

Council

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Medway Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

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Summary

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requires Local Authorities to have a Youth Justice Plan, which is updated annually to set out how youth justice will be delivered locally within available resources.

This plan (attached at Appendix 1) is a completely new plan in line with guidance distributed to local authorities in March 2024. The format of the plan follows guidance and headings provided by the National Youth Justice Board for England and Wales in the guidance mentioned, detailing best practice in the Youth Justice plans completion.

The report was previously considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 August 2025 and by the Cabinet on 23 September 2025, the draft minutes and decisions of which are set out at sections 5 and 6 of the report below.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Council is requested to note the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the decisions of the Cabinet, as set out at sections 5 and 6 of the report.
- 1.2. The Council is requested to approve the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2025 – 2026.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. A Youth Justice Plan is required under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

- 2.2. The Youth Justice Plan is a strategic plan and forms part of the Policy Framework for Medway Council (Chapter 2, Article 4.1 of the Constitution). The approval or adoption of the Policy Framework is a function of Full Council. The Youth Justice Plan therefore needs to be approved by Full Council prior to formal submission to the Ministry of Justice. The submitted Plan is then placed in the House of Lords Library.
- 2.3. The Medway Youth Justice Partnership Strategic Plan (attached at Appendix 1) is revised on an annual basis and forms part of the Council's policy framework.
- 2.4. The Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB) will retain 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 and contribution from all partners. 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 a range of services to support the partnership's responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to:
 - Co-ordinate the provision of youth justice services for all those in the authority's area who need them;
 - Carry out such functions assigned in the youth justice plan formulated by the local authority;
 - In addition, by providing the youth justice services outlined at Section 38 (4) of the Act, the local authority also addresses its duty, under the Children Act 1989, to take reasonable steps designed to encourage children and young people within the area not to commit offences.

3. Background

- 3.1. In March 2024, the National Youth Justice Board provided updated guidance as to how local authorities should complete their annual Youth Justice Plans.
- 3.2. The YJB in their revised guidance on completing the **Youth Justice Plan** have stated that they require a new plan to be submitted by **30 June 2025**. Youth justice plans in England must be signed off by full Council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. This regulation does not apply to Wales. Where it is not possible to achieve full sign off by the deadline above, plans can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date. As chair, Celia Buxton Assistant Director – Education and SEND, has signed this off prior to its submission. The Medway Youth Justice Plan was presented at Cabinet on 23rd September 2025 and is now being by full Council for final approval.
- 3.3. The plan has to follow a structure by which a number of specified headings and priorities are used.
- 3.4. The Youth Justice Board offer the following rationale for this approach –

Youth justice plans should be submitted using the headings set out in the [‘Youth Justice Plan Structure’](#) section below. The data and information contained within the plan is used by the YJPB as an intelligence source to provide support to the sector through our oversight function. Analysis of the information identifies good performance and can provide focus on regional and national themes. The aggregated data on priorities, risks and practice is used to provide advice to ministers and inform the YJPB’s strategic influence across government.

Completed plans are now rated by the National Youth Justice Board. The 2024- 2025 Medway Youth Justice was rated as being a ‘Good’ plan.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1. The principal aims of the Youth Justice system are to:

- Prevent Youth Crime
- Reduce Re-offending
- Safeguard young people from harm
- Protect the public from harm

4.2. The following priorities have been developed for the 2025-2026 plan:

The Prevention of Offending. The lead Board member is the Assistant Director of Education and SEND. The Board will seek to intervene early to reduce the risks that might lead to children becoming involved in offending.

Victim Support. The lead Board member is Kent Police’s Child Centred Policing manager. The Board will aim to ensure that all services to victims of crime committed by children are responsive, compassionate, and effective. This approach helps those who have been harmed to heal, recover, and rebuild their lives.

A Skilled and Effective Youth Justice service. The lead Board member is the Assistant Director of Children’s Services. The service will prevent reoffending through being equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver a specialised package of support to children and their families, and to coordinate a responsive, multi-agency approach to managing risks to others.

Disproportionality (fairness, equity and inclusion). The lead Board members are the Assistant Director for Education and SEND and the Kent and Medway Police Child Centred Policing Manager (the board chairs). The Board will develop and implement a strategic plan that promote fairness, equity, and inclusion across all services.

Young People’s Voice. The lead Board member is the Head of Corporate Parenting and Youth Justice Service. All children involved in the Youth Justice System will be heard, respected, and actively involved in decisions that affect them. The service will use feedback, consultation and co-production with children and families to shape and improve how services are delivered.

- 4.3. The wording of these priorities emphasises the aspiration to deliver the child first principle, emphasising positive identities, strengths, collaboration and working with young people and their families, whilst incorporating a focus on local issues.
- 4.4. These priorities are aligned to Priority 1 of the One Medway Council Plan 2024-28:

‘Delivering quality Social Care and Community services’ – Sub Priority
‘Support our children and young people to ensure they are safe, secure and stable’.
- 4.5. The approach taken by the National Youth Justice Board to the development and submission of Youth Justice Plans enables central government to compare the provision of Youth Justice Services from one Local Authority to another.
- 4.6. The National Youth Justice Board requires local authorities to report back on 10 key performance indicators, 11 National priority areas, as well as rates of first-time entrants in the Youth Justice System, rates of Re-offending and rates of the use of custody. The Youth Justice Plan requirements are aligned to these key performance indicators. The National Youth Justice Board are now able to collate comparison data in respect to Local Authorities’ Youth Justice services.
- 4.7. From the beginning of 2025 the His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation has begun a new round of inspections across the youth justice sector nationally. This new round of inspections has an increased focus on services provided to victims and, of the four published inspection reports using the new format, no service has fully met the requirements for victims.
- 4.8. On 29 May 2025 the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board met to discuss the plan and agreed a partnership response to its completion.
- 4.9. The Medway Youth Justice Plan requires approval by full Council under the current constitution.

5. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1. The above Committee considered the report on 7 August 2025, and the draft minutes of the discussion are set out below.
- 5.2. The Committee received a presentation and the annual report which set out how youth justice would be delivered locally. This new plan was developed in line with the new guidance that was distributed to Local Authorities in March 2024.
- 5.3. Members raised several comments and questions which included:

- 5.3.1. The Team was commended for the work being undertaken in addressing re offending rates.
- 5.3.2. **Prevention** - it was commented that over the years, there had been funding cuts to budgets which negatively impacted the ability to implement preventative measures, and it was asked what was being done to address issues despite reduction in funding. It was also commented that it was vital that community groups affected were held accountable and that families take ownership of issues with youth offending, Additionally, future reports presented to the Committee detail preventative measures alongside outcomes and not to just provide headlines of what was or was not working.
- 5.3.3. Members were informed that Medway was in a good position, had an outstanding youth team whose priority was a focus on prevention, by targeting and working with children that they had concerns about before they came into the youth justice system.
- 5.3.4. **Workforce** – in response to a question on what was being done to further mitigate issues locally amidst national challenges, the Committee was informed that this was an area of continues focus. There had been an increase in staff within the team and there were currently plans in place to recruit a second team manager to focus specifically on quality assurance. There was ongoing investment in upskilling the workforce, retention of staff and building relationships with partners.
- 5.3.5. **Victim Support** - it was asked what conversations were taking place with partners on the views of victims and the Committee was informed that this would be the focus of the next report . The Assistant Director of Education and SEND confirmed that as Chair of the Community Partnership Board, a review of the service had been undertaken as well as a review of the Terms of Refence and training for Board Members, to ensure that they understood their roles. Victim support was a priority on the agenda for the Community Partnership Board as it was important to have victims at the heart of the service and work being carried out.
- 5.3.6. **Disproportionality** - it was asked what was being done to educate all to recognise and address issues and to understand all the characteristics that fall under this umbrella. The Committee was informed that there was continuous extensive work undertaken with families as it was vital to view young people as a whole package and not insolation. There was also a comprehensive assessment tool in place to assist officers with their work. There was work undertaken on development of plans around the young person, plans which set goals and objectives and there was ongoing work with parental support of the plan and making sure they understood the experiences of young people. It was important to note that whilst often parents can be a risk factor in a young person offending, they were also a huge preventative factor, so it was important to secure their support with the plans.
- 5.3.7. **Not in Education Employment or Training** - it was asked what was being done to address issues with offending in young people and the Committee

was informed that this was a national challenge. The service had submitted a bid for additional funding to enable them, to work with a number of schools on different areas that may contribute to offending such as prevention of repeated suspension. The team currently provided support to children that had fallen out of the school realm and also worked with virtual schools to provide support for families.

5.4. The Committee made the following decisions:

5.4.1. The Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2025 - 2026, as set out at Appendix 1, to Cabinet.

5.4.2. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend Full Council to approve the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2025 – 2026.

5.4.3. A briefing note be provided to the Committee on disproportionality.

6. Cabinet

6.1. The Cabinet considered the report on 23 September 2025, the decisions of which are set out below.

6.2. The Cabinet noted the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out at section 6 of the report.

6.3. The Cabinet agreed to recommend Full Council approve the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026.

7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The focus is on operational delivery not the Youth Justice Partnership arrangements.	Medway Council and the Youth Justice Service become the focus of improvement rather than a service wide and system approach to tackle culture change and service improvement.	Strong leadership and governance from the Youth Justice Partnership Board. We need to improve the system if we are to achieve outstanding.	CIII
Increased complexity of the needs of children within the youth justice system and increasing numbers of	Services may 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.	The Youth Justice Partnership Board will use shared data and analysis to identify system pressures and respond accordingly.	CII

children aged 10 – 14.	Increasing demand without an increase in resources may lead to a failure to manage risks of harm to children or to the community.		
The Youth Justice Service and the Youth Justice Board do not make the improvements needed.	Medway fails to address areas for improvement and is not rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' in any external inspection.	Improvement plan aligned to children's improvement board. Strong leadership and governance from the Youth Justice Partnership Board.	DIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

8. Consultation

- 8.1. Consultation has taken place primarily through the multi-agency Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board, which is the main forum for governance and oversight of the Youth Justice Service in Medway. The Youth Justice Partnership Board has good representation from all statutory partners and a range of non-statutory partners to the Youth Justice Service and includes the Lead Member for Children's Services.
- 8.2. Particular attention has been given in the plan to consultation and collaboration with children and young people in its development. This is aligned to the 'Child First' principles which since 2018 have been adopted by the Youth Justice Board as the official guiding principles for Youth Justice services. The second of these principles states that Youth Justice services should be developed in collaboration with children.
- 8.3. Following agreement by the Youth Justice Partnership Board, endorsement will be sought by the Cabinet and finally the Council.

9. Climate change implications

- 9.1. There are no implications as a result of this report.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The Youth Justice Service's responsibilities are funded through contributions from the statutory partner agencies in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Each partner's contributions are reviewed annually.
- 10.2. In addition, the Youth Justice Service also receives a Youth Justice Grant from the Ministry of Justice, which is passported via Medway to the Youth Justice Board. Submission of annual Youth Justice plans is a duty outlined as a requirement of the terms and conditions of grant. Medway's 2025-2026 grant allocation is £399,984.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year, a plan (a "Youth Justice Plan") setting out how Youth Justice Services in their area are to be provided, funded, and will deliver against their targets.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Medway Youth Justice Plan 2025 - 2026

Background papers

[Youth Justice Plans- Guidance](#)