

MEDWAY YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2023/24



JUNE 9, 2023

Chairs Introduction

The past 3 years have seen society go through unprecedented challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed our world view. It is hard to describe or generalise the specific impact the pandemic has had on a particular individual. What is known is the pandemic had a significant impact on the ability of youth offending services to deliver their mandates. For example, although exemptions were in place to enable youth offending services to maintain delivery of core services, it is the case that staff or client sickness, social distancing and other issues, will have impacted on the quality of sessions. Other enabling factors for example disruption to the court services, impacted on the ability of the youth offending services to work with those young people who already within the criminal justice system.

It is important not to forget the impact of the pandemic on young people themselves. The pandemic may have increased the exposure of vulnerable young people to factors that could increase the likelihood of them becoming involved in offending behaviour. For example substance misuse, being subjected to or seeing domestic violence. Mental health issues, and of course social isolation. In terms of mental health issues, it is likely that young people already dealing with mental health issues may have experienced exacerbated symptoms. This could be due to increased stress, uncertainty and disruption of their routines. These issues could have led to an increase in offending behaviour. There is evidence to suggest that young people exposed to these issues may resort to negative coping mechanisms or become involved in criminal activities.

This Youth Justice Plan for Medway is centred on the child first principle. In practice, this means all work must focus on the child or young person to support them to prevent them offending, or reduce the likelihood they will reoffend. There is strong focus on protecting communities from harm and the risks posed by offenders, through working in a more collaborative, evidence based and systematic way. This is important. The pandemic saw communities coming together. More people volunteering to help others than has been recorded previously.

Transgenerational activity increased. Young people were being mentored and supported in their learning (albeit remotely in most cases) by older people. Older people were being visited and supported by young people.

We cannot and must not ignore the challenges faced by young people who find themselves entangled in the justice system. We must focus on addressing the inequity and support young people from specific communities who are currently over represented within the criminal justice system. If no action is taken, there is a risk that these young people will face severe impacts on their life chances. This Youth Justice Plan sets out the ambition all stakeholders involved in the Medway Youth Justice Board, have to challenge the status quo. It sets out the innovation of the Board and the focus on prevention and early intervention. It also highlights the need for collaboration and partnership working across all sectors, both public, private and voluntary.

The way to reduce youth offending is to deal proactively with the causes or wider societal factors that can give rise to offending behaviour. There must be a focus on children and families. There must be alignment with treatment and support being readily available and aligned to need. There must be a relentless focus on enabling our young people to access the support they need to gain appropriate education achievement. There is a recognition of the severe harm caused to the victims of offending behaviour. This plan sets out the partnerships commitment to prevent youths offending, and deal with the consequences of any harm caused and protect communities from those young people who may unfortunately, continue to try and offend.

This Youth Justice Plan has been drawn up through the work of all stakeholders within the Medway Youth Justice Board. It provides the framework for the Board to navigate through a complex and ever-changing policy environment. It is an ambitious plan, given the focus on moving 'upstream' using a public health approach, to prevent and reduce the likelihood of young people entering the criminal justice system. The chapter headings and related narrative describe this approach. It sets out what is meant by child first, emphasising the expressed aim is to protect the public.

As chair of the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board, I will facilitate constructive but challenging dialogue between all Board members. Through our joint endeavours we believe this plan will deliver a brighter future for our young people and a safer and more prosperous community in Medway.

James Williams

Director of Public Health

Chair of Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board

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1. Introduction, vision and strategy

Medway Youth Offending Team aims to achieve the best outcomes for the children and young people that we work with.

We aim to empower young people to enable them to achieve their full potential and contribute positively to the community.

We aim to provide opportunities for young people to find the best in themselves.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requires Local Authorities to have a Youth Justice Plan which is annually updated to set out how youth justice will be delivered locally within available resources. The [Youth Justice Board's guidance on Youth Justice Plans](#) sets out a clear framework, which has been followed throughout the creation of this local plan.

This plan will cover the period 2023/24.

In this strategy the terms child and young person are used. The term child is used in accordance with the child first principle to acknowledge that the youth offending team is in fact working with children and should work with them as children. The term child acknowledges the respective rights of children and responsibilities that the adult world has towards them. During the consultation period, it was apparent that the children for whom the plan is written referred to themselves as young people and wanted the Youth Offending Team to refer to them in that way. The terms young people and young person are used to operationalise the strategy so that it is acceptable to those to whom it refers.

1.1. Actions

The principle aims of the Youth Justice system are:

1. Prevent Youth Crime
2. Reduce Re-offending
3. Safeguard young people from harm
4. Protect the public from harm

This plan seeks to deliver these aims through the application of the 'Child First' principle. This plan presents what we believe to be a strong commitment to the four principles of Child First Practice.

The actions presented in the plan are directly aimed at realising these principles, namely:

1. Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, capacities, rights and potential.
2. Build on children's individual strengths and capabilities as a means of developing a pro-social identity for sustainable desistance from crime. This leads 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.
3. Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
4. Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

A full list of the actions specified throughout this plan are detailed in the service development plan (section 15).

1.2. Priorities

We have set out in section 3 of this plan the action we have taken and our achievements in relation to delivering Child First practice within Medway.

Building upon these achievements, the following priorities have been developed for the 2023/24 plan:

1. Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and Build Bonds, Bridges and Links between young people and the community.
2. Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.
3. Keep Young People Safe and enable them to thrive.
4. Prevent Young people from entering the Youth Justice System.

The service development plan (section 15) provides a comprehensive description of these priorities, clearly specifying the objectives, activities, and metrics for achievement.

The wording of these priorities emphasises the aspiration to deliver the child first principle, emphasising positive identities, strengths, collaboration and working with young people, whilst incorporating a focus on local issues.

These priorities are aligned in spirit and intention to one of the key ambitions of the Medway People Strategy, 2021-2025, which is 'Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential'. Specific outcomes in the Medway People Strategy aligned to the Medway Youth Justice Plan are:

1. Children in Medway will have the best start in life
2. Children and young people in Medway will develop well
3. People in Medway contribute to their community and have a meaningful say in decisions and services that shape their lives

The strengths-based approach to children is mirrored in both strategies. For example, further priorities in the Medway People Strategy include:

Support good mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience for children and young people, from pre-school right through to young adulthood.

Children and young people will have clear pathways and smooth transitions between education, health and social care settings by effective partnership working. Their preparation for adulthood will be built on their strengths, thus enabling them to have an independent life as possible'.

In 2022 a two-year youth justice plan was submitted to the national Youth Justice Board seeking to cover the delivery of Youth Justice Services over 2022 - 2024. The current plan is a development of that previous plan. The current plan has been updated to meet the national Youth Justice Boards requirements for the contents of a Youth Justice Plan as set out in the recent YJB guidance published in March 2023. The current plan continues was informed by extensive child and staff consultation prior to submission in 2022. This new plan has been informed by this consultation.

2. Child first

Medway will implement a [Child First approach](#). This puts the children at the heart of the plan. It views them as children first and offenders second and sees the whole child, including any structural barriers they face. This approach creates safer communities with fewer victims.

The Child First approach has four guiding principles and Medway will seek to deliver them as follows:

1. Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, capacities, rights, and potential.

Children have different needs and vulnerabilities depending on their age. This guiding principle seeks to recognise these and encourage the development of each child's intrinsic value and potential. The child's unmet needs must be addressed, and their strengths identified to create opportunities for them to realise their potential.

2. Building a pro-social identity.

Each child has individual strengths and capacities, and these can be identified to support them in building their own pro-social identity. All work with the child will be positive, constructive, and focused on the future to empower children to make positive contributions to society. This plan looks at shifting away from a 'casework' approach towards utilising resources in the young person's family and community.

3. Collaborating with children

Engaging with the child, giving them a voice and listening to them makes them feel invested in the programme. Children are more likely to stay with the process if they genuinely feel like a part of it. This strategy has been developed from a collaboration with children. Over 50 of the comments and suggestions made by young people in the consultation contributing to the previous 2022 -24 strategy have been directly incorporated into this document.

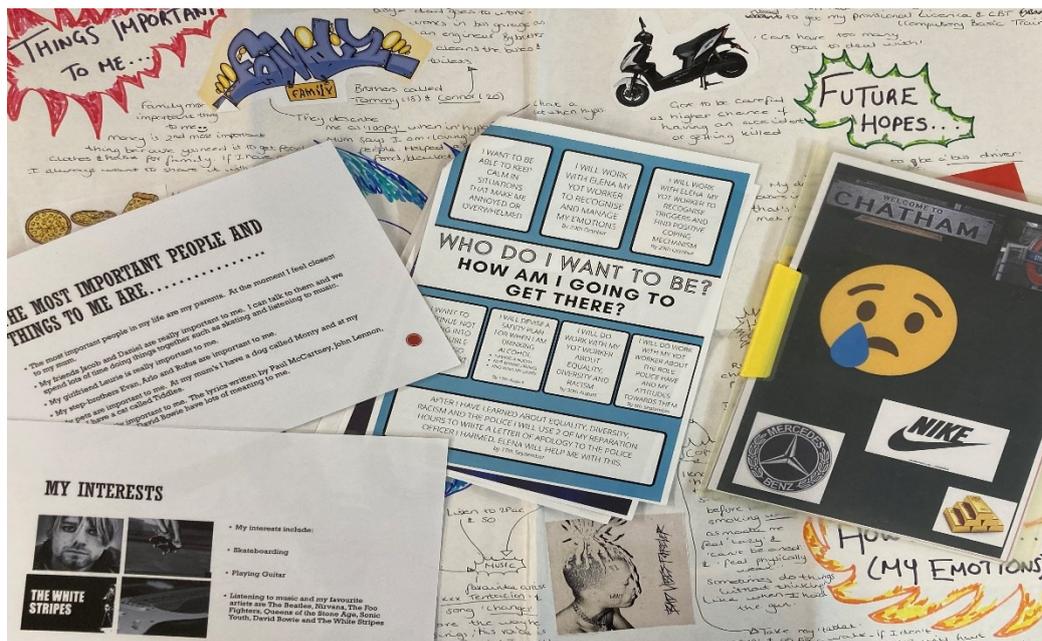
The strategy builds on a platform which places collaboration with young people central to delivery and service development. The result of this collaboration is the new plan has a more operational slant to it than previous plans. The distance between the concerns of young people and the actions included in the plan have been reduced. Engagement / collaborative events also took place with staff, councillors, and the Youth Justice Partnership Board members, encouraging them all to contribute ideas and expert knowledge to the 2022 -24 strategy. A professional collaboration has taken place with Essex Youth Offending Service and this plan incorporates all 13 recommendations made in recent review of Medway YOT by Essex in August 2021.

4. Diverting from stigma

Contact with the youth justice system can result in criminogenic stigma. This guiding principle highlights that this can be reduced by identifying vulnerable children to prevent them entering the system, or diverting children with a linked offence to receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record. Prevention and diversionary activity feature strongly in the Medway Youth Justice Plan. Historically 'prevention' work has been underdeveloped in the work of the partnership. The Youth Offending Team has predominantly worked with young people already identified as being involved in offending having been referred by either the police or the youth court. This plan reflects a determination to reach out past these traditional referral routes to identify and work with children who are considered as being at risk of offending and to prevent them coming into the justice system from the outset.

To date the Youth Justice Partnership has supported the Medway Youth Offending Team to be aspirational, creative, and innovative in its practice with Children. This plan builds upon the prior

achievements of the Youth Offending Team particularly in the areas of Child First / and Identity based practice, Relationship based practice, and strengths-based practice.



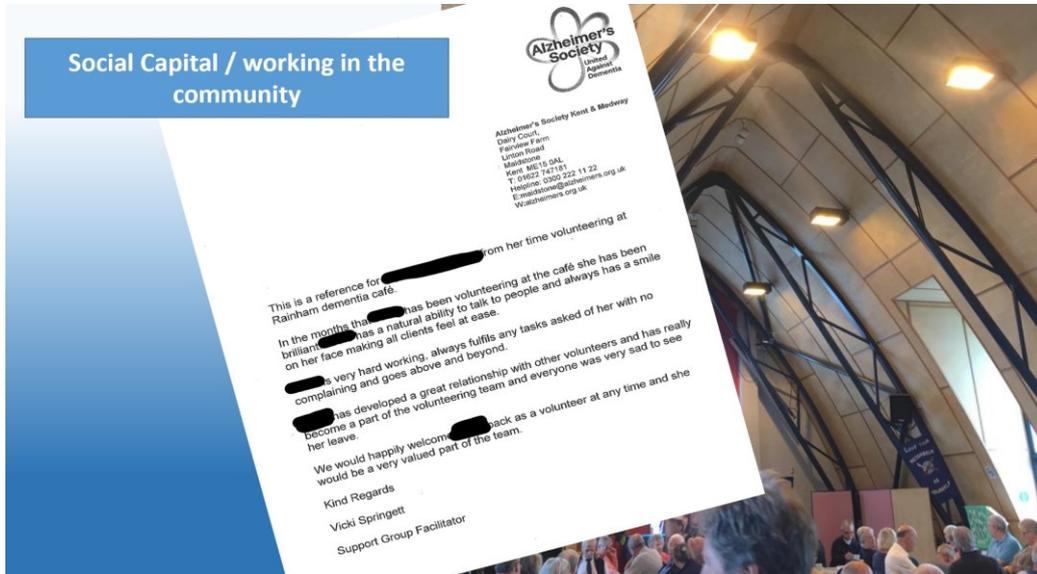
Medway demonstrate the child first approach when designing new approaches and services. One example of this is their response to the 'Beyond Youth Custody' research undertaken by NACRO. This research highlighted the importance of addressing the theme of identity with children when engaging them in the process of change. Medway YOT has developed an approach to planning with children that effectively worked with them towards the realisation of a positive future identity. This is an example of building a pro-social identity and the use of effective collaboration. The development of this approach has been a bold and innovative project which eschews templates and formulaic approaches to planning in favour of an entirely individualised approach. The worker and the child explore questions together which include 'Who am I?', 'Who do I want to be?' and 'How am I going to get there?'. This is a demonstration of designing a project using the child first principles, by prioritising the needs and interests of the children, as well as giving them a voice.

Furthermore, in 2020 the Youth Offending Team was given a Pathfinder grant from the National Youth Justice Board to develop a digital tool to facilitate this planning process with both children in the community and in custody. The aim of the pathfinder project is to produce a tool that will be able to be used by Youth Offending Teams across the country. The Pathfinder projects reflects the YOTs bold aspiration to be sector leaders in developing Youth Justice Practice.

Key to delivering the child first principles is our commitment to relationship and strengths-based approaches to practice.

Relationship based practice: The team has a passion and commitment to working positively with children in a **Relationship** based approach. Relationship based meaning that there is an organisational recognition that the trusting relationship that the young person has with their worker is the foundation for developing and encouraging motivation and change, and therefore effective risk reduction. Successive inspections and reviews have commented and observed the staff team's passion and commitment to the young people with whom they work. Throughout 2020 and 2021 staff retention in the team has been good, allowing a relationship-based approach to practice to be actively fostered and developed.

Strengths based practice: The Youth Offending Team has sought to identify the strengths of children and develop opportunities to utilise these for the benefit of the children themselves and the community. Reparation projects have been sought that enable young people to develop their skills and strengths as well as making a direct contribution to the community. Again, this has been a bold approach as we have sought opportunities for children to make a direct contribution through work with vulnerable members of the community.



Doing this has required a long-term building of trust with several voluntary organisations to encourage them to work with children referred by the Youth Offending Team. Through this partnership children have through their experience of work with the Youth Offending Team been able to gain valuable experiences in which they have gained skills and increased in self-esteem and confidence. The next step for the team is to put in place a process by which children gain formal accreditation for the work that they undertake with the team.

3. Voice of the child

The third guiding principle of Child First Practice emphasises the importance of collaboration with children. The preparation of this strategy is based on collaboration with children.

A consultation with children took place over a period of four months (July 2021 – October 2021). This gave respondents sufficient time to provide their views in a variety of ways resulting in meaningful responses. Thirty-nine children took part which represented 50% of the caseload. This consultation took place in the form of workshops where children were asked about the priorities and make contributions to the project. Over 50 of their suggestions and comments were incorporated into the 2022 plan.

The voice of the child is central to the relationship based practice developed within the youth justice team, it is the centre point of all our work with children. This is exemplified in the planning process that the team has developed in working with children that focuses squarely on their identity and their aspirations for their future. Medway is currently undertaking a consultation covering two years. This is because of a commitment to including as many children as possible which involves reaching children who would not normally provide their views. This is still ongoing and responses will be available in 2024.

4. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

The diagram below provides an overview of the membership of the Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB). Appendix 1 details Full board membership; linked to Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements.



The YJPB retains a clear focus on the principal aim of reducing offending and re-offending and maintains strategic oversight of the delivery and performance of the local youth justice system. The membership of the board provides senior representation from key partners to ensure that young people involved in the youth justice system have access to universal and specialist services delivered by partners and other key agencies.

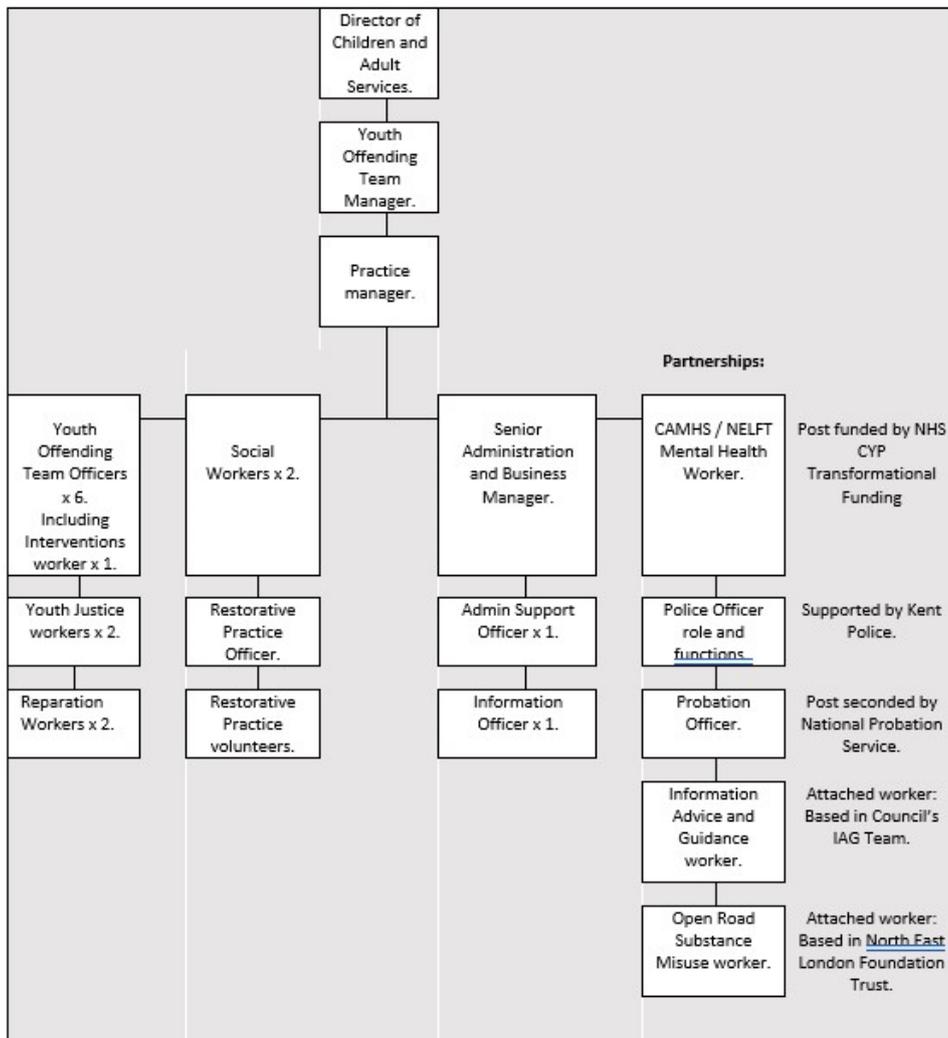
The board is currently chaired by the director of Public Health for Medway. This provides strategic oversight over health, social care and criminal justice arenas. Have the board chaired by the director of Public Health has ensured that Youth Justice services in Medway are more closely integrated in strategic partnerships more broadly. The establishment of Integrated Care Boards and requirement to deliver integrated care strategies and Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategies, further facilitates partnership action. Collaboration with the Violent Reduction Unit for Kent and Medway, also brings synergy to deliver our child first agenda.

The partnership board has the responsibility of ensuring that the YOT has access to the minimum partnership resources, of Police, health, education, social work, and probation. The board aims to be fully engaged in the practice of the YOT and to strive for excellence and proactively work as a partnership to address and anticipate the needs of children in Medway involved in the Youth Justice System.

The YJPB membership provides alignment with other key partnership boards addressing the Youth Justice agenda, Kent Criminal Justice Board, Kent and Medway Reoffending Board, Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP), MAPPA Strategic Management Board. With its being

brought into Children’s Services the YOT is represented at Children’s services management and senior management meetings.

The YOT has sat within the Children and Adults services directorate since March 2021. The YOT Manager is the Service Manager, and has overall responsibility for the delivery of youth justice services in Medway. The YOT Manager reports directly to the Director of Children and Adult Services who is also the Deputy Chief Executive for Medway Council.



5. Board development

During the last year a strategy has been delivered to develop the knowledge and engagement of the Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB). This is so the YJPB is informed and able to deliver the vision for children in the Youth Justice System outlined at the beginning of this Plan. A key element of achieving this has been theming meetings by the following topic areas:

1. Child First practice.
2. Partnership and resources.
3. Quality of Practice.
4. Prevention/diversion and Out of Court disposals.

These themes give the Board members a broad knowledge to better understand and deliver in their roles. To keep Board members' knowledge relevant and up-to-date so that they can facilitate the implementation the Medway Youth Justice Plan, meetings mainly consist of presentations by local and national experts in the field, sharing of a piece of local work, and discussion of the quarterly performance digest. Examples of each are given below.

Professor Stephen Case presented at the Child First Practice themed board meeting. Kent Police have presented at the Out of Court disposal meeting. All key partners outlined in the 'Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements' section have had representation at the partnership and resources meeting.

Practitioners share local pieces of work that they have been undertaking with a child. The themes of practitioner presentations will follow the theme for that meeting. These presentations have often been the highlight of the board meeting enabling the board to understand how its activity makes an actual difference in the lives of children.

A quarterly performance digest is presented and discussed at each board meeting. The digest presents a mixture of national and local data. Over the past year there has been a developing discussion with the board as to how the digest can best meet its needs. In particular, we are working at identifying through the digest the needs of our re-offending cohort. This is work undertaken through the development of the analysis of local data on account of it not being possible to identify individuals through the national re-offending data provided by the Youth Justice Board. We are in the process of refining the performance digest to report on the national KPI's.

In line with the living with Covid-19 national plan, Board meetings are sometimes held in person at the YOT office. This has enabled board members to meet with practitioners to discuss their work outside of the board meetings.

Actions

An area for development is for the Board to develop its knowledge of best practice in youth justice. The following actions are proposed and have been added to the service development plan (see section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
5:1	For the Youth Justice Partnership board to scrutinise evaluate local youth Justice governance arrangements.	For the local partnership board to audit itself against the HMIP criteria for- 1.Organisational delivery. 1.1. Governance and leadership (and against any future revisions to this criteria).	Completion of self-Audit through development day.
5:2	For the Youth Justice Partnership board to challenge and evaluate the delivery of Youth Justice Services based on HMIP inspection criteria.	For the local partnership board to be familiar and conversant with the HMIP criteria for court disposals and out of court disposals (and against any future revisions to this criteria).	Training to be completed to the board in relations to the HMIP criteria for inspection.

6. Progress on previous plan

The 2022 plan contained 60 actions in total. The intention was to deliver those actions over the course of two years. The plan sought to bring together actions from the following sources – the Board, Children open to the Youth Offending Team (YOT), the staff team, and a peer review on the team that had been undertaken by Essex Youth Justice service in 2021. The actions contained a mixture of strategic aspiration and practical operational changes.

The aspiration of the 2022 plan was to capture the creativity, inspiration and insights from the lengthy period of consultation that informed it. On reflection, the prospect of delivering all of these actions within the timescale of the planning cycle was challenging. This was in part due to capacity issues within the Medway YOT. The current plan revisits these actions and prioritises those that will have most impact on improving the lives of children in the Youth Justice system.

Nineteen of the 2022 plans actions have been either progressed or completed. This represents 31% of the total actions recorded in the plan. The table below identifies these.

Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and Build Bonds, Bridges and Links between young people and the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be creative and innovative in the delivery of interventions addressing the themes of Child First practice, identity, and strengths-based approaches (Pathfinder Project and collaboration with Loughborough University). ▪ Develop and deliver programs to support young people’s readiness, skills, and confidence in preparation for ETE, independence and transition to adulthood (in collaboration IAG team and relevant partners). ▪ Develop a more diverse group of panel members that reflects young people’s identities. ▪ Develop the accreditation of young people’s work with the Youth Offending Team. Recognising and celebrating their strengths and achievements. ▪ Deliver services to young people from safe non stigmatising spaces across Medway, local to their community. Facilitating opportunities for them to express themselves and feel safe and understood.
Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Board to undertake a review of data use and establish partnership involvement and responsibility in providing data in respect of the risks and needs in the community. For local data from the Police, VRU to be included in the quarterly performance digest. ▪ Work closely alongside initiatives to reduce Youth Violence, The Violence Reduction Unit, and the Serious Youth Violence. ▪ Develop intensive support and intervention programs for those young people assessed as being at the highest risk of re-offending and causing harm in the community. ▪ Deliver themed Management Board meetings. Include staff members in the management board to communicate to the board directly the issues that the team is working with.
Keep Young People Safe and enable them to thrive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunities for children and families to access individual and group parenting interventions such as NVR (Non Violent Resistance), PBS (Positive Behaviour Support) and the DICE program (Parenting intervention) that promote their being safeguarded in the family. ▪ Improve access to CAMHS services, consultation, assessment, and treatment, through the implementation of a YOT CAMHS worker post.

- Promote a model of practice based in trusted relationships and providing safe spaces for young people to feel supported, recognised by professionals and believed in.
- In collaboration with the Youth Service promote opportunities in the community for positive activities and spaces for young people.
- Work with partners in the VRU to explore local patterns and tensions to proactively safeguard young people (support the development of a focused deterrence model).
- Appointment of relevant specialist workers as indicated using data and regular needs assessment of the cohort.

Prevent Young people from entering the Youth Justice System.

- Youth service manager to be invited to join the Youth Justice partnership Board to have oversight of Youth Services Crime Prevention activity.
- Develop link between Youth Service diversionary activities and diversionary out of court disposals
- Work within children's services to develop a Contextual Safeguarding Approach to preventing young people from involvement in offending.
- Develop YOT Voluntary category of Intervention. Include Voluntary Intervention as an intervention type to allow all recording to be against this rather than against the previous order the young person was subject to. Define the voluntary offer and develop a clear 'exit' strategy.

The following points highlight key areas of progress:

- The work undertaken through the Youth Justice Board pathfinder program developing a digital application that promotes child first identity-based practice with children. During the course of the last year the App has been developed and it is now currently being tested with children. The terms of the Pathfinder program are that the App will be made freely available to any YOT in country who wishes to use it. This is an example of the Medway partnership seeking to influence national practice in the field of youth justice.
- The accreditation of interventions for children. The ambition that children will have an accredited qualification for the interventions that they undertake with the YOT has been a long-held ambition of the team. Providing children with accreditation for the time that they spend working with the team is important in terms reframing children's experience of youth justice as being something that has a positive impact upon their lives, increasing their self-esteem and their future aspirations. In February 2023, the Medway YOT was approved as a AQA unit award centre. At the beginning of May this year the first 4 children received AQA certification for the work that they had undertaken with the youth offending Team.
- The strengthening of the resourcing for the work of the YOT. The team now has a CAMHS nurse. A provision has been developed within the team to enable it to offer more intensive support for those children that need it through the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance program and through bail support in the community. Within the last year, two additional Youth Justice worker posts have been established – the focus of these roles is to develop the team's capacity to provide face to face contact to children who require intensive intervention.

7. Resources and services

We use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver our services based on the priorities presented in section 10. We believe we have aligned our approach to produce the best benefits and outcomes for our services. The vision of this strategy is to orientate the work of the Youth Offending Team to delivering the Child First principle. Key to this is ensuring that the team is staffed sufficiently to enable practitioners to carry out high quality relationship-based practice, within the National Standards set out by the Youth Justice Board. Over the next year we propose to transition towards developing prevention pathways and community-based work. This will develop the strengths of each child to help them reach their potential.

Furthermore, we will develop qualitative performance measures to complement the quantitative measures already in place. This will facilitate improvement to the experience children have when working with the YOT. Previous data collected locally in Medway has shown children greatly value working with the YOT, and these developments are expected to help the YOT expand on current successful strategies. This is likely to result in further supporting children to improve their self-esteem, as well as their sense of value and connectedness to their communities.

Our performance will be improved in 2023/24 as the following will be focused upon:

- Ensuring high quality child first / relationship-based work with Children.
- Development of strengths based work, and developing opportunities for children to be positively involved in and contribute to their community.
- Ensuring that resources are targeted both at prevention work and at work with those children who most offend prolifically in the community.

In this section of the plan an overview of current resourcing is presented with a discussion of areas of development.

The resourcing of the Youth Offending Team should be viewed in terms of,

- Statutory commitments specified in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act
- Responding to the needs of children in the Youth Justice System

The Statutory Commitments are as follows:

Section 39.5 of the 1998 Crime and Disorder act specifies –

(5) A youth offending team shall include at least one of each of the following, namely –

(a) an officer of a local probation board or an officer of a provider of probation services.

The Youth Offending Team has a Probation Officer allocated to it from the local Probation Board.

(aa) where the local authority is in England, a person with experience of social work in relation to children nominated by the director of children's services appointed by the local authority under section 18 of the Children Act 2004;

Medway Youth Offending Team has two social workers employed by Medway Council.

@ a police officer.

The Youth Offending Team has not had a police officer seconded into it since February 2022. Kent Police support the delivery of these statutory responsibilities through the provision of the Kent Police Youth Justice Team.

(d) a person nominated by a clinical commissioning group or a Local Health Board any part of whose area lies within the local authority's area;

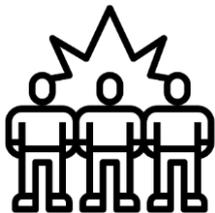
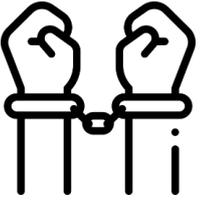
As of October 2021, Medway YOT has had a CAMHS nurse allocated to it.

(da) where the local authority is in England, a person with experience in education nominated by the director of children's services appointed by the local authority under section 18 of the Children Act 2004:

The Youth Offending Team currently has an Information advice and guidance worker allocated to it with experience in enabling children to access 16 + Education. A worker is seconded to the team from the Council's Information Advice and Guidance service.

We will be investing addition resourced into implementing the AssetPlus assessment and planning intervention framework. This has been developed by the Youth Justice Board to provide a holistic end-to-end plan to follow a child throughout their time in the youth justice system. The Asset Plus assessment contains screening tools, that screen children in the Youth Justice System, in relation to emotional and mental health issues, speech, language and neuro development issues, substance use issues and identifies whether children are at risk of sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation. The key aim of this tool is to gain a clearer distinction between the identification of need and the likelihood of reoffending to help ensure that youth justice interventions are appropriately targeted or appropriate referrals are made. Through these screening tools we can identify levels of need and subsequently provide better support to our local cohort of children.

The table below presents a needs analysis of young people supported by the Medway YOT. Data is taken from the Asset Plus screening tools from the case closures of the financial year of 2022/23 (01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023). During this year, 80 children were closed by the team, meaning that their order or intervention ended during this period. The table presents both the crude numbers and percentages of children.

Needs Analysis of Youth Offending Team Cohort: Case Closures 2022 / 23.			
			
56- Emotional Mental Health 70%	13- EHCP Plans 16%	58- Substance Misuse 72%	59- Speech, Language and Neuro Development 74%
		CSE	
28- Looked After Child 35%	17- Gang Affiliation 21%	9- At Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation 11%	50- At Risk of Criminal Exploitation 62%

This data set out the prevalence of issues affecting children who have been screened. Key issues arising are emotional and mental health, substance misuse and Speech, Language and Neuro Development. These findings do not represent a formal diagnosis. What they do reveal however are issues affecting children related to their emotional and mental health. These issues would benefit from being further assessed by a mental health professional or a substance misuse worker if the matter relates to substance misuse.

In terms of the resourcing of the Youth Offending Team what is important is that those children who are open to the team have access to the appropriate resources / professional services who can respond to the issues identified by the Asset Plus screening tools. The table below presents the Youth Offending Teams current resources in relation to these areas.

Resource provision for key needs identified through Asset Plus screening tools:	
Emotional and Mental Health screening tool.	CAMHS nurse is seconded into the team.
The Speech, Language and Neuro Development screening tool.	Current provision is not in place. Local commissioning is exploring a potential innovative solution to meeting this need. See below.
Substance use screening tool.	Current provision through Open Road Young People’s Service. Plans are in an advanced stage to increase the level of service provided to the YOT as this continues to be one of the highest areas of need.
Identification of CSE and Gang affiliation.	Close working with the Adolescent Team – partnership working with the Violence Reduction Unit.

The table demonstrates that overall, the youth offending team in Medway is resourced to meet the assessed needs of the children referred to it. Resources and partnerships are in place to enable the YOT to meet the needs of those children where there are indicators of need in relation to emotional and mental health / substance use and the identification of CSE and gang affiliation.

The YOT has a strong relationship with commissioning teams within the council. Work is being undertaken to commission a service to address the needs of those children whose screenings indicated issues in relation to Speech, Language and Neuro Development. A highly innovative response is being developed with NHS support with a company called Kids Speech Lab (KSL). KSL is a remote screening and intervention digital app for speech, language & communication. The app uses audio examples of the child which are reviewed by a qualified Speech & Language professional who provides families with a brief assessment and activities/exercises. It provides a “clinical first impression”. KSL are wanting to develop the app to be available to young people in the youth justice system. The service delivered through the App will achieve the following:

- Support Case Workers and professionals.
- Identify how best to communicate with the child.
- Empower the young person in dealing with judicial processes.
- Support identification of missed SLC needs or even Neurodevelopmental needs – and suggest responses to these.

This is an example of the Youth Justice Partnership seeking and finding innovative solutions to the meeting the needs of children.

Prior to the pandemic the YOT had looked to the skills of the staff team in terms of developing the resources that can be made available to children. If a member of staff had a particular skill or interest, they produced an intervention based around it that was advertised to children by means of flyers and posters in the waiting room. This approach proved popular with children as staff were able to deliver interventions closely linked to the interests of children in areas such as sports and cooking. Identity work was delivered through these sessions helping children explore their potential and exploring with them their goals and aspirations for their future through these interventions. The current staff team has many talents and expertise including enabling children to express themselves through music, art and sport. We are looking to relaunch this approach which both increases the interventions and resources that can be offered to children but also directly values staff’s individual talents and interests and the more personalised contribution that they can make to the work undertaken with children.

In January 2023 the team successfully recruited to the role of an Interventions Officer. Part of this role entails the accreditation of interventions through AQA awards, and the development of specific interventions to address the identified offending related needs of the children that the team works with. As described earlier in this plan the ambition that children will have an accredited qualification for the interventions that they undertake with the Youth Offending Team has been a long-held ambition of the team. Providing children with accreditation for the time that they spend working with the team is important in terms reframing children’s experience of youth justice as being something that has a positive impact upon their lives, increasing their self-esteem and their future aspirations. In February 2023 Medway YOT was approved as a AQA unit award centre. At the beginning of May this year the first 4 children received AQA certification for the work that they had undertaken with the youth offending Team. During this 2023/24 plan it is our ambition to significantly increase the numbers of children achieve an accredited intervention whilst working with the team.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to resources and services and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
7:1	An intervention for children who have been positively screened for Speech, Language and Neuro Development issues.	Develop the digital provision with Kids Speech Lab to provide a resource for these children.	A resource in place to deliver assessments and interventions for those children positively screened for Speech, Language and Neuro Development issues.
7:2	For a wider range of innovative interventions to be in place based on the staff teams skills and interests.	For the team to develop its offer of interventions to children utilising the skills and interests of the staff team.	For programs to be in place and available to children that music – arts and sports (and other areas drawn from staff skills, knowledge and expertise).
7:3	To significantly increase the use of accreditation.	Increase the delivery of accreditation to children on court orders. To offer all children on out of court interventions an accredited intervention.	70% of children on court orders to have received a AQA accredited award in relation to an intervention that they have undertaken at the YOT.

			To be able to offer accredited interventions to all children on out of court disposals.
7:4	To have developed accredited interventions that address offending related needs.	Statistical data is used to identify what offence needs require interventions to address them.	Accredited interventions are in place to address the offence types that are most impacting upon the community.

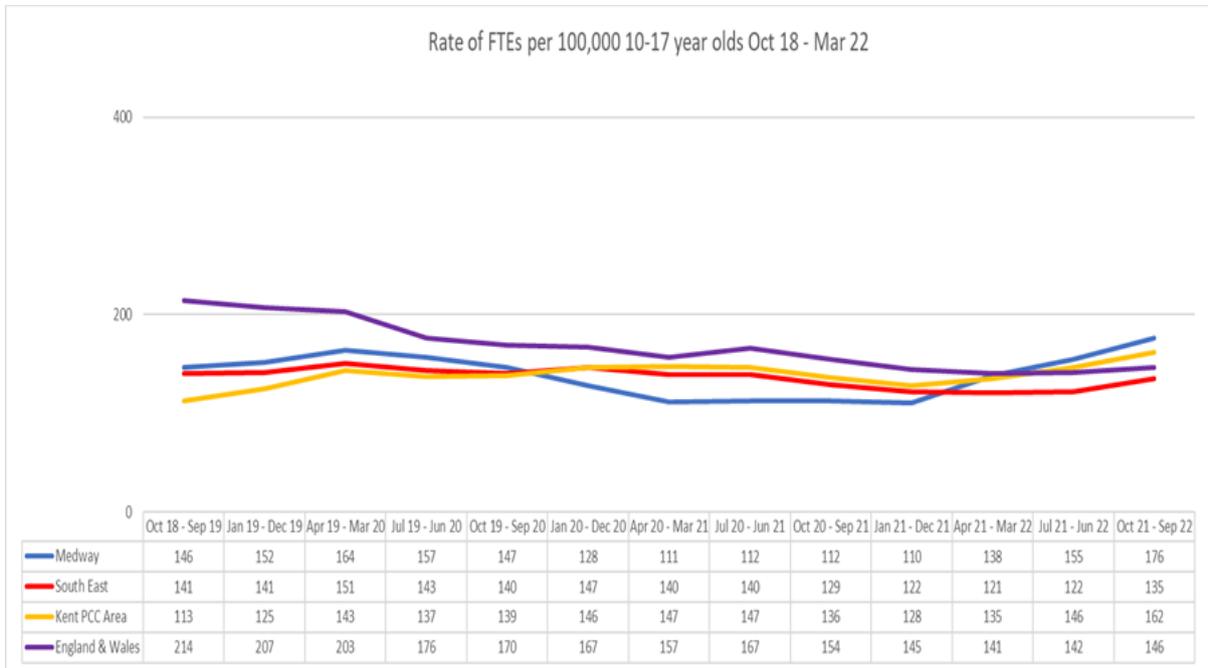
8. Performance

This section of the plan describes how Medway is performing in relation to nationally measured targets. Some analysis of performance is given alongside a description of the how the plan is targeted at improving performance. The national targets explored are:

- First time entrants
- Binary reoffending rate
- Frequency of reoffending
- Use of custody

8.1. First time entrants

First time entrants (FTEs) are young people aged 10 to 17 who receive their first youth caution or court conviction. The data for this indicator comes from the Police National Computer (PNC), is published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and forms part of the YJB’s YOT data summary. The data is collected in rolling 12-month periods to March, July, September, and December of each year.

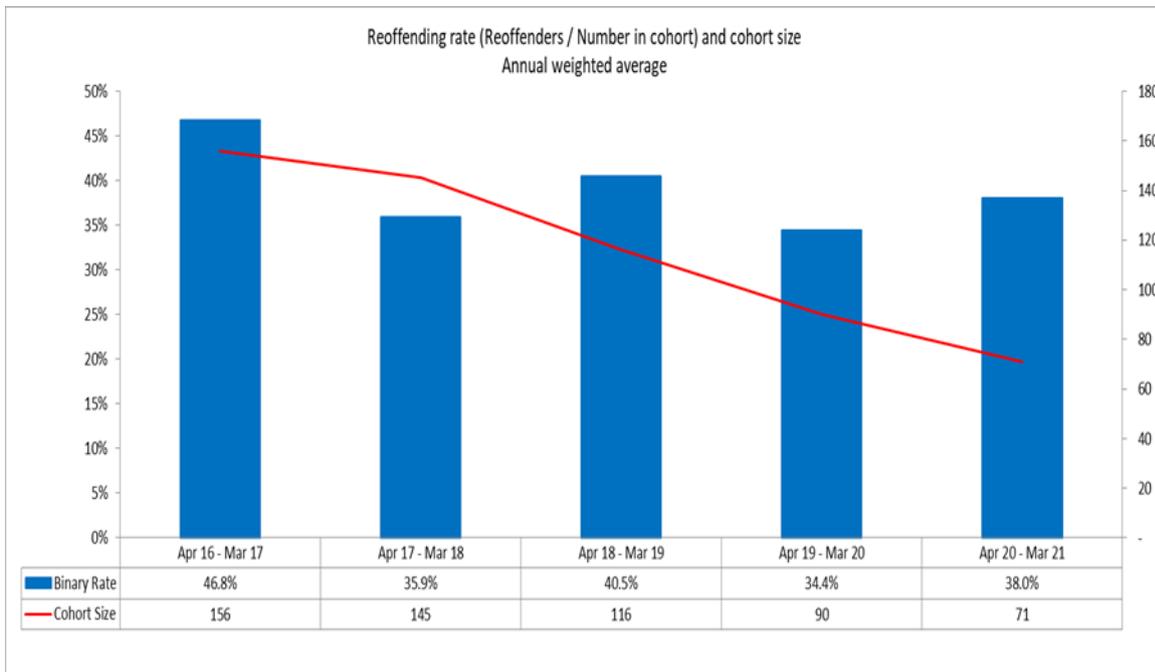
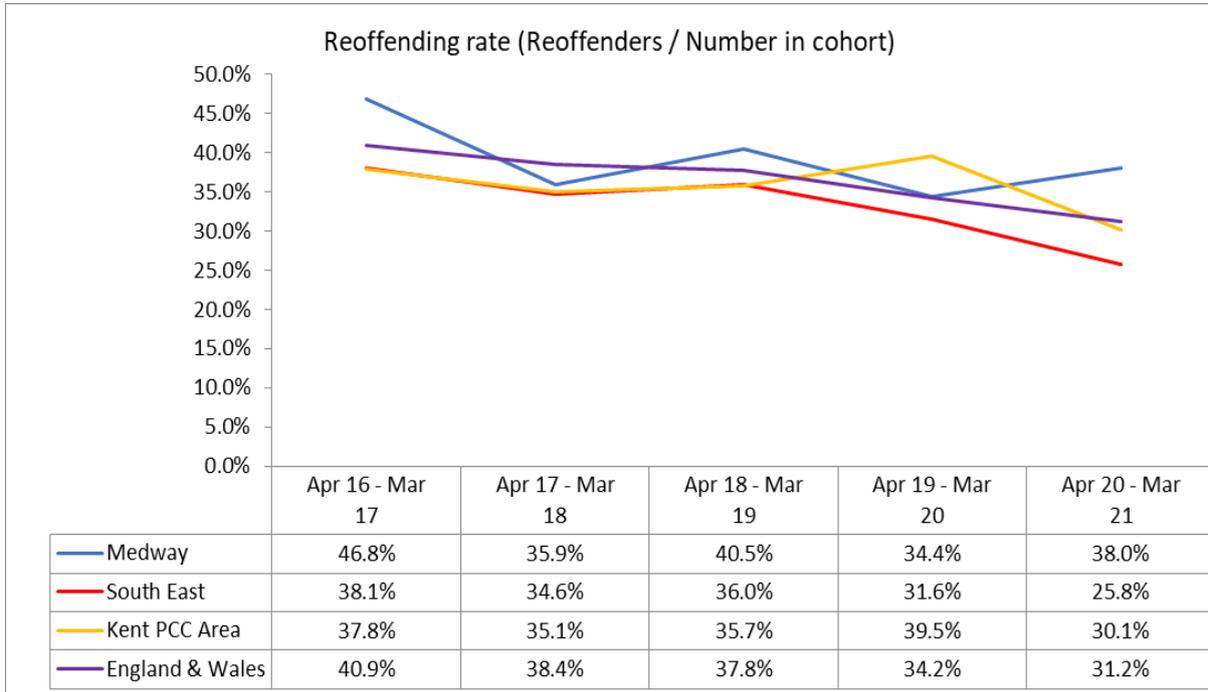


8.2. Reoffending

Reoffending rate data is sourced from the Police National Computer and is published by the Ministry of Justice. The plot shows the reoffending rate in percentage based on the latest available 12-month

data. The cohort included in this plot consists of all the children and young people who received a pre-court or court disposal or were released from custody within that time.

Reoffending rate (Reoffenders / Number in cohort)



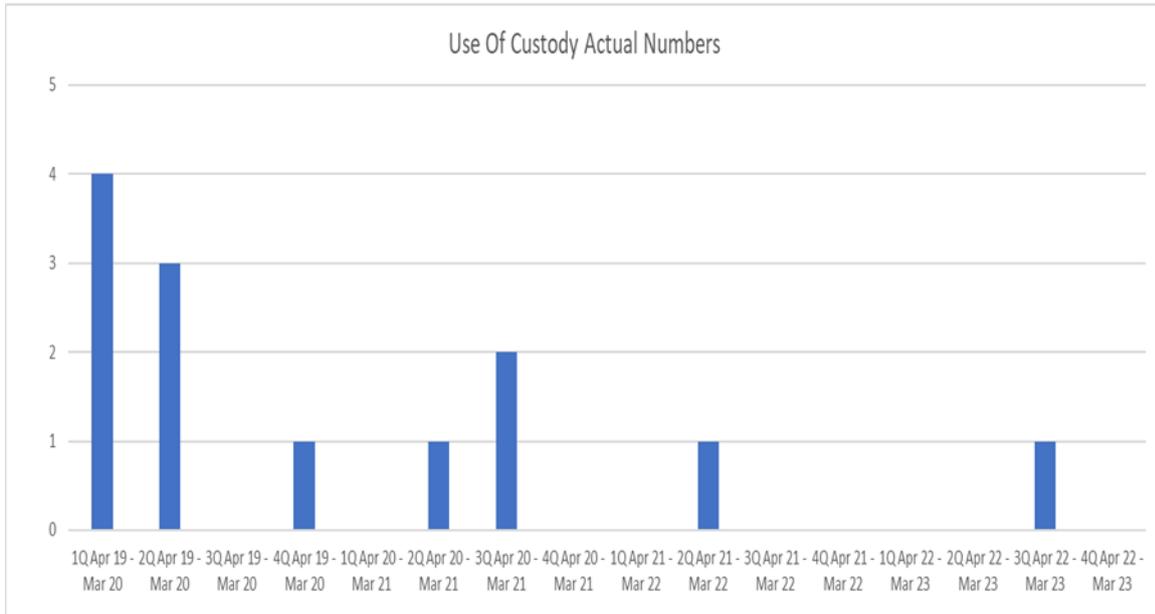
The methodology for calculating reoffending rates can be found in the ‘Ministry of Justice, Guide to Proven Re-offending Statistics 2018’ report.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729651/guide-to-proven-reoffending-statistics-jul18.pdf

Annual figures for youth reoffending are calculated by taking a weighted average of the four preceding three-month offender cohorts. The binary reoffending rate is the proportion of reoffenders who reoffend.

8.3. Use of custody

A court may choose to give a child a custodial sentence if the offense they committed is very serious and cannot be adequately addressed with a fine or a community sentence. Two children in Medway have been sentenced to custody in the last two years. This is below the family average for use of custody.



8.4. Discussion

The above data is provided by the national Youth Justice Board. Numerical data is provided but not case data. This means that by using the data provided to us above we cannot identify the actual children represented.

There has been an increase in both FTE and reoffending rates since the last report. Prior to the latest available year, Medway's rate of FTEs was below national and regional averages. The latest available data shows Medway's FTE rate to be higher than the regional and national rates.

The latest reoffending rate in Medway is also higher than regional and national averages. Despite this, the data does show that the overall cohort of children who reoffend has reduced. In Medway, we have a small number of young people who are committing more offences per person. Our latest figure was 5.5 reoffences per person.

Any explanation of the increase of FTEs at this stage would be speculative. One action of this plan is to undertake further work to identify these children, as well as better understand the cohort and the key factors driving increases in rates.

Regarding the reoffending rates, we have been working to identify these children and better understand their needs. This has been done by keeping local case-based data covering a period of

two years. This data has enabled us to identify the children who are reoffending over the period of a year.

The figures representing the use of custody continue to represent all time low numbers for Medway. This is encouraging.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to performance and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
8:1	For the partnership board to understand and be able to respond to the local increase in the numbers of first-time entrants.	Identify those children who are first time entrants then identify their characteristics. Identify what measures would be needed to take place to prevent the continued increase in FTEs.	A paper to be presented to the youth Justice Partnership Board identifying the characteristics and needs of FTEs at the partnership board meeting on 12/10/2023.
8:2	For the partnership board to understand and be able to respond to the local increase in the rate of re-offending.	Identify those children who are re-offenders then identify their characteristics. Identify what measures would be needed to take place to encourage their desistence from offending.	For the performance digest to present this analysis at a partnership board meeting within the time period of this plan.

9. National key performance indicators

The Ministry of Justice have designed new key performance measures to monitor the performance of youth justice services. These new measures are also designed to help identify the key barriers to reducing reoffending rates. The new indicators collect data on:

- Accommodation
- Education, training and employment
- Special educational needs or disability (SEND)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing
- Substance misuse
- Out-of-court disposals
- Management board attendance
- Wider services
- Serious violence
- Victims

This report has been written prior to the first submission of the new National Key Performance Indicators. The reporting deadline for the first quarter is 31 August 2023.

Medway has been proactive in seeking to establish accurate reporting mechanisms in respect to these indicators. The 2022/23 quarter 2 performance digest presented data in relation to each of these indicators. Systems are in place to ensure that accurate reporting of these indicators in the quarterly performance digest are presented to the partnership board.

A summary of the data collected for these indicators over the next year will be presented in the 2024/25 youth justice plan.

10. Priorities

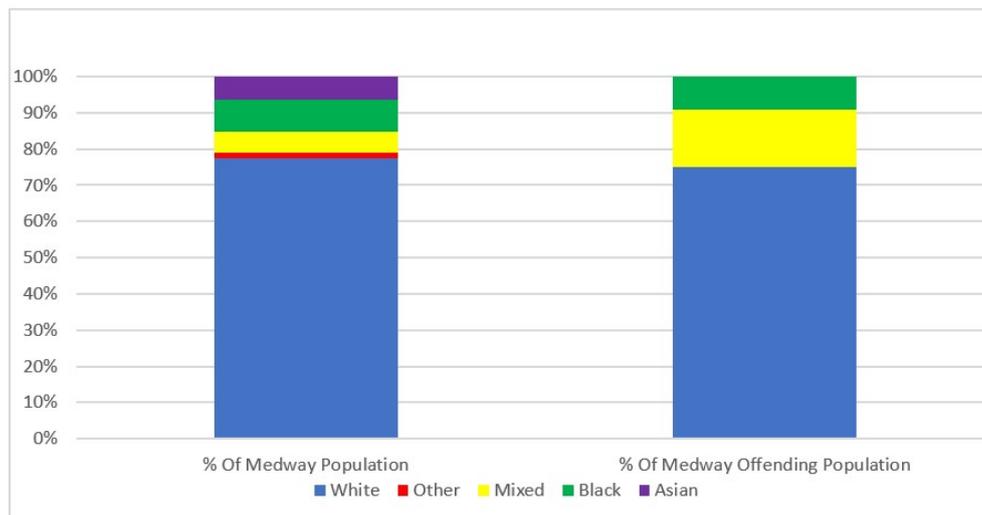
The following priorities have been identified by the youth justice board for inclusion in the plan. In response to each of these priorities this plan presents relevant local data and establishes actions as to how these priorities are going to be addressed.

1. Children from groups which are over-represented
2. Prevention
3. Diversion
4. Education
5. Restorative approaches and victims
6. Serious violence and exploitation
7. Detention in Police custody
8. Remands
9. Use of custody
10. Constructive resettlement

10.1. Children from groups which are over-represented

Local data in respect to children who are over-represented in the Youth Justice system is complex and requires careful analysis and exploration. Caution is required in drawing conclusions from the data on account of the small numbers represented by the Medway cohort. The Youth Justice Board publish a local data set that enables Youth Justice partnerships to analysis local data in relation to disproportionality – this is referred to in this plan as the disproportionality tool kit.

2021 – 2022 representation of % of the population compared to % of offending population



This plot represents the percentage of children from different ethnic groups compared to the percentage in the offending population.

Whilst the Youth Justice Board disproportionality tool kit does not ‘flag’ any disproportionality issues in respect to Medway, it is also clear that there are some areas where disproportionality does appear to be indicated. This section of the plan shall present an overview of the data and then present a discussion with actions.

Nationally it is known that Black and Mixed ethnicity boys are over-represented in the youth justice system. The above data shows that Mixed ethnicity children represent 6% of the general population

and 16% of the offending population (for Black children the percentage in the population and the percentage in the offending population is the same = 9%). The numbers of children are however low in both cases with only 4 Black and 7 mixed ethnicity children in the offending population – out of a total of 44. As the number of children is low, this prevents them from being flagged as statistically significant.

The data from the disproportionality toolkit also indicates that for the year ending in in 2021 ethnic minority groups represented 43% of those children that received a community penalty and 100% of those children who received a custodial sentence (in respect to custodial sentences this amounted to 3 children).

The data appears to indicate that the numbers of Black and Mixed ethnicity children being made subject to community and custodial sentences is proportionately more than the numbers represented in the offending population. Neither the gravity of the offences being committed by these children, or the category of offences provides an explanation as to why these children are represented in the tier of community sentences in the numbers that they are (in that the offences that they are committing are not more serious than those committed by White children).

This is a priority area that has been explored by the inspectorate in the thematic report titles - ‘The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system, A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021’. It is important for youth justice services locally to responsive to the findings of thematic inspections.

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/10/The-experiences-of-black-and-mixed-heritage-boys-in-the-youth-justice-system-thematic-report-v1.0.pdf>

This report identifies a range of factors that affects the type of criminal justice outcome that Black and mixed ethnicity children are made subject to. These include – the efficacy of pre court interventions – the extent to which YOT reports to the court are responsive to the experiences of Black and mixed ethnicity children - Police stop and search activity – Police charging decisions – the decisions made by the Crown Prosecution Service – the sentencing decisions of the Youth Court. The report also identifies other factors including these children’s experiences of children’s social care services and education.

The report contains a wealth of observations and recommendations, a few of which have been cited below, that specifically address Youth Justice Partnership and leadership. These have been identified in this plan to provide a starting place for local actions to respond to this important issue.

3.2. Local YOS partnership governance and leadership

Vision and strategy:

Boards did not have mechanisms in place to continuously measure and monitor progress against a set of shared targets and objectives. There was an ambition for improvement but it was not always clearly defined. Not all services were using the YJB disproportionality toolkit or other data to develop an understanding of which children they needed to focus on to reduce over-representation.

The role of YOS board members in highlighting issues of disproportionality and advocating for the YOS:

Board members did not always have a thorough understanding of how practices and processes in their own agencies were impacting on the longer-term outcomes for black and mixed heritage boys.

We found that local police stop and search data and information on children released under investigation is not shared at partnership board level, which means that any disproportionality in the application of police processes cannot be examined.

The role of YOS leaders in supporting effective service delivery and addressing disproportionality:

The majority of services referenced wider local authority equality and diversity policies in relation to their practice and expectations. A minority of services had created specific guidance, for example when assessing factors relating to the child’s self-identity and their personal and social situation.

Some observations regarding the Youth Offending Team particularly in respect to disproportionality. The staff team have developed a model of practice of working with children which is responsive to issues of identity (this is described in section 2 of this plan). This is not ‘a one size fits all’ approach but is rather an approach that has at its starting place a recognition that responding to a child’s experience of their identity is central to working collaboratively with them.

Over the last year some progress has been made in increasing the ethnic diversity of both the Youth Offending Team staff team and the Referral Order Youth Offender Panel members volunteer group.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to children from groups which are over-represented and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:1:1	For the Youth Justice partnership Board to be aware of local disproportionality data- taken from the YJB disproportionality tool kit.	The initial recommendation is to present this data to the board annually. Analysing the local data on a quarterly basis is unlikely to yield a comprehensive or significant insight.	That the board has had oversight of and is able to respond to the data contained within the YJB disproportionality tool kit.
10:1:2	For the Youth Justice partnership Board to be aware of partnership agency data regarding disproportionality	That disproportionality becomes one of the themes in the yearly cycle of Youth Justice Board partnership meetings. That the Youth Justice partnership agencies present their agency data that explores this issue.	That the board has had oversight of and is able to respond to partnership agency data regarding disproportionality.
10:1:3	That the findings of the HMIP thematic report - ‘The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system, A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021’ - are discussed and responded to by the local partnership board.	That the HMIP thematic report - ‘The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system, A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021’ – is circulated to board members for discussion at a partnership board meeting.	A full response to the HMIP report will need to be given by the local Youth Justice Partnership board.
10:1:4	Specific youth justice guidance is developed to address the issue of disproportionality.	Specific guidance is in place that addresses the theme of addressing disproportionality in assessment – the presentation of reports – planning and delivering interventions with children.	Local guidance being in place.

10.2. Prevention

This plan uses the following Youth Justice Board definition for prevention.

[https://yjresourcehub.uk/images/YJB/Definitions for Prevention and Diversion YJB 2021.pdf](https://yjresourcehub.uk/images/YJB/Definitions%20for%20Prevention%20and%20Diversion%20YJB%202021.pdf)

“Prevention is support and intervention with children (and their parents/carers) who may be displaying behaviours which may indicate underlying needs or vulnerability. In practice this involves a tiered approach of early and targeted prevention. The aim being to address unmet needs, safeguard, promote positive outcomes and stop children entering the formal youth justice system.”

The Youth Justice Board identify two tiers of prevention. These are...

“Early Prevention is support for children (with no linked offence) to address unmet needs / welfare concerns, usually delivered by mainstream and voluntary sector services. The YJS Management Board may have an oversight role in monitoring and advocating on behalf of vulnerable children. YJS’s may also share youth justice / adolescent expertise to improve outcomes for children.

Targeted Prevention is specialist support for children who have had some contact with criminal justice services but are not currently being supported through diversion, an out of court disposal or statutory order (this could include children who have had previous YJS intervention). This is to address unmet needs / welfare concerns. The aim is to improve outcomes through positive interaction while minimising harmful experiences for children.”

The Youth Offending Team in Medway is not engaged in delivering Prevention activities at either of these tiers.

Prevention work that meets the following definitions is undertaken by Medway’s Youth Service and Early Help services. Detached youth work has been implemented throughout Medway, focusing on children who have been identified as involved in anti-social behaviour.

The Youth Service reported to the board on its Prevention activities in October 2022.

Actions

This plan aspires to create a more formal link between the Youth Service’s prevention work and work of the Youth Justice Partnership board. The following action has been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:2:1	The prevention activity of Medway Youth Service to be represented at the Medway youth Justice Partnership Board.	The manager of the Youth Service will be invited to be a member of the partnership board. The Youth Service is invited to contribute to the 2024/25 Youth Justice Plan to incorporate its prevention activity in that plan.	The prevention activity of the Youth Service to be represented in the Medway Youth Justice Plan. The manager of the Youth Service to be a member of the partnership board.

10.3. Diversion

The Youth Justice Board define diversion as being -

“Diversion is where children with a linked offence receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record, avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system and associated stigmatisation. This may involve the YJS delivering support / intervention that may or may not be voluntary and/or signposting children (and parent/carers) into relevant services. All support should be proportionate, aimed at addressing unmet needs and supporting prosocial life choices.”

The Youth Justice Board identifies Diversionary options as including –

- Community Resolution (Out of Court Disposal),
- No Further Action with voluntary support offered by the Youth Offending Team,
- No Further Action – Outcome 22: A diversionary police outcome that can be used when diversionary, educational or intervention activity has taken place or been offered, and it is not in the public interest to take any further action.

The Medway partnership board particularly wants to intervene in a diversionary manner with those children subject to no further action by the police. It has been a longstanding concern expressed by the board regarding the number of NFAs that children receive prior to their receiving an out of court outcome. Data provided by the police in October 2019 showed that the 59 children who were considered for an out of court disposal had between them accrued a total of 352 NFAs before the offence for which they were being dealt with. This is an average total of 6 NFA's / child (the highest number of NFA's accrued by any one child was 31 and the lowest was 0).

There are multiple reasons why no further action is taken by the police – but it is reasonable to expect that in many cases the presence of multiple NFA's on a child's record indicates offence related needs that would benefit from diversionary intervention.

The use of Outcome 22 in respect to NFA's is not a practice well established in Medway. Recent college of policing guidance has outlined how Outcome 22 can be used as a deferred prosecution for offences of a more significant level of seriousness than is usually associated with the delivery of an out of court disposal. Put simply a child can be put forward for an Outcome 22 intervention program and if they complete it successfully, they are not then prosecuted for the offence that resulted in their referral. The use of Outcome 22 in this way represents a bolder diversionary stance providing the opportunity to significantly extend the capacity of diversionary programs to prevent children from becoming first time entrants in the youth justice system. Given the high rates of first-time entrants reported on in section 8 of this plan it is important that diversionary activity is delivered boldly and effectively in Medway.

Medway is currently delivering the Ministry of Justice's Turnaround program. This program is designed to deliver diversionary activity to those children considered as being on the cusp of offending. The criteria for children's suitability for the program are...

- Release under investigation or pre-charge bail:
- Anti-social behaviour - acceptable behaviour contacts (ABCs)
- Anti-social behaviour - ancillary orders
- Interviewed under caution following arrest/voluntary interview
- No Further Action (including Outcome 22)

- Community Resolution (Outcome 8)
- First-time youth caution (not including conditional caution)
- Release under investigation or pre-charge bail
- Discharged by a court

Except for the final criterion of those children discharged by the Youth Court - all the other categories require identification from the police.

Kent Police are currently developing a Child Centred Policing team that will have community responsibilities for ages 0-25. These teams are being established in June 2023. The relationship that these teams will have with the Youth Offending Team will be key in terms of the effective delivery of diversionary activity with children.

Actions

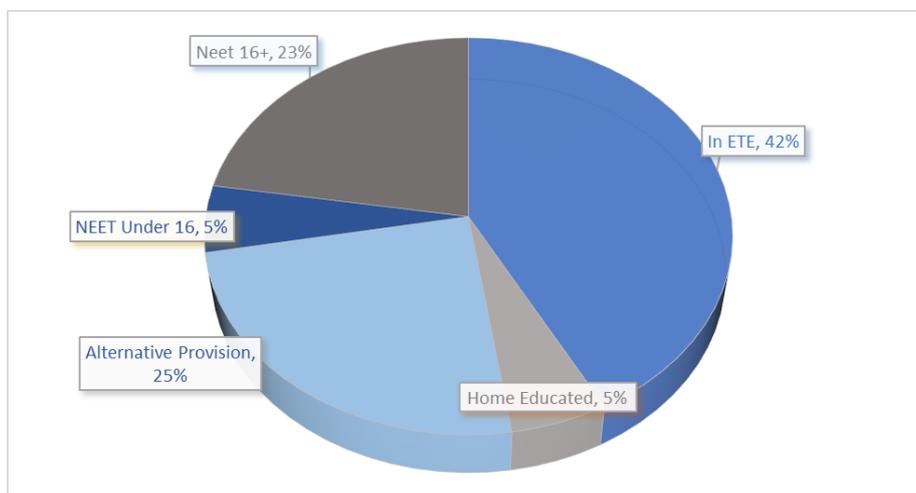
The following actions are proposed in relation to diversion and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:3:1	The delivery of diversionary interventions for those children subject to No Further Action (NFA) by the police.	Kent Police and Medway Youth Offending Team should establish a process for the timely identification and referral of children subject to NFA to the Youth Offending Team Turnaround Program.	A process to be in place by the end of Q2 2023 / 24. For regular numbers of children subject to Police NFA being identified each month.
10:3:2	The extension of diversionary work with children through the use of outcome 22 being used as a deferred prosecution linked to NFAs.	Kent Police and Medway Youth Offending Team should establish a process for the use of outcome 22 as a deferred prosecution.	Evidence of the use of outcome 22 as a deferred prosecution.

10.4. Education

Local data indicates that children in the Youth Offending Team cohort not being in education is a significant issue.

Education and employment status of children / cohort 2021-22



The plot above presents the ETE status of the 147 children open to the Youth Offending Team during the period 2021 – 2022. Below are presented the actual numbers of children.

Status	Count	Proportion
In ETE	62	42%
Home Educated	8	5%
Alternative Provision	36	25%
NEET Under 16	8	5%
NEET 16+	33	23%

There were a total 41 children who were identified as being NEET, representing 28% of the entire cohort of 147 children. 50% of both the under 16 and the over 16 NEET cohort were either a child in care, or on a child protection plan or on a child in need plan. 12 (29%) of the NEET group of children are Black or Mixed ethnicity. Within the NEET figure there are 2 children who are enrolled, but are not attending school. Of the entire cohort of 147 children 21 had a Medway EHCP plan in place (14%). Of the NEET cohort 5 children had a Medway EHCP plan in place (12%). Of the NEET children 8 were transferred into Medway from other local authorities (19%). Most of the children identified as being NEET were on court orders, meaning they were no longer first-time entrants in the Youth Justice system.

Medway is well supported in terms of the alternative provision available. A total of 36 children (25%) were in alternative provision during this period. The two pupil referral units in Medway have recent outstanding and good OFSTED inspection ratings. The Youth Offending Team has close working relationships with both of these schools – supporting the children open to the team who are pupils.

The youth offending team is supported by a worker from the councils own Information Advice and Guidance service – providing ETE advice and support to the children open to it. The Youth Justice Partnership board has senior education representation on it with the Strategic head of Education – quality and inclusion in attendance.

There is no single solution to the addressing the problem of children not being in education. Multiple factors impact upon this issue, particularly any Adverse Childhood Experiences that have taken place in the child’s life. Often the children that teamwork with have very low sense of self-esteem and a lack of educational aspiration on account of this.

The strategy of this plan is to seek to provide the children working with the Youth Offending Team positive experiences of success, with the aim of rekindling their educational aspiration. As described in section 7 of this plan the team is now seeking to routinely formally accredit using the AQA award scheme interventions undertaken with children. Action 7:3 seeks to ensure that 70% of children on court orders to have received a AQA accredited award in relation to an intervention that they have undertaken at the YOT. Working with children on court orders in this way will hopefully have a significant impact on the NEET figures over the coming year. Our hope is that once children grow in confidence, they are more likely to engage positively with the information advice and guidance service and successfully secure and maintain ETE provision.

We also want to work more closely supporting children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Currently these plans are not routinely accessed and referred to when working with children. Given the degree of contact and support that the staff of the Youth Offending Team provide to the children that they work with it is clear that they can play a role in supporting the delivery of the EHCP plans.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to education and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

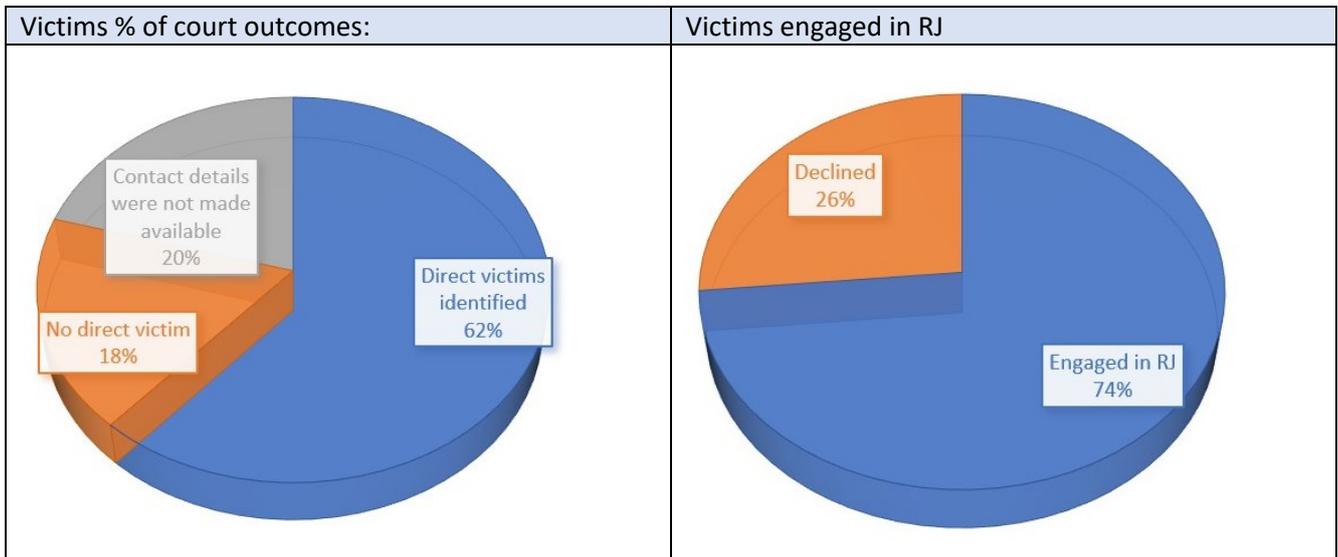
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:4:1	Collaborative support of children in Education on EHCP Plans. Improving their educational outcomes.	Ensure that checks are made in respect to whether a child has a EHCP Plan – and that the youth justice practitioner makes contact with the school to access the plan.	For the Youth Offending Team staff to access and be aware of the contents of all EHCP plans of the children that they are working with. To be able to evidence the support of children’s needs

10.5. Restorative approaches and victims

Giving victims a voice in the criminal justice process is a key aspiration of the youth Offending Team in Medway. Restorative approaches to working with children who offend and the victims of their offences is a central part of the work undertaken by the team.

The team has a Restorative Justice practitioner within the staff team. However, the delivery of restorative justice is not seen as being solely their role to deliver, rather the Restorative Justice practitioner undertakes their work in collaboration with the child’s youth justice practitioner. This approach ensures that restorative practice is central to the work undertaken with children and that the victims wishes are kept firmly in sight during the entire course of the work undertaken with the child.

Restorative Practice 2022 – 23



In 2022/23 there were 39 outcomes in the Medway youth court. 7 of these outcomes had No Direct Victim (18%). For 8 of these outcomes no contact details for the victims were made available. This is on account of the 7 of the offences taking place in London and there not being a mechanism available to get the details of victims from the metropolitan police.

There were 34 victims associated with the 24 outcomes where victim details were available (this is on account of some children being sentenced for multiple offences). All these 34 victims were contacted by the Youth Offending Team to identify whether or not they wanted to engage in restorative justice. 25 engaged in Restorative justice (74%) and 9 declined (26%).

As the above data indicates there is a good level of engagement from victims in the restorative work undertaken in respect to court outcomes.

This work is entirely victim led- and the wishes of the victims of Offending are respected through out the process. What the above data does show is that the youth Offending Team is able to engage with victims effectively. It is well known that engagement in restorative approaches is beneficial for both victim and the children who commit offences. The above data shows that the team is effectively engaging victims and enabling them to experience these benefits.

In 2022 court outcomes represented 34% of the overall caseload of children working with the Youth Offending Team. The other 66% of the cohort was made up of children referred to the team by the police as out of court disposals.

The Office of the Police Crime Commissioner commissions the victim contact service in respect to out of court disposals and the Youth Offending Team are not responsible for the delivery of restorative approaches to this group. The local experience of this arrangement is that minimal restorative approaches are delivered in respect of out of court disposals. This is an area of practice that needs to be addressed by the partnership board.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to restorative approaches and victims and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:5:1	Oversight by the partnership board of the delivery of restorative approaches to the victims of offences committed by children subject to out of court disposals.	The partnership board should request data on the level of engagement in restorative approaches from the PCC office.	For the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board to be aware of the levels of engagement in restorative approaches for the victims of offences committed by children subject to out of court disposals. To be able to compare these rates of engagement with the levels of engagement achieved by the Youth Offending Team. To be able to recommendations to the PCC office regarding future commissioning.

10.6. Serious violence and exploitation

Medway Youth Offending Team is working alongside partners in the local authority to discharge the duty contained in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 to respond to serious violence. This duty entails that relevant services work together to share information and allow them to target their interventions, where possible through existing partnership structures, collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities. In Kent and Medway this work is being led by the Police Crime Commissioners office. The Youth Offending Team has attended events hosted by the PCCs office to develop a Kent wide response to the duty.

Medway Youth Offending Team has close links with the local Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). Representatives from the violence reduction unit attend the monthly ‘Risk’ meeting convened by the

Youth Offending Team to manages the risks of those children assessed as presenting a ‘high’ level of risk to the local community.

The Youth Offending Team has collaborated with the VRU and supported recent initiatives such as the delivery of the ‘focused deterrence’ approach to addressing the violence perpetrated by groups of youths in the community. Put simply the focused deterrence model provides both support and deterrence to children assessed as being at risk of committing serious violence in the community.

Key to the delivery of the of the serious violence duty is the sharing of information to be able to target interventions. This plan seeks to support the VRU initiative to have a single dashboard of data across both Kent and Medway to identify indicators of serious violence.

Another area that the Youth Offending Team is seeking to collaborate with the VRU is developing the risk assessment and support provided in respect to children transferred into Medway who have been involved in incidents of serious violence / gangs / county lines activity. It is often the case that the Youth Offending Team is the first local agency to be made aware of children who has been placed in Medway from other local authorities for serious offences of violence. Given the small geographical area within Medway it is critical that these children are supported by robust risk assessments, that provide a level of support that minimises their risks to the local community.

The Youth Offending Team is located within Medway children’s social care. It has close working relationships with social work teams within the council and particularly the Adolescent Team. Most of the children known to present a risk to the local community and known to be themselves at risk of either criminal / sexual exploitation are open to both the youth offending team and the Adolescent Team.

A practice standard to develop the two teams collaborative working to safeguard children was developed in 2022. Due to changes in the staffing of the adolescent team, and the Youth Offending Team there would be benefit in re-launching this standard.

The Youth Offending Team has representation on the local children’s services Missing and exploitation panel. We work closely alongside colleagues to ensure that collaborative approaches are delivered to support children at risk of exploitation.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to serious violence and exploitation and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:6:1	A dataset is developed across Kent and Medway to identify risks related to Serious Youth Violence.	That the Youth Justice Partnership board should support the development of the Violence Reduction Units proposed Kent and Medway-wide dashboard.	A dashboard being in place to inform the delivery of the serious violence duty.
10:6:2	Strong collaborative working practices in place between the Youth Offending Team and the Adolescent Team.	A launch of the joint working practice standards developed in 2022.	That the practice standard is routinely in use.
10:6:3	A local approach to effectively managing the risk of ‘high’ risk children transferred into the area.	The VRU and the Youth Offending Team develop an approach that minimises the risks that these children present to the local community.	An approach being agreed between the VRU and the youth Offending to support high risk children transferred into Medway.

10.7. Detention in police custody

The detention of children in police custody is not routinely reported on to the local Youth Justice partnership Board. The provision of appropriate adults is provided by volunteers for a non-profit organisation based in Kent, the ‘Young Lives Foundation’. The oversight of this service is undertaken by the council’s partnership commissioning team. The Youth Offending Team does not have direct involvement in the provision of this service as in some other areas. In writing this plan I am not in a position to meaningfully comment upon local compliance with the Police and criminal Evidence Act 1984. The local partnership board has been cited on developments in the provision of PACE beds locally (July 2021).

This plan recognises that this is an area of youth justice that the partnership board needs to strengthen its oversight of. It is an action of this plan for the board to strengthen its oversight of the detention of children in custody.

The Youth Offending Team has attended this year as series of meetings convened by Kent Police to address the Home Office Concordat on Children in Custody – seeking to prevent the detention of children in police stations following charge.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to detention in police custody and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:7:1	For the local Youth Justice Partnership board to achieve effective oversight of children detained in police custody.	The inclusion of children in custody as a standing item in the yearly cycle of partnership board meetings is proposed.	Data regarding children detained in youth custody will have been presented, discussed and responded to by the partnership board.

10.8. Remands

The Youth Offending Team is aware of how children are not necessarily convicted for the offences that they are remanded for, and there where possible convincing alternatives to youth detention accommodation should be provided to the court. Over the year 2022 – 23 we believe that we have achieved a successful use of bail packages in the community to reduce the use of remands.

Within the year 2022/23, 10 children were remanded into Youth Detention Accommodation in Medway. One of these children was remanded twice once at the beginning of the year and once towards the end of the year for a different offence, this brings the total to 11 remands.

With respect to 5 of these remands the Youth Offending Team successfully put forwarded bail packages to the court which were accepted, and the child was released on bail. Of these 5 children 3 of these children who were eventually released on bail were initially remanded in respect to a manslaughter case that had a high media profile in the local community. This was a particularly successful piece of work undertaken by the team working closely alongside the Crown Court. These children were supervised on bail for a significant period in the community before their trial and all of them complied with the bail conditions imposed upon them. When it came to their trial the Crown’s case against them was discontinued on account of evidential matters.

During 2022/23 of the 5 children supervised on bail in the community by the Youth Offending Team none re-offended.

Of the children who remained remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation two of these had pleaded guilty to serious sexual offences and the other 3 await trial, 1 for an offence of rape and the other two for a very serious offence of section 18 wounding.

There has been some particularly good practice in the last year in collaborative working with children’s social care to come up with packages of accommodation and support to present to the court as alternatives to youth detention accommodation. It is an action of this plan to develop this type of collaborative working in respect to future remands.

Actions

The following actions are proposed in relation to remands and have been added to the service development plan (section 15).

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:8:1	Plans for alternatives to Youth Detention Accommodation to be agreed with Childrens Social Care – when these are appropriate to present to the court.	Collaborative work with Childrens Social Care – to identify accommodation / placement / alternatives to remands to Youth detention accommodation.	Children should only remain in Youth detention accommodation when this is considered the only option by the court.

10.9. Use of custody and constructive resettlement

In the last year the Youth Offending Team has only had one child sentenced to custody. This very low rate of the use of custody means that it is not possible to present any statistically significant data in respect to the needs of these children and the issues that they face on their resettlement journeys. It is also not possible to provide examples of constructive resettlement being delivered locally on account of any such examples only referring to a single individual rather than being examples of service wide change.

In a similar theme to the above discussion on remands – the success of the Youth Offending Team locally has been in presenting convincing alternatives to the court instead of custody. Whilst only one child has been sentenced to custody in 2022 – 23 the court has considered custody in requesting ‘all options’ Pre-Sentence Reports in many cases.

Over the last year the team has sought to develop its capacity to provide intensive packages of supervision and support in the community – as alternatives to both custody and remands. These packages include the provision of the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme. A new post has been created in the team of a Youth Justice Worker. The aim of this post is to increase the capacity of the team to provide face to face contacts and interventions in the community. The Youth Justice Workers work alongside case holding staff but do not have the responsibility of the ongoing assessment and planning linked to a child, thereby freeing them up to be able to provide daily contact and support to children.

The Youth Offending Team has also continued to develop its provision of unpaid work and reparation activities in the community. The unpaid work requirement in a Youth Rehabilitation Order of up to 240 hours for children over 16 adds an element of robustness to a community sentence. As previously described in this plan we are in the process of accrediting these interventions so that children will receive recognised qualifications for their completion of unpaid work and reparation. This all increases the rehabilitative element of supervision in the community improving the viability of YOT supervision in the community as an alternative to custody.

11. Standards for children in the justice system

The most recent standards for children come from the 'Standards for children in the youth justice services 2019' report. These standards are at the heart of this plan and provide a statutory framework for the delivery of child first practice.

The most recent national standards self-assessment submitted by Medway to the National Youth Justice Board covered the same timeframe and cohort of children that were inspected in our 2020 HMIP Inspection Report. The findings of the self-assessment mirror the findings of the published HMIP Inspection report. A deficit in the teams approach to planning with young people was identified, particularly in relation to planning in response to risk and safeguarding concerns.

This audit alongside an external assessment of the Youth Offending Team undertaken by Essex Youth Offending Service in August 2021 provided an action plan to address the deficits identified by the HMIP in the planning processes undertaken with young people. We are now confident that we have a planning process that addresses both risk and safeguarding concerns as well as involves children and their parents / carers in a discussion of risk and safeguarding concerns.

The Youth Offending Team remains committed to the delivery of high-quality Youth Justice services in accordance with the National Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019. Alongside the delivery of this service improvement plan we are committed to implementing a series of audits to ensure that the plan is driving forwards the delivery of these standards as well as the best practice identified in the HMIP thematic reports.

12. Workforce development

Staff are supported to develop through an established Personal Development Review (PDR) process. This sits as part of the MedPay structure operating across the council. All staff have a PDR with annual target setting, mid and end of year reviews. Mandatory training has been delivered and compliance has been monitored. Staff have access to CareFirst counselling services free of charge through the council scheme alongside other support offered across the council. The council is currently reviewing MedPay. The service manager will be working with the HR business partners to align the structure and ensure appropriate incentives are in place for recruitment and retention.

Staff have access to an extensive list of training courses including: Safeguarding, data security, Prevent, the Public Health Champions, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, anti-racism, health and safety. The full list of over 300 courses are available via an online booking system. The YOT have full access to the support services offered through the Council Workforce development programme

In 2023/24 Medway Youth offending team will build on the existing training systems to use opportunities to improve the skill set of the workforce. Staff will have a broad knowledge of wraparound services that young people can access and where possible collaborative working will be delivered. This will include inputs from Sexual Health, Substance Use, Domestic Abuse, healthy eating, stop smoking and other healthy lifestyles.

The YOT leadership contribute to the Medway Combatting Drugs Partnership and liaise with other partners to identify opportunities for joint working and staff development.

Medway YOT will refresh the workforce needs assessment in 2023/24.

13. Evidenced-based practice and innovation

The Medway Youth Offending Team is committed to being innovative and developing more effective, evidence-based ways of engaging with young people. Section 3 of this strategy identifies the team's approach to Child First practice particularly in engaging children in the process of thinking about their futures. The team has developed this approach since 2018, an approach firmly based in the Beyond Youth Custody research's emphasis on the importance and efficacy of addressing the theme of identity in young people's lives <http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net/>.

The work of the team developing approaches to planning with young people featured in the follow up NACRO toolkit 'USING AN IDENTITY LENS: Constructive working with children in the criminal justice system' (published 27/01/2020).

<https://3bx16p38bchl32s0e12di03h-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Using-an-identity-lens-toolkit.pdf>

This toolkit identifies the importance of understanding the role of identity in working with children in the youth justice system and provides guidance in helping children develop a pro social identity. Some of the examples used in this publication were directly drawn from the work undertaken in Medway.

More recently Medway have contributed to a discussion with the national Youth Justice Board regarding planning with young people through the resettlement process. The approach developed by Medway of having a young persons plan that is delivered alongside a professionals plan has been recognised as presenting a constructive challenge to more traditional approaches.

The Youth Offending Team has been awarded pathfinder funding from the national youth Justice Board to develop the Child First approach to planning both in the community and in the context of constructive resettlement. The aim of this project is to develop a digital application that supports the delivery of child first planning with young people. The primary aim of the project is not the development of the application itself but rather sees the development of the application as being a tool to promote a child first approach to planning with children in the youth justice system. The final product produced by this project will be made available to the Youth Justice sector nationally. We are preparing for dissemination events in the autumn of 2023 to promote the application and its approach to planning with young people.

The pathfinder project has been developed alongside academic support from Professor Stephen Case and Senior Researcher Ann Browning from the University of Loughborough. This support has sought to steer the project so that it aligned to Child First principles. Every step of the projects development has been undertaken in conjunction and collaboration with children.

14. Evaluation

The YOT provide data to the Medway Combatting Drugs partnership to contribute to the evidence base.

In 2022/23 it was identified that there was a gap in services for young people who used substances. The staff reported that cannabis use among the young people had increased and had become normalised behaviour. Historically there had been a worker embedded in the YOT but this had been withdrawn several years earlier. The YOT approached Public Health Commissioners to see what collaborative work could be done. Using Public Health held Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant funding it has been agreed to host a shared full-time young people's

substance misuse worker who will be embedded in YOT and the Youth Service. This will enable faster access to treatment services but also upskill staff knowledge of substances, their prevalence and screening tools. This will improve the outcomes for young people and provide greater resilience across the organisation.

15. Service development plan

During the preparation of the youth justice plan, the following areas have been considered:

- Service development: What key activities and outcomes are needed for children and how they will be delivered.
- Challenges, risks, and issues
- Sign off, submission and approval

Detail for each of these areas is captured in the proceeding sections.

15.1. Service development

The service development plan detailed below is divided into two sections: 1) Actions; 2) Priorities.

15.1.1. Actions

The section identifies actions for each of the main headings in this report.

Actions address areas of development that have been identified in the analysis and discussions.

Board development:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
5:1	For the Youth Justice Partnership board to scrutinise evaluate local youth Justice governance arrangements.	For the local partnership board to audit itself against the HMIP criteria for- 1.Organisational delivery. 1.1. Governance and leadership (and against any future revisions to this criteria).	Completion of self-Audit through development day.
5:2	For the Youth Justice Partnership board to challenge and evaluate the delivery of Youth Justice Services based on HMIP inspection criteria.	For the local partnership board to be familiar and conversant with the HMIP criteria for court disposals and out of court disposals (and against any future revisions to this criteria).	Training to be completed to the board in relations to the HMIP criteria for inspection.

Resources and Services:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
7:1	An intervention for children who have been positively screened for Speech, Language and Neuro Development issues.	Develop the digital provision with Kids Speech Lab to provide a resource for these children.	A resource in place to deliver assessments and interventions for those children positively screened for Speech, Language and Neuro Development issues.
7:2	For a wider range of innovative interventions to be in place based on	For the team to develop its offer of interventions to children utilising the	For programs to be in place and available to children that music – arts and sports (and other areas

	the staff teams skills and interests.	skills and interests of the staff team.	drawn from staff skills, knowledge and expertise).
7:3	To significantly increase the use of accreditation.	Increase the delivery of accreditation to children on court orders. To offer all children on out of court interventions an accredited intervention.	70% of children on court orders to have received a AQA accredited award in relation to an intervention that they have undertaken at the YOT. To be able to offer accredited interventions to all children on out of court disposals.
7:4	To have developed accredited interventions that address offending related needs.	Statistical data is used to identify what offence needs require interventions to address them.	Accredited interventions are in place to address the offence types that are most impacting upon the community.

Performance:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
8:1	For the partnership board to understand and be able to respond to the local increase in the numbers of first-time entrants.	Identify those children who are first time entrants then identify their characteristics. Identify what measures would be needed to take place to prevent the continued increase in FTEs.	A paper to be presented to the youth Justice Partnership Board identifying the characteristics and needs of FTEs at the partnership board meeting on 12/10/2023.
8:2	For the partnership board to understand and be able to respond to the local increase in the rate of re-offending.	Identify those children who are re-offenders then identify their characteristics. Identify what measures would be needed to take place to encourage their desistance from offending.	For the performance digest to present this analysis at a partnership board meeting within the time period of this plan.

Children from groups that are over-represented:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:1:1	For the Youth Justice partnership Board to be aware of local disproportionality data-taken from the YJB disproportionality tool kit.	The initial recommendation is to present this data to the board annually. Analysing the local data on a quarterly basis is unlikely to yield a comprehensive or significant insight.	That the board has had oversight of and is able to respond to the data contained within the YJB disproportionality tool kit.
10:1:2	For the Youth Justice partnership Board to be	That disproportionality becomes one of the	That the board has had oversight of and is able to respond to

	aware of partnership agency data regarding disproportionality	themes in the yearly cycle of Youth Justice Board partnership meetings. That the Youth Justice partnership agencies present their agency data that explores this issue.	partnership agency data regarding disproportionality.
10:1:3	That the findings of the HMIP thematic report - 'The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system, A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021'- are discussed and responded to by the local partnership board.	That the HMIP thematic report - 'The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system, A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation October 2021' – is circulated to board members for discussion at a partnership board meeting.	A full response to the HMIP report has been given by the local Youth Justice Partnership board.
10:1:4	Specific youth justice guidance is developed to address the issue of disproportionality.	Specific guidance is in place that addresses the theme of addressing disproportionality in assessment – the presentation of reports – planning and delivering interventions with children.	Local guidance being in place.

Prevention:

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:2:1	The prevention activity of Medway Youth Service to be represented at the Medway youth Justice Partnership Board.	The manager of the Youth Service to be invited to be a member of the partnership board. The Youth Service to be invited to contribute to the 2024 / 25 Youth Justice Plan to incorporate its prevention activity in that plan.	The prevention activity of the Youth Service to be represented in the Medway Youth Justice Plan. The manager of the Youth Service to be a member of the partnership board.

Diversion:

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:3:1	The delivery of diversionary	Kent Police and Medway Youth	A process to be in place by the end of Q2 2023 / 24.

	interventions for those children subject to No Further Action (NFA) by the police.	Offending Team should establish a process for the timely identification and referral of children subject to NFA to the Youth Offending Team Turnaround Program.	For regular numbers of children subject to Police NFA being identified each month.
10:3:2	The extension of diversionary work with children through the use of outcome 22 being used as a deferred prosecution linked to NFAs.	Kent Police and Medway Youth Offending Team to establish a process for the use of outcome 22 as a deferred prosecution.	Evidence of the use of outcome 22 as a deferred prosecution.

Education:

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:4:1	Collaborative support of children in Education on EHCP Plans. Improving their educational outcomes.	Ensure that checks are made in respect to whether a child has a EHCP Plan – and that the youth justice practitioner makes contact with the school to access the plan.	For the Youth Offending Team staff to access and be aware of the contents of all EHCP plans of the children that they are working with. To be able to evidence the support of children’s needs

Restorative Approaches and victims:

ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:5:1	Oversight by the partnership board of the delivery of restorative approaches to the victims of offences committed by children subject to out of court disposals.	The partnership board should request data on the level of engagement in restorative approaches from the PCC office.	For the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board to be aware of the levels of engagement in restorative approaches for the victims of offences committed by children subject to out of court disposals. To be able to compare these rates of engagement with the levels of engagement achieved by the Youth Offending Team. To be able to recommendations to the PCC office regarding future commissioning.

Serious Violence and Exploitation:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:6:1	A dataset is developed across Kent and Medway to identify risks related to Serious Youth Violence.	That the Youth Justice Partnership board should support the development of the Violence Reduction Units proposed Kent and Medway-wide dashboard.	A dashboard being in place to inform the delivery of the serious violence duty.
10:6:2	Strong collaborative working practices in place between the Youth Offending Team and the Adolescent Team.	A launch of the joint working practice standards developed in 2022.	That the practice standard is routinely in use.
10:6:3	A local approach to effectively managing the risk of 'high' risk children transferred into the area.	The VRU and the Youth Offending Team develop an approach that minimises the risks that these children present to the local community.	An approach being agreed between the VRU and the youth Offending to support high risk children transferred into Medway.

Detention in Police custody:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:7:1	For the local Youth Justice Partnership board to achieve effective oversight of children detained in police custody.	The inclusion of children in custody as a standing item in the yearly cycle of partnership board meetings is proposed.	Data regarding children detained in youth custody will have been presented, discussed and responded to by the partnership board.

Remands:			
ID	Achieve:	Do:	Measure:
10:8:1	Plans for alternatives to Youth Detention Accommodation to be agreed with Childrens Social Care – when these are appropriate to present to the court.	Collaborative work with Childrens Social Care – to identify accommodation / placement / alternatives to remands to Youth detention accommodation.	Children should only remain in Youth detention accommodation when this is considered the only option by the court.

15.1.2. Priorities

This section of the development plan outlines the objectives, activities, and metrics for achieving the four identified priorities, serving as the central focus of the plan.

These priorities represent our vision for the delivery of child first principles in Medway youth justice.

The four priorities are:

1. Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and build Bonds, bridges and links between young people and the community.
2. Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.
3. Keep young people safe and enable them to thrive.
4. Prevent young people from entering the Youth Justice System.

Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and Build Bonds, Bridges and Links between young people and the community.

Achieve:

- Support the delivery of practice that treats young people in trouble with the law as children first across the youth justice partnership.
- Create accredited opportunities utilising a strengths-based model to enable young people to develop life skills, self-esteem, build confidence, independence and explore their identity and their transition to adulthood.
- Promoting the value of relationship-based identity focused practice across the local authority and wider Youth Justice sector.
- Develop specific strategies to ensure that the Youth Offending Team meets the needs of protected characteristics.
- Developing services In response to what we learn from what children tell us about their identity and needs.
- Gaining the voice of children and their families and creating a culture of collaboration.
- Promoting opportunities for young people to feel a part of and make a positive opportunity to the wider community.

Do:

- To be creative and innovative in the delivery of interventions addressing the themes of Child First practice, identity, and strengths-based approaches (Pathfinder Project and collaboration with Loughborough University).
- Develop and deliver programs to support young people's readiness, skills, and confidence in preparation for ETE, independence and transition to adulthood (in collaboration IAG team and relevant partners).
- Develop a more diverse group of panel members that reflects young people's identities.
- Develop the accreditation of young people's work with the Youth Offending Team. Recognising and celebrating their strengths and achievements.
- To review our reparation, offer to young people so that it is responsive to their strengths and interests.
- To develop community and business links to provide a range of developmental and learning experiences for young people.
- Reparation projects that enable young people to have direct contact with their community and feel that they have made a valuable contribution to it.
- Publicise and promote the positive contribution made by the young people to their communities, encouraging mutual understanding. Through means such as newsletters, a website, and engagement with councillors and local community.
- Deliver services to young people from safe non stigmatising spaces across Medway, local to their community. Facilitating opportunities for them to express themselves and feel safe and understood.

- Change the name of the service so that it no longer refers to offending and stigmatises young people.
- Create a regular 'drop in / one stop shop', that provides easy access for young people to ETE advice and guidance, and links to positive activities in the community (Youth Service).
- To develop a transition process, to adult Probation, that is based in the Child First principles and is supportive of developing a positive identity as a young adult.

Measure:

- Increased numbers of young people in education, employment and engaged in positive activities in the community.
- The numbers of accredited interventions being completed.
- The numbers of young people undertaking reparation / positive activities in the community who are subject to an out of court disposal.
- The numbers of young people involved in local community activities.
- Clear evidence of the agency of young people and their carers in both their own plans and in the strategic and developmental plans of the service.
- Qualitative measures to developed to explore children's experience of working with the Youth Offending Team, increased self-esteem, value, connectedness to their communities and self-efficacy.

Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.

Achieve:

- Maximise the opportunities for Restorative practice to provide victims a voice.
- That the youth justice partnership is effectively resourced to address the risks that it manages, and the needs of the young people that it encounters.
- To take a Child First approach to working with young people to manage risk in the community and custody.
- Develop intensive intervention programs as alternative to custody.

Do:

- Review operating procedures to ensure that risk management is maximised through the development of a child first approach.
- The board to undertake a review of data use and establish partnership involvement and responsibility in providing data in respect of the risks and needs in the community. For local data from the Police, VRU to be included in the quarterly performance digest.
- Work closely alongside initiatives to reduce Youth Violence, The Violence Reduction Unit, and the Serious Youth Violence.
- Develop intensive support and intervention programs for those young people assessed as being at the highest risk of re-offending and causing harm in the community.
- Develop the planning process with children so that it incorporates a clear expression of the voice of the victim / s of their offending, and that this voice is taken into account in the work undertaken with the child.
- Using data to proactively provide management oversight of the risks and needs of the young people open to the service.
- Work with the Probation Service to identify adults with lived experience of both offending and desistance who can communicate to young people the risks of continued engagement in offending.
- Develop the use of Compliance meetings with young people, to look at how barriers to engagement can be overcome, and motivation improved, where safe and appropriate breach action can be stayed.
- Review the role of the Police Officer – and clarify how this role meets the national police college guidance in managing risk.

- Develop joint (Police and YOT) delivery of YC and YCC to ensure Young People and their families/carers are fully aware of the meaning of the outcome (including disclosure implications) and any involvement to follow.
- Use confidential notes on IYSS, to effectively identify and communicate sensitive risk issues.
- Deliver themed Management Board meetings. Include staff members in the management board to communicate to the board directly the issues that the team is working with.
- Identify “champions” within the team (for example for domestic abuse, SEND etc) to lead on specific areas of interest.

Measure:

- Evidence of a reduction in the risk concerns of children open to the YOT (Asset Plus risk of harm level reduced).
- Continued reduction in the use of custody.
- A reduction in the seriousness of children’s re-offending.
- Increase of partnership involvements in management of risk.

Keep Young People Safe and enable them to thrive.

Achieve:

- Safeguarding children in Medway from harm and supporting them to reach their potential.
- Work with partners to develop a contextual safeguarding approach in Medway.
- Developing working practices with wider children’s services to safeguard children and young people.
- Work with families to ensure young people are safe at home. Equip young people and their families with knowledge and strategies to promote personal safety.
- Improvement in the Emotional and Mental Health of Children open to the Youth Offending Team.

Do:

- Work with children and their Carers, and partnership services to effectively address concerns in respect to exploitation (criminal, and sexual).
- Ensure that case formulation and multi-agency meetings are formalised as part of the process to manage and address safeguarding concerns and supporting children to thrive.
- Provide opportunities for children and families to access individual and group parenting interventions such as NVR (Non-Violent Resistance), PBS (Positive Behaviour Support) and the DICE program (Parenting intervention) that promote their being safeguarded in the family.
- Improve access to CAMHS services, consultation, assessment, and treatment, through the implementation of a YOT CAMHS nurse post.
- All children with EHCP plans are identified at the point of referral and liaison takes place with the relevant SENCO to ensure that the child’s needs are responded to.
- Develop closer links / a point of contact with the councils housing department to support young people more effectively with accommodation difficulties.
- Promote a model of practice based in trusted relationships and providing safe spaces for young people to feel supported, recognised by professionals and believed in.
- In collaboration with the Youth Service promote opportunities in the community for positive activities and spaces for young people.
- Work with partners in the VRU to explore local patterns and tensions to proactively safeguard young people (support the development of a focused deterrence model).
- Foster links with local education and training providers to increase ETE opportunities for young people involved in the criminal justice system.

- Ensure that case recording is standardised to confirm records clearly convey the aim of the planned session progress made against the plan and allow for reflection to be captured.

Measure:

- Evidence of a reduction in the safeguarding concerns of children open to the YOT (Asset Plus Safety and Well-being level reduced, Exploitation screening, evidence of YOT contributing to children being 'stepped down' by wider children's services).
- Implementation of a new planning process and document to effectively collaborate and share plans with families and support networks.
- Evidence from children's voice- feedback from children and families about their experiences – specifically in relation to their feeling safe.
- Improvement in assessed emotional and mental health of children open to the YOT.
- The service as appropriate links to specialist services as identified through needs analysis.
- Safeguarding Partnership board data set, evidencing the YOTs effective involvement in wider safeguarding processes.

Prevent Young people from entering the Youth Justice System.

Achieve:

- Ensure that diversion from the criminal justice system is the first outcome considered for children in Medway.
- Increase partnership work with other agencies to specifically develop a YOT prevention offer within Children's services.
- Maximise engagement through innovative, relationship-based practice and the use of digital technologies.

Do:

- Work with partners to develop diversion pathways. With the Police - Outcome 22 (diversionary Offer), and Informal Community Resolutions.
- Youth service manager to be invited to join the Youth Justice partnership Board to have oversight of Youth Services Crime Prevention activity.
- Develop link between Youth Service diversionary activities and diversionary out of court disposals
- Work within children's services to develop a Contextual Safeguarding Approach to preventing young people from involvement in offending.
- Develop YOT Voluntary category of Intervention. Include Voluntary Intervention as an intervention type to allow all recording to be against this rather than against the previous order the young person was subject to. Define the voluntary offer and develop a clear 'exit' strategy.
- Develop the identification of appropriate prevention work through the CJLADS service.
- Explore how the implementation of digital technology can promote and support engagement with children and families.

Measure:

- Reduction in the number of first-time entrants.
- The numbers of siblings who access a prevention intervention.
- The numbers of young people accessing the YOT prevention offer, including the number of young people who receive a YOT intervention in conjunction with the police having delivered an Outcome 22 or an Informal Community Resolution.

15.2. Challenges, risks and issues

There is an abundance of good services available in Medway to support young people. There are a number of commissioning organisations involved including Office of the Police Crime Commissioner, Integrated Care System, the local authority. While some of the commissioning has been agreed through partnership working there is a risk that new, and often short term, funding may be used to commission services that are not part of an overall plan or structure. To mitigate against this the YOT will work with partner organisations to maintain a list of commissioned services and begin to identify projects to close gaps that can be delivered should funding become available.

Young people who have undiagnosed neurodivergence or speech and language need are likely to face additional barriers accessing appropriate services. This may hinder their diversion from criminal activity. The YOT will work with health commissioners and providers to improve pathways for diagnosis and support as this will increase the likelihood of a successful outcome for the young person. Where improvement in pathways is not made the issue will be raised through governance structures via the chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Board to the Health and Wellbeing board.

Substance use, particularly that of cannabis and Nitrous Oxide, have become normalised among a significant proportion of young people in contact with the criminal justice system. Changes to classification and enforcement are likely to result in the criminalisation of increased numbers of young people. The YOT will work with police, substance misuse treatment services, to develop a health focussed response to increased use. We will look for early opportunities to identify young people who use substances and divert them away at the earliest opportunity. Vulnerable young people who become involved with drug selling will be supported as victims. The Combatting Drugs Partnership will monitor the impact of any changes and coordinate the support system available.

15.3. Sign off, submission and approval

This Youth Justice plan was signed off by the Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Board on xx/xx/xxxx pending the final approval of the Cabinet of Medway Council.

In line with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, the plan was approved by the Cabinet of Medway Council on xx/xx/xxxx.