to YJSS and Thames Valley Police North and South Community Teams.
- **The YJSS** work closely with YPDA team who provide specialist interventions, support and advice, for children in relation to substance use. The nature of the partnership work has been greatly strengthened by the incorporation of the YPDA team as part of the wider YJSS. The Service Lead for O OCD, Youth Diversion and Prevention has a close working relationship with the Team Leader at YPDA team as part of the Thames Valley Police Drugs Diversion Scheme (DDS). The Thames Valley wide partnership approach to joint delivery of the DDS by Thames Valley Police and Thames Valley YOTs is a key part of the Violence Reduction Strategy. Additionally, as part of YPDA team focus on education / prevention and harm

minimisation, we offer all ESP clients drug / alcohol awareness sessions, whether substances are identified as risk or not. YPDA team also work in collaboration with Thames Valley Police regarding Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) for under 18`s relating to alcohol and antisocial behaviour.

- **Probation** – We currently have a seconded Probation Officer who is based with YJSS for 4 days a week. The role supports young people transitioning to probation as well as focusing on MAPPA referrals and management of high-risk cases.
- **Health** – YJSS continue to have limited access to Physical Health provision, and it is recognised that this remains an area of challenge for the YJSB. The School Nursing Service previously reviewed health screenings and offered access to specific services within their remit. The level of service is under current review and challenge as it is recognised that many of our children who have identified health needs do not fit the remit of school nursing and require a different focus of support due to the complex needs identified. Progression of this was initially delayed due to complications and pressures on health provision as a result of Covid and remains an area for addressing that is reflected in the current plan.
- **CAMHS** – A positive and strong relationship has been built with our local CAMHS team. This is filled by a senior practitioner who has significant experience of the complex needs of our children, and whose work has previously been recognised positively in the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the provision for Mental Health. We have access to regular (6 weekly) consultation appointments with a Consultant Clinical Psychologist for complex case discussion and support. Additional telephone consultations are also provided. The Senior Mental Health Practitioner offers assessments and interventions to children and their families and provides training to staff.
- **Parents and Families** – the Family Support and Intervention Coordinator (FSIC) at the YJSS provides 1-2-1 support to the parents of the children working with the service. This is frequently focused on helping parents/carers with the issues relating to their child, such as, tension in the family home, boundary setting and rebuilding relationships.

The role also provides support to parents and carers to help address wider structural barriers affecting the family e.g., debt, benefits, housing and the FSIC can apply for funding for items that are needed through the Strengthening Families fund. The FSIC is both, the coordinator and main facilitator, for the Who's in Charge Programme; a 10-week programme for parents/carers who are experiencing violent or abusive behaviour from their children aged between 10-18. This programme takes place 6 times a year, with afternoon and evening sessions available to maximise parental attendance.

- **Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)** – we have three part-time Speech and Language Therapists which equates to 8 days of dedicated Speech and Language Therapy per week. We also have a PhD Student on placement within the Youth Justice and Support Service, and all children are offered a Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessment at the point of entry into the service, including our Youth Diversion and Prevention work. SLCN assessments have also been useful in focusing in and identifying co-existing conditions and underlying life events and experiences that have an impact on the child.
- **Contextual Safeguarding Team** – The multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team is part of the wider Youth Justice and Support Service and strengthens the links with close partnership working between the YJSS, Children's Social Care, Police and Health, for children being exploited, as well as significantly enhancing joint working approaches to identify and address issues relating to gangs, county lines, modern day slavery, serious youth violence and knife crime.
- **Seconded Police Officer** – This role is used creatively across the service including direct involvement with delivering OOC's, undertaking interventions with children to strengthen relationships between children and Police, provide key information around risks using PNC and Police intel. The role of Thames Valley Police in the YJSS is also enhanced by our close partnership working with TVP Problem Solving Team and Violence Reduction Unit.

Financial Resources

49. The final budget for 2023/24 has yet to be established but is not expected to be any less than 2022/23 (which was £1,413,636).
50. Additionally, the YJSS has been successful in securing NHS funding of £97,224 for the year to continue the Early Support Project prevention work with continued funding to the end of 2023/24. This will enable us to continue our early intervention/prevention work and to continue to expand our more direct work with schools. The YJSS is also due to receive £47,969 from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley to continue the funding of the Early Support Project (Knife Carrier Project): ACT- Now until the end of December 2023. This implementation has expanded our work pre-OOCD / Court with children arrested for knife carrying offences. The tailored voluntary engagement and support programme which children arrested for knife carrying offences begins the process of access whilst still in Police Custody between 9.00am – 10.00pm, 7 days a week and provides them with the opportunity to begin working towards positive goals and achievements prior to the offences being considered for OOCD / Court outcomes. Reports from ACT-Now are available to the JDMP / Court to positively influence disposals and increase opportunities to divert more children towards deferred outcome (Outcome 22), YCC (rather than Court Disposal) and reduce the risk of custodial sentences / longer community-based sentences, recognising the positive benefits for longer term outcomes for children when contact with the formal Youth Justice System is minimised.
51. As in previous years the resources will be prioritised on court ordered interventions especially at the intensive level. Maintaining a low level of re-offending and custodial sentences as well as significant reductions in Youth Detention Accommodation would seem to suggest that the strategy is having a positive impact and represents a good rate of return on the investment made.
52. All grants from the YJB are controlled within the YJSS budget arrangements and are used exclusively for the delivery of youth justice services. The only exception is the grant paid to support remands to Youth Detention Accommodation, which is held within the placements budgets of children's social care.

8. Performance and priorities

53. Outlined below are the National and Local KPIs for the Youth Justice and Support Service illustrating outcomes for the past 12 months indicating current performance and the planned targets for the coming year. Where relevant a brief narrative is included to add clarity. The priorities for the coming year on the whole represent continuing incremental improvement on progress made to date or, in the case of Prevention, maintaining the positive outcomes achieved as the multiple complexity of need for those accessing the service increases.

KPIs:

1) Reoffending

- a. Target for 2022/23 was <30%.
 - i. Outturn was 29.4% (for cohort July 2020 to June 2021)
- b. Target for 2023/24 has been agreed to remain as <30%

2) First Time Entrants

- a. Target for 2022/23 was <140
 - i. Outturn was 172 (for period January to December 2022)
- b. Target for 2022/23 has been agreed to remain as <140 as the reason for the higher figure for last year was identified as due to a significant increase in 1 quarter as FTE for Oct 2021 – Sept 2022 was 128.

3) Use of custody

- a. Target for 2022/23 was <0.2
 - i. Outturn was 0.09 (for period April 2022 to March 2023)
- b. Target for 2023/24 has been agreed to remain as <0.2

4) Prevention

a. Target for 2022/23 was for less than 5% of young people engaged to go on to offend within 2 years.

i. Outturn was 2.66%

b. Target for 2023/24 has been agreed to remain as <5%

5) New KPIs.

a) New KPIs have been introduced with effect from 1/4/23 to measure;

i) Accommodation Suitability, ii) Education Training & Employment, iii) Special Educational Needs, iv) Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing, v) Substance Misuse, vi) Out of Court Disposals, vii) Links to Wider Services, viii) Management Board Attendance, ix) Serious Violence, and x) Victims.

Although we have monitored several of these (and some others such as timeliness of outcomes) for a while, no targets have yet been set either nationally or locally.

6) Disproportionality

a) Disproportionality is monitored 'in real time' on a quarterly basis, with data being reviewed by the Youth Justice Strategic Board, and also via the YJB data which is published approximately 1 year in arrears.

Milton Keynes demographic has changed significantly between 2011 and 2021 with the proportion of young people from an Ethnic Minority background making up 40% of the under 18 population cohort. The latest quarterly data showed a figure of 35% in our current statutory caseload.

This data, based upon the 2021 census figures, confirms our long reported status of those from Ethnic Minorities not being over-represented in the YJ system in Milton Keynes.

Local performance data

ESP targets and outcomes

54. The Early Support Project forms part of the wider Youth Justice and Support Service and focuses on Diversion and Prevention work including work completed under Achieving Change Together – Now (ACT-Now), our knife crime pilot in Milton Keynes and our Speech and Language Therapy Project in primary and secondary schools.
55. We work towards our local KPI target of not exceeding 5% re-offending rate (over a rolling two-year period) with all children and young people who engage with the Early Support Project. We have not exceeded 4% since the project came online in 2018.
56. We have continued to maintain a low re-offending rate throughout the entire project and this is currently at 2.66%. This is particularly significant as we do not go on to have any further youth justice contact with over 97% of young people over a rolling 2-year period.
57. Being able to meet the increased demand on the Early Support Project is one of the primary risks. In order to address this, we have recently recruited a 12-month Seconded YOT Officer and a YOT Officer fulfilling a 24-month YOT Officer post. Both members of staff will be trained in completing Out of Court Disposal assessments, and all other caseload responsibilities, ensuring that we have flexibility within the workforce.

Priorities

Children from groups which are over-represented

58. Children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are over-represented within Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service (MKYJSS) and this fits in with the national picture in terms of SLCN and children and young people who offend.
59. In terms of prevalence, our local data collected between April 2022 – March 2023 identified that out of 120 children and young people assessed for SLCN, 88% of young people assessed had an identified need, and only 12% had no SLCN

identified following assessment. In terms of level of need identified during this time frame, 24% of the young people assessed had a Mild SLCN, 26% had a Mild – Moderate SLCN identified, 37% had a Moderate SLCN and 13% had a Moderate – Severe SLCN identified.

60. The prevalence of SLCN amongst children and young people who offend has been locally monitored and it is useful to highlight patterns and trends here that have continued from previous years. In 2019 / 2020, of 80 young people assessed for SLCN, 80% had an identified SLCN. In 2020 / 2021, of 97 young people assessed for SLCN, 84% had an identified SLCN and in 2021 / 2022, of 86 young people assessed for SLCN, 87% had identified SLCN. What can be deduced from our data since 2020 is that year on year, there is a percentage increase in terms of the prevalence of SLCN within Milton Keynes and young people and needs being identified in terms of those that access our service via Diversion, Prevention, Out of Court Disposals and Post-Court youth justice support.

61. It is useful to consider here that between 2022 / 2023, 98% of children and young people assessed under our Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusions (PRRE), our Speech and Language Therapy project in primary and secondary schools, had an identified SLCN following assessment. This is a 2% increase from 2021 / 2022 data which identified that 96% of children and young person assessed under the project had an SLCN identified. Children and young people can be referred to PRRE if they are assessed by their education provision as being at the greatest risk of school suspensions or a move to alternative education.

62. Only 15% of children and young people had their SLCN identified prior to Youth Justice involvement which suggests that young people's needs are not being identified and addressed consistently before Youth Justice involvement.

63. It has been identified that 10% of children and young people have a 'long-term SLCN' within the general population and so what can be concluded from our local data is that children and young people with SLCN, are significantly overrepresented within the Youth Justice System.

64. We constantly monitor the ethnic diversity of our caseload as part of the monthly 'demographics' report and 'white' young people have consistently been overrepresented. As outlined in the commentary above the YJSB regularly reviews the data on disproportionality at each meeting and this is kept under constant review. Whilst there appeared at one point to be a statistically small over representation of some other groups this was analysed and identified as involved because of the changes in both the population size and school age ethnicity demography since 2011 when the official census data was last published. The updated data when compared to the 2021 National Census data removed this over representation for all but the White group with the accurate Youth population reflecting White young people making up 60% ; Asian young people 14% ; Black young people 15% ; Mixed (Dual heritage) young people 8% and 'Other' young people are 2% of the population.

65. One of the factors we aim to explore in the coming months through analysis of data and individual case studies is whether there is any evidence of 'Adultification' as a factor with any of the overrepresented groups of children, with needs not being recognised because challenging behaviours are viewed as 'deliberate' or 'expected' rather than seen as potential indicators of an unidentified and unmet need. Such approaches can result in enforcement and suspension action being pursued by schools, rather than explorative supportive approaches to assess unmet needs and adjust provision accordingly. This approach reflects the expectations outlined in the HMIP Thematic Report on Understanding Racial Disparity to "ensure that black and mixed heritage boys are receiving their legal entitlement to education, including alternative provision when this is deemed necessary, and that the placements are suitable to meet their needs"

66. Given the responsibilities of both the Youth Justice Service and the wider Youth Justice and Support Service in supporting children involved in County Lines as victims of criminal exploitation, then the Youth Justice Service and partners are jointly focused on ensuring that multi-agency practice around planning and support is also reflective of other key findings of the HIMP thematic report into Understanding Racial Disparity. Specifically, that:

- a) "Local authorities should:
- provide suitable and timely accommodation placements and support packages for black and mixed heritage boys who are facing remand or being released from custody
 - make sure that, where children and families are moved to a new location as a result of concerns about their safety, the accommodation and placements provided are suitable and sustainable to meet their needs"
- b) The Youth Justice and Support Service will continue to monitor the data and where gaps are identified seek additional information from across individual partner services to ensure that a triangulated approach to analysis continues to inform the YJSB. Any strategy that is formulated following this analysis for improving outcomes will reflect a joint strategic need assessment and be shared across the Youth Justice and Support Service and partner agencies with clear targets set and mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of outcomes.
- c) In addition, building on the work undertaken to capture and reflect the voice of children in shaping the services provided by both the Youth Justice and Support Service and its partners, we will explore whether further changes are needed to ensure that processes for gaining feedback from over represented groups, such as black and mixed heritage boys, about the services they receive are effective and inform our collective ability to assess, review and improve the quality and suitability of those services.
- d) The Youth Justice and Support Service Management and Seniors ensure thorough management oversight, induction programmes, training and supervision and support that staff fully understand what is expected of them in exploring and adjusting their practice to reflect the individual needs and diversity of children, and to enable them to work effectively with all children with particular consideration of additional barriers faced by overrepresented groups of children, including black and mixed heritage boys. Staff are made fully aware of how to escalate concerns both within the Youth Justice and Support Service and with partner organisations in seeking to address identified barriers that are preventing access to required services.

- e) Appropriate steps are taken to address key gaps in provision for overrepresented groups, including black and mixed heritage boys. A good example is around providing access to mentoring through the Youth Resilience Project. The Youth Justice and Support Service are working in partnership with a third sector provider, YMCA, who are developing one to one mentoring sessions to young people in Milton Keynes.
- f) To tackle over representation, Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service has considered and implemented the following:
- Staff within Youth Justice Service attend Cultural Diversity Training.
 - Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) – as outlined earlier the Youth Justice Service recognise the over representation of young people in the Youth Justice System with Speech Language and Communication Needs. Speech and Language Provision is offered to all young people regardless of intervention including PRRE, ESP and both community and Court Orders. It is evidenced through the data collected and individual case studies that offering this assessment and support at PRRE can reduce the number of young people excluded from school because their needs are not being identified and supported.
 - Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) – the Youth Justice representation at JDMP provides a multi-agency approach to consider diversity and learning needs prior to decision being made about action, including input from CAMHS / Liaison and Diversion, and the Professional Lead for Missing and Exploitation, therefore taking into account their current status within Social Care and any identified Health needs.
 - Within Milton Keynes we have an effective data sharing process which enables a young person’s vulnerabilities and diverse needs to be shared with Police, who in turn share with CPS to fully inform charging decisions.
 - Diversity needs are incorporated into a young person’s child friendly plan following ASSET+ assessment being completed so that intervention is informed and delivered around diversity needs.

- Historically we recognised that the former Youth Offending Team staffing was not as culturally diverse as the demography of Milton Keynes. Following recent recruitment and the development of the multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team, the demography of the wider service is far more reflective of the city of Milton Keynes.
- When young people are open to other services / provisions such as Children's Social Care; SEND; Pupil Referral Unit the Youth Justice and Support Service ensure co-ordinated partnership working to achieve best outcomes.
- In all Pre-Sentence Reports, Breach, and other Court reports particularly for sentencing the Youth Justice and Support Service include within the report when a young person is part of an overrepresented group so that the Court acknowledge and take this into account during sentencing. Copies of SLCN assessments are also supplied to ensure that the impact of a child's SLCN can also be considered by the Court to inform sentencing.
- Youth Justice and Support Service staff comply with the Equality Policy within the Council.
- Young people complete 'Where to Now' reflective feedback at the end of all Youth Justice and Support Service interventions with an impartial staff member from the Participation and Engagement Team to gain feedback around the service. Currently the feedback and questions covered are being reviewed to ensure we can tailor more specific questions for over-represented young people to inform service development and delivery of the Youth Justice Service and partners.
- We have access to interpreting facilities for all aspects of work across the YJSS and this is regularly used to ensure young people and their families / carers and victims are able to fully engage and participate with the services offered.

Prevention and Diversion

67. Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service have a well-established Youth Diversion and Prevention Service that is known locally at the Early Support Project (ESP). ESP offers support to children and young people who require early prevention, targeted prevention and diversion from the formal youth justice system. Within the Prevention service offer, we have a Speech and Language Therapy project that works with primary and secondary schools, known locally as PRRE

(Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusions). The project enables primary and secondary schools and further education settings to refer children and young people to the project where it has been identified that they are at the greatest risk of school suspensions and / or a move to an alternative provision. The Prevention element of ESP works with children and young people who are displaying behaviours associated with offending behaviour and / or child exploitation in order to safeguard and reduce vulnerabilities that could be associated with them being at risk of entering the formal youth justice system.

68. There are several referral pathways for agencies to refer children and young people to the Prevention element of the service (including PRRE). These are:

- Children's Social Care including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Children and Families Practices (Early Help)
- Missing and Exploitation Panel (MEP)
- Contextual Safeguarding Board (CSB)
- Contextual Safeguarding Group chaired by Thames Valley Police
- Primary and Secondary schools and Further Education settings
- Alternative Education Panel (a multi-agency panel where children and young people at risk of being moved to alternative education are discussed)
- PREVENT Channel Panel (a multi-agency panel where children at risk of radicalisation and / or extremism are discussed)

69. Within the Diversion aspect of the service, we have a local service level agreement with Thames Valley Police whereby we received all YOT1 notifications for young people who have received Community Resolutions in the Milton Keynes area. We then complete an initial screening assessment for the ESP and if the young person is considered suitable and eligible for the project, we make a service offer and complete an Asset Plus assessment and plan to address young people's risks and needs and build on identified positive factors and strengths.

70. As part of our Out-of-Court-Disposal (O OCD) service area, we have a Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) that meets weekly to discuss young people referred to the

panel by the Youth Justice Unit for an OOC to be assessed. The JDMP has representatives present from the Youth Justice and Support Service, CS Team, Youth Justice Unit at Thames Valley Police and Liaison and Diversion colleagues to represent CAMHS. We have trained members of staff that complete the OOC Initial Screening Assessment (ISA) for young people being discussed at the panel, with a full AssetPlus being completed for serious violent or sexual offending, including those offences involving weapons and / or knives.

71. In terms of processes, the ESP offers children and young people a 12 – 24 weeks period of intervention in order to address structural barriers that may have an impact on the individual being at risk of offending or further offending, as well as delivering interventions to address problematic behaviour. ESP is a strengths-based and future-focused service in that we support young people and their families to build on their strengths and move towards building a safe, healthy, and pro-social future.
72. We offer an 'opt out' service. We contact all young people considered appropriate for the service.
73. We use a consistent screening, triage, and case management approach within the Early Support Project whereby we; screen, triage, assess, plan, review and signpost all young people.
74. Keeping others safe, keeping the young person safe and supporting young people to build on the factors that will support them to avoid crime is key within our work, to ultimately enable young people to have successful and positive futures. We use our understanding of trauma and adverse childhood experiences to explore behaviour and how it impacts on the young person, their desistance, risk to others and their own safety and wellbeing. Understanding attachment behaviour helps us explore how young people get their needs met (which may include offending to meet these needs). We also identify and explore the links between school absence, serious youth violence, exploitation, and the persistence of offending into later life. We have a strong emphasis on Speech and Language Therapy within the Prevention and Diversion Service, and more specifically, how unrecognised Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) can have a significant impact on a young person's education and future life opportunities if not recognised early. We understand that to

safeguard children and young people, a contextual safeguarding approach with adolescents is often needed and we work alongside the Contextual Safeguarding Team (CS Team) and Children's Social Care in protecting and promoting the safety of children and young people in Milton Keynes.

75. The service is evaluated on an annual basis and has been independently evaluated by an external researcher. We provide quarterly reports to the NHS, one of our funding partners to identify our received referrals, working data surrounding the age, gender and ethnicity of the young people accessing the service, and providing case studies to demonstrate how the service promote better outcomes for children and young people.

- **Diversion data** (young people given a community resolution): Between 1/4/2022 and 31/3/2023; 64 cases were referred to YJSS and of these 24 completed a programme of work. 8 cases are still open and 34 cases refused the offer of support, and we are working to understand the reasons for this and identify methods to engage with these cases. We are aware that timeliness for the outcome was one of the contributing factors.
- **Prevention data** (young people at risk of becoming involved in crime): During the same period; 106 cases were referred and of those 52 completed a programme of work. 42 cases are still open and 12 cases refused the offer of support, and the reasons are being reviewed.
- Offending by these two groups is monitored for 2 years following their engagement and just 2.66% have gone on to offend.

Education, Training and Employment

76. The Youth Justice and Support Service recognises that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in relation to Education, Training and Employment (ETE) are evolving and we have processes in place / or are in progress to ensure that we are able to monitor how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many children are excluded from school, how many children are educated on reduced school timetables, how many children / parents elect for home education and the number of children on SEN Support or who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in

place.

The percentage of young people on part-time timetables or not in full-time ETE has been improving over the last year; details are shown below.

(No-one is presently 'home educated'.)

Period	Percentage on part-time timetables	Percentage not in full-time ETE
January – March 2022	50%	69%
April – June 2022	36%	61%
July – September 2022	32%	55%
October – December 2022	33%	47%
January – March 2023	33%	56%

The balance of young people by ethnicity and looked after status is also monitored with no clear imbalance displayed due to either (where there are sufficient cases to be statistically significant).

77. The education staffing provision in the service has been two part-time workers, however, we are planning to increase the role of ETE Coordinator to full time. Both education workers have their own areas of responsibility. The Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that children of school-age receive appropriate education, and our link Young People's Personal Advisor is responsible for offering support to young people over the age of 16 who are NEET (those not in education, training, or employment).

78. The Education, Training and Employment Coordinator is actively involved where children and young people are identified as being on a reduced school timetable, home educated, school refusing or have a complex relationship with school. We have introduced a process whereby the ETE Coordinator has regular 1-2-1 meetings with YOT Officers to ensure that there is a ETE plan for every child working with the Youth Justice and Support Service, and that complex circumstances have intervention from the Coordinator to support the YOT Officer in addressing these difficulties successfully.

79. The ETE Coordinator attends the Alternative Education Panel to represent the Youth Justice Service in cases where children and young people are brought to the attention of alternative education due to problematic and challenging behaviour within their school of origin. In order to best meet young people's needs, we offer a Speech and Language Therapy assessment for young people who have not previously had their needs assessed to support the setting to implement alternative approaches with the child with a view to addressing behaviour more effectively should SLCN be identified.
80. The ETE Coordinator's role includes advocating and liaising with school settings whereby complex situations arise.
81. If a setting participates with our PRRE Speech and Language Therapy project, they are also afforded free Speech and Language Training to develop the knowledge and skills of school staff and to upskill staff within the Speech and Language Therapy arena to feel confident in employing strategies within the classroom to specifically address identified SLCN.
82. We have also created an Education, Training and Employment Panel Meeting comprised of the management lead responsible for ETE (Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention), the ETE Coordinator, the Young People's Personal Advisor, SEND representation, Virtual School, Sufficiency and Access and local authority (Children's Social Care) representation. The panel provides strategic and service management oversight of complex children and young people with ETE difficulties and utilises a problem-solving approach to young people who are not accessing full-time Education, Training or Employment. The panel meets every 8 weeks to monitor and review appropriate cases that have been referred for discussion with a view to adopting a multi-agency solution finding approach to address difficulties and concerns.
83. We have also identified that school refusing children with emotional based school avoidance, may require a multi-faceted approach from the Youth Justice and Support Service. As such, we are in the process of developing an Emotional Based School Avoidance pathway whereby children and young people receive paralleled support from our Mental Health Practitioner, ETE Coordinator and Speech and Language

Therapy team to address the barriers to attending school and offering a bespoke package of support dependent on the individual risks and needs of the young person.

84. We have also strengthened our links with the Virtual School to expand the opportunities for young people receiving Youth Justice intervention to be better supported by the local authority. The Virtual School now offer Youth Justice members of staff consultation sessions to discuss individual cases with a view to increasing the support afforded to them. This is being led by our ETE Coordinator.

85. Simon Simms, Head of Delivery for Education Sufficiency & Access is a core member of the Youth Justice Strategic Board.

Restorative Approaches and Victims

86. Through strong case work and multi-agency working, we support and encourage children to build pro-social identities to support their desistance from crime and reducing victims of crime and we work hard to offer victims of crime a voice.

87. We have strengthened the YJSS's work in restorative justice, through collaborative work with the police and Youth Services (Stay Safe) to increase the level of victim information and engagement and to ensure direct and indirect restorative approaches are both available and meet the requirements of a service structured around Child First principles and approaches. This work was further developed to ensure that the needs of victims are paramount, and the effective approach developed for post court disposals was fully replicated within all elements of the Diversion work of the Youth Justice and Support Service and key partners in the YJS.

88. The Victim Liaison Officer contacts victims of children working with YJSS offering support, including being kept informed of case progression, support to attend Youth Offender Panels and meeting the child face-to-face for a restorative conference. YJSS staff are trained to YJB/Restorative Justice Council standards for the facilitation of restorative conversations. Current data shows that of the victims who we were given details by the police, 78% engaged with the YJSS.

89. We have focused on expanding the opportunities available for Reparation / Community Enrichment to enable young people not only to repair the harm they have caused but also to provide opportunities for community engagement, and development of key skills and qualifications.

90. One area that will be developed over the year of 2023/2024 will be how we effectively capture the voice of victims to inform the evaluation and development of the services that have been offered to them.

Serious violence and exploitation

91. In response to increasing concerns regarding serious youth violence and exploitation highlighted earlier in this Youth Justice Plan, Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service have taken the following steps:

- As highlighted above the multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team (CS Team) , was launched in February 2023 as a new element of the Youth Justice and Support Service to focus on extra familial harm in relation to the criminal exploitation of children, and the overlap with serious youth violence. The specialist team and improved partnership working, information sharing and forward planning has helped to embed partnership and individual service approaches to address child exploitation, knife crime, serious youth violence, county lines, gangs, trafficking and modern-day slavery as the CS Team have established very positive information sharing and multi-agency working with the wider partnership with particular focus on joint working with Thames Valley Police who have specialist police officers based within the Contextual Safeguarding Team. This enables a proactive approach to managing contextual risks of children and young people open to both the CS Team and YJSS and results in more robust co-ordinated partnership response to safeguarding concerns and targeting adult perpetrators who are exploiting children or engaging them in acts of serious youth violence.

- The Service Lead for OOC Youth Diversion and Prevention is a core member of the Missing and Exploitation Panel ensuring that multi-agency plans to address missing and exploitation concerns are robust and reflect an effective multi-agency approach.
- A joint National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Policy has been created to ensure consistency across all key services within Children and Families (Youth Justice and Support Service; Children's Social Care etc) and to assist with capturing accurate data and recording of NRM outcomes across the wider partnership.
- Given the significant increase in the young people in Milton Keynes being the victims of exploitation specialist training is being developed for delivery across Milton Keynes Children and Families Services to upskill practitioners understanding of Exploitation including the frequent potential for overlap with other key elements including Serious Youth Violence / County Lines / Gangs / Knife Crime and Missing episodes.
- The Contextual Safeguarding team provide an Exploitation Bulletin sharing key information, updates, trends, and emerging themes around exploitation issues to support Contextual Safeguarding approaches within Milton Keynes to safeguard young people. The Exploitation Bulletin is circulated every 4-6 weeks to Children and Families Services (including the YJSS).
- A Senior YOT Officer has been accepted as a SCA Multi Agency Assurance Panel (MAAP) member, which will significantly support our NRM referrals and enhance our ability to challenge NRM Decisions where these appear incongruous based upon the evidence available.
- All Young people working with the YJSS on statutory interventions or referred to ESP must have an up-to-date Exploitation Screening Tool completed and referred to the Contextual Safeguarding Team for consideration, ensuring a more holistic multi-agency assessment, scrutiny and advice is available to address the needs and risks of that young person.

- The addition of Youth workers and Youth Support Workers within YJSS, has provided additional resource enabling greater opportunity for early intervention to be offered to young people identified as vulnerable to exploitation.
- As highlighted earlier we have been successful in obtaining pilot funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to provide a joint response to knife or bladed article carrying / possession along with Thames Valley Police. The ACT-Now (Achieving Change Together - Now) project is being funded initially for 12 months whereby the YJSS provide a pro-active and timely response (within 90 minutes) to young people in Police custody where they have been arrested for a knife / bladed article offence. This enables YJSS staff to reach out and offer timely intervention and support to young people, therefore capitalising on reachable and teachable moments within a child and young person's life.

Constructive Resettlement and Use of Custody

92. Milton Keynes Youth Justice Strategic Board (YJSB) are responsible for ensuring that the approach to custody, resettlement and transitions is evidenced-based as well as ensuring that suitable and timely accommodation provision is available for all children leaving custody along with young people having equitable access to services. The YJSB are able to identify, challenge and address any structural barriers that exist with regards to the resettlement of young people into the community (e.g., poor access to education, training, and employment for NEET young people over 16, and a lack of suitable accommodation provision for young people in care/ care leavers).

93. Milton Keynes YJSS 'Custody, Resettlement and Transitions Policy' provides the detailed framework for this area of work, outlining the service expectations in relation to children and young people serving custodial sentences, remanded to youth detention accommodation and for those leaving custody and resettling back into their communities, including clear guidance and expectations around:

- Evidenced-based research underpinning the practice model

- Resettlement
- Structural barriers to resettlement
- Transitions
- Role of Children's Social Care
- Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation
- Custodial sentences
- SEND Code of Practice: Legal Duty (Chapter 10)
- Transitions
- Extended Sentences
- Use of Youth Justice Assessment Framework (YJAF)
- Additional Contact with Young People in Custody
- Policy Evaluation

94. We recognise that the Resettlement of females requires a different approach to when addressing the needs of males (Beyond Youth Custody, 2014). An interpersonal approach to Resettlement with high levels of support is required for females. Developing a pro-social identity, forming positive supportive networks, and addressing relationships are key in terms of supporting an effective Resettlement (Beyond Youth Custody, 2014).

95. The approach adopted by Milton Keynes YJSS wholly supports the perspective that young people serving custodial sentences must receive an effective, end-to end service provision based on a thorough assessment of need and risk, in order to reintegrate them into the community. We recognise that in order to achieve this, partnership working, alongside the participation and engagement of young people and their families, is essential for Resettlement (Beyond Youth Custody, 2014).

96. Milton Keynes YJSS has an approach that reflects the findings of research that young people who offend (but especially young people serving custodial sentences) are likely to have considerable Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), along with additional needs as a result of being in the care of the local authority, being a care leaver, having complex family backgrounds, problematic substance misuse, significant health needs, trauma and several adverse childhood experiences. This list of

anticipated needs is not exhaustive; however, it outlines how resettlement has to be approached on an individual basis as it is different for every young person and how an accurate assessment of needs and risks is essential to ensuring that barriers are identified, addressed, and overcome.

97. It is a service expectation, and reflected in National Standards 2019, that allocated Social Workers are actively involved in all aspects of remand and sentence planning. Responsible YOT Officers ensure that Social Workers are invited to all planning meetings held within the secure estate and liaise regularly outside of these meetings to ensure effective and timely information sharing and joint planning.
98. We also recognise that structural barriers, such as a lack of suitable and timely accommodation for young people in care and care leavers need to be addressed at the earliest opportunity and at a national level within remand/ sentence planning. One of the most important Resettlement Pathways is 'Accommodation' as feeling safe and stable lends itself well to young people being able to effectively engage in other positive activities including education, training, and employment.
99. We are realistic in recognising that finding suitable and appropriate accommodation for young people who offend can be challenging. To ensure that this is addressed in a timely way in line with the YJSS and CSC Partnership Working Agreement (Jan 2020), where a young person is identified during the custodial period as being likely to require accommodation on release the YJSS will complete a referral to MASH at least 3 months prior to the release date.
100. In order to ensure that young people are sufficiently prepared to make the transition from custody to the community, CSC (where appropriate) ensure that accommodation for children is confirmed no later than one week prior to the Final Planning Meeting to enable the young person to have an opportunity to plan, prepare, share their views, and discuss any concerns at the Final Planning Meeting. YJSS encourage identification of a placement at the earliest point within the custodial phase of a sentence, however, also recognise that this can be a significant challenge to achieve so far in advance.

101. We have developed evaluation tools to capture the views of young people, parents / carers, and key professionals in relation to their experiences in order to ensure these inform the development of the service and policy reviews.

102. YJSS have a Resettlement Champion to support practitioners with custody, remand, and resettlement. The Champion is responsible for monitoring and liaising with responsible YOT Officers so that evaluation forms are completed in a timely manner, and that practitioners can obtain specific support around Resettlement throughout the entirety of the sentence.

9. National Standards (Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System).

103. A Baseline self-assessment of 'Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System 2019' was completed in early 2020. The audit identified that the majority of areas were rated as good. Actions were identified to strengthen areas of service and all of these have now been implemented. Case audits were completed in 2021 as per recommendations; participation services have been undertaken to gain an independent review of YOT and partner services following completion of interventions, this work has now been extended to be completed with voluntary interventions also. Links with local youth services have been strengthened through the integration of the Stay Safe Team under the lead of the YJSS. Victim and Restorative Justice services have been strengthened and contact is now offered to all victims who consent including those victims of young people on voluntary interventions.

104. The YJSS participates in the Thames Valley scrutiny panels for OOC, and the new Resettlement and Transitions policy has taken account of current research and evidence of good practice.

105. An internal audit was completed in April 2021 and reviewed 15 formal OOC's and statutory cases. All case management domains were reviewed, and the findings identified good practice in all areas. These outcomes were also positively reflected in May 2021 when Milton Keynes Youth Offending Team was subject to inspection by HM inspectorate of Probation. The results of which were published in August 2021 and reflected an overall rating of Good. Three

recommendations were made, and all of these have now been achieved along with the earlier audit recommendations.

106. The Youth Offending Team was subject to a Rapid Service Review which identified a number of proposed managerial and structural changes to the Service. Those that were taken forward were completed as part of the wider changes to Children's Services that took effect in April 2021. The key changes combined the role of YOT Manager / YOT Operational Manager / Strategic Lead for Exploitation into one role as YOS Manager / Strategic Lead for Exploitation (subsequently Head of Youth Justice and Support Service) and incorporated the Youth Offending Team; Missing and Exploitation Hub; Stay Safe Team and Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service into one Youth Offending Service managed by the YOS Manager. The Youth Offending Service became the Youth Justice and Support Service in February 2023 and the role of YOS Manager / Strategic Lead for Exploitation evolved into the Head of Youth Justice and Support Service.
107. Following the reimplementation of Serious Incident Reporting by the Youth Justice Board, we have implemented a process of 'table top' reviews alongside partner agencies of cases which meet this criteria. The process does not circumvent Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews rather acts as a method of gathering initial information and reviewing whether any immediate actions are required to improve service delivery. As part of this process, we are also ensuring that we consider learning points from Local and National CSPR's. We have a plan in place that when relevant CSPR's are published, seniors/managers will review these and deliver a focused training session to the whole of the YJSS ensuring that everyone has access and understanding of the learning from these. One key CSPR where training is planned to look at key learning points, is that which was published in June 2023 in relation to a murder of a young person in Milton Keynes who we had previously worked with and the perpetrator being a young person who was previously caretaken by us.
108. For 2023/24 we have a full auditing schedule planned to audit cases in line with the inspection framework and findings from these will continue to inform training and development needs and areas of service development.

10. Workforce Development

109. Looking forward to 2023 / 2024, we have a comprehensive plan for further workforce development, covering the following areas;

- We will be facilitating AssetPlus training to staff to continue the development of assessment practices and intervention, risk and vulnerability planning.
- All YJSS staff will undertake regular Safeguarding Training in line with Milton Keynes City Council guidelines.
- Developing a multi-agency sexually harmful behaviour (SHB) pathway including, developing a training package to be delivered across the partnership, to address the full spectrum, from awareness through to specialist assessment and intervention.
- Delivering further Diversion and Prevention training to Youth Justice and Support Service staff to promote an assertive outreach methodology, which will enable us to effectively work with voluntary service users and address the complexity of children and young people with emerging needs and risks.

110. The Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention is currently completing a City and Guilds Level 5 Operations / Departmental Manager Apprenticeship.

111. In line with the findings of the Strategic Youth Violence Needs Assessment and strategy, to develop multi-agency workshops, providing training around the inter-related complexity of serious youth violence and it's overlap with inter-group conflicts including county drug lines, organised crime groups, gang membership and knife crime. Alongside the current Complex Case Forum, we are looking to develop and implement reflective peer supervision to expand and embed the learning from the workshops and the existing Complex Case Forum methodology.

112. We are going to offer training to staff to ensure a greater understanding of case formulation including, understanding of the 4 P's (Predisposing, Precipitating,

Perpetuating and Protective) to increase our understanding of a child / young person's journey and offending history and to better inform risk and vulnerability management.

113. We are embedding a trauma-informed approach to all aspects of youth justice support and supporting the partnership to develop their trauma-aware and trauma-informed approaches.

114. The YJSS alongside the CS Team are creating Exploitation training to be delivered within YJSS, CS Team and to wider Children's Social Care Staff to upskill practitioners in Exploitation, given the significant increase in the young people in Milton Keynes being the victims of exploitation.

115. During 2022 / 2023, we have provided inhouse training in key areas of service, as well as providing access to multiple webinar's provided by the YJB and access to internal training specifically aimed at children services staff provided through Milton Keynes City Council. Staff therefore received training in a range of topics including:

- Speech Language and Communication Needs
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Gambling Workshops
- Resilience Training
- Signs of Safety Training
- Prevent Training
- New starters within the team are signposted to complete three youth justice modules provided by the Youth Justice Institute, including Exploring Youth Justice, Introduction to Child and Adolescent Development and Youth Diversion.

116. The Deputy Manager trained to become a Local Assessors with HMIP. One Senior YOT Officer has commenced training as a Multi-Agency Assurance Panel Member with the Home Office.

117. A member of the team has completed the Unitas/Youth Justice Board's Trauma Informed Effective Practice Award and shared knowledge with others via training and workshops.

118. In the development of the Achieving Change Together – Now (ACT-Now) team in relation to our knife crime pilot with Thames Valley Police, we have used

evidence-based approaches to support and engage with young people. We understand the importance of the links across relational practice, responding to trauma and responding in an individualised manner. The importance of strengths-based working, interventions and diversionary opportunities is critical within this work.

119. The impact of the overall training package delivered in 2022 / 2023 has been reflected in staff and managers demonstrating a greater level of insight and understanding of key areas - the risk of harm to others, adolescent vulnerabilities, safety and wellbeing concerns, victim safeguarding, staff safety and structural barriers.
120. The above impacts are illustrated through improvements within the quality, insight and evidence detailed within AssetPlus assessments, Court reports, case supervision, one-to-one discussions around interventions, delivery of interventions, risk, safety and wellbeing management, and reviews of policies and procedures. We have implemented a child-first, trauma-informed strategic approach (multi-agency Education, Training and Employment Panel) to address the systemic structural barriers preventing children and young people accessing Education, Training and Employment.
121. The YJSS alongside the CS Team are creating Exploitation training to be delivered within YJSS, CS Team and to wider Children's Social Care Staff to upskill practitioners in Exploitation, given the significant increase in the young people in Milton Keynes being the victims of exploitation.
122. Staff have access to clinical supervision and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) alongside regular one-to-one personal supervision and case supervision. We hold regular team meetings and team development days to ensure that staff feel supported, and we continue to promote their resilience and wellbeing within the workplace. As a management team, we have an 'open door' approach and managers and seniors are available outside of core working hours for advice and support where required.
123. The YJSS are supported by a team of trained and experienced volunteers acting as Youth Offender Panel Members, Youth Resilience Project Mentors and

Appropriate Adults. These groups have ongoing access to statutory and non-statutory training as well as regular support and consultation meetings.

124. All YJSS Officers are trained in the full remit of the service from Diversion and Prevention, Out of Court Disposals (O OCD) and Post-Court, including custody and transitions.

125. Continued Professional Development is a key component of the Youth Justice and Support Service's approach with staff. We have an in-house Practice Educator who regularly takes student placements and utilises a similar methodology with supporting the professional development of staff members. The YJSS has an established practice learning curriculum for students, including more specifically, Student Social Workers who undertake both 70 days and 100-day placements. YJSS staff also have access to undertake social work apprenticeships and we currently have two Senior Officers on this programme.

126. We have a well-established internal progression model that has enabled practitioners to progress and take advantage of development opportunities. This is attractive to staff and is reflected within our excellent retention rates.

127. The funding available for training is kept under scrutiny, in line with pressures on the overall budget.

11. Evidence-based practice and innovation

128. Milton Keynes Youth Justice and Support Service are keen to use the latest research and development of effective practice guidance to continue to improve services for young people and their families. The areas below demonstrate some of the key areas of evidence-based practice and innovation currently in place.

129. The Youth Resilience Project (mentoring programme) considers research from the Punishing abuse research published in 2021. Punishing Abuse is unique ground-breaking research into the extent of childhood adversity, abuse, loss, and trauma in children involved in the criminal justice system in the West Midlands. Two critical areas frequently cited in research on how resilience is developed and maintained is the importance of a relationship with an adult who cares and

engagement in education. The Youth Resilience Project provides a positive relationship between the Mentor and Mentee allowing the young people to build resilience to tackle past, current, and future adversity. The Youth Resilience Project is preventing young people from becoming involved in youth violence, crime or being exploited and supporting those who have found themselves in difficult situations that they need help to get out of.

130. Speech and Language Assessments are offered to all young people open to the service. These assessments inform our developmental approach to support young people's understanding of their interventions. This approach, which has informed and been informed by, local, national and international research, and frequently evaluated since its introduction, has proved effective in identifying those with SLCN (a hidden disability) whether present as a primary need, as a coexisting condition with other needs such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) ; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) ; Dyslexia etc., or as a consequence of other factors such as Attachment Disorder; Adverse Childhood Experiences; Trauma and Loss ; Domestic Abuse ; Family breakdown ; Sexual Abuse ; Criminal or Sexual Exploitation etc. Central to this approach is the recognition that the majority of children in the Youth Justice System (60%-90% Based on research; 65% - 88% based on local data; 71% YJB Asset Plus data) have SLCN but, as this is a hidden disability, for the majority of children this is not accurately recognised prior to them being assessed by the YJSS.

131. The Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) team completed a local service audit of this area and have provided headline statistics from April 2022 – March 2023. It is useful to consider that within this time frame, the SLT team completed 120 Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessments and of the 120 children assessed 50 were accessing statutory interventions, 22 were accessing the Early Support Project and 48 were accessing our Speech and Language Therapy in primary and secondary schools. The number of children assessed as having no SLCN was 13, 12% of the number of children assessed. In comparison, 107 children were assessed as having a SLCN and this equates to 88% of the children and young people assessed. It is useful to reflect that out of the 45 children who were assessed under our SLT project in schools, only 1 young person was not identified as having any SLCN. This suggests that the

prevalence of children and young people who are accessing our SLT project in schools have a considerable SLCN and reflects that the children and young people being identified by the school settings are in need of additional support. In terms of severity of SLCN being identified, out of the entire cohort assessed between April 2022 – March 2023, 24% of the children and young people had a Mild need identified, 25% had a Mild-Moderate need, 36% had a Moderate need and 13% had a Moderate-Severe need. This demonstrates that most of the young people assessed had a Moderate need identified, and this equates to their needs being greater than 94% of their peers.

132. The Head of the Youth Justice and Support Service and the Service Lead for Out of Court Disposals, Youth Diversion and Prevention continue to develop and share our work around preventative approaches including the early identification of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). This included delivering national online webinars with MicroLink / Association of YOT Managers as well as the RaPiC conference with the University of Cambridge, and a similar conference for University of Central London, involving over 300 delegates having access to the Webinars.

133. Our Custody and Resettlement Policy takes into consideration research developed by Beyond Youth Custody in 2014 and 2017 in regard to the resettlement of females and the 5 C's of effective resettlement. It is also underpinned by the YJB guidance on resettlement pathways and National Standards 2019.

134. The Early Support Project is a short-term intervention underpinned by a case management model, focused on strength based and future focused working, it is underpinned by a strong health and education focus given the emerging research around school exclusions, SLCN, home education, SEND and social inequalities. Within the ESP there is a systems theory / contextual safeguarding approach to case management, highlighted by the Taylor Review in 2019 as an example of good practice.

135. Our Speech and Language Project in schools is a promising initiative in partnership with our local education partners. The project is considered to be 'Pre-Prevention' as we want to work upstream to identify and address SLCN at

the earliest opportunity to support children and young people's futures in a positive way. We have been successful in obtaining a PhD University of Cambridge Criminology student to complete a service evaluation of PRRE, our Speech and Language Therapy project in schools. This will be completed over the summer of 2023.

136. The Achieving Change Together – Now (ACT-Now) is an exciting new initiative where Youth Justice and Police have joined up in order to address knife-related offending in Milton Keynes. We have developed a creative and imaginative way to offer voluntary support to young people when a 'reachable and teachable moment' presents itself, such as being arrested for a knife offence. We respond to young people within 90 minutes of notification from the Police and complete a home visit within 48 hours to encourage young people to work voluntarily with the Early Support Project pending Police outcome.
137. The introduction of the multi-agency / multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Team (CS Team) which launched in February 2023 as a core element of the Youth Justice and Support Service has significantly increased the opportunities for greater co-ordinated systemic approaches across the partnership. The CS Team ethos and approach reflects both the changes in our identified offending profile, and insight into the impact of extra familial harm in relation to the criminal exploitation of children, and the overlap with serious youth violence. The specialist team and improved partnership working, information sharing and forward planning has helped to embed partnership and individual service approaches to address child exploitation, knife crime, serious youth violence, county lines, gangs, trafficking and modern-day slavery.

12. Service Development Plan

138. Looking forward to 2023 / 2024, we have a comprehensive plan for service development which reflects the ethos encapsulated within the strategic pillars of the YJB strategic plan 2021-2024. We are looking to strengthen approaches across the service in the following ways:

- a) Promote an integrated approach to address challenges facing children in contact with the youth justice system / Drive system improvements that treat children as children / Promote sector-led practice development and strengthen ways to disseminate what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond by:
- Further developing assessment practices and intervention, risk and vulnerability planning through staff training.
- b) Developing a multi-agency sexually harmful behaviour (SHB) pathway including, developing a training package to be delivered across the partnership, to address the full spectrum, from awareness through to specialist assessment and intervention.
- c) Developing the deferred outcome methodology (linked to National NPCC Guidance on Outcome 22) to ensure more opportunities for young people not to be drawn into the formal Youth Justice System and to be offered appropriate interventions whilst avoiding the stigmatisation of being criminalised. We are developing this methodology for higher gravity score offending than is currently addressed through Community Resolutions to further reduce first time entrants into the Youth Justice System. Developing the Diversion and Prevention pathways to further promote an assertive outreach methodology, will enable us to effectively work with voluntary service users and address the complexity of children and young people with emerging needs and risks.
- d) In line with the findings of the Strategic Youth Violence Needs Assessment and strategy, we are developing multi-agency workshops to provide training around the inter-related complexity of serious youth violence and it's overlap with inter-group conflicts including county drug lines, organised crime groups, gang membership and knife crime.
- e) Alongside the current Complex Case Forum, we are seeking to develop and implement reflective peer supervision to expand and embed the learning from the workshops and the existing Complex Case Forum methodology.

- f) Expanding greater use of case formulation methodology including greater staff insight into the 4 P's (Predisposing, Precipitating, Perpetuating and Protective) to increase our understanding of a child / young person's journey and offending history and to better inform risk and vulnerability management.
- g) Embedding a trauma-informed approach to all aspects of youth justice support and supporting the partnership to develop their trauma-aware and trauma-informed approaches.
- h) The YJSS alongside the CS Team are developing Exploitation training to be delivered within YJSS, CS Team and to wider Children's Social Care Staff to upskill practitioners in Exploitation, given the significant increase in the young people in Milton Keynes being the victims of exploitation.
- i) We are continuing to explore options with health partners to address the current key gap around physical health assessments and interventions for young people involved with the service.
- j) By revising and reinvigorating the role of the ETE Co-ordinator we are looking to bring stronger focus to ensure greater support for children to access appropriate education, training or employment.
- k) Creating a resilient workforce, maintaining and rewarding the workforce by:
- Introducing peer reflective supervision to strengthen support amongst staff dealing with a significantly evidenced increase in young people presenting with highly complex needs and increasing levels of risk and concerns regarding their safety and well-being. We have increased and highlighted opportunities for access to clinical supervision and support through Employee Support Services through Milton Keynes City Council.
 - We are active in our recruitment strategies ensuring timely and proportionate responses to vacancies and extrapolated and evidenced increases in demands. This includes creating time limited

posts in order to supplement core staffing in order to meet increased service demands.

- Given recent challenges around recruitment and staff retention and significant increases in the overall caseloads we are further exploring other opportunities to attract, retain and reward staff through initiatives that are available to other key staffing groups within Milton Keynes City Council, including other parts of the YJSS but are not currently available to YOT Officers or managers.
- l) In line with our identified offending profile, we are continuing to develop and coordinate the focus upon addressing the criminal exploitation of children, and the overlap with serious youth violence, through improved partnership information sharing and forward planning; further embedding approaches to address child exploitation, knife crime, serious youth violence, county lines, gangs, trafficking and modern-day slavery.
- m) The high number of children continuing to enter the YJS in Milton Keynes with unrecognised and unmet Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) evidences the significant disproportionality in relation to this group of children and the requirement to continue to develop and evaluate the proactive outreach work, in collaboration with the Education Psychology Service and the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology , to highlight the specific risks around children being drawn into offending and criminal exploitation linked to unrecognised SLCN and SEND.
- n) With secondary schools and partners, there is a need to continue to address the issues related to attendance at school and access to appropriate timetables and levels of individual support that meets their needs to reduce the risk of children getting involved in offending behaviour or being exploited. This is explicitly highlighted and addressed earlier in this plan.
- o) Access to post 16 ETE opportunities remains an ongoing challenge as this is a key component in ensuring a young person is able to develop longer term resilience. We are therefore continuing to explore opportunities for

children aged over 16 who have offended to achieve greater access to employment, training and education opportunities, through collaborative work with relevant partners including Young People's Careers Information Advice and Guidance, Milton Keynes College, other local providers, and employers. Likewise, there remain challenges around access to full time timetables for school age young people and consequently we are continuing to explore the opportunities for innovative approaches to support those not accessing appropriate levels of Education.

- p) Whilst as highlighted earlier there has been some improvement in the diversity of the staff team better representing the changing demography of the young City population there is still further progress to be made. We are continuing to explore effective targeted recruitment approaches to address this.
- q) Maximise opportunities for improvements for children and Participation by:
- Reviewing current examples of good practice in the area of engagement and participation and co-production across YOT's / Youth Justice Services in England and Wales with a view to bench mark our current approaches,
 - Reviewing current practice and identifying any key learning opportunities to further develop this key area of work within the service.

12a Challenges, risks and issues

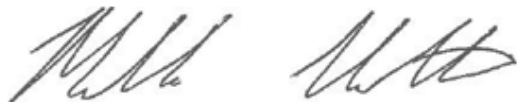
139. Future budget settlements, including changes in national funding arrangements, will have a significant impact on the ability to provide the range of services and intervention required in Milton Keynes to meet national standards and reduce first-time entrants, re-offending and use of custody. Funding may also be reduced if youth justice is not considered a priority by local partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

140. The contribution from the national Supporting Families Programme may reduce, with the uncertainty around longer-term funding of the programme, which would directly impact upon available staffing and service delivery.
141. There are currently a number of areas of the service that are largely funded through a series of external time limited grants. A considerable proportion of these deliver what has become core components of our work with significant benefits. However, the nature of this model carries a number of risks around service resilience because of the wider uncertainty of continued funding. These include Early Support Project (ESP); Promoting Reintegration and Reducing Exclusion (PRRE); ACT: Now; Turnaround and Youth Resilience Project (YRP). To address these issues we have collected and evaluated data to evidence the benefits of the outlined projects and this has been utilised consistently in further bids for on-going grant funding to maintain these services. In addition, we continue to highlight the benefits of the services with the wider Youth Justice Partnership through the Youth Justice Strategic Board, Community Safety Partnership and other multi agency partnerships to ensure that opportunities for mainstreaming any of the funding arrangements can be considered and implemented where feasible.
142. Health Provision: Whilst the YJSS has benefited from CAMHS provision (funded by the ICB) and Speech and Language Therapists (funded by NHS England Grant Funding; SEND and Turnaround) there remains a significant gap in provision around access to physical health assessment and interventions for the highly complex cohort of children that the service currently works with. This is the subject of ongoing discussion with health partners with a view to resolve this significant gap in provision.
143. Increased demands across caseloads: We have seen a significant increase in the overall caseload of our work with children and parents within both statutory and voluntary interventions. Between August 2022 and May 2023, the increase has coincided with the previously highlighted challenges created by staff changes and long-term absences. This has an impact on staff resilience and is a challenge for the service going forward including the ability to respond to a fast-changing landscape with limited flexibility around resources available. Whilst we have been able to create time limited additional posts to meet some of this

demand, there remains a challenge for the longer term if the current trajectory is maintained. Therefore, it will be essential to continue to capture and analyse data in real time to establish whether the current trajectory that was largely focused in one quarter is altering and therefore to be able to use this to evidence a requirement for additional core resourcing from the Youth Justice Partnership, or to review our current ways of working.

144. Increased peer conflict: It has been recognised that there has been a significant increase in peer conflict / intergroup rivalries which are displayed both within our Court settings and within Milton Keynes City Centre which is where the YJSS is mainly based. This has had an exponential impact on the necessity for single agency and multi-agency risk management planning in order to ensure both the safety of young people and staff as well as members of the public. One of the challenges of the consistently evolving risk picture is around the dynamic nature of a number of the groupings in Milton Keynes which contrary to normal expectations of gangs / groups appear to shift allegiances in very short time frames, meaning that real time intelligence gathering, analysis and response is crucial but challenging to ensure effective risk management. To address this, we continue to work effectively with our partner agencies alerting them to known risks of conflict and putting in place appropriate risk management arrangements including, moving Court hearings, utilising the support of Thames Valley Police (TVP) colleagues to provide additional safeguarding within the Court environment, along with real time recording of 'non association' flags on ChildView to minimise risks around known individuals in conflict. A key factor in all of these arrangements is the ability to benefit from real time access to police intelligence systems which is currently limited as the level of demand has increased. Whilst we have an increasing youth population, as the population of Milton Keynes is growing at a significantly faster rate comparative to other areas across the UK, we currently only have access to one YOT PC who is a temporary replacement covering the role on a short-term basis. To address this issue, we are exploring the Police allocation to ensure a substantive role is in place and whether additional resourcing can be applied reflecting the increased demand for Policing in Milton Keynes recognised as part of the Thames Valley Police Force Review and reflected in the recent upturn and increasing complexity of the current offending picture.

13. Sign off, submission and approval (Page 16 of the Guidance)

Chair of YJS Board - name	Dr Mac Heath
Signature	
Date	29 June 2023

14. Appendix 1 (Page 10 of the Guidance) *Outline of full board membership, including attendance, job title of the board member and dates of board meetings should be included in Appendix 1*

Membership of the Youth Justice Strategic Board is;

- Local Authority (Milton Keynes Council)
 - o Director of Children’s Services
 - o Group Head – Children and Families
 - o Head of Partnerships and Resilience
 - o Head of Delivery – Sufficiency and Access (Education)
- Central Bedfordshire Council Shared Services
 - o Head of Public Health Programmes
- Probation
 - o Head of Probation Delivery Unit – Milton Keynes & Buckinghamshire
- Police
 - o Deputy Local Police Area Commander
 - o Strategic Lead for Youth Justice
- CAMHS
 - o Interim Service manager
- NHS CCG (Central and North-West London)
 - o Associate Director, Children’s and Maternity Commissioning
- Buckinghamshire Magistrates Court

- Chair of Youth Magistrates Panel
- Youth Justice and Support Service
 - Head of Youth Justice and Support Service
 - Volunteers' representative

In addition to the core board members, we also have the following advisors / invitees;

- Youth Justice Board
- Police and Crime Commissioner representative
- Court
 - Senior Legal Advisor
- YJSS
 - Deputy YOT Managers

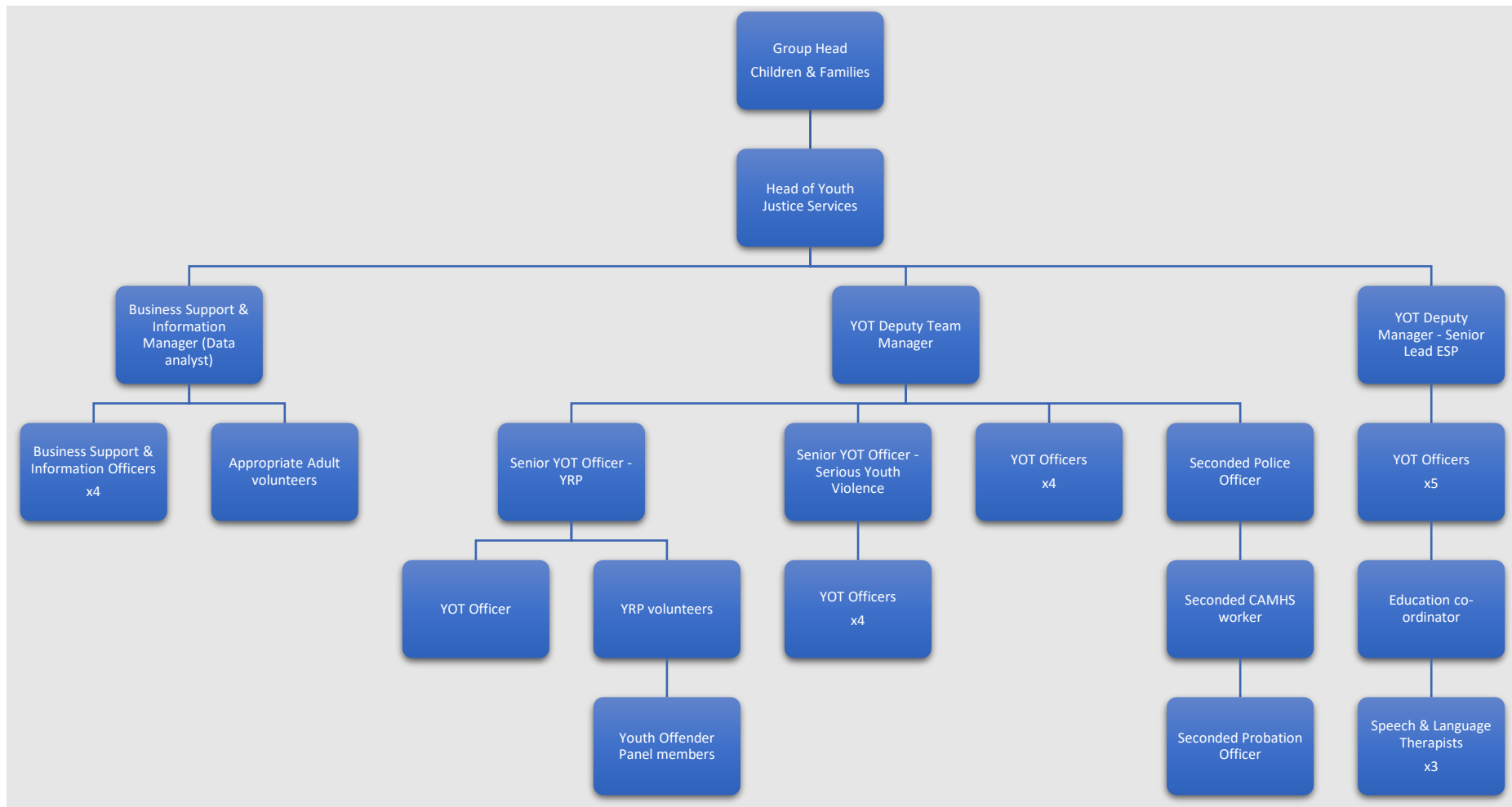
Attendance is shown on the next page.

Member's role	Meeting 21/7/22	Meeting 20/10/22	Meeting 1/2/23	Meeting 27/4/23
Director of Children's Services	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
Group Head – Children and Families	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
Head of Partnerships and Delivery	Represented	Attended	Attended	Attended
Head of Delivery – Sufficiency and Access	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
Head of Public Health Programmes	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
Head of Probation Delivery Unit	Attended		Attended	
Deputy Police Area Commander	Attended	Attended		Attended
Police Lead for Youth Justice	Not member at this time	Attended	Represented	Attended
CAMHS Interim Service Manager		Attended	Attended	
Associate Director – Children's and Maternity Commissioning	Represented	Attended	Represented	Represented
Chair of Youth Magistrates panel	Attended		Attended	
Head of Youth Justice and Support Service	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended

Volunteers' representative	Attended	Represented	Attended	Attended
----------------------------	----------	-------------	----------	----------

(Represented means there was suitably senior representation.)

Appendix 2 – Service Structure Chart (Page 10 of Guidance) should include details of the staff roles in the YJS and the reporting arrangements for the Head of Service. Information on the links to the data analyst should also be included. There should be a separate table in the appendix recording the ethnicity, sex and known disability of staff.



YJS staffing:

Ethnicity group	Managers Strategic		Managers Operational		Practitioners		Administrative		Sessional		Student		Referral Order volunteers		Other volunteers		TOTAL		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Asian or Asian British					2											1		2	1
Black or Black British						2													2
Mixed																2			2
Chinese or Other								1											1
White or White British	1			2	3	16	1	3				1	2	7	3	10		10	39
TOTAL	1			2	5	18	1	4				1	2	7	3	13		12	45

There are no members of staff with disabilities.

Common youth justice terms, please add any locally used terminology

ACE	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
AIM 2 and 3	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
ASB	Antisocial behaviour
AssetPlus	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
CCE	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
Children	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

Child First	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
Child looked-after	Child looked-after, where a child is looked after by the local authority
CME	Child Missing Education
Constructive resettlement	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
Contextual safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety
Community resolution	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
EHCP	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
ETE	Education, training or employment
EHE	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school

EOTAS	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
FTE	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
HMIP	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
JAC	Junior Attendance Centre
MAPPA	Multi agency public protection arrangements
MFH	Missing from Home
NRM	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
OOCD	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court

Outcome 22/21	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
Over-represented children	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
RHI	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
SLCN	Speech, Language and communication needs
STC	Secure training centre
SCH	Secure children's home
Young adult	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
YJS	Youth justice service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a Child First approach
YOI	Young offender institution