

2025 - 2026

Medway Youth Justice Plan



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Introduction and Strategic Vision

Medway Council has an ambition to be a community where children and young people have the best start in life, where everyone can thrive and where all residents can access the support, they need to ensure that they can take up the opportunities available to them.

The Youth Justice Partnership plays an important role in delivering on this ambition to children who have come into contact with the youth justice system and those where there are risks that this might happen. Medway is a safe place for most children but there are times when our children will commit crime or be the victims of crime. Too often, those who offend have previously been victims of crime or have not received the support they need from the adults in their lives which could have made a positive difference.

In the past 12 months the partnership has reviewed how well it works and put in place the resources and structures so that we can support those children in contact with the justice system and help them to steer their lives in a positive direction. A review of the service was undertaken in the Summer of 2024 which led to recommendations on how the service could be improved: the Council has increased the funding available to the Youth Justice Service which has allowed for an uplift in staff; the Probation Service and the Medway Young Persons Wellbeing Service have changed how their staff deliver support to children; and Kent Police have strengthened their collaboration to divert children from the criminal justice system.

This year the partnership will focus on key areas which will help reduce the harm that victims of crime experience, will allow the service to work closer with children and parents so that their voice informs how support is delivered, and how a stronger, better equipped workforce from the Local Authority, Police, Health and Probation will collaborate to keep children and the communities in which they live safe from harm.

The Youth Justice Plan sets out how the Board will lead aspects of this work and, through their leadership, demonstrate how a partnership can harness the resources and energy of all agencies. The plan also includes key activities that the service will undertake to strengthen the prevention of harm so that there are fewer victims and the numbers of children who offend reduces.

As the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, I am pleased to see that the Youth Justice Partnership represents the values of the Council and has set out an ambitious plan that puts the needs of children and our communities first.

Councillor Adam Price

Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Medway Council

Medway.YouthJustice.Plan.868①- 868②

The Medway Youth Justice Service brings together the Local Authority, Police, Health and Probation and delivers a coordinated multi-agency response to children and families so that children in Medway can thrive and live lives free from harm.

The Youth Justice Partnership Board provides joint governance and working across the system and oversees the work of the service. The board is committed to:

- Provide comprehensive services to the victims of youth crime.
- Provide comprehensive services to young people who offend or are at risk of offending
- Reducing the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system.
- Reducing re-offending of those young people already within the youth justice system.
- Reducing the number of young people receiving a custodial sentence.
- Ensure that custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour.
- Ensure that young people in the youth justice system are safeguarded, and the public are adequately protected.

HERE TO HELP YOU



WHO WE ARE

- A team made up of people from the council, police, health, and probation services
- We work together to support young people in Medway



WHAT WE DO

- Help young people stay out of trouble
- Support those who have made mistakes to get back on track
- Make sure victims of youth crime are supported



OUR GOALS

- Fewer young people getting into trouble for the first time
- Help young people stop reoffending
- Avoid custody unless absolutely necessary
- Make sure custody is safe and helps young people to change
- Keep young people and the community safe



WE BELIEVE IN SECOND CHANCES

Here to help you navigate away from crime and towards success.

The Youth Justice Service is a team of friendly adults who are here to support you if you've found yourself in trouble with the law. We're not here to judge you. Our job is to help you understand what happened, make things right, and support you to make better choices moving forward.

If someone was hurt by what happened, we'll make sure they feel safe, listened to, and supported. At the same time, we'll help you learn from the situation, so it doesn't happen again.

We're also here to support you with things like school, finding a job, or just having someone to talk to about how you're feeling. We will work with your family too, so everyone gets the help they need, and you can build strong, positive relationships at home.

Our goal is simple: to help you stay out of trouble and build a brighter future for yourself.

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. In preparing this plan, the partnership adhered to guidance by the Youth Justice Board, which sets out a clear framework for Youth Justice Plans.

Local Context.

Medway is a unitary authority in the county of Kent in the Southeast of England. Medway is home to 15.1% of the Kent population. The 2021 census data indicated an overall population increase of 6% to 279,800. As the table below shows the population of children in Medway has shown both increases and decreases depending upon age group. Population estimates (ONS, 2021) states that 11.8% of the population are aged between 10-17.

Age:	2011 census	2021 census	JSNA data	Census Change	Census % Change
Age 10 – 14 years	16765 8149 Girls 8616 Boys	18000 8800 Girls 9200 Boys	18853 9192 Girls 9661 Boys	+1235	+7%
Age 15 – 19 years	19031 9254 Girls 9777 Boys	16200 7900 Girls 8300 Boys	16506 8082 Girls 8424 Boys	-2831	-15%

Deprivation

The Office for National Statistics data (exploring local income deprivation, 2021) detailed that in Medway 13.4% of the population was income deprived in 2019. Of the 316 local authorities in England, excluding the Isles of Scilly, Medway is ranked 103rd most income deprived.

There are significant local deprivation variances which bring some unique challenges. Of 163 neighbourhoods in Medway, 30 are among the '20% most income deprived in England', adjacent to 25 in the '20% least income deprived in England', in a relatively small geographical area.

The 2021 census identified that Medway saw the South East's joint second-largest percentage-point fall in the proportion of people aged 16 years and over (excluding full-time students) who were unemployed (from 4.5% in 2011 to 3.0% in 2021).

Despite the decrease, Medway was in the highest 25% of English local authority areas for the share of people aged 16 years and over (excluding full-time students) who were unemployed in 2021.

Diversity

In 2021, 5.6% of Medway residents identified their ethnic group within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" category, up from 2.5% in 2011. The 3.1 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.

Across the Southeast, the percentage of residents from the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" ethnic group increased from 1.6% to 2.4%, while across England the percentage increased from 3.5% to 4.2%.

In 2021, 84.3% of residents in Medway identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 89.6% in 2011), while 5.9% identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category (compared with 5.2% the previous decade).

The percentage of residents who identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category increased from 2.0% in 2011 to 2.8% in 2021.

Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements.

The diagram below provides an overview of the membership of the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board. The Board is co-chaired by Medway Councils Assistant Director for Education and SEND, and the Kent and Medway Police Reducing Harm & Child Centred Policing Manager.



The board 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 joined up universal and specialist services delivered across all partners and related agencies.

The board is responsible for ensuring that the service has clear, identified resources from police, health, education, social care, and probation. The board is fully engaged in the practice of youth justice and proactively work as a partnership to anticipate and address the needs of children in Medway involved in the Youth Justice System.

The Youth Justice Plan is informed by and reflects key aspects of different strategies and plans due to the multi-agency nature of the service.

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB)

The Youth Justice Board has set a strategy for delivering positive outcomes for children by reducing offending and creating safer communities (2024–2027). The priorities of the national strategy are:

- Supporting improvement of youth justice services in local communities.
- Provision of diversion across the country.
- Working with partners to prevent and reduce serious violence.
- Improving youth justice services' support to victims of crime.
- Providing for children during the time that they are in custody and when they leave.
- Supporting workforce development.
- Focussing on addressing persistent racial disparities across the youth justice system.
- Influencing development of policy and practice to advance the adoption of Child First throughout the youth justice system.

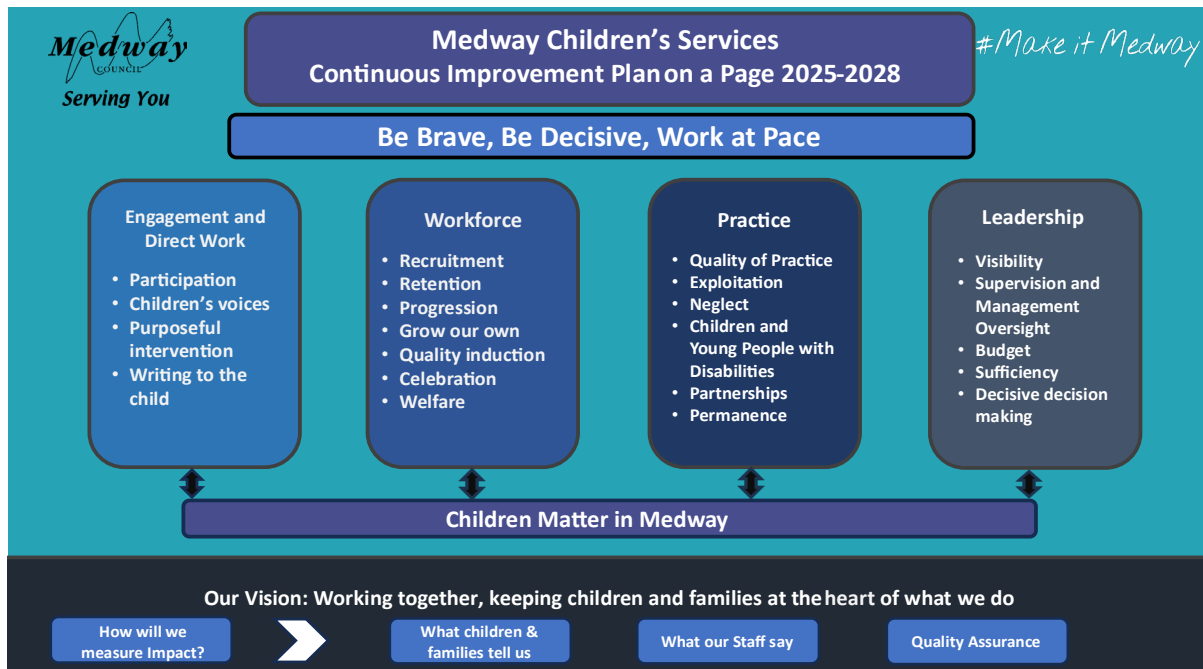
Medway Council Plan 2024

Priority 1 of this plan is around 'Delivering Quality Social Care and Community Services'. This includes two areas which are highly relevant to children we are supporting which are: 'Provide effective targeted support for our most vulnerable residents to enable them to fulfil their potential and improve their quality of life' and 'Support our children and young people to ensure they are safe, secure and stable'.

Medway Children's Service continuous improvement plan

The plan sets out a clear vision for all children's services including Youth Justice which is:

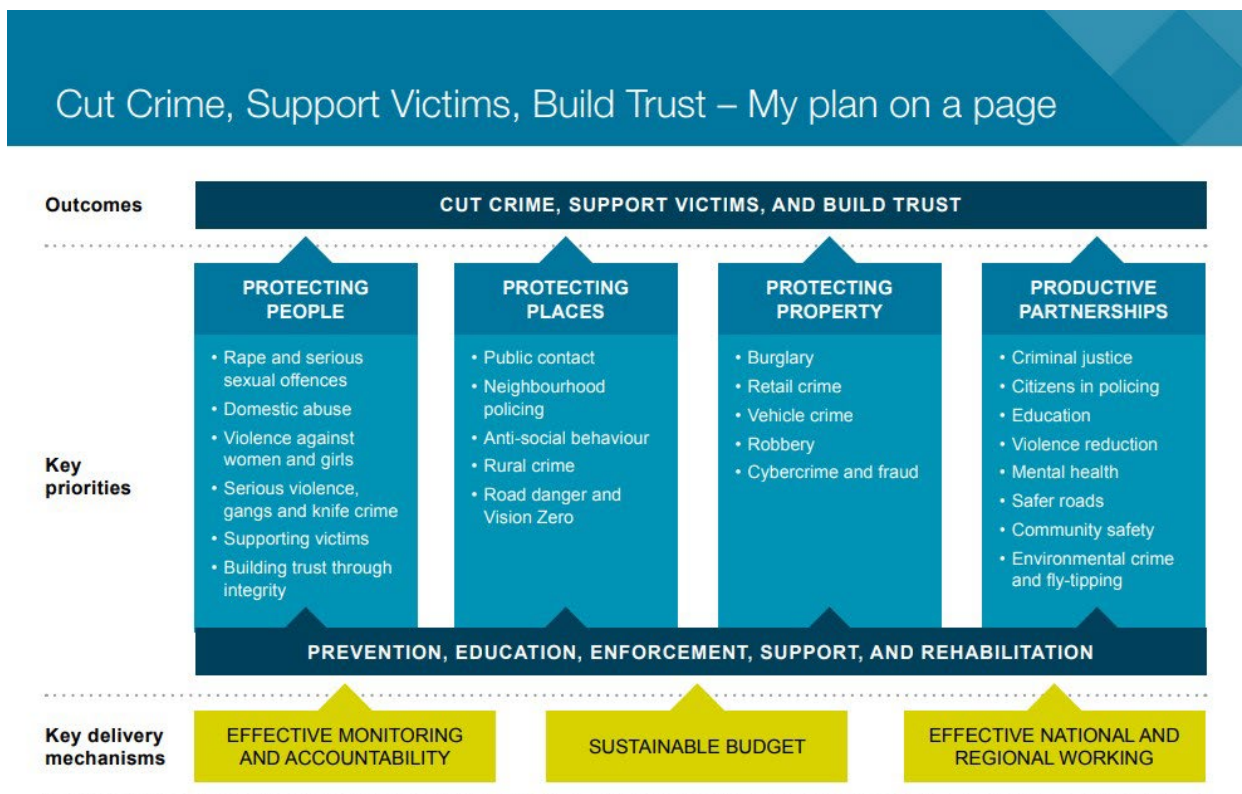
- Working together, keeping children and families at the heart of what we do.
- We will work together with children, young people and families to help them feel safe, secure, valued and supported.
- We will work with children and families, to live in stable supportive homes building caring and consistent relationships that help them to develop into independent adults.
- We will value strengths, celebrate differences and listen to children to keep them at the heart of what we do.



Medway Children's Services Continuous Improvement Plan on a Page (2025-2028)

Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

The Commissioner has a plan to Cut Crime, Support Victims and Build Trust and provides funding to Youth Justice as part of his work in the County.



The membership of the Board provides alignment with other key partnership boards addressing the Youth Justice agenda including the Kent Criminal Justice Board, Kent and Medway Reoffending Board, Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement Strategic Management Board and the Serious Violence Prevention Partnership Board.

Update on previous year

Progress against previous plan

The Police have developed and begun delivering their Outcome 22 interventions which are identifying children where risks are starting to emerge. The Police's analysis of their early intervention workbooks which are used as a tool with which to engage and support children shows that 92% of the children receiving one have not been reported for a further crime. The data needs to be compared with those who did not undertake a workbook to understand the impact of the interventions better. The analysis also shows it does not really work for assaults on emergency workers.

There are still a higher number of children First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system when compared to statistical neighbours, and the same is seen across the rest of the County. The rates of First Time Entrants have been falling over the last 12 months which suggests that the diversionary approach may be having a positive impact.

There has been a systemic approach to how professionals understand and respond to trauma. The authority has ensured that the workforce has adopted a trauma informed way of working and all schools and colleges in Medway have completed the training to become trauma informed places of learning. The work with schools has been led by the Medway Council Assistant Director for Education and SEND.

Overall levels of violence have reduced by 6% and the most serious violence has reduced by 19% according to the Violence Reduction Unit's Strategic Needs Assessment (January 2025). Of those involved in or affected by violence 24% of the suspects and 29% of the victims were children. This shows that children, who comprise approximately 12% of the population, are disproportionately represented within violence statistics.

The previous plan was produced before the work on and findings of an analysis of the Youth Justice review had been finalised and agreed by the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board. The review identified gaps in areas of practice and made recommendations as to how this should improve.

Progress.made.to.date;

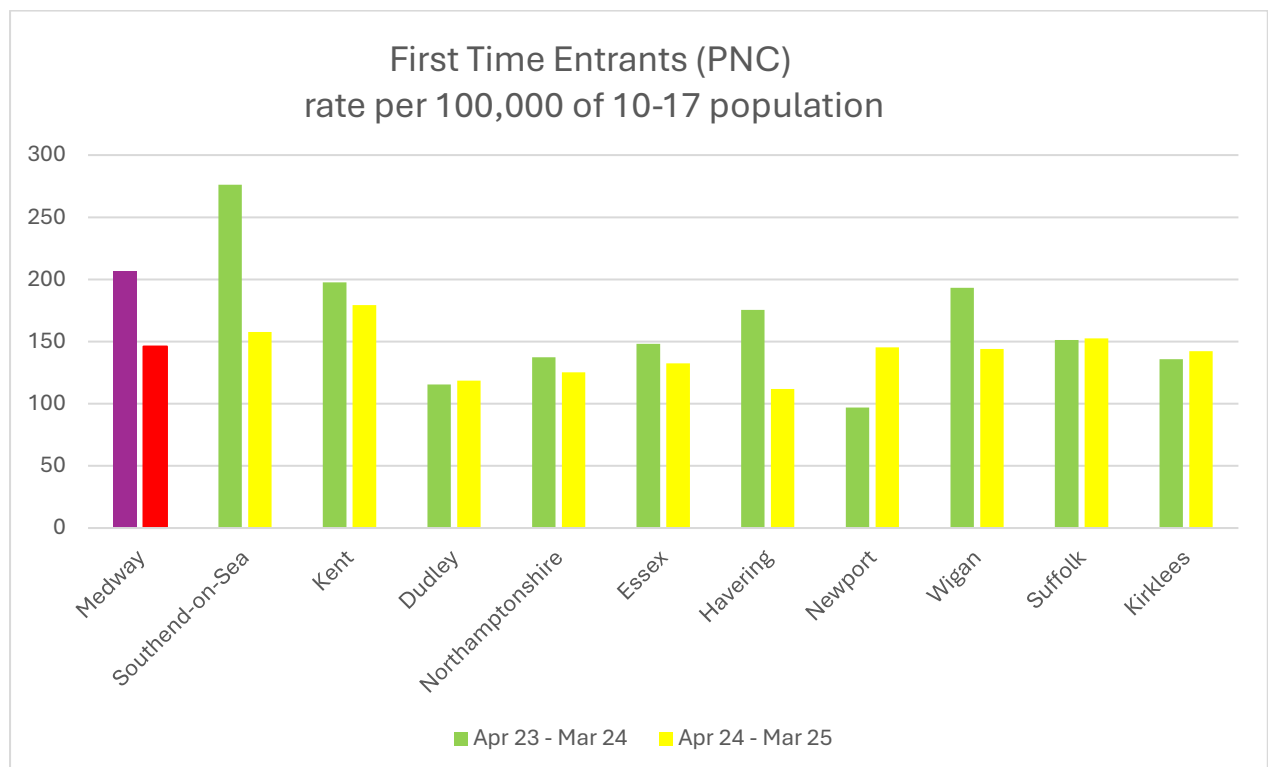
- Increases in the resources available to Youth Justice with a full time Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service worker and a part time substance misuse worker. The Probation Officer has refreshed their working arrangements to hold more Youth Justice children on their caseload.

- Improvements in management oversight since the appointment of the new Practice Manager and locum Team Manager. Cases are being reviewed at the 10-day stage for increased oversight and accountability.
- Risk panel has been reformatted and moved to fortnightly with external professionals in the child's network being invited. New risk panel documentation has been devised.
- Templates and checklists are in place to improve the quality of recording and reports being presented to the courts. A feedback loop has been devised for magistrates and District Judges to comment on report quality and the Youth Justice service to the courts.
- Process workshops with the management team have begun to ensure alignment around timescales and process, and to reflect the emerging findings from the thematic inspection of Out of Court disposals.
- There is starting to be a footprint of victim involvement on case files and plans in place for a recruitment of new panel members.

Performance over the previous year

The service has a dedicated data analyst who provides the Board and operational managers with a suite of reports. Work has taken place to develop a suite of PowerBI reports which will allow more sophisticated analysis that supports an interrogation of the reasons behind the data.

3.1 First Time Entrants



There has been a decrease of 29% in the numbers of children entering the criminal justice system as a First Time Entrant. Medway Service shares a Police force with Kent County Council, and it is positive to see that the reduction for Medway is greater than that for Kent. However, the rate of First Time Entrants is still higher than comparable neighbours and remains an area of concern.

3.2 Reoffending

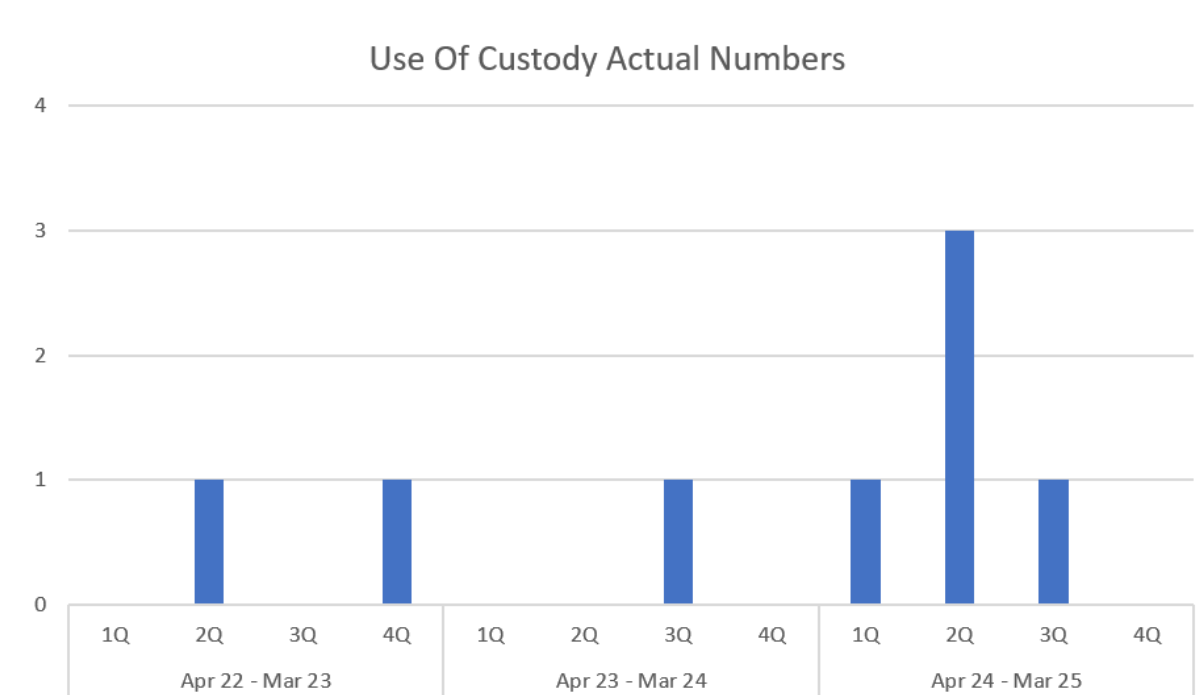
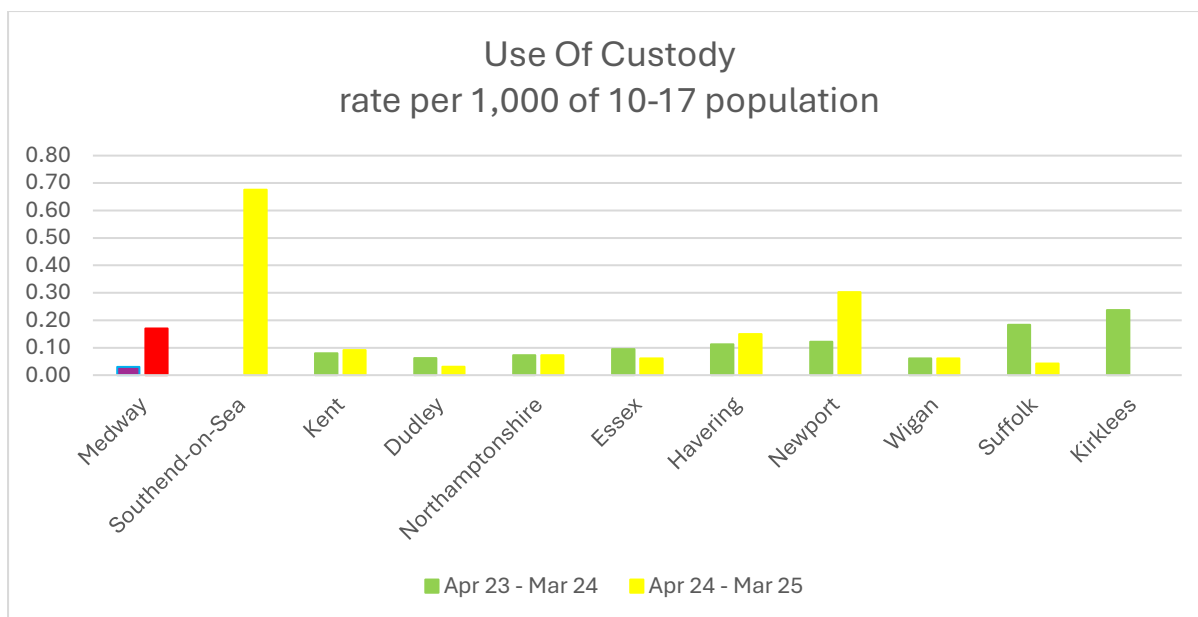
The reoffending data is published by the Ministry of Justice. The data below shows the most recent performance data which is up to 30th June 2023. There is a positive downward trend in reoffending and a positive reduction when compared to the South-East average.

Reoffending rates after 12 months - Three month cohorts	~ 3/4 ♠	© ♠
Reoffences per reoffender Apr 23 - June 23 cohort (latest period)	3.86	3.96
Reoffences per reoffender Apr 22 - June 22 cohort (base line)	5.75	4.19
percent change from selected baseline	-32.90%	-5.40%

Reoffending rates after 12 months - Yearly cohorts		
Reoffences per reoffender Jun 22 - Jun 23 cohort (latest period)	3.82	4.02

3.3 Custody

The year saw an increase in the proportion of children being sentenced to custody which is a concern for the service. The actual numbers of children increased from 1 on 2023 –2024 to 5 in 2024 –2025. The reasons for children being sentenced to custody were primarily due to breaches of community order, robbery or for incidents of serious violence.



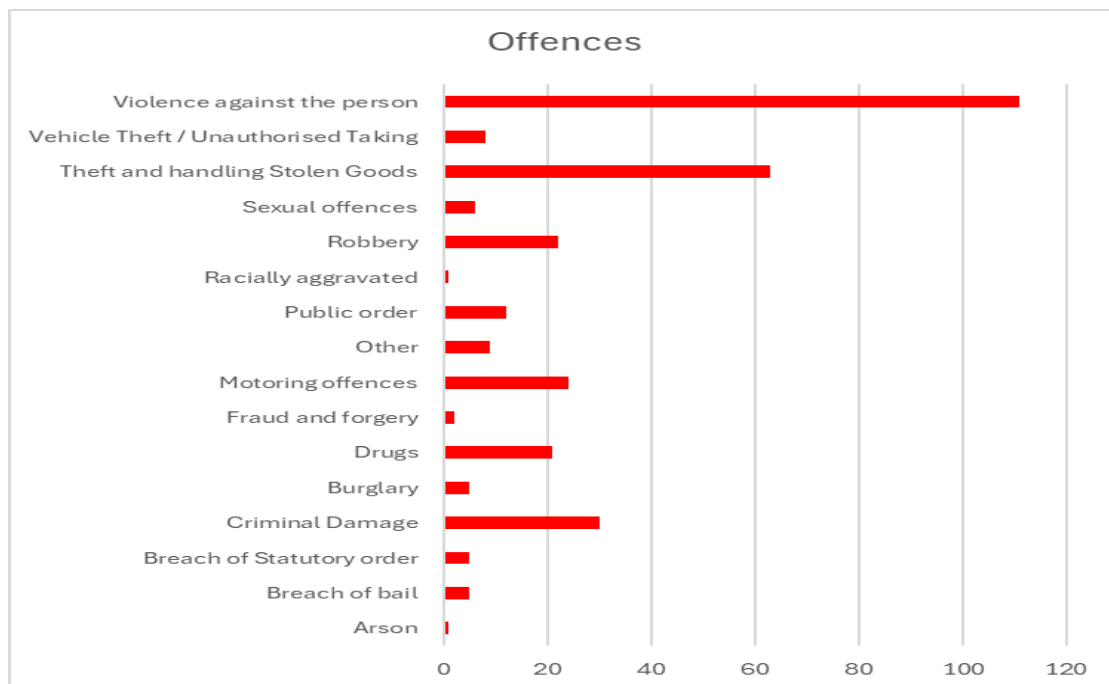
3.4 Medway Youth Justice Population

The most recent available data from the national Youth Justice Board's YJAF portal is below and compares the population from the most recent census with that of the Youth Justice population in Medway. The data shows that children from mixed, black or black British and other communities are over-represented within the criminal justice system, and this remains an area of concern.

10-17 mid 2021 population by ethnicity (latest available)						
	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Other	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)
Medway	77%	6%	6%	9%	2%	23%
South East England	79%	6%	9%	4%	2%	21%
& Wales	74%	6%	12%	6%	3%	26%

Apr -June 2024 Offending population by ethnicity						
	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Other	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)
Medway	60%	14%	0%	19%	6%	40%
South East England	78%	10%	4%	6%	2%	22%
& Wales	69%	11%	6%	11%	3%	31%

The service holds information on children who have been convicted of an offence and is working on better information relating to the victims of those offences. Boys comprise 80% of the children the service works with and offences of violence, theft and criminal damage are the three most common offence type.



Risks and issues

Staffing and workforce

The report on the 'Review of Medway Youth Justice Services (August 2024)' identified concerns about the knowledge and skills of the Youth Justice service workforce. Aligned with this are challenges around poor record keeping and a high proportion of inexperienced staff. This creates a risk around the assessment of and response to risk linked to the children receiving support from the service. The levels of sickness within the service have impacted on the ability to make improvements in this area and it is not yet possible to see improvements on case files.

Key risks

The service will not be assessed as 'good' or 'outstanding' should an inspection be conducted.

Gaps in knowledge of key data fields and recording inhibit the ability to evaluate the impact of work

Imminence: High Impact: High Overall Risk level: High

Mitigation

The Youth Justice plan has the development of the workforce as priority 3 for the year. A workforce development plan has been created which sets out the key areas where staff development are required and the training necessary to ensure that the Youth Justice Service, with both Local Authority and partner agency staff, is equipped to offer a service which makes a positive difference to children's lives and to public safety.

Ability to access suitable ETE

Access to suitable full-time education, training or employment remains a challenge for the Medway Youth Justice Service along with other services across England and Wales. The service has introduced the use of AQA accreditation to ensure that children are able to complete qualifications whilst being supported and in 2024 – 2025 approximately 50% of children achieved at least one qualification.

Key risks

Children are unable to access education that meets their needs and fail to secure the qualifications necessary to do well in their chosen career.

Imminence: High Impact: Medium Overall Risk level: Medium

Mitigation

The Medway Council Education Service are working closely with the Youth Justice Service to set out the multiple opportunities for support available to children being supported by the Youth Justice Service or through diversionary activity.

Information.sharing.and.multi_agency.collaboration

Both the Medway Youth Justice review and the more recent thematic inspection of Out of Court Disposals in Kent County Council identified concerns about information sharing across key partners to ensure a shared understanding of risk. The concerns raised also identified a failure to develop an agreed multi-agency plan that sets out how different partners will support the child and their family, and how access to mainstream services will be secured.

The service does not have agreements with partners that set out how agencies will routinely and automatically share information, and how a shared plan will be agreed across the different organisations or services.

Key risks

Assessments and plans will miss key areas in a child's life where support is required.

Agencies fail to use information known by others to maximise opportunities to safeguard children or protect the public from harm.

Plans are duplicated or set different requirements to achieve goals.

Imminence: High Impact: High Overall Risk level: High

Mitigation

The Youth Justice Service Manager will agree Service Level Agreements (SLA) with the Police, Health, Education, Children's Social Care and Probation that set out how information will be shared swiftly and easily, and how cases will be audited to ensure that information sharing is having a positive impact. The SLAs will also set out how collaboration will be built into assessments, planning, the delivery of support and the management of risk.

The Service Manager will chair the work with the Violence Reduction Unit to develop a multi-agency data sharing platform to allow information to be shared without multiple manual requests being required

Managing.Risk

The Youth Justice Service has a significant proportion of children assessed as having risks in their lives which are either 'high' or 'very high'. As at May 2025 the proportion of children assessed as having these risks present are:

- Risk to the child's Safety and Wellbeing – 25% of the caseload
- Risk of Serious Harm to Others – 17% of the caseload

The service does not have agreements with partners that set out how agencies will collaborate to ensure that identified risks are shared and managed, and how Youth Justice workers can access specialist guidance and support as and when necessary.

Medway has an additional challenge in that some families move to the borough with the intention of keeping their child safe from harm, and other children are placed by authorities in the borough for this reason or because suitable accommodation is not available closer to home. The risks the children face are not always mitigated by a move to Medway and at times the risks are heightened through the loss of friendship groups, access to education and leisure activities.

Key risks

Agencies fail to use information known by others to maximise opportunities to safeguard children or protect the public from harm

Imminence: High Impact: High Overall Risk level: High

Mitigation

The service will set out standards and expectations for all staff and organisations about how risk will be understood, information shared, and plans will be agreed which reflect the multi-agency requirements.

Multi-agency audits will assess how agencies collaborate to ensure that risk is managed effectively using all resources available across the partnership.

Victims

The new inspection criteria for victims has increased the scrutiny of the work to effectively meet the needs of victims who have been harmed by a child. The service will be expected to offer high quality support to victims and will need to work closely with other organisations delivering support to victims to ensure that contact and support is coordinated across agencies and is led by the views and wishes of each victim. The service currently has one Victim worker and there are no arrangements in place for how the service works with other victim support agencies or the commissioners of any support.

Key risks

Victims either receive offers of support from multiple services or are missed due to a belief that the support is being delivered from elsewhere.

Resources are used inefficiently.

Youth Justice are unable to meet the needs of all victims harmed by a child who has been convicted of an offence or subject to an Out of Court Disposal.

Imminence: High Impact: Medium Overall Risk level: Medium

Mitigation

The Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board will have victims as a priority area for the year and work at a strategic level to ensure that the system is aligned to maximise the support available to victims.

Complexity of Need

There is an increasing understanding of neurodiversity and how children are affected, and around the increasing challenges relating to children's emotional and mental health. This new awareness raises challenges for all organisations within Youth Justice on how to effectively meet the needs of children in the criminal justice system. There is also an increase in the numbers of children aged 10 – 14 within the general population which will place an increased demand on services as the peak age of offending is around 16.5.

Key risks

Services will not have sufficient capacity to offer the tailored support to children within the justice system.

Reoffending may increase which will negatively impact on public confidence in the justice system.

Increasing demand without an increase in resources may lead to a failure to manage risks of harm to children or to the community.

Imminence: Medium Impact: High Overall Risk level: Medium

Mitigation

The service will improve the analytical capacity of systems so that levels of need are understood and can form part of service planning. The Head of Service and Service Manager will ensure that there is Youth Justice representation at partner meetings to allow the predicted needs of the service and the children supported by the service to be included in future planning.

Plan for the year

The delivery of the Child first Principles is central to the ethos of the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board and this Youth Justice Plan. The principles are to:

- Seeing Children as children
- Building pro-social identity
- Collaborating with children
- Diverting from stigma

Board Commitments:

Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board will ensure that the Child First vision is embedded within the plan for 2025 –2026. The Board will do this by ensuring that all priorities, actions and activities reflect one or more of the commitments below. The Board acknowledges that some of the commitments will take time to become embedded into all strands of work.

We will be Child First through the following commitments. We will:

- ❖ Focus on building skills, strengths and self-esteem.
- ❖ Provide children and those parenting them with access to the mainstream services they need.
- ❖ Build our work on consultation with and the involvement of children, their families, and the professionals who work with them.
- ❖ Collaborate across services.
- ❖ Promote the understanding that change comes from strong and positive relationships.

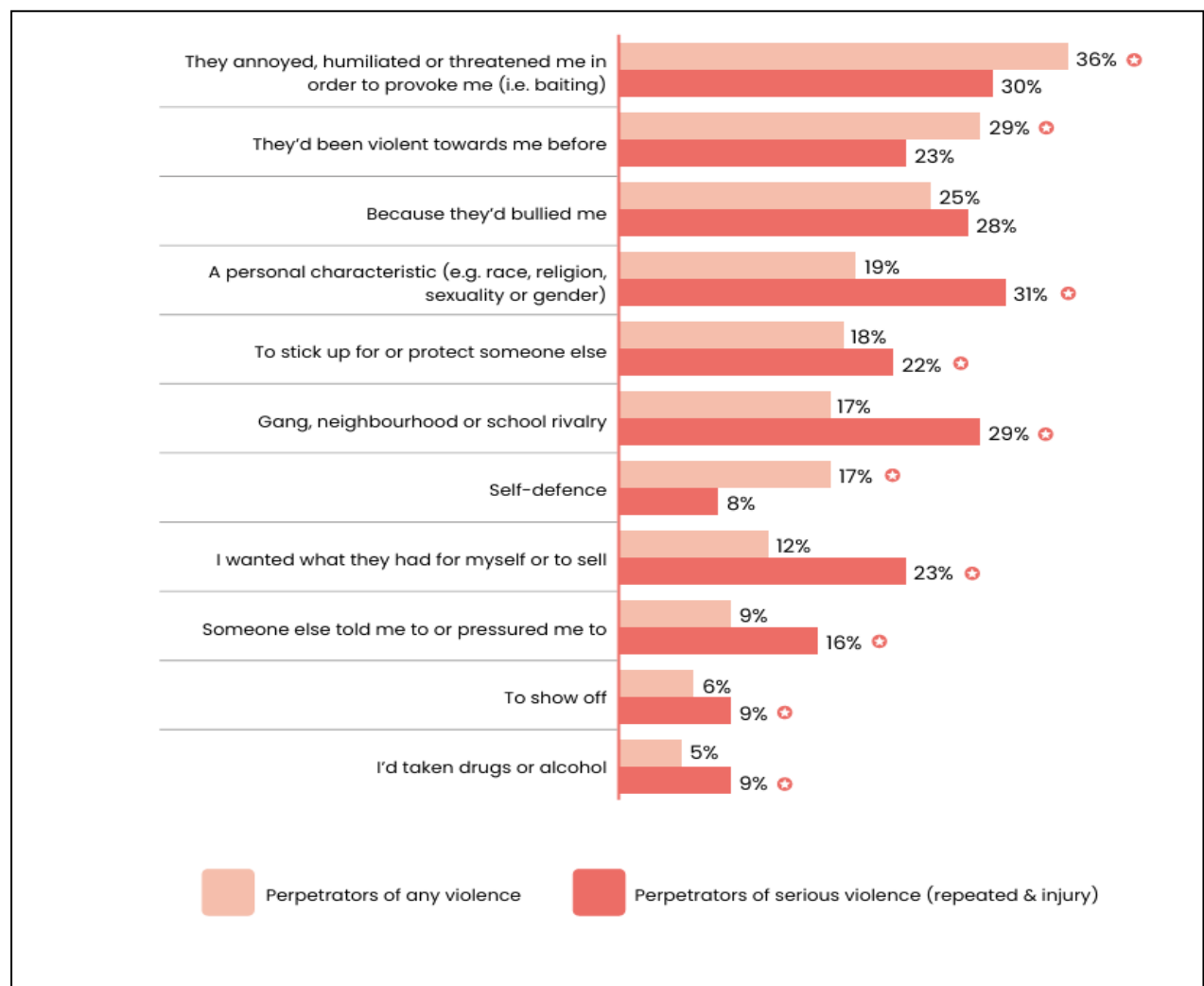
Child's Voice

The review of the Youth Justice Service found that 'Opportunities for children and parent-carers to provide feedback and shape service delivery are limited; Formal processes for feedback and a wider focus on child participation would enable the service to further develop a child first approach and engage children in developing a more responsive service.'

The Board agreed its Participation Plan in March 2025, and the plan contains a priority section for how the policy will become embedded within the work of the service. The Board will agree a lead for the work who will drive the activity and ensure that links are developed across partners so that views are captured in different settings and through different means and can inform the Board's discussions as well as the design and delivery of services.

In March 2025 the Board heard back from consultation with children who had moved into the borough. The work was commissioned as Medway experiences a high number of children either moving to or being placed in the borough due to concerns about risks of harm. The children fed back that they wanted to have an education place at a school in Medway before they moved to the borough, and access to sport and leisure activities while living here so that they had something positive to do. Children also spoke highly of adults who listened to them and responded to their needs, and were critical of adults who they felt were judgemental or who failed to act on their promises.

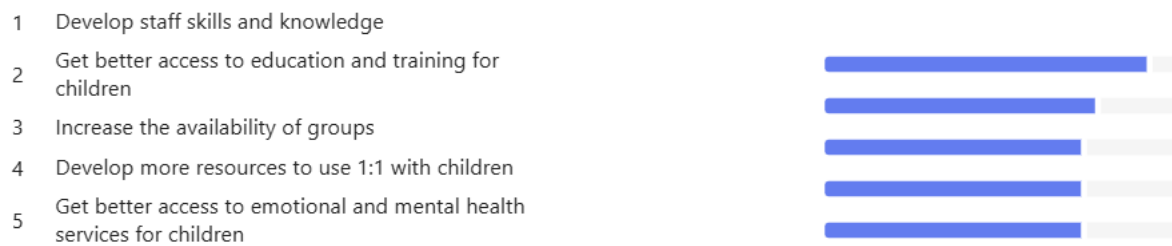
The Youth Endowment Fund's report on 'Who Is Affected by Violence' (2024) identified the following reasons given by children as to why violence occurs.



YouthJustice.staff's.voice

The plan has also been informed by consultation with the Youth Justice staff. They were consulted and their responses are below.

What should be the top 3 priorities for the Youth Justice Service for this year?

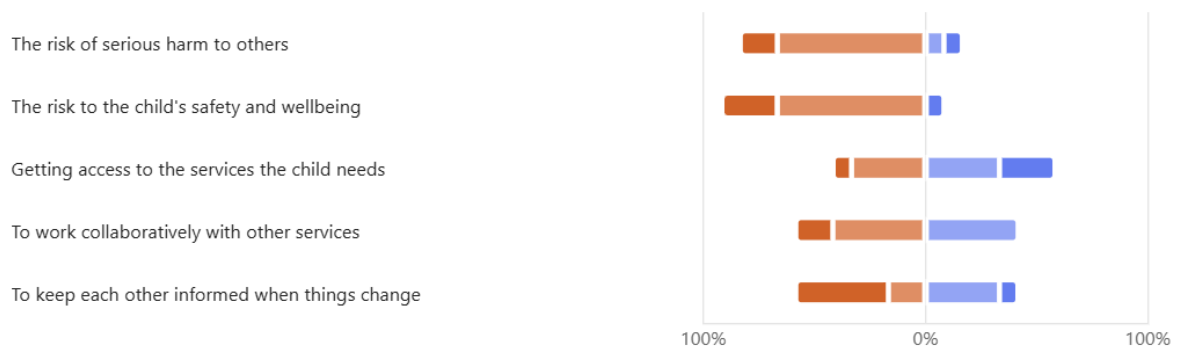


How much influence does the Board have on your work?



How well do we, as a service, manage the following:

● Very well ● Quite well ● Not so well ● Badly



Plan for the year - Priorities

The Youth Justice plan for 2025 – 2026 is built on a commitment to improving services. Medway Assistant Director of Children's Services commissioned an external review of

the Youth Justice service in the Summer of 2024. The review made recommendations to improve service delivery, by further developing its ability to:

- be active in its leadership in the strategy for serious youth violence, crime reduction and early help.
- contribute to the identification of the extent and nature of children's and family's needs in relation to the prevention and reduction of crime.
- ensure effective engagement of service users in assessing need and designing and monitoring provision.
- monitor and provide support and challenge on preventative measures to divert children from committing crime and anti-social behaviour.
- monitor and provide support and challenge on initiatives in support of young people and their families who have been victims of crime.

Following the report findings being shared with the Board, additional resource was provided, including a Service Manager and an additional Practice Manager. Through this increase in resource the service will drive up practice across both Court and Out of Court Outcomes. Work has begun to improve how data is collected and analysed to evaluate the impact of Youth Justice Service, and each organisation is refreshing their own Service Level Agreement that it has with the Youth Justice Service. These are currently work in progress and will be shared with the Board once completed.

Our.Priorities

1. Prevention of offending.

The lead Board member is the Assistant Director of Education and SEND.

Aim:

To make sure that all services and agencies working with young people can spot the early warning signs, take action quickly, and reduce the risks that might lead to offending. Such that youth crime reduces, and fewer children and young people enter the youth justice system.

How:

- Identification:
 - Use multi agency data analysis to identify risk of offending factors that enable interventions to be targeted.
- Education:
 - Ensure young people are engaged in education that leads to a successful development of skills and employment.

- Ensure young people are educated on the consequences of crime and are equipped to make positive choices.
- Prevention:
 - Provide a targeted offer of engagement activities for young people which improves health, well-being and aspirations away from crime.
 - Work across services to disrupt the environmental and social conditions that lead to youth crime.
 - Offer parents and carers support in understanding their young people and building positive relationships.

2. Victim support

The lead Board member is Kent Police.

Aim:

To understand how crime affects victims—both physically and emotionally. By listening to their experiences and recognising their needs, we aim to ensure that all services are responsive, compassionate, and effective. This approach helps those who have been harmed to heal, recover, and rebuild their lives.

We also recognise that some of the children supported by Youth Justice have been victims of harm themselves. We aim to provide the right support to help them feel safe, valued, and empowered to move forward positively.

How:

The PCC commitment to victims includes ‘I will provide a Victims Advocacy and Support Service for all victims of crime in Kent and Medway regardless of whether a crime has been reported to the police or when the crime took place.’ and ‘Working with partners? I will provide a dedicated offer for children and young people impacted by crime.’

- Youth Justice and the PCC’s Office will assess the effectiveness of the current offers available to victims and make recommendations on how services to victims can be improved.
- Youth Justice will monitor the take up of support and the feedback from victims on the quality and suitability of the support they have received.
- Youth Justice will work with Medway’s Public Health Service and Medway’s Young Person’s Wellbeing Service to identify how the emotional and mental wellbeing of children can be improved through swift access to relevant services and support.

3. Skilled and effective Youth Justice service

The lead Board member is the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

Aim:

The Youth Justice Service is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver a specialised package of support to children and their families, and coordinate a responsive, multi-agency approach to managing risks to others.

How:

- Develop further opportunities for children to learn new skills, get qualifications and build their self-esteem.
- Provide a bespoke offer for girls, within the system.
- Strengthen the teams core skills and specialist knowledge such that assessments, plans and interventions are impactful and of a high quality. The Youth Justice Service workforce plan sets out the skills required by all staff working within Youth Justice regardless of the organisation they are employed by.

The service will ensure expertise in:

- Managing the risk of harm to others.
- Assessing and delivering interventions around harmful sexual behaviour.
- Trauma informed practice.
- Serious Youth Violence and child criminal exploitation.
- What Works to prevent violence, using the Youth Endowment Fund evidence base to inform staff skill development and the commissioning of projects.
- Support for parents and carers.

4. Disproportionality (fairness, equity and inclusion)

The lead Board member are Assistant Director for Education and SEND and the Kent and Medway Police Reducing Harm & Child Centred Policing Manager (the board chairs).

Aim:

The Board is committed to understanding and addressing the over-representation of children from specific communities or groups within the youth justice system. By identifying patterns of disproportionality, the Board will develop and implement a strategic plan that promote fairness, equity, and inclusion across all services.

How:

- Co-produce a clear statement of the Board's commitment to equity and inclusion.
- Collect and analyse data on ethnicity, gender, disability, and other characteristics. Identifying where disproportionality exists. Use both quantitative data and lived experiences.
- Acknowledge the impact of disproportionality on children and communities.
- Publish findings and actions to maintain transparency.
- Engage with young people and families from over-represented groups and include their voices in shaping solutions and evaluating services.
- Provide training across agencies on unconscious bias, cultural competence, and anti-racism.
- Promote reflective practice and inclusive decision-making and share data and best practices across agencies.
- Develop or commission culturally appropriate services.
- Focus on early intervention and prevention for at-risk groups.

5. Young People's Voice

The lead Board member is the Head of Corporate Parenting and Youth Justice Service.

The Medway Youth Justice Service's Participation policy (April 2025) sets out the aims and objectives:

- Ensure that all children involved in the Youth Justice System are heard, respected, and actively involved in decisions that affect them.
- Provide personalised interventions that reflect each young person's unique background, experiences, and needs.
- Work in partnership with children, their families, and professionals to promote positive outcomes and reduce the risk of reoffending.
- Use feedback, consultation and co-production with children and families to shape and improve how services are delivered.

How:

- Individual voice. The plans created as part of work with children and young people will involve them and their families in the setting of key aims and activities so that the voice of the child is clear within all plans.
- The Youth Justice Service will systematically request and publish feedback from children supported by the service and their parents and carers. The published information will use a 'You Said, We Did' approach to show how the service has responded to feedback.

- Youth Justice will work with the Youth Service Participation Leads to develop focus groups of children who can advise on how Youth Justice services and activities should be designed so that they meet the needs of children who are receiving them.
- Youth Justice will consult with groups of parents and carers on the service they receive from Youth Justice and on the design of resources including the YJ digital offer and the support they need which is not currently available.

Key Partnership Areas

Education training and employment

The Board lead is Celia Buxton.

Youth Justice Board KPI	<p>The percentage of children in the community and being released from custody attending a suitable Education Training and Employment arrangement</p> <p>The percentage of children who have an identified SEND need, are in suitable Education Training and Employment and have a formal learning plan in place for the current academic year</p>
Resources in the Youth Justice service	0.1 X Information Advice and Guidance worker
Current performance against KPI	<p>The current Youth Justice plan identifies that 35% of children were not in suitable Education Training and Employment at the end of their order with Youth Justice.</p> <p>Of these, 33% were of school age and 67% were over 16.</p>
Vision – what do we want to achieve by March 2026?	The service will be aware of any child who is not in full time education and will use all available resources to support the child to reengage in suitable education or training.
Activity – what will we do to achieve our vision? Who will do this? By when?	<p>We will develop a routine way of sharing information about children we are worried about due to their education and ensure that there are regular meetings where we arrange a plan for how we will support these children.</p> <p>We will think about what extra resources might be needed that will help these children or the Youth Justice Service and seek to meet any gaps in provision.</p>

Policing.

The Board lead is Samantha Matthews

Vision – what do we want to achieve by March 2026?	Our aim is to effectively engage with children in Medway so that they can live lives free of crime or harm.
Activity – what will we do to	

<p>achieve our vision? Who will do this? By when?</p>	<p>We will develop offers of support for children and ensure that we deliver these as a partnership. We will establish group based activity to be run by the Police, Youth Justice and the Youth Service which offers opportunities for children to learn practical skills and to develop social skills through interaction with others.</p> <p>We will create an evaluation model for our Out of Court resolutions which will use quantitative data and qualitative feedback from children, their parents or carers, and professionals. The model will allow us to understand what works in preventing children from offending or being harmed by others.</p> <p>We will establish clear arrangements for data and intelligence sharing so that we know which children are receiving support from Youth Justice and which children are receiving support from the Police. For any child receiving support from the partnership, we will routinely share relevant intelligence and information as soon as it becomes known so we can help prevent further offending, risks to victims or to the child.</p>
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Serious violence exploitation and contextual safeguarding

Medway Youth Justice are a specified authority within the Serious Violence Duty which, along with the Authority, Police, Probation, Health and others, are required to collaborate to prevent violence. The County has a Violence Reduction Unit which offers information and intelligence around data along with the commissioning of services to tackle serious violence.

Medway Council has clear arrangements for contextual safeguarding children who go missing and those at risk of exploitation. The Youth Justice service regularly attends these meetings and contributes to discussions around children or places of concern.

The Service will:

- Work with the Violence Reduction Unit to ensure that all relevant data and analysis is shared and used to inform how the Authority responds to children or places of concern.
- Develop an agreement with the Police on how children with a risk of harm to others are identified, and how an agreed plan is developed to reduce or eliminate the risk to others.
- Explore the development of a Young Futures Prevention Partnership panel and support for children at risk of becoming involved in or harmed by violence

Health

The Board leads for health are Aeilish Geldenhuys (Public Health) and Nancy Sayer (Integrated Care Board).

Emotional and Mental Health

Youth Justice Board KPI	<p>The percentage of children in the community and being released from custody with a screened or identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing;</p> <p>and of that, the percentage of planned/offered interventions;</p> <p>of that, the percentage of children attending interventions.</p>
Resources in the Youth Justice service	<p>1 x Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Youth Justice Mental Health worker</p> <p>Other universal services available to support mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in youth justice services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kooth (10–25-year-olds) is online counselling support • QWELL (18+ year olds) is an online counselling support • children can access Mental Health Support Team's within their schools (this is dependent on whether the school has MHST's) • For children who do not have access to Mental Health Support Team they can access MCH's Emotional Wellbeing Team • BRAVE service offers low mood and anxiety pathways • SIT is a bespoke counselling path for care experienced children • NHS Talking Therapies • CHAT health for secondary school aged young people • School Nursing Team • CHUM's for children who have experienced traumatic bereavement • Be You provide LGBTQIA+ support • Involve provide care navigators for care leavers..
Current performance against KPI	Data not published in the current YJ plan.
Vision – what do we want to achieve by March 2026?	To improve and enhance the care and treatment of the mental health of young people involved in the criminal justice system or at risk of re-offending.
Activity – what will we do to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely access to assessments (All young people to be assessed by the Youth Justice Mental Health Practitioner within 4 weeks).

achieve our vision? Who will do this? By when?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely access to treatment (All young people that have been assessed by the Youth Offending Mental Health Practitioner, to commence treatment if remaining open to MYPWS/YJS within 8 weeks, 4 weeks post assessment). • Increase in consultation provided by Youth Offending Mental Health Practitioner to YJS/MYPWS/Adolescent Team.
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Substance Misuse

Youth Justice Board KPI	<p>The percentage of children with a screened or identified need for specialist treatment intervention to address substance misuse;</p> <p>and of that the percentage of children with planned or offered intervention/treatment;</p> <p>and of that the percentage number of children attending intervention/treatment.</p>
Resources in the Youth Justice service	0.4 x Open Road Substance Misuse worker.
Current performance against KPI	Data not available.
Vision – what do we want to achieve by March 2026?	Build strong links between Youth Justice and the Children's Substance Misuse service (Open Road) that lead to prevention of substance use and associated harms.
Activity – what will we do to achieve our vision? Who will do this? By when?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase access to harm reduction and treatment support for children and young people using substances. - Co-location of the Children's Substance Misuse worker with criminal justice services to increase referrals for early interventions, harm reduction, and treatment support. - Providing bespoke training to upskill professionals on young person's substance misuse by March 2026.

Detention in police custody

The service maintains close links with the Police and the NHS Liaison and Diversion Service to ensure that children are only held in police custody when necessary and that those children in custody are supported by NHS professionals. The Head of Service attends the Children in Custody Concordat meetings which are chaired by the Police Superintendent responsible for custody.

Remands

The numbers of children who have been subject to a Remand to the Local Authority (RLAA) or to Youth Detention are low and this is due to the service offering a strong community based package to the courts. The service will review any child who is subject to RLAA or RYDA

Use of custody and constructive resettlement

There has been an increase in custodial sentences in the previous 12 months. The reasons for this were that 2 children had breached their orders and three were convicted of robbery or serious violence offences.

Working with families

Medway Council has invested in the Positive Behaviour Support program and the DICE Adolescent Parenting program which is available to Youth Justice staff. Services for partners are commissioned by Medway's Public Health Service who are represented on the Youth Justice Partnership Board.

Resources and services

The staffing structure including the resources available from the partnership is detailed in Appendix One.

Staff development and support

The Youth Justice Service has set out a Workforce Development plan for 2025 – 2026 which establishes the key skills and learning required from any staff in the service including those from partners outside Medway Council. The development of staff will be built on a skills audit of each individual so that alongside the core skills of the team will be a personalised training plan for the next 24 months.

Medway Youth Justice Workforce Development plan – key areas:

All staff working within the Youth Justice service regardless of their employer will be supported to develop a key set of skills and knowledge as set out in the service's Workforce Development plan.

The service will develop case formulation and clinical supervision as a way to manage high risk and to support the development of staff skills and knowledge. The service will promote shared or group supervision for any child who is also supported by a Social Worker.

Develop a Youth Justice apprenticeship offer and Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate (YJEPC) offer for staff.

- Internal coaching, mentoring, and shadowing opportunities
- Practice “Champions” for key service areas
- Youth Justice Board Inset training
- Elevate (for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Managers)

Board Development

The purpose of the Board is to offer leadership to increase influence on the strategic direction of the service driving improvement across the partnership. The review of the Youth Justice Service was commissioned by the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board and the Authority has supported the recommendations made regarding how the service should increase capacity so that the practice of the service and the outcomes for children improve. Work has begun on improving the data available from within the Youth Justice Service to the Board to inform the strategic development of the service, and partners are considering what data they have available which could help inform board reports and discussions.

The review identified challenges around the oversight of strategic plans in relation to partnership activity and performance linked to children's outcomes, and highlighted

education and health needs as areas on which there could be additional focus. This plan highlights how these partners will establish clear aims for the year, and the actions required to achieve them.

Evidence based practice and innovation

The service works closely with the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit and has developed the Focused Deterrence approach to tackle gangs or Young Street Groups. The approach has a high impact on violence and is recommended by the Youth Endowment Fund.

The service has begun the planning to enhance diversionary activities within the borough. The Turnaround Project uses a Social Skills approach to underpin all activities and support being provided to children and is focused on those at risk of entering the criminal justice system. It is linked with the Child Centred Policing team who currently deliver support to children through the Outcome 22 outcome. The service is in discussion with the Violence Reduction Unit about testing a Young Futures Prevention Panel which will extend the diversionary and preventative reach of the service. The panel will be subject to formal evaluation that is commissioned by the Home Office.

The service has been accepted as one of four areas to test a 'Whole Area Model' with the Youth Endowment Fund. The work will consider how the whole Police Force area can be a beacon of good practice around Out of Court and Diversion work and so will include Kent Police and Kent County Council. The Youth Endowment Fund will evaluate the work and use the project to create good practice guidance to be used by youth justice services across England and Wales.

Standards for children

The learning from the commissioned review plus the recent thematic review on Out of Court disposals has influenced the practice over the previous year as well as some key priority areas within this year's plan. The priorities around improving services to victims and on disproportionality are informed by recommendations from both reviews and the Workforce Development plan draws on the learning from all aspects of practice as well as feedback from the workforce themselves.

The service will develop a revised quality assurance framework and use this to assess aspects of practice throughout the year. The framework will help the Board to understand how practice is improving and any areas for development and will be combined with feedback from children and their parents or carers.

The service will be supported by Medway Council's Practice Development Service who will lead the work to understand thematic issues as well as pulling together multi-agency audits which involve access to and scrutiny of partners case management systems. The Practice Development Service will hold their first thematic review on

Harmful Sexual Behaviour to assist in the development of the partnership's response to this area of risk

Service development summary

The development of the service has been informed by the review commissioned in 2024. This has led to changes in how the Board operates and the management capacity of the service, as well as changes to practice standards and guidance.

Appendix One

Medway.YouthJustice.Structure

